

# **CRITICISM**

Edgar Allan Poe

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# CRITICISM

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IT HAS been said that a good critique on a poem may be written by one who is no poet himself. This, according to your idea and mine of poetry, I feel to be false- the less poetical the critic, the less just the critique, and the converse. On this account, and because the world's good opinion as proud of your own. Another than yourself might here observe, "Shakespeare is in possession of the world's good opinion, and yet Shakespeare is the greatest of poets. It appears then that as the world judges correctly, why should you be ashamed of their favourable judgment?" The difficulty lies in the interpretation of the word "judgment" or "opinion." The opinion is the world's, truly, but it may be called theirs as a man would call a book his, having bought it; he did not write the book, but it is his; they did not originate the opinion, but it is theirs. A fool, for example, thinks Shakespeare a great poet- yet the fool has never read Shakespeare. But the fool's neighbor, who is a step higher on the Andes of the mind, whose head (that is to say, his more exalted thought) is too far above the fool to be seen or understood, but whose feet (by which I mean his every-day actions) are sufficiently near to be discerned, and by means of which that superiority is ascertained, which but for them would never have been discovered- this neighbor asserts that Shakespeare is a great poet- the fool believes him, and it is henceforward his opinion. This neighbor's own opinion has, in like manner, been adopted from one above him, and so, ascendingly, to a few gifted individuals who kneel around the summit, beholding, face to face, the master spirit who stands upon the pinnacle....

You are aware of the great barrier in the path of an American writer. He is read, if at all, in preference to the combined and established wit of the world. I say established; for it is with literature as with law or empire- an established name is an estate in tenure, or a throne in possession. Besides, one might suppose that books, like their authors, improve by travel- their having crossed the sea is, with us, so great a distinction. Our antiquaries abandon time for distance; our very fops glance from the binding to the bottom of the title-page, where the mystic characters which spell London, Paris, or Genoa, are precisely so many letters of recommendation.

I mentioned just now a vulgar error as regards criticism. I think the notion that no poet can form a correct estimate of his own writings is another. I remarked before that in proportion to the poetical talent would be the justice of a critique upon poetry. Therefore a bad poet would, I grant, make a false critique, and his self-love would infallibly bias his little judgment in his favour; but a poet, who is indeed a poet, could not, I think, fail of making a just critique; whatever should be deducted on the score of self-love might be replaced on account of his intimate acquaintance with the subject; in short, we have more instances of false criticism than of just where one's own writings are the test, simply because we have more bad poets than good. There are, of course, many objections to what I say: Milton is a great example of the contrary, but his opinion with respect to the Paradise Regained is by no means fairly ascertained. By what trivial circumstances men are often led to assert what they do not really believe! Perhaps an inadvertent world has descended to posterity. But, in fact, the Paradise Regained is little, if at all inferior to the Paradise Lost and is only supposed so to be because men do not like epics, whatever they may say to the contrary, and reading those of Milton in their natural order, are too much wearied with the first to derive any pleasure from the second.

I dare say Milton preferred Comos to either- if so- justly....

As I am speaking of poetry, it will not be amiss to touch slightly upon the most singular heresy in its modern history- the heresy of what is called, very foolishly, the Lake School. Some years ago I might have been induced,

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by an occasion like the present, to attempt a formal refutation of their doctrine; at present it would be a work of supererogation. The wise must bow to the wisdom of such men as Coleridge and Southey, but being wise, have laughed at poetical theories so prosaically exemplified.

Aristotle, with singular assurance, has declared poetry the most philosophical of all writings- but it required a Wordsworth to pronounce it the most metaphysical. He seems to think that the end of poetry is, or should be, instruction; yet it is a truism that the end of our existence is happiness; if so, the end of every separate part of our existence, everything connected with our existence, should be happiness. Therefore the end of instruction should be happiness; and happiness is another name for pleasure,- therefore the end of instruction should be pleasure; yet we see the above-mentioned opinion implies precisely the reverse.

To proceed: *ceteris paribus*, he who pleases is of more importance to his fellow-men than he who instructs, since utility is happiness, and pleasure is the end already obtained while instruction is merely the means of obtaining.

I see no reason, then, why our metaphysical poets should plume themselves so much on the utility of their works, unless indeed they refer to instruction with eternity in view; in which case, sincere respect for their piety would not allow me to express my contempt for their judgement; contempt which it would be difficult to conceal, since their writings are professedly to be understood by the few, and it is the many who stand in need of salvation. In such case I should no doubt be tempted to think of the devil in "Melmoth," who labours indefatigably, through three octavo volumes, to accomplish the destruction of one or two souls, while any common devil would have demolished one or two thousand.

Against the subtleties which would make poetry a study- not a passion- it becomes the metaphysician to reason- but the poet to protest. Yet Wordsworth and Coleridge are men in years; the one imbued in contemplating from his childhood, the other a giant in intellect and learning. The diffidence, then, with which I venture to dispute their authority would be overwhelming did I not feel, from the bottom of my heart, that learning has little to do with the imagination- intellect with the passions- or age with poetry.

Trifles, like straws, upon the surface flow;

He who would search for pearls must dive below,

are lines which have done much mischief. As regards the greater truths, men oftener err by seeking them at the bottom than at the top; Truth lies in the huge abysses where wisdom is sought- not in the palpable palaces where she is found. The ancients were not always right in hiding the goddess in a well; witness the light which Bacon has thrown upon philosophy; witness the principles of our divine faith- that moral mechanism by which the simplicity of a child may overbalance the wisdom of a man.

We see an instance of Coleridge's liability to err, in his *Biographia Literaria*- professedly his literary life and opinions, but, in fact, a treatise *de omni scibili et quibusdam aliis*. He goes wrong by reason of his very profundity, and of his error we have a natural type in the contemplation of a star. He who regards it directly and intensely sees, it is true, the star, but it is the star without a ray- while he who surveys it less inquisitively is conscious of all for which the star is useful to us below- its brilliancy and its beauty.

As to Wordsworth, I have no faith in him. That he had in youth the feelings of a poet I believe- for there are glimpses of extreme delicacy in his writings- (and delicacy is the poet's own kingdom- his *El Dorado*)- but they have the appearance of a better day recollected; and glimpses, at best, are little evidence of present poetic fire- we know that a few straggling flowers spring up daily in the crevices of the glacier.

He was to blame in wearing away his youth in contemplation with the end of poetizing in his manhood. With the increase of his judgment the light which should make it apparent has faded away. His judgment consequently is

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too correct. This may not be understood,- but the old Goths of Germany would have understood it, who used to debate matters of importance to their State twice, once when drunk, and once when sober- sober that they might not be deficient in formality- drunk lest they should be destitute of vigour.

The long wordy discussions by which he tries to reason us into admiration of his poetry, speak very little in his favour: they are full of such assertions as this (I have opened one of his volumes at random)- "Of genius the only proof is the act of doing well what is worthy to be done, and what was never done before";- indeed? then it follows that in doing what is unworthy to be done, or what has been done before, no genius can be evinced; yet the picking of pockets is an unworthy act, pockets have been picked time immemorial and Barrington, the pickpocket, in point of genius, would have thought hard of a comparison with William Wordsworth, the poet.

Again- in estimating the merit of certain poems, whether they be Ossian's or M'Pherson's, can surely be of little consequence, yet, in order to prove their worthlessness, Mr. W. has expended many pages in the controversy. Tantaene animis? Can great minds descend to such absurdity? But worse still: that he may bear down every argument in favour of these poems, he triumphantly drags forward a passage in his abomination with which he expects the reader to sympathise. It is the beginning of the epic poem "Temora." "The blue waves of Ullin roll in light; the green hills are covered with day, trees shake their dusty heads in the breeze." And this- this gorgeous, yet simple imagery, where all is alive and panting with immortality- this, William Wordsworth, the author of "Peter Bell," has selected for his contempt. We shall see what better he, in his own person, has to offer. Imprimis:

And now she's at the pony's tail,

And now she's at the pony's head,

On that side now, and now on this;

And, almost stifed with her bliss,

A few sad tears does Betty shed....

She pats the pony, where or when

She knows not... happy Betty Foy!

Oh, Johnny, never mind the doctor!

Secondly:

The dew was falling fast, the- stars began to blink;

I heard a voice: it said- "Drink, pretty creature, drink!"

And, looking o'er the hedge, be- fore me I espied

A snow-white mountain lamb, with a- maiden at its side.

No other sheep was near,- the lamb was all alone,

And by a slender cord was- tether'd to a stone.

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Now, we have no doubt this is all true; we will believe it, indeed we will, Mr. W. Is it sympathy for the sheep you wish to excite? I love a sheep from the bottom of my heart.

Wordsworth is reasonable. Even Stamboul, it is said, shall have an end, and the most unlucky blunders must come to a conclusion. Here is an extract from his preface:-

"Those who have been accustomed to the phraseology of modern writers, if they persist in reading this book to a conclusion (impossible!) will, no doubt, have to struggle with feelings of awkwardness; (ha! ha! ha!) they will look round for poetry (ha! ha! ha! ha!), and will be induced to inquire by what species of courtesy these attempts have been permitted to assume that title." Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha!

Yet, let not Mr. W. despair; he has given immortality to a wagon, and the bee Sophocles has transmitted to eternity a sore toe, and dignified a tragedy with a chorus of turkeys.

Of Coleridge, I cannot speak but with reverence. His towering intellect! his gigantic power! He is one more evidence of the fact "que la plupart des sectes ont raison dans une bonne partie de ce qu'elles avancent, mais non pas en ce qu'elles nient." He has imprisoned his own conceptions by the barrier he has erected against those of others. It is lamentable to think that such a mind should be buried in metaphysics, and, like the Nyctanthes, waste its perfume upon the night alone. In reading that man's poetry, I tremble like one who stands upon a volcano, conscious from the very darkness bursting from the crater, of the fire and the light that are weltering below.

What is Poetry?- Poetry! that Proteus-like idea, with as many appellations as the nine-titled Corcyra! Give me, I demanded of a scholar some time ago, give me a definition of poetry. "Tres-volontiers"; and he proceeded to his library, brought me a Dr. Johnson, and overwhelmed me with a definition. Shade of the immortal Shakespeare! I imagine to myself the scowl of your spiritual eye upon the profanity of the scurrilous Ursa Major. Think of poetry, dear of all that is airy and fairy-like, and then of all that is hideous and unwieldy, think of his huge bulk, the Elephant! and then- and then think of the Tempest- the Midsummer Night's Dream- Prospero- Oberon- and Titania!

A poem, in my opinion, is opposed to a work of science by having, for its immediate object, pleasure, not truth; to romance, by having for its object, an indefinite instead of a definite pleasure, being a poem only so far as this object is attained; romance presenting perceptible images with definite poetry with indefinite sensations, to which end music is an essential, since the comprehension of sweet sound is our most indefinite conception. Music, when combined with a pleasurable idea, is poetry- music, without the idea, is simply music; the idea, without the music, is prose, from its very definitiveness.

What was meant by the invective against him who had no music in his soul? [possibly missing text] doubt, perceive, for the metaphysical poets as poets, the most sovereign contempt. That they have followers proves nothing-

No Indian prince has to his palace

More followers than a thief to the gallows.

DRAKE AND HALLECK

THE CULPRIT FAY, AND OTHER POEMS

Joseph Rodman Drake

ALNWICK CASTLE, AND OTHER POEMS

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Fitz-Greene Halleck

BEFORE entering upon the detailed notice which we propose of the volumes before us, we wish to speak a few words in regard to the present state of American criticism.

It must be visible to all who meddle with literary matters, that of late years a thorough revolution has been effected in the censorship of our press. That this revolution is infinitely for the worse we believe. There was a time, it is true, when we cringed to foreign opinion- let us even say when we paid most servile deference to British critical dicta. That an American book could, by any possibility, be worthy perusal, was an idea by no means extensively prevalent in the land; and if we were induced to read at all the productions of our native writers, it was only after repeated assurances from England that such productions were not altogether contemptible. But there was, at all events, a shadow of excuse, and a slight basis of reason for a subserviency so grotesque. Even now, perhaps, it would not be far wrong to assert that such basis of reason may still exist. Let us grant that in many of the abstract sciences- that even in Theology, in Medicine, in Law, in Oratory, in the Mechanical Arts, we have no competitors whatever, still nothing but the most egregious national vanity would assign us a place, in the matter of Polite Literature, upon a level with the elder and riper climes of Europe, the earliest steps of whose children are among the groves of magnificently endowed Academies, and whose innumerable men of leisure, and of consequent learning, drink daily from those august fountains of inspiration which burst around them everywhere from out the tombs of their immortal dead, and from out their hoary and trophied monuments of chivalry and song. In paying then, as a nation, a respectful and not undue deference to a supremacy rarely questioned but by prejudice or ignorance, we should, of course, be doing nothing more than acting in a rational manner. The excess of our subserviency was blamable- but, as we have before said, this very excess might have found a shadow of excuse in the strict justice, if properly regulated, of the principle from which it issued. Not so, however, with our present follies. We are becoming boisterous and arrogant in the pride of a too speedily assumed literary freedom. We throw off, with the most presumptuous and unmeaning hauteur, all deference whatever to foreign opinion- we forget, in the puerile inflation of vanity, that the world is the true theatre of the biblical histrio- we get up a hue and cry about the necessity of encouraging native writers of merit- we blindly fancy that we can accomplish this by indiscriminate puffing of good, bad, and indifferent, without taking the trouble to consider that what we choose to denominate encouragement is thus, by its general application, rendered precisely the reverse. In a word, so far from being ashamed of the many disgraceful literary failures to which our own inordinate vanities and misapplied patriotism have lately given birth, and so far from deeply lamenting that these daily puerilities are of home manufacture, we adhere pertinaciously to our original blindly conceived idea, and thus often find ourselves involved in the gross paradox of liking a stupid book the better, because, sure enough, its stupidity is American.[1]

[1] This charge of indiscriminant puffing will, of course, only apply to the general character of our criticism- there are some noble exceptions. We wish also especially to discriminate between those notices of new works which are intended merely to call public attention to them, and deliberate criticism on the works themselves.

Deeply lamenting this unjustifiable state of public feeling, it has been our constant endeavor, since assuming the Editorial duties of this Journal, to stem, with what little abilities we possess, a current so disastrously undermining the health and prosperity of our literature.

We have seen our efforts applauded by men whose applauses we value. From all quarters we have received abundant private as well as public testimonials in favor of our Critical Notices, and, until very lately, have heard from no respectable source one word impugning their integrity or candor. In looking over, however, a number of the New York Commercial Advertiser, we meet with the following paragraph.

"The last number of the Southern Literary Messenger is very readable and respectable. The contributions to the Messenger are much better than the original matter. The critical department of this work- much as it would seem to boast itself of impartiality and discernment,- is in our opinion decidedly quacky. There is in it a great

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assumption of acumen, which is completely unsustained. Many a work has been slashingly condemned therein, of which the critic himself could not write a page, were he to die for it. This affectation of eccentric sternness in criticism, without the power to back one's suit withal, so far from deserving praise, as some suppose, merits the strongest reprehension. Philadelphia Gazette.'

"We are entirely of opinion with the Philadelphia Gazette in relation to the Southern Literary Messenger, and take this occasion to express our total dissent from the numerous and lavish encomiums we have seen bestowed upon its critical notices. Some few of them have been judicious, fair and candid; bestowing praise and censure with judgement and impartiality; but by far the greater number of those we have read, have been flippant, unjust, untenable and uncritical. The duty of the critic is to act as judge, not as enemy, of the writer whom he reviews; a distinction of which the Zoilus of the Messenger seems not to be aware. It is possible to review a book sincerely, without bestowing opprobrious epithets upon the writer, to condemn with courtesy, if not with kindness. The critic of the Messenger has been eulogized for his scorching and scarifying abilities, and he thinks it incumbent upon him to keep up his reputation in that line, by sneers, sarcasm and downright abuse; by straining his vision with microscopic intensity in search of faults, and shutting his eyes, with all his might to beauties. Moreover, we have detected him, more than once, in blunders quite as gross as those on which it was his pleasure to descant." [2]

[2] In addition to these things we observe, in the New York Mirror, what follows: "Those who have read the Notices of American books in a certain Southern Monthly, which is striving to gain notoriety by the loudness of its abuse, may find amusement in the sketch on another page, entitled "The Successful Novel." The Southern Literary Messenger knows by experience what it is to write a successful novel." We have, in this case, only to deny, flatly, the assertion of the Mirror. The Editor of the Messenger never in his life wrote or published, or attempted to publish, a novel either successful or successful.

In the paragraph from the Philadelphia Gazette, (which is edited by Mr. Willis Gaylord Clark, one of the editors of the Knickerbocker) we find nothing at which we have any desire to take exception. Mr. C. has a right to think us quacky if he pleases, and we do not remember having assumed for a moment that we could write a single line of the works we have reviewed. But there is something equivocal, to say the least, in the remarks of Col. Stone. He acknowledges that "some of our notices have been judicious, fair, and candid bestowing praise and censure with judgment and impartiality." This being the case, how can he reconcile his total dissent from the public verdict in our favor, with the dictates of justice? We are accused too of bestowing "opprobrious epithets" upon writers whom we review and in the paragraphs so accusing us are called nothing less than "flippant, unjust and uncritical."

But there is another point of which we disapprove. While in our reviews we have at all times been particularly careful not to deal in generalities, and have never, if we remember aright, advanced in any single instance an unsupported assertion, our accuser has forgotten to give us any better evidence of our flippancy, injustice, personality, and gross blundering, than the solitary dictum of Col. Stone. We call upon the Colonel for assistance in this dilemma. We wish to be shown our blunders that we may correct them- to be made aware of our flippancy that we may avoid it hereafter- and above all to have our personalities pointed out that we may proceed forthwith with a repentant spirit, to make the amende honorable. In default of this aid from the Editor of the Commercial we shall take it for granted that we are neither blunderers, flippant, personal, nor unjust.

Who will deny that in regard to individual poems no definitive opinions can exist, so long as to Poetry in the abstract we attach no definitive idea? Yet it is a common thing to hear our critics, day after day, pronounce, with a positive air, laudatory or condemnatory sentences, en masse, upon material works of whose merits or demerits they have, in the first place, virtually confessed an utter ignorance, in confessing it ignorance of all determinate principles by which to regulate a decision. Poetry has never been defined to the satisfaction of all parties. Perhaps, in the present condition of language it never will be. Words cannot hem it in. Its intangible and purely spiritual nature refuses to be bound down within the widest horizon of mere sounds. But it is not, therefore, misunderstood- at least, not by all men is it misunderstood. Very far from it, if indeed, there be any one circle of



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thought distinctly and palpably marked out from amid the jarring and tumultuous chaos of human intelligence, it is that evergreen and radiant Paradise which the true poet knows, and knows alone, as the limited realm of his authority- as the circumscribed Eden of his dreams. But a definition is a thing of words- a conception of ideas. And thus while we readily believe that Poesy, the term, it will be troublesome, if not impossible to define- still, with its image vividly existing in the world, we apprehend no difficulty in so describing Poesy, the Sentiment, as to imbue even the most obtuse intellect with a comprehension of it sufficiently distinct for all the purposes of practical analysis.

To look upwards from any existence, material or immaterial to its design, is, perhaps, the most direct, and the most unerring method of attaining a just notion of the nature of the existence itself. Nor is the principle at fault when we turn our eyes from Nature even to Nature's God. We find certain faculties, implanted within us, and arrive at a more plausible conception of the character and attributes of those faculties, by considering, with what finite judgment we possess, the intention of the Deity in so implanting them within us, than by any actual investigation of their powers, or any speculative deductions from their visible and material effects. Thus, for example, we discover in all men a disposition to look with reverence upon superiority, whether real or supposititious. In some, this disposition is to be recognized with difficulty, and, in very peculiar cases, we are occasionally even led to doubt its existence altogether, until circumstances beyond the common routine bring it accidentally into development. In others again it forms a prominent and distinctive feature of character, and is rendered palpably evident in its excesses. But in all human beings it is, in a greater or less degree, finally perceptible. It has been, therefore, justly considered a primitive sentiment. Phrenologists call it Veneration. It is, indeed, the instinct given to man by God as security for his own worship. And although, preserving its nature, it becomes perverted from its principal purpose, and although swerving from that purpose, it serves to modify the relations of human society- the relations of father and child, of master and slave, of the ruler and the ruled- its primitive essence is nevertheless the same, and by a reference to primal causes, may at any moment be determined.

Very nearly akin to this feeling, and liable to the same analysis, is the Faculty of Ideality- which is the sentiment of Poesy. This sentiment is the sense of the beautiful, of the sublime, and of the mystical.[3] Thence spring immediately admiration of the fair flowers, the fairer forests, the bright valleys and rivers and mountains of the Earth- and love of the gleaming stars and other burning glories of Heaven- and, mingled up inextricably with this love and this admiration of Heaven and of Earth, the unconquerable desire- to know. Poesy is the sentiment of Intellectual Happiness here, and the Hope of a higher Intellectual Happiness hereafter.[4](2)

[3] We separate the sublime and the mystical- for, despite of high authorities, we are firmly convinced that the latter may exist, in the most vivid degree, without giving rise to the sense of the former.

[4](2) The consciousness of this truth was by no mortal more fully than by Shelley, although he has only once especially alluded to it. In his Hymn to intellectual Beauty we find these lines.

While yet a boy I sought for ghosts, and sped

Through many a listening chamber, cave and ruin,

And starlight wood, with fearful steps pursuing

Hopes of high talk with the departed dead:

I called on poisonous names with which our youth is fed:

I was not heard: I saw them not.

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When musing deeply on the lot  
Of life at that sweet time when birds are wooing  
All vital things that wake to bring  
News of buds and blossoming,  
Sudden thy shadow fell on me—  
I shrieked and clasped my hands in ecstasy!  
I vow'd that I would dedicate my powers  
To thee and thine: have I not kept the vow?  
With beating heart and streaming eyes, even now  
I call the phantoms of a thousand hours  
Each from his voiceless grave: they have in vision'd bowers  
Of studious zeal or love's delight  
Outwatch'd with me the envious night:  
They know that never joy illum'd my brow,  
Unlink'd with hope that thou wouldst free,  
This world from its dark slavery,  
That thou, O awful Loveliness,  
Wouldst give whate'er these words cannot express.

Imagination is its soul.[5] With the passions of mankind- although it may modify them greatly- although it may exalt, or inflame, or purify, or control them- it would require little ingenuity to prove that it has no inevitable, and indeed no necessary co-existence. We have hitherto spoken of poetry in the abstract: we come now to speak of it in its everyday acceptance- that is to say, of the practical result arising from the sentiment we have considered.

[5] Imagination is, possibly in man, a lesser degree of the creative power in God. What the Deity imagines, is, but was not before. What man imagines, is, but was also. The mind of man cannot imagine what is not. This latter point may be demonstrated.- See *Les Premiers Traits de L'Erudition Universelle*, par M. Le Baron de Biefield, 1767.

And now it appears evident, that since Poetry, in this new sense, is the practical result, expressed in language, of this Poetic Sentiment in certain individuals, the only proper method of testing the merits of a poem is by measuring its capabilities of exciting the Poetic Sentiments in others. And to this end we have many aids- in observation, in experience, in ethical analysis, and in the dictates of common sense. Hence the Poeta nascitur, which is indisputably true if we consider the Poetic Sentiment, becomes the merest of absurdities when we regard

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it in reference to the practical result. We do not hesitate to say that a man highly endowed with the powers of Causality- that is to say, a man of metaphysical acumen- will, even with a very deficient share of Ideality, compose a finer poem (if we test it, as we should, by its measure of exciting the Poetic Sentiment) than one who, without such metaphysical acumen, shall be gifted, in the most extraordinary degree, with the faculty of Ideality. For a poem is not the Poetic faculty, but the means of exciting it in mankind. Now these means the metaphysician may discover by analysis of their effects in other cases than his own, without even conceiving the nature of these effects- thus arriving at a result which the unaided Ideality of his competitor would be utterly unable, except by accident, to attain. It is more than possible that the man who, of all writers, living or dead, has been most successful in writing the purest of all poems- that is to say, poems which excite more purely, most exclusively, and most powerfully the imaginative faculties in men- owed his extraordinary and almost magical preeminence rather to metaphysical than poetical powers. We allude to the author of *Christabel*, of the *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, and of *Love- to Coleridge*- whose head, if we mistake not its character, gave no great phrenological tokens of Ideality, while the organs of Causality and Comparison were most singularly developed.

Perhaps at this particular moment there are no American poems held in so high estimation by our countrymen, as the poems of Drake, and of Halleck. The exertions of Mr. George Dearborn have no doubt a far greater share in creating this feeling than the lovers of literature for its own sake and spiritual uses would be willing to admit. We have indeed seldom seen more beautiful volumes than the volumes now before us. But an adventitious interest of a loftier nature- the interest of the living in the memory of the beloved dead- attaches itself to the few literary remains of Drake. The poems which are now given to us with his name are nineteen in number; and whether all, or whether even the best of his writings, it is our present purpose to speak of these alone, since upon this edition his poetical reputation to all time will most probably depend.

It is only lately that we have read *The Culprit Fay*. This is a poem of six hundred and forty irregular lines, generally iambic, and divided into thirty-six stanzas, of unequal length. The scene of the narrative, as we ascertain from the single line,

The moon looks down on old Cronest,

is principally in the vicinity of West Point on the Hudson. The plot is as follows. An Ouphe, one of the race of Fairies, has "broken his vestal vow,"

He has loved an earthly maid

And left for her his woodland shade;

He has lain upon her lip of dew,

And sunned him in her eye of blue,

Fann'd her cheek with his wing of air,

Play'd with the ringlets of her hair,

And, nestling on her snowy breast,

Forgot the lily-kings behest-

in short, he has broken Fairy-law in becoming enamored of a mortal. The result of this misdemeanor we could not express so well as the poet, and will therefore make use of the language put into the mouth of the Fairy-King who reprimands the criminal.

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Fairy! Fairy! list and mark,

Thou hast broke thine elfin chain,

Thy flame—wood lamp is quench'd and dark

And thy wings are dyed with a deadly stain.

The Ouphe being in this predicament, it has become necessary that his case and crime should be investigated by a jury of his fellows, and to this end the "shadowy tribes of air" are summoned by the "sentry elve" who has been awakened by the "wood-tick"- are summoned we say to the "elfin-court" at midnight to hear the doom of the Culprit Fay.

"Had a stain been found on the earthly fair," whose blandishments so bewildered the little Ouphe, his punishment would have been severe indeed. In such case he would have been (as we learn from the Fairy judge's exposition of the criminal code,)

Tied to the hornet's shardy wings;

Tossed on the pricks of nettles' stings;

Or seven long ages doomed to dwell

With the lazy worm in the walnut shell;

Or every night to writhe and bleed

Beneath the tread of the centipede,

Or bound in a cobweb dungeon dim

His jailer a spider huge and grim,

Amid the carrion bodies to lie

Of the worm and the bug and the murdered fly—

Fortunately, however, for the Culprit, his mistress is proved to be of "sinless mind" and under such redeeming circumstances the sentence is, mildly, as follows-

Thou shalt seek the beach of sand

Where the water bounds the elfin land,

Thou shalt watch the oozy brine

Till the sturgeon leaps in the bright moonshine,

Then dart the glistening arch below,

And catch a drop from his silver bow.

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If the spray-bead be won  
The stain of thy wing is washed away,  
But another errand must be done  
Ere thy crime be lost for aye;  
Thy flame-wood lamp is quenched and dark,  
Thou must re-illuminate its spark.  
Mount thy steed and spur him high  
To the heaven's blue canopy,  
And when thou seest a shooting star  
Follow it fast and follow it far  
The last faint spark of its burning train  
Shall light the elfin lamp again.

Upon this sin, and upon this sentence, depends the web of the narrative, which is now occupied with the elfin difficulties overcome by the Ouphe in washing away the stain of his wing, and re-illuminating his flame-wood lamp. His soiled pinion having lost its power, he is under the necessity of wending his way on foot from the Elfin court upon Cronest to the river beach at its base. His path is encumbered at every step with "bog and briar," with "brook and mire," with "beds of tangled fern," with "groves of night-shade," and with the minor evils of ant and snake. Happily, however, a spotted toad coming in sight, our adventurer jumps upon her back, and "bridling her mouth with a silk-weed twist" bounds merrily along

Till the mountain's magic verge is past  
And the beach of sand is reached at last.

Alighting now from his "courser-toad" the Ouphe folds his wings around his bosom, springs on a rock, breathes a prayer, throws his arms above his head,

Then tosses a tiny curve in air  
And plunges in the waters blue.

Here, however, a host of difficulties await him by far too multitudinous to enumerate. We will content ourselves with simply stating the names of his most respectable assailants. These are the "spirits of the wave" dressed in "snail-plate armor" and aided by the "mailed shrimp," the "prickly prong," the "blood-red leech," the "stony star-fish," the "jellied quarl," the "soldier-crab," and the "lancing squab." But the hopes of our hero are high, and his limbs are strong, so

He spreads his arms like the swallow's wing,

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And throws his feet with a frog-like fling.

All however, is to no purpose.

On his thigh the leech has fixed his hold,

The quarl's long arms are round him roll'd,

The prickly prong has pierced his skin,

And the squab has thrown his javelin,

The gritty star has rubb'd him raw,

And the crab has struck with his giant claw;

He bawls with rage, and he shrieks with pain

He strikes around but his blows are vain—

So then,

He turns him round and flies amain

With hurry and dash to the beach again.

Arrived safely on land our Fairy friend now gathers the dew from the "sorrel-leaf and henbane-bud" and bathing therewith his wounds, finally ties them up with cobweb. Thus recruited, he

—treads the fatal shore

As fresh and vigorous as before.

At length espying a "purple-muscle shell" upon the beach, he determines to use it as a boat and thus evade the animosity of the water spirits whose powers extend not above the wave. Making a "sculler's notch" in the stern, and providing himself with an oar of the bootle-blade, the Ouphe a second time ventures upon the deep. His perils are now diminished, but still great. The imps of the river heave the billows up before the prow of the boat, dash the surges against her side, and strike against her keel. The quarl uprears "his island-back" in her path, and the scallop, floating in the rear of the vessel, spatters it all over with water. Our adventurer, however, bails it out with the colen bell (which he has luckily provided for the purpose of catching the drop from the silver bow of the sturgeon,) and keeping his little bark warily trimmed, holds on his course undiscomfited.

The object of his first adventure is at length discovered in a "brownbacked sturgeon," who

Like the heaven-shot javelin

Springs above the waters blue,

And, instant as the star-fall light

Plunges him in the deep again,

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But leaves an arch of silver bright,

The rainbow of the moony main.

From this rainbow our Ouphe succeeds in catching, by means of his colen bell cup, a "droplet of the sparkling dew." One half of his task is accordingly done-

His wings are pure, for the gem is won.

On his return to land, the ripples divide before him, while the water-spirits, so rancorous before, are obsequiously attentive to his comfort. Having tarried a moment on the beach to breathe a prayer, he "spreads his wings of gilded blue" and takes his way to the elfin court- there resting until the cricket, at two in the morning, rouses him up for the second portion of his penance.

His equipments are now an "acorn-helmet," a "thistle-down plume," a corslet of the "wild-bee's" skin, a cloak of the "wings of butterflies," a shield of the "shell of the lady-bug," for lance "the sting of a wasp," for sword a "blade of grass," for horse "a fire-fly," and for spurs a couple of "cockle seed." Thus accoutred,

Away like a glance of thought he flies

To skim the heavens and follow far

The fiery trail of the rocket-star.

In the Heavens he has new dangers to encounter. The "shapes of air" have begun their work- a "drizzly mist" is cast around him- "storm, darkness, sleet and shade" assail him- "shadowy hands" twitch at his bridle-rein- "flame-shot tongues" play around him- "fiendish eyes" glare upon him- and

Yells of rage and shrieks of fear

Come screaming on his startled ear.

Still our adventurer is nothing daunted.

He thrusts before, and he strikes behind,

Till he pierces the cloudy bodies through

And gashes the shadowy limbs of mind.

and the Elfin makes no stop, until he reaches the "bank of the milky way." He there checks his courser, and watches "for the glimpse of the planet shoot." While thus engaged, however, an unexpected adventure befalls him. He is approached by a company of the "sylphs of Heaven attired in sunset's crimson pall." They dance around him, and "skip before him on the plain." One receiving his "wasp-sting lance," and another taking his bridle-rein,

With warblings wild they lead him on,

To where, through clouds of amber seen,

Studded with stars resplendent shone

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The palace of the sylphid queen.

A glowing description of the queen's beauty follows: and as the form of an earthly Fay had never been seen before in the bowers of light, she is represented as falling desperately in love at first sight with our adventurous Ouphe. He returns the compliment in some measure, of course; but, although "his heart bent fitfully," the "earthly form imprinted there" was a security against a too vivid impression. He declines, consequently, the invitation of the queen to remain with her and amuse himself by "lying within the fleecy drift," "hanging upon the rainbow's rim," having his "brow adorned with all the jewels of the sky," "sitting within the Pleiad ring," "resting upon Orion's belt" "riding upon the lightning's gleam," "dancing upon the orb'd moon," and "swimming within the milky way."

Lady, he cries, I have sworn to—night

On the word of a fairy knight

To do my sentence task aright

The queen, therefore, contents herself with bidding the Fay an affectionate farewell- having first directed him carefully to that particular portion of the sky where a star is about to fall. He reaches this point in safety, and in despite of the "fiends of the cloud," who "bellow very loud," succeeds finally in catching a "glimmering spark" with which he returns triumphantly to Fairy-land. The poem closes with an Io Paean chaunted by the elves in honor of these glorious adventures.

It is more than probable that from ten readers of the Culprit Fay, nine would immediately pronounce it a poem betokening the most extraordinary powers of imagination, and of these nine, perhaps five or six, poets themselves, and fully impressed with the truth of what we have already assumed, that Ideality is indeed the soul of the Poetic Sentiment, would feel embarrassed between a half-consciousness that they ought to admire the production, and a wonder that they do not. This embarrassment would then arise from an indistinct conception of the results in which Ideality is rendered manifest. Of these results some few are seen in the Culprit Fay, but the greater part of it is utterly destitute of any evidence of imagination whatever. The general character of the poem will, we think, be sufficiently understood by any one who may have taken the trouble to read our foregoing compendium of the narrative. It will be there seen that what is so frequently termed the imaginative power of this story, lies especially- we should have rather said is thought to lie- in the passages we have quoted, or in others of a precisely similar nature. These passages embody, principally, mere specifications of qualities, of habiliments, of punishments, of occupations, of circumstances, which the poet has believed in unison with the size, firstly, and secondly with the nature of his Fairies. To all which may be added specifications of other animal existences (such as the toad, the beetle, the lance-fly, the fire-fly and the like) supposed also to be in accordance. An example will best illustrate our meaning upon this point-

He put his acorn helmet on;

It was plumed of the silk of the thistle down:

The corslet plate that guarded his breast

Was once the wild bee's golden vest;

His cloak of a thousand mingled dyes,

Was formed of the wings of butterflies;

His shield was the shell of a lady-bug queen,



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Studs of gold on a ground of green;[6]

And the quivering lance which he brandished bright

Was the sting of a wasp he had slain in fight.

[6] Chestnut color, or more slack,

Gold upon a ground of black.

Ben Jonson.

We shall now be understood. Were any of the admirers of the Culprit Fay asked their opinion of these lines, they would most probably speak in high terms of the imagination they display. Yet let the most stolid and the most confessedly unpoetical of these admirers only try the experiment, and he will find, possibly to his extreme surprise, that he himself will have no difficulty whatever in substituting for the equipments of the Fairy, as assigned by the poet, other equipments equally comfortable, no doubt, and equally in unison with the preconceived size, character, and other qualities of the equipped. Why we could accoutre him as well ourselves- let us see.

His blue-bell helmet, we have heard

Was plumed with the down of the hummingbird,

The corslet on his bosom bold

Was once the locust's coat of gold,

His cloak, of a thousand mingled hues,

Was the velvet violet, wet with dews,

His target was, the crescent shell

Of the small sea Sidrophel,

And a glittering beam from a maiden's eye

Was the lance which he proudly wav'd on high.

The truth is, that the only requisite for writing verses of this nature, ad libitum is a tolerable acquaintance with the qualities of the objects to be detailed, and a very moderate endowment of the faculty of Comparison- which is the chief constituent of Fancy or the powers of combination. A thousand such lines may be composed without exercising in the least degree the Poetic Sentiment, which is Ideality, Imagination, or the creative ability. And, as we have before said, the greater portion of the Culprit Fay is occupied with these, or similiar things, and upon such, depends very nearly, if not altogether, its reputation. We select another example-

But oh! how fair the shape that lay

Beneath a rainbow bending bright,

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She seem'd to the entranced Fay  
The loveliest of the forms of light,  
Her mantle was the purple rolled  
At twilight in the west afar;  
T'was tied with threads of dawning gold,  
And button'd with a sparkling star.  
Her face was like the lily roon  
That veils the vestal planet's hue,  
Her eyes, two beamlets from the moon  
Set floating in the welkin blue.  
Her hair is like the sunny beam,  
And the diamond gems which round it gleam  
Are the pure drops of dewy even,  
That neer have left their native heaven.

Here again the faculty of Comparison is alone exercised, and no mind possessing the faculty in any ordinary degree would find a difficulty in substituting for the materials employed by the poet other materials equally as good. But viewed as mere efforts of the Fancy and without reference to Ideality, the lines just quoted are much worse than those which were taken earlier. A congruity was observable in the accoutrements of the Ouphe, and we had no trouble in forming a distinct conception of his appearance when so accoutred. But the most vivid powers of Comparison can attach no definitive idea to even "the loveliest form of light," when habited in a mantle of "rolled purple tied with threads of dawn and buttoned with a star," and sitting at the same time under a rainbow with "beamlet" eyes and a visage of "lily roon."

But if these things evince no Ideality in their author, do they not excite it in others?- if so, we must conclude, that without being himself imbued with the Poetic Sentiment, he has still succeeded in writing a fine poem- a supposition as we have before endeavored to show, not altogether paradoxical. Most assuredly we think not. In the case of a great majority of readers the only sentiment aroused by compositions of this order is a species of vague wonder at the writer's ingenuity, and it is this indeterminate sense of wonder which passes but too frequently current for the proper influence of the Poetic power. For our own part we plead guilty to a predominant sense of the ludicrous while occupied in the perusal of the poem before us- a sense whose promptings we sincerely and honestly endeavored to quell, perhaps not altogether successfully, while penning our compend of the narrative. That a feeling of this nature is utterly at war with the Poetic Sentiment will not be disputed by those who comprehend the character of the sentiment itself. This character is finely shadowed out in that popular although vague idea so prevalent throughout all time, that a species of melancholy is inseparably connected with the higher manifestations of the beautiful. But with the numerous and seriously- adduced incongruities of the Culprit Fay, we find it generally impossible to connect other ideas than those of the ridiculous. We are bidden, in the first place, and in a tone of sentiment and language adapted to the loftiest breathings of the Muse, to imagine a

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race of Fairies in the vicinity of West Point. We are told, with a grave air, of their camp, of their king, and especially of their sentry, who is a wood-tick. We are informed that an Ouphe of about an inch in height has committed a deadly sin in falling in love with a mortal maiden, who may, very possibly, be six feet in her stockings. The consequence to the Ouphe is- what? Why, that he has "died his wings," "broken his elfin chain," and "quenched his flame-wood lamp." And he is therefore sentenced to what? To catch a spark from the tail of a falling star, and a drop of water from the belly of a sturgeon. What are his equipments for the first adventure? An acorn-helmet, a thistle-down plume, a butterfly cloak, a lady-bug shield, cockle-seed spurs, and a fire-fly horse. How does he ride to the second? On the back of a bullfrog. What are his opponents in the one? "Drizzle-mists," "sulphur and smoke," "shadowy hands and flame-shot tongues." What in the other? "Mailed shrimps," "prickly prongs," "blood-red leeches," "jellied quarls," "stony star fishes," "lancing squabs" and "soldier crabs." Is that all? No- Although only an inch high he is in imminent danger of seduction from a "sylphid queen," dressed in a mantle of "rolled purple," "tied with threads of dawning gold," "buttoned with a sparkling star," and sitting under a rainbow with "beamlet eyes" and a countenance of "lily roon." In our account of all this matter we have had reference to the book- and to the book alone. It will be difficult to prove us guilty in any degree of distortion or exaggeration. Yet such are the puerilities we daily find ourselves called upon to admire, as among the loftiest efforts of the human mind, and which not to assign a rank with the proud trophies of the matured and vigorous genius of England, is to prove ourselves at once a fool; a maligner, and no patriot.[7]

[7] A review of Drake's poems, emanating from one of our proudest Universities, does not scruple to make use of the following language in relation to the Culprit Fay. "It is, to say the least, an elegant production, the purest specimen of Ideality we have ever met with, sustaining in each incident a most bewitching interest. Its very title is enough," We quote these expressions as a fair specimen of the general unphilosophical and adulatory tenor of our criticism.

As an instance of what may be termed the sublimely ridiculous we quote the following lines-

With sweeping tail and quivering fin,

Through the wave the sturgeon flew,

And like the heaven-shot javelin,

He sprung above the waters blue.

Instant as the star-fall light,

He plunged into the deep again,

But left an arch of silver bright

The rainbow of the moony main.

It was a strange and lovely sight

To see the puny goblin there,

He seemed an angel form of light

With azure wing and sunny hair,

Throned on a cloud of purple fair

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Circled with blue and edged with white

And sitting at the fall of even

Beneath the bow of summer heaven.

The [lines of the last verse], if considered without their context, have a certain air of dignity, elegance, and chastity of thought. If however we apply the context, we are immediately overwhelmed with the grotesque. It is impossible to read without laughing, such expressions as "It was a strange and lovely sight"- "He seemed an angel form of light"- "And sitting at the fall of even, beneath the bow of summer heaven" to a Fairy- a goblin- an Ouphe- half an inch high, dressed in an acorn helmet and butterfly-cloak, and sitting on the water in a muscleshell, with a "brown-backed sturgeon" turning somersets over his head.

In a world where evil is a mere consequence of good, and good a mere consequence of evil- in short where all of which we have any conception is good or bad only by comparison- we have never yet been fully able to appreciate the validity of that decision which would debar the critic from enforcing upon his readers the merits or demerits of a work with another. It seems to us that an adage has had more to do with this popular feeling than any just reason founded upon common sense. Thinking thus, we shall have no scruple in illustrating our opinion in regard to what is not Ideality or the Poetic Power, by an example of what is.[8]

[8] As examples of entire poems of the purest ideality, we would cite the Prometheus Vincit of Aeschylus, the Inferno of Dante, Cervantes' Destruction of Numantia, the Comus of Milton, Pope's Rape of the Lock, Burns' Tam O'Shanter, the Auncient Mariner, the Christabel, and the Kubla Khan of Coleridge, and most especially the Sensitive Plant of Shelley, and the Nightingale of Keats. We have seen American poems evincing the faculty in the highest degree.

We have already given the description of the Sylphid Queen in the Culprit Fay. In the Queen Mab of Shelley a Fairy is thus introduced-

Those who had looked upon the sight

Passing all human glory,

Saw not the yellow moon,

Saw not the mortal scene,

Heard not the night wind's rush,

Heard not an earthly sound,

Saw but the fairy pageant,

Heard but the heavenly strains

That filled the lonely dwelling—

and thus described-

The Fairy's frame was slight, yon fibrous cloud

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That catches but the faintest tinge of even,  
And which the straining eye can hardly seize  
When melting into eastern twilight's shadow,  
Were scarce so thin, so slight; but the fair star  
That gems the glittering coronet of morn,  
Sheds not a light so mild, so powerful,  
As that which, bursting from the Fairy's form,  
Spread a purpureal halo round the scene,  
Yet with an undulating motion,  
Swayed to her outline gracefully.

In these exquisite lines the Faculty of mere Comparison is but little exercised- that of Ideality in a wonderful degree. It is probable that in a similar case the poet we are now reviewing would have formed the face of the Fairy of the "fibrous cloud," her arms of the "pale tinge of even," her eyes of the "fair stars," and her body of the "twilight shadow." Having so done, his admirers would have congratulated him upon his imagination, not, taking the trouble to think that they themselves could at any moment imagine a Fairy of materials equally as good, and conveying an equally distinct idea. Their mistake would be precisely analogous to that of many a schoolboy who admires the imagination displayed in Jack the Giant-Killer, and is finally rejoiced at; discovering his own imagination to surpass that of the author, since the monsters destroyed by Jack are only about forty feet in height, and he himself has no trouble in imagining some of one hundred and forty. It will, be seen that the Fairy of Shelley is not a mere compound of incongruous natural objects, inartificially put together, and unaccompanied by any moral sentiment- but a being, in the illustration of whose nature some physical elements are used collaterally as adjuncts, while the main conception springs immediately or thus apparently springs, from the brain of the poet, enveloped in the moral sentiments of grace, of color, of motion- of the beautiful, of the mystical, of the august- in short of the ideal.[9]

[9] Among things, which not only in our opinion, but in the opinion of far wiser and better men, are to be ranked with the mere prettinesses of the Muse, are the positive similes so abundant in the writing of antiquity, and so much insisted upon by the critics of the reign of Queen Anne.

It is by no means our intention to deny that in the Culprit Fay are passages of a different order from those to which we have objected- passages evincing a degree of imagination not to be discovered in the plot, conception, or general execution of the poem. The opening stanza will afford us a tolerable example.

Tis the middle watch of a summer's night-  
The earth is dark but the heavens are bright  
Naught is seen in the vault on high  
But the moon, and the stars, and the cloudless sky,

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And the flood which rolls its milky hue  
A river of light on the welkin blue.  
The moon looks down on old Cronest,  
She mellows the shades of his shaggy breast,  
And seems his huge gray form to throw  
In a silver cone on the wave below,  
His sides are broken by spots of shade,  
By the walnut bow and the cedar made,  
And through their clustering branches dark  
Glimmers and dies the fire-fly's spark—  
Like starry twinkles that momentarily break  
Through the rifts of the gathering tempest rack.

There is Ideality in these lines- but except in the case of the [second and the fourteenth lines]- it is Ideality not of a high order. We have, it is true, a collection of natural objects, each individually of great beauty, and, if actually seen as in nature, capable of exciting in any mind, through the means of the Poetic Sentiment more or less inherent in all, a certain sense of the beautiful. But to view such natural objects as they exist, and to behold them through the medium of words, are different things. Let us pursue the idea that such a collection as we have here will produce, of necessity, the Poetic Sentiment, and we may as well make up our minds to believe that a catalogue of such expressions as moon, sky, trees, rivers, mountains, shall be capable of exciting it,- it is merely an extension of the principle. But in the line "the earth is dark, but the heavens are bright" besides the simple mention of the "dark earth" "and the bright heaven," we have, directly, the moral sentiment of the brightness of the sky compensating for the darkness of the earth- and thus, indirectly, of the happiness of a future state compensating for the miseries of the present. All this is effected by the simple introduction of the word but between the "dark earth" and the "bright heaven"- this introduction, however, was prompted by the Poetic Sentiment, and by the Poetic Sentiment alone. The case is analogous in the expression "glimmers and dies," where the imagination is exalted by the moral sentiment of beauty heightened in dissolution.

In one or two shorter passages of the Culprit Fay the poet will recognize the purely ideal, and be able at a glance to distinguish it from that baser alloy upon which we have descanted. We give them without farther comment.

The winds are whist, and the owl is still,  
The bat in the shelvy rock is hid  
And naught is heard on the lonely hill  
But the cricket's chirp and the answer shrill  
Of the gauze-winged katydid;

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And the plaint of the wailing whippoorwill  
Who mourns unseen, and ceaseless sings  
Ever a note of wail and wo—  
Up to the vaulted firmament  
His path the fire-fly courser bent,  
And at every gallop on the wind  
He flung a glittering spark behind.  
He blessed the force of the charmed line  
And he banned the water-goblins' spite,  
For he saw around in the sweet moonshine,  
Their little wee faces above the brine,  
Grinning and laughing with all their might  
At the piteous hap of the Fairy wight.

The poem "To a Friend" consists of fourteen Spenserian stanzas. They are fine spirited verses, and probably were not supposed by their author to be more. Stanza the fourth, although beginning nobly, concludes with that very common exemplification of the bathos, the illustrating natural objects of beauty or grandeur by references to the tinsel of artificiality.

Oh! for a seat on Appalachia's brow,  
That I might scan the glorious prospects round,  
Wild waving woods, and rolling floods below,  
Smooth level glades and fields with grain embrowned,  
High heaving hills, with tufted forests crowned,  
Rearing their tall tops to the heaven's blue dome,  
And emerald isles, like banners green un-wound,  
Floating along the take, while round them roam  
Bright helms of billowy blue, and plumes of dancing foam.

