

**The Project Gutenberg eBook of By-ways in Book-land: Short Essays
on Literary Subjects, by W. H. Davenport Adams**

This ebook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this ebook or online at www.gutenberg.org. If you are not located in the United States, you'll have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

Title: By-ways in Book-land: Short Essays on Literary Subjects

Author: W. H. Davenport Adams

Release Date: January 21, 2010 [EBook #31034]

Language: English

Credits: Produced by Julia Miller, Stephanie Eason, and the Online Distributed Proofreading Team at <https://www.pgdp.net>. (This file was produced from images generously made available by The Internet Archive/American Libraries.)

*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK BY-WAYS IN BOOK-LAND: SHORT
ESSAYS ON LITERARY SUBJECTS ***

BY-WAYS IN BOOK-LAND.

BY-WAYS IN BOOK-LAND

Short Essays on Literary Subjects

BY

WM. DAVENPORT ADAMS

AUTHOR OF 'DICTIONARY OF ENGLISH LITERATURE,' ETC.

'Excursusque breves tentat.'
'GEORGICS,' iv. 194.

LONDON
ELLIOT STOCK, 62, PATERNOSTER ROW
1888

TO MY FATHER,
W. H. DAVENPORT ADAMS,
THIS LITTLE VOLUME
Is Affectionately Inscribed.

*I*N the following pages, the writer for the most part deals with
small subjects in an unelaborate manner. He leaves the

highways of literature, and strays into the fields and lanes, picking here a flower and there a leaf, and not going far at any time. There is no endeavour to explore with system, or to extend any excursion beyond a modest ramble. The author wanders at haphazard into paths which have attracted him, and along which, he hopes, the reader may be willing to bear him company.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
PAPER-KNIFE PLEASURES	1
RUSKIN AS POET	10
ELECTIONS IN LITERATURE	19
FAMILIAR VERSE	28
SHAKESPEARE'S ENGLAND	36
HEREDITY IN SONG	44
STINGS FOR THE STINGY	51
DIALOGUES OF THE DEAD	59
SERMONS IN FLOWERS	66
'DON QUIXOTE' IN ENGLAND	74
BEDSIDE BOOKS	83
THEIR MUCH SPEAKING	91
PEERS AND POETRY	99
THE PRAISE OF THAMES	107
ENGLISH EPIGRAPHS	114
THE 'SEASON' IN SONG	123
THE 'RECESS' IN RHYME	131
JAQUES IN LOVE	139
MOCKING AT MATRIMONY	148
PARSON POETS	156
THE OUTSIDES OF BOOKS	164
THE NOT IMPOSSIBLE SHE	172
NONSENSE VERSES	180
SINGLE-SPEECH HAMILTONS	188
DRAMATIC NOMENCLATURE	196
PUNS AND PATRONYMICS	203
'YOURS TRULY'	209
POSTSCRIPTS	217



PAPER-KNIFE PLEASURES.



ne is for ever hearing enough and to spare about old books and those who love them. There is a whole literature of the subject. The men themselves, from Charles Lamb downwards, have over and over again described their ecstasies—with what joy they have pounced upon some rare edition, and with what reverence they have ever afterwards regarded it. It is some time since Mr. Buchanan drew his quasi-pathetic picture of the book-hunter, bargaining for his prize,

‘With the odd sixpence in his hand,
And greed in his gray eyes;’

having, moreover, in his mind’s eye as he walked

‘Vistas of dusty libraries
Prolonged eternally.’

Mr. Andrew Lang, too, has sung to us of the man who ‘book-hunts while the loungers fly,’ who ‘book-hunts though December freeze,’ for whom

‘Each tract that flutters in the breeze
Is charged with hopes and fears,’

while

‘In mouldy novels fancy sees
Aldines, Bodonis, Elzevirs.’

There are periodicals which cater solely for old-book adorers; and while on the one hand your enthusiast will publish his ‘Pleasures’ and ‘Diversions,’ on the other a contemporary will devote a volume to the subjects which attract and interest ‘the Book Fancier.’

Meanwhile, is there nothing to be said of, or by, the admirer of new books—the man or woman who rejoices in the pleasant act of turning over new leaves? At a time when volumes are issuing by the dozen from the publishers’ counters, shall not something be chronicled of the happiness which lies in the contemplation, the perusal, of the literary product which comes hot from the press? For, to begin with, the new books have at least this great advantage over the old—that they are clean. It is not everybody who can wax dithyrambic over the ‘dusty’ and the ‘mouldy.’ It is possible for a volume to be too ‘second-hand.’ Your devotee, to be sure, thinks fondly of the many hands, dead and gone, through which his ‘find’ has passed; he loves to imagine that it may have been held between the fingers of some person or persons of distinction; he is in the seventh heaven of exaltation if he can be quite certain it has had that honour. But suppose this factitious charm is really wanting? Suppose a volume is dirty, and ignobly so? Must one necessarily delight in dogs’ ears, bask in the shadow of beer-stains, and ‘chortle’ at the sign of cheese-marks? Surely it is one of the merits of new leaves that they come direct from the printer and the binder, though they, alas! may have left occasional impressions of an inky thumb.