In the Extracts from Leon are passages not often surpassed in vigor of passionate thought and expression- and which induce us to believe not only that their author would have succeeded better in prose romance than in

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poetry, but that his attention would have naturally fallen into the former direction, had the Destroyer only spared him a little longer.

This poem contains also lines of far greater poetic power than any to be found in the Culprit Fay. For example-

The stars have lit in heaven their lamps of gold,

The viewless dew falls lightly on the world;

The gentle air that softly sweeps the leaves

A strain of faint unearthly music weaves:

As when the harp of heaven remotely plays,

Or sygnets wail- or song of sorrowing fays

That float amid the moonshine glimmerings pale,

On wings of woven air in some enchanted vale.[10]

[10] The expression "woven air," much insisted upon by the friends of Drake, seems to be accredited to him as original. It is to be found in many English writers- and can be traced back to Apuleius, who calls fine drapery *ventum textilem*.

Niagara is objectionable in many respects, and in none more so than in its frequent inversions of language, and the artificial character of its versification. The invocation,

Roar, raging torrent! and thou, mighty river,

Pour thy white foam on the valley below!

Frown ye dark mountains,

is ludicrous- and nothing more. In general, all such invocations have an air of the burlesque. In the present instance we may fancy the majestic Niagara replying, "Most assuredly I will roar, whether, worm! thou tellest me or not."

The American Flag commences with a collection of those bald conceits, which we have already shown to have no dependence whatever upon the Poetic Power- springing altogether from Comparison.

When Freedom from her mountain height

Unfurled her standard to the air,

She tore the azure robe of night

And set the stars of glory there.

She mingled with its gorgeous dyes



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The milky baldrick of the skies,  
And striped its pure celestial white  
With streakings of the morning light;  
Then from his mansion in the sun  
She called her eagle bearer down  
And gave into his mighty hand  
The symbol of her chosen land.

Let us reduce all this to plain English, and we have- what? Why, a flag, consisting of the "azure robe of night," "set with stars of glory," interspersed with "streaks of morning light," relieved with a few pieces of "milky way," and the whole carried by an "eagle bearer," that is to say, an eagle ensign, who bears aloft this "symbol of our chosen land" in his "mighty hand," by which we are to understand his claw. In the second stanza, "the thunder-drum of Heaven" is bathetic and grotesque in the highest degree- a commingling of the most sublime music of Heaven with the most utterly contemptible and common-place of Earth. The two concluding verses are in a better spirit, and might almost be supposed to be from a different hand. The images contained in the lines

When Death careering on the gale  
Sweeps darkly round the bellied sail,  
And frightened waves rush wildly back,  
Before the broadsides reeling rack,

are of the highest order of Ideality. The deficiencies of the whole poem may be best estimated by reading it in connection with "Scots wha hae," with the "Mariners of England," or with "Hohenlinden." It is indebted for its high and most undeserved reputation to our patriotism- not to our judgment.

The remaining poems in Mr. Dearborn's edition of Drake, are three Songs; Lines in an Album; Lines to a Lady; Lines on leaving New Rochelle; Hope; A Fragment; To-; To Eva; To a Lady; To Sarah; and Bronx. These are all poems of little compass, and with the exception of Bronx and a portion of the Fragment, they have no character distinctive from the mass of our current poetical literature. Bronx, however, is in our opinion, not only the best of the writings of Drake, but altogether a lofty and beautiful poem, upon which his admirers would do better to found a hope of the writer's ultimate reputation than upon the niaiseries of the Culprit Fay. In the Fragment is to be found the finest individual passage in the volume before us, and we quote it as a proper finale to our review.

Yes! thou art lovelier now than ever,  
How sweet't would be when all the air  
In moonlight swims, along thy river  
To couch upon the grass, and hear  
Niagra's everlasting voice

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Far in the deep blue west away,  
That dreamy and poetic noise  
We mark not in the glare of day,  
Oh! how unlike its torrent-cry,  
When o'er the brink the tide is driven,  
As if the vast and sheeted sky  
In thunder fell from Heaven.

Halleck's poetical powers appear to us essentially inferior, upon the whole, to those of his friend Drake. He has written nothing at all comparable to *Bronx*. By the hackneyed phrase, sportive elegance, we might possibly designate at once the general character of his writings and the very loftiest praise to which he is justly entitled.

*Alnwick Castle* is an irregular poem of one hundred and twenty-eight lines- was written, as we are informed, in October 1822- and is descriptive of a seat of the Duke of Northumberland, in Northumberlandshire, England. The effect of the first stanza is materially impaired by a defect in its grammatical arrangement. The fine lines,

Home of the Percy's high-born race,  
Home of their beautiful and brave,  
Alike their birth and burial place,  
Their cradle and their grave!

are of the nature of an invocation, and thus require a continuation of the address to the "Home, We are consequently disappointed when the stanza proceeds with-

Still sternly o'er the castle gate  
Their house's Lion stands in state  
As in his proud departed hours;  
And warriors frown in stone on high,  
And feudal banners "flout the sky"  
Above his princely towers.

The objects of allusion here vary, in an awkward manner, from the castle to the lion, and from the Lion to the towers. By writing the verses thus the difficulty would be remedied.

Still sternly o'er the castle gate  
Thy house's Lion stands in state,

## CRITICISM

As in his proud departed hours;  
And warriors frown in stone on high,  
And feudal banners "flout the sky"  
Above thy princely towers.

The second stanza, without evincing in any measure the loftier powers of a poet, has that quiet air of grace, both in thought and expression, which seems to be the prevailing feature of the Muse of Halleck.

A gentle hill its side inclines,  
Lovely in England's fadeless green,  
To meet the quiet stream which winds  
Through this romantic scene  
As silently and sweetly still,  
As when, at evening, on that hill,  
While summer's wind blew soft and low,  
Seated by gallant Hotspur's side  
His Katherine was a happy bride  
A thousand years ago.

There are one or two brief passages in the poem evincing a degree of rich imagination not elsewhere perceptible throughout the book. For example-

Gaze on the Abbey's ruined pile:  
Does not the succoring Ivy keeping,  
Her watch around it seem to smile  
As o'er a lov'd one sleeping?  
and,  
One solitary turret gray  
Still tells in melancholy glory  
The legend of the Cheviot day.

## CRITICISM

The commencement of the fourth stanza is of the highest order of Poetry, and partakes, in a happy manner, of that quaintness of expression so effective an adjunct to Ideality, when employed by the Shelleys, the Coleridges and the Tennysons, but so frequently debased, and rendered ridiculous, by the herd of brainless imitators.

Wild roses by the abbey towers

Are gay in their young bud and bloom:

They were born of a race of funeral flowers,

That garlanded in long-gone hours,

A Templar's knightly tomb.

The tone employed in the concluding portions of Alnwick Castle, is, we sincerely think, reprehensible, and unworthy of Halleck. No true poet can unite in any manner the low burlesque with the ideal, and not be conscious of incongruity and of a profanation. Such verses as

Men in the coal and cattle line

From Tevoit's bard and hero land,

From royal Berwick's beach of sand,

From Wooler, Morpeth, Hexham, and

Newcastle upon Tyne.

may lay claim to oddity- but no more. These things are the defects and not the beauties of Don Juan. They are totally out of keeping with the graceful and delicate manner of the initial portions of Alnwick Castle, and serve no better purpose than to deprive the entire poem of all unity of effect. If a poet must be farcical, let him be just that, and nothing else. To be drolly sentimental is bad enough, as we have just seen in certain passages of the Culprit Fay, but to be sentimentally droll is a thing intolerable to men, and Gods, and columns.

Marco Bozzaris appears to have much lyrical without any high order of ideal beauty. Force is its prevailing character- a force, however, consisting more in a well ordered and sonorous arrangement of this metre, and a judicious disposal of what may be called the circumstances of the poem, than in the true material of lyric vigor. We are introduced, first, to the Turk who dreams, at midnight, in his guarded tent,

of the hour

When Greece her knee in suppliance bent,

Should tremble at his power-

He is represented as revelling in the visions of ambition.

In dreams through camp and court he bore

The trophies of a conqueror;

## CRITICISM

In dreams his song of triumph heard;  
Then wore his monarch's signet ring;  
Then pressed that monarch's throne— a king;  
As wild his thoughts and gay of wing  
As Eden's garden bird.

In direct contrast to this we have Bozzaris watchful in the forest, and ranging his band of Suliotes on the ground, and amid the memories of Plataea. An hour elapses, and the Turk awakes from his visions of false glory- to die. But Bozzaris dies- to awake. He dies in the flush of victory to awake, in death, to an ultimate certainty of Freedom. Then follows an invocation to death. His terrors under ordinary circumstances are contrasted with the glories of the dissolution of Bozzaris, in which the approach of the Destroyer is

welcome as the cry

That told the Indian isles were nigh  
To the world-seeking Genoese,  
When the land-wind from woods of palm,  
And orange groves and fields of balm,  
Blew o'er the Haytian seas.

The poem closes with the poetical apotheosis of Marco Bozzaris as

One of the few, the immortal names  
That are not born to die.

It will be seen that these arrangements of the subject are skillfully contrived- perhaps they are a little too evident, and we are enabled too readily by the perusal of one passage, to anticipate the succeeding. The rhythm is highly artificial. The stanzas are well adapted for vigorous expression- the fifth will afford a just specimen of the versification of the whole poem.

Come to the bridal Chamber, Death!  
Come to the mother's when she feels  
For the first time her first born's breath;  
Come when the blessed seals  
That close the pestilence are broke,  
And crowded cities wail its stroke,

## CRITICISM

Come in consumption's ghastly form,  
The earthquake shock, the ocean storm;  
Come when the heart beats high and warm,  
With banquet song and dance, and wine;  
And thou art terrible— the tear,  
The groan, the knell, the pall, the bier,  
And all we know, or dream, or fear  
Of agony, are thine.

Granting, however, to Marco Bozzaris, the minor excellences we have pointed out we should be doing our conscience great wrong in calling it, upon the whole, any more than a very ordinary matter. It is surpassed, even as a lyric, by a multitude of foreign and by many American compositions of a similar character. To Ideality it has few pretensions, and the finest portion of the poem is probably to be found in the verses we have quoted elsewhere—

Thy grasp is welcome as the hand  
Of brother in a foreign land,  
Thy summons welcome as the cry  
That told the Indian isles were nigh  
To the world—seeking Genoese,  
When the land—wind from woods of palm  
And orange groves, and fields of balm  
Blew o'er the Haytian seas.

The verses entitled Burns consist of thirty-eight quatrains— the three first lines of each quatrain being of four feet, the fourth of three. This poem has many of the traits of Alnwick Castle, and bears also a strong resemblance to some of the writings of Wordsworth. Its chief merits, and indeed the chief merit, so we think, of all the poems of Halleck is the merit of expression. In the brief extracts from Burns which follow, our readers will recognize the peculiar character of which we speak.

Wild Rose of Alloway! my thanks:  
Thou mind'st me of that autumn noon  
When first we met upon "the banks  
And braes o'bonny Doon"—

## CRITICISM

Like thine, beneath the thorn–tree's bough,

My sunny hour was glad and brief–

We've crossed the winter sea, and thou

Art withered–flower and leaf,

There have been loftier themes than his,

And longer scrolls and louder lyres

And lays lit up with Poesy's

Purer and holier fires.

And when he breathes his master–lay

Of Alloways witch–haunted wall

All passions in our frames of clay

Come thronging at his call.

Such graves as his are pilgrim–shrines,

Shrines to no code or creed confined–

The Delphian vales, the Palastines,

The Meccas of the mind.

They linger by the Doon's low trees,

And pastoral Nith, and wooded Ayr,

And round thy Sepulchres, Dumfries!

The Poet's tomb is there.

Wyoming is composed of nine Spenserian stanzas. With some unusual excellences, it has some of the worst faults of Halleck. The lines which follow are of great beauty.

I then but dreamed: thou art before me now,

In life– a vision of the brain no more,

I've stood upon the wooded mountain's brow,

That beetles high thy love! valley o'er;

## CRITICISM

And now, where winds thy river's greenest shore,  
Within a bower of sycamores am laid;  
And winds as soft and sweet as ever bore  
The fragrance of wild flowers through sun and shade  
Are singing in the trees, whose low boughs press my head.

The poem, however, is disfigured with the mere burlesque of some portions of Alnwick Castle- with such things as

he would look particularly droll

In his Iberian boot and Spanish plume;

and

A girl of sweet sixteen

Love-darting eyes and tresses like the morn

Without a shoe or stocking- hoeing corn,

mingled up in a pitiable manner with images of real beauty.

The Field of the Grounded Arms contains twenty-four quatrains, without rhyme, and, we think, of a disagreeable versification. In this poem are to be observed some of the finest passages of Halleck. For example-

Strangers! your eyes are on that valley fixed

Intently, as we gaze on vacancy,

When the mind's wings o'erspread

The spirit world of dreams.

and again-

O'er sleepless seas of grass whose waves are flowers.

Red-jacket has much power of expression with little evidence of poetical ability. Its humor is very fine, and does not interfere, in any great degree, with the general tone of the poem.

A Sketch should have been omitted from the edition as altogether unworthy of its author.

The remaining pieces in the volume are Twilight, Psalm cxxxvii; To...; Love; Domestic Happiness; Magdalen, From the Italian; Woman; Connecticut; Music; On the Death of Lieut. William Howard Allen; A Poet's Daughter; and On the Death of Joseph Rodman Drake. Of the majority of these we deem it unnecessary to say more than that they partake, in a more or less degree, of the general character observable in the poems of Halleck. The Poet's



## CRITICISM

Daughter appears to us a particularly happy specimen of that general character, and we doubt whether it be not the favorite of its author. We are glad to see the vulgarity of

I'm busy in the cotton trade

And sugar line,

omitted in the present edition. The eleventh stanza is certainly not English as it stands- and besides it is altogether unintelligible. What is the meaning of this?

But her who asks, though first among

The good, the beautiful, the young

The birthright of a spell more strong

Than these have brought her.

The Lines on the Death of Joseph Rodman Drake, we prefer to any of the writings of Halleck. It has that rare merit in composition of this kind- the union of tender sentiment and simplicity. This poem consists merely of six quatrains, and we quote them in full.

Green be the turf above thee,

Friend of my better days!

None knew thee but to love thee,

Nor named thee but to praise.

Tears fell when thou wert dying

From eyes unused to weep,

And long, where thou art lying,

Will tears the cold turf steep.

When hearts whose truth was proven,

Like thine are laid in earth,

There should a wreath be woven

To tell the world their worth.

And I, who woke each morrow

To clasp thy hand in mine,

Who shared thy joy and sorrow,

## CRITICISM

Whose weal and woe were thine—

It should be mine to braid it

Around thy faded brow,

But I've in vain essayed it,

And feel I cannot now.

While memory bids me weep thee,

Nor thoughts nor words are free,

The grief is fixed too deeply,

That mourns a man like thee.

If we are to judge from the subject of these verses, they are a work of some care and reflection. Yet they abound in faults. In the line,

Tears fell when thou wert dying;

wert is not English.

Will tears the cold turf steep,

is an exceedingly rough verse. The metonymy involved in

There should a wreath be woven

To tell the world their worth,

is unjust. The quatrain beginning,

And I who woke each morrow,

is ungrammatical in its construction when viewed in connection with the quatrain which immediately follows. "Weep thee" and "deeply" are inaccurate rhymes- and the whole of the first quatrain,

Green be the turf,

although beautiful, bears too close a resemblance to the still more beautiful lines of William Wordsworth,

She dwelt among the untrodden ways

Beside the springs of Dove,

A maid whom there were none to praise

And very few to love.

CRITICISM

## CRITICISM

As a versifier Halleck is by no means equal to his friend, all of whose poems evince an ear finely attuned to the delicacies of melody. We seldom meet with more inharmonious lines than those, generally, of the author of Alnwick Castle. At every step such verses occur as,

And the monk's hymn and minstrel's song—

True as the steel of their tried blades—

For him the joy of her young years—

Where the Bard—peasant first drew breath—

And withered my life's leaf like thine—

in which the proper course of the rhythm would demand an accent upon syllables too unimportant to sustain it. Not infrequently, too, we meet with lines such as this,

Like torn branch from death's leafless tree,

in which the multiplicity of consonants renders the pronunciation of the words at all, a matter of no inconsiderable difficulty.

But we must bring our notice to a close. It will be seen that while we are willing to admire in many respects the poems before us, we feel obliged to dissent materially from that public opinion (perhaps not fairly ascertained) which would assign them a very brilliant rank in the empire of Poesy. That we have among us poets of the loftiest order we believe- but we do not believe that these poets are Drake and Halleck.

## BRYANT'S POEMS

MR. BRYANT'S poetical reputation, both at home and abroad, is greater, we presume, than that of any other American. British critics have frequently awarded him high praise, and here, the public press have been unanimous in approbation. We can call to mind no dissenting voice. Yet the nature, and, most especially the manner, of the expressed opinions in this case, should be considered as somewhat equivocal, and but too frequently must have borne to the mind of the poet doubts and dissatisfaction. The edition now before us may be supposed to embrace all such of his poems as he deems not unworthy his name. These (amounting to about one hundred) have been "carefully revised." With the exception of some few, about which nothing could well be said, we will speak briefly of them one by one, but in such order as we may find convenient.

The Ages, a didactic piece of thirty-five Spenserian stanzas, is the first and longest in the volume. It was originally printed in 1821, With about half a dozen others now included in this collection. The design of the author in this poem is "from a survey of the past ages of the world, and of the successive advances of mankind in knowledge and virtue, to justify and confirm the hopes of the philanthropist for the future destinies of the human race." It is, indeed, an essay on the perfectability of man, wherein, among other better arguments some in the very teeth of analogy, are deduced from the eternal cycle of physical nature, to sustain a hope of progression in happiness. But it is only as a poem that we wish to examine The Ages. Its commencement is impressive. The four initial lines arrest the attention at once by a quiet dignity of manner, an air of placid contemplation, and a versification combining the extremes of melody and force-

When to the common rest that crowns our days,

Called in the noon of life, the good man goes,

## CRITICISM

Or full of years, and ripe in wisdom, lays

His silver temples in their last repose—

The five concluding lines of the stanza, however, are not equally effective—

When, o'er the buds of youth, the death—wind blows,

And brights the fairest; when our bitterest tears

Stream, as the eyes of those that love us close,

We think on what they were, with many fears

Lest goodness die with them, and leave the coming years.

The defects, here, are all of a metrical and of course minor nature, but are still defects. The line

When o'er the buds of youth the death—wind blows,

is impeded in its flow by the final th in youth, and especially in death where w follows. The word tears cannot readily be pronounced after the final st in bitterest; and its own final consonants, rs, in like manner render an effort necessary in the utterance of stream which commences the next line. In the verse

We think on what they were, with many fears

the word many is, from its nature, too rapidly pronounced for the fulfilment of the time necessary to give weight to the foot of two syllables. All words of two syllables do not necessarily constitute a foot (we speak now of the Pentameter here employed) even although the syllables be entirely distinct, as in many, very, often, and the like. Such as, without effort, cannot employ in their pronunciation the time demanded by each of the preceding and succeeding feet of the verse, and occasionally of a preceding verse, will never fail to offend. It is the perception of this fact which so frequently forces the versifier of delicate ear to employ feet exceeding what are unjustly called legitimate dimensions. For example. We have the following lines—

Lo! to the smiling Arno's classic side,

The emulous nations of the West repair!

These verses are exceedingly forcible, yet, upon scanning the latter we find a syllable too many. We shall be told possibly that there should be an elision of the e in the at the commencement. But no— this was not intended. Both the and emulous demand a perfect accentuation. The verse commencing Lo!

Lo! to the smiling Arno's classic side,

has, it will be observed, a Trochee in its first foot. As is usually the case, the whole line partakes, in consequence, of a stately and emphatic enunciation, and to equalize the time in the verse succeeding, something more is necessary than the succession of Iambuses which constitute the ordinary English Pentameter. The equalization is therefore judiciously effected by the introduction of an additional syllable. But in the lines

Stream, as the eyes of those that love us close,

## CRITICISM

We think on what they were with many fears,

lines to which the preceding observations will equally apply, this additional syllable is wanting. Did the rhyme admit of the alteration, everything necessary could be accomplished by writing

We think on what they were with many a fear,

Lest goodness die with them and leave the coming year.

These remarks may be considered hypercritical- yet it is undeniable that upon a rigid attention to minutiae such as we have pointed out, any great degree of metrical success must altogether depend. We are more disposed, too, to dwell upon the particular point mentioned above, since, with regard to it, the American Monthly, in a late critique upon the poems of Mr. Willis, has evidently done that gentleman injustice. The reviewer has fallen into what we conceive the error of citing, by themselves, (that is to say insulated from the context) such verses as

The night-wind with a desolate moan swept by.

With difficult energy and when the rod.

Fell through, and with the tremulous hand of age.

With supernatural whiteness loosely fell.

for the purpose of animadversion. "The license" he says "of turning such words as 'passionate' and 'desolate' into two syllables could only have been taken by a pupil of the Fantastic School." We are quite sure that Mr. Willis had no purpose of turning them into words of two syllables- nor even, as may be supposed upon a careless examination, of pronouncing them in the same time which would be required for two ordinary, syllables. The excesses of measure are here employed (perhaps without any definite design on the part of the writer, who may have been guided solely by ear) with reference to the proper equalization, of balancing, if we may so term it, of time, throughout an entire sentence. This, we confess, is a novel idea, but, we think, perfectly tenable. Any musician will understand us. Efforts for the relief of monotone will necessarily produce fluctuations in the time of any metre, which fluctuations, if not subsequently counterbalanced, affect the ear like unresolved discords in music. The deviations then of which we have been speaking, from the strict rules of prosodial art, are but improvements upon the rigor of those rules, and are a merit, not a fault. It is the nicety of this species of equalization more than any other metrical merit which elevates Pope as a versifier above the mere couplet-maker of his day, and, on the other hand, it is the extension of the principle to sentences of greater length which elevates Milton above Pope. Knowing this, it was, of course, with some surprise that we found the American Monthly (for whose opinions we still have the highest respect,) citing Pope in opposition to Mr. Willis upon the very point to which we allude. A few examples will be sufficient to show that Pope not only made free use of the license referred to, but that he used it for the reasons, and under the circumstances which we have suggested.

Oh thou! whatever title please thine ear,

Dean, Drapier, Bickerstaff, or Gulliver!

Whether thou choose Cervantes' serious air,

Or laugh and shake in Rabelais easy chair.

Any person will here readily perceive that the third line

## CRITICISM

Whether thou choose Cervantes' serious air,

differs in time from the usual course of the rhythm, and requires some counterbalance in the line which succeeds. It is indeed precisely such a verse as that of Mr. Bryant's upon which we have commented,

Stream, as the eyes of those that love us close,

and commences in the same manner with a Trochee. But again, from Pope we have-

Hence hymning Tyburn's elegiac lines

Hence Journals, Medleys, Mercuries, Magazines.

Else all my prose and verse were much the same,

This prose on stilts, that poetry fallen lame.

And thrice he lifted high the birth-day brand

And thrice he dropped it from his quivering hand.

Here stood her opium, here she nursed her owls,

And here she planned the imperial seat of fools.

Here to her chosen all her works she shows;

Prose swell'd to verse, verse loitering into prose.

Rome in her Capitol saw Querno sit

Throned on seven hills, the Antichrist of wit.

And his this drum whose hoarse heroic bass

Drowns the loud clarion of the braying ass.

But such a bulk as no twelve bards could raise

Twelve starveling bards of these degenerate days.

These are all taken at random from the first book of the Dunciad. In the last example it will be seen that the two additional syllables are employed with a view of equalizing the time with that of the verse,

But such a bulk as no twelve bards could raise,

a verse which will be perceived to labor in its progress- and which Pope, in accordance with his favorite theory of making sound accord with sense, evidently intended so to labor. It is useless to say that the words should be written with elision-starv'ling and degen'rate. Their pronunciation is not thereby materially affected- and, besides, granting it to be so, it may be as well to make the elision also in the case of Mr. Willis. But Pope had no such intention, nor, we presume, had Mr. W. It is somewhat singular, we may remark, en passant, that the American

## CRITICISM

Monthly, in a subsequent portion of the critique alluded to, quotes from Pope as a line of "sonorous grandeur" and one beyond the ability of our American poet, the well known

Luke's iron crown and Damien's bed of steel.

Now this is indeed a line of "sonorous grandeur"- but it is rendered so principally if not altogether by that very excess of metre (in the word Damien) which the reviewer has condemned in Mr. Willis. The lines which we quote below from Mr. Bryant's poem of The Ages will suffice to show that the author we are now reviewing fully appreciates the force of such occasional excess, and that he has only neglected it through oversight in the verse which suggested these observations.

Peace to the just man's memory— let it grow

Greener with years, and blossom through the flight

Of ages— let the mimic canvass show

His calm benevolent features.

Does prodigal Autumn to our age deny

The plenty that once swelled beneath his sober eye?

Look on this beautiful world and read the truth

In her fair page.

Will then the merciful One who stamped our race

With his own image, and who gave them sway

O'er Earth and the glad dwellers on her face,

Now that our flourishing nations far away

Are spread, where'er the moist earth drinks the day,

Forget the ancient care that taught and nursed

His latest offspring?

He who has tamed the elements shall not live

The slave of his own passions.

When liberty awoke

New-born, amid those beautiful vales.

Oh Greece, thy flourishing cities were a spoil

## CRITICISM

Unto each other.

And thou didst drive from thy unnatural breast

Thy just and brave.

Yet her degenerate children sold the crown.

Instead of the pure heart and innocent hands—

Among thy gallant sons that guard thee well

Thou laugh'st at enemies. Who shall then declare—

Far like the comet's way thro' infinite space.

The full region leads

New colonies forth.

Full many a horrible worship that, of old,

Held o'er the shuddering realms unquestioned sway.

All these instances, and some others, occur in a poem of but thirty-five stanzas- yet in only a very few cases is the license improperly used. Before quitting this subject it may be as well to cite a striking example from Wordsworth-

There was a youth whom I had loved so long,

That when I loved him not I cannot say.

Mid the green mountains many and many a song

We two had sung like gladsome birds in May.

Another specimen, and one still more to the purpose may be given from Milton whose accurate ear (although he cannot justly be called the best of versifiers) included and balanced without difficulty the rhythm of the longest passages.

But say, if our Deliverer up to heaven

Must re-ascend, what will betide the few

His faithful, left among the unfaithful herd,

The enemies of truth? who then shall guide

His people, who defend? Will they not deal

More with his foe than with him they dealt?



## CRITICISM

Be sure they will, said the Angel.

The other metrical faults in *The Ages* are few. Mr. Bryant is not always successful in his Alexandrines. Too great care cannot be taken, we think, in so regulating this species of verse as to admit of the necessary pause at the end of the third foot- or at least as not to render a pause necessary elsewhere. We object, therefore, to such lines as

A palm like his, and catch from him the hallowed flame.

The truth of heaven, and kneel to Gods that heard them not.

That which concludes Stanza X, although correctly cadenced in the above respect, requires an accent on the monosyllable *the*, which is too unimportant to sustain it. The defect is rendered the more perceptible by the introduction of a Trochee in the first foot.

The sick untended then

Languished in the damp shade, and died afar from men.

We are not sure that such lines as

A boundless sea of blood and the wild air.

The smile of heaven, till a new age expands.

are in any case justifiable, and they can be easily avoided. As in the Alexandrine mentioned above, the course of the rhythm demands an accent on monosyllables too unimportant to sustain it. For this prevalent heresy in metre we are mainly indebted to Byron, who introduced it freely, with the view of imparting an abrupt energy to his verse. There are, however, many better ways of relieving a monotone.

Stanza VI is, throughout, an exquisite specimen of versification, besides embracing many beauties both of thought and expression.

Look on this beautiful world and read the truth

In her fair page; see every season brings

New change, to her, of everlasting youth;

Still the green soil with joyous living things

Swarms; the wide air is full of joyous wings;

And myriads, still, are happy in the sleep

Of ocean's azure gulfs, and where he flings

The restless surge. Eternal love doth keep

In his complacent arms the earth, the air, the deep.

## CRITICISM

The cadences, here, at the words page, swarms, and surge respectively, cannot be surpassed. We shall find, upon examination, comparatively few consonants in the stanza, and by their arrangement no impediment is offered to the flow of the verse. Liquids and the most melodious vowels abound. World, eternal, season, wide, change, full, air, everlasting, wings, flings, complacent, surge, gulfs, myriads, azure, ocean, sail, and joyous, are among the softest and most sonorous sounds in the language, and the partial line after the pause at surge, together with the stately march of the Alexandrine which succeeds, is one of the finest imaginable of finales-

Eternal love doth keep

In his complacent arms, the earth, the air, the deep.

The higher beauties of the poem are not, we think, of the highest. It has unity, completeness,- a beginning, middle and end. The tone, too, of calm, hopeful, and elevated reflection, is well sustained throughout. There is an occasional quaint grace of expression, as in

Nurse of full streams, and lifter up of proud

Sky-mingling mountains that o'erlook the cloud-

or of antithetical and rhythmical force combined, as in

The shock that burl'd

To dust in many fragments dashed and strewn

The throne whose roots were in another world

And whose far-stretching shadow awed our own.

But we look in vain for something more worthy commendation. At the same time the piece is especially free from errors. Once only we meet with an unjust metonymy, where a sheet of water is said to

Cradle, in his soft embrace, a gay

Young group of grassy islands.

We find little originality of thought, and less imagination. But in a poem essentially didactic, of course we cannot hope for the loftiest breathings of the Muse.

To the Past is a poem of fourteen quatrains- three feet and four alternately. In the second quatrain, the lines

And glorious ages gone

Lie deep within the shadow of thy womb.

are, to us, disagreeable. Such things are common, but at best, repulsive. In the present case there is not even the merit of illustration. The womb, in any just imagery, should be spoken of with a view to things future; here it is employed, in the sense of the tomb, and with a view to things past. In Stanza XI the idea is even worse. The allegorical meaning throughout the poem, although generally well sustained, is not always so. In the quatrain

Thine for a space are they

## CRITICISM

Yet shalt thou yield thy treasures up at last;

Thy gates shall yet give way

Thy bolts shall fall inexorable Past!

it seems that The Past, as an allegorical personification, is confounded with Death.

The Old Man's Funeral is of seven stanzas, each of six lines- four Pentameters and Alexandrine rhyming. At the funeral of an old man who has lived out his full quota of years, another, as aged, reproves the company for weeping. The poem is nearly perfect in its way- the thoughts striking and natural- the versification singularly sweet. The third stanza embodies a fine idea, beautifully expressed.

Ye sigh not when the sun, his course fulfilled,

His glorious course rejoicing earth and sky,

In the soft evening when the winds are stilled,

Sings where his islands of refreshment lie,

And leaves the smile of his departure spread

O'er the warm-colored heaven, and ruddy mountain head.

The technical word chronic should have been avoided in the fifth line of Stanza VI-

No chronic tortures racked his aged limb.

The Rivulet has about ninety octo-syllabic verses. They contrast the changing and perishable nature of our human frame, with the greater durability of the Rivulet. The chief merit is simplicity. We should imagine the poem to be one of the earliest pieces of Mr. Bryant, and to have undergone much correction. In the first paragraph are, however, some awkward constructions. In the verses, for example

This little rill that from the springs

Of yonder grove its current brings,

Plays on the slope awhile, and then

Goes prattling into groves again.

the reader is apt to suppose that rill is the nominative to plays, whereas it is the nominative only to draw in the subsequent lines,

Oft to its warbling waters drew

My little feet when life was new.

The proper verb is, of course, immediately seen upon reading these latter lines- but the ambiguity has occurred.

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The Praries. This is a poem, in blank Pentameter, of about one hundred and twenty-five lines, and possesses features which do not appear in any of the pieces above mentioned. Its descriptive beauty is of a high order. The peculiar points of interest in the Prairie are vividly shown forth, and as a local painting, the work is, altogether, excellent. Here are moreover, evidences of fine imagination. For example-

The great heavens

Seem to stoop down upon the scene in love—

A nearer vault and of a tenderer blue

Than that which bends above the eastern hills.

Till twilight blushed, and lovers walked and wooed

In a forgotten language, and old tunes

From instruments of unremembered form

Gave the soft winds a voice.

The bee

Within the hollow oak. I listen long

To his domestic hum and think I hear

The sound of the advancing multitude

Which soon shall fill these deserts.

Breezes of the south!

Who toss the golden and the flame-like flowers,

And pass the prairie-hawk that poised on high,

Flaps his broad wing yet moves not!

There is an objectionable ellipsis in the expression "I behold them from the first," meaning "first time;" and either a grammatical or typographical error of moment in the fine sentence commencing

Fitting floor

For this magnificent temple of the sky—

With flowers whose glory and whose multitude

Rival the constellations!

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Earth, a poem of similar length and construction to *The Prairies*, embodies a noble conception. The poet represents himself as lying on the earth in a "midnight black with clouds," and giving ideal voices to the varied sounds of the coming tempest. The following passages remind us of some of the more beautiful portions of *Young*.

On the breast of Earth

I lie and listen to her mighty voice;

A voice of many tones—sent up from streams

That wander through the gloom, from woods unseen

Swayed by the sweeping of the tides of air,

From rocky chasm where darkness dwells all day,

And hollows of the great invisible hills,

And sands that edge the ocean stretching far

Into the night— a melancholy sound!

Ha! how the murmur deepens! I perceive

And tremble at its dreadful import. Earth

Uplifts a general cry for guilt and wrong

And Heaven is listening. The forgotten graves

Of the heart broken utter forth their plaint.

The dust of her who loved and was betrayed,

And him who died neglected in his age,

The sepulchres of those who for mankind

Labored, and earned the recompense of scorn,

Ashes of martyrs for the truth, and bones

Of those who in the strife for liberty

Were beaten down, their corpses given to dogs,

Their names to infamy, all find a voice!

In this poem and elsewhere occasionally throughout the volume, we meet with a species of grammatical construction, which, although it is to be found in writing of high merit, is a mere affectation, and, of course,

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objectionable. We mean the abrupt employment of a direct pronoun in place of the customary relative. For example-

Or haply dost thou grieve for those that die—  
For living things that trod awhile thy face,  
The love of thee and heaven, and how they sleep,  
Mixed with the shapeless dust on which thy herds  
Trample and graze?

The note of interrogation here, renders the affectation more perceptible.

The poem To the Apenines resembles, in meter, that entitled The Old Man's Funeral, except that the former has a Pentameter in place of the Alexandrine. This piece is chiefly remarkable for the force, metrical and moral, of its concluding stanza.

In you the heart that sighs for Freedom seeks  
Her image; there the winds no barrier know,  
Clouds come and rest and leave your fairy peaks;  
While even the immaterial Mind, below,  
And Thought, her winged offspring, chained by power,  
Pine silently for the redeeming hour.

The Knight's Epitaph consists of about fifty lines of blank Pentameter. This poem is well conceived and executed. Entering the Church of St. Catherine at Pisa, the poet is arrested by the image of an armed knight graven upon the lid of a sepulchre. The epitaph consists of an imaginative portraiture of the knight, in which he is made the impersonation of the ancient Italian chivalry.

Seventy-six has seven stanzas of a common, but musical versification, of which these lines will afford an excellent specimen.

That death—stain on the vernal sword,  
Hallowed to freedom all the shore—  
In fragments fell the yoke abhorred—  
The footsteps of a foreign lord  
Profaned the soil no more.

The Living Lost has four stanzas of somewhat peculiar construction, but admirably adapted to the tone of contemplative melancholy which pervades the poem. We can call to mind few things more singularly impressive

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than the eight concluding verses. They combine ease with severity, and have antithetical force without effort or flippancy. The final thought has also a high ideal beauty.

But ye who for the living lost

That agony in secret bear

Who shall with soothing words accost

The strength of your despair?

Grief for your sake is scorn for them

Whom ye lament, and all condemn,

And o'er the world of spirit lies

A gloom from which ye turn your eyes.

The first stanza commences with one of those affectations which we noticed in the poem "Earth."

Matron, the children of whose love,

Each to his grave in youth have passed,

And now the mould is heaped above

The dearest and the last.

The Strange Lady is of the fourteen syllable metre, answering to two lines, one of eight syllables, the other six. This rhythm is unmanageable, and requires great care in the rejection of harsh consonants. Little, however, has been taken, apparently, in the construction of the verses

As if they loved to breast the breeze that sweeps the cool

clear sky.

And thou shouldst chase the nobler game, and I bring

down the bird.

Or that strange dame so gay and fair were some mysterious foe, which are not to be pronounced without labor. The story is old- of a young gentleman who going out to hunt, is inveigled into the woods and destroyed by a fiend in the guise of a fair lady. The ballad character is nevertheless well preserved, and this, we presume, is nearly every thing intended.

The Hunter's Vision is skilfully and sweetly told. It is a tale of a young hunter who, overcome with toil, dozes on the brink of a precipice. In this state between waking and sleeping, he fancies a spirit-land in the fogs of the valley beneath him, and sees approaching him the deceased lady of his love. Arising to meet her, he falls, with the effort, from the crag, and perishes. The state of reverie is admirably pictured in the following stanzas. The poem consists of nine such.

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All dim in haze the mountains lay  
With dimmer vales between;  
And rivers glimmered on their way  
By forests faintly seen;  
While ever rose a murmuring sound  
From brooks below and bees around.  
He listened till he seemed to hear  
A strain so soft and low  
That whether in the mind or ear  
The listener scarce might know.  
With such a tone, so sweet and mild  
The watching mother lulls her child.

Catterskill Falls is a narrative somewhat similar. Here the hero is also a hunter- but of delicate frame. He is overcome with the cold at the foot of the falls, sleeps, and is near perishing- but being found by some woodmen, is taken care of, and recovers. As in the Hunters Vision, the dream of the youth is the main subject of the poem. He fancies a goblin palace in the icy network of the cascade, and peoples it in his vision with ghosts. His entry into this palace is, with rich imagination on the part of the poet, made to correspond with the time of the transition from the state of reverie to that of nearly total insensibility.

They eye him not as they pass along,  
But his hair stands up with dread,  
When he feels that he moves with that phantom throng  
Till those icy turrets are over his head,  
And the torrent's roar as they enter seems  
Like a drowsy murmur heard in dreams.  
The glittering threshold is scarcely passed  
When there gathers and wraps him round  
A thick white twilight sullen and vast  
In which there is neither form nor sound;



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The phantoms, the glory, vanish all

Within the dying voice of the waterfall.

There are nineteen similar stanzas. The metre is formed of Iambuses and Anapests.

The Hunter of the Prairies (fifty-six octosyllabic verses with alternate rhymes) is a vivid picture of the life of a hunter in the desert. The poet, however, is here greatly indebted to his subject.

The Damsel of Peru is in the fourteen syllable metre, and has a most spirited, imaginative and musical commencement

Where olive leaves were twinkling in every wind that blew,

There sat beneath the pleasant shade a damsel of Peru.

This is also a ballad, and a very fine one—full of action, chivalry, energy and rhythm. Some passages have even a loftier merit—that of a glowing ideality. For example—

For the noon is coming on, and the sunbeams fiercely beat,

And the silent hills and forest—tops seem reeling in the heat.

The Song of Pitcairn's Island is a sweet, quiet and simple poem, of a versification differing from that of any preceding piece. We subjoin a specimen. The Tahetian maiden addresses her lover.

Come talk of Europe's maids with me

Whose necks and cheeks they tell

Outshine the beauty of the sea,

White foam and crimson shell.

I'll shape like theirs my simple dress

And bind like them each jetty tress,

A sight to please thee well

And for my dusky brow will braid

A bonnet like an English maid.

There are seven similar stanzas.

Rispa is a scriptural theme from 2 Samuel, and we like it less than any poem yet mentioned. The subject, we think, derives no additional interest from its poetical dress. The metre resembling, except in the matter of rhyme, that of "Catterskill Falls," and consisting of mingled Iambuses and Anapaests, is the most positively disagreeable of any which our language admits, and, having a frisky or fidgetty rhythm, is singularly ill-adapted to the lamentations of the bereaved mother. We cannot conceive how the fine ear of Mr. Bryant could admit such verses

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as,

And Rispah once the loveliest of all

That bloomed and smiled in the court of Saul,

The Indian Girl's Lament and The Arctic Lover have nearly all the peculiarities of the "Song of Pitcairn's Island."

The Massacre at Scio is only remarkable for inaccuracy of expression in the two concluding lines-

Till the last link of slavery's chain

Is shivered to be worn no more.

What shall be worn no more? The chain- but the link is implied.

Monument Mountain is a poem of about a hundred and forty blank Pentameters and relates the tale of an Indian maiden who loved her cousin. Such a love being deemed incestuous by the morality of her tribe, she threw herself from a precipice and perished. There is little peculiar in the story or its narration. We quote a rough verse-

The mighty columns with which earth props heaven.

The use of the epithet old preceded by some other adjective, is found so frequently in this poem and elsewhere in the writings of Mr. Bryant, as to excite a smile upon each recurrence of the expression.

In all that proud old world beyond the deep-

There is a tale about these gray old rocks-

The wide old woods resounded with her song-

And the gray old men that passed-

And from the gray old trunks that high in heaven.

We dislike too the antique use of the word affect in such sentences as

They deemed

Like worshippers of the elder time that

God Doth walk in the high places and affect

The earth- o'erlooking mountains.

Milton, it is true, uses it- we remember it especially in Comus-

'T is most true

That musing meditation most affects

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The pensive secrecy of desert cell—

but then Milton would not use it were he writing Comus today.

In the Summer Wind, our author has several successful attempts at making "the sound an echo to the sense." For example—

For me, I lie

Languidly in the shade, where the thick turf

Yet virgin from the kisses of the sun

Retains some freshness.

All is silent, save the faint

And interrupted murmur of the bee

Settling on the sick flowers, and then again

Instantly on the wing.

All the green herbs

Are stirring in his breath; a thousand flowers

By the road side, and the borders of the brook

Nod, gaily to each other.

Autumn Woods. This is a poem of much sweetness and simplicity of expression, and including one or two fine thoughts, viz:

the sweet South—west at play

Flies, rustling where the painted leaves are strown

Along the winding way.

But 'neath yon crimson tree

Lover to listening maid might breathe his flame,

Nor mark within its roseate canopy

Her flush of maiden shame.

The mountains that unfold

In their wide sweep the colored landscape round,

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Seem groups of giant kings in purple and gold

That guard the enchanted ground.

All this is beautiful- Happily to endow inanimate nature with sentience and a capability of moral action is one of the severest tests of the poet. Even the most unmusical ear will not fail to appreciate the rare beauty and strength of the extra syllable in the line

Seem groups of giant kings in purple and gold.

The Distinterred Warrior has a passage we do not clearly understand. Speaking of the Indian our author says-

For he was fresher from the hand

That formed of earth the human face,

And to the elements did stand

In nearer kindred than our race.

There are ten similar quatrains in the poem.

The Greek Boy consists of four spirited stanzas, nearly resembling, in metre, The Living Lost. The two concluding lines are highly ideal.

A shoot of that old vine that made

The nations silent in its shade.

When the Firmament Quivers with Daylight's Young Beam, belongs to a species of poetry which we cannot be brought to admire. Some natural phenomenon is observed, and the poet taxes his ingenuity to find a parallel in the moral world. In general, we may assume, that the more successful he is in sustaining a parallel, the farther he departs from the true province of the Muse. The title, here, is a specimen of the metre. This is a kind which we have before designated as exceedingly difficult to manage.

To a Musquito, is droll, and has at least the merit of making, at the same time, no efforts at being sentimental. We are not inclined, however, to rank as poems, either this production or the article on New England Coal.

The Conjunction of Jupiter and Venus has ninety Pentameters. One of them

Kind influence. Lo! their orbs burn more bright,

can only be read, metrically, by drawing out influence into three marked syllables, shortening the long monosyllable, Lo! and lengthening the short one, their.

June is sweet and soft in its rhythm, and inexpressibly pathetic. There is an illy subdued sorrow and intense awe coming up, per force as it were to the surface of the poet's gay sayings about his grave, which we find thrilling us to the soul.

And what if cheerful shouts, at noon,

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Come, from the village sent,  
Or songs of maids, beneath the moon  
With fairy laughter blent?  
And what if, in the evening light,  
Betrothed lovers walk in sight  
Of my low monument?  
I would the lovely scene around  
Might know no sadder sight nor sound.  
I know, I know I should not see  
The season's glorious show,  
Nor would its brightness shine for me  
Nor its wild music flow,  
But if, around my place of sleep,  
The friends I love should come to weep,  
They might not haste to go  
Soft airs, and song, and light, and bloom  
Should keep them lingering by my tomb.

Innocent Child and Snow-White Flower, is remarkable only for the deficiency of a foot in one of its verses.

White as those leaves just blown apart  
Are the folds of thy own young heart.  
and for the graceful repetition in its concluding quatrain  
Throw it aside in thy weary hour,  
Throw to the ground the fair white flower,  
Yet as thy tender years depart  
Keep that white and innocent heart.

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Of the seven original sonnets in the volume before us, it is somewhat difficult to speak. The sonnet demands, in a great degree, point, strength, unity, compression, and a species of completeness. Generally, Mr. Bryant has evinced more of the first and the last, than of the three mediate qualities. William Tell is feeble. No forcible line ever ended with liberty, and the best of the rhymes- thee, he, free, and the like, are destitute of the necessary vigor. But for this rhythmical defect the thought in the concluding couplet-

The bitter cup they mingled strengthened thee

For the great work to set thy country free

would have well ended the sonnet. Midsummer is objectionable for the variety of its objects of allusion. Its final lines embrace a fine thought-

As if the day of fire had dawned and sent

Its deadly breath into the firmament-

but the vigor of the whole is impaired by the necessity of placing an unwonted accent on the last syllable of firmament. October has little to recommend it, but the slight epigrammatism of its conclusion-

And when my last sand twinkled in the glass,

Pass silently from men- as thou dost pass.

The Sonnet To Cole, is feeble in its final lines, and is worthy of praise only in the verses-

Paths, homes, graves, ruins, from the lowest glen

To where life shrinks from the fierce Alpine air.

Mutation, a didactic sonnet, has few either of faults or beauties. November is far better. The lines

And the blue Gentian flower that, in the breeze,

Nods lonely, of her beauteous race the last,

are very happy. A single thought pervades and gives unity to the piece. We are glad, too, to see an Alexandrine in the close. In the whole metrical construction of his sonnets, however, Mr. Bryant has very wisely declined confining himself to the laws of the Italian poem, or even to the dicta of Capel Lofft. The Alexandrine is beyond comparison the most effective finale, and we are astonished that the common Pentameter should ever be employed. The best sonnet of the seven is, we think, that To-. With the exception of a harshness in the last line but one it is perfect. The finale is inimitable.

Ay, thou art for the grave; thy glances shine

Too brightly to shine long; another Spring

Shall deck her for men's eyes, but not for thine

Sealed in a sleep which knows no wakening.

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The fields for thee have no medicinal leaf,  
And the vexed ore no mineral of power;  
And they who love thee wait in anxious grief  
Till the slow plague shall bring the fatal hour.  
Glide softly to thy rest, then; Death should come  
Gently to one of gentle mould like thee,  
As light winds wandering through groves of bloom  
Detach the delicate blossom from the tree.  
Close thy sweet eyes, calmly, and without pain,  
And we will trust in God to see thee yet again.

To a Cloud, has another instance of the affectation to which we alluded in our notice of Earth, and The Living Lost.

Whose sons at length have heard the call that comes  
From the old battle fields and tombs,  
And risen, and drawn the sword, and on the foe  
Have dealt the swift and desperate blow,  
And the Othman power is cloven, and the stroke  
Has touched its chains, and they are broke.

Of the Translations in the volume it is not our intention to speak in detail. Mary Magdalen, from the Spanish of Bartoleme Leonardo De Argensola, is the finest specimen of versification in the book. Alexis, from the Spanish of Iglesias, is delightful in its exceeding delicacy, and general beauty. We cannot refrain from quoting it entire.

Alexis calls me cruel—

The rifted crags that hold  
The gathered ice of winter,  
He says, are not more cold.  
When even the very blossoms  
Around the fountain's brim,

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And forest walks, can witness

The love I bear to him.

I would that I could utter

My feelings without shame

And tell him how I love him

Nor wrong my virgin fame.

Alas! to seize the moment

When heart inclines to heart,

And press a suit with passion

Is not a woman's part.

If man come not to gather

The roses where they stand,

They fade among their foliage,

They cannot seek his hand.

The Waterfowl is very beautiful, but still not entitled to the admiration which it has occasionally elicited. There is a fidelity and force in the picture of the fowl as brought before the eye of the mind, and a fine sense of effect in throwing its figure on the background of the "crimson sky," amid "falling dew," "while glow the heavens with the last steps of day." But the merits which possibly have had most weight in the public estimation of the poem, are the melody and strength of its versification, (which is indeed excellent) and more particularly its completeness. Its rounded and didactic termination has done wonders:

on my heart,

Deeply hath sunk the lesson thou hast given

And shall not soon depart.

He, who, from zone to zone,

Guides through the boundless sky thy certain flight

In the long way that I must tread alone

Will lead my steps aright.

There are, however, points of more sterling merit. We fully recognize the poet in



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Thou art gone– the abyss of heaven

Hath swallowed up thy form.

There is a power whose care

Teaches thy way along that pathless coast–

The desert, and illimitable air–

Lone, wandering, but not lost.

The Forest Hymn consists of about a hundred and twenty blank Pentameters of whose great rhythmical beauty it is scarcely possible to speak too highly. With the exception of the line

The solitude. Thou art in the soft winds,

no fault, in this respect, can be found, while excellencies are frequent of a rare order, and evincing the greatest delicacy of ear. We might, perhaps, suggest, that the two concluding verses, beautiful as they stand, would be slightly improved by transferring to the last the metrical excess of the one immediately preceding. For the appreciation of this, it is necessary to quote six or seven lines in succession

Oh, from these sterner aspects of thy face

Spare me and mine, nor let us need the warmth

Of the mad unchained elements, to teach

Who rules them. Be it ours to meditate

In these calm shades thy milder majesty,

And to the beautiful order of thy works

Learn to conform the order of our lives.

There is an excess of one syllable in the [sixth line]. If we discard this syllable here, and adopt it in the final line, the close will acquire strength, we think, in acquiring a fuller volume.

Be it ours to meditate

In these calm shades thy milder majesty,

And to the perfect order of thy works

Conform, if we can, the order of our lives.

Directness, boldness, and simplicity of expression, are main features in the poem.

Oh God! when thou

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Dost scare the world with tempests, set on fire

The heavens with falling thunderbolts, or fill

With all the waters of the firmament

The swift dark whirlwind that uproots the woods,

And drowns the villages.

Here an ordinary writer would have preferred the word fright to scare, and omitted the definite article before woods and villages.

To the Evening Wind has been justly admired. It is the best specimen of that completeness which we have before spoken of as a characteristic feature in the poems of Mr. Bryant. It has a beginning, middle, and end, each depending upon the other, and each beautiful. Here are three lines breathing all the spirit of Shelley.

Pleasant shall be thy way, where meekly bows

The shutting flower, and darkling waters pass,

And 'twixt the o'ershadowing branches and the grass.

The conclusion is admirable-

Go- but the circle of eternal change,

Which is the life of Nature, shall restore,

With sounds and scents from all thy mighty range,

Thee to thy birth-place of the deep once more;

Sweet odors in the sea air, sweet and strange,

Shall tell the home-sick mariner of the shore,

And, listening to thy murmur, he shall deem

He hears the rustling leaf and running stream.

Thanatopsis is somewhat more than half the length of The Forest Hymn, and of a character precisely similar. It is, however, the finer poem. Like The Waterfowl, it owes much to the point, force, and general beauty of its didactic conclusion. In the commencement, the lines

To him who, in the love of nature, holds

Communion with her visible forms,

belong to a class of vague phrases, which, since the days of Byron, have obtained too universal a currency. The verse

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Go forth under the open sky and list—

is sadly out of place amid the forcible and even Miltonic rhythm of such lines as—

Take the wings

Of morning, and the Barcan desert pierce,

Or lose thyself in the continuous woods

Where rolls the Oregon

But these are trivial faults indeed and the poem embodies a great degree of the most elevated beauty. Two of its passages, passages of the purest ideality, would alone render it worthy of the general commendation it has received.

So live, that when thy summons comes to join

The innumerable caravan that moves

To that mysterious realm where each shall take

His chamber in the silent halls of death,

Thou go not, like the quarry slave at night,

Scourged to his dungeon; but sustained and soothed

By an unfaltering trust, approach thy grave

Like one who wraps the drapery of his couch

About him, and lies down to pleasant dream.

The hills

Rock-ribbed and ancient as the sun— the vales

Stretching in pensive quietude between—

The venerable woods— rivers that move

In majesty, and the complaining brooks

That make the meadows green— and, pured round all,

Old Ocean's gray and melancholy waste—

Are but the solemn decorations all

Of the great tomb of man.

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Oh, fairest of the Rural Maids! is a gem, of which we cannot sufficiently express our admiration. We quote in full.

Oh, fairest of the rural maids!

Thy birth was in the forest shades;

Green boughs and glimpses of the sky

Were all that met thine infant eye.

Thy sports, thy wanderings when a child

Were ever in the sylvan wild;

And all the beauty of the place

Is in thy heart and on thy face.

The twilight of the trees and rocks

Is in the light shade of thy locks,

Thy step is as the wind that weaves

Its playful way among the leaves.

Thine eyes are springs, in whose serene

And silent waters Heaven is seen;

Their lashes are the herbs that look

On their young figures in the brook.

The forest depths by foot impressed

Are not more sinless than thy breast;

The holy peace that fills the air

Of those calm solitudes, is there.

A rich simplicity is a main feature in this poem- simplicity of design and execution. This is strikingly perceptible in the opening and concluding lines, and in expression throughout. But there is a far higher and more strictly ideal beauty, which it is less easy to analyze. The original conception is of the very loftiest order of true Poesy. A maiden is born in the forest-

Green boughs and glimpses of the sky

Are all which meet her infant eye-

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She is not merely modelled in character by the associations of her childhood- this were the thought of an ordinary poet- an idea that we meet with every day in rhyme- but she imbibes, in her physical as well as moral being, the traits, the very features of the delicious scenery around her- its loveliness becomes a portion of her own-

The twilight of the trees and rocks

Is in the light shade of her locks,

And all the beauty of the place

Is in her heart and on her face.

It would have been a highly poetical idea to imagine the tints in the locks of the maiden deducing a resemblance to the "twilight of the trees and rocks," from the constancy of her associations- but the spirit of Ideality is immeasurably more apparent when the "twilight" is represented as becoming identified with the shadows of her hair.

The twilight of the trees and rocks

Is in the light shade of her locks,

And all the beauty of the place

Is in her heart and on her face.

Feeling thus, we did not, in copying the poem, [comment on] the lines, although beautiful,

Thy step is as the wind that weaves

Its playful way among the leaves,

nor those which immediately follow. The two concluding verses however, are again of the most elevated species of poetical merit.

The forest depths by foot impressed

Are not more sinless than thy breast—

The holy peace that fills the air

Of those calm solitudes, is there.

The image contained in the lines

Thine eyes are springs in whose serene

And silent waters Heaven is seen—

is one which, we think, for appropriateness, completeness, and every perfect beauty of which imagery is susceptible, has never been surpassed- but imagery is susceptible of no beauty like that we have designated in the sentences above. The latter idea, moreover, is not original with our poet.

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In all the rhapsodies of Mr. Bryant, which have reference to the beauty or the majesty of nature, is a most audible and thrilling tone of love and exultation. As far as he appreciates her loveliness or her augustness, no appreciation can be more ardent, more full of heart, more replete with the glowing soul of adoration. Nor, either in the moral or physical universe coming within the periphery of his vision, does he at any time fail to perceive and designate, at once, the legitimate items of the beautiful. Therefore, could we consider (as some have considered) the mere enjoyment of the beautiful when perceived, or even this enjoyment when combined with the readiest and truest perception and discrimination in regard to beauty presented, as a sufficient test of the poetical sentiment we could have no hesitation in according to Mr. Bryant the very highest poetical rank. But something more, we have elsewhere presumed to say, is demanded. Just above, we spoke of "objects in the moral or physical universe coming within the periphery of his vision." We now mean to say, that the relative extent of these peripheries of poetical vision must ever be a primary consideration in our classification of poets. Judging Mr. B. in this manner, and by a general estimate of the volume before us, we should, of course, pause long before assigning him a place with the spiritual Shelleys, or Coleridges, or Wordsworths, or with Keats, or even Tennyson, or Wilson, or with some other burning lights of our own day, to be valued in a day to come. Yet if his poems, as a whole, will not warrant us in assigning him this grade, one such poem as the last upon which we have commented, is enough to assure us that he may attain it.

The writings of our author, as we find them here, are characterized by an air of calm and elevated contemplation more than by any other individual feature. In their mere didactics, however, they err essentially and primitively, inasmuch as such things are the province rather of Minerva than of the Camenae. Of imagination, we discover much- but more of its rich and certain evidences, than of its ripened fruit. In all the minor merits Mr. Bryant is pre-eminent. His *ars celare artem* is most efficient. Of his "completeness," unity, and finish of style we have already spoken. As a versifier, we know of no writer, living or dead, who can be said greatly to surpass him. A Frenchman would assuredly call him "un poete des plus correctes."

Between Cowper and Young, perhaps, (with both of whom he has many points of analogy,) would be the post assigned him by an examination at once general and superficial. Even in this view, however, he has a juster appreciation of the beautiful than the one, of the sublime than the other- a finer taste than Cowper- an equally vigorous, and far more delicate imagination than Young. In regard to his proper rank among American poets there should be no question whatever. Few- at least few who are fairly before the public, have more than very shallow claims to a rivalry with the author of *Thanatopsis*.

### THE OLD CURIOSITY SHOP

#### THE OLD CURIOSITY SHOP, AND OTHER TALES

By Charles Dickens, With Numerous Illustrations by Cattermole

and Browne. Philadelphia: Lea & Blanchard.

### MASTER HUMPHREY'S CLOCK

By Charles Dickens. (Boz.) With Ninety-one Illustrations by

George Cattermole and Hablot Browne. Philadelphia: Lea & Blanchard.

WHAT WE here give [the above titles] is the duplicate title, on two separate title-pages, of an octavo volume of three hundred and sixty-two pages. Why this method of nomenclature should have been adopted is more than we can understand- although it arises, perhaps, from a certain confusion and hesitation observable in the whole structure of the book itself. Publishers have an idea, however, (and no doubt they are the best judges in such matters) that a complete work obtains a readier sale than one "to be continued;" and we see plainly that it is with

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the design of intimating the entireness of the volume now before us, that "The Old Curiosity Shop and other Tales," has been made not only the primary and main title, but the name of the whole publication as indicated by the back. This may be quite fair in trade, but is morally wrong not the less. The volume is only one of a series-only part of a whole; and the title has no right to insinuate otherwise. So obvious is this intention to misguide, that it has led to the absurdity of putting the inclusive, or general, title of the series, as a secondary instead of a primary one. Anybody may see that if the wish had been fairly to represent the plan and extent of the volume, something like this would have been given on a single page-

### MASTER HUMPHREY'S CLOCK

By Charles Dickens. Part I. Containing The Old Curiosity Shop,

and other tales, with numerous illustrations,

This would have been better for all parties, a good deal more honest, and a vast deal more easily understood. In fact, there is sufficient uncertainty of purpose in the book itself, without resort to mystification in the matter of title. We do not think it altogether impossible that the rumors in respect to the sanity of Mr. Dickens which were so prevalent during the publication of the first numbers of the work, had some slight- some very slight foundation in truth. By this, we mean merely to say that the mind of the author, at the time, might possibly have been struggling with some of those manifold and multiform aberrations by which the nobler order of genius is so frequently beset- but which are still so very far removed from disease.

There are some facts in the physical world which have a really wonderful analogy with others in the world of thought, and seem thus to give some color of truth to the (false) rhetorical dogma, that metaphor or simile may be made to strengthen an argument, as well as to embellish a description. The principle of the *vis inertiae*, for example, with the amount of momentum proportionate with it and consequent upon it, seems to be identical in physics and metaphysics. It is not more true, in the former, that a large body is with more difficulty set in motion than a smaller one, and that its subsequent impetus is commensurate with this difficulty, than it is, in the latter, that intellects of the vaster capacity, while more forcible, more constant, and more extensive in their movements than those of inferior grade, are yet the less readily moved, and are more embarrassed and more full of hesitation in the first few steps of their progress. While, therefore, it is not impossible, as we have just said, that some slight mental aberration might have given rise to the hesitancy and indefinitiveness of purpose which are so very perceptible in the first pages of the volume before us, we are still the more willing to believe these defects the result of the moral fact just stated, since we find the work itself of an unusual order of excellence, even when regarded as the production of the author of "Nicholas Nickleby." That the evils we complain of are not, and were not, fully perceived by Mr. Dickens himself, cannot be supposed for a moment. Had his book been published in the old way, we should have seen no traces of them whatever.

The design of the general work, "Humphrey's Clock," is simply the common-place one of putting various tales into the mouths of a social party. The meetings are held at the house of Master Humphrey- an antique building in London, where an old-fashioned clock case is the place of deposit for the M.S.S. Why such designs have become common is obvious. One half the pleasure experienced at a theatre arises from the spectator's sympathy with the rest of the audience, and, especially, from his belief in their sympathy with him. The eccentric gentleman who not long ago, at the Park, found himself the solitary occupant of box, pit, and gallery, would have derived but little enjoyment from his visit, had he been suffered to remain. It was an act of mercy to turn him out. The present absurd rage for lecturing is founded in the feeling in question. Essays which we would not be hired to read- so trite is their subject- so feeble is their execution- so much easier is it to get better information on similar themes out of any Encyclopaedia in Christendom- we are brought to tolerate, and alas, even to applaud in their tenth and twentieth repetition, through the sole force of our sympathy with the throng. In the same way we listen to a story with greater zest when there are others present at its narration besides ourselves. Aware of this, authors without due reflection have repeatedly attempted, by supposing a circle of listeners, to imbue their narratives with the

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interest of sympathy. At a cursory glance the idea seems plausible enough. But, in the one case, there is an actual, personal, and palpable sympathy, conveyed in looks, gestures and brief comments- a sympathy of real individuals, all with the matters discussed to be sure, but then especially, each with each. In the other instance, we, alone in our closet, are required to sympathise with the sympathy of fictitious listeners, who, so far from being present in body, are often studiously kept out of sight and out of mind for two or three hundred pages at a time. This is sympathy double-diluted- the shadow of a shade. It is unnecessary to say that the design invariably fails of its effect.

In his preface to the present volume, Mr. Dickens seems to feel the necessity for an apology in regard to certain portions of his commencement, without seeing clearly what apology he should make, or for what precise thing he should apologize. He makes an effort to get over the difficulty, by saying something about its never being "his intention to have the members of 'Master Humphrey's Clock' active agents in the stories they relate," and about his "picturing to himself the various sensations of his hearers-thinking how Jack Redburn might incline to poor Kit-how the deaf gentleman would have his favorite and Mr. Miles his," but we are quite sure that all this is as pure a fiction as "The Curiosity Shop?" itself. Our author is deceived. Occupied with little Nell and her grandfather, he had forgotten the very existence of his interlocutors until he found himself, at the end of his book, under the disagreeable necessity of saying a word or two concerning them, by way of winding them up. The simple truth is that, either for one of the two reasons at which we have already hinted, or else because the work was begun in a hurry, Mr. Dickens did not precisely know his own plans when he penned the five or six first chapters of the "Clock."

The wish to preserve a certain degree of unity between various narratives naturally unconnected, is a more obvious and a better reason for employing interlocutors. But such unity as may be thus had is scarcely worth having. It may, in some feeble measure, satisfy the judgment by a sense of completeness; but it seldom produces a pleasant effect; and if the speakers are made to take part in their own stories (as has been the Case here) they become injurious by creating confusion. Thus, in "The Curiosity Shop," we feel displeased to find Master Humphrey commencing the tale in the first person, dropping this for the third, and concluding by introducing himself as the "single gentleman" who figures in the story. In spite of all the subsequent explanation we are forced to look upon him as two. All is confusion, and what makes it worse, is that Master Humphrey is painted as a lean and sober personage, while his second self is a fat, bluff and boisterous old bachelor.

Yet the species of connexion in question, besides preserving the unity desired, may be made, if well managed, a source of consistent and agreeable interest. It has been so made by Thomas Moore- the most skilful literary artist of his day- perhaps of any day- a man who stands in the singular and really wonderful predicament of being undervalued on account of the profusion with which he has scattered about him his good things. The brilliancies on any one page of Lalla Rookh would have sufficed to establish that very reputation which has been in a great measure self-dimmed by the galazied lustre of the entire book. It seems that the horrid laws of political economy cannot be evaded even by the inspired, and that a perfect versification, a vigorous style, and a never-tiring fancy, may, like the water we drink and die without, yet despise, be so plentifully set forth as to be absolutely of no value at all.

By far the greater portion of the volume now published, is occupied with the tale of "The Old Curiosity Shop," narrated by Master Humphrey himself. The other stories are brief. The "Giant Chronicles" is the title of what appears to be meant for a series within a series, and we think this design doubly objectionable. The narrative of "The Bowyer," as well as of "John Podgers," is not altogether worthy of Mr. Dickens. They were probably sent to press to supply a demand for copy, while he was occupied with the "Curiosity Shop." But the "Confession Found in a Prison in the Time of Charles the Second" is a paper of remarkable power, truly original in conception, and worked out with great ability.

The story of "The Curiosity Shop" is very simple. Two brothers of England, warmly attached to each other, love the same lady, without each other's knowledge. The younger at length discovers the elder's secret, and, sacrificing



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himself to fraternal affection, quits the country and resides for many years in a foreign land, where he amasses great wealth. Meantime his brother marries the lady, who soon dies, leaving an infant daughter- her perfect resemblance. In the widower's heart the mother lives again through the child. This latter grows up, marries unhappily, has a son and a daughter, loses her husband, and dies herself shortly afterward. The grandfather takes the orphans to his home. The boy spurns his protection, falls into bad courses, and becomes an outcast. The girl- in whom a third time lives the object of the old man's early choice- dwells with him alone, and is loved by him with a most dotting affection. He has now become poor, and at length is reduced to keeping a shop for antiquities and curiosities. Finally, through his dread of involving the child in want, his mind becomes weakened. He thinks to redeem his fortune by gambling, borrows money for this purpose of a dwarf, who, at length, discovering the true state of the old man's affairs, seizes his furniture and turns him out of doors. The girl and himself set out, without farther object than to relieve themselves of the sight of the hated city, upon a weary pilgrimage, whose events form the basis or body of the tale. In fine, just as a peaceful retirement is secured for them, the child, wasted with fatigue and anxiety, dies. The grandfather, through grief, immediately follows her to the tomb. The younger brother, meantime, has received information of the old man's poverty, hastens to England, and arrives only in time to be at the closing scene of the tragedy.

This plot is the best which could have been constructed for the main object of the narrative. This object is the depicting of a fervent and dreamy love for the child on the part of the grandfather- such a love as would induce devotion to himself on the part of the orphan. We have thus the conception of a childhood, educated in utter ignorance of the world, filled with an affection which has been, through its brief existence, the sole source of its pleasures, and which has no part in the passion of a more mature youth for an object of its own age- we have the idea of this childhood, full of ardent hopes, leading by the hand, forth from the heated and wearying city, into the green fields, to seek for bread, the decrepid imbecility of a dotting and confiding old age, whose stern knowledge of man, and of the world it leaves behind, is now merged in the sole consciousness of receiving love and protection from that weakness it has loved and protected.

This conception is indeed most beautiful. It is simply and severely grand. The more fully we survey it the more thoroughly we are convinced of the lofty character of that genius which gave it birth. That in its present simplicity of form, however, it was first entertained by Mr. Dickens, may well be doubted. That it was not, we are assured by the title which the tale bears. When in its commencement he called it "The Old Curiosity Shop," his design was far different from what we see it in its completion. It is evident that had he now to name the story he would not so term it; for the shop itself is a thing of an altogether collateral interest, and is spoken of merely in the beginning. This is only one among a hundred instances of the disadvantage under which the periodical novelist labors. When his work is done, he never fails to observe a thousand defects which he might have remedied, and a thousand alterations, in regard to the book as a whole, which might be made to its manifest improvement.

But of the conception of this story deserves praise, its execution is beyond all- and here the subject naturally leads us from the generalization which is the proper province of the critic, into details among which it is scarcely fitting that he should venture.

The Art of Mr. Dickens, although elaborate and great, seems only a happy modification of Nature. In this respect he differs remarkably from the author of "Night and Morning." The latter, by excessive care and by patient reflection, aided by much rhetorical knowledge, and general information, has arrived at the capability of producing books which be mistaken by ninety-nine readers out of a hundred for the genuine inspirations of genius. The former, by the promptings of the truest genius itself, has been brought to compose, and evidently without effort, works which have effected a long-sought consummation- which have rendered him the idol of the people, while defying and enchanting the critics. Mr. Bulwer, through art, has almost created a genius. Mr. Dickens, through genius, has perfected a standard from which Art itself will derive its essence, in rules.

When we speak in this manner of the "Old Curiosity Shop," we speak with entire deliberation, and know quite well what it is we assert. We do not mean to say that it is perfect, as a whole- this could not well have been the

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case under the circumstances of its composition. But we know that, in all the higher elements which go to make up literary greatness, it is supremely excellent. We think, for instance, that the introduction of Nelly's brother (and here we address those who have read the work) is supererogatory- that the character of Quilp would have been more in keeping had he been confined to petty and grotesque acts of malice- that his death should have been made the immediate consequence of his attempt at revenge upon Kit; and that after matters had been put fairly in train for this poetical justice, he should not have perished by an accident inconsequential upon his villany. We think, too, that there is an air of ultra-accident in the finally discovered relationship between Kit's master and the bachelor of the old church- that the sneering politeness put into the mouth of Quilp, with his manner of commencing a question which he wishes answered in the affirmative, with an affirmative interrogatory, instead of the ordinary negative one- are fashions borrowed from the authors own Fagin- that he has repeated himself in many other instances- that the practical tricks and love of mischief of the dwarf's boy are too nearly consonant with the traits of the master- that so much of the propensities of Swiveller as relate to his inapposite appropriation of odds and ends of verse, is stolen from the generic loafer of our fellow-townsmen, Neal- and that the writer has suffered the overflowing kindness of his own bosom to mislead him in a very important point of art, when he endows so many of his dramatis personae with a warmth of feeling so very rare in reality. Above all, we acknowledge that the death of Nelly is excessively painful- that it leaves a most distressing oppression of spirit upon the reader- and should, therefore, have been avoided.

But when we come to speak of the excellences of the tale these defects appear really insignificant. It embodies more originality in every point, but in character especially, than any single work within our knowledge. There is the grandfather- a truly profound conception; the gentle and lovely Nelly- we have discoursed of her before; Quilp, with mouth like that of the panting dog- (a bold idea which the engraver has neglected to embody) with his hilarious antics, his cowardice, and his very petty and spoilt-child- like malevolence, Dick Swiveller, that prince of goodhearted, good-for-nothing, lazy, luxurious, poetical, brave, romantically generous, gallant, affectionate, and not over-and-above honest, "glorious Apollos;" the marchioness, his bride; Tom Codlin and his partner; Miss Sally Brass, that "fine fellow;" the pony that had an opinion of its own; the boy that stood upon his head; the sexton; the man at the forge; not forgetting the dancing dogs and baby Nubbles. There are other admirably drawn characters- but we note these for their remarkable originality, as well as for their wonderful keeping, and the glowing colors in which they are painted. We have heard some of them called caricatures- but the charge is grossly ill-founded. No critical principle is more firmly based in reason than that a certain amount of exaggeration is essential to the proper depicting of truth itself. We do not paint an object to be true, but to appear true to the beholder. Were we to copy nature with accuracy the object copied would seem unnatural. The columns of the Greek temples, which convey the idea of absolute proportion, are very considerably thicker just beneath the capital than at the base. We regret that we have not left ourselves space in which to examine this whole question as it deserves. We must content ourselves with saying that caricature seldom exists (unless in so gross a form as to disgust at once) where the component parts are in keeping; and that the laugh excited by it, in any case, is radically distinct from that induced by a properly artistical incongruity- the source of all mirth. Were these creations of Mr. Dickens' really caricatures they would not live in public estimation beyond the hour of their first survey. We regard them as creations- (that is to say as original combinations of character) only not all of the highest order, because the elements employed are not always of the highest. In the instances of Nelly, the grandfather, the Sexton, and the man of the furnace, the force of the creative intellect could scarcely have been engaged with nobler material, and the result is that these personages belong to the most august regions of the Ideal.

In truth, the great feature of the "Curiosity Shop" is its chaste, vigorous, and glorious imagination. This is the one charm, all potent, which alone would suffice to compensate for a world more of error than Mr. Dickens ever committed. It is not only seen in the conception, and general handling of the story, or in the invention of character; but it pervades every sentence of the book. We recognise its prodigious influence in every inspired word. It is this which induces the reader who is at all ideal, to pause frequently, to reread the occasionally quaint phrases, to muse in uncontrollable delight over thoughts which, while he wonders he has never hit upon them before, he yet admits that he never has encountered. In fact it is the wand of the enchanter.

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Had we room to particularize, we would mention as points evincing most distinctly the ideality of the "Curiosity Shop"- the picture of the shop itself- the newly-born desire of the worldly old man for the peace of green fields- his whole character and conduct, in short- the schoolmaster, with his desolate fortunes, seeking affection in little children- the haunts of Quilp among the wharf-rats- the tinkering of the Punchmen among the tombs- the glorious scene where the man of the forge sits poring, at deep midnight, into that dread fire- again the whole conception of this character, and, last and greatest, the stealthy approach of Nell to her death- her gradual sinking away on the journey to the village, so skilfully indicated rather than described- her pensive and prescient meditation- the fit of strange musing which came over her when the house in which she was to die first broke upon her sight- the description of this house, of the old church, and of the churchyard- everything in rigid consonance with the one impression to be conveyed- that deep meaningless well- the comments of the Sexton upon death, and upon his own secure life- this whole world of mournful yet peaceful idea merging, at length, into the decease of the child Nelly, and the uncomprehending despair of the grandfather. These concluding scenes are so drawn that human language, urged by human thought, could go no farther in the excitement of human feelings. And the pathos is of that best order which is relieved, in great measure, by ideality. Here the book has never been equalled,- never approached except in one instance, and that is in the case of the "Undine" by De La Motte Fouque. The imagination is perhaps as great in this latter work, but the pathos, although truly beautiful and deep, fails of much of its effect through the material from which it is wrought. The chief character, being endowed with purely fanciful attributes, cannot command our full sympathies, as can a simple denizen of earth. In saying above, that the death of the child left too painful an impression, and should therefore have been avoided, we must, of course, be understood as referring to the work as a whole, and in respect to its general appreciation and popularity. The death, as recorded, is, we repeat, of the highest order of literary excellence- yet while none can deny this fact, there are few who will be willing to read the concluding passages a second time.

Upon the whole we think the "Curiosity Shop" very much the best of the works of Mr. Dickens. It is scarcely possible to speak of it too well. It is in all respects a tale which will secure for its author the enthusiastic admiration of every man of genius.

The edition before us is handsomely printed, on excellent paper. The designs by Cattermole and Browne are many of them excellent- some of them outrageously bad. Of course, it is difficult for us to say how far the American engraver is in fault. In conclusion, we must enter our solemn protest against the final page full of little angels in smock frocks, or dimity chemises.

## THE QUACKS OF HELICON

A Satire. By L. A. Wilmer

A SATIRE, professedly such, at the present day, and especially by an American writer, is a welcome novelty indeed. We have really done very little in the line upon this side of the Atlantic- nothing certainly of importance- Trumbull's clumsy poem and Halleck's "Croakers" to the contrary notwithstanding. Some things we have produced, to be sure, which were excellent in the way of burlesque, without intending a syllable that was not utterly solemn and serious. Odes, ballads, songs, sonnets, epics, and epigrams, possessed of this unintentional excellence, we could have no difficulty in designating by the dozen; but in the matter of directly meant and genuine satire, it cannot be denied that we are sadly deficient. Although, as a literary people, however, we are not exactly Archilochuses- although we have no pretensions to the echeenpes iamboi- although in short, we are no satirists ourselves, there can be no question that we answer sufficiently well as subjects for satire.

We repeat that we are glad to see this book of Mr. Wilmer's; first, because it is something new under the sun; secondly, because, in many respects, it is well executed; and thirdly, because, in the universal corruption and rigmarole, amid which we gasp for breath, it is really a pleasant thing to get even one accidental whiff of the unadulterated air of truth.

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"The Quacks of Helicon," as a poem and otherwise, has many defects, and these we shall have no scruple in pointing out- although Mr. Wilmer is a personal friend of our own, and we are happy and proud to say so- but it has also many remarkable merits- merits which it will be quite useless for those aggrieved by the satire- quite useless for any clique, or set of cliques, to attempt to frown down, or to affect not to see, or to feel, or to understand.

Its prevalent blemishes are referable chiefly to the leading sin of imitation. Had the work been composed professedly in paraphrase of the whole manner of the sarcastic epistles of the times of Dryden and Pope, we should have pronounced it the most ingenious and truthful thing of the kind upon record. So close is the copy that it extends to the most trivial points- for example, to the old forms of punctuation. The turns of phraseology, the tricks of rhythm, the arrangement of the paragraphs, the general conduct of the satire- everything- all- are Dryden's. We cannot deny, it is true, that the satiric model of the days in question is insusceptible of improvement, and that the modern author who deviates therefrom must necessarily sacrifice something of merit at the shrine of originality. Neither can we shut our eyes to the fact that the imitation in the present case has conveyed, in full spirit, the high qualities, as well as in rigid letter, the minor elegancies and general peculiarities of the author of "Absalom and Achitophel." We have here the bold, vigorous, and sonorous verse, the biting sarcasm, the pungent epigrammatism, the unscrupulous directness, as of old. Yet it will not do to forget that Mr. Wilmer has been shown how to accomplish these things. He is thus only entitled to the praise of a close observer, and of a thoughtful and skilful copyist. The images are, to be sure, his own. They are neither Popes, nor Dryden's, nor Rochester's, nor Churchill's- but they are moulded in the identical mould used by these satirists.

This servility of imitation has seduced our author into errors, which his better sense should have avoided. He sometimes mistakes intentions; at other times, he copies faults, confounding them with beauties. In the opening of the poem, for example, we find the lines-

Against usurpers, Olney, I declare

A righteous, just and patriotic war.

The rhymes war and declare are here adopted from Pope, who employs them frequently; but it should have been remembered that the modern relative pronunciation of the two words differs materially from the relative pronunciation of the era of the "Dunciad."

We are also sure that the gross obscenity, the filth- we can use no gentler name- which disgraces "The Quacks of Helicon," cannot be the result of innate impurity in the mind of the writer. It is but a part of the slavish and indiscriminating imitation of the Swift and Rochester school. It has done the book an irreparable injury, both in a moral and pecuniary view, without affecting anything whatever on the score of sarcasm, vigour or wit. "Let what is to be said, he said plainly." True, but let nothing vulgar be ever said or conceived.

In asserting that this satire, even in its mannerism, has imbued itself with the full spirit of the polish and of the pungency of Dryden, we have already awarded it high praise. But there remains to be mentioned the far loftier merit of speaking fearlessly the truth, at an epoch when truth is out of fashion, and under circumstances of social position which would have deterred almost any man in our community from a similar Quixotism. For the publication of "The Quacks of Helicon"- a poem which brings under review, by name, most of our prominent literati and treats them, generally, as they deserve (what treatment could be more bitter?)- for the publication of this attack, Mr. Wilmer, whose subsistence lies in his pen, has little to look for- apart from the silent respect of those at once honest and timid- but the most malignant open or covert persecution. For this reason, and because it is the truth which he has spoken, do we say to him, from the bottom of our hearts, "God speed!"

We repeat it: it is the truth which he has spoken; and who shall contradict us? He has said unscrupulously what every reasonable man among us has long known to be "as true as the Pentateuch"- that, as a literary people, we

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are one vast perambulating humbug. He has asserted that we are clique-ridden; and who does not smile at the obvious truism of that assertion? He maintains that chicanery is, with us, a far surer road than talent to distinction in letters. Who gainsays this? The corrupt nature of our ordinary criticism has become notorious. Its powers have been prostrated by its own arm. The intercourse between critic and publisher, as it now almost universally stands, is comprised either in the paying and pocketing of blackmail, as the price of a simple forbearance, or in a direct system of petty and contemptible bribery, properly so-called- a system even more injurious than the former to the true interests of the public, and more degrading to the buyers and sellers of good opinion, on account of the more positive character of the service here rendered for the consideration received. We laugh at the idea of any denial of our assertions upon this topic; they are infamously true. In the charge of general corruption, there are undoubtedly many noble exceptions to be made. There are, indeed, some very few editors, who, maintaining an entire independence, will receive no books from publishers at all, or who receive them with a perfect understanding, on the part of these latter, that an unbiassed critique will be given. But these cases are insufficient to have much effect on the popular mistrust; a mistrust heightened by late exposure of the machinations of coteries in New York-coteries which, at the bidding of leading booksellers, manufacture, as required from time to time, a pseudo-public opinion by wholesale, for the benefit of any little hanger-on of the party, or pettifogging protector of the firm.

We speak of these things in the bitterness of scorn. It is unnecessary to cite instances, where one is found in almost every issue of a book. It is needless to call to mind the desperate case of Fay- a case where the pertinacity of the effort to gull- where the obviousness of the attempt at forestalling a judgment- where the woefully overdone bemirroring of that man-of-straw, together with the pitiable platitude of his production, proved a dose somewhat too potent for even the well-prepared stomach of the mob. We say it is supererogatory to dwell upon "Norman Leslie," or other by-gone follies, when we have before our eyes hourly instances of the machinations in question. To so great an extent of methodical assurance has the system of puffery arrived, that publishers, of late, have made no scruple of keeping on hand an assortment of commendatory notices, prepared by their men of all work, and of sending these notices around to the multitudinous papers within their influence, done up within the fly leaves of the book. The grossness of these base attempts, however, has not escaped indignant rebuke from the more honourable portion of the press; and we hail these symptoms of restiveness under the yoke of unprincipled ignorance and quackery (strong only in combination) as the harbinger of a better era for the interests of real merit, and of the national literature as a whole.

It has become, indeed, the plain duty of each individual connected with our periodicals heartily to give whatever influence he possesses to the good cause of integrity and the truth. The results thus attainable will be found worthy his closest attention and best efforts. We shall thus frown down all conspiracies to foist inanity upon the public consideration at the obvious expense of every man of talent who is not a member of a clique in power. We may even arrive in time at that desirable point from which a distinct view of our men of letters may be obtained, and their respective pretensions adjusted by the standard of a rigorous and self-sustaining criticism alone. That their several positions are as yet properly settled; that the posts which a vast number of them now hold are maintained by any better tenure than that of the chicanery upon which we have commented, will be asserted by none but the ignorant, or the parties who have best right to feel an interest in the "good old condition of things." No two matters can be more radically different than the reputation of some of our prominent litterateurs as gathered from the mouths of the people (who glean it from the paragraphs of the papers), and the same reputation as deduced from the private estimate of intelligent and educated men. We do not advance this fact as a new discovery. Its truth, on the contrary, is the subject, and has long been so, of every-day witticism and mirth.

Why not? Surely there can be few things more ridiculous than the general character and assumptions of the ordinary critical notices of new books! An editor, sometimes without the shadow of the commonest attainment- often without brains, always without time- does not scruple to give the world to understand that he is in the daily habit of critically reading and deciding upon a flood of publications, one-tenth of whose title pages he may possibly have turned over, three-fourths of whose contents would be Hebrew to his most desperate efforts at comprehension, and whose entire mass and amount, as might be mathematically demonstrated, would be

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sufficient to occupy, in the most cursory perusal, the attention of some ten or twenty readers for a month! What he wants in plausibility, however, he makes up in obsequiousness; what he lacks in time he supplies in temper. He is the most easily pleased man in the world. He admires everything, from the big Dictionary of Noah Webster to the last diamond edition of Tom Thumb. Indeed, his sole difficulty is in finding tongue to express his delight. Every pamphlet is a miracle- every book in boards is an epoch in letters. His phrases, therefore, get bigger and bigger every day, and, if it were not for talking Cockney, we might call him a "regular swell."

Yet, in the attempt at getting definite information in regard to any one portion of our literature, the merely general reader, or the foreigner, will turn in vain from the lighter to the heavier journals. But it is not our intention here to dwell upon the radical, antique, and systematized rigmarole of our Quarterlies. The articles here are anonymous. Who writes?- who causes to be written? Who but an ass will put faith in tirades which may be the result of personal hostility, or in panegyrics which nine times out of ten may be laid, directly or indirectly, to the charge of the author himself? It is in the favour of these saturnine pamphlets that they contain, now and then, a good essay *de omnibus rebus et quibusdam aliis*, which may be looked into, without decided somnolent consequences, at any period, not immediately subsequent to dinner. But it is useless to expect criticism from periodicals called "Reviews" from never reviewing. Besides, all men know, or should know, that these books are sadly given to verbiage. It is a part of their nature, a condition of their being, a point of their faith. A veteran reviewer loves the safety of generalities and is therefore rarely particular. "Words, words, words," are the secret of his strength. He has one or two ideas of his own and is both wary and fussy in giving them out. His wit lies, with his truth, in a well, and there is always a world of trouble in getting it up. He is a sworn enemy to all things simple and direct. He gives no ear to the advice of the giant Molineau-"Belier, mon ami commencez au commencement." He either jumps at once into the middle of his subject, or breaks in at a back door, or sidles up to it with the gait of a crab. No other mode of approach has an air of sufficient profundity. When fairly into it, however, he becomes dazzled with the scintillations of his own wisdom, and is seldom able to see his way out. Tired of laughing at his antics, or frightened at seeing him flounder, the reader, at length, shuts him up, with the book. "What song the Syrens sang," says Sir Thomas Browne, "or what name Achilles assumed when he hid himself among women, though puzzling questions, are not beyond all conjecture";- but it would puzzle Sir Thomas, backed by Achilles and all the Syrens in Heathendom, to say, in nine cases out of ten, what is the object of a thoroughgoing Quarterly Reviewer.

Should the opinions promulgated by our press at large be taken, in their wonderful aggregate, as an evidence of what American literature absolutely is (and it may be said that, in general, they are really so taken), we shall find ourselves the most enviable set of people upon the face of the earth. Our fine writers are legion. Our very atmosphere is redolent of genius; and we, the nation, are a huge, well-contented chameleon, grown puffy by inhaling it. We are *teretes et rotundi*- enwrapped in excellence. All our poets are Milton neither mute nor inglorious; all our poetesses are "American Hemanses"; nor will it do to deny that all our novelists are Great Knowns or Great Unknowns, and that everybody who writes, in every possible and impossible department, is the Admirable Crichton, or, at least, the Admirable Crichton's ghost. We are thus in a glorious condition, and will remain so until forced to disgorge our ethereal honours. In truth there is some danger that the jealousy of the Old World will interfere. It cannot long submit to that outrageous monopoly of "all the decency and all the talent," of which the gentlemen of the press give such undoubted assurance of our being the possessors.

But we feel angry with ourselves for the jesting tone of our observations upon this topic. The prevalence of the spirit of puffery is a subject far less for merriment than for disgust. Its truckling, yet dogmatical character- its bold, unsustained, yet self-sufficient and wholesale laudation- is becoming, more and more, an insult to the common sense of the community. Trivial as it essentially is, it has yet been made the instrument of the grossest abuse in the elevation of imbecility, to the manifest injury, to the utter ruin, of true merit. Is there any man of good feeling and of ordinary understanding- is there one single individual among all our readers- who does not feel a thrill of bitter indignation, apart from any sentiment of mirth, as he calls to mind instance after instance of the purest, of the most unadulterated quackery in letters, which has risen to a high post in the apparent popular estimation, and which still maintains it, by the sole means of a blustering arrogance, or of a busy wriggling conceit, or of the most barefaced plagiarism, or even through the simple immensity of its assumptions-

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assumptions not only unopposed by the press at large, but absolutely supported in proportion to the vociferous clamour with which they are made- in exact accordance with their utter baselessness and untenability? We should have no trouble in pointing out to-day some twenty or thirty so-called literary personages, who, if not idiots, as we half think them, or if not hardened to all sense of shame by a long course of disingenuousness, will now blush in the perusal of these words, through consciousness of the shadowy nature of that purchased pedestal upon which they stand-will now tremble in thinking of the feebleness of the breath which will be adequate to the blowing it from beneath their feet. With the help of a hearty good will, even we may yet tumble them down.

So firm, through a long endurance, has been the hold taken upon the popular mind (at least so far as we may consider the popular mind reflected in ephemeral letters) by the laudatory system which we have deprecated, that what is, in its own essence, a vice, has become endowed with the appearance, and met with the reception of a virtue. Antiquity, as usual, has lent a certain degree of speciousness even to the absurd. So continuously have we puffed, that we have, at length, come to think puffing the duty, and plain speaking the dereliction. What we began in gross error, we persist in through habit. Having adopted, in the earlier days of our literature, the untenable idea that this literature, as a whole, could be advanced by an indiscriminate approbation bestowed on its every effort- having adopted this idea, we say, without attention to the obvious fact that praise of all was bitter although negative censure to the few alone deserving, and that the only result of the system, in the fostering way, would be the fostering of folly- we now continue our vile practice through the supineness of custom, even while, in our national self-conceit, we repudiate that necessity for patronage and protection in which originated our conduct. In a word, the press throughout the country has not been ashamed to make head against the very few bold attempts at independence which have from time to time been made in the face of the reigning order of things. And if in one, or perhaps two, insulated cases, the spirit of severe truth, sustained by an unconquerable will, was not to be so put down, then, forthwith, were private chicaneries set in motion; then was had resort, on the part of those who considered themselves injured by the severity of criticism (and who were so, if the just contempt of every ingenuous man is injury), resort to arts of the most virulent indignity, to untraceable slanders, to ruthless assassination in the dark. We say these things were done while the press in general looked on, and, with a full understanding of the wrong perpetrated, spoke not against the wrong. The idea had absolutely gone abroad- had grown up little by little into toleration- that attacks, however just, upon a literary reputation, however obtained, however untenable, were well retaliated by the basest and most unfounded traduction of personal fame. But is this an age- is this a day- in which it can be necessary even to advert to such considerations as that the book of the author is the property of the public, and that the issue of the book is the throwing down of the gauntlet to the reviewer- to the reviewer whose duty is the plainest; the duty not even of approbation, or of censure, or of silence, at his own, will but at the sway of those sentiments and of those opinions which are derived from the author himself, through the medium of his written and published words? True criticism is the reflection of the thing criticized upon the spirit of the critic.

But a nos moutons- to "The Quacks of Helicon." This satire has many faults besides those upon which we have commented. The title, for example, is not sufficiently distinctive, although otherwise good. It does not confine the subject to American quacks, while the work does. The two concluding lines enfeeble instead of strengthening the finale, which would have been exceedingly pungent without them. The individual portions of the thesis are strung together too much at random- a natural sequence is not always preserved- so that, although the lights of the picture are often forcible, the whole has what, in artistical parlance, is termed an accidental and spotty appearance. In truth, the parts of the poem have evidently been composed each by each, as separate themes, and afterwards fitted into the general satire in the best manner possible.

But a more reprehensible sin than an or than all of these is yet to be mentioned- the sin of indiscriminate censure. Even here Mr. Wilmer has erred through imitation. He has held in view the sweeping denunciations of the *Dunciad*, and of the later (abortive) satire of Byron. No one in his senses can deny the justice of the general charges of corruption in regard to which we have just spoken from the text of our author. But are there no exceptions? We should, indeed, blush if there were not. And is there no hope? Time will show. We cannot do everything in a day- *Non se gano Zonora en un ora*. Again, it cannot be gainsaid that the greater number of those

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who hold high places in our poetical literature are absolute nincompoops- fellows alike innocent of reason and of rhyme. But neither are we all brainless, nor is the devil himself so black as he is painted. Mr. Wilmer must read the chapter in Rabelais's "Gargantua," "de ce qu'est signifie par les couleurs blanc et bleu,"- for there is some difference after all. It will not do in a civilized land to run a-muck like a Malay. Mr. Morris has written good songs. Mr. Bryant is not all a fool. Mr. Willis is not quite an ass. Mr. Longfellow will steal, but, perhaps, he cannot help it (for we have heard of such things), and then it must not be denied that nil tetigit quod non ornavit.

The fact is that our author, in the rank exuberance of his zeal, seems to think as little of discrimination as the Bishop of Autun[11] did of the Bible. Poetical "things in general" are the windmills at which he spurs his Rozinante. He as often tilts at what is true as at what is false; and thus his lines are like the mirrors of the temples of Smyrna, which represent the fairest images as deformed. But the talent, the fearlessness, and especially the design of this book, will suffice to preserve it from that dreadful damnation of "silent contempt," to which editors throughout the country, if we are not much mistaken, will endeavour, one and all to consign it.

[11] Talleyrand.

## EXORDIUM

[Graham's Magazine, January, 1842]

IN Commencing, with the New Year, a New Volume, we shall be permitted to say a very few words by way of exordium to our usual chapter of Reviews, or, as we should prefer calling them, of Critical Notices. Yet we speak not for the sake of the exordium, but because we have really something to say, and know not when or where better to say it.

That the public attention, in America, has, of late days, been more than usually directed to the matter of literary criticism, is plainly apparent. Our periodicals are beginning to acknowledge the importance of the science (shall we so term it?) and to disdain the flippant opinion which so long has been made its substitute.

Time was when we imported our critical decisions from the mother country. For many years we enacted a perfect farce of subserviency to the dicta of Great Britain. At last a revulsion of feeling, with self-disgust, necessarily ensued. Urged by these, we plunged into the opposite extreme. In throwing totally off that "authority," whose voice had so long been so sacred, we even surpassed, and by much, our original folly. But the watchword now was, "a national literature!"- as, if any true literature could be "national"- as if the world at large were not the only proper stage for the literary histrio. We became, suddenly, the merest and maddest partizans in letters. Our papers spoke of "tariffs" and "protection." Our Magazines had habitual passages about that "truly native novelist, Mr. Cooper," or that "staunch American genius, Mr. Paulding." Unmindful of the spirit of the axioms that "a prophet has no honor in his own land" and that "a hero is never a hero to his valet-de-chambre"- axioms founded in reason and in truth- our reviews urged the propriety- our booksellers the necessity, of strictly "American" themes. A foreign subject, at this epoch, was a weight more than enough to drag down into the very depths of critical damnation the finest writer owning nativity in the States; while, on the reverse, we found ourselves daily in the paradoxical dilemma of liking, or pretending to like, a stupid book the better because (sure enough) its stupidity was of our own growth, and discussed our own affairs.

It is, in fact, but very lately that this anomalous state of feeling has shown any signs of subsidence. Still it is subsiding. Our views of literature in general having expanded, we begin to demand the use- to inquire into the offices and provinces of criticism- to regard it more as an art based immovably in nature, less as a mere system of fluctuating and conventional dogmas. And, with the prevalence of these ideas, has arrived a distaste even to the home-dictation of the bookseller-coterie. If our editors are not as yet all independent of the will of a publisher, a majority of them scruple, at least, to confess a subservience, and enter into no positive combinations against the minority who despise and discard it. And this is a very great improvement of exceedingly late date.



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Escaping these quicksands, our criticism is nevertheless in some danger- some very little danger- of falling into the pit of a most detestable species of cant- the cant of generality. This tendency has been given it, in the first instance, by the onward and tumultuous spirit of the age. With the increase of the thinking-material comes the desire, if not the necessity, of abandoning particulars for masses. Yet in our individual case, as a nation, we seem merely to have adopted this bias from the British Quarterly Reviews, upon which our own Quarterlies have been slavishly and pertinaciously modelled. In the foreign journal, the review or criticism properly so termed, has gradually yet steadily degenerated into what we see it at present- that is to say, into anything but criticism. Originally a "review" was not so called as *lucus a non lucendo*. Its name conveyed a just idea of its design. It reviewed, or surveyed the book whose title formed its text, and, giving an analysis of its contents, passed judgment upon its merits or defects. But, through the system of anonymous contribution, this natural process lost ground from day to day. The name of a writer being known only to a few, it became to him an object not so much to write well, as to write fluently, at so many guineas per sheet. The analysis of a book is a matter of time and of mental exertion. For many classes of composition there is required a deliberate perusal, with notes, and subsequent generalization. An easy substitute for this labor was found in a digest or compendium of the work noticed, with copious extracts- or a still easier, in random comments upon such passages as accidentally met the eye of the critic, with the passages themselves copied at full length. The mode of reviewing most in favor, however, because carrying with it the greatest semblance of care, was that of diffuse essay upon the subject matter of the publication, the reviewer(?) using the facts alone which the publication supplied, and using them as material for some theory, the sole concern, bearing, and intention of which, was mere difference of opinion with the author. These came at length to be understood and habitually practised as the customary or conventional fashions of review; and although the nobler order of intellects did not fall into the full heresy of these fashions- we may still assert that even Macaulay's nearest approach to criticism in its legitimate sense, is to be found in his article upon Ranke's "History of the Popes"- an article in which the whole strength of the reviewer is put forth to account for a single fact- the progress of Romanism- which the book under discussion has established.