It might possibly be argued that a new volume is, if anything, ‘too bright and good’—too beautiful and too resplendent—for ‘base uses.’ There is undoubtedly an *amari aliquid* about them. They certainly do seem to say that we ‘may look but must not touch.’ Talk about the awe with which your book-hunter gazes upon an ancient or infrequent tome; what is it when compared with the respect which another class of book-lover feels for a volume which reaches them ‘clothed upon with’ virtual spotlessness? Who can have the heart to impair that innocent freshness? Do but handle the book, and the harm is done—unless, indeed, the handling be achieved with hands delicately gloved. The touch of the finger is, in too many cases, fatal. On the smooth cloth or the vellum or the parchment, some mark, alas! must needs be made. The lover of new books will hasten, oftentimes, to enshrine them in paper covers; but a book in such a guise is, for many, scarcely a book at all; it has lost a great deal of its charm. Better, almost, the inevitable tarnishing. All that’s bright must fade; the new book cannot long maintain its lustre. But it has had it, to begin with. And that is much. We feel at least the first fine careless rapture. Whatever happens, no one can deprive us of that—of the first fond glimpse of the immaculate.

But the matter is not, of course, one of exterior only. Some interest, at least, attaches to the contents, however dull the subject, however obscure the author. A new book is a new birth, not only to the æsthetic but to the literary sense. It contains within it boundless possibilities. There are printed volumes which are books only in form—which are mere collections of facts or figures, or what not, and which do not count. But if a volume be a genuine specimen of the *belles lettres*, the imagination loves to play upon it. What will it be like? What treasures lie concealed in it? What delights has it in store for us? In our curiosity we are like the boy in Mr. Pinero’s farcical comedy: ‘It is the ‘orrible uncertainty wot we craves after.’ No one can tell what may nestle in the recesses of new leaves. Not even in reference to well-known writers can we be positively sure. They may belie their reputation. The illustrious Smith may make a failure; the obscurer Brown may score a hit. For once in a way Robinson may have produced something we can read; to everybody’s surprise, the great Jones has dropped into

[Pg 2]

[Pg 3]

[Pg 4]

[Pg 5]

[Pg 6]

the direst twaddle. And if this uncertainty exists in respect to those we know, how much more auspicious is it in the case of those who are quite new to us? What gems of purest ray serene may repose within the pages of the unopened book before us!

And, talking of unopened books, how much of the pleasure we derive from newly-published volumes lies in the process by which we first make their acquaintance. There are those who would have all books issued with the edges of the pages cut. The reasons why are obvious. To begin with, some labour is thereby saved to the purchaser; a certain measure of time, too, is saved. The reviewer, who has no moments to spare, may anathematize the leaves he has to separate with the paper-knife; the traveller by rail may condemn to Hades the producers of the work which he cannot cut open—because he has not the wherewithal about him. Everywhere there are eager and hasty readers who chafe at the delay which an uncut book imposes upon their impatient spirit. On the other hand, your genuine book-adorer, your enthusiast, who loves to extract from a volume all which it is capable of yielding, cannot but approve a habit which enables him to linger delightedly over his new possession. What special sweets may not be hidden within just those very pages which are at present closed to him! *Omne ignotum* is, for him, *pro magnifico*—here may be the very cream of the cream. And so the adorer dallies with his prize. First he peeps within the leaves, and gleans a sentence here and there. And then he begins to use the cutter—slowly, slowly—dwelling with enraptured tardiness upon each page which he reveals.

[Pg 7]

[Pg 8]

Who shall say that new leaves have no drawbacks? Verily, they have them. It cannot be supposed, for instance, that they are always wholly acceptable to the aforesaid professional censor. The reviewer, sitting surrounded by them, tier on tier, may rail at the productiveness of the age, and wish that there might not be more than one new book each week. And the omnivorous reader, anxious to keep up with the literature of the day, might fairly re-echo the aspiration. Who, indeed, can hope to turn over a tithe of the new leaves which are issued daily? Nor can an unlimited consumption of them be recommended. Mr. Lowell is to a certain extent justified when he says that

‘Reading new books is like eating new bread;
One can bear it at first, but by gradual steps he
Is brought to death’s door of a mental dyspepsy.’