Now, while we do not mean to deny that a good essay is a good thing, we yet assert that these papers on general topics have nothing whatever to do with that criticism which their evil example has nevertheless infected in se. Because these dogmatizing pamphlets, which were once "Reviews," have lapsed from their original faith, it does not follow that the faith itself is extinct- that "there shall be no more cakes and ale"- that criticism, in its old acceptation, does not exist. But we complain of a growing inclination on the part of our lighter journals to believe, on such grounds, that such is the fact- that because the British Quarterlies, through supineness, and our own, through a degrading imitation, have come to merge all varieties of vague generalization in the one title of "Review," it therefore results that criticism, being everything in the universe, is, consequently, nothing whatever in fact. For to this end, and to none other conceivable, is the tendency of such propositions, for example, as we find in a late number of that very clever monthly magazine, *Arcturus*.

"But now" (the emphasis on the now is our own)- "but now," says Mr. Mathews, in the preface to the first volume of his journal, "criticism has a wider scope and a universal interest. It dismisses errors of grammar, and hands over an imperfect rhyme or a false quantity to the proofreader; it looks now to the heart of the subject and the author's design. It is a test of opinion. Its acuteness is not pedantic, but philosophical; it unravels the web of the author's mystery to interpret his meaning to others; it detects his sophistry, because sophistry is injurious to the heart and life; it promulgates his beauties with liberal, generous praise, because this is his true duty as the servant of truth. Good criticism may be well asked for, since it is the type of the literature of the day. It gives method to the universal inquisitiveness on every topic relating to life or action. A criticism, now, includes every form of literature, except perhaps the imaginative and the strictly dramatic. It is an essay, a sermon, an oration, a chapter in history, a philosophical speculation, a prose-poem, an art-novel, a dialogue, it admits of humor, pathos, the personal feelings of autobiography, the broadest views of statesmanship. As the ballad and the epic were the productions of the days of Homer, the review is the native characteristic growth of the nineteenth century."

We respect the talents of Mr. Mathews, but must dissent from nearly all that he here says. The species of "review" which he designates as the "characteristic growth of the nineteenth century" is only the growth of the last twenty

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or thirty years in Great Britain. The French Reviews, for example, which are not anonymous, are very different things, and preserve the unique spirit of true criticism. And what need we say of the Germans?- what of Winckelmann, of Novalis, of Schelling, of Goethe, of Augustus William, and of Frederick Schlegel?- that their magnificent critiques raisonnees differ from those of Kames, of Johnson, and of Blair, in principle not at all, (for the principles of these artists will not fail until Nature herself expires,) but solely in their more careful elaboration, their greater thoroughness, their more profound analysis and application of the principles themselves. That a criticism "now" should be different in spirit, as Mr. Mathews supposes, from a criticism at any previous period, is to insinuate a charge of variability in laws that cannot vary- the laws of man's heart and intellect- for these are the sole basis, upon which the true critical art is established. And this art "now" no more than in the days of the "Dunciad," can, without neglect of its duty, "dismiss errors of grammar," or "hand over an imperfect rhyme or a false quantity to the proof-reader." What is meant by a "test of opinion" in the connection here given the words by Mr. M., we do not comprehend as clearly as we could desire. By this phrase we are as completely enveloped in doubt as was Mirabeau in the castle of If. To our imperfect appreciation it seems to form a portion of that general vagueness which is the tone of the whole philosophy at this point:- but all that which our journalist describes a criticism to be, is all that which we sturdily maintain it is not. Criticism is not, we think, an essay, nor a sermon, nor an oration, nor a chapter in history, nor a philosophical speculation, nor a prose-poem, nor an art-novel, nor a dialogue. In fact, it can be nothing in the world but- a criticism. But if it were all that Arcturus imagines, it is not very clear why it might not be equally "imaginative, or "dramatic"- a romance or a melodrama, or both. That it would be a farce cannot be doubted.

It is against this frantic spirit of generalization that we protest. We have a word, "criticism," whose import is sufficiently distinct, through long usage, at least, and we have an art of high importance and clearly ascertained limit, which this word is quite well enough understood to represent. Of that conglomerate science to which Mr. Mathews so eloquently alludes, and of which we are instructed that it is anything and everything at once- of this science we know nothing, and really wish to know less; but we object to our contemporary's appropriation in its behalf, of a term to which we, in common with a large majority of mankind, have been accustomed to attach a certain and very definitive idea. Is there no word but "criticism" which may be made to serve the purposes of "Arcturus"? Has it any objection to Orphicism, or Dialism, or Emersonism, or any other pregnant compound indicative of confusion worse confounded?

Still, we must not pretend a total misapprehension of the idea of Mr. Mathews, and we should be sorry that he misunderstood us. It may be granted that we differ only in terms- although the difference will yet be found not unimportant in effect. Following the highest authority, we would wish, in a word, to limit literary criticism to comment upon Art. A book is written- and it is only as the book that we subject it to review. With the opinions of the work, considered otherwise than in their relation to the work itself, the critic has really nothing to do. It is his part simply to decide upon the mode in which these opinions are brought to bear. Criticism is thus no "test of opinion." For this test, the work, divested of its pretensions as an art-product, is turned over for discussion to the world at large- and first, to that class which it especially addresses- if a history, to the historian- if a metaphysical treatise, to the moralist. In this, the only true and intelligible sense, it will be seen that criticism, the test or analysis of Art, (not of opinion,) is only properly employed upon productions which have their basis in art itself, and although the journalist (whose duties and objects are multiform) may turn aside, at pleasure, from the mode or vehicle of opinion to discussion of the opinion conveyed- it is still clear that he is "critical" only in so much as he deviates from his true province not at all.

And of the critic himself what shall we say?- for as yet we have spoken only the proem- to the true epepea. What can we better say of him than, with Bulwer, that "he must have courage to blame boldly, magnanimity to eschew envy, genius to appreciate, learning to compare, an eye for beauty, an ear for music, and a heart for feeling." Let us add, a talent for analysis and a solemn indifference to abuse.

## BALLADS AND OTHER POEMS

## CRITICISM

By Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, author of "Voices of the Night," "Hyperion," Second edition. John Owen, Cambridge.

"IL Y A A PARIER," says Chamfort, "que toute idee publique, toute convention recue, est une sottise, car elle a convenu au plus grand notore."- One would be safe in wagering that any given public idea is erroneous, for it has been yielded to the clamor of the majority,- and this strictly philosophical, although somewhat French assertion has especial bearing upon the whole race of what are termed maxims and popular proverbs; nine-tenths of which are the quintessence of folly. One of the most deplorably false of them is the antique adage, *De gustibus non est disputandum*- there should be no disputing about taste. Here the idea designed to be conveyed is that any one person has as just right to consider his own taste the true, as has any one other- that taste itself, in short, is an arbitrary something, amenable to no law, and measurable by no definite rules. It must be confessed, however, that the exceedingly vague and impotent treatises which are alone extant, have much to answer for as regards confirming the general error. Not the least important service which, hereafter, mankind will owe to Phrenology, may, perhaps, be recognized in an analysis of the real principles, and a digest of the resulting laws of taste. These principles, in fact, are as clearly traceable, and these laws as really susceptible of system as are any whatever.

In the meantime, the inane adage above mentioned is in no respect more generally, more stupidly, and more pertinaciously quoted than by the admirers of what is termed the "good old Pope," or the "good old Goldsmith school" of poetry, in reference to the bolder, more natural and more ideal compositions of such authors as Coetlogon and Lamartine[12] in France; Herder, Korner, and Uhland, in Germany; Brun and Baggesen in Denmark; Bellman, Tegner, Nyberg[13](2) in Sweden; Keats, Shelley, Coleridge, and Tennyson in England; Lowell and Longfellow in America. "*De gustibus non*," say these "good-old school" fellows; and we have no doubt that their mental translation of the phrase is- "We pity your taste- we pity every body's taste but our own."

[12] We allude here chiefly to the "David" of Coetlogon and only to the "Chute d'un Ange" of Lamartine.

[13](2) Julia Nyberg, author of the "Dikter von Euphrosyne."

It is our purpose hereafter, when occasion shall be afforded us, to controvert in an article of some length, the popular idea that the poets, just mentioned owe to novelty, to trickeries of expression, and to other meretricious effects, their appreciation by certain readers:- to demonstrate (for the matter is susceptible of demonstration) that such poetry and such alone has fulfilled the legitimate office of the muse; has thoroughly satisfied an earnest and unquenchable desire existing in the heart of man. In the present number of our Magazine we have left ourselves barely room to say a few random words of welcome to these "Ballads," by Longfellow, and to tender him, and all such as he, the homage of our most earnest love and admiration.

The volume before us (in whose outward appearance the keen "taste" of genius is evinced with nearly as much precision as in its internal soul) includes, with several brief original pieces, a translation from the Swedish of Tegner. In attempting (what never should be attempted) a literal version of both the words and the metre of this poem, Professor Longfellow has failed to do justice either to his author or himself. He has striven to do what no man ever did well and what, from the nature of the language itself, never can be well done. Unless, for example, we shall come to have an influx of spondees in our English tongue, it will always be impossible to construct an English hexameter. Our spondees, or, we should say, our spondiac words, are rare. In the Swedish they are nearly as abundant as in the Latin and Greek. We have only "compound," "context," "footfall," and a few other similar ones. This is the difficulty; and that it is so will become evident upon reading "The Children of the Lord's Supper," where the sole readable verses are those in which we meet with the rare spondaic dissyllables. We mean to say readable as Hexameters; for many of them will read very well as mere English Dactyls, with certain irregularities.

But within the narrow compass now left us we must not indulge in anything like critical comment. Our readers will be better satisfied perhaps with a few brief extracts from the original poems of the volume- which we give for

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their rare excellence, without pausing now to say in what particulars this excellence exists.

And, like the water's flow

Under December's snow

Came a dull voice of woe,

From the heart's chamber.

So the loud laugh of scorn,

Out of those lips unshorn

From the deep drinking-horn

Blew the foam lightly.

As with his wings aslant

Sails the fierce cormorant

Seeking some rocky haunt,

With his prey laden,

So toward the open main,

Beating to sea again,

Through the wild hurricane,

Bore I the maiden.

Down came the storm and smote amain

The vessel in its strength;

She shuddered and paused like a frightened steed

Then leaped her cable's length.

She drifted a dreary wreck,

And a whooping billow swept the crew

Like icicles from her deck.

He hears the parson pray and preach

He hears his daughter's voice,

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Singing in the village choir,  
And it makes his heart rejoice;  
It sounds to him like her mother's voice  
Singing in Paradise!  
He needs must think of her once more  
How in the grave she lies;  
And with his hard rough hand he wipes  
A tear out of his eyes.  
Thus the flaming forge of life  
Our fortunes must be wrought;  
Thus on its sounding anvil shaped  
Each burning deed and thought.  
The rising moon has hid the stars  
Her level rays like golden bars  
Lie on the landscape green  
With shadows brown between.  
Love lifts the boughs whose shadows deep  
Are life's oblivion, the soul's sleep,  
And kisses the closed eyes  
Of him who slumbering lies.  
Friends my soul with joy remembers!  
How like quivering flames they start,  
When I fan the living embers  
On the hearth—stone of my heart.  
Hearest thou voices on the shore,  
That our ears perceive no more

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Deafened by the cataract's roar?

And from the sky, serene and far

A voice fell like a falling star.

Some of these passages cannot be fully appreciated apart from the context- but we address those who have read the book. Of the translations we have not spoken. It is but right to say, however, that "The Luck of Edenhall" is a far finer poem, in every respect than any of the original pieces. Nor would we have our previous observations misunderstood. Much as we admire the genius of Mr. Longfellow, we are fully sensible of his many errors of affectation and imitation. His artistical skill is great and his ideality high. But his conception of the aims of poesy is all wrong, and this we shall prove at some future day- to our own satisfaction, at least. His didactics are all out of place. He has written brilliant poems- by accident; that is to say when permitting his genius to get the better of his conventional habit of thinking- a habit deduced from German study. We do not mean to say that a didactic moral may not be well made the under-current of a poetical thesis; but that it can never be well put so obtrusively forth, as in the majority of his compositions. There is a young American who, with ideality not richer than that of Longfellow, and with less artistical knowledge, has yet composed far truer poems, merely through the greater propriety of his themes. We allude to James Russell Lowell; and in the number of this Magazine for last month, will be found a ballad entitled "Rosaline," affording an excellent exemplification of our meaning. This composition has unquestionably its defects, and the very defects which are not perceptible in Mr. Longfellow- but we sincerely think that no American poem equals it in the higher elements of song.

In our last number we had some hasty observations on these "Ballads"- observations which we propose, in some measure, to amplify and explain.

It may be remembered that, among other points, we demurred to Mr. Longfellow's themes, or rather to their general character. We found fault with the too obtrusive nature of their didacticism. Some years ago, we urged a similar objection to one or two of the longer pieces of Bryant, and neither time nor reflection has sufficed to modify, in the slightest particular, our conviction upon this topic.

We have said that Mr. Longfellow's conception of the aims of poesy is erroneous; and that thus, labouring at a disadvantage, he does violent wrong to his own high powers; and now the question is, What are his ideas of the aims of the Muse, as we gather these ideas from the general tendency of his poems? It will be at once evident that, imbued with the peculiar spirit of German song (a pure conventionality), he regards the inculcation of a moral as essential. Here we find it necessary to repeat that we have reference only to the general tendency of his compositions; for there are some magnificent exceptions, where, as if by accident, he has permitted his genius to get the better of his conventional prejudice. But didacticism is the prevalent tone of his song. His invention, his imagery, his all, is made subservient to the elucidation of some one or more points (but rarely of more than one) which he looks upon as truth. And that this mode of procedure will find stern defenders should never excite surprise, so long as the world is full to overflowing with cant and conventicles. There are men who will scramble on all fours through the muddiest sloughs of vice to pick up a single apple of virtue. There are things called men who, so long as the sun rolls, will greet with snuffling huzzas every figure that takes upon itself the semblance of truth, even although the figure, in itself only a "stuffed Paddy," be as much out of place as a toga on the statue of Washington, or out of season as rabbits in the days of the dog-star.

Now, with as deep a reverence for "the true" as ever inspired the bosom of mortal man, we would limit, in many respects, its modes of inculcation. We would limit, to enforce them. We would not render them impotent by dissipation. The demands of truth are severe. She has no sympathy with the myrtles. All that is indispensable in song is all with which she has nothing to do. To deck her in gay robes is to render her a harlot. It is but making her a flaunting paradox to wreath her in gems and flowers. Even in stating this our present proposition, we verify our own words- we feel the necessity, in enforcing this truth, of descending from metaphor. Let us then be simple

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and distinct. To convey "the true" we are required to dismiss from the attention all inessentials. We must be perspicuous, precise, terse. We need concentration rather than expansion of mind. We must be calm, unimpassioned, unexcited- in a word, we must be in that peculiar mood which, as nearly as possible, is the exact converse of the poetical. He must be blind indeed who cannot perceive the radical and chasmal difference between the truthful and the poetical modes of inculcation. He must be grossly wedded to conventionalisms who, in spite of this difference, shall still attempt to reconcile the obstinate oils and waters of Poetry and Truth.

Dividing the world of mind into its most obvious and immediately recognisable distinctions, we have the pure intellect, taste and the moral sense. We place taste between the intellect and the moral sense, because it is just this intermediate space which, in the mind, it occupies. It is the connecting link in the triple chain.

It serves to sustain a mutual intelligence between the extremes. It appertains, in strict appreciation, to the former, but is distinguished from the latter by so faint a difference that Aristotle has not hesitated to class some of its operations among the Virtues themselves. But the offices of the trio are broadly marked. Just as conscience, or the moral sense, recognises duty; just as the intellect deals with truth; so is it the part of taste alone to inform us BEAUTY. And Poesy is the handmaiden but of Taste. Yet we would not be misunderstood. This handmaiden is not forbidden to moralise- in her own fashion. She is not forbidden to depict- but to reason and preach of virtue. As of this latter. conscience recognises the obligation, so intellect teaches the expediency, while taste contents herself with displaying the beauty; waging war with vice merely on the ground of its inconsistency with fitness, harmony, proportion- in a word with- 'to kalon.'

An important condition of man's immortal nature is thus, plainly, the sense of the Beautiful. This it is which ministers to his delight in the manifold forms and colours and sounds and sentiments amid which he exists. And, just as the eyes of Amaryllis are repeated in the mirror, or the living lily in the lake, so is the mere record of these forms and colours and sounds and sentiments- so is their mere oral or written repetition a duplicate source of delight. But this repetition is not Poesy. He who shall merely sing with whatever rapture, in however harmonious strains, or with however vivid a truth of imitation, of the sights and sounds which greet him in common with all mankind- he, we say, has yet failed to prove his divine title. There is still a longing unsatisfied, which he has been impotent to fulfil. There is still a thirst unquenchable, which to allay he has shown us no crystal springs. This burning thirst belongs to the immortal essence of man's nature. It is equally a consequence and an indication of his perennial life. It is the desire of the moth for the star. It is not the mere appreciation of the beauty before us. It is a wild effort to reach the beauty above. It is a forethought of the loveliness to come. It is a passion to be satiated by no sublunary sights, or sounds, or sentiments, and the soul thus athirst strives to allay its fever in futile efforts at creation. Inspired with a prescient ecstasy of the beauty beyond the grave, it struggles by multiform novelty of combination among the things and thoughts of Time, to anticipate some portion of that loveliness whose very elements, perhaps, appertain solely to Eternity, and the result of such effort, on the part of souls fittingly constituted, is alone what mankind have agreed to denominate Poetry.

We say this with little fear of contradiction. Yet the spirit of our assertion must be more heeded than the letter. Mankind have seemed to define Poesy in a thousand, and in a thousand conflicting, definitions. But the war is one only of words. Induction is as well applicable to this subject as to the most palpable and utilitarian; and by its sober processes we find that, in respect to compositions which have been really received as poems, the imaginative, or, more popularly, the creative portions alone have ensured them to be so received. Yet these works, on account of these portions, having once been so received and so named, it has happened naturally and inevitably, that other portions totally unpoetic have not only come to be regarded by the popular voice as poetic, but have been made to serve as false standards of perfection in the adjustment of other poetical claims. Whatever has been found in whatever has been received as a poem, has been blindly regarded as *ex statu poetic*. And this is a species of gross error which scarcely could have made its way into any less intangible topic. In fact that license which appertains to the Muse herself, it has been thought decorous, if not sagacious, to indulge in all examination of her character.

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Poesy is thus seen to be a response- unsatisfactory it is true- but still in some measure a response, to a natural and irrepressible demand. Man being what he is, the time could never have been in which poesy was not. Its first element is the thirst for supernal BEAUTY- a beauty which is not afforded the soul by any existing collocation of earth's forms- a beauty which, perhaps, no possible combination of these forms would fully produce. Its second element is the attempt to satisfy this thirst by novel combinations among those forms of beauty which already exist- or by novel combinations of those combinations which our predecessors, toiling in chase of the same phantom have already set in order. We thus clearly deduce the novelty, the originality, the invention, the imagination, or lastly the creation of BEAUTY (for the terms as here employed are synonymous), as the essence of all Poesy. Nor is this idea so much at variance with ordinary opinion as, at first sight, it may appear. A multitude of antique dogmas on this topic will be found when divested of extrinsic speculation, to be easily resolvable into the definition now proposed. We do nothing more than present tangibly the vague clouds of the world's idea. We recognize the idea itself floating, unsettled, indefinite, in every attempt which has yet been made to circumscribe the conception of "Poesy" in words. A striking instance of this is observable in the fact that no definition exists in which either the "beautiful," or some one of those qualities which we have mentioned above designated synonymously with "creation," has not been pointed out as the chief attribute of the Muse. "Invention," however, or "imagination," is by far more commonly insisted upon. The word poesis itself (creation) speaks volumes upon this point. Neither will it be amiss here to mention Count Bielfeld's definition of poetry as "L'art d'exprimer les pensees par la fiction." With this definition (of which the philosophy is profound to a certain extent) the German terms Dichtkunst, the art of fiction, and Dichten, to feign, which are used for "poetry" and "to make verses," are in full and remarkable accordance. It is, nevertheless, in the combination of the two omniprevalent ideas that the novelty and, we believe, the force of our own proposition is to be found.

So far we have spoken of Poesy as of an abstraction alone. As such, it is obvious that it may be applicable in various moods. The sentiment may develop itself in Sculpture, in Painting, in Music, or otherwise. But our present business is with its development in words- that development to which, in practical acceptance, the world has agreed to limit the term. And at this point there is one consideration which induces us to pause. We cannot make up our minds to admit (as some have admitted) the inessentiality of rhythm. On the contrary, the universality of its use in the earliest poetical efforts of all mankind would be sufficient to assure us, not merely of its congeniality with the Muse, or of its adaptation to her purposes, but of its elementary and indispensable importance. But here we must, perforce, content ourselves with mere suggestion; for this topic is of a character which would lead us too far. We have already spoken of Music as one of the moods of poetical development. It is in Music, perhaps, that the soul most nearly attains that end upon which we have commented- the creation of supernal beauty. It may be, indeed, that this august aim is here even partially or imperfectly attained, in fact. The elements of that beauty which is felt in sound, may be the mutual or common heritage of Earth and Heaven. In the soul's struggles at combination it is thus not impossible that a harp may strike notes not unfamiliar to the angels. And in this view the wonder may well be less that all attempts at defining the character or sentiment of the deeper musical impressions have been found absolutely futile. Contenting ourselves, therefore, with the firm conviction that music (in its modifications of rhythm and rhyme) is of so vast a moment in Poesy as never to be neglected by him who is truly poetical- is of so mighty a force in furthering the great aim intended that he is mad who rejects its assistance- content with this idea we shall not pause to maintain its absolute essentiality, for the mere sake of rounding a definition. We will but add, at this point, that the highest possible development of the Poetical Sentiment is to be found in the union of song with music, in its popular sense. The old Bards and Minnesingers possessed, in the fullest perfection, the finest and truest elements of Poesy; and Thomas Moore, singing his own ballads, is but putting the final touch to their completion as poems.

To recapitulate, then, we would define in brief the Poetry of words as the Rhythmical Creation of Beauty. Beyond the limits of Beauty its province does not extend. Its sole arbiter is Taste. With the Intellect or with the Conscience it has only collateral relations. It has no dependence, unless incidentally, upon either Duty or Truth. That our definition will necessarily exclude much of what, through a supine toleration, has been hitherto ranked as poetical, is a matter which affords us not even momentary concern. We address but the thoughtful, and heed only their approval- with our own. If our suggestions are truthful, then "after many days" shall they be understood as



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truth, even though found in contradiction of all that has been hitherto so understood. If false, shall we not be the first to bid them die?

We would reject, of course, all such matters as "Armstrong on Health," a revolting production; Pope's "Essay on Man," which may well be content with the title of an "Essay in Rhyme"; "Hudibras," and other merely humorous pieces. We do not gainsay the peculiar merits of either of these latter compositions- but deny them the position they have held. In a notice of Brainard's Poems, we took occasion to show that the common use of a certain instrument (rhythm) had tended, more than aught else, to confound humorous verse with poetry. The observation is now recalled to corroborate what we have just said in respect to the vast effect or force of melody in itself- an effect which could elevate into even momentary confusion with the highest efforts of mind, compositions such as are the greater number of satires or burlesques.

Of the poets who have appeared most fully instinct with the principles now developed, we may mention Keats as the most remarkable. He is the sole British poet who has never erred in his themes. Beauty is always his aim.

We have thus shown our ground of objection to the general themes of Professor Longfellow. In common with all who claim the sacred title of poet, he should limit his endeavours to the creation of novel moods of beauty, in form, in colour, in sound, in sentiment; for over all this wide range has the poetry of words dominion. To what the world terms prose may be safely and properly left all else. The artist who doubts of his thesis, may always resolve his doubt by the single question- "might not this matter be as well or better handled in prose?" If it may, then is it no subject for the Muse. In the general acceptance of the term Beauty we are content to rest, being careful only to suggest that, in our peculiar views, it must be understood as inclusive of the sublime.

Of the pieces which constitute the present volume there are not more than one or two thoroughly fulfilling the idea above proposed; although the volume as a whole is by no means so chargeable with didacticism as Mr. Longfellow's previous book. We would mention as poems nearly true, "The Village Blacksmith," "The Wreck of the Hesperus," and especially "The Skeleton in Armor." In the first- mentioned we have the beauty of simple-mindedness as a genuine thesis; and this thesis is inimitably handled until the concluding stanza, where the spirit of legitimate poesy is aggrieved in the pointed antithetical deduction of a moral from what has gone before. In "The Wreck of the Hesperus" we have the beauty of child- like confidence and innocence, with that of the father's courage and affection. But, with slight exception, those particulars of the storm here detailed are not poetic subjects. Their thrilling horror belongs to prose, in which it could be far more effectively discussed, as Professor Longfellow may assure himself at any moment by experiment. There are points of a tempest which afford the loftiest and truest poetical themes- points in which pure beauty is found, or, better still, beauty heightened into the sublime, by terror. But when we read, among other similar things, that

The salt sea was frozen on her breast,

The salt tears in her eyes.

we feel, if not positive disgust, at least a chilling sense of the inappropriate. In "The Skeleton in Armor" we find a pure and perfect thesis artistically treated. We find the beauty of bold courage and self-confidence, of love and maiden devotion, of reckless adventure, and finally the life-contemning grief. Combined with all this, we have numerous points of beauty apparently insulated, but all aiding the main effect or impression. The heart is stirred, and the mind does not lament its malinstruction. The metre is simple, sonorous, well-balanced, and fully adapted to the subject. Upon the whole, there are few truer poems than this. It has not one defect- an important one. The prose remarks prefacing the narrative are really necessary. But every work of art should contain within itself all that is requisite for its own comprehension. And this remark is especially true of the ballad. In poems of magnitude the mind of the reader is not, at all times, enabled to include, in one comprehensive survey, the proportions and proper adjustment of the whole. He is pleased, if at all with particular passages; and the sum of his pleasure is compounded of the sums of the pleasurable sentiments inspired by these individual passages in the

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progress of perusal. But, in pieces of less extent, the pleasure is unique, in the proper acceptance of this term- the understanding is employed, without difficulty, in the contemplation of the picture as a whole; and thus its effect will depend, in great measure, upon the perfection of its finish, upon the nice adaptation of its constituent parts, and especially, upon what is rightly termed by Schlegel the unity or totality of interest. But the practice of prefixing explanatory passages is utterly at variance with such unity. By the prefix, we are either put in possession of the subject of the poem, or some hint, historic fact, or suggestion, is thereby afforded, not included in the body of the piece, which, without the hint, is incomprehensible. In the latter case, while perusing the poem, the reader must revert, in mind at least, to the prefix, for the necessary explanation. In the former, the poem being a mere paraphrase of the prefix, the interest is divided between the prefix and the paraphrase. In either instance the totality of effect is destroyed.

Of the other original poems in the volume before us there is none in which the aim of instruction, or truth, has not been too obviously substituted for the legitimate aim, beauty. We have heretofore taken occasion to say that a didactic moral might be happily made the under-current of a poetical theme, and we have treated this point at length in a review of Moore's "Alciphron"; but the moral thus conveyed is invariably an ill effect when obtruding beyond the upper-current of the thesis itself. Perhaps the worst specimen of this obtrusion is given us by our poet in "Blind Bartimeus" and the "Goblet of Life," where it will be observed that the sole interest of the upper-current of meaning depends upon its relation or reference to the under. What we read upon the surface would be *vox et praeterea nihil* in default of the moral beneath. The Greek finales of "Blind Bartimeus" are an affectation altogether inexcusable. What the small, second-hand, Gibbonish pedantry of Byron introduced, is unworthy the imitation of Longfellow.

Of the translations we scarcely think it necessary to speak at all. We regret that our poet will persist in busying himself about such matters. His time might be better employed in original conception. Most of these versions are marked with the error upon which we have commented. This error is, in fact, essentially Germanic. "The Luck of Edenhall," however, is a truly beautiful poem; and we say this with all that deference which the opinion of the "Democratic Review" demands. This composition appears to us one of the very finest. It has all the free, hearty, obvious movement of the true ballad-legend. The greatest force of language is combined in it with the richest imagination, acting in its most legitimate province. Upon the whole, we prefer it even to the "Sword-Song" of Korner. The pointed moral with which it terminates is so exceedingly natural- so perfectly fluent from the incidents- that we have hardly heart to pronounce it in ill-taste. We may observe of this ballad, in conclusion, that its subject is more physical than is usual in Germany. Its images are rich rather in physical than in moral beauty. And this tendency in Song is the true one. It is chiefly, if we are not mistaken- it is chiefly amid forms of physical loveliness (we use the word forms in its widest sense as embracing modifications of sound and colour) that the soul seeks the realisation of its dreams of BEAUTY. It is to her demand in this sense especially, that the poet, who is wise, will most frequently and most earnestly respond.

"The Children of the Lord's Supper" is, beyond doubt, a true and most beautiful poem in great part, while, in some particulars, it is too metaphysical to have any pretension to the name. We have already objected, briefly, to its metre- the ordinary Latin or Greek Hexameter-dactyls and spondees at random, with a spondee in conclusion. We maintain that the hexameter can never be introduced into our language, from the nature of that language itself. This rhythm demands, for English ears, a preponderance of natural spondees. Our tongue has few. Not only does the Latin and Greek, with the Swedish, and some others, abound in them; but the Greek and Roman ear had become reconciled (why or how is unknown) to the reception of artificial spondees- that is to say, spondaic words formed partly of one word and partly of another, or from an excised part of one word. In short, the ancients were content to read as they scanned, or nearly so. It may be safely prophesied that we shall never do this; and thus we shall never admit English hexameters. The attempt to introduce them, after the repeated failures of Sir Philip Sidney and others, is perhaps somewhat discreditable to the scholarship of Professor Longfellow. The "Democratic Review," in saying that he has triumphed over difficulties in this rhythm, has been deceived, it is evident, by the facility with which some of these verses may be read. In glancing over the poem, we do not observe a single verse which can be read, to English ears, as a Greek hexameter. There are many, however, which

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can be well read as mere English dactylic verses; such, for example, as the well-known lines of Byron, commencing

Know ye the / land where the / cypress and / myrtle.

These lines (although full of irregularities) are, in their perfection, formed of three dactyls and a caesura- just as if we should cut short the initial verse of the *Bucolics* thus-

Tityre / tu patu / lae recu / bans-

The "myrtle," at the close of Byron's line, is a double rhyme, and must be understood as one syllable.

Now a great number, of Professor Longfellow's hexameters are merely these dactylic lines, continued for two feet. For example-

Whispered the / race of the / flowers and / merry on / balancing /  
branches.

In this example, also, "branches," which is a double ending, must be regarded as the caesura, or one syllable, of which alone it has the force.

As we have already alluded, in one or two regards, to a notice of these poems which appeared in the "Democratic Review," we may as well here proceed with some few further comments upon the article in question- with whose general tenor we are happy to agree.

The Review speaks of "Maidenhood" as a poem, "not to be understood but at the expense of more time and trouble than a song can justly claim." We are scarcely less surprised at this opinion from Mr. Langtree than we were at the condemnation of "The Luck of Edenhall."

"Maidenhood" is faulty, it appears to us, only on the score of its theme, which is somewhat didactic. Its meaning seems simplicity itself. A maiden on the verge of womanhood hesitating to enjoy life (for which she has a strong appetite) through a false idea of duty, is bidden to fear nothing, having purity of heart as her lion of Una.

What Mr. Langtree styles "an unfortunate peculiarity" in Mr. Longfellow, resulting from "adherence to a false system," has really been always regarded by us as one of his idiosyncratic merits. "In each poem," says the critic, "he has but one idea, which, in the progress of his song, is gradually unfolded, and at last reaches its full development in the concluding lines: this singleness of thought might lead a harsh critic to suspect intellectual barrenness." It leads us, individually, only to a full sense of the artistical power and knowledge of the poet. We confess that now, for the first time, we hear unity of conception objected to as a defect. But Mr. Langtree seems to have fallen into the singular error of supposing the poet to have absolutely but one idea in each of his ballads. Yet how "one idea" can be "gradually unfolded" without other ideas is, to us, a mystery of mysteries. Mr. Longfellow, very properly, has but one leading idea which forms the basis of his poem; but to the aid and development of this one there are innumerable others, of which the rare excellence is that all are in keeping, that none could be well omitted, that each tends to the one general effect. It is unnecessary to say another word upon this topic.

In speaking of "Excelsior," Mr. Langtree (are we wrong in attributing the notice to his very forcible pen?) seems to labour under some similar misconception. "It carries along with it," says he, "a false moral which greatly diminishes its merit in our eyes. The great merit of a picture, whether made with the pencil or pen, is its truth; and this merit does not belong to Mr. Longfellow's sketch. Men of genius may, and probably do, meet with greater difficulties in their struggles with the world than their fellow men who are less highly gifted; but their power of

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overcoming obstacles is proportionately greater, and the result of their laborious suffering is not death but immortality."

That the chief merit of a picture is its truth, is an assertion deplorably erroneous. Even in Painting, which is, more essentially than Poetry, a mimetic art, the proposition cannot be sustained. Truth is not even the aim. Indeed it is curious to observe how very slight a degree of truth is sufficient to satisfy the mind, which acquiesces in the absence of numerous essentials in the thing depicted. An outline frequently stirs the spirit more pleasantly than the most elaborate picture. We need only refer to the compositions of Flaxman and of Retzsch. Here all details are omitted- nothing can be farther from truth. Without even colour the most thrilling effects are produced. In statues we are rather pleased than disgusted with the want of the eyeball. The hair of the Venus de Medicis was gilded. Truth indeed! The grapes of Zeuxis as well as the curtain of Parrhasius were received as indisputable evidence of the truthful ability of these artists- but they were not even classed among their pictures. If truth is the highest aim of either Painting or Poesy, then Jan Steen was a greater artist than Angelo, and Crabbe is a nobler poet than Milton.

But we have not quoted the observation of Mr. Langtree to deny its philosophy; our design was simply to show that he has misunderstood the poet. "Excelsior" has not even a remote tendency to the interpretation assigned it by the critic. It depicts the earnest upward impulse of the soul- an impulse not to be subdued even in Death. Despising danger, resisting pleasure, the youth, bearing the banner inscribed "Excelsior!" (higher still) struggles through all difficulties to an Alpine summit. Warned to be content with the elevation attained, his cry is still "Excelsior!" and even in falling dead on the highest pinnacle, his cry is still "Excelsior!" There is yet an immortal height to be surmounted- an ascent in Eternity. The poet holds in view the idea of never-ending progress. That he is misunderstood is rather the misfortune of Mr. Langtree than the fault of Mr. Longfellow. There is an old adage about the difficulty of one's furnishing an auditor both with matter to be comprehended and brains for its comprehension.

### HAWTHORNE'S TWICE-TOLD TALES

By Nathaniel Hawthorne. James Munroe & Co.: Boston

WE HAVE always regarded the Tale (using this word in its popular acceptance) as affording the best prose opportunity for display of the highest talent. It has peculiar advantages which the novel does not admit. It is, of course, a far finer field than the essay. It has even points of superiority over the poem. An accident has deprived us, this month, of our customary space for review, and thus nipped in the bud a design long cherished of treating this subject in detail; taking Mr. Hawthorne's volumes as a text. In May we shall endeavor to carry out our intention. At present we are forced to be brief.

With rare exception- in the case of Mr. Irving's "Tales of a Traveller" and a few other works of a like cast- we have had no American tales of high merit. We have had no skilful compositions- nothing which could bear examination as works of art. Of twaddle called tale- writing we have had, perhaps more than enough. We have had a superabundance of the Rosa-Matilda effusions- gilt-edged paper all couleur de rose: a full allowance of cut-and-thrust blue-blazing melodramaticisms; a nauseating surfeit of low miniature copying of low life, much in the manner, and with about half the merit, of the Dutch herrings and decayed cheeses of Van Tuyssele- of all this, eheu jam satis!

Mr. Hawthorne's volumes appear misnamed to us in two respects. In the first place they should not have been called "Twice-Told Tales"- for this is a title which will not bear repetition. If in the first collected edition they were twice-told, of course now they are thrice-told.- May we live to hear them told a hundred times. In the second place, these compositions are by no means all "Tales." The most of them are essays properly so called. It would have been wise in their author to have modified his title, so as to have had reference to all included. This point could have been easily arranged.

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But under whatever titular blunders we receive this book, it is most cordially welcome. We have seen no prose composition by any American which can compare with some of these articles in the higher merits, or indeed in the lower; while there is not single piece which would do dishonor to the best of the British essayists.

"The Rill from the Town Pump" which, through the ad captandum nature of its title, has attracted more of the public notice than any other of Mr. Hawthorne's compositions, is perhaps, the least meritorious. Among his best we may briefly mention "The Hollow of the Three Hills" "The Minister's Black Veil"; "Wakefield"; "Mr. Higginbotham's Catastrophe"; "Fancy's Show-Box"; "Dr. Heidegger's Experiment"; "David Swan"; "The Wedding Knell"; and "The White Old Maid." It is remarkable that all of these, with one exception, are from the first volume.

The style of Mr. Hawthorne is purity itself. His tone is singularly effective- wild, plaintive, thoughtful, and in full accordance with his themes. We have only to object that there is insufficient diversity in these themes themselves, or rather in their character. His originality both of incident and reflection is very remarkable; and this trait alone would insure him at least our warmest regard and commendation. We speak here chiefly of the tales; the essays are not so markedly novel. Upon the whole we look upon him as one of the few men of indisputable genius to whom our country has as yet given birth. As such, it will be our delight to do him honor; and lest, in these undigested and cursory remarks, without proof and without explanation, we should appear to do him more honor than is his due, we postpone all farther comment until a more favorable opportunity.

We said a few hurried words about Mr. Hawthorne in our last number, with the design of speaking more fully in the present. We are still, however, pressed for room, and must necessarily discuss his volumes more briefly and more at random than their high merits deserve.

The book professes to be a collection of tales, yet is, in two respects, misnamed. These pieces are now in their third republication, and, of course, are thrice-told. Moreover, they are by no means all tales, either in the ordinary or in the legitimate understanding of the term. Many of them are pure essays; for example, "Sights from a Steeple," "Sunday at Home," "Little Annie's Ramble," "A Rill from the Town Pump," "The Toll-Gatherer's Day," "The Haunted Mind," "The Sister Sister Years," "Snow-Flakes," "Night Sketches," and "Foot-Prints on the Sea-Shore." We mention these matters chiefly on account of their discrepancy with that marked precision and finish by which the body of the work is distinguished.

Of the Essays just named, we must be content to speak in brief. They are each and all beautiful, without being characterized by the polish and adaptation so visible in the tales proper. A painter would at once note their leading or predominant feature, and style it repose. There is no attempt at effect. All is quiet, thoughtful, subdued. Yet this repose may exist simultaneously with high originality of thought; and Mr. Hawthorne has demonstrated the fact. At every turn we meet with novel combinations; yet these combinations never surpass the limits of the quiet. We are soothed as we read; and withal is a calm astonishment that ideas so apparently obvious have never occurred or been presented to us before. Herein our author differs materially from Lamb or Hunt or Hazlitt- who, with vivid originality of manner and expression, have less of the true novelty of thought than is generally supposed, and whose originality, at best, has an uneasy and meretricious quaintness, replete with startling effects unfounded in nature, and inducing trains of reflection which lead to no satisfactory result. The Essays of Hawthorne have much of the character of Irving, with more of originality, and less of finish; while, compared with the Spectator, they have a vast superiority at all points. The Spectator, Mr. Irving, and Mr. Hawthorne have in common that tranquil and subdued manner which we have chosen to denominate repose; but in the case of the two former, this repose is attained rather by the absence of novel combination, or of originality, than otherwise, and consists chiefly in the calm, quiet, unostentatious expression of commonplace thoughts, in an unambitious unadulterated Saxon. In them, by strong effort, we are made to conceive the absence of all. In the essays before us the absence of effort is too obvious to be mistaken, and a strong under-current of suggestion runs continuously beneath the upper stream of the tranquil thesis. In short, these effusions of Mr. Hawthorne are the product of a truly imaginative intellect, restrained, and in some measure repressed, by fastidiousness of taste, by constitutional melancholy and by

indolence.

But it is of his tales that we desire principally to speak. The tale proper, in our opinion, affords unquestionably the fairest field for the exercise of the loftiest talent, which can be afforded by the wide domains of mere prose. Were we bidden to say how the highest genius could be most advantageously employed for the best display of its own powers, we should answer, without hesitation- in the composition of a rhymed poem, not to exceed in length what might be perused in an hour. Within this limit alone can the highest order of true poetry exist. We need only here say, upon this topic, that, in almost all classes of composition, the unity of effect or impression is a point of the greatest importance. It is clear, moreover, that this unity cannot be thoroughly preserved in productions whose perusal cannot be completed at one sitting. We may continue the reading of a prose composition, from the very nature of prose itself, much longer than we can persevere, to any good purpose, in the perusal of a poem. This latter, if truly fulfilling the demands of the poetic sentiment, induces an exaltation of the soul which cannot be long sustained. All high excitements are necessarily transient. Thus a long poem is a paradox. And, without unity of impression, the deepest effects cannot be brought about. Epics were the offspring of an imperfect sense of Art, and their reign is no more. A poem too brief may produce a vivid, but never an intense or enduring impression. Without a certain continuity of effort- without a certain duration or repetition of purpose- the soul is never deeply moved. There must be the dropping of the water upon the rock. De Beranger has wrought brilliant things- pungent and spirit-stirring- but, like all immassive bodies, they lack momentum, and thus fail to satisfy the Poetic Sentiment. They sparkle and excite, but, from want of continuity, fail deeply to impress. Extreme brevity will degenerate into epigrammatism; but the sin of extreme length is even more unpardonable. *In medio tutissimus ibis.*

Were we called upon, however, to designate that class of composition which, next to such a poem as we have suggested, should best fulfil the demands of high genius- should offer it the most advantageous field of exertion- we should unhesitatingly speak of the prose tale, as Mr. Hawthorne has here exemplified it. We allude to the short prose narrative, requiring from a half-hour to one or two hours in its perusal. The ordinary novel is objectionable, from its length, for reasons already stated in substance. As it cannot be read at one sitting, it deprives itself, of course, of the immense force derivable from totality. Worldly interests intervening during the pauses of perusal, modify, annul, or counteract, in a greater or less degree, the impressions of the book. But simple cessation in reading, would, of itself, be sufficient to destroy the true unity. In the brief tale, however, the author is enabled to carry out the fulness of his intention, be it what it may. During the hour of perusal the soul of the reader is at the writer's control. There are no external or extrinsic influences- resulting from weariness or interruption.

A skilful literary artist has constructed a tale. If wise, he has not fashioned his thoughts to accommodate his incidents; but having conceived, with deliberate care, a certain unique or single effect to be wrought out, he then invents such incidents- he then combines such events as may best aid him in establishing this preconceived effect. If his very initial sentence tend not to the out-bringing of this effect, then he has failed in his first step. In the whole composition there should be no word written, of which the tendency, direct or indirect, is not to the one pre-established design. And by such means, with such care and skill, a picture is at length painted which leaves in the mind of him who contemplates it with a kindred art, a sense of the fullest satisfaction. The idea of the tale has been presented unblemished, because undisturbed; and this is an end unattainable by the novel. Undue brevity is just as exceptionable here as in the poem; but undue length is yet more to be avoided.

We have said that the tale has a point of superiority even over the poem. In fact, while the rhythm of this latter is an essential aid in the development of the poem's highest idea- the idea of the Beautiful- the artificialities of this rhythm are an inseparable bar to the development of all points of thought or expression which have their basis in Truth. But Truth is often, and in very great degree, the aim of the tale. Some of the finest tales are tales of ratiocination. Thus the field of this species of composition, if not in so elevated a region on the mountain of Mind, is a table-land of far vaster extent than the domain of the mere poem. Its products are never so rich, but infinitely more numerous, and more appreciable by the mass of mankind. The writer of the prose tale, in short, may bring to his theme a vast variety of modes or inflections of thought and expression- (the ratiocinative, for example, the

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sarcastic or the humorous) which are not only antagonistical to the nature of the poem, but absolutely forbidden by one of its most peculiar and indispensable adjuncts; we allude, of course, to rhythm. It may be added, here, parenthetically, that the author who aims at the purely beautiful in a prose tale is laboring at great disadvantage. For Beauty can be better treated in the poem. Not so with terror, or passion, or horror, or a multitude of such other points. And here it will be seen how full of prejudice are the usual animadversions against those tales of effect, many fine examples of which were found in the earlier numbers of Blackwood. The impressions produced were wrought in a legitimate sphere of action, and constituted a legitimate although sometimes an exaggerated interest. They were relished by every man of genius: although there were found many men of genius who condemned them without just ground. The true critic will but demand that that the design intended be accomplished, to the fullest extent, by the means most advantageously applicable.

We have very few American tales of real merit- we may say, indeed, none, with the exception of "The Tales of a Traveller" of Washington Irving, and these "Twice-Told Tales" of Mr. Hawthorne. Some of the pieces of Mr. John Neal abound in vigor and originality; but in general his compositions of this class are excessively diffuse, extravagant, and indicative of an imperfect sentiment of Art. Articles at random are, now and then, met with in our periodicals which might be advantageously compared with the best effusions of the British Magazines; but, upon the whole, we are far behind our progenitors in this department of literature.

Of Mr. Hawthorne's Tales we would say, emphatically, that they belong to the highest region of Art- and Art subservient to genius of a very lofty order. We had supposed, with good reason for so supposing, that he had been thrust into his present position by one of the impudent cliques which beset our literature, and whose pretensions it is our full purpose to expose at the earliest opportunity, but we have been most agreeably mistaken. We know of few compositions which the critic can more honestly commend than these "Twice-Told Tales." As Americans, we feel proud of the book.

Mr. Hawthorne's distinctive trait is invention, creation, imagination, originality- a trait which, in the literature of fiction, is positively worth all the rest. But the nature of originality, so far as regards its manifestation in letters, is but imperfectly understood. The inventive or original mind as frequently displays itself in novelty of tone as in novelty of matter. Mr. Hawthorne is original at all points.

It would be a matter of some difficulty to designate the best of these tales; we repeat that, without exception, they are beautiful. "Wakefield" is remarkable for the skill with which an old idea- a well-known incident- is worked up or discussed. A man of whims conceives the purpose of quitting his wife and residing incognito, for twenty years, in her immediate neighborhood. Something of this kind actually happened in London. The force of Mr. Hawthorne's tale lies in the analysis of the motives which must or might have impelled the husband to such folly, in the first instance, with the possible causes of his perseverance. Upon this thesis a sketch of singular power has been constructed.

"The Wedding Knell" is full of the boldest imagination- an imagination fully controlled by taste. The most captious critic could find no flaw in this production.

"The Minister's Black Veil" is a masterly composition of which the sole defect is that to the rabble its exquisite skill will be caviare. The obvious meaning of this article will be found to smother its insinuated one. The moral put into the mouth of the dying minister will be supposed to convey the true import of the narrative, and that a crime of dark dye, (having reference to the "young lady") has been committed, is a point which only minds congenial with that of the author will perceive.

"Mr. Higginbotham's Catastrophe" is vividly original and managed most dexterously.

"Dr. Heidegger's Experiment" is exceedingly well imagined, and executed, with surpassing ability. The artist breathes in every line of it.

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"The White Old Maid" is objectionable, even more than the "Minister's Black Veil," on the score of its mysticism. Even with the thoughtful and analytic, there will be much trouble in penetrating its entire import.

"The Hollow of the Three Hills" we would quote in full, had we space;- not as evincing higher talent than any of the other pieces, but as affording an excellent example of the author's peculiar ability. The subject is commonplace. A witch, subjects the Distant and the Past to the view of a mourner. It has been the fashion to describe, in such cases, a mirror in which the images of the absent appear, or a cloud of smoke is made to arise, and thence the figures are gradually unfolded. Mr. Hawthorne has wonderfully heightened his effect by making the ear, in place of the eye, the medium by which the fantasy is conveyed. The head of the mourner is enveloped in the cloak of the witch, and within its magic, folds there arise sounds which have an all-sufficient intelligence. Throughout this article also, the artist is conspicuous- not more in positive than in negative merits. Not only is all done that should be done, but (what perhaps is an end with more difficulty attained) there is nothing done which should not be. Every word tells, and there is not a word which does not tell.