Assuredly new books are so far like new bread, that we should not consume them in too rapid succession. At the same time, let us be thankful for them, inasmuch as they have the unquestionable gift of novelty. Lord Beaconsfield’s Lady Montfort said she preferred a new book, even if bad, to a classic. That was a strong saying, but there are points of view from which it is perfectly defensible.

[Pg 9]



[Pg 10]

RUSKIN AS POET.



It was lately rumoured that Mr. Ruskin was about to issue a volume of poems, consisting mainly of pieces already published. The statement was probably the first intimation received by many that the author of ‘Modern Painters’ had ever written anything in the shape of verse. That he has always been, like Sidney, a ‘warbler of poetic prose,’ has lately been emphasized by a magazine-writer; but it is not at all universally known that between the years 1835 and 1845 Mr. Ruskin

figured somewhat largely as a poet, in the popular sense of that much abused word. During that time he produced a good deal of verse, in addition to the prize poem which has always been readily accessible by his admirers.

Even if one had not known, it would not have been difficult to have assumed, from the rhythmic character of Mr. Ruskin's prose, that he had at one time 'dropped into poetry.' Such a master of rhetoric could hardly have gone through life without wooing the Muse of Song, however temporarily or unsuccessfully. It would not have been natural for him to have done so. And, indeed, it is probable that no great prose rhetorician has failed to pay the same homage to the charm of verbal melody and cadence. In all the most sonorous prose turned out by English authors there will be found a lilt and a swing which would without difficulty translate themselves into verse. 'Most wretched men,' says Shelley, 'are cradled into poetry by wrong.' Most literary men have been cradled into it by their irresistible feeling and aptitude for rhythm, together with that general poetic sensibility which is rarely absent from the nature of the literary artist. Certain it is that practice in verse has always been recognised as the best of all preparation for work in prose, and no doubt much of Mr. Ruskin's success as prose-producer has been owing to his early devotion to the Muse.

[Pg 11]

[Pg 12]

He himself tells us, in the course of his tribute to his 'first editor' (W. H. Harrison), that

'A certain capacity for rhythmic cadence (visible enough in all my later writings), and the cheerfulness of a much-protected but not foolishly-indulged childhood, made me early a rhymester.'

And he adds—the tribute was paid in 1878—

'A shelf of the little cabinet by which I am now writing is loaded with poetical effusions which were the delight of my father and mother, and which I have not got the heart to burn.'

A much fuller account of the poetic stages through which he passed in childhood is given by Mr. Ruskin in his 'Præterita,' where he tells us of the six 'poems' he brought forth in his seventh year (1826), one of them being on the subject of the steam-engine, and rejoicing in such couplets as:

'When furious up from mines the water pours,
And clears from rusty moisture all the ores.'

Another, on the rainbow, was in blank verse and impressively didactic in its tone. Then, when he was nine years old, he broke out with yet another effusion, called 'Eudosia;' and when only eleven he began the composition of an elaborate 'poetical' description of his various journeyings, under the title of 'Iteriad.'

[Pg 13]

It is easy to understand how this fondness for the rhythmical was fostered by the aforesaid parental admiration, and how it was still further increased by the boy's admiration, successively, for Scott and Byron. Certain early friendships held out to the young versifier the prospect of publication, and thus it is that we find him, in his sixteenth year, figuring as a contributor to 'Friendship's Offering and Winter's Wreath: a Christmas and New Year's Present' for 1835. This was the era of the old-fashioned 'annuals,' and 'Friendship's Offering' was one of the most notable of its kind. In the issue for the year named we note Barry Cornwall, John Clare, William Howitt, and H. F. Chorley among the writers of whom the youthful Ruskin was one. Here, by the side of really excellent steel-engravings, portraying languishing ladies in corkscrew curls, and illustrating literary matter not always unworthy of the embellishment given to it, we discover Mr. Ruskin's first published verses—'Salzburg' and some 'Fragments' of a poetical journal, kept on tour. In the former we seem to detect the influence of Rogers, rather than that of Scott or Byron. It opens thus:

[Pg 14]

'On Salza's quiet tide the westering sun
Gleams mildly; and the lengthening shadows dun,
Chequered with ruddy streaks from spire and roof,
Begin to weave fair twilight's mystic woof;
Till the dim tissue, like a gorgeous veil,
Wraps the proud city, in her beauty pale.'

A little further on we read:

'Sweet is the twilight hour by Salza's strand,
Though no Arcadian visions grace the land;
Wakes not a sound that floats not sweetly by,
While day's last beams upon the landscape die;
Low chants the fisher where the waters pour,
And murmuring voices melt along the shore;
The plash of waves comes softly from the side
Of passing barge slow gliding o'er the tide;
And there are sounds from city, field, and hill,
Shore, forest, flood; yet mellow all, and still.'