In "Howes Masquerade" we observe something which resembles a plagiarism- but which may be a very flattering coincidence of thought. We quote the passage in question.

"With a dark flush of wrath upon his brow they saw the general draw his sword and advance to meet the figure in the cloak before the latter had stepped one pace upon the floor.

"'Villain, unmuffle yourself,' cried he, 'you pass no further!'"

"The figure without blanching a hair's breadth from the sword which was pointed at his breast, made a solemn pause, and lowered the cape of the cloak from his face, yet not sufficiently for the spectators to catch a glimpse of it. But Sir William Howe had evidently seen enough. The sternness of his countenance gave place to a look of wild amazement, if not horror, while he recoiled several steps from the figure, and let fall his sword upon the floor."

The idea here is, that the figure in the cloak is the phantom or reduplication of Sir William Howe, but in an article called "William Wilson," one of the "Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque," we have not only the same idea, but the same idea similarly presented in several respects. We quote two paragraphs, which our readers may compare with what has been already given.

"The brief moment in which I averted my eyes had been sufficient to produce, apparently, a material change in the arrangement at the upper or farther end of the room. A large mirror, it appeared to me, now stood where none had been perceptible before: and as I stepped up to it in extremity of terror, mine own image, but with features all pale and dabbled in blood, advanced with a feeble and tottering gait to meet me.

"Thus it appeared I say, but was not. It was Wilson, who then stood before me in the agonies of dissolution. Not a line in all the marked and singular lineaments of that face which was not even identically mine own. His mask and cloak lay where he had thrown them, upon the floor."

Here it will be observed, not only are the two general conceptions identical but there are various points of similarity. In each case the figure seen is the wraith or duplication of the beholder. In each case the scene is a masquerade. In each case the figure is cloaked. In each, there is a quarrel- that is to say, angry words pass between the parties. In each the beholder is enraged. In each the cloak and sword fall upon the floor. The "villain, unmuffle yourself," of Mr. H. is precisely paralleled by a passage of "William Wilson."

In the way of objection we have scarcely a word to say of these tales. There is, perhaps, a somewhat too general or prevalent tone- a tone of melancholy and mysticism. The subjects are insufficiently varied. There is not so much of versatility evinced as we might well be warranted in expecting from the high powers of Mr. Hawthorne.



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But beyond these trivial exceptions we have really none to make. The style is purity itself. Force abounds. High imagination gleams from every page. Mr. Hawthorne is a man of the truest genius. We only regret that the limits of our Magazine will not permit us to pay him that full tribute of commendation, which, under other circumstances, we should be so eager to pay.

### THE AMERICAN DRAMA

A BIOGRAPHER of Berryer calls him "l'homme qui, dans ses description, demande le plus grande quantité possible d'antithèse,"- but that ever-recurring topic, the decline of the drama, seems to have consumed of late more of the material in question than would have sufficed for a dozen prime ministers- even admitting them to be French. Every trick of thought and every harlequinade of phrase have been put in operation for the purpose "de nier ce qui est, et d'expliquer ce qui n'est pas."

Ce qui n'est pas:- for the drama has not declined. The facts and the philosophy of the case seem to be these. The great opponent to Progress is Conservatism. In other words- the great adversary of Invention is Imitation: the propositions are in spirit identical. Just as an art is imitative, is it stationary. The most imitative arts are the most prone to repose and the converse. Upon the utilitarian- upon the business arts, where Necessity impels, Invention, Necessity's well-understood offspring, is ever in attendance. And the less we see of the mother the less we behold of the child. No one complains of the decline of the art of Engineering. Here the Reason, which never retrogrades or reposes, is called into play. But let us glance at Sculpture. We are not worse here, than the ancients, let pedantry say what it may (the Venus of Canova is worth, at any time, two of that of Cleomenes), but it is equally certain that we have made, in general, no advances; and Sculpture, properly considered, is perhaps the most imitative of all arts which have a right to the title of Art at all. Looking next at Painting, we find that we have to boast of progress only in the ratio of the inferior imitativeness of Painting, when compared with Sculpture. As far indeed as we have any means of judging, our improvement has been exceedingly little, and did we know anything of ancient Art in this department, we might be astonished at discovering that we had advanced even far less than we suppose. As regards Architecture, whatever progress we have made has been precisely in those particulars which have no reference to imitation:- that is to say, we have improved the utilitarian and not the ornamental provinces of the art. Where Reason predominated, we advanced; where mere Feeling or Taste was the guide, we remained as we were.

Coming to the Drama, we shall see that in its mechanisms we have made progress, while in its spirituality we have done little or nothing for centuries certainly- and, perhaps, little or nothing for thousands of years. And this is because what we term the spirituality of the drama is precisely its imitative portion- is exactly that portion which distinguishes it as one of the principal of the imitative arts.

Sculptors, painters, dramatists, are, from the very nature of their material- their spiritual material-imitators-conservatists-prone to repose in old Feeling and in antique Taste. For this reason- and for this reason only- the arts of Sculpture, Painting, and the Drama have not advanced- or have advanced feebly, and inversely in the ratio of their imitativeness.

But it by no means follows that either has declined. All seem to have declined, because they have remained stationary while the multitudinous other arts (of reason) have flitted so rapidly by them. In the same manner the traveller by railroad can imagine that the trees by the wayside are retrograding. The trees in this case are absolutely stationary but the Drama has not been altogether so, although its progress has been so slight as not to interfere with the general effect- that of seeming retrogradation or decline.

This seeming retrogradation, however, is to all practical intents an absolute one. Whether the Drama has declined, or whether it has merely remained stationary, is a point of no importance, so far as concerns the public encouragement of the Drama. It is unsupported, in either case, because it does not deserve support.

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But if this stagnation, or deterioration, grows out of the very idiosyncrasy of the drama itself, as one of the principal of the imitative arts, how is it possible that a remedy shall be applied- since it is clearly impossible to alter the nature of the art, and yet leave it the art which it now is?

We have already spoken of the improvements effected in Architecture, in all its utilitarian departments, and in the Drama, at all the points of its mechanism. "Wherever Reason predominates, we advance; where mere Feeling or Taste is the guide, we remain as we are." We wish now to suggest that, by the engrafting of Reason upon Feeling and Taste, we shall be able, and thus alone shall be able, to force the modern drama into the production of any profitable fruit.

At present, what is it we do? We are content if, with Feeling and Taste, a dramatist does as other dramatists have done. The most successful of the more immediately modern playwrights has been Sheridan Knowles, and to play Sheridan Knowles seems to be the highest ambition of our writers for the stage. Now the author of "The Hunchback" possesses what we are weak enough to term the true "dramatic feeling," and this true dramatic feeling he has manifested in the most preposterous series of imitations of the Elizabethan drama by which ever mankind were insulted and begulled. Not only did he adhere to the old plots, the old characters, the old stage conventionalities throughout; but he went even so far as to persist in the obsolete phraseologies of the Elizabethan period- and, just in proportion to his obstinacy and absurdity at all points, did we pretend to like him the better, and pretend to consider him a great dramatist.

Pretend- for every particle of it was pretence. Never was enthusiasm more utterly false than that which so many "respectable audiences" endeavoured to get up for these plays- endeavoured to get up, first, because there was a general desire to see the drama revive, and secondly, because we had been all along entertaining the fancy that "the decline of the drama" meant little, if anything, else than its deviation from the Elizabethan routine- and that, consequently, the return to the Elizabethan routine was, and of necessity must be, the revival of the drama.

But if the principles we have been at some trouble in explaining are true- and most profoundly do we feel them to be so- if the spirit of imitation is, in fact, the real source, of the drama's stagnation- and if it is so because of the tendency in in all imitation to render Reason subservient to Feeling and to Taste it is clear that only by deliberate counteracting of the spirit, and of the tendency of the spirit, we can hope to succeed in the drama's revival.

The first thing necessary is to burn or bury the "old models," and to forget, as quickly as possible, that ever a play has been penned. The second thing is to consider de novo what are the capabilities of the drama- not merely what hitherto have been its conventional purposes. The third and last point has reference to the composition of a play (showing to the fullest extent these capabilities) conceived and constructed with Feeling and with Taste, but with Feeling and Taste guided and controlled in every particular by the details of Reason- of Common Sense- in a word, of a Natural Art.

It is obvious, in the meantime, that towards the good end in view much may be effected by discriminative criticism on what has already been done. The field, thus stated, is, of course, practically illimitable- and to Americans the American drama is the special point of interest. We propose, therefore, in a series of papers, to take a somewhat deliberate survey of some few of the most noticeable American plays. We shall do this without reference either to the date of the composition or its adaptation for the closet or the stage. We shall speak with absolute frankness both of merits and defects- our principal object being understood not as that of mere commentary on the individual play- but on the drama in general, and on the American drama in especial, of which each individual play is a constituent part. We will commence at once with

### TORTESA, THE USURER

This is the third dramatic attempt of Mr. Willis, and may be regarded as particularly successful, since it has received, both on the stage and in the closet, no stinted measure of commendation. This success, as well as the

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high reputation of the author, will justify us in a more extended notice of the play than might, under other circumstances, be desirable.

The story runs thus:- Tortesa, a usurer of Florence, and whose character is a mingled web of good and evil feelings, gets into his possession the palace and lands of a certain Count Falcone. The usurer would wed the daughter (Isabella) of Valcone, not through love, but in his own words,

"To please a devil that inhabits him—"

in fact, to mortify the pride of the nobility, and avenge himself of their scorn. He therefore bargains with Falcone [a narrow-souled villain] for the hand of Isabella. The deed of the Falcone property is restored to the Count upon an agreement that the lady shall marry the usurer- this contract being invalid should Falcone change his mind in regard to the marriage, or should the maiden demur- but valid should the wedding be prevented through any fault of Tortesa, or through any accident not springing from the will of the father or child. The first Scene makes us aware of this bargain, and introduces us to Zippa, a glover's daughter, who resolves, with a view of befriending Isabella, to feign a love for Tortesa [which, in fact she partially feels], hoping thus to break off the match.

The second Scene makes us acquainted with a young painter (Angelo), poor, but of high talents and ambition, and with his servant (Tomaso), an old bottle-loving rascal, entertaining no very exalted opinion of his master's abilities. Tomaso does some injury to a picture, and Angelo is about to run him through the body when he is interrupted by a sudden visit from the Duke of Florence, attended by Falcone. The Duke is enraged at the murderous attempt, but admires the paintings in the studio. Finding that the rage of the great man will prevent his patronage if he knows the aggressor as the artist, Angelo passes off Tomaso as himself (Angelo), making an exchange of names. This is a point of some importance, as it introduces the true Angelo to a job which he has long coveted- the painting of the portrait of Isabella, of whose beauty he had become enamoured through report. The Duke wishes the portrait painted. Falcone, however, on account of a promise to Tortesa, would have objected to admit to his daughter's presence the handsome Angelo, but in regard to Tomaso has no scruple. Supposing Tomaso to be Angelo and the artist, the Count writes a note to Isabella, requiring her "to admit the painter Angelo." The real Angelo is thus admitted. He and the lady love at first sight (much in the manner of Romeo and Juliet), each ignorant of the other's attachment.

The third Scene of the second Act is occupied with a conversation between Falcone and Tortesa, during which a letter arrives from the Duke, who, having heard of the intended sacrifice of Isabella, offers to redeem the Count's lands and palace, and desires him to preserve his daughter for a certain Count Julian. But Isabella,- who, before seeing Angelo, had been willing to sacrifice herself for her father's sake, and who, since seeing him, had entertained hopes of escaping the hateful match through means of a plot entered into by herself and Zippa-Isabella, we say, is now in despair. To gain time, she at once feigns a love for the usurer, and indignantly rejects the proposal of the Duke. The hour for the wedding draws near. The lady has prepared a sleeping potion, whose effects resemble those of death. (Romeo and Juliet.) She swallows it- knowing that her supposed corpse would lie at night, pursuant to an old custom, in the sanctuary of the cathedral; and believing that Angelo- whose love for herself she has elicited, by a stratagem, from his own lips- will watch by the body, in the strength of his devotion. Her ultimate design (we may suppose, for it is not told) is to confess all to her lover on her revival, and throw herself upon his protection- their marriage being concealed, and herself regarded as dead by the world. Zippa, who really loves Angelo- (her love for Tortesa, it must be understood, is a very equivocal feeling, for the fact cannot be denied that Mr. Willis makes her love both at the same time)- Zippa, who really loves Angelo- who has discovered his passion for Isabella- and who, as well as that lady, believes that the painter will watch the corpse in the cathedral,- determines, through jealousy, to prevent his so doing, and with this view informs Tortesa that she has learned it to be Angelo's design to steal the body for purposes,- in short, as a model to be used in his studio. The usurer, in consequence, sets a guard at the doors of the cathedral. This guard does, in fact, prevent the lover from watching the corpse, but, it appears, does not prevent the lady, on her revival and disappointment in not seeing the one she sought, from passing unperceived from the church. Weakened by her long sleep, she

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wanders aimlessly through the streets, and at length finds herself, when just sinking with exhaustion, at the door of her father. She has no resource but to knock. The Count, who here, we must say, acts very much as Thimble of old- the knight, we mean, of the "scolding wife"- maintains that she is dead, and shuts the door in her face. In other words, he supposes it to be the ghost of his daughter who speaks; and so the lady is left to perish on the steps. Meantime Angelo is absent from home, attempting to get access to the cathedral; and his servant Tomaso takes the opportunity of absenting himself also, and of indulging his bibulous propensities while perambulating the town. He finds Isabella as we left her, and through motives which we will leave Mr. Willis to explain, conducts her unresistingly to Angelo's residence, and- deposits her in Angelo's bed. The artist now returns- Tomaso is kicked out of doors- and we are not told, but left to presume, that a fun explanation and perfect understanding are brought about between the lady and her lover.

We find them, next morning, in the studio, where stands, leaning against an easel the portrait (a full length) of Isabella, with curtains adjusted before it. The stage-directions, moreover, inform us that "the black wall of the room is such as to form a natural ground for the picture." While Angelo is occupied in retouching it, he is interrupted by the arrival of Tortesa with a guard, and is accused of having stolen the corpse from the sanctuary- the lady, meanwhile, having stepped behind the curtain. The usurer insists upon seeing the painting, with a view of ascertaining whether any new touches had been put upon it, which would argue an examination, post mortem, of those charms of neck and bosom which the living Isabella would not have unveiled. Resistance in vain- the curtain is torn down; but, to the surprise of Angelo, the lady herself is discovered, "with her hands crossed on her breast, and her eyes fixed on the ground, standing motionless in the frame which had contained the picture." The tableau we are to believe, deceives Tortesa, who steps back to contemplate what he supposes to be the portrait of his betrothed. In the meantime, the guards, having searched the house, find the veil which had been thrown over the imagined corpse in the sanctuary, and upon this evidence the artist is carried before the Duke. Here he is accused, not only of sacrilege, but of the murder of Isabella, and is about to be condemned to death, when his mistress comes forward in person; thus resigning herself to the usurer to save the life of her lover. But the noble nature of Tortesa now breaks forth; and, smitten with admiration of the lady's conduct, as well as convinced that her love for himself was feigned, he resigns her to Angelo- although now feeling and acknowledging for the first time that a fervent love has, in his own bosom, assumed the place of the misanthropic ambition which, hitherto, had alone actuated him in seeking her hand. Moreover, he endows Isabella with the lands of her father Falcone. The lovers are thus made happy. The usurer weds Zippa; and the curtain drops upon the promise of the Duke to honour the double nuptials with his presence.

This story, as we have given it, hangs better together (Mr. Willis will pardon our modesty), and is altogether more easily comprehended, than in the words of the play itself. We have really put the best face upon the matter, and presented the whole in the simplest and clearest light in our power. We mean to say that "Tortesa" (partaking largely, in this respect, of the drama of Cervantes and Calderon) is over-clouded- rendered misty- by a world of unnecessary and impertinent intrigue. This folly was adopted by the Spanish comedy, and is imitated by us, with the idea of imparting "action," "business," "vivacity." But vivacity, however desirable, can be attained in many other ways, and is dearly purchased, indeed, when the price is intelligibility.

The truth is that cant has never attained a more owl-like dignity than in the discussion of dramatic principle. A modern stage critic is nothing, if not a lofty contemner of all things simple and direct. He delights in mystery- revels in mystification- has transcendental notions concerning P. S. and O. P., and talks about "stage business and stage effect" as if he were discussing the differential calculus. For much of all this we are indebted to the somewhat overprofound criticisms of Augustus William Schlegel.

But the dicta of common sense are of universal application, and, touching this matter of intrigue, if, from its superabundance, we are compelled, even in the quiet and critical perusal of a play, to pause frequently and reflect long- to re-read passages over and over again, for the purpose of gathering their bearing upon the whole- of maintaining in our mind a general connection- what but fatigue can result from the exertion? How, then, when we come to the representation?- when these passages- trifling, perhaps, in themselves, but important when considered

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in relation to the plot- are hurried and blurred over in the stuttering enunciation of some miserable rantipole, or omitted altogether through the constitutional lapse of memory so peculiar to those lights of the age and stage, bedight (from being of no conceivable use) supernumeraries? For it must be borne in mind that these bits of intrigue (we use the term in the sense of the German critics) appertain generally, indeed altogether, to the after thoughts of the drama- to the underplots- are met with consequently, in the mouth of the lackeys and chambermaids- and are thus consigned to the tender mercies of the stellae minores. Of course we get but an imperfect idea of what is going on before our eyes. Action after action ensues whose mystery we can not unlock without the little key which these barbarians have thrown away and lost. Our weariness increases in proportion to the number of these embarrassments, and if the play escape damnation at all it escapes in spite of that intrigue to which, in nine cases out of ten, the author attributes his success, and which he will persist in valuing exactly in proportion to the misapplied labour it has cost him.

But dramas of this kind are said, in our customary parlance, to "abound in plot." We have never yet met any one, however, who could tell us what precise ideas he connected with the phrase. A mere succession of incidents, even the most spirited, will no more constitute a plot than a multiplication of zeros, even the most infinite, will result in the production of a unit. This all will admit- but few trouble themselves to think further. The common notion seems to be in favour of mere complexity; but a plot, properly understood, is perfect only inasmuch as we shall find ourselves unable to detach from it or disarrange any single incident involved, without destruction to the mass.

This we say is the point of perfection- a point never yet attained, but not on that account unattainable. Practically, we may consider a plot as of high excellence, when no one of its component parts shall be susceptible of removal without detriment to the whole. Here, indeed, is a vast lowering of the demand- and with less than this no writer of refined taste should content himself.

As this subject is not only in itself of great importance, but will have at all points a bearing upon what we shall say hereafter, in the examination of various plays, we shall be pardoned for quoting from the "Democratic Review" some passages (of our own which enter more particularly into the rationale of the subject:-

"All the Bridgewater treatises have failed in noticing the great idiosyncrasy in the Divine system of adaptation:- that idiosyncrasy which stamps the adaptation as divine, in distinction from that which is the work of merely human constructiveness. I speak of the complete mutuality of adaptation. For example:- in human constructions, a particular cause has a particular effect- a particular purpose brings about a particular object; but we see no reciprocity. The effect does not react upon the cause- the object does not change relations with the purpose. In Divine constructions, the object is either object or purpose as we choose to regard it, while the purpose is either purpose or object; so that we can never (abstractly- without concretion- without reference to facts of the moment) decide which is which.

"For secondary example:- In polar climates, the human frame, to maintain its animal heat, requires, for combustion in the capillary system, an abundant supply of highly azotized food, such as train oil. Again:- in polar climates nearly the sole food afforded man is the oil of abundant seals and whales. Now whether is oil at hand because imperatively demanded? or whether is it the only thing demanded because the only thing to be obtained? It is impossible to say:- there is an absolute reciprocity of adaptation for which we seek in vain among the works of man.

"The Bridgewater tractists may have avoided this point, on account of its apparent tendency to overthrow the idea of cause in general- consequently of a First Cause-of God. But it is more probable that they have failed to perceive what no one preceding them has, to my knowledge, perceived.

"The pleasure which we derive from any exertion of human ingenuity, is in the direct ratio of the approach to this species of reciprocity between cause and effect. In the construction of plot, for example, in fictitious literature, we should aim at so arranging the points, or incidents, that we cannot distinctly see, in respect to any one of them,

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whether that one depends from any one other or upholds it. In this sense, of course, perfection of plot is unattainable in fact- because Man is the constructor. The plots of God are perfect. The Universe is a plot of God."

The pleasure derived from the contemplation of the unity resulting from plot is far more intense than is ordinarily supposed, and, as in Nature we meet with no such combination of incident, appertains to a very lofty region of the ideal. In speaking thus we have not said that plot is more than an adjunct to the drama- more than a perfectly distinct and separable source of pleasure. It is not an essential. In its intense artificiality it may even be conceived injurious in a certain degree (unless constructed with consummate skill) to that real lifelikeness which is the soul of the drama of character. Good dramas have been written with very little plot- capital dramas might be written with none at all. Some plays of high merit, having plot, abound in irrelevant incident- in incident, we mean, which could be displaced or removed altogether without effect upon the plot itself, and yet are by no means objectionable as dramas; and for this reason- that the incidents are evidently irrelevant- obviously episodic. Of their digressive nature the spectator is so immediately aware that he views them, as they arise, in the simple light of interlude, and does not fatigue his attention by attempting to establish for them a connection, or more than an illustrative connection, with the great interests of the subject. Such are the plays of Shakespeare. But all this is very different from that irrelevancy of intrigue which disfigures and very usually damns the work of the unskilful artist. With him the great error lies in inconsequence. Underplot is piled upon underplot (the very word is a paradox), and all to no purpose- to no end. The interposed incidents have no ultimate effect upon the main ones. They may hang upon the mass- they may even coalesce with it, or, as in some intricate cases, they may be so intimately blended as to be lost amid the chaos which they have been instrumental in bringing about- but still they have no portion in the plot, which exists, if at all, independently of their influence. Yet the attempt is made by the author to establish and demonstrate a dependence- an identity, and it is the obviousness of this attempt which is the cause of weariness in the spectator, who, of course, cannot at once see that his attention is challenged to no purpose- that intrigues so obtrusively forced upon it are to be found, in the end, without effect upon the leading interests of the day.

"Tortosa" will afford us plentiful examples of this irrelevancy of intrigue- of this misconception of the nature and of the capacities of plot. We have said that our digest of the story is more easy of comprehension than the detail of Mr. Willis. If so, it is because we have forbore to give such portions as had no influence upon the whole. These served but to embarrass the narrative and fatigue the attention. How much was irrelevant is shown by the brevity of the space in which we have recorded, somewhat at length, all the influential incidents of a drama of five acts. There is scarcely a scene in which is not to be found the germ of an underplot- a germ, however, which seldom proceeds beyond the condition of a bud, or, if so fortunate as to swell into a flower, arrives, in no single instance, at the dignity of fruit. Zippa, a lady altogether without character (dramatic), is the most pertinacious of all conceivable concoctors of plans never to be matured- of vast designs that terminate in nothing- of cul-de-sac machinations. She plots in one page and counter-plots in the next. She schemes her way from P. S. to O. P., and intrigues perseveringly from the footlights to the slips. A very singular instance of the inconsequence of her manoeuvres is found towards the conclusion of the play. The whole of the second scene (occupying five pages), in the fifth act, is obviously introduced for the purpose of giving her information, through Tomaso's means, of Angelo's arrest for the murder of Isabella. Upon learning his danger she rushes from the stage, to be present at the trial, exclaiming that her evidence can save his life. We, the audience, of course applaud, and now look with interest to her movements in the scene of the judgment-hall. She, Zippa, we think, is somebody after all; she will be the means of Angelo's salvation; she will thus be the chief unraveller of the plot. All eyes are bent, therefore, upon Zippa- but alas! upon the point at issue, Zippa does not so much as open her mouth. It is scarcely too much to say that not a single action of this impertinent little busybody has any real influence upon the play;- yet she appears upon every occasion- appearing only to perplex.

Similar things abound; we should not have space even to allude to them all. The whole conclusion of the play is supererogatory. The immensity of pure fuss with which it is overloaded forces us to the reflection that all of it might have been avoided by one word of explanation to the Duke an amiable man who admires the talents of Angelo, and who, to prevent Isabella's marrying against her will, had previously offered to free Falcone of his

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bonds to the usurer. That he would free him now, and thus set all matters straight, the spectator cannot doubt for an instant, and he can conceive no better reason why explanations are not made than that Mr. Willis does not think proper they should be. In fact, the whole drama is exceedingly ill motivirt.

We have already mentioned an inadvertence, in the fourth Act, where Isabella is made to escape from the sanctuary through the midst of guards who prevented the ingress of Angelo. Another occurs where Falcone's conscience is made to reprove him, upon the appearance of his daughter's supposed ghost, for having occasioned her death by forcing her to marry against her will. The author had forgotten that Falcone submitted to the wedding, after the Duke's interposition, only upon Isabella's assurance that she really loved the usurer. In the third Scene, too, of the first Act, the imagination of the spectator is no doubt a little taxed when he finds Angelo, in the first moment of his introduction to the palace of Isabella, commencing her portrait by laying on colour after colour, before he has made any attempt at an outline. In the last Act, moreover, Tortesa gives to Isabella a deed

"Of the Falcone palaces and lands,

And all the money forfeit by Falcone."

This is a terrible blunder, and the more important as upon this act of the usurer depends the development of his newborn sentiments of honour and virtue- depends, in fact, the most salient point of the play. Tortesa, we say, gives to Isabella the lands forfeited by Falcone; but Tortesa was surely not very generous in giving what, clearly, was not his own to give. Falcone had not forfeited the deed, which had been restored to him by the usurer, and which was then in his (Falcone's) possession. Here Tortesa:-

He put it in the bond,

That if, by any humour of my own,

Or accident that came not from himself,

Or from his daughter's will, the match were marred,

His tenure stood intact."

Now Falcone is still resolute for the match; but this new generous "humour" of Tortesa induces him (Tortesa) to decline it. Falcone's tenure is then intact; he retains the deed, the usurer is giving away property not his own.

As a drama of character, "Tortesa" is by no means open to so many objections as when we view it in the light of its plot; but it is still faulty. The merits are so exceedingly negative, that it is difficult to say anything about them. The Duke is nobody, Falcone, nothing; Zippa, less than nothing. Angelo may be regarded simply as the medium through which Mr. Willis conveys to the reader his own glowing feelings- his own refined and delicate fancy- (delicate, yet bold)- his own rich voluptuousness of sentiment- a voluptuousness which would offend in almost any other language than that in which it is so skilfully apparelled. Isabella is- the heroine of the Hunchback. The revolution in the character of Tortesa- or rather the final triumph of his innate virtue- is a dramatic point far older than the hills. It may be observed, too, that although the representation of no human character should be quarrelled with for its inconsistency, we yet require that the inconsistencies be not absolute antagonisms to the extent of neutralization: they may be permitted to be oils and waters, but they must not be alkalis and acids. When, in the course of the denouement, the usurer bursts forth into an eloquence virtue- inspired, we cannot sympathize very heartily in his fine speeches, since they proceed from the mouth of the self-same egotist who, urged by a disgusting vanity, uttered so many sotticisms (about his fine legs, etc.) in the earlier passages of the play. Tomaso is, upon the whole, the best personage. We recognize some originality in his conception, and conception was seldom more admirably carried out.

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One or two observations at random. In the third Scene of the fifth Act, Tomaso, the buffoon, is made to assume paternal authority over Isabella (as usual, without sufficient purpose), by virtue of a law which Tortesa thus expounds:-

"My gracious liege, there is a law in Florence

That if a father, for no guilt or shame,

Disown and shut his door upon his daughter,

She is the child of him who succours her,

Who by the shelter of a single night,

Becomes endowed with the authority

Lost by the other."

No one, of course, can be made to believe that any such stupid law as this ever existed either in Florence or Timbuctoo; but, on the ground que le vrai n'est pas toujours le vraisemblable, we say that even its real existence would be no justification of Mr. Willis. It has an air of the far-fetched- of the desperate- which a fine taste will avoid as a pestilence. Very much of the same nature is the attempt of Tortesa to extort a second bond from Falcone. The evidence which convicts Angelo of murder is ridiculously frail. The idea of Isabella's assuming the place of the portrait, and so deceiving the usurer, is not only glaringly improbable, but seems adopted from the "Winter's Tale." But in this latter-play, the deception is at least possible, for the human figure but imitates a statue. What, however, are we to make of Mr. W.'s stage direction about the back wall's being "so arranged as to form a natural ground for the picture"? Of course, the very slightest movement of Tortesa (and he makes many) would have annihilated the illusion by disarranging the perspective, and in no manner could this latter have been arranged at all for more than one particular point of view- in other words, for more than one particular person in the whole audience. The "asides," moreover, are unjustifiably frequent. The prevalence of this folly (of speaking aside) detracts as much from the acting merit of our drama generally as any other inartisticity. It utterly destroys verisimilitude. People are not in the habit of soliloquising aloud- at least, not to any positive extent; and why should an author have to be told, what the slightest reflection would teach him, that an audience, by dint of no imagination, can or will conceive that what is sonorous in their own ears at the distance of fifty feet cannot be heard by an actor at the distance of one or two?

Having spoken thus of "Tortesa" in terms of nearly unmitigated censure- our readers may be surprised to hear us say that we think highly of the drama as a whole- and have little hesitation in ranking it before most of the dramas of Sheridan Knowles. Its leading faults are those of the modern drama generally- they are not peculiar to itself- while its great merits are. If in support of our opinion we do not cite points of commendation, it is because those form the mass of the work. And were we to speak of fine passages, we should speak of the entire play. Nor by "fine passages" do we mean passages of merely fine language, embodying fine sentiment, but such as are replete with truthfulness, and teem with the loftiest qualities of the dramatic art. Points- capital points abound; and these have far more to do with the general excellence of a play than a too speculative criticism has been willing to admit. Upon the whole, we are proud of "Tortesa"- and her again, for the fiftieth time at least, record our warm admiration of the abilities of Mr. Willis.

We proceed now to Mr. Longfellow's

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The reputation of its author as a poet, and as a graceful writer of prose, is, of course, long and deservedly established- but as a dramatist he was unknown before the publication of this play. Upon its original appearance, in Graham's Magazine, the general opinion was greatly in favour- if not exactly of "The Spanish Student"- at all events of the writer of "Outre-Mer." But this general opinion is the most equivocal thing in the world. It is never self-formed. It has very seldom indeed an original development. In regard to the work of an already famous or infamous author it decides, to be sure, with a laudable promptitude; making up all the mind that it has, by reference to the reception of the author's immediately previous publication- making up thus the ghost of a mind pro tem.- a species of critical shadow that fully answers, nevertheless, all the purposes of a substance itself until the substance itself shall be forthcoming. But beyond this point the general opinion can only be considered that of the public, as a man may call a book his, having bought it. When a new writer arises, the shop of the true, thoughtful or critical opinion is not simultaneously thrown away- is not immediately set up. Some weeks elapse; and, during this interval, the public, at a loss where to procure an opinion of the debutante, have necessarily no opinion of him at all for the nonce.

The popular voice, then, which ran so much in favour of "The Spanish Student," upon its original issue, should be looked upon as merely the ghost pro tem.- as based upon critical decisions respecting the previous works of the author- as having reference in no manner to "The Spanish Student" itself- and thus as utterly meaningless and valueless per se.

The few, by which we mean those who think, in contradistinction from the many who think they think- the few who think at first hand, and thus twice before speaking at all- these received the play with a commendation somewhat less pronounced- somewhat more guardedly qualified- than Professor Longfellow might have desired, or may have been taught to expect. Still the composition was approved upon the whole. The few words of censure were very far indeed from amounting to condemnation. The chief defect insisted upon was the feebleness of the denouement, and, generally, of the concluding scenes, as compared with the opening passages. We are not sure, however, that anything like detailed criticism has been attempted in the case- nor do we propose now to attempt it. Nevertheless, the work has interest, not only within itself, but as the first dramatic effort of an author who has remarkably succeeded in almost every other department of light literature than that of the drama. It may be as well, therefore, to speak of it, if not analytically, at least somewhat in detail; and we cannot, perhaps, more suitably commence than by a quotation, without comment of some of the finer passages:

"And, though she is a virgin outwardly,

Within she is a sinner, like those panels

Of doors and altar-pieces the old monks

Painted in convents, with the Virgin Mary

On the outside, and on the inside Venus."

"I believe

That woman, in her deepest degradation,

Holds something sacred, something undefiled,

Some pledge and keepsake of her higher nature,

And, like the diamond in the dark, retains

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Some quenchless gleam of the celestial light."

"And we shall sit together unmolested,  
And words of true love pass from tongue to tongue  
As singing birds from one bough to another."

"Our feelings and our thoughts  
Tend ever on and rest not in the Present,  
As drops of rain fall into some dark well,  
And from below comes a scarce audible sound,  
So fall our thoughts into the dark  
Hereafter, And their mysterious echo reaches us."

"Her tender limbs are still, and, on her breast,  
The cross she prayed to, ere she fell asleep,  
Rises or falls with the soft tide of dreams,  
Like a light barge safe moored."

"Hark! how the large and ponderous mace of Time  
Knocks at the golden portals of the day!"

"The lady Violante bathed in tears  
Of love and anger, like the maid of Colchis,  
Whom thou, another faithless Argonaut,  
Having won that golden fleece, a woman's love,  
Desertest for this Glauce."

"I read, or sit in reverie and watch  
The changing colour of the waves that break  
Upon the idle sea-shore of the mind."

"I will forget her. All dear recollections  
Pressed in my heart, like flowers within a book,

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Shall be tom out and scattered to the winds."

"Oh yes! I see it now—

Yet rather with my heart than with mine eyes,

So faint it is. And all my thoughts sail thither,

Freighted with prayers and hopes, and forward urged,

Against all stress of accident, as, in

The Eastern Tale, against the wind and tide

Great ships were drawn to the Magnetic Mountains."

"But there are brighter dreams than those of Fame,

Which are the dreams of Love! Out of the heart

Rises the bright ideal of these dreams,

As from some woodland fount a spirit rises

And sinks again into its silent deeps,

Ere the enamoured knight can touch her robe!

'Tis this ideal that the soul of Man,

Like the enamoured knight beside the fountain,

Waits for upon the margin of Life's stream;

Waits to behold her rise from the dark waters,

Clad in a mortal shape! Alas, how many

Must wait in vain! The stream flows evermore,

But from its silent deeps no spirit rises!

Yet I, born under a propitious star,

Have found the bright ideal of my dreams."

"Yes; by the Darro's side

My childhood passed. I can remember still

The river, and the mountains capped with snow;

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The villages where, yet a little child,  
I told the traveller's fortune in the street;  
The smugglers horse; the brigand and the shepherd;  
The march across the moor; the halt at noon;  
The red fire of the evening camp, that lighted  
The forest where we slept; and, farther back,  
As in a dream, or in some former life,  
Gardens and palace walls."  
"This path will lead us to it,  
Over the wheatfields, where the shadows sail  
Across the running sea, now green, now blue,  
And, like an idle mariner on the ocean,  
Whistles the quail."

These extracts will be universally admired. They are graceful, well expressed, imaginative, and altogether replete with the true poetic feeling. We quote them now, at the beginning of our review, by way of justice to the poet, and because, in what follows, we are not sure that we have more than a very few words of what may be termed commendation to bestow.

"The Spanish Student" has an unfortunate beginning, in a most unpardonable, and yet to render the matter worse, in a most indispensable "Preface:-

"The subject of the following play," says Mr. L., "is taken in part from the beautiful play of Cervantes, La Gitanilla. To this source, however, I am indebted for the main incident only, the love of a Spanish student for a Gipsy girl, and the name of the heroine, Preciosa. I have not followed the story in any of its details. In Spain this subject has been twice handled dramatically, first by Juan Perez de Montalvan in La Gitanilla, and afterwards by Antonio de Solis y Rivadeneira in La Gitanilla de Madrid. The same subject has also been made use of by Thomas Middleton, an English dramatist of the seventeenth century. His play is called The Spanish Gipsy. The main plot is the same as in the Spanish pieces; but there runs through it a tragic underplot of the loves of Rodrigo and Dona Clara, which is taken from another tale of Cervantes, La Fuerza de la Sangre. The reader who is acquainted with La Gitanilla of Cervantes, and the plays of Montalvan, Solis, and Middleton, will perceive that my treatment of the subject differs entirely from theirs."

Now the autorial originality, properly considered, is threefold. There is, first, the originality of the general thesis, secondly, that of the several incidents or thoughts by which the thesis is developed, and thirdly, that of manner or tone, by which means alone an old subject, even when developed through hackneyed incidents or thoughts, may be made to produce a fully original effect- which, after all, is the end truly in view.

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But originality, as it is one of the highest, is also one of the rarest of merits. In America it is especially and very remarkably rare:- this through causes sufficiently well understood. We are content perforce, therefore, as a general thing, with either of the lower branches of originality mentioned above, and would regard with high favour indeed any author who should supply the great desideratum in combining the three. Still the three should be combined; and from whom, if not from such men as Professor Longfellow- if not from those who occupy the chief niches in our Literary Temple- shall we expect the combination? But in the present instance, what has Professor Longfellow accomplished? Is he original at any one point? Is he original in respect to the first and most important of our three divisions? "The [subject] of the following play," he says himself, "is taken [in part] from the beautiful play of Cervantes, 'La Gitanilla.' To this source, however, I am indebted for [the main incident only,] the love of the Spanish student for a Gipsy girl, and the name of the heroine, Preciosa."

The [brackets] are our own, and the [bracketed words] involve an obvious contradiction. We cannot understand how "the love of the Spanish student for the Gipsy girl" can be called an "incident," or even a "main incident," at all. In fact, this love- this discordant and therefore eventful or incidental love is the true thesis of the drama of Cervantes. It is this anomalous "love," which originates the incidents by means of which itself, this "love," the thesis, is developed. Having based his play, then, upon this "love," we cannot admit his claim to originality upon our first count; nor has he any right to say that he has adopted his "subject" "in part." It is clear that he has adopted it altogether. Nor would he have been entitled to claim originality of subject, even had he based his story upon any variety of love arising between parties naturally separated by prejudices of caste- such, for example, as those which divide the Brahmin from the Pariah, the Ammonite from the African, or even the Christian from the Jew. For here in its ultimate analysis, is the real thesis of the Spaniard. But when the drama is founded, not merely upon this general thesis, but upon this general thesis in the identical application given it by Cervantes- that is to say, upon the prejudice of caste exemplified in the case of a Catholic, and this Catholic a Spaniard, and this Spaniard a student, and this student loving a Gipsy, and this Gipsy a dancing-girl, and this dancing-girl bearing the name Preciosa- we are not altogether prepared to be informed by Professor Longfellow that he is indebted for an "incident only" to the "beautiful 'Gitanilla' of Cervantes."

Whether our author is original upon our second and third points- in the true incidents of his story, or in the manner and tone of their handling- will be more distinctly seen as we proceed.

It is to be regretted that "The Spanish Student" was not subtitled "A Dramatic Poem," rather than "A Play." The former title would have more fully conveyed the intention of the poet; for, of course, we shall not do Mr. Longfellow the injustice to suppose that his design has been, in any respect, a play, in the ordinary acceptation of the term. Whatever may be its merits in a merely poetical view, "The Spanish Student" could not be endured upon the stage.

Its plot runs thus:- Preciosa, the daughter of a Spanish gentleman, is stolen, while an infant, by Gipsies, brought up as his own daughter, and as a dancing-girl, by a Gipsy leader, Cruzado; and by him betrothed to a young Gipsy, Bartolome. At Madrid, Preciosa loves and is beloved by Victorian, a student of Alcala, who resolves to marry her, notwithstanding her caste, rumours involving her purity, the dissuasions of his friends, and his betrothal to an heiress of Madrid. Preciosa is also sought by the Count of Lara, a roue. She rejects him. He forces his way into her chamber, and is there seen by Victorian, who, misinterpreting some words overheard, doubts the fidelity of his mistress, and leaves her in anger, after challenging the Count of Lara. In the duel, the Count receives his life at the hands of Victorian: declares his ignorance of the understanding between Victorian and Preciosa; boasts of favours received from the latter, and, to make good his words, produces a ring which she gave him, he asserts, as a pledge of her love. This ring is a duplicate of one previously given the girl by Victorian, and known to have been so given by the Count. Victorian mistakes it for his own, believes all that has been said, and abandons the field to his rival, who, immediately afterwards, while attempting to procure access to the Gipsy, is assassinated by Bartolome. Meantime, Victorian, wandering through the country, reaches Guadarrama. Here he receives a letter from Madrid, disclosing the treachery practiced by Lara, and telling that Preciosa, rejecting his addresses, had been through his instrumentality hissed from the stage, and now again roamed with the Gipsies. He

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goes in search of her, finds her in a wood near Guadarrama; approaches her, disguising his voice; she recognizes him, pretending she does not, and unaware that he knows her innocence; a conversation of equivocal ensues; he sees his ring upon her finger; offers to purchase it; she refuses to part with it, a full éclaircissement takes place; at this juncture a servant of Victoriano's arrives with "news from court," giving the first intimation of the true parentage of Preciosa. The lovers set out, forthwith, for Madrid, to see the newly discovered father. On the route, Bartolome dogs their steps; fires at Preciosa; misses her; the shot is returned; he falls; and "The Spanish Student" is concluded.

This plot, however, like that of "Tortosa," looks better in our naked digest than amidst the details which develop only to disfigure it. The reader of the play itself will be astonished, when he remembers the name of the author, at the inconsequence of the incidents- at the utter want of skill- of art-manifested in their conception and introduction. In dramatic writing, no principle is more clear than that nothing should be said or done which has not a tendency to develop the catastrophe, or the characters. But Mr. Longfellow's play abounds in events and conversations that have no ostensible purpose, and certainly answer no end. In what light, for example, since we cannot suppose this drama intended for the stage, are we to regard the second scene of the second act, where a long dialogue between an Archbishop and a Cardinal is wound up by a dance from Preciosa? The Pope thinks of abolishing public dances in Spain, and the priests in question have been delegated to examine, personally, the proprieties or improprieties of such exhibitions. With this view, Preciosa is summoned and required to give a specimen of her skill. Now this, in a mere spectacle, would do very well; for here all that is demanded is an occasion or an excuse for a dance; but what business has it in a pure drama? or in what regard does it further the end of a dramatic poem, intended only to be read? In the same manner, the whole of Scene the eighth, in the same act, is occupied with six lines of stage directions, as follows:-

The Theatre: the orchestra plays the Cachuca. Sound of castinets behind the scenes. The curtain rises and discovers Preciosa in the attitude of commencing the dance. The Cachuca. Tumult. Hisses. Cries of Brava! and Aguera! She falters and pauses. The music stops. General confusion. Preciosa faints.

But the inconsequence of which we complain will be best exemplified by an entire scene. We take Scene the Fourth, Act the First:-

"An inn on the road to Alcala. BALTASAR asleep on a bench. Enter CHISPA."

CHISPA. And here we are, half way to Alcala, between cocks and midnight. Body o' me! what an inn this is! The light out and the landlord asleep! Hola! ancient Baltasar!

BALTASAR. [waking]. Here I am.

CHISPA. Yes, there you are, like a one-eyed alcalde in a town without inhabitants. Bring a light, and let me have supper.

BALTASAR. Where is your master?

CHISPA. Do not trouble yourself about him. We have stopped a moment to breathe our horses; and if he chooses to walk up and down in the open air, looking into the sky as one who hears it rain, that does not satisfy my hunger, you know. But be quick, for I am in a hurry, and every one stretches his legs according to the length of his coverlet. What have we here?

BALTASAR. [setting a light on the table]. Stewed rabbit.

CHISPA. [eating]. Conscience of Portalegre! stewed kitten you mean!

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BALTASAR. And a pitcher of Pedro Ximenes, with a roasted pear in it.

CHISPA [drinking]. Ancient Baltasar, amigo! You know how to cry wine and sell vinegar. I tell you this is nothing but Vino Tinto of La Mancha, with a tang of the swine-skin.

BALTASAR. I swear to you by Saint Simon and Judas, it is all as I say.

CHISPA. And I swear to you by Saint Peter and Saint Paul that it is no such thing. Moreover, your supper is like the hidalgo's dinner- very little meat and a great deal of tablecloth.

BALTASAR. Ha! ha! ha!

CHISPA. And more noise than nuts.

BALTASAR. Ha! ha! ha! You must have your joke, Master Chispa. But

shall I not ask Don Victorian in to take a draught of the Pedro Ximenes?

CHISPA. No; you might as well say, "Don't you want some?" to a dead man.

BALTASAR. Why does he go so often to Madrid?

CHISPA. For the same reason that he eats no supper. He is in love. Were you ever in love, Baltasar?

BALTASAR. I was never out of it, good Chispa. It has been the torment of my life.

CHISPA. What! are you on fire, too, old hay-stack? Why, we shall never be able to put you out.

VICTORIAN [without] Chispa!

CHISPA. Go to bed, Pero Grullo, for the cocks are crowing.

VICTORIAN. Ea! Chispa! Chispa!

CHISPA. Ea! Senor. Come with me, ancient Baltasar, and bring water for the horses. I will pay for the supper tomorrow. [Exeunt.]

Now here the question occurs- what is accomplished? How has the subject been forwarded? We did not need to learn that Victorian was in love- that was known before; and all that we glean is that a stupid imitation of Sancho Panza drinks in the course of two minutes (the time occupied in the perusal of the scene) a bottle of vino tinto, by way of Pedro Ximenes, and devours a stewed kitten in place of a rabbit.

In the beginning of the play this Chispa is the valet of Victorian; subsequently we find him the servant of another; and near the denouement he returns to his original master. No cause is assigned, and not even the shadow of an object is attained; the whole tergiversation being but another instance of the gross inconsequence which abounds in the play.

The authors deficiency of skill is especially evinced in the scene of the eclaircissement between Victorian and Preciosa. The former having been enlightened respecting the true character of the latter by means of a letter received at Guadarrama, from a friend at Madrid (how woefully inartistical is this!), resolves to go in search of her forthwith, and forthwith, also, discovers her in a wood close at hand. Whereupon he approaches, disguising his

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voice:- yes, we are required to believe that a lover may so disguise his voice from his mistress as even to render his person in full view irrecognizable! He approaches, and each knowing the other, a conversation ensues under the hypothesis that each to the other is unknown- a very unoriginal, and, of course, a very silly source of equivoque, fit only for the gum- elastic imagination of an infant. But what we especially complain of here is that our poet should have taken so many and so obvious pains to bring about this position of equivoque, when it was impossible that it could have served any other purpose than that of injuring his intended effect! Read, for example, this passage:-

VICTORIAN. I never loved a maid;

For she I loved was then a maid no more.

PRECIOSA. How know you that?

VICTORIA. A little bird in the air

Whispered the secret.

PRECIOSA. There, take back your gold!

Your hand is cold like a deceiver's hand!

There is no blessing in its charity!

Make her your wife, for you have been abused;

And you shall mend your fortunes mending hers.

VICTORIAN. How like an angel's speaks the tongue of woman,

When pleading in another's cause her own!

Now here it is clear that if we understood Preciosa to be really ignorant of Victorian's identity, the "pleading in another's cause her own" would create a favourable impression upon the reader or spectator. But the advice- "Make her your wife, etc.," takes an interested and selfish turn when we remember that she knows to whom she speaks.

Again, when Victorian says:

That is a pretty ring upon your finger,

Pray give it me!

and when she replies:

No, never from my hand

Shall that be taken,

we are inclined to think her only an artful coquette, knowing, as we do, the extent of her knowledge, on the hand we should have applauded her constancy (as the author intended) had she been represented ignorant of Victorian's



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presence. The effect upon the audience, in a word, would be pleasant in place of disagreeable were the case altered as we suggest, while the effect upon Victorian would remain altogether untouched.

A still more remarkable instance of deficiency in the dramatic tact is to be found in the mode of bringing about the discovery of Preciosa's parentage. In the very moment of the eclairsissement between the lovers, Chispa arrives almost as a matter of course, and settles the point in a sentence:-

Good news from the Court; Good news! Beltran Cruzado,

The Count of the Cales, is not your father,

But your true father has returned to Spain

Laden with wealth. You are no more a Gipsy.

Now here are three points:- first, the extreme baldness, platitude, and independence of the incident narrated by Chispa. The opportune return of the father (we are tempted to say the excessively opportune) stands by itself- has no relation to any other event in the play- does not appear to arise, in the way of result, from any incident or incidents that have arisen before. It has the air of a happy chance, of a God-send, of an ultra-accident, invented by the play-wright by way of compromise for his lack of invention. Nec Deus intersit, etc.- but here the God has interposed, and the knot is laughably unworthy of the God.

The second point concerns the return of the father "laden with wealth." The lover has abandoned his mistress in her poverty, and, while yet the words of his proffered reconciliation hang upon his lips, comes his own servant with the news that the mistress' father has returned "laden with wealth." Now, so far as regards the audience, who are behind the scenes and know the fidelity of the lover- so far as regards the audience, all is right; but the poet had no business to place his heroine in the sad predicament of being forced, provided she is not a fool, to suspect both the ignorance and the disinterestedness of the hero.

The third point has reference to the words- "You are now no more a Gipsy." The thesis of this drama, as we have already said, is love disregarding the prejudices of caste, and in the development of this thesis, the powers of the dramatist have been engaged, or should have been engaged, during the whole of the three acts of the play. The interest excited lies in our admiration of the sacrifice, and of the love that could make it; but this interest immediately and disagreeably subsides when we find that the sacrifice has been made to no purpose. "You are no more a Gipsy" dissolves the charm, and obliterates the whole impression which the author has been at so much labour to convey. Our romantic sense of the hero's chivalry declines into a complacent satisfaction with his fate. We drop our enthusiasm, with the enthusiast, and jovially shake by the hand the mere man of good luck. But is not the latter feeling the more comfortable of the two? Perhaps so; but "comfortable" is not exactly the word Mr. Longfellow might wish applied to the end of his drama, and then why be at the trouble of building up an effect through a hundred and eighty pages, merely to knock it down at the end of the hundred and eighty-first?

We have already given, at some length, our conceptions of the nature of plot- and of that of "The Spanish Student", it seems almost superfluous to speak at all. It has nothing of construction about it. Indeed there is scarcely a single incident which has any necessary dependence upon any one other. Not only might we take away two-thirds of the whole without ruin- but without detriment- indeed with a positive benefit to the mass. And, even as regards the mere order of arrangement, we might with a very decided chance of improvement, put the scenes in a bag, give them a shake or two by way of shuffle, and tumble them out. The whole mode of collocation- not to speak of the feebleness of the incidents in themselves- evinces, on the part of the author, an utter and radical want of the adapting or constructive power which the drama so imperatively demands.

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Of the unoriginality of the thesis we have already spoken; and now, to the unoriginality of the events by which the thesis is developed, we need do little more than allude. What, indeed, could we say of such incidents as the child stolen by Gipsies- as her education as a danseuse- as her betrothal to a Gipsy- as her preference for a gentleman- as the rumours against her purity- as her persecution by a rousee- as the irruption of the rousee into her chamber- as the consequent misunderstanding between her and her lover- as the duel- as the defeat of the rousee- as the receipt of his life from the hero- as his boasts of success with the girl- as the ruse of the duplicate ring- as the field, in consequence, abandoned by the lover- as the assassination of Lara while scaling the girl's bed-chamber- as the disconsolate peregrination of Victoriano- as the equivocal scene with Preciosa- as the offering to purchase the ring and the refusal to part with it- as the "news from court," telling of the Gipsy's true parentage- what could we say of all these ridiculous things, except that we have met them, each and all, some two or three hundred times before, and that they have formed, in a great or less degree, the staple material of every Hop-O'My-Thumb tragedy since the flood? There is not an incident, from the first page of "The Spanish Student" to the last and most satisfactory, which we would not undertake to find bodily, at ten minutes' notice, in some one of the thousand and one comedies of intrigue attributed to Calderon and Lope de Vega.

But if our poet is grossly unoriginal in his subject, and in the events which evolve it, may he not be original in his handling or tone? We really grieve to say that he is not, unless, indeed, we grant him the need of originality for the peculiar manner in which he has jumbled together the quaint and stilted tone of the old English dramatists with the degagee air of Cervantes. But this is a point upon which, through want of space, we must necessarily permit the reader to judge altogether for himself. We quote, however, a passage from the second scene of the first act, by way of showing how very easy a matter it is to make a man discourse Sancho Panza:-

Chispa. Abrenuncio Satanás! and a plague upon all lovers who ramble about at night, drinking the elements, instead of sleeping quietly in their beds. Every dead man to his cemetery, say I; and every friar to his monastery. Now, here's my master Victoriano, yesterday a cow-keeper and to-day a gentleman; yesterday a student and to-day a lover; and I must be up later than the nightingale, for as the abbot sings so must the sacristan respond. God grant he may soon be married, for then shall all this serenading cease. Ay, marry, marry, marry! Mother, what does marry mean? It means to spin, to bear children, and to weep, my daughter! and, of a truth, there is something more in matrimony than the wedding-ring. And now, gentlemen, Pax vobiscum! as the ass said to the cabbages!

And we might add, as an ass only should say.

In fact, throughout "The Spanish Student," as well as throughout other compositions of its author, there runs a very obvious vein of imitation. We are perpetually reminded of something we have seen before- some old acquaintance in manner or matter, and even where the similarity cannot be said to amount to plagiarism, it is still injurious to the poet in the good opinion of him who reads.

Among the minor defects of the play, we may mention the frequent allusion to book incidents not generally known, and requiring each a Note by way of explanation. The drama demands that everything be so instantaneously evident that he who runs may read; and the only impression effected by these Notes to a play is, that the author is desirous of showing his reading.

We may mention, also, occasional tautologies, such as:-

Never did I behold thee so attired

And garmented in beauty as to-night!

Or-

What we need

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Is the celestial fire to change the fruit

Into transparent crystal, bright and clear!

We may speak, too, of more than occasional errors of grammar. For example:-

"Did no one see thee? None, my love, but thou."

Here "but" is not a conjunction, but a preposition, and governs thee in the objective. "None but thee" would be right; meaning none except thee, saving thee. Earlier, "mayest" is somewhat incorrectly written "may'st." And we have:-

I have no other saint than thou to pray to.

Here authority and analogy are both against Mr. Longfellow. "Than" also is here a preposition governing the objective, and meaning save or except. "I have none other God than thee, etc" See Horne Tooke. The Latin "quam te" is exactly equivalent. [Later] we read:-

Like thee I am a captive, and, like thee,

I have a gentle gaoler.

Here "like thee" (although grammatical of course) does not convey the idea. Mr. L. does not mean that the speaker is like the bird itself, but that his condition resembles it. The true reading would thus be:-

As thou I am a captive, and, as thou,

I have a gentle poler.

That is to say, as thou art and as thou hast.

Upon the whole, we regret that Professor Longfellow has written this work, and feel especially vexed that he has committed himself by its republication. Only when regarded as a mere poem can it be said to have merit of any kind. For in fact it is only when we separate the poem from the drama that the passages we have commended as beautiful can be understood to have beauty. We are not too sure, indeed, that a "dramatic poem" is not a flat contradiction in terms. At all events a man of true genius (and such Mr. L. unquestionably is) has no business with these hybrid and paradoxical compositions. Let a poem be a poem only, let a play be a play and nothing more. As for "The Spanish Student," its thesis is unoriginal; its incidents are antique; its plot is no plot; its characters have no character, in short, it is a little better than a play upon words to style it "A Play" at all.

## PREFACE TO THE RAVEN AND OTHER POEMS

THESE TRIFLES are collected and republished chiefly with a view to their redemption from the many improvements to which they have been subjected while "going the rounds of the press." I am naturally anxious that if what I have written is to circulate at all, it should circulate as I wrote it. In defence of my own taste, nevertheless, it is incumbent on me to say that I think nothing in this volume of much value to the public, or very creditable to myself. Events not to be controlled have prevented me from making, at any time, any serious effort in what, under happier circumstances would have been the field of my choice. With me poetry has not been a purpose, but a passion; and the passions should be held in reverence; they must not- they cannot at will be excited, with an eye to the paltry compensations, or the more paltry commendations, of mankind

E. A. P.

### THE PHILOSOPHY OF COMPOSITION

CHARLES DICKENS, in a note now lying before me, alluding to an examination I once made of the mechanism of "Barnaby Rudge," says- "By the way, are you aware that Godwin wrote his 'Caleb Williams' backwards? He first involved his hero in a web of difficulties, forming the second volume, and then, for the first, cast about him for some mode of accounting for what had been done."

I cannot think this the precise mode of procedure on the part of Godwin- and indeed what he himself acknowledges, is not altogether in accordance with Mr. Dickens' idea- but the author of "Caleb Williams" was too good an artist not to perceive the advantage derivable from at least a somewhat similar process. Nothing is more clear than that every plot, worth the name, must be elaborated to its denouement before anything be attempted with the pen. It is only with the denouement constantly in view that we can give a plot its indispensable air of consequence, or causation, by making the incidents, and especially the tone at all points, tend to the development of the intention.

There is a radical error, I think, in the usual mode of constructing a story. Either history affords a thesis- or one is suggested by an incident of the day- or, at best, the author sets himself to work in the combination of striking events to form merely the basis of his narrative- designing, generally, to fill in with description, dialogue, or aural comment, whatever crevices of fact, or action, may, from page to page, render themselves apparent.

I prefer commencing with the consideration of an effect. Keeping originality always in view- for he is false to himself who ventures to dispense with so obvious and so easily attainable a source of interest- I say to myself, in the first place, "Of the innumerable effects, or impressions, of which the heart, the intellect, or (more generally) the soul is susceptible, what one shall I, on the present occasion, select?" Having chosen a novel, first, and secondly a vivid effect, I consider whether it can be best wrought by incident or tone- whether by ordinary incidents and peculiar tone, or the converse, or by peculiarity both of incident and tone- afterward looking about me (or rather within) for such combinations of event, or tone, as shall best aid me in the construction of the effect.

I have often thought how interesting a magazine paper might be written by any author who would- that is to say, who could- detail, step by step, the processes by which any one of his compositions attained its ultimate point of completion. Why such a paper has never been given to the world, I am much at a loss to say- but, perhaps, the aural vanity has had more to do with the omission than any one other cause. Most writers- poets in especial- prefer having it understood that they compose by a species of fine frenzy- an ecstatic intuition- and would positively shudder at letting the public take a peep behind the scenes, at the elaborate and vacillating crudities of thought- at the true purposes seized only at the last moment- at the innumerable glimpses of idea that arrived not at the maturity of full view- at the fully-matured fancies discarded in despair as unmanageable- at the cautious selections and rejections- at the painful erasures and interpolations- in a word, at the wheels and pinions- the tackle for scene-shifting- the step-ladders, and demon-traps- the cock's feathers, the red paint and the black patches, which, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, constitute the properties of the literary histrio.

I am aware, on the other hand, that the case is by no means common, in which an author is at all in condition to retrace the steps by which his conclusions have been attained. In general, suggestions, having arisen pell-mell are pursued and forgotten in a similar manner.

For my own part, I have neither sympathy with the repugnance alluded to, nor, at any time, the least difficulty in recalling to mind the progressive steps of any of my compositions, and, since the interest of an analysis or reconstruction, such as I have considered a desideratum, is quite independent of any real or fancied interest in the thing analysed, it will not be regarded as a breach of decorum on my part to show the modus operandi by which some one of my own works was put together. I select "The Raven" as most generally known. It is my design to

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render it manifest that no one point in its composition is referable either to accident or intuition- that the work proceeded step by step, to its completion, with the precision and rigid consequence of a mathematical problem.

Let us dismiss, as irrelevant to the poem, per se, the circumstance- or say the necessity- which, in the first place, gave rise to the intention of composing a poem that should suit at once the popular and the critical taste.

We commence, then, with this intention.

The initial consideration was that of extent. If any literary work is too long to be read at one sitting, we must be content to dispense with the immensely important effect derivable from unity of impression- for, if two sittings be required, the affairs of the world interfere, and everything like totality is at once destroyed. But since, *ceteris paribus*, no poet can afford to dispense with anything that may advance his design, it but remains to be seen whether there is, in extent, any advantage to counterbalance the loss of unity which attends it. Here I say no, at once. What we term a long poem is, in fact, merely a succession of brief ones- that is to say, of brief poetical effects. It is needless to demonstrate that a poem is such only inasmuch as it intensely excites, by elevating the soul; and all intense excitements are, through a psychal necessity, brief. For this reason, at least, one-half of the "Paradise Lost" is essentially prose- a succession of poetical excitements interspersed, inevitably, with corresponding depressions- the whole being deprived, through the extremeness of its length, of the vastly important artistic element, totality, or unity of effect.

It appears evident, then, that there is a distinct limit, as regards length, to all works of literary art- the limit of a single sitting- and that, although in certain classes of prose composition, such as "Robinson Crusoe" (demanding no unity), this limit may be advantageously overpassed, it can never properly be overpassed in a poem. Within this limit, the extent of a poem may be made to bear mathematical relation to its merit- in other words, to the excitement or elevation-again, in other words, to the degree of the true poetical effect which it is capable of inducing; for it is clear that the brevity must be in direct ratio of the intensity of the intended effect- this, with one proviso- that a certain degree of duration is absolutely requisite for the production of any effect at all.

Holding in view these considerations, as well as that degree of excitement which I deemed not above the popular, while not below the critical taste, I reached at once what I conceived the proper length for my intended poem- a length of about one hundred lines. It is, in fact, a hundred and eight.

My next thought concerned the choice of an impression, or effect, to be conveyed: and here I may as well observe that throughout the construction, I kept steadily in view the design of rendering the work universally appreciable. I should be carried too far out of my immediate topic were I to demonstrate a point upon which I have repeatedly insisted, and which, with the poetical, stands not in the slightest need of demonstration- the point, I mean, that Beauty is the sole legitimate province of the poem. A few words, however, in elucidation of my real meaning, which some of my friends have evinced a disposition to misrepresent. That pleasure which is at once the most intense, the most elevating, and the most pure is, I believe, found in the contemplation of the beautiful. When, indeed, men speak of Beauty, they mean, precisely, not a quality, as is supposed, but an effect- they refer, in short, just to that intense and pure elevation of soul- not of intellect, or of heart- upon which I have commented, and which is experienced in consequence of contemplating the "beautiful." Now I designate Beauty as the province of the poem, merely because it is an obvious rule of Art that effects should be made to spring from direct causes- that objects should be attained through means best adapted for their attainment- no one as yet having been weak enough to deny that the peculiar elevation alluded to is most readily attained in the poem. Now the object Truth, or the satisfaction of the intellect, and the object Passion, or the excitement of the heart, are, although attainable to a certain extent in poetry, far more readily attainable in prose. Truth, in fact, demands a precision, and Passion, a homeliness (the truly passionate will comprehend me), which are absolutely antagonistic to that Beauty which, I maintain, is the excitement or pleasurable elevation of the soul. It by no means follows, from anything here said, that passion, or even truth, may not be introduced, and even profitably introduced, into a poem for they may serve in elucidation, or aid the general effect, as do discords in music, by contrast- but the true artist will always

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contrive, first, to tone them into proper subservience to the predominant aim, and, secondly, to enveil them, as far as possible, in that Beauty which is the atmosphere and the essence of the poem.

Regarding, then, Beauty as my province, my next question referred to the tone of its highest manifestation- and all experience has shown that this tone is one of sadness. Beauty of whatever kind in its supreme development invariably excites the sensitive soul to tears. Melancholy is thus the most legitimate of all the poetical tones.

The length, the province, and the tone, being thus determined, I betook myself to ordinary induction, with the view of obtaining some artistic piquancy which might serve me as a key-note in the construction of the poem- some pivot upon which the whole structure might turn. In carefully thinking over all the usual artistic effects- or more properly points, in the theatrical sense- I did not fail to perceive immediately that no one had been so universally employed as that of the refrain. The universality of its employment sufficed to assure me of its intrinsic value, and spared me the necessity of submitting it to analysis. I considered it, however, with regard to its susceptibility of improvement, and soon saw it to be in a primitive condition. As commonly used, the refrain, or burden, not only is limited to lyric verse, but depends for its impression upon the force of monotone- both in sound and thought. The pleasure is deduced solely from the sense of identity- of repetition. I resolved to diversify, and so heighten the effect, by adhering in general to the monotone of sound, while I continually varied that of thought: that is to say, I determined to produce continuously novel effects, by the variation of the application of the refrain- the refrain itself remaining for the most part, unvaried.

These points being settled, I next bethought me of the nature of my refrain. Since its application was to be repeatedly varied it was clear that the refrain itself must be brief, for there would have been an insurmountable difficulty in frequent variations of application in any sentence of length. In proportion to the brevity of the sentence would, of course, be the facility of the variation. This led me at once to a single word as the best refrain.

The question now arose as to the character of the word. Having made up my mind to a refrain, the division of the poem into stanzas was of course a corollary, the refrain forming the close to each stanza. That such a close, to have force, must be sonorous and susceptible of protracted emphasis, admitted no doubt, and these considerations inevitably led me to the long o as the most sonorous vowel in connection with r as the most producible consonant.

The sound of the refrain being thus determined, it became necessary to select a word embodying this sound, and at the same time in the fullest possible keeping with that melancholy which I had pre-determined as the tone of the poem. In such a search it would have been absolutely impossible to overlook the word "Nevermore." In fact it was the very first which presented itself.

The next desideratum was a pretext for the continuous use of the one word "nevermore." In observing the difficulty which I had at once found in inventing a sufficiently plausible reason for its continuous repetition, I did not fail to perceive that this difficulty arose solely from the preassumption that the word was to be so continuously or monotonously spoken by a human being- I did not fail to perceive, in short, that the difficulty lay in the reconciliation of this monotony with the exercise of reason on the part of the creature repeating the word. Here, then, immediately arose the idea of a non-reasoning creature capable of speech, and very naturally, a parrot, in the first instance, suggested itself, but was superseded forthwith by a Raven as equally capable of speech, and infinitely more in keeping with the intended tone.

I had now gone so far as the conception of a Raven, the bird of ill-omen, monotonously repeating the one word "Nevermore" at the conclusion of each stanza in a poem of melancholy tone, and in length about one hundred lines. Now, never losing sight of the object- supremeness or perfection at all points, I asked myself- "Of all melancholy topics what, according to the universal understanding of mankind, is the most melancholy?" Death, was the obvious reply. "And when," I said, "is this most melancholy of topics most poetical?" From what I have already explained at some length the answer here also is obvious- "When it most closely allies itself to Beauty: the death then of a beautiful woman is unquestionably the most poetical topic in the world, and equally is it

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beyond doubt that the lips best suited for such topic are those of a bereaved lover."

I had now to combine the two ideas of a lover lamenting his deceased mistress and a Raven continuously repeating the word "Nevermore." I had to combine these, bearing in mind my design of varying at every turn the application of the word repeated, but the only intelligible mode of such combination is that of imagining the Raven employing the word in answer to the queries of the lover. And here it was that I saw at once the opportunity afforded for the effect on which I had been depending, that is to say, the effect of the variation of application. I saw that I could make the first query propounded by the lover- the first query to which the Raven should reply "Nevermore"- that I could make this first query a commonplace one, the second less so, the third still less, and so on, until at length the lover, startled from his original nonchalance by the melancholy character of the word itself, by its frequent repetition, and by a consideration of the ominous reputation of the fowl that uttered it, is at length excited to superstition, and wildly propounds queries of a far different character- queries whose solution he has passionately at heart- propounds them half in superstition and half in that species of despair which delights in self-torture- propounds them not altogether because he believes in the prophetic or demoniac character of the bird (which reason assures him is merely repeating a lesson learned by rote), but because he experiences a frenzied pleasure in so modelling his questions as to receive from the expected "Nevermore" the most delicious because the most intolerable of sorrows. Perceiving the opportunity thus afforded me, or, more strictly, thus forced upon me in the progress of the construction, I first established in my mind the climax or concluding query- that query to which "Nevermore" should be in the last place an answer- that query in reply to which this word "Nevermore" should involve the utmost conceivable amount of sorrow and despair.

Here then the poem may be said to have had its beginning- at the end where all works of art should begin- for it was here at this point of my preconsiderations that I first put pen to paper in the composition of the stanza:

"Prophet!" said I, "thing of evil! prophet still if bird or devil!

By that Heaven that bends above us— by that God we both adore,

Tell this soul with sorrow laden, if, within the distant Aidenn,

It shall clasp a sainted maiden whom the angels name Lenore—

Clasp a rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore."

Quoth the Raven— "Nevermore."

I composed this stanza, at this point, first that, by establishing the climax, I might the better vary and graduate, as regards seriousness and importance, the preceding queries of the lover, and secondly, that I might definitely settle the rhythm, the metre, and the length and general arrangement of the stanza, as well as graduate the stanzas which were to precede, so that none of them might surpass this in rhythmical effect. Had I been able in the subsequent composition to construct more vigorous stanzas I should without scruple have purposely enfeebled them so as not to interfere with the climacteric effect.

And here I may as well say a few words of the versification. My first object (as usual) was originality. The extent to which this has been neglected in versification is one of the most unaccountable things in the world. Admitting that there is little possibility of variety in mere rhythm, it is still clear that the possible varieties of metre and stanza are absolutely infinite, and yet, for centuries, no man, in verse, has ever done, or ever seemed to think of doing, an original thing. The fact is that originality (unless in minds of very unusual force) is by no means a matter, as some suppose, of impulse or intuition. In general, to be found, it must be elaborately sought, and although a positive merit of the highest class, demands in its attainment less of invention than negation.

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Of course I pretend to no originality in either the rhythm or metre of the "Raven." The former is trochaic- the latter is octametre acatalectic, alternating with heptametre catalectic repeated in the refrain of the fifth verse, and terminating with tetrametre catalectic. Less pedantically the feet employed throughout (trochees) consist of a long syllable followed by a short, the first line of the stanza consists of eight of these feet, the second of seven and a half (in effect two-thirds), the third of eight, the fourth of seven and a half, the fifth the same, the sixth three and a half. Now, each of these lines taken individually has been employed before, and what originality the "Raven" has, is in their combination into stanza; nothing even remotely approaching this has ever been attempted. The effect of this originality of combination is aided by other unusual and some altogether novel effects, arising from an extension of the application of the principles of rhyme and alliteration.

The next point to be considered was the mode of bringing together the lover and the Raven- and the first branch of this consideration was the locale. For this the most natural suggestion might seem to be a forest, or the fields- but it has always appeared to me that a close circumscription of space is absolutely necessary to the effect of insulated incident- it has the force of a frame to a picture. It has an indisputable moral power in keeping concentrated the attention, and, of course, must not be confounded with mere unity of place.

I determined, then, to place the lover in his chamber- in a chamber rendered sacred to him by memories of her who had frequented it. The room is represented as richly furnished- this in mere pursuance of the ideas I have already explained on the subject of Beauty, as the sole true poetical thesis.

The locale being thus determined, I had now to introduce the bird- and the thought of introducing him through the window was inevitable. The idea of making the lover suppose, in the first instance, that the flapping of the wings of the bird against the shutter, is a "tapping" at the door, originated in a wish to increase, by prolonging, the reader's curiosity, and in a desire to admit the incidental effect arising from the lover's throwing open the door, finding all dark, and thence adopting the half-fancy that it was the spirit of his mistress that knocked.

I made the night tempestuous, first to account for the Raven's seeking admission, and secondly, for the effect of contrast with the (physical) serenity within the chamber.

I made the bird alight on the bust of Pallas, also for the effect of contrast between the marble and the plumage- it being understood that the bust was absolutely suggested by the bird- the bust of Pallas being chosen, first, as most in keeping with the scholarship of the lover, and secondly, for the sonorousness of the word, Pallas, itself.

About the middle of the poem, also, I have availed myself of the force of contrast, with a view of deepening the ultimate impression. For example, an air of the fantastic- approaching as nearly to the ludicrous as was admissible- is given to the Raven's entrance. He comes in "with many a flirt and flutter."

Not the least obeisance made he- not a moment stopped or stayed he,

But with mien of lord or lady, perched above my chamber door.

In the two stanzas which follow, the design is more obviously carried out:-

Then this ebony bird, beguiling my sad fancy into smiling

By the grave and stern decorum of the countenance it wore,

Though thy crest be shorn and shaven, thou," I said, "art sure no  
craven,



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Ghastly grim and ancient Raven wandering from the Nightly shore-

Tell me what thy lordly name is on the Night's Plutonian shore?"

Quoth the Raven- "Nevermore."

Much I marvelled this ungainly fowl to hear discourse so plainly,

Though its answer little meaning- little relevancy bore;

For we cannot help agreeing that no living human being

Ever yet was blessed with seeing bird above his chamber door-

Bird or beast upon the sculptured bust above his chamber door,

With such name as "Nevermore."

The effect of the denouement being thus provided for, I immediately drop the fantastic for a tone of the most profound seriousness- this tone commencing in the stanza directly following the one last quoted, with the line,

But the Raven, sitting lonely on that placid bust, spoke only, etc.

From this epoch the lover no longer jests- no longer sees anything even of the fantastic in the Raven's demeanour. He speaks of him as a "grim, ungainly, ghastly, gaunt, and ominous bird of yore," and feels the "fiery eyes" burning into his "bosom's core." This revolution of thought, or fancy, on the lover's part, is intended to induce a similar one on the part of the reader- to bring the mind into a proper frame for the denouement- which is now brought about as rapidly and as directly as possible.

With the denouement proper- with the Raven's reply, "Nevermore," to the lover's final demand if he shall meet his mistress in another world- the poem, in its obvious phase, that of a simple narrative, may be said to have its completion. So far, everything is within the limits of the accountable- of the real. A raven, having learned by rote the single word "Nevermore," and having escaped from the custody of its owner, is driven at midnight, through the violence of a storm, to seek admission at a window from which a light still gleams- the chamber-window of a student, occupied half in poring over a volume, half in dreaming of a beloved mistress deceased. The casement being thrown open at the fluttering of the bird's wings, the bird itself perches on the most convenient seat out of the immediate reach of the student, who amused by the incident and the oddity of the visitor's demeanour, demands of it, in jest and without looking for a reply, its name. The raven addressed, answers with its customary word, "Nevermore"- a word which finds immediate echo in the melancholy heart of the student, who, giving utterance aloud to certain thoughts suggested by the occasion, is again startled by the fowl's repetition of "Nevermore." The student now guesses the state of the case, but is impelled, as I have before explained, by the human thirst for self-torture, and in part by superstition, to propound such queries to the bird as will bring him, the lover, the most of the luxury of sorrow, through the anticipated answer, "Nevermore." With the indulgence, to the extreme, of this self-torture, the narration, in what I have termed its first or obvious phase, has a natural termination, and so far there has been no overstepping of the limits of the real.

But in subjects so handled, however skillfully, or with however vivid an array of incident, there is always a certain hardness or nakedness which repels the artistical eye. Two things are invariably required- first, some amount of complexity, or more properly, adaptation; and, secondly, some amount of suggestiveness- some under-current, however indefinite, of meaning. It is this latter, in especial, which imparts to a work of art so much of that richness (to borrow from colloquy a forcible term), which we are too fond of confounding with the ideal. It

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is the excess of the suggested meaning- it is the rendering this the upper instead of the under-current of the theme- which turns into prose (and that of the very flattest kind), the so-called poetry of the so-called transcendentalists.

Holding these opinions, I added the two concluding stanzas of the poem- their suggestiveness being thus made to pervade all the narrative which has preceded them. The under-current of meaning is rendered first apparent in the line-

Take thy beak from out my heart, and take thy form from off my

door!"

Quoth the Raven "Nevermore!"

It will be observed that the words, "from out my heart," involve the first metaphorical expression in the poem. They, with the answer, "Nevermore," dispose the mind to seek a moral in all that has been previously narrated. The reader begins now to regard the Raven as emblematical- but it is not until the very last line of the very last stanza that the intention of making him emblematical of Mournful and never ending Remembrance is permitted distinctly to be seen:

And the Raven, never flitting, still is sitting, still is sitting,

On the pallid bust of Pallas just above my chamber door;

And his eyes have all the seeming of a demon that is dreaming,

And the lamplight o'er him streaming throws his shadow on the floor;

And my soul from out that shadow that lies floating on the floor

Shall be lifted- nevermore.

## THE RATIONALE OF VERSE

THE WORD "Verse" is here used not in its strict or primitive sense, but as the term most convenient for expressing generally and without pedantry all that is involved in the consideration of rhythm, rhyme, metre, and versification.

There is, perhaps, no topic in polite literature which has been more pertinaciously discussed, and there is certainly not one about which so much inaccuracy, confusion, misconception, misrepresentation, mystification, and downright ignorance on all sides, can be fairly said to exist. Were the topic really difficult, or did it lie, even, in the cloudland of metaphysics, where the doubt- vapors may be made to assume any and every shape at the will or at the fancy of the gazer, we should have less reason to wonder at all this contradiction and perplexity; but in fact the subject is exceedingly simple; one-tenth of it, possibly, may be called ethical; nine-tenths, however, appertain to mathematics; and the whole is included within the limits of the commonest common sense.

"But, if this is the case, how," it will be asked, "can so much misunderstanding have arisen? Is it conceivable that a thousand profound scholars, investigating so very simple a matter for centuries, have not been able to place it in the fullest light, at least, of which it is susceptible?" These queries, I confess, are not easily answered: at all events, a satisfactory reply to them might cost more trouble than would, if properly considered, the whole vexata quaestio to which they have reference. Nevertheless, there is little difficulty or danger in suggesting that the "thousand profound scholars" may have failed first, because they were scholars; secondly, because they were

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profound; and thirdly, because they were a thousand-the impotency of the scholarship and profundity having been thus multiplied a thousand fold. I am serious in these suggestions; for, first again, there is something in "scholarship" which seduces us into blind worship of Bacon's Idol of the Theatre- into irrational deference to antiquity, secondly, the proper "profundity" is rarely profound- it is the nature of Truth in general, as of some ores in particular, to be richest when most superficial; thirdly, the clearest subject may be over-clouded by mere superabundance of talk. In chemistry, the best way of separating two bodies is to add a third; in speculation, fact often agrees with fact and argument with argument until an additional well-meaning fact or argument sets everything by the ears. In one case out of a hundred a point is excessively discussed because it is obscure; in the ninety-nine remaining it is obscure because excessively discussed. When a topic is thus circumstanced, the readiest mode of investigating it is to forget that any previous investigation has been attempted.

But, in fact, while much has been written on the Greek and Latin rhythms, and even on the Hebrew, little effort has been made at examining that of any of the modern tongues. As regards the English, comparatively nothing has been done. It may be said, indeed, that we are without a treatise on our own verse. In our ordinary grammars and in our works on rhetoric or prosody in general, may be found occasional chapters, it is true, which have the heading, "Versification," but these are, in all instances, exceedingly meagre. They pretend to no analysis; they propose nothing like system; they make no attempts at even rule; everything depends upon "authority." They are confined, in fact, to mere exemplification of the supposed varieties of English feet and English lines- although in no work with which I am acquainted are these feet correctly given or these lines detailed in anything like their full extent. Yet what has been mentioned is all- if we except the occasional introduction of some pedagogue-ism, such as this borrowed from the Greek Prosodies: "When a syllable is wanting the verse is said to be catalectic; when the measure is exact, the line is acatalectic; when there is a redundant syllable, it forms hypermeter." Now, whether a line be termed catalectic or acatalectic is, perhaps, a point of no vital importance- it is even possible that the student may be able to decide, promptly, when the a should be employed and when omitted, yet be incognizant, at the same time, of all that is worth knowing in regard to the structure of verse.

A leading defect in each of our treatises (if treatises they can be called) is the confining the subject to mere Versification, while Verse in general, with the understanding given to the term in the heading of this paper, is the real question at issue. Nor am I aware of even one of our Grammars which so much as properly defines the word versification itself. "Versification," says a work now before me, of which the accuracy is far more than usual- the "English Grammar" of Gould Brown- "Versification is the art of arranging words into lines of correspondent length, so as to produce harmony by the regular alternation of syllables differing in quantity." The commencement of this definition might apply, indeed, to the art of versification, but not to versification itself. Versification is not the art of arranging, etc, but the actual arranging- a distinction too obvious to need comment. The error here is identical with one which has been too long permitted to disgrace the initial page of every one of our school grammars. I allude to the definitions of English Grammar itself. "English Grammar," it is said, "is the art of speaking and writing the English language correctly." This phraseology, or something essentially similar, is employed, I believe, by Bacon, Miller, Fisk, Greenleaf, Ingersoll, Kirkland, Cooper, Flint, Pue, Comly, and many others. These gentlemen, it is presumed, adopted it without examination from Murray, who derived it from Lily (whose work was "quam solam Regia Majestas in omnibus scholis docendam praecipit"), and who appropriated it without acknowledgment, but with some unimportant modification, from the Latin Grammar of Leonicensus. It may be shown, however, that this definition, so complacently received, is not, and cannot be, a proper definition of English Grammar. A definition is that which so describes its object as to distinguish it from all others- it is no definition of any one thing if its terms are applicable to any one other. But if it be asked- "What is the design- the end- the aim of English Grammar?" our obvious answer is, "The art of speaking and writing the English language correctly"- that is to say, we must use the precise words employed as the definition of English Grammar itself. But the object to be obtained by any means is, assuredly, not the means. English Grammar and the end contemplated by English Grammar are two matters sufficiently distinct; nor can the one be more reasonably regarded as the other than a fishing- hook as a fish. The definition, therefore, which is applicable in the latter instance, cannot, in the former, be true. Grammar in general is the analysis of language; English Grammar of the English.

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But to return to Versification as defined in our extract above. "It is the art," says the extract "of arranging words into lines of correspondent length." Not so:- a correspondence in the length of lines is by no means essential. Pindaric odes are, surely, instances of versification, yet these compositions are noted for extreme diversity in the length of their lines.

The arrangement is moreover said to be for the purpose of producing "harmony by the regular alternation," etc. But harmony is not the sole aim- not even the principal one. In the construction of verse, melody should never be left out of view; yet this is a point which all our Prosodies have most unaccountably forborne to touch. Reasoned rules on this topic should form a portion of all systems of rhythm.

"So as to produce harmony," says the definition, "by the regular alternation," etc. A regular alternation, as described, forms no part of any principle of versification. The arrangement of spondees and dactyls, for example, in the Greek hexameter, is an arrangement which may be termed at random. At least it is arbitrary. Without interference with the line as a whole, a dactyl may be substituted for a spondee, or the converse, at any point other than the ultimate and penultimate feet, of which the former is always a spondee, the latter nearly always a dactyl. Here, it is clear, we have no "regular alternation of syllables differing in quantity."

"So as to produce harmony," proceeds the definition "by the regular alternation of syllables differing in quantity,"- in other words by the alternation of long and short syllables; for in rhythm all syllables are necessarily either short or long. But not only do I deny the necessity of any regularity in the succession of feet and, by consequence, of syllables, but dispute the essentiality of any alternation regular or irregular, of syllables long and short. Our author, observe, is now engaged in a definition of versification in general, not of English versification in particular. But the Greek and Latin metres abound in the spondee and pyrrhic- the former consisting of two long syllables, the latter of two short; and there are innumerable instances of the immediate succession of many spondees and many pyrrhics.

Here is a passage from Silius Italicus:

Fallit te mensas inter quod credis inermem

Tot bellis quaesita viro, tot caedibus armat

Majestas aeterna ducem: si admoveris ora

Cannas et Trebium ante oculos Trasymenaque busta

Et Pauli stare ingentem miraberis umbram.

Making the elisions demanded by the classic Prosodies, we should scan these Hexameters thus:

Fallit / te men / sas in / ter quod / credis in / ermem /

Tot bel / lis quae / sita tot / caedibus / armat /

Majes / tas ae / terna du / cem s'ad / moveris / ora /

Cannas / et Trebi / ant ocu / los Trasy / menaque / busta /

Et Pau / li sta / r' ingen / tem mi / raberis / umbram /

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It will be seen that, in the first and last of these lines, we have only two short syllables in thirteen, with an uninterrupted succession of no less than nine long syllables. But how are we to reconcile all this with a definition of versification which describes it as "the art of arranging words into lines of correspondent length so as to produce harmony by the regular alternation of syllables differing in quantity"?

It may be urged, however, that our prosodist's intention was to speak of the English metres alone, and that, by omitting all mention of the spondee and pyrrhic, he has virtually avowed their exclusion from our rhythms. A grammarian is never excusable on the ground of good intentions. We demand from him, if from any one, rigorous precision of style. But grant the design. Let us admit that our author, following the example of all authors on English Prosody, has, in defining versification at large, intended a definition merely of the English. All these prosodists, we will say, reject the spondee and pyrrhic. Still all admit the iambus, which consists of a short syllable followed by a long; the trochee, which is the converse of the iambus; the dactyl, formed of one long syllable followed by two short; and the anapaest- two short succeeded by a long. The spondee is improperly rejected, as I shall presently show. The pyrrhic is rightfully dismissed. Its existence in either ancient or modern rhythm is purely chimerical, and the insisting on so perplexing a nonentity as a foot of two short syllables, affords, perhaps, the best evidence of the gross irrationality and subservience to authority which characterise our Prosody. In the meantime the acknowledged dactyl and anapaest are enough to sustain my proposition about the "alternation," etc, without reference to feet which are assumed to exist in the Greek and Latin metres alone- for an anapaest and a dactyl may meet in the same line, when, of course, we shall have an uninterrupted succession of four short syllables. The meeting of these two feet, to be sure, is an accident not contemplated in the definition now discussed; for this definition, in demanding a "regular alternation of syllables differing in quantity," insists on a regular succession of similar feet. But here is an example:

Sing to me / Isabelle.

This is the opening line of a little ballad now before me which proceeds in the same rhythm- a peculiarly beautiful one. More than all this:- English lines are often well composed, entirely, of a regular succession of syllables all of the same quantity:- the first line, for instance, of the following quatrain by Arthur C. Coxe:

March! march! march!

Making sounds as they tread,

Ho! ho! how they step,

Going down to the dead!

The [first line] is formed of three caesuras. The caesura, of which I have much to say hereafter, is rejected by the English Prosodies, and grossly misrepresented in the classic. It is a perfect foot- the most important in all verse- and consists of a single long syllable; but the length of this syllable varies.

It has thus been made evident that there is not one point of the definition in question which does not involve an error, and for anything more satisfactory or more intelligible we shall look in vain to any published treatise on the topic.

So general and so total a failure can be referred only to radical misconception. In fact the English Prosodists have blindly followed the pedants. These latter, like les moutons de Panurge, have been occupied in incessant tumbling into ditches, for the excellent reason that their leaders have so tumbled before. The Iliad, being taken as a starting point, was made to stand instead of Nature and common sense. Upon this poem, in place of facts and deduction from fact, or from natural law, were built systems of feet, metres, rhythms, rules,- rules that contradict each other every five minutes, and for nearly all of which there may be found twice as many exceptions as examples. If any

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one has a fancy to be thoroughly confounded- to see how far the infatuation of what is termed "classical scholarship," can lead a bookworm in the manufacture of darkness out of sunshine, let him turn over for a few moments any of the German Greek Prosodies. The only thing clearly made out in them is a very magnificent contempt for Leibnitzs principle of "a sufficient reason."

To divert attention from the real matter in hand by any further reference to these works is unnecessary, and would be weak. I cannot call to mind at this moment one essential particular of information that is to be gleaned from them, and I will drop them here with merely this one observation,- that employing from among the numerous "ancient" feet the spondee, the trochee, the iambus, the anapaest, the dactyl, and the caesura alone, I will engage to scan correctly any of the Horatian rhythms, or any true rhythm that human ingenuity can conceive. And this excess of chimerical feet is perhaps the very least of the scholastic supererogations. *Ex uno disce omnia*. The fact is that quantity is a point in whose investigation the lumber of mere learning may be dispensed with, if ever in any. Its appreciation is universal. It appertains to no region, nor race, nor era in special. To melody and to harmony the Greeks hearkened with ears precisely similar to those which we employ for similar purposes at present, and I should not be condemned for heresy in asserting that a pendulum at Athens would have vibrated much after the same fashion as does a pendulum in the city of Penn.

Verse originates in the human enjoyment of equality, fitness. To this enjoyment, also, all the moods of verse, rhythm, metre, stanza, rhyme, alliteration, the refrain, and other analogous effects, are to be referred. As there are some readers who habitually confound rhythm and metre, it may be as well here to say that the former concerns the character of feet (that is arrangements of syllables) while the latter has to do with the number of these feet. Thus by "a dactylic rhythm" we express a sequence of dactyls. By "a dactylic hexameter" we imply a line or measure consisting of six of these dactyls.

To return to equality. Its idea embraces those of similarity, proportion, identity, repetition, and adaptation or fitness. It might not be very difficult to go even behind the idea of equality, and show both how and why it is that the human nature takes pleasure in it, but such an investigation would, for any purpose now in view, be supererogatory. It is sufficient that the fact is undeniable- the fact that man derives enjoyment from his perception of equality. Let us examine a crystal. We are at once interested by the equality between the sides and between the angles of one of its faces; the equality of the sides pleases us, that of the angles doubles the pleasure. On bringing to view a second face in all respects similar to the first, this pleasure seems to be squared; on bringing to view a third it appears to be cubed, and so on. I have no doubt, indeed, that the delight experienced, if measurable, would be found to have exact mathematical relation such as I suggest, that is to say, as far as a certain point, beyond which there would be a decrease in similar relations.

The perception of pleasure in the equality of sounds is the principle of Music. Unpractised ears can appreciate only simple equalities, such as are found in ballad airs. While comparing one simple sound with another they are too much occupied to be capable of comparing the equality subsisting between these two simple sounds taken conjointly, and two other similar simple sounds taken conjointly. Practised ears, on the other hand, appreciate both equalities at the same instant, although it is absurd to suppose that both are heard at the same instant. One is heard and appreciated from itself, the other is heard by the memory, and the instant glides into and is confounded with the secondary appreciation. Highly cultivated musical taste in this manner enjoys not only these double equalities, all appreciated at once, but takes pleasurable cognizance, through memory, of equalities the members of which occur at intervals so great that the uncultivated taste loses them altogether. That this latter can properly estimate or decide on the merits of what is called scientific music is of course impossible. But scientific music has no claim to intrinsic excellence; it is fit for scientific ears alone. In its excess it is the triumph of the physique over the morale of music. The sentiment is overwhelmed by the sense. On the whole, the advocates of the simpler melody and harmony have infinitely the best of the argument, although there has been very little of real argument on the subject.

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In verse, which cannot be better designated than as an inferior or less capable Music, there is, happily, little chance for complexity. Its rigidly simple character not even Science- not even Pedantry can greatly pervert.

The rudiment of verse may possibly be found in the spondee. The very germ of a thought seeking satisfaction in equality of sound would result in the construction of words of two syllables, equally accented. In corroboration of this idea we find that spondees most abound in the most ancient tongues. The second step we can easily suppose to be the comparison, that is to say, the collocation of two spondees- or two words composed each of a spondee. The third step would be the juxtaposition of three of these words. By this time the perception of monotone would induce further consideration; and thus arises what Leigh Hunt so flounders in discussing under the title of "The Principle of Variety in Uniformity." Of course there is no principle in the case- nor in maintaining it. The "Uniformity" is the principle- the "Variety" is but the principle's natural safeguard from self-destruction by excess of self. "Uniformity," besides, is the very worst word that could have been chosen for the expression of the general idea at which it aims.

The perception of monotone having given rise to an attempt at its relief, the first thought in this new direction would be that of collating two or more words formed each of two syllables differently accented (that is to say, short and long) but having the same order in each word- in other terms, of collating two or more iamboes, or two or more trochees. And here let me pause to assert that more pitiable nonsense has been written on the topic of long and short syllables than on any other subject under the sun. In general, a syllable is long or short, just as it is difficult or easy of enunciation. The natural long syllables are those encumbered- the natural short syllables are those unencumbered with consonants; all the rest is mere artificiality and jargon. The Latin Prosodies have a rule that a "vowel before two consonants is long." This rule is deduced from "authority"- that is, from the observation that vowels so circumstanced, in the ancient poems, are always in syllables long by the laws of scansion. The philosophy of the rule is untouched, and lies simply in the physical difficulty of giving voice to such syllables- of performing the lingual evolutions necessary for their utterance. Of course, it is not the vowel that is long (although the rule says so), but the syllable of which the vowel is a part. It will be seen that the length of a syllable, depending on the facility or difficulty of its enunciation, must have great variation in various syllables; but for the purposes of verse we suppose a long syllable equal to two short ones, and the natural deviation from this relativeness we correct in perusal. The more closely our long syllables approach this relation with our short ones, the better, *ceteris paribus*, will be our verse: but if the relation does not exist of itself we force it by emphasis, which can, of course, make any syllable as long as desired;- or, by an effort we can pronounce with unnatural brevity a syllable that is naturally too long. Accented syllables are, of course, always long, but where unencumbered with consonants, must be classed among the unnaturally long. Mere custom has declared that we shall accent them- that is to say, dwell upon them; but no inevitable lingual difficulty forces us to do so. In fine, every long syllable must of its own accord occupy in its utterance, or must be made to occupy, precisely the time demanded for two short ones. The only exception to this rule is found in the caesura- of which more anon.

The success of the experiment with the trochees or iamboes (the one would have suggested the other) must have led to a trial of dactyls or anapaests- natural dactyls or anapaests- dactylic or anapaestic words. And now some degree of complexity has been attained. There is an appreciation, first, of the equality between the several dactyls or anapaests, and secondly, of that between the long syllable and the two short conjointly. But here it may be said, that step after step would have been taken, in continuation of this routine, until all the feet of the Greek Prosodies became exhausted. Not so; these remaining feet have no existence except in the brains of the scholiasts. It is needless to imagine men inventing these things, and folly to explain how and why they invented them, until it shall be first shown that they are actually invented. All other "feet" than those which I have specified are, if not impossible at first view, merely combinations of the specified; and, although this assertion is rigidly true, I will, to avoid misunderstanding, put it in a somewhat different shape. I will say, then, that at present I am aware of no rhythm- nor do I believe that any one can be constructed- which, in its last analysis, will not be found to consist altogether of the feet I have mentioned, either existing in their individual and obvious condition, or interwoven with each other in accordance with simple natural laws which I will endeavour to point out hereafter.

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We have now gone so far as to suppose men constructing indefinite sequences of spondaic, iambic, trochaic, dactylic, or anapaestic words. In extending these sequences, they would be again arrested by the sense of monotone. A succession of spondees would immediately have displeased; one of iambs or of trochees, on account of the variety included within the foot itself, would have taken longer to displease, one of dactyls or anapaests, still longer; but even the last, if extended very far, must have become wearisome. The idea first of curtailing, and secondly of defining, the length of a sequence would thus at once have arisen. Here then is the line of verse proper.[14] The principle of equality being constantly at the bottom of the whole process, lines would naturally be made, in the first instance, equal in the number of their feet; in the second instance, there would be variation in the mere number; one line would be twice as long as another, then one would be some less obvious multiple of another; then still less obvious proportions would be adopted- nevertheless there would be proportion, that is to say, a phase of equality, still.

[14] Verse, from the Latin *vertere*, to turn, is so called on account of the turning or re-commencement of the series of feet. Thus a verse strictly speaking is a line. In this sense, however, I have preferred using the latter word alone; employing the former in the general acceptance given it in the heading of this paper.

Lines being once introduced, the necessity of distinctly defining these lines to the ear (as yet written verse does not exist), would lead to a scrutiny of their capabilities at their terminations- and now would spring up the idea of equality in sound between the final syllables- in other words, of rhyme. First, it would be used only in the iambic, anapaestic, and spondaic rhythms (granting that the latter had not been thrown aside long since, on account of its tameness), because in these rhythms the concluding syllable being long, could best sustain the necessary protraction of the voice. No great while could elapse, however, before the effect, found pleasant as well as useful, would be applied to the two remaining rhythms. But as the chief force of rhyme must lie in the accented syllable, the attempt to create rhyme at all in these two remaining rhythms, the trochaic and dactylic, would necessarily result in double and triple rhymes, such as beauty with duty (trochaic), and beautiful with dutiful (dactylic).

It must be observed that in suggesting these processes I assign them no date; nor do I even insist upon their order. Rhyme is supposed to be of modern origin, and were this proved my positions remain untouched. I may say, however, in passing, that several instances of rhyme occur in the "Clouds" of Aristophanes, and that the Roman poets occasionally employed it. There is an effective species of ancient rhyming which has never descended to the moderns: that in which the ultimate and penultimate syllables rhyme with each other. For example:

*Parturiunt montes; nascetur ridiculus mus.*

And again:

*Litoreis ingens inventa sub ilicibus sus.*

The terminations of Hebrew verse (as far as understood) show no signs of rhyme; but what thinking person can doubt that it did actually exist? That men have so obstinately and blindly insisted, in general, even up to the present day, in confining rhyme to the ends of lines, when its effect is even better applicable elsewhere, intimates in my opinion the sense of some necessity in the connection of the ends with the rhyme- hints that the origin of rhyme lay in a necessity which connected it with the end- shows that neither mere accident nor mere fancy gave rise to the connection-points, in a word, at the very necessity which I have suggested (that of some mode of defining lines to the ear), as the true origin of rhyme. Admit this and we throw the origin far back in the night of Time- beyond the origin of written verse.