Herein, it will be seen, is something of the power of description which the writer was afterwards to exhibit so much more effectively in prose.

[Pg 15]

Four years later Mr. Ruskin's initials were to be seen appended to a couple of pieces in verse contributed to 'The Amaranth,' an annual of much more imposing presence than the 'Offering'—edited by T. K. Hervey, admirably illustrated, and happy in the practical support of such literary lights as Horace Smith, Douglas Jerrold, Sheridan Knowles, Thomas Hood, Praed, and Mrs. Browning. One of the two pieces in question is 'The Wreck,' in which Mr. Ruskin's poetic capability, such as it is, is visible in one of its most attractive moods. The last verse runs:

'The voices of the night are mute
Beneath the moon's eclipse;
The silence of the fitful flute
Is in the dying lips!
The silence of my lonely heart
Is kept for ever more
In the lull
Of the waves
Of a low lee shore.'

To the same year belong contributions to the *London Monthly Miscellany* and the prize poem ('Salsette and Elephanta') before-mentioned. In the *Miscellany* appeared some lines which, in certain respects, are a species of anticipation of the Swinburnian manner; as, for example:

[Pg 16]

'We care not what skies are the clearest,
What scenes are the fairest of all;
The skies and the scenes that are dearest
For ever, are those that recall
To the thoughts of the hopelessly-hearted
The light of the dreams that deride,
With the form of the dear and departed,
Their loneliness, weary and wide.'

It may be assumed that 'Salsette and Elephanta' has been read by all who care about the undertaking. It was recited in the theatre at Oxford, printed in the same year (1839), and reprinted exactly forty years afterwards. It is a by no means unattractive piece of rhetoric.

Another of the annuals to which Mr. Ruskin contributed in those days was the *Keepsake*, in which he figured in 1845, under the editorship of the Countess of Blessington, with Landor, Monckton Milnes, Lord John Manners, and the future Lord Beaconsfield as fellow-contributors. He was also welcomed to the pages of *Heath's Book of Beauty*. Five years later he collected his fugitive pieces, and, adding a few new ones, included the whole in a volume privately circulated in 1850. Copies of this book are said to have been bought at sales, at different times, for £31 and 41 guineas. Six years ago, a selection from the 'Annual' verses was published, together with the prize poem and other matter, in America.

[Pg 17]

Glancing through Mr. Ruskin's verse, one is forced to admit that it has no special individuality or charm. It deals with conventional subjects in a more or less conventional manner. There is a classical element, and a flavour of foreign scenery, and an occasional excursion in the direction of such topics as 'Spring,' 'The Months,' 'The Old Water Wheel,' 'The Old Seaman,' 'Remembrance,' 'The Last Smile,' and the like. The rhythm is always regular and flowing, and the descriptive passages have light and colour; but the 'lyric cry' has no particular tone that could attract the public. The longest piece ever written by Mr. Ruskin was, not the prize poem, but that entitled 'The Broken Chain,' with an extract from which I may conclude this brief survey of a great prose-writer's verse-production:—

[Pg 18]

'Where the flower hath fairest hue,
Where the breeze hath balmiest breath,
Where the dawn hath softest dew,
Where the heaven hath deepest blue,
There is death.

'Where the gentle streams of thinking,
Through our hearts that flow so free,
Have the deepest, softest sinking,
And the fullest melody,
Where the crown of hope is nearest,
Where the voice of joy is clearest,
Where the heart of youth is lightest,
Where the light of love is brightest,
There is death.'



ELECTIONS IN LITERATURE.

It is not surprising that Parliamentary contests should have figured largely in the English plays, stories, and poems of the past. That they will hold so prominent a place in them in future is, of course, by no means certain. If elections have been made purer than they were, they have been made less picturesque. They have now but little romance about them. Nearly everything in them is precise and practical.

The literary artist, therefore, is likely to find in them few things to attract him, and will be, to that extent, at a disadvantage as compared with those who have preceded him. There were days when the preliminary canvassing, the nomination and the polling days, had features which invited treatment on the stage or in print. The whole atmosphere of electioneering was different to that which now exists. Those involved in it went about their work with a reckless jollity productive of results eminently interesting to students of character and manners. A battle at the polls brought out all which was most characteristic in the Englishmen of the times, and to describe such a conflict was naturally the aim of many a man of letters.

[Pg 20]

Several theatrical pieces have been based almost wholly upon the varied incidents of such a contest. There was, for example, that 'musical interlude,' 'The Election,' written by Miles Peter Andrews, and produced at Drury Lane in 1774. In this, Trusty and Sir Courtly are candidates for a seat, and, while one John, a baker, would fain vote for the former, his wife is desirous that he should support the latter. As she wheedlingly