But to resume. The amount of complexity I have now supposed to be attained is very considerable. Various systems of equalization are appreciated at once (or nearly so) in their respective values and in the value of each system with reference to all the others. As our present ultimatum of complexity, we have arrived at triple-rhymed, natural-dactylic lines, existing proportionally as well as equally with regard to other triple-rhymed,



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natural-dactylic lines. For example:

Virginal Lilian, rigidly, humblily dutiful;

Saintlily, lowlily,

Thrillingly, holily

Beautiful!

Here we appreciate, first, the absolute equality between the long syllable of each dactyl and the two short conjointly; secondly, the absolute equality between each dactyl and any other dactyl, in other words, among all the dactyls; thirdly, the absolute equality between the two middle lines; fourthly, the absolute equality between the first line and the three others taken conjointly, fifthly, the absolute equality between the last two syllables of the respective words "dutiful" and "beautiful"; sixthly, the absolute equality between the two last syllables of the respective words "lowlily" and "holily"; seventhly, the proximate equality between the first syllable of "dutiful" and the first syllable of "beautiful"; eighthly, the proximate equality between the first syllable of "lowlily" and that of "holily"; ninthly, the proportional equality (that of five to one) between the first line and each of its members, the dactyls; tenthly, the proportional equality (that of two to one) between each of the middle lines and its members, the dactyls, eleventhly, the proportional equality between the first line and each of the two middle, that of five to two; twelfthly, the proportional equality between the first line and the last, that of five to one; thirteenthly, the proportional equality between each of the middle lines and the last, that of two to one, lastly, the proportional equality, as concerns number, between all the lines taken collectively, and any individual line, that of four to one.

The consideration of this last equality would give birth immediately to the idea of stanza,[15] that is to say, the insulation of lines into equal or obviously proportional masses. In its primitive (which was also its best) form the stanza would most probably have had absolute unity. In other words, the removal of any one of its lines would have rendered it imperfect, as in the case above, where if the last line, for example, be taken away there is left no rhyme to the "dutiful" of the first. Modern stanza is excessively loose, and where so, ineffective as a matter of course.

[15] A stanza is often vulgarly, and with gross impropriety, called a verse.

Now, although in the deliberate written statement which I have here given of these various systems of equalities, there seems to be an infinity of complexity so much that it is hard to conceive the mind taking cognisance of them all in the brief period occupied by the perusal or recital of the stanza, yet the difficulty is in fact apparent only when we will it to become so. Any one fond of mental experiment may satisfy himself, by trial, that in listening to the lines he does actually (although with a seeming unconsciousness, on account of the rapid evolutions of sensation) recognise and instantaneously appreciate (more or less intensely as his is cultivated) each and all of the equalizations detailed. The pleasure received or receivable has very much such progressive increase, and in very nearly such mathematical relations as those which I have suggested in the case of the crystal.

It will be observed that I speak of merely a proximate equality between the first syllable of "dutiful" and that of "beautiful," and it may be asked why we cannot imagine the earliest rhymes to have had absolute instead of proximate equality of sound. But absolute equality would have involved the use of identical words, and it is the duplicate sameness or monotony, that of sense as well as that of sound, which would have caused these rhymes to be rejected in the very first instance.

The narrowness of the limits within which verse composed of natural feet alone must necessarily have been confined would have led, after a very brief interval, to the trial and immediate adoption of artificial feet, that is to

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say, of feet not constituted each of a single word but two, or even three words, or of parts of words. These feet would be intermingled with natural ones. For example:

A breath / can make / them as / a breath / his made.

This is an iambic line in which each iambus is formed of two words. Again:

The un / ima / gina / ble might / of Jove.

This is an iambic line in which the first foot is formed of a word and a part of a word; the second and third of parts taken from the body or interior of a word; the fourth of a part and a whole; the fifth of two complete words. There are no natural feet in either line. Again:

Can it be / fancied that / Deity / ever vin / dictively

Made in his / image a / mannikin / merely to / madden it?

These are two dactylic lines in which we find natural feet ("Deity," "mannikin"); feet composed of two words ("fancied that," "image a," "merely to," "madden it"); feet composed of three words, ("can it be," "made in his"); a foot composed of a part of a word ("dictively"); and a foot composed of a word and a part of a word ("ever vin").

And now, in our suppositional progress, we have gone so far as to exhaust all the essentialities of verse. What follows may, strictly speaking, be regarded as embellishment merely, but even in this embellishment the rudimental sense of equality would have been the never-ceasing impulse. It would, for example, be simply in seeking further administration to this sense that men would come in time to think of the refrain or burden, where, at the closes of the several stanzas of a poem, one word or phrase is repeated; and of alliteration, in whose simplest form a consonant is repeated in the commencements of various words. This effect would be extended so as to embrace repetitions both of vowels and of consonants in the bodies as well as in the beginnings of words, and at a later period would be made to infringe on the province of rhyme by the introduction of general similarity of sound between whole feet occurring in the body of a line- all of which modifications I have exemplified in the line above.

Made in his image a mannikin merely to madden it.

Further cultivation would improve also the refrain by relieving its monotone in slightly varying the phrase at each repetition, or (as I have attempted to do in "The Raven") in retaining the phrase and varying its application, although this latter point is not strictly a rhythmical effect alone. Finally, poets when fairly wearied with following precedent, following it the more closely the less they perceived it in company with Reason, would adventure so far as to indulge in positive rhyme at other points than the ends of lines. First, they would put it in the middle of the line, then at some point where the multiple would be less obvious, then, alarmed at their own audacity, they would undo all their work by cutting these lines in two. And here is the fruitful source of the infinity of "short metre" by which modern poetry, if not distinguished, is at least disgraced. It would require a high degree, indeed, both of cultivation and of courage on the part of any versifier to enable him to place his rhymes, and let them remain at unquestionably their best position, that of unusual and unanticipated intervals.

On account of the stupidity of some people, or (if talent be a more respectable word), on account of their talent for misconception- I think it necessary to add here, first, that I believe the "processes" above detailed to be nearly, if not accurately, those which did occur in the gradual creation of what we now can verse; secondly, that, although I so believe, I yet urge neither the assumed fact nor my belief in it as a part of the true propositions of this paper, thirdly, that in regard to the aim of this paper, it is of no consequence whether these processes did occur either in the order I have assigned them, or at all; my design being simply, in presenting a general type of what such

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processes might have been and must have resembled, to help them, the "some people," to an easy understanding of what I have further to say on the topic of Verse.

There is one point, which, in my summary of the processes, I have purposely forborne to touch; because this point, being the most important of all on account of the immensity of error usually involved in its consideration, would have led me into a series of detail inconsistent with the object of a summary.

Every reader of verse must have observed how seldom it happens that even any one line proceeds uniformly with a succession, such as I have supposed, of absolutely equal feet; that is to say, with a succession of iambs only, or of trochees only, or of dactyls only, or of anapaests only, or of spondees only. Even in the most musical lines we find the succession interrupted. The iambic pentameters of Pope, for example, will be found on examination, frequently varied by trochees in the beginning, or by (what seem to be) anapaests in the body of the line.

oh thou / whate / ver ti / tle please / thine ear /

Dean Dra / pier Bick / erstaff / or Gull / iver /

Whether / thou choose / Cervan / tes' / se / rious air /

or laugh / and shake / in Rab / elais' ea / sy chair /

Were any one weak enough to refer to the Prosodies for the solution of the difficulty here, he would find it solved as usual by a rule, stating the fact (or what it, the rule, supposes to be the fact), but without the slightest attempt at the rationale. "By a synaeresis of the two short syllables," say the books, "an anapaest may sometimes be employed for an iambus, or dactyl for a trochee.... In the beginning of a line a trochee is often used for an iambus."

Blending is the plain English for synaeresis- but there should be no blending; neither is an anapaest ever employed for an iambus, or a dactyl for a trochee. These feet differ in time, and no feet so differing can ever be legitimately used in the same line. An anapaest is equal to four short syllables- an iambus only to three. Dactyls and trochees hold the same relation. The principle of equality, in verse, admits, it is true, of variation at certain points, for the relief of monotone, as I have already shown, but the point of time is that point which, being the rudimental one, must never be tampered with at all.

To explain:- In further efforts for the relief of monotone than those to which I have alluded in the summary, men soon came to see that there was no absolute necessity for adhering to the precise number of syllables, provided the time required for the whole foot was preserved inviolate. They saw, for instance, that in such a line as

or laugh / and shake / in Rab / elais ea / sy chair /

the equalisation of the three syllables elais ea with the two syllables composing any of the other feet could be readily effected by pronouncing the two syllables elais in double quick time. By pronouncing each of the syllables e and lais twice as rapidly as the syllable sy, or the syllable in, or any other short syllable, they could bring the two of them, taken together, to the length, that is to say to the time, of any one short syllable. This consideration enabled them to effect the agreeable variation of three syllables in place of the uniform two. And variation was the object-variation to the ear. What sense is there, then, in supposing this object rendered null by the blending of the two syllables so as to render them, in absolute effect, one? Of course, there must be no blending. Each syllable must be pronounced as distinctly as possible (or the variation is lost), but with twice the rapidity in which the ordinary short syllable is enunciated. That the syllables elais ea do not compose an anapaest is evident, and the signs of their accentuation are erroneous. The foot might be written with inverted crescents expressing double quick time; and might be called a bastard iambus.

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Here is a trochaic line:

See the / delicate-footed / rain-deer.

The prosodies- that is to say the most considerate of them- would here decide that "delicate" is a dactyl used in place of a trochee, and would refer to what they call their "rule, for justification. Others, varying the stupidity, would insist upon a Procrustean adjustment thus (del'cate) an adjustment recommended to all such words as silvery, murmuring. etc., which, it is said, should be not only pronounced but written silv'ry, murm'ring, and so on, whenever they find themselves in trochaic predicament. I have only to say that "delicate," when circumstanced as above, is neither a dactyl nor a dactyl's equivalent; that I think it as well to call it a bastard trochee; and that all words, at all events, should be written and pronounced in full, and as nearly as possible as nature intended them.

About eleven years ago, there appeared in "The American Monthly Magazine" (then edited, I believe, by Messrs Hoffman and Benjamin,) a review of Mr. Willis's Poems; the critic putting forth his strength, or his weakness, in an endeavor to show that the poet was either absurdly affected, or grossly ignorant of the laws of verse; the accusation being based altogether on the fact that Mr. W. made occasional use of this very word "delicate," and other similar words, in "the Heroic measure, which every one knew consisted of feet of two syllables." Mr. W. has often, for example, such lines as

That binds him to a woman's delicate love—

In the gay sunshine, reverent in the storm

With its invisible fingers my loose hair.

Here of course, the feet licate love, verent in and sible fin, are bastard iambuses; are not anapaests and are not improperly used. Their employment, on the contrary, by Mr. Willis, is but one of the innumerable instances he has given of keen sensibility in all those matters of taste which may be classed under the general head of fanciful embellishment.

It is also about eleven years ago, if I am not mistaken, since Mr. Horne (of England,) the author of "Orion," one of the noblest epics in any language, thought it necessary to preface his "Chaucer Modernized" by a very long and evidently a very elaborate essay, of which the greater portion was occupied in a discussion of the seemingly anomalous foot of which we have been speaking. Mr. Horne upholds Chaucer in its frequent use; maintains his superiority, on account of his so frequently using it, over all English versifiers; and indignantly repelling the common idea of those who make verse on their fingers- that the superfluous syllable is a roughness and an error- very chivalrously makes battle for it as a "grace." That a grace it is, there can be no doubt; and what I complain of is, that the author of the most happily versified long poem in existence, should have been under the necessity of discussing this grace merely as a grace, through forty or fifty vague pages, solely because of his inability to show how and why it is a grace- by which showing the question would have been settled in an instant.

About the trochee used for an iambus, as we see in the beginning of the line,

Whether thou choose Cervantes' serious air,

there is little that need be said. It brings me to the general proposition that, in all rhythms, the prevalent or distinctive feet may be varied at will and nearly at random, by the occasional introduction of feet- that is to say, feet the sum of whose syllabic times is equal to the sum of the syllabic times of the distinctive feet. Thus, the trochee, whether is equal, in the sum of the times of its syllables, to the iambus, thou choose, in the sum of the times of its syllables; each foot being in time equal to three short syllables. Good versifiers who happen to be also

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good poets, contrive to relieve the monotony of a series of feet by the use of equivalent feet only at rare intervals, and at such points of their subject as seem in accordance with the startling character of the variation. Nothing of this care is seen in the line quoted above- although Pope has some fine instances of the duplicate effect. Where vehemence is to be strongly expressed, I am not sure that we should be wrong in venturing on two consecutive equivalent feet- although I cannot say that I have ever known the adventure made, except in the following passage, which occurs in "Al Aaraaf," a boyish poem written by myself when a boy. I am referring to the sudden and rapid advent of a star:

Dim was its little disk, and angel eyes

Alone could see the phantom in the skies,

When first the phantoms course was found to be

Headlong hithirward o'er the starry sea.

In the "general proposition" above, I speak of the occasional introduction of equivalent feet. It sometimes happens that unskilful versifiers, without knowing what they do, or why they do it, introduce so many "variations" as to exceed in number the "distinctive" feet, when the ear becomes at once balked by the bouleversement of the rhythm. Too many trochees, for example, inserted in an iambic rhythm would convert the latter to a trochaic. I may note here that in all cases the rhythm designed should be commenced and continued, without variation, until the ear has had full time to comprehend what is the rhythm. In violation of a rule so obviously founded in common sense, many even of our best poets do not scruple to begin an iambic rhythm with a trochee, or the converse; or a dactylic with an anapaest or the converse; and so on.

A somewhat less objectionable error, although still a decided one, is that of commencing a rhythm not with a different equivalent foot but with a "bastard" foot of the rhythm intended. For example:

Many a / thought will / come to / memory. /

Here 'many a' is what I have explained to be a bastard trochee, and to be understood should be accented with inverted crescents. It is objectionable solely on account of its position as the opening foot of a trochaic rhythm. Memory, similarly accented is also a bastard trochee, but unobjectionable, although by no means demanded.

The further illustration of this point will enable me to take an important step.

One of our finest poets, Mr. Christopher Pearse Cranch, begins a very beautiful poem thus:

Many are the thoughts that come to me

In my lonely musing;

And they drift so strange and swift

There's no time for choosing

Which to follow; for to leave

Any, seems a losing.

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"A losing" to Mr. Cranch, of course- but this en passant. It will be seen here that the intention is trochaic;- although we do not see this intention by the opening foot as we should do, or even by the opening line. Reading the whole stanza, however, we perceive the trochaic rhythm as the general design, and so after some reflection, we divide the first line thus:

Many are the / thoughts that / come to / me.

Thus scanned, the line will seem musical. It is highly so. And it is because there is no end to instances of just such lines of apparently incomprehensible music, that Coleridge thought proper to invent his nonsensical system of what he calls "scanning by accents"- as if "scanning by accents" were anything more than a phrase. Whenever "Christabel" is really not rough, it can be as readily scanned by the true I laws (not the supposititious rules) of verse, as can the simplest pentameter of Pope; and where it is rough (passim) these same laws will enable any one of common sense to show why it is rough and to point out instantaneously the remedy for the roughness.

A reads and re-reads a certain line, and pronounces it false in rhythm-unmusical. B, however, reads it to A, and A is at once struck with the perfection of the rhythm, and wonders at his dulness in not "catching" it before. Henceforward he admits the line to be musical. B, triumphant, asserts that, to be sure the line is musical- for it is the work of Coleridge- and that it is A who is not; the fault being in A's false reading. Now here A is right and B wrong. That rhythm is erroneous (at some point or other more or less obvious), which any ordinary reader can, without design, read improperly. It is the business of the poet so to construct his line that the intention must be caught at once. Even when these men have precisely the same understanding of a sentence, they differ, and often widely, in their modes of enunciating it. Any one who has taken the trouble to examine the topic of emphasis (by which I here mean not accent of particular syllables, but the dwelling on entire words), must have seen that men emphasize in the most singularly arbitrary manner. There are certain large classes of people, for example, who persist in emphasizing their monosyllables. Little uniformity of emphasis prevails; because the thing itself- the idea, emphasis- is referable to no natural- at least to no well comprehended and therefore uniform-law. Beyond a very narrow and vague limit, the whole matter is conventionality. And if we differ in emphasis even when we agree in comprehension, how much more so in the former when in the latter too! Apart, however, from the consideration of natural disagreement, is it not clear that, by tripping here and mouthing there, any sequence of words may be twisted into any species of rhythm? But are we thence to deduce that all sequences of words are rhythmical in a rational understanding of the term?- for this is the deduction precisely to which the reductio ad absurdum will, in the end, bring all the propositions of Coleridge. Out of a hundred readers of "Christabel," fifty will be able to make nothing of its rhythm, while forty-nine of the remaining fifty with some ado, fancy they comprehend it, after the fourth or fifth perusal. The one out of the whole hundred who shall both comprehend and admire it at first sight- must be an unaccountably clever person- and I am by far too modest to assume, for a moment, that that very clever person is myself.

In illustration of what is here advanced I cannot do better than quote a poem:

Pease porridge hot pease porridge cold

Pease porridge in the pot- nine days old.

Now those of my readers who have never heard this poem pronounced according to the nursery conventionality, will find its rhythm as obscure as an explanatory note; while those who have heard it will divide it thus, declare it musical, and wonder how there can be any doubt about it.

Pease / porridge / hot / pease / porridge / cold /

Pease / porridge / in the / pot / nine / days / old. /

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The chief thing in the way of this species of rhythm, is the necessity which it imposes upon the poet of travelling in constant company with his compositions, so as to be ready at a moment's notice, to avail himself of a well-understood poetical license- that of reading aloud one's own doggerel.

In Mr. Cranch's line,

Many are the / thoughts that / come to / me,

the general error of which I speak is, of course, very partially exemplified, and the purpose for which, chiefly, I cite it, lies yet further on in our topic.

The two divisions (thoughts that) and (come to) are ordinary trochees. The first division (many are the) would be thus accented by the Greek Prosodies (many are the), and would be called by them astrologos. The Latin books would style the foot Paeon Primus, and both Greek and Latin would swear that it was composed of a trochee and what they term a pyrrhic- that is to say, a foot of two short syllables- a thing that cannot be, as I shall presently show large

But now, there is an obvious difficulty. The astrologos, according to the Prosodies' own showing, is equal to five short syllables, and the trochee to three- yet, in the line quoted, these two feet are equal. They occupy, precisely, the same time. In fact, the whole music of the line depends upon their being made to occupy the same time. The Prosodies then, have demonstrated what all mathematicians have stupidly failed in demonstrating- that three and five are one and the same thing. After what I have already said, however, about the bastard trochee and the bastard iambus, no one can have any trouble in understanding that many are the is of similar character. It is merely a bolder variation than usual from the routine of trochees, and introduces to the bastard trochee one additional syllable. But this syllable is not short. That is, it is not short in the sense of "short" as applied to the final syllable of the ordinary trochee, where the word means merely the half of long.

In this case (that of the additional syllable) "short," if used at all, must be used in the sense of the sixth of long. And all the three final syllables can be called short only with the same understanding of the term. The three together are equal only to the one short syllable (whose place they supply) of the ordinary trochee. It follows that there is no sense in accenting these syllables with [a crescent placed with the curve to the bottom]. We must devise for them some new character which shall denote the sixth of long. Let it be the crescent placed with the curve to the left. The whole foot (many are the) might be called a quick trochee.

We now come to the final division (me) of Mr. Cranch's line. It is clear that this foot, short as it appears, is fully equal in time to each of the preceding. It is, in fact, the caesura- the foot which, in the beginning of this paper, I called the most important in all verse. Its chief office is that of pause or termination; and here- at the end of a line- its use is easy, because there is no danger of misapprehending its value. We pause on it, by a seeming necessity, just so long as it has taken us to pronounce the preceding feet, whether iam-buses, trochees, dactyls, or anapaests. It is thus a variable foot, and, with some care, may be well introduced into the body of a line, as in a little poem of great beauty by Mrs. Welby:

I have / a lit / tle step / son / of on / ly three / years old. /

Here we dwell on the caesura, son just as long as it requires us to pronounce either of the preceding or succeeding iam-buses. Its value, therefore, in this line, is that of three short syllables. In the following dactylic line its value is that of four short syllables.

Pale as a / lily was / Emily / [Gray]. /

I have accented the caesura with brackets by way of expressing this variability of value.

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I observed just now that there could be no such foot as one of two short syllables. What we start from in the very beginning of all idea on the topic of verse, is quantity, length. Thus when we enunciate an independent syllable it is long, as a matter of course. If we enunciate two, dwelling on both we express equality in the enunciation, or length, and have a right to call them two long syllables. If we dwell on one more than the other, we have also a right to call one short, because it is short in relation to the other. But if we dwell on both equally, and with a tripping voice, saying to ourselves here are two short syllables, the query might well be asked of us- "in relation to what are they short?" Shortness is but the negation of length. To say, then, that two syllables, placed independently of any other syllable, are short, is merely to say that they have no positive length, or enunciation- in other words, that they are no syllables- that they do not exist at all. And if, persisting, we add anything about their equality, we are merely floundering in the idea of an identical equation, where, x being equal to x, nothing is shown to be equal to zero. In a word, we can form no conception of a pyrrhic as of an independent foot. It is a mere chimera bred in the mad fancy of a pedant.

From what I have said about the equalization of the several feet of a line, it must not be deduced that any necessity for equality in time exists between the rhythm of several lines. A poem, or even a stanza, may begin with iambs in the first line, and proceed with anapaests in the second, or even with the less accordant dactyls, as in the opening of quite a pretty specimen of verse by Miss Mary A. S. Aldrich:

The wa / ter li / ly sleeps / in pride /

Down in the / depths of the / Azure / [lake.] /

Here azure is a spondee, equivalent to a dactyl; lake a caesura.

I shall now best proceed in quoting the initial lines of Byron's "Bride of Abydos":

Know ye the land where, the cypress and myrtle

Are emblems of deeds that are done in their clime,

Where the rage of the vulture, the love of the turtle

Now melt into softness, now madden to crime?

Know ye the land of the cedar and vine,

Where the flowers ever blossom, the beams ever shine,

And the light wings of Zephyr, oppressed with perfume.

Wax faint o'er the gardens of Gul in their bloom?

Where the citron and olive are fairest of fruit

And the voice of the nightingale never is mute—

Where the virgins are soft as the roses they twine,

And all save the spirit of man is divine?

'Tis the land of the East— 'tis the clime of the Sun—



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Can he smile on such deeds as his children have done?

Oh, wild as the accents of lovers' farewell

Are the hearts that they bear and the tales that they tell.

Now the flow of these lines (as times go) is very sweet and musical. They have been often admired, and justly- as times go- that is to say, it is a rare thing to find better versification of its kind. And where verse is pleasant to the ear, it is silly to find fault with it because it refuses to be scanned. Yet I have heard men, professing to be scholars, who made no scruple of abusing these lines of Byron's on the ground that they were musical in spite of all law. Other gentlemen, not scholars, abused "all law" for the same reason- and it occurred neither to the one party nor to the other that the law about which they were disputing might possibly be no law at all- an ass of a law in the skin of a lion.

The Grammars said nothing about dactylic lines, and it was easily seen that these lines were at least meant for dactylic. The first one was, therefore, thus divided:

Know ye the / land where the / cypress and / myrtle. /

The concluding foot was a mystery; but the Prosodies said something about the dactylic "measure" calling now and then for a double rhyme; and the court of inquiry were content to rest in the double rhyme, without exactly perceiving what a double rhyme had to do with the question of an irregular foot. Quitting the first line, the second was thus scanned:

are emblems / of deeds that / are done in / their clime. /

It was immediately seen, however, that this would not do- it was at war with the whole emphasis of the reading. It could not be supposed that Byron, or any one in his senses, intended to place stress upon such monosyllables as "are," "of," and "their," nor could "their clime," collated with "to crime," in the corresponding line below, be fairly twisted into anything like a "double rhyme," so as to bring everything within the category of the Grammars. But farther these Grammars spoke not. The inquirers, therefore, in spite of their sense of harmony in the lines, when considered without reference to scansion, fell upon the idea that the "Are" was a blunder- an excess for which the poet should be sent to Coventry- and, striking it out, they scanned the remainder of the line as follows:

—emblems of / deeds that are / done in their / clime.

This answered pretty well; but the Grammars admitted no such foot as a foot of one syllable; and besides the rhythm was dactylic. In despair, the books are well searched, however, and at last the investigators are gratified by a full solution of the riddle in the profound "Observation" quoted in the beginning of this article:- "When a syllable is wanting, the verse is said to be catalectic, when the measure is exact, the line is acatalectic; when there is a redundant syllable it forms hypermeter" This is enough. The anomalous line is pronounced to be catalectic at the head and to form hypermeter at the tail- and so on, and so on; it being soon discovered that nearly all the remaining lines are in a similar predicament, and that what flows so smoothly to the ear, although so roughly to the eye, is, after all, a mere jumble of catalecticism, acatalecticism, and hypermeter- not to say worse.

Now, had this court of inquiry been in possession of even the shadow of the philosophy of Verse, they would have had no trouble in reconciling this oil and water of the eye and ear, by merely scanning the passage without reference to lines, and, continuously, thus:

Know ye the / land where the / cypress and myrtle Are / emblems of deeds that are / done in their / clime Where  
the rage of the / vulture the / love of the / turtle Now / melt into / softness now / madden to / Know ye the / land of

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the / cedar and / vine Where the flowers ever / blossom the / beams ever / shine And the / light wings of / Zephyr  
op / pressed by per / fume Wax / faint o'er the / gardens of / Gul in their / bloom where the / citron and / olive are /  
fairest of / fruit And the / voice of the / nightingale / never is / mute Where the / virgins are / soft as the / roses  
they / twine And / all save the / spirit of / man is di / vine. 'Tis the / land of the / East 'tis the / clime of the / sum  
Can he / smile on such / deeds as his / children have / done Oh / wild as the / accents of / lovers' fare / well Are  
the / hearts that they / bear and the / tales that they / tell. Here "crime" and "tell" are caesuras, each having the  
value of a dactyl, four short syllables, while "fume Wax," "twine And," and "done Oh," are spondees which, of  
course, being composed of two long syllables are also equal to four short, and are the dactyl's natural equivalent.  
The nicety of Byron's ear has led him into a succession of feet which, with two trivial exceptions as regards  
melody, are absolutely accurate, a very rare occurrence this in dactylic or anapaestic rhythms. The exceptions are  
found in the spondee "twine And," and the dactyl "smile on such." Both feet are false in point of melody. In  
"twine And" to make out the rhyme we must force "And" into a length which it will not naturally bear. We are  
called on to sacrifice either the proper length of the syllable as demanded by its position as a member of a  
spondee, or the customary accentuation of the word in conversation. There is no hesitation, and should be none.  
We at once give up the sound for the sense, and the rhythm is imperfect. In this instance it is very slightly so, not  
one person in ten thousand could by ear detect the inaccuracy. But the perfection of verse as regards melody,  
consists in its never demanding any such sacrifice as is here demanded. The rhythmical must agree thoroughly  
with the reading flow. This perfection has in no instance been attained, but is unquestionably attainable. "Smile on  
such," a dactyl, is incorrect, because "such," from the character of the two consonants ch cannot easily be  
enunciated in the ordinary time of a short syllable, which its position declares that it is. Almost every reader will  
be able to appreciate the slight difficulty here, and yet the error is by no means so important as that of the "And"  
in the spondee. By dexterity we may pronounce "such" in the true time, but the attempt to remedy the rhythmical  
deficiency of the And by drawing it out, merely aggravates the offence against natural enunciation by directing  
attention to the offence.

My main object, however, in quoting these lines is to show that in spite of the Prosodies, the length of a line is  
entirely an arbitrary matter. We might divide the commencement of Byron's poem thus:-

Know ye the / land where the /

or thus:

Know ye the / land where the / cypress and /

or thus:

Know ye the / land where the / cypress and / myrtle are /

or thus:

Know ye the / land where the / cypress and / myrtle are / emblems of

In short, we may give it any division we please, and the lines will be good, provided we have at least two feet in a  
line. As in mathematics two units are required to form number, so rhythm (from the Greek arithmos, number)  
demands for its formation at least two feet. Beyond doubt, we often see such lines as

Know ye the—

Land where the—

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lines of one foot, and our Prosodies admit such, but with impropriety, for common sense would dictate that every so obvious division of a poem as is made by a line, should include within itself all that is necessary for its own comprehension, but in a line of one foot we can have no appreciation of rhythm, which depends upon the equality between two or more pulsations. The false lines, consisting sometimes of a single caesura, which are seen in mock Pindaric odes, are, of course, "rhythmical" only in connection with some other line, and it is this want of independent rhythm, which adapts them to the purposes of burlesque alone. Their effect is that of incongruity (the principle of mirth), for they include the blankness of prose amid the harmony of verse.

My second object in quoting Byron's lines was that of showing how absurd it often is to cite a single line from amid the body of a poem for the purpose of instancing the perfection or imperfection of the lines rhythm. Were we to see by itself

Know ye the land where the cypress and myrtle,

we might justly condemn it as defective in the final foot, which is equal to only three, instead of being equal to four short syllables.

In the foot "flowers ever" we shall find a further exemplification of the principle of the bastard iambus, bastard trochee, and quick trochee, as I have been at some pains in describing these feet above. All the Prosodies on English verse would insist upon making elision in "flowers," thus (flow'rs), but this is nonsense. In the quick trochee (many Are the) occurring in Mr. Cranch's trochaic line, we had to equalize the time of the three syllables (ny, are, the) to that of the one short syllable whose position they usurp. Accordingly each of these syllables is equal to the third of a short syllable, that is to say, the sixth of a long. But in Byron's dactylic rhythm, we have to equalize the time of the three syllables (ers, ev, er) to that of the one long syllable whose position they usurp, or (which is the same thing) of the two short. Therefore the value of each of the syllables (ers, ev, and er) is the third of a long. We enunciate them with only half the rapidity we employ in enunciating the three final syllables of the quick trochee- which latter is a rare foot. The "flowers ever," on the contrary, is as common in the dactylic rhythm as is the bastard trochee in the trochaic, or the bastard iambus in the iambic. We may as well accent it with the curve of the crescent to the right and call it a bastard dactyl. A bastard anapaest, whose nature I now need be at no trouble in explaining, will of course occur now and then in an anapaestic rhythm.

[A brief discussion of diacritical marks has been eliminated. Ed.]

I began the "processes" by a suggestion of the spondee as the first step towards verse. But the innate monotony of the spondee has caused its disappearance as the basis of rhythm from all modern poetry. We may say, indeed, that the French heroic- the most wretchedly monotonous verse in existence- is to all intents and purposes spondaic. But it is not designedly spondaic, and if the French were ever to examine it at all, they would no doubt pronounce it iambic. It must be observed that the French language is strangely peculiar in this point- that it is without accentuation and consequently without verse. The genius of the people, rather than the structure of the tongue, declares that their words are for the most part enunciated with a uniform dwelling on each syllable. For example we say "syllabification." A Frenchman would say syl-la-bi-fi-ca-ti-on, dwelling on no one of the syllables with any noticeable particularity. Here again I put an extreme case in order to be well understood, but the general fact is as I give it- that, comparatively, the French have no accentuation; and there can be nothing worth the name of verse without. Therefore, the French have no verse worth the name- which is the fact put in sufficiently plain terms. Their iambic rhythm so superabounds in absolute spondees as to warrant me in calling its basis spondaic; but French is the only modern tongue which has any rhythm with such basis, and even in the French it is, as I have said, unintentional.

Admitting, however, the validity of my suggestion, that the spondee was the first approach to verse, we should expect to find, first, natural spondees (words each forming just a spondee) most abundant in the most ancient languages; and, secondly, we should expect to find spondees forming the basis of the most ancient rhythms. These

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expectations are in both cases confirmed.

Of the Greek hexameter the intentional basis is spondaic. The dactyls are the variation of the theme. It will be observed that there is no absolute certainty about their points of interposition. The penultimate foot, it is true, is usually a dactyl but not uniformly so, while the ultimate, on which the ear lingers, is always a spondee. Even that the penultimate is usually a dactyl may be clearly referred to the necessity of winding up with the distinctive spondee. In corroboration of this idea, again, we should look to find the penultimate spondee most usual in the most ancient verse, and, accordingly, we find it more frequent in the Greek than in the Latin hexameter.

But besides all this, spondees are not only more prevalent in the heroic hexameter than dactyls, but occur to such an extent as is even unpleasant to modern ears, on account of monotony. What the modern chiefly appreciates and admires in the Greek hexameter is the melody of the abundant vowel sounds. The Latin hexameters really please very few moderns- although so many pretend to fall into ecstasies about them. In the hexameters quoted several pages ago, from Silius Italicus, the preponderance of the spondee is strikingly manifest. Besides the natural spondees of the Greek and Latin, numerous artificial ones arise in the verse of these tongues, on account of the tendency which inflection has to throw full accentuation on terminal syllables, and the preponderance of the spondee is further ensured by the comparative infrequency of the small prepositions which we have to serve us instead of case, and also the absence of the diminutive auxiliary verbs with which we have to eke out the expression of our primary ones. These are the monosyllables whose abundance serves to stamp the poetic genius of a language as tripping or dactylic.

Now paying no attention to these facts, Sir Philip Sidney, Professor Longfellow, and innumerable other persons, more or less modern, have busied themselves in constructing what they supposed to be "English hexameters on the model of the Greek." The only difficulty was that (even leaving out of question the melodious masses of vowel) these gentlemen never could get their English hexameters to sound Greek. Did they look Greek?- that should have been the query, and the reply might have led to a solution of the riddle. In placing a copy of ancient hexameters side by side with a copy (in similar type) of such hexameters as Professor Longfellow, or Professor Felton or the Frogpondian Professors collectively, are in the shameful practice of composing "on the model of the Greek," it will be seen that the latter (hexameters, not professors) are about one-third longer to the eye, on an average, than the former. The more abundant dactyls make the difference. And it is the greater number of spondees in the Greek than in the English, in the ancient than in the modern tongue, which has caused it to fall out that while these eminent scholars were groping about in the dark for a Greek hexameter, which is a spondaic rhythm varied now and then by dactyls, they merely stumbled, to the lasting scandal of scholarship, over something which, on account of its long-leggedness, we may as well term a Feltonian hexameter, and which is a dactylic rhythm interrupted rarely by artificial spondees which are no spondees at all, and which are curiously thrown in by the heels at all kinds of improper and impertinent points.

Here is a specimen of the Longfellow hexameter:

Also the / church with / in was a / dorned for / this was the /  
season /

In which the / young their / parent's / hope and the / loved ones of  
/ Heaven /

Should at the / foot of the / altar re / new the / vows of their /  
baptism /

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Therefore each / nook and / corner was / swept and / cleaned and the  
/ dust was /

Blown from the / walls and / ceiling and / from the / oil-painted /  
benches. /

Mr. Longfellow is a man of imagination, but can he imagine that any individual, with a proper understanding of the danger of lockjaw, would make the attempt of twisting his mouth into the shape necessary for the emission of such spondees as "parents," and "from the," or such dactyls as "cleaned and the," and "loved ones of"? "Baptism" is by no means a bad spondee- perhaps because it happens to be a dactyl- of all the rest, however, I am dreadfully ashamed.

But these feet, dactyls and spondees, all together, should thus be put at once into their proper position:

"Also the church within was adorned; for this was the season in which the young, their parents' hope, and the loved ones of Heaven, should, at the foot of the altar, renew the vows of their baptism. Therefore, each nook and corner was swept and cleaned; and the dust was blown from the walls and ceiling, and from the oil-painted benches?"

There!- That is respectable prose, and it will incur no danger of ever getting its character ruined by anybody's mistaking it for verse.

But even when we let these modern hexameters go as Greek, and merely hold them fast in their proper character of Longfellowine, or Feltonian, or Frogpondian, we must still condemn them as having been committed in a radical misconception of the philosophy of verse. The spondee, as I observed, is the theme of the Greek line. Most of the ancient hexameters begin with spondees, for the reason that the spondee is the theme, and the ear is filled with it as with a burden. Now the Feltonian dactylics have, in the same way, dactyl for the theme, and most of them begin with dactyls- which is all very proper if not very Greek- but unhappily, the one point at which they are very Greek is that point, precisely, at which they should be nothing but Feltonian. They always close with what is meant for a spondee. To be consistently silly they should die off in a dactyl.

That a truly Greek hexameter cannot, however, be readily composed in English, is a proposition which I am by no means inclined to admit. I think I could manage the point myself. For example:

Do tell! / when may we / hope to make / men of sense / out of the

Pundits

Born and brought / up with their / snouts deep / down in the / mud

of the / Frog-pond?

Why ask? / who ever / yet saw / money made / out of a / fat old

Jew, or / downright / upright / nutmegs / out of a / pine-knot?

The proper spondee predominance is here preserved. Some of the dactyls are not so good as I could wish, but, upon the whole the rhythm is very decent- to say nothing of its excellent sense.

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### THE POETIC PRINCIPLE

IN SPEAKING of the Poetic Principle, I have no design to be either thorough or profound. While discussing, very much at random, the essentiality of what we call Poetry, my principal purpose will be to cite for consideration, some few of those minor English or American poems which best suit my own taste, or which, upon my own fancy, have left the most definite impression. By "minor poems" I mean, of course, poems of little length. And here, in the beginning, permit me to say a few words in regard to a somewhat peculiar principle, which, whether rightfully or wrongfully, has always had its influence in my own critical estimate of the poem. I hold that a long poem does not exist. I maintain that the phrase, "a long poem," is simply a flat contradiction in terms.

I need scarcely observe that a poem deserves its title only inasmuch as it excites, by elevating the soul. The value of the poem is in the ratio of this elevating excitement. But all excitements are, through a psychal necessity, transient. That degree of excitement which would entitle a poem to be so called at all, cannot be sustained throughout a composition of any great length. After the lapse of half an hour, at the very utmost, it flags- fails- a revulsion ensues- and then the poem is, in effect and in fact, no longer such.

There are, no doubt, many who have found difficulty in reconciling the critical dictum that the "Paradise Lost" is to be devoutly admired throughout, with the absolute impossibility of maintaining for it, during perusal, the amount of enthusiasm which that critical dictum would demand. This great work, in fact, is to be regarded as poetical, only when, losing sight of that vital requisite in all works of Art, Unity, we view it merely as a series of minor poems. If, to preserve its Unity- its totality of effect or impression- we read it (as would be necessary) at a single sitting, the result is but a constant alteration of excitement and depression. After a passage of what we feel to be true poetry, there follows, inevitably, a passage of platitude which no critical prejudgment can force us to admire; but if, upon completing the work, we read it again, omitting the first book- that is to say, commencing with the second- we shall be surprised at now finding that admirable which we before condemned- that damnable which we had previously so much admired. It follows from all this that the ultimate, aggregate, or absolute effect of even the best epic under the sun, is a nullity:- and this is precisely the fact.

In regard to the Iliad, we have, if not positive proof, at least very good reason for believing it intended as a series of lyrics; but, granting the epic intention, I can say only that the work is based in an imperfect sense of art. The modern epic is, of the supposititious ancient model, but an inconsiderate and blindfold imitation. But the day of these artistic anomalies is over. If, at any time, any very long poem were popular in reality, which I doubt, it is at least clear that no very long poem will ever be popular again.

That the extent of a poetical work is, *ceteris paribus*, the measure of its merit, seems undoubtedly, when we thus state it a proposition sufficiently absurd- yet we are indebted for it to the Quarterly Reviews. Surely there can be nothing in mere size, abstractly considered- there can be nothing in mere bulk, so far as a volume is concerned, which has so continuously elicited admiration from these saturnine pamphlets! A mountain, to be sure, by the mere sentiment of physical magnitude which it conveys, does impress us with a sense of the sublime- but no man is impressed after this fashion by the material grandeur of even "The Columbiad." Even the Quarterlies have not instructed us to be so impressed by it. As yet, they have not insisted on our estimating Lamartine by the cubic foot, or Pollock by the pound- but what else are we to infer from their continual prating about "sustained effort"? If, by "sustained effort," any little gentleman has accomplished an epic, let us frankly commend him for the effort- if this indeed be a thing commendable- but let us forbear praising the epic on the effort's account. It is to be hoped that common sense, in the time to come, will prefer deciding upon a work of Art rather by the impression it makes- by the effect it produces- than by the time it took to impress the effect, or by the amount of "sustained effort" which had been found necessary in effecting the impression. The fact is, that perseverance is one thing and genius quite another- nor can all the Quarterlies in Christendom confound them. By and by, this proposition, with many which I have been just urging, will be received as self-evident. In the meantime, by being generally condemned as falsities, they will not be essentially damaged as truths.

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On the other hand, it is clear that a poem may be improperly brief. Undue brevity degenerates into mere epigrammatism. A very short poem, while now and then producing a brilliant or vivid, never produces a profound or enduring effect. There must be the steady pressing down of the stamp upon the wax. De Beranger has wrought innumerable things, pungent and spirit-stirring, but in general they have been too imponderous to stamp themselves deeply into the public attention, and thus, as so many feathers of fancy, have been blown aloft only to be whistled down the wind.

A remarkable instance of the effect of undue brevity in depressing a poem, in keeping it out of the popular view, is afforded by the following exquisite little Serenade-

I arise from dreams of thee

In the first sweet sleep of night,

When the winds are breathing low,

And the stars are shining bright.

I arise from dreams of thee,

And a spirit in my feet

Has led me— who knows how?—

To thy chamber—window, sweet!

The wandering airs they faint

On the dark the silent stream—

The champak odors fail

Like sweet thoughts in a dream;

The nightingale's complaint,

It dies upon her heart,

As I must die on thine,

O, beloved as thou art!

O, lift me from the grass!

I die, I faint, I fail!

Let thy love in kisses rain

On my lips and eyelids pale.

My cheek is cold and white, alas!

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My heart beats loud and fast:

O, press it close to thine again,

Where it will break at last.

Very few perhaps are familiar with these lines- yet no less a poet than Shelley is their author. Their warm, yet delicate and ethereal imagination will be appreciated by all, but by none so thoroughly as by him who has himself arisen from sweet dreams of one beloved to bathe in the aromatic air of a southern midsummer night.

One of the finest poems by Willis- the very best in my opinion which he has ever written- has no doubt, through this same defect of undue brevity, been kept back from its proper position, not less in the critical than in the popular view:-

The shadows lay along Broadway,

'Twas near the twilight-tide-

And slowly there a lady fair

Was walking in her pride.

Alone walk'd she; but, viewlessly,

Walk'd spirits at her side.

Peace charm'd the street beneath her feet,

And Honour charm'd the air,

And all astir looked kind on her,

And called her good as fair-

For all God ever gave to her

She kept with chary care.

She kept with care her beauties rare

From lovers warm and true-

For heart was cold to all but gold,

And the rich came not to woo-

But honour'd well her charms to sell

If priests the selling do.

Now walking there was one more fair-

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A slight girl lily-pale;  
And she had unseen company  
To make the spirit quail-  
'Twixt Want and Scorn she walk'd forlorn,  
And nothing could avail.  
No mercy now can clear her brow  
From this world's peace to pray,  
For as loves wild prayer dissolved in air,  
Her woman's heart gave way!-  
But the sin forgiven by Christ in Heaven,  
By man is cursed alway!

In this composition we find it difficult to recognise the Willis who has written so many mere "verses of society." The lines are not only richly ideal, but full of energy, while they breathe an earnestness, an evident sincerity of sentiment, for which we look in vain throughout all the other works of this author.

While the epic mania, while the idea that to merit in poetry prolixity is indispensable, has for some years past been gradually dying out of the public mind, by mere dint of its own absurdity, we find it succeeded by a heresy too palpably false to be long tolerated, but one which, in the brief period it has already endured, may be said to have accomplished more in the corruption of our Poetical Literature than all its other enemies combined. I allude to the heresies of The Didactic. It has been assumed, tacitly and avowedly, directly and indirectly, that the ultimate object of all Poetry is Truth. Every poem, it is said, should inculcate a moral, and by this moral is the poetical merit of the work to be adjudged. We Americans especially have patronized this happy idea, and we Bostonians very especially have developed it in full. We have taken it into our heads that to write a poem simply for the poem's sake, and to acknowledge such to have been our design, would be to confess ourselves radically wanting in the true poetic dignity and force:- but the simple fact is that would we but permit ourselves to look into our own souls we should immediately there discover that under the sun there neither exists nor can exist any work more thoroughly dignified, more supremely noble, than this very poem, this poem per se, this poem which is a poem and nothing more, this poem written solely for the poem's sake.

With as deep a reverence for the True as ever inspired the bosom of man, I would nevertheless limit, in some measure, its modes of inculcation. I would limit to enforce them. I would not enfeeble them by dissipation. The demands of Truth are severe. She has no sympathy with the myrtles. All that which is so indispensable in Song is precisely all that with which she has nothing whatever to do. It is but making her a flaunting paradox to wreath her in gems and flowers. In enforcing a truth we need severity rather than efflorescence of language. We must be simple, precise, terse. We must be cool, calm, unimpassioned. In a word, we must be in that mood which, as nearly as possible, is the exact converse of the poetical. He must be blind indeed who does not perceive the radical and chasmal difference between the truthful and the poetical modes of inculcation. He must be theory-mad beyond redemption who, in spite of these differences, shall still persist in attempting to reconcile the obstinate oils and waters of Poetry and Truth.

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Dividing the world of mind into its three most immediately obvious distinctions, we have the Pure Intellect, Taste, and the Moral Sense. I place Taste in the middle, because it is just this position which in the mind it occupies. It holds intimate relations with either extreme; but from the Moral Sense is separated by so faint a difference that Aristotle has not hesitated to place some of its operations among the virtues themselves. Nevertheless we find the offices of the trio marked with a sufficient distinction. Just as the Intellect concerns itself with Truth, so Taste informs us of the Beautiful, while the Moral Sense is regardful of Duty. Of this latter, while Conscience teaches the obligation, and Reason the expediency, Taste contents herself with displaying the charms:- waging war upon Vice solely on the ground of her deformity- her disproportion- her animosity to the fitting, to the appropriate, to the harmonious- in a word, to Beauty.

An immortal instinct deep within the spirit of man is thus plainly a sense of the Beautiful. This it is which administers to his delight in the manifold forms, and sounds, and odors and sentiments amid which he exists. And just as the lily is repeated in the lake, or the eyes of Amaryllis in the mirror, so is the mere oral or written repetition of these forms, and sounds, and colors, and odors, and sentiments a duplicate source of delight. But this mere repetition is not poetry. He who shall simply sing, with however glowing enthusiasm, or with however vivid a truth of description, of the sights, and sounds, and odors, and colors, and sentiments which greet him in common with all mankind- he, I say, has yet faded to prove his divine title. There is still a something in the distance which he has been unable to attain. We have still a thirst unquenchable, to allay which he has not shown us the crystal springs. This thirst belongs to the immortality of Man. It is at once a consequence and an indication of his perennial existence. It is the desire of the moth for the star. It is no mere appreciation of the Beauty before us, but a wild effort to reach the Beauty above. Inspired by an ecstatic prescience of the glories beyond the grave, we struggle by multiform combinations among the things and thoughts of Time to attain a portion of that Loveliness whose very elements perhaps appertain to eternity alone. And thus when by Poetry, or when by Music, the most entrancing of the poetic moods, we find ourselves melted into tears, we weep then, not as the Abbate Gravina supposes, through excess of pleasure, but through a certain petulant, impatient sorrow at our inability to grasp now, wholly, here on earth, at once and for ever, those divine and rapturous joys of which through the poem, or through the music, we attain to but brief and indeterminate glimpses.

The struggle to apprehend the supernal Loveliness- this struggle, on the part of souls fittingly constituted- has given to the world all that which it (the world) has ever been enabled at once to understand and to feel as poetic.

The Poetic Sentiment, of course, may develop itself in various modes- in Painting, in Sculpture, in Architecture, in the Dance- very especially in Music- and very peculiarly, and with a wide field, in the composition of the Landscape Garden. Our present theme, however, has regard only to its manifestation in words. And here let me speak briefly on the topic of rhythm. Contenting myself with the certainty that Music, in its various modes of metre, rhythm, and rhyme, is of so vast a moment in Poetry as never to be wisely rejected- is so vitally important an adjunct that he is simply silly who declines its assistance, I will not now pause to maintain its absolute essentiality. It is in Music perhaps that the soul most nearly attains the great end for which, when inspired by the Poetic Sentiment it struggles- the creation of supernal Beauty. It may be, indeed, that here this sublime end is, now and then, attained in fact. We are often made to feel, with a shivering delight, that from an earthly harp are stricken notes which cannot have been unfamiliar to the angels. And thus there can be little doubt that in the union of Poetry with Music in its popular sense, we shall find the widest field for the Poetic development. The old Bards and Minnesingers had advantages which we do not possess- and Thomas Moore, singing his own songs, was, in the most legitimate manner, perfecting them as poems.

To recapitulate then:- I would define, in brief, the Poetry of words as The Rhythmical Creation of Beauty. Its sole arbiter is Taste. With the Intellect or with the Conscience it has only collateral relations. Unless incidentally, it has no concern whatever either with Duty or with Truth.

A few words, however, in explanation. That pleasure which is at once the most pure, the most elevating, and the most intense, is derived, I maintain, from the contemplation of the Beautiful. In the contemplation of Beauty we

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alone find it possible to attain that pleasurable elevation, or excitement of the soul, which we recognise as the Poetic Sentiment, and which is so easily distinguished from Truth, which is the satisfaction of the Reason, or from Passion, which is the excitement of the heart. I make Beauty, therefore- using the word as inclusive of the sublime- I make Beauty the province of the poem, simply because it is an obvious rule of Art that effects should be made to spring as directly as possible from their causes:- no one as yet having been weak enough to deny that the peculiar elevation in question is at least most readily attainable in the poem. It by no means follows, however, that the incitements of Passion, or the precepts of Duty, or even the lessons of Truth, may not be introduced into a poem, and with advantage, for they may subserve incidentally, in various ways, the general purposes of the work: but the true artist will always contrive to tone them down in proper subjection to that Beauty which is the atmosphere and the real essence of the poem.

I cannot better introduce the few poems which I shall present for your consideration, than by the citation of the Proem to Longfellow's "Waif":-

The day is done, and the darkness  
Falls from the wings of Night,  
As a feather is wafted downward  
From an Eagle in his flight.  
I see the lights of the village  
Gleam through the rain and the mist,  
And a feeling of sadness comes o'er me,  
That my soul cannot resist;  
A feeling of sadness and longing,  
That is not akin to pain,  
And resembles sorrow only  
As the mist resembles the rain.  
Come, read to me some poem,  
Some simple and heartfelt lay,  
That shall soothe this restless feeling,  
And banish the thoughts of day.  
Not from the grand old masters,  
Not from the bards sublime,  
Whose distant footsteps echo

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Through the corridors of Time.  
For, like strains of martial music,  
Their mighty thoughts suggest  
Life's endless toil and endeavour;  
And to-night I long for rest.  
Read from some humbler poet,  
Whose songs gushed from his heart,  
As showers from the clouds of summer,  
Or tears from the eyelids start;  
Who through long days of labor,  
And nights devoid of ease,  
Still heard in his soul the music  
Of wonderful melodies.  
Such songs have power to quiet  
The restless pulse of care,  
And come like the benediction  
That follows after prayer.  
Then read from the treasured volume  
The poem of thy choice,  
And lend to the rhyme of the poet  
The beauty of thy voice.  
And the night shall be filled with music,  
And the cares that infest the day  
Shall fold their tents like the Arabs,  
And as silently steal away.

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With no great range of imagination, these lines have been justly admired for their delicacy of expression. Some of the images are very effective. Nothing can be better than-

-the bards sublime,

Whose distant footsteps echo

Down the corridors of Time.

The idea of the last quatrain is also very effective. The poem on the whole, however, is chiefly to be admired for the graceful insouciance of its metre, so well in accordance with the character of the sentiments, and especially for the ease of the general manner. This "ease" or naturalness, in a literary style, it has long been the fashion to regard as ease in appearance alone- as a point of really difficult attainment. But not so:- a natural manner is difficult only to him who should never meddle with it- to the unnatural. It is but the result of writing with the understanding, or with the instinct, that the tone, in composition, should always be that which the mass of mankind would adopt- and must perpetually vary, of course, with the occasion. The author who, after the fashion of "The North American Review," should be upon all occasions merely "quiet," must necessarily upon many occasions be simply silly, or stupid; and has no more right to be considered "easy" or "natural" than a Cockney exquisite, or than the sleeping Beauty in the waxworks.

Among the minor poems of Bryant, none has so much impressed me as the one which he entitles "June." I quote only a portion of it:-

There, through the long, long summer hours,

The golden light should lie,

And thick young herbs and groups of flowers

Stand in their beauty by.

The oriole should build and tell

His love-tale, close beside my cell;

The idle butterfly

Should rest him there, and there be heard

The housewife-bee and humming bird.

And what if cheerful shouts at noon,

Come, from the village sent,

Or songs of maids, beneath the moon,

With fairy laughter blent?

And what if, in the evening light,

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Betrothed lovers walk in sight  
Of my low monument?  
I would the lovely scene around  
Might know no sadder sight nor sound.  
I know, I know I should not see  
The season's glorious show,  
Nor would its brightness shine for me;  
Nor its wild music flow;  
But if, around my place of sleep,  
The friends I love should come to weep,  
They might not haste to go.  
Soft airs and song, and the light and bloom,  
Should keep them lingering by my tomb.  
These to their soften'd hearts should bear  
The thoughts of what has been,  
And speak of one who cannot share  
The gladness of the scene;  
Whose part in all the pomp that fills  
The circuit of the summer hills,  
Is— that his grave is green;  
And deeply would their hearts rejoice  
To hear again his living voice.

The rhythmical flow here is even voluptuous- nothing could be more melodious. The poem has always affected me in a remarkable manner. The intense melancholy which seems to well up, perforce, to the surface of all the poet's cheerful sayings about his grave, we find thrilling us to the soul- while there is the truest poetic elevation in the thrill. The impression left is one of a pleasurable sadness. And if, in the remaining compositions which I shall introduce to you, there be more or less of a similar tone always apparent, let me remind you that (how or why we know not) this certain taint of sadness is inseparably connected with all the higher manifestations of true Beauty. It is, nevertheless,

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A feeling of sadness and longing

That is not akin to pain,

And resembles sorrow only

As the mist resembles the rain.

The taint of which I speak is clearly perceptible even in a poem so full of brilliancy and spirit as "The Health" of Edward Coate Pinckney:-

I fill this cup to one made up

Of loveliness alone,

A woman, of her gentle sex

The seeming paragon;

To whom the better elements

And kindly stars have given

A form so fair that, like the air,

'Tis less of earth than heaven.

Her every tone is musies own,

Like those of morning birds,

And something more than melody

Dwells ever in her words;

The coinage of her heart are they,

And from her lips each flows

As one may see the burden'd be

Forth issue from the rose.

Affections are as thoughts to her,

The measures of her hours;

Her feelings have the fragrancly,

The freshness of young flowers;

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And lovely passions, changing oft,  
So fill her, she appears  
The image of themselves by turns,  
The idol of past years!  
Of her bright face one glance will trace  
A picture on the brain,  
And of her voice in echoing hearts  
A sound must long remain;  
But memory, such as mine of her,  
So very much endears  
When death is nigh my latest sigh  
Will not be life's, but hers.  
I fill'd this cup to one made up  
Of loveliness alone,  
A woman, of her gentle sex  
The seeming paragon—  
Her health! and would on earth there stood,  
Some more of such a frame,  
That life might be all poetry,  
And weariness a name.

It was the misfortune of Mr. Pinckney to have been born too far south. Had he been a New Englander, it is probable that he would have been ranked as the first of American lyrists by that magnanimous cabal which has so long controlled the destinies of American Letters, in conducting the thing called "The North American Review." The poem just cited is especially beautiful; but the poetic elevation which it induces we must refer chiefly to our sympathy in the poet's enthusiasm. We pardon his hyperboles for the evident earnestness with which they are uttered.

It was by no means my design, however, to expatiate upon the merits of what I should read you. These will necessarily speak for themselves. Boccalini, in his "Advertisements from Parnassus," tells us that Zoilus once presented Apollo a very caustic criticism upon a very admirable book:- whereupon the god asked him for the beauties of the work. He replied that he only busied himself about the errors. On hearing this, Apollo, handing



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him a sack of unwinnowed wheat, bade him pick out all the chaff for his reward.

Now this fable answers very well as a hit at the critics- but I am by no means sure that the god was in the right. I am by no means certain that the true limits of the critical duty are not grossly misunderstood. Excellence, in a poem especially, may be considered in the light of an axiom, which need only be properly put, to become self-evident. It is not excellence if it require to be demonstrated as such:- and thus to point out too particularly the merits of a work of Art, is to admit that they are not merits altogether.

Among the "Melodies" of Thomas Moore is one whose distinguished character as a poem proper seems to have been singularly left out of view. I allude to his lines beginning- "Come, rest in this bosom." The intense energy of their expression is not surpassed by anything in Byron. There are two of the lines in which a sentiment is conveyed that embodies the all in all of the divine passion of Love- a sentiment which, perhaps, has found its echo in more, and in more passionate, human hearts than any other single sentiment ever embodied in words:-

Come, rest in this bosom, my own stricken deer

Though the herd have fled from thee, thy home is still here;

Here still is the smile, that no cloud can o'ercast,

And a heart and a hand all thy own to the last.

Oh! what was love made for, if 'tis not the same

Through joy and through torment, through glory and shame?

I know not, I ask not, if guilt's in that heart,

I but know that I love thee, whatever thou art.

Thou hast call'd me thy Angel in moments of bliss,

And thy Angel I'll be, 'mid the horrors of this,-

Through the furnace, unshrinking, thy steps to pursue,

And shield thee, and save thee,- or perish there too!

It has been the fashion of late days to deny Moore Imagination, while granting him Fancy- a distinction originating with Coleridge- than whom no man more fully comprehended the great powers of Moore. The fact is, that the fancy of this poet so far predominates over all his other faculties, and over the fancy of all other men, as to have induced, very naturally, the idea that he is fanciful only. But never was there a greater mistake. Never was a grosser wrong done the fame of a true poet. In the compass of the English language I can call to mind no poem more profoundly- more weirdly imaginative, in the best sense, than the lines commencing- "I would I were by that dim lake"- which are the composition of Thomas Moore. I regret that I am unable to remember them.

One of the noblest- and, speaking of Fancy- one of the most singularly fanciful of modern poets, was Thomas Hood. His "Fair Ines" had always for me an inexpressible charm:-

O saw ye not fair Ines?

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She's gone into the West,  
To dazzle when the sun is down,  
And rob the world of rest;  
She took our daylight with her,  
The smiles that we love best,  
With morning blushes on her cheek,  
And pearls upon her breast.  
O turn again, fair Ines,  
Before the fall of night,  
For fear the moon should shine alone,  
And stars unrivall'd bright;  
And blessed will the lover be  
That walks beneath their light,  
And breathes the love against thy cheek  
I dare not even write!  
Would I had been, fair Ines,  
That gallant cavalier,  
Who rode so gaily by thy side,  
And whisper'd thee so near!  
Were there no bonny dames at home  
Or no true lovers here,  
That he should cross the seas to win  
The dearest of the dear?  
I saw thee, lovely Ines,  
Descend along the shore,  
With bands of noble gentlemen,

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And banners waved before,  
And gentle youth and maidens gay,  
And snowy plumes they wore;  
It would have been a beautiful dream,  
If it had been no more!  
Alas, alas, fair Ines,  
She went away with song,  
With music waiting on her steps,  
And shoutings of the throng;  
But some were sad and felt no mirth,  
But only Music's wrong,  
In sounds that sang Farewell, Farewell,  
To her you've loved so long.  
Farewell, farewell, fair Ines,  
That vessel never bore  
So fair a lady on its deck,  
Nor danced so light before,—  
Alas for pleasure on the sea,  
And sorrow on the shore!  
The smile that blest one lover's heart  
Has broken many more!

"The Haunted House," by the same author, is one of the truest poems ever written,- one of the truest, one of the most unexceptionable, one of the most thoroughly artistic, both in its theme and in its execution. It is, moreover, powerfully ideal- imaginative. I regret that its length renders it unsuitable for the purposes of this lecture. In place of it permit me to offer the universally appreciated "Bridge of Sighs":-

One more Unfortunate,  
Weary of breath,

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Gone to her death!  
Take her up tenderly,  
Lift her with care,—  
Fashion'd so slenderly,  
Young and so fair!  
Look at her garments  
Clinging like cerements;  
Whilst the wave constantly  
Drips from her clothing;  
Take her up instantly,  
Loving, not loathing.  
Touch her not scornfully,  
Think of her mournfully,  
Gently and humanly,  
Not of the stains of her,  
All that remains of her  
Now is pure womanly.  
Make no deep scrutiny  
Into her mutiny  
Rash and undutiful;  
Past all dishonor,  
Death has left on her  
Only the beautiful.  
Where the lamps quiver  
So far in the river,  
With many a light

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From window and casement  
From garret to basement,  
She stood, with amazement,  
Houseless by night  
The bleak wind of March  
Made her tremble and shiver,  
But not the dark arch,  
Or the black flowing river:  
Mad from life's history,  
Glad to death's mystery,  
Swift to be hurl'd—  
Anywhere, anywhere  
Out of the world!  
In she plunged boldly,  
No matter how coldly  
The rough river ran,—  
Over the brink of it,  
Picture it,— think of it,  
Dissolute Man!  
Lave in it, drink of it  
Then, if you can!  
Still, for all slips of her  
One of Eves family—  
Wipe those poor lips of hers  
Oozing so clammily,  
Loop up her tresses

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Escaped from the comb,  
Her fair auburn tresses;  
Whilst wonderment guesses  
Where was her home?  
Who was her father?  
Who was her mother?  
Had she a sister?  
Had she a brother?  
Or was there a dearer one  
Still, and a nearer one  
Yet, than all other?  
Alas! for the rarity  
Of Christian charity  
Under the sun!  
Oh! it was pitiful  
Near a whole city full,  
Home she had none.  
Sisterly, brotherly,  
Fatherly, motherly,  
Feelings had changed:  
Love, by harsh evidence,  
Thrown from its eminence,  
Seeming estranged.  
Take her up tenderly,  
Lift her with care;  
Fashion'd so slenderly,

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Young, and so fair!  
Ere her limbs frigidly  
Stiffen too rigidly,  
Decently,– kindly,–  
Smooth and compose them;  
And her eyes, close them,  
Staring so blindly!  
Dreadfully staring  
Through muddy impurity,  
As when with the daring  
Last look of despairing  
Fixed on futurity.  
Perishing gloomily,  
Spurred by contumely,  
Cold inhumanity,  
Burning insanity,  
Into her rest,–  
Cross her hands humbly,  
As if praying dumbly,  
Over her breast!  
Owning her weakness,  
Her evil behaviour,  
And leaving, with meekness,  
Her sins to her Saviour!

The vigour of this poem is no less remarkable than its pathos. The versification although carrying the fanciful to the very verge of the fantastic, is nevertheless admirably adapted to the wild insanity which is the thesis of the poem.

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Among the minor poems of Lord Byron is one which has never received from the critics the praise which it undoubtedly deserves:-

Though the day of my destiny's over,  
And the star of my fate hath declined  
Thy soft heart refused to discover  
The faults which so many could find;  
Though thy soul with my grief was acquainted,  
It shrunk not to share it with me,  
And the love which my spirit hath painted  
It never hath found but in thee.  
Then when nature around me is smiling,  
The last smile which answers to mine,  
I do not believe it beguiling,  
Because it reminds me of thine,  
And when winds are at war with the ocean,  
As the breasts I believed in with me,  
If their billows excite an emotion,  
It is that they bear me from thee.  
Though the rock of my last hope is shivered,  
And its fragments are sunk in the wave,  
Though I feel that my soul is delivered  
To pain— it shall not be its slave.  
There is many a pang to pursue me:  
They may crush, but they shall not contemn—  
They may torture, but shall not subdue me—  
'Tis of thee that I think— not of them.



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Though human, thou didst not deceive me,  
Though woman, thou didst not forsake,  
Though loved, thou forborest to grieve me,  
Though slandered, thou never couldst shake,—  
Though trusted, thou didst not disclaim me,  
Though parted, it was not to fly,  
Though watchful, 'twas not to defame me,  
Nor mute, that the world might belie.  
Yet I blame not the world, nor despise it,  
Nor the war of the many with one—  
If my soul was not fitted to prize it,  
'Twas folly not sooner to shun:  
And if dearly that error hath cost me,  
And more than I once could foresee,  
I have found that whatever it lost me,  
It could not deprive me of thee.  
From the wreck of the past, which hath perished,  
Thus much I at least may recall,  
It hath taught me that which I most cherished  
Deserved to be dearest of all:  
In the desert a fountain is springing,  
In the wide waste there still is a tree,  
And a bird in the solitude singing,  
Which speaks to my spirit of thee.

Although the rhythm here is one of the most difficult, the versification could scarcely be improved. No nobler theme ever engaged the pen of poet. It is the soul-elevating idea that no man can consider himself entitled to complain of Fate while in his adversity he still retains the unwavering love of woman.

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From Alfred Tennyson, although in perfect sincerity I regard him as the noblest poet that ever lived, I have left myself time to cite only a very brief specimen. I call him, and think him the noblest of poets, not because the impressions he produces are at all times the most profound- not because the poetical excitement which he induces is at all times the most intense- but because it is at all times the most ethereal- in other words, the most elevating and most pure. No poet is so little of the earth, earthy. What I am about to read is from his last long poem, "The Princess":-

Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean,  
Tears from the depth of some divine despair  
Rise in the heart, and gather to the eyes,  
In looking on the happy Autumn fields,  
And thinking of the days that are no more.  
Fresh as the first beam glittering on a sail,  
That brings our friends up from the underworld,  
Sad as the last which reddens over one  
That sinks with all we love below the verge;  
So sad, so fresh, the days that are no more.  
Ah, sad and strange as in dark summer dawns  
The earliest pipe of half-awaken'd birds  
To dying ears, when unto dying eyes  
The casement slowly grows a glimmering square;  
So sad, so strange, the days that are no more.  
Dear as remember'd kisses after death,  
And sweet as those by hopeless fancy feign'd  
On lips that are for others; deep as love,  
Deep as first love, and wild with all regret,  
O Death in Life, the days that are no more.

Thus, although in a very cursory and imperfect manner, I have endeavoured to convey to you my conception of the Poetic Principle. It has been my purpose to suggest that, while this principle itself is strictly and simply the Human Aspiration for Supernal Beauty, the manifestation of the Principle is always found in an elevating excitement of the soul, quite independent of that passion which is the intoxication of the Heart, or of that truth

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which is the satisfaction of the Reason. For in regard to passion, alas! its tendency is to degrade rather than to elevate the Soul. Love, on the contrary- Love- the true, the divine Eros- the Uranian as distinguished from the Dionnan Venus- is unquestionably the purest and truest of all poetical themes. And in regard to Truth, if, to be sure, through the attainment of a truth we are led to perceive a harmony where none was apparent before, we experience at once the true poetical effect; but this effect is referable to the harmony alone, and not in the least degree to the truth which merely served to render the harmony manifest.

We shall reach, however, more immediately a distinct conception of what the true Poetry is, by mere reference to a few of the simple elements which induce in the Poet himself the true poetical effect. He recognises the ambrosia which nourishes his soul in the bright orbs that shine in Heaven- in the volutes of the flower- in the clustering of low shrubberies- in the waving of the grain-fields- in the slanting of tall eastern trees- in the blue distance of mountains- in the grouping of clouds- in the twinkling of half-hidden brooks- in the gleaming of silver rivers- in the repose of sequestered lakes- in the star-mirroring depths of lonely wells. He perceives it in the songs of birds- in the harp of Aeolus- in the sighing of the night-wind- in the repining voice of the forest- in the surf that complains to the shore- in the fresh breath of the woods- in the scent of the violet- in the voluptuous perfume of the hyacinth- in the suggestive odour that comes to him at eventide from far-distant undiscovered islands, over dim oceans, illimitable and unexplored. He owns it in all noble thoughts- in all unworldly motives- in all holy impulses- in all chivalrous, generous, and self-sacrificing deeds. He feels it in the beauty of woman- in the grace of her step- in the lustre of her eye- in the melody of her voice- in her soft laughter, in her sigh- in the harmony of the rustling of her robes. He deeply feels it in her winning endearments- in her burning enthusiasms- in her gentle charities- in her meek and devotional endurances- but above all- ah, far above all he kneels to it- he worships it in the faith, in the purity, in the strength, in the altogether divine majesty- of her love.

Let me conclude by- the recitation of yet another brief poem- one very different in character from any that I have before quoted. It is by Motherwell, and is called "The Song of the Cavalier." With our modern and altogether rational ideas of the absurdity and impiety of warfare, we are not precisely in that frame of mind best adapted to sympathize with the sentiments, and thus to appreciate the real excellence of the poem. To do this fully we must identify ourselves in fancy with the soul of the old cavalier:-

Then mount! then mounte, brave gallants all,

And don your helmes amaine:

Deathe's couriers, Fame and Honour call

Us to the field againe.

No shrewish teares shall fill your eye

When the sword-hilt's in our hand,-

Heart-whole we'll part, and no whit sighe

For the fayrest of the land;

Let piping swaine, and craven wight,

Thus weepe and puling crye,

Our business is like men to fight,

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And hero-like to die!

### MARGINALIA

DEMOCRATIC REVIEW, November, 1844

In getting my books, I have been always solicitous of an ample margin; this not so much through any love of the thing in itself, however agreeable, as for the facility it affords me of pencilling suggested thoughts, agreements, and differences of opinion, or brief critical comments in general. Where what I have to note is too much to be included within the narrow limits of a margin, I commit it to a slip of paper, and deposit it between the leaves; taking care to secure it by an imperceptible portion of gum tragacanth paste.

All this may be whim; it may be not only a very hackneyed, but a very idle practice;- yet I persist in it still; and it affords me pleasure; which is profit, in despite of Mr. Bentham, with Mr. Mill on his back.

This making of notes, however, is by no means the making of mere memorandum- a custom which has its disadvantages, beyond doubt "Ce que je mets sur papier," says Bernadine de St. Pierre, "je remets de ma memoire et par consequence je l'oublie;"- and, in fact, if you wish to forget anything upon the spot, make a note that this thing is to be remembered.

But the purely marginal jottings, done with no eye to the Memorandum Book, have a distinct complexion, and not only a distinct purpose, but none at all; this it is which imparts to them a value. They have a rank somewhat above the chance and desultory comments of literary chit-chat- for these latter are not unfrequently "talk for talk's sake," hurried out of the mouth; while the marginalia are deliberately pencilled, because the mind of the reader wishes to unburthen itself of a thought;- however flippant- however silly- however trivial- still a thought indeed, not merely a thing that might have been a thought in time, and under more favorable circumstances. In the marginalia, too, we talk only to ourselves; we therefore talk freshly- boldly- originally- with abandonnement- without conceit- much after the fashion of Jeremy Taylor, and Sir Thomas Browne, and Sir William Temple, and the anatomical Burton, and that most logical analogist, Butler, and some other people of the old day, who were too full of their matter to have any room for their manner, which, being thus left out of question, was a capital manner, indeed,- a model of manners, with a richly marginalic air.

The circumscription of space, too, in these pencillings, has in it something more of advantage than of inconvenience. It compels us (whatever diffuseness of idea we may clandestinely entertain), into Montesquieu-ism, into Tacitus-ism (here I leave out of view the concluding portion of the "Annals")- or even into Carlyle-ism- a thing which, I have been told, is not to be confounded with your ordinary affectation and bad grammar. I say "bad grammar," through sheer obstinacy, because the grammarians (who should know better) insist upon it that I should not. But then grammar is not what these grammarians will have it; and, being merely the analysis of language, with the result of this analysis, must be good or bad just as the analyst is sage or silly- just as he is Horne Tooke or a Cobbett.

But to our sheep. During a rainy afternoon, not long ago, being in a mood too listless for continuous study, I sought relief from ennui in dipping here and there, at random, among the volumes of my library- no very large one, certainly, but sufficiently miscellaneous; and, I flatter myself, not a little recherche.

Perhaps it was what the Germans call the "brain-scattering" humor of the moment; but, while the picturesqueness of the numerous pencil-scratches arrested my attention, their helter-skelter-iness of commentary amused me. I found myself at length forming a wish that it had been some other hand than my own which had so bedevilled the books, and fancying that, in such case, I might have derived no inconsiderable pleasure from turning them over. From this the transition- thought (as Mr. Lyell, or Mr. Murchison, or Mr. Featherstonhaugh would have it) was natural enough:- there might be something even in my scribblings which, for the mere sake of scribblings would

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have interest for others.

The main difficulty respected the mode of transferring the notes from the volumes- the context from the text- without detriment to that exceedingly frail fabric of intelligibility in which the context was imbedded. With all appliances to boot, with the printed pages at their back, the commentaries were too often like Dodona's oracles- or those of Lycophron Tenebrosus- or the essays of the pedant's pupils, in Quintilian, which were "necessarily excellent, since even he (the pedant) found it impossible to comprehend them":- what, then, would become of it- this context- if transferred?- if translated? Would it not rather be traduit (translated) which is the French synonym, or overzezet (turned topsy-turvy) which is the Dutch one?

I concluded, at length, to put extensive faith in the acumen and imagination of the reader:- this as a general rule. But, in some instances, where even faith would not remove mountains, there seemed no safer plan than so to re-model the note as to convey at least the ghost of a conception as to what it was all about. Where, for such conception, the text itself was absolutely necessary, I could quote it, where the title of the book commented upon was indispensable, I could name it. In short, like a novel-hero dilemma'd, I made up my mind "to be guided by circumstances," in default of more satisfactory rules of conduct.

As for the multitudinous opinion expressed in the subjoined farrago- as for my present assent to all, or dissent from any portion of it- as to the possibility of my having, in some instances, altered my mind- or as to the impossibility of my not having altered it often- these are points upon which I say nothing, because upon these there can be nothing cleverly said. It may be as well to observe, however, that just as the goodness of your true pun is in the direct ratio of its intolerability, so is nonsense the essential sense of the Marginal Note.

I have seen many computations respecting the greatest amount of erudition attainable by an individual in his life-time, but these computations are falsely based, and fall infinitely beneath the truth. It is true that, in general we retain, we remember to available purpose, scarcely one-hundredth part of what we read; yet there are minds which not only retain all receipts, but keep them at compound interest forever. Again:- were every man supposed to read out, he could read, of course, very little, even in half a century; for, in such case, each individual word must be dwelt upon in some degree. But, in reading to ourselves, at the ordinary rate of what is called "light reading," we scarcely touch one word in ten. And, even physically considered, knowledge breeds knowledge, as gold gold; for he who reads really much, finds his capacity to read increase in geometrical ratio. The helluo librorum will but glance at the page which detains the ordinary reader some minutes; and the difference in the absolute reading (its uses considered), will be in favor of the helluo, who will have winnowed the matter of which the tyro mumbled both the seeds and the chaff. A deep-rooted and strictly continuous habit of reading will, with certain classes of intellect, result in an instinctive and seemingly magnetic appreciation of a thing written; and now the student reads by pages just as other men by words. Long years to come, with a careful analysis of the mental process, may even render this species of appreciation a common thing. It may be taught in the schools of our descendants of the tenth or twentieth generation. It may become the method of the mob of the eleventh or twenty-first. And should these matters come to pass- as they will- there will be in them no more legitimate cause for wonder than there is, to-day, in the marvel that, syllable by syllable, men comprehend what, letter by letter, I now trace upon this page.

Is it not a law that need has a tendency to engender the thing needed?

Moore has been noted for the number of appositeness, as well as novelty of his similes; and the renown thus acquired is indicial of his deficiency in that noble merit- the noblest of all. No poet thus distinguished was ever richly ideal. Pope and Cowper are instances. Direct similes are of too palpably artificial a character to be artistical. An artist will always contrive to weave his illustrations into the metaphorical form.

Moore has a peculiar facility in prosaically telling a poetical story. By this I mean that he preserves the tone and method of arrangement of a prose relation, and thus obtains great advantage, in important points, over his more

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stilted compeers. His is no poetical style (such as the French have- a distinct style for a distinct purpose) but an easy and ordinary prose manner, which rejects the licenses because it does not require them, and is merely ornamented into poetry. By means of this manner he is enabled to encounter, effectually, details which would baffle any other versifier of the day; and at which Lamartine would stand aghast. In "Alciphron" we see this exemplified. Here the minute and perplexed incidents of the descent into the pyramid, are detailed, in verse, with quite as much precision and intelligibility as could be attained even by the coolest prose of Mr. Jeremy Bentham.

Moore has vivacity; verbal and constructive dexterity; a musical ear not sufficiently cultivated; a vivid fancy; an epigrammatic spirit; and a fine taste- as far as it goes.

Democratic Review, December, 1844

I am not sure that Tennyson is not the greatest of poets. The uncertainty attending the public conception of the term "poet" alone prevents me from demonstrating that he is. Other bards produce effects which are, now and then, otherwise produced than by what we call poems; but Tennyson an effect which only a poem does. His alone are idiosyncratic poems. By the enjoyment or non-enjoyment of the "Morte D'Arthur" or of the "Oenone," I would test any one's ideal sense.

There are passages in his works which rivet a conviction I had long entertained, that the indefinite is an element in the true poesis. Why do some persons fatigue themselves in attempts to unravel such fantasy-pieces as the "Lady of Shalott"? As well unweave the "ventum textilem." If the author did not deliberately propose to himself a suggestive indefinitiveness of meaning with the view of bringing about a definitiveness of vague and therefore of spiritual effect- this, at least, arose from the silent analytical promptings of that poetic genius which, in its supreme development, embodies all orders of intellectual capacity.

I know that indefinitiveness is an element of the true music- I mean of the true musical expression. Give to it any undue decision- imbue it with any very determinate tone- and you deprive it at once of its ethereal, its ideal, its intrinsic and essential character. You dispel its luxury of dream. You dissolve the atmosphere of the mystic upon which it floats. You exhaust it of its breath of fiery. It now becomes a tangible and easily appreciable idea- a thing of the earth, earthy. It has not, indeed, lost its power to please, but all which I consider the distinctiveness of that power. And to the uncultivated talent, or to the unimaginative apprehension, this deprivation of its most delicate air will be, not unfrequently, a recommendation. A determinateness of expression is sought- and often by composers who should know better- is sought as a beauty rather than rejected as a blemish. Thus we have, even from high authorities, attempts at absolute imitation in music. Who can forget the silliness of the "Battle of Prague"? What man of taste but must laugh at the interminable drums, trumpets, blunderbusses, and thunder? "Vocal music," says L'Abbate Gravina, who would have said the same thing of instrumental, "ought to imitate the natural language of the human feelings and passions, rather than the warblings of canary birds, which our singers, now-a-days, affect so vastly to mimic with their quaverings and boasted cadences." This is true only so far as the "rather" is concerned. If any music must imitate anything, it were assuredly better to limit the imitation as Gravina suggests.

Tennyson's shorter pieces abound in minute rhythmical lapses sufficient to assure me that- in common with all poets living or dead- he has neglected to make precise investigation of the principles of metre; but, on the other hand, so perfect is his rhythmical instinct in general that, like the present Viscount Canterbury, he seems to see with his ear.

Godey's Lady's Book, September, 1845

The increase, within a few years, of the magazine literature, is by no means to be regarded as indicating what some critics would suppose it to indicate- a downward tendency in American taste or in American letters. It is but a sign of the times, an indication of an era in which men are forced upon the curt, the condensed, the

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well-digested in place of the voluminous- in a word, upon journalism in lieu of dissertation. We need now the light artillery rather than the peace-makers of the intellect. I will not be sure that men at present think more profoundly than half a century ago, but beyond question they think with more rapidity, with more skill, with more tact, with more of method and less of excrement in the thought. Besides all this, they have a vast increase in the thinking material; they have more facts, more to think about. For this reason, they are disposed to put the greatest amount of thought in the smallest compass and disperse it with the utmost attainable rapidity. Hence the journalism of the age; hence, in especial, magazines. Too many we cannot have, as a general proposition; but we demand that they have sufficient merit to render them noticeable in the beginning, and that they continue in existence sufficiently long to permit us a fair estimation of their value.

Broadway Journal, Oct. 4, 1845

Much has been said, of late, about the necessity of maintaining a proper nationality in American Letters; but what this nationality is, or what is to be gained by it, has never been distinctly understood. That an American should confine himself to American themes, or even prefer them, is rather a political than a literary idea- and at best is a questionable point. We would do well to bear in mind that "distance lends enchantment to the view." *Ceteris paribus*, a foreign theme is, in a strictly literary sense, to be preferred. After all, the world at large is the only legitimate stage for the authorial histrio.

But of the need of that nationality which defends our own literature, sustains our own men of letters, upholds our own dignity, and depends upon our own resources, there can not be the shadow of a doubt. Yet here is the very point at which we are most supine. We complain of our want of International Copyright on the ground that this want justifies our publishers in inundating us with British opinion in British books; and yet when these very publishers, at their own obvious risk, and even obvious loss, do publish an American book, we turn up our noses at it with supreme contempt (this is a general thing) until it (the American book) has been dubbed "readable" by some literate Cockney critic. Is it too much to say that, with us, the opinion of Washington Irving- of Prescott- of Bryant- is a mere nullity in comparison with that of any anonymous sub-sub-editor of the *Spectator*, the *Athenaeum*, or the *London Punch*? It is not saying too much to say this. It is a solemn- an absolutely awful fact. Every publisher in the country will admit it to be a fact. There is not a more disgusting spectacle under the sun than our subserviency to British criticism. It is disgusting, first because it is truckling, servile, pusillanimous- secondly, because of its gross irrationality. We know the British to bear us little but ill will- we know that, in no case, do they utter unbiased opinions of American books- we know that in the few instances in which our writers have been treated with common decency in England, these writers have either openly paid homage to English institutions, or have had lurking at the bottom of their hearts a secret principle at war with Democracy:- we know all this, and yet, day after day, submit our necks to the degrading yoke of the crudest opinion that emanates from the fatherland. Now if we must have nationality, let it be a nationality that will throw off this yoke.

The chief of the rhapsodists who have ridden us to death like the Old Man of the Mountain, is the ignorant and egotistical Wilson. We use the term rhapsodists with perfect deliberation; for, Macaulay, and Dilke, and one or two others, excepted, there is not in Great Britain a critic who can be fairly considered worthy the name. The Germans and even the French, are infinitely superior. As regards Wilson, no man ever penned worse criticism or better rhodomontade. That he is "egotistical" his works show to all men, running as they read. That he is "ignorant" let his absurd and continuous school-boy blunders about Homer bear witness. Not long ago we ourselves pointed out a series of similar inanities in his review of Miss Barret's [sic] poems- a series, we say, of gross blunders, arising from sheer ignorance- and we defy him or any one to answer a single syllable of what we then advanced.

And yet this is the man whose simple dictum (to our shame be it spoken) has the power to make or to mar any American reputation! In the last number of *Blackwood*, he has a continuation of the dull "Specimens of the British Critics," and makes occasion wantonly to insult one of the noblest of our poets, Mr. Lowell. The point of the whole attack consists in the use of slang epithets and phrases of the most ineffably vulgar description.

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"Squabashes" is a pet term. "Faugh!" is another. "We are Scotsmen to the spiner" says Sawney- as if the thing were not more than self-evident. Mr. Lowell is called a "maggie," an "ape," a "Yankee cockney," and his name is intentionally mis-written John Russell Lowell. Now were these indecencies perpetrated by an American critic, that critic would be sent to Coventry by the whole press of the country, but since it is Wilson who insults, we, as in duty bound, not only submit to the insult, but echo it, as an excellent jest, throughout the length and breadth of the land. "Quamdiu Catilina?" We do indeed demand the nationality of self-respect. In Letters as in Government we require a Declaration of Independence. A better thing still would be a Declaration of War- and that war should be carried forthwith "into Africa."

Graham's Magazine, March, 1846

Some Frenchman- possibly Montaigne- says: "People talk about thinking, but for my part I never think except when I sit down to write." It is this never thinking, unless when we sit down to write, which is the cause of so much indifferent composition. But perhaps there is something more involved in the Frenchman's observation than meets the eye. It is certain that the mere act of inditing tends, in a great degree, to the logicalisation of thought. Whenever, on account of its vagueness, I am dissatisfied with a conception of the brain, I resort forthwith to the pen, for the purpose of obtaining, through its aid, the necessary form, consequence, and precision.

How very commonly we hear it remarked that such and such thoughts are beyond the compass of words! I do not believe that any thought, properly so called, is out of the reach of language. I fancy, rather, that where difficulty in expression is experienced, there is, in the intellect which experiences it, a want either of deliberateness or of method. For my own part, I have never had a thought which I could not set down in words, with even more distinctness than that with which I conceived it:- as I have before observed, the thought is logicalised by the effort at (written) expression.

There is, however, a class of fancies, of exquisite delicacy, which are not thoughts, and to which, as yet, I have found it absolutely impossible to adapt language. I use the word fancies at random, and merely because I must use some word; but the idea commonly attached to the term is not even remotely applicable to the shadows of shadows in question. They seem to me rather psychal than intellectual. They arise in the soul (alas, how rarely!) only at its epochs of most intense tranquillity- when the bodily and mental health are in perfection- and at those mere points of time where the confines of the waking world blend with those of the world of dreams. I am aware of these "fancies" only when I am upon the very brink of sleep, with the consciousness that I am so. I have satisfied myself that this condition exists but for an inappreciable point of time- yet it is crowded with these "shadows of shadows"; and for absolute thought there is demanded time's endurance.

These "fancies" have in them a pleasurable ecstasy, as far beyond the most pleasurable of the world of wakefulness, or of dreams, as the Heaven of the Northman theology is beyond its Hell. I regard the visions, even as they arise, with an awe which, in some measure moderates or tranquillises the ecstasy- I so regard them, through a conviction (which seems a portion of the ecstasy itself) that this ecstasy, in itself, is of a character supernal to the Human Nature- is a glimpse of the spirit's outer world; and I arrive at this conclusion- if this term is at all applicable to instantaneous intuition- by a perception that the delight experienced has, as its element, but the absoluteness of novelty. I say the absoluteness- for in the fancies- let me now term them psychal impressions- there is really nothing even approximate in character to impressions ordinarily received. It is as if the five senses were supplanted by five myriad others alien to mortality.

Now, so entire is my faith in the power of words, that at times I have believed it possible to embody even the evanescence of fancies such as I have attempted to describe. In experiments with this end in view, I have proceeded so far as, first, to control (when the bodily and mental health are good), the existence of the condition:- that is to say, I can now (unless when ill), be sure that the condition will supervene, if I so wish it, at the point of time already described: of its supervention until lately I could never be certain even under the most favorable circumstances. I mean to say, merely, that now I can be sure, when all circumstances are favorable, of the



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supervention of the condition, and feel even the capacity of inducing or compelling it:- the favorable circumstances, however, are not the less rare- else had I compelled already the Heaven into the Earth.

I have proceeded so far, secondly, as to prevent the lapse from the Point of which I speak- the point of blending between wakefulness and sleep- as to prevent at will, I say, the lapse from this border- ground into the dominion of sleep. Not that I can continue the condition- not that I can render the point more than a point- but that I can startle myself from the point into wakefulness; and thus transfer the point itself into the realm of Memory- convey its impressions, or more properly their recollections, to a situation where (although still for a very brief period) I can survey them with the eye of analysis.

For these reasons- that is to say, because I have been enabled to accomplish thus much- I do not altogether despair of embodying in words at least enough of the fancies in question to convey to certain classes of intellect, a shadowy conception of their character.

In saying this I am not to be understood as supposing that the fancies or psychal impressions to which I allude are confined to my individual self- are not, in a word, common to all mankind- for on this point it is quite impossible that I should form an opinion- but nothing can be more certain than that even a partial record of the impressions would startle the universal intellect of mankind, by the supremeness of the novelty of the material employed, and of its consequent suggestions. In a word- should I ever write a paper on this topic, the world will be compelled to acknowledge that, at last, I have done an original thing.

Democratic Review, April, 1846

In general, our first impressions are true ones- the chief difficulty is in making sure which are the first. In early youth we read a poem, for instance, and are enraptured with it. At manhood we are assured by our reason that we had no reason to be enraptured. But some years elapse, and we return to our primitive admiration, just as a matured judgment enables us precisely to see what and why we admired.

Thus, as individuals, we think in cycles, and may, from the frequency, or infrequency of our revolutions about the various thought-centres, form an accurate estimate of the advance of our thought toward maturity. It is really wonderful to observe how closely, in all the essentials of truth, the child- opinion coincides with that of the man proper- of the man at his best.

And as with individuals so, perhaps, with mankind. When the world begins to return, frequently, to its first impressions, we shall then be warranted in looking for the millennium- or whatever it is:- we may safely take it for granted that we are attaining our maximum of wit, and of the happiness which is thence to ensue. The indications of such a return are, at present, like the visits of angels- but we have them now and then- in the case, for example, of credulity. The philosophic, of late days, are distinguished by that very facility in belief which was the characteristic of the illiterate half a century ago. Scepticism in regard to apparent miracles, is not, as formerly, an evidence either of superior wisdom or knowledge. In a word, the wise now believe- yesterday they would not believe- and day before yesterday (in the time of Strabo, for example) they believed, exclusively, anything and everything:- here, then, is one of the indicative cycles of discretion. I mention Strabo merely as an exception to the rule of his epoch- (just as one in a hurry for an illustration, might describe Mr. So and So to be as witty or as amiable as Mr. This and That is not- for so rarely did men reject in Strabo's time, and so much more rarely did they err by rejection, that the scepticism of this philosopher must be regarded as one of the most remarkable anomalies on record.

I have not the slightest faith in Carlyle. In ten years- possibly in five- he will be remembered only as a butt for sarcasm. His linguistic Euphuisms might very well have been taken as prima facie evidence of his philosophic ones; they were the froth which indicated, first, the shallowness, and secondly, the confusion of the waters. I would blame no man of sense for leaving the works of Carlyle unread merely on account of these Euphuisms; for

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it might be shown a priori that no man capable of producing a definite impression upon his age or race, could or would commit himself to such inanities and insanities. The book about 'Hero-Worship'- is it possible that it ever excited a feeling beyond contempt? No hero-worshipper can possess anything within himself. That man is no man who stands in awe of his fellow-man. Genius regards genius with respect- with even enthusiastic admiration- but there is nothing of worship in the admiration, for it springs from a thorough cognizance of the one admired- from a perfect sympathy, the result of the cognizance; and it is needless to say, that sympathy and worship are antagonistic. Your hero-worshippers, for example- what do they know about Shakespeare? They worship him- rant about him- lecture about him- about him, him and nothing else- for no other reason than that he is utterly beyond their comprehension. They have arrived at an idea of his greatness from the pertinacity with which men have called him great. As for their own opinion about him- they really have none at all. In general the very smallest of mankind are the class of men-worshippers. Not one out of this class have ever accomplished anything beyond a very contemptible mediocrity.

Carlyle, however, has rendered an important service (to posterity, at least) in pushing rant and cant to that degree of excess which inevitably induces reaction. Had he not appeared we might have gone on for yet another century, Emerson-izing in prose, Wordsworth-izing in poetry, and Fourier-izing in philosophy, Wilson-izing in criticism- Hudson-izing and Tom O'Bedlam-izing in everything. The author of the 'Sartor Resartus,' however, has overthrown the various arguments of his own order, by a personal reductio ad absurdum. Yet an Olympiad, perhaps, and the whole horde will be swept bodily from the memory of man- or be remembered only when we have occasion to talk of such fantastic tricks as, erewhile, were performed by the Abderites.

Graham's Magazine, January, 1848

If any ambitious man have a fancy to revolutionize, at one effort, the universal world of human thought, human opinion, and human sentiment, the opportunity is his own- the road to immortal renown lies straight, open, and unencumbered before him. All that he has to do is to write and publish a very little book. Its title should be simple- a few plain words- "My Heart Laid Bare." But- this little book must be true to its title.

Now, is it not very singular that, with the rabid thirst for notoriety which distinguishes so many of mankind- so many, too, who care not a fig what is thought of them after death, there should not be found one man having sufficient hardihood to write this little book? To write, I say. There are ten thousand men who, if the book were once written, would laugh at the notion of being disturbed by its publication during their life, and who could not even conceive why they should object to its being published after their death. But to write it- there is the rub. No man dare write it. No man ever will dare write it. No man could write it, even if he dared. The paper would shrivel and blaze at every touch of the fiery pen.

Southern Literary Messenger, April, 1849

I blush to see, in the—, an invidious notice of Bayard Taylor's "Rhymes of Travel." What makes the matter worse, the critique is from the pen of one who, although undeservedly, holds, himself, some position as a poet:- and what makes the matter worst, the attack is anonymous, and (while ostensibly commending) most zealously endeavors to damn the young writer "with faint praise." In his whole life, the author of the criticism never published a poem, long or short, which could compare, either in the higher merits, or in the minor morals of the Muse, with the worst of Mr. Taylor's compositions.

Observe the generalizing, disingenuous, patronizing tone:—

"It is the empty charlatan, to whom all things are alike impossible, who attempts everything. He can do one thing as well as another, for he can really do nothing.... Mr. Taylor's volume, as we have intimated, is an advance upon his previous publication. We could have wished, indeed, something more of restraint in the rhetoric, but,"

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The concluding sentence, here, is an excellent example of one of the most ingeniously malignant of critical ruses—that of condemning an author, in especial, for what the world, in general, feel to be his principal merit. In fact, the "rhetoric" of Mr. Taylor, in the sense intended by the critic, is Mr. Taylor's distinguishing excellence. He is, unquestionably, the most terse, glowing, and vigorous of all our poets, young or old— in point, I mean, of expression. His sonorous, well-balanced rhythm puts me often in mind of Campbell (in spite of our anonymous friend's implied sneer at "mere jingling of rhymes, brilliant and successful for the moment,") and his rhetoric in general is of the highest order:— By "rhetoric, I intend the mode generally in which thought is presented. When shall we find more magnificent passages than these?

First queenly Asia, from the fallen thrones

Of twice three thousand years

Came with the woe a grieving Goddess owns

Who longs for mortal tears.

The dust of ruin to her mantle clung

And dimmed her crown of gold,

While the majestic sorrow of her tongue

From Tyre to Indus rolled.

Mourn with me, sisters, in my realm of woe

Whose only glory streams

From its lost childhood like the Arctic glow

Which sunless winter dreams.

In the red desert moulders Babylon

And the wild serpent's hiss

Echoes in Petra's palaces of stone

And waste Persepolis.

Then from her seat, amid the palms embowered

That shade the Lion-land,

Swart Africa in dusky aspect towered,

The fetters on her hand.

Backward she saw, from out the drear eclipse,

## CRITICISM

The mighty Theban years,

And the deep anguish of her mournful lips

Interpreted, her tears.

I copy these passages first, because the critic in question has copied them, without the slightest appreciation of their grandeur- for they are grand; and secondly, to put the question of "rhetoric" at rest. No artist who reads them will deny that they are the perfection of skill in their way. But thirdly, I wish to call attention to the glowing imagination evinced in the lines. My very soul revolts at such efforts, (as the one I refer to,) to depreciate such poems as Mr. Taylor's. Is there no honor- no chivalry left in the land? Are our most deserving writers to be forever sneered down, or hooted down, or damned down with faint praise, by a set of men who possess little other ability than that which assures temporary success to them, in common with Swaim's Panaces or Morrison's Pills? The fact is, some person should write, at once, a Magazine paper exposing- ruthlessly exposing, the dross of our literary affairs. He should show how and why it is that ubiquitous quack in letters can always "succeed," while genius, (which implies self-respect with a scorn of creeping and crawling,) must inevitably succumb. He should point out the "easy arts" by which any one, base enough to do it, can get himself placed at the very head of American Letters by an article in that magnanimous Journal, "The Review." He should explain, too, how readily the same work can be induced (in the case of Simms,) to vilify personally, any one not a Northerner, for a trifling "consideration." In fact, our criticism needs a thorough regeneration, and must have it.

Southern Literary Messenger, June, 1849

I have sometimes amused myself by endeavoring to fancy what would be the fate of any individual gifted, or rather accursed, with an intellect very far superior to that of his race. Of course, he would be conscious of his superiority; nor could he (if otherwise constituted as man is) help manifesting his consciousness. Thus he would make himself enemies at all points. And since his opinions and speculations would widely differ from those of all mankind- that he would be considered a madman, is evident. How horribly painful such a condition! Hell could invent no greater torture than that of being charged with abnormal weakness on account of being abnormally strong.

In like manner, nothing can be clearer than that a very generous spirit- truly feeling what all merely profess- must inevitably find itself misconceived in every direction- its motives misinterpreted. Just as extremeness of intelligence would be thought fatuity, so excess of chivalry could not fail of being looked upon as meanness in its last degree- and so on with other virtues. This subject is a painful one indeed. That individuals have so soared above the plane of their race, is scarcely to be questioned; but, in looking back through history for traces of their existence, we should pass over all biographies of "the good and the great," while we search carefully the slight records of wretches who died in prison, in Bedlam, or upon the gallows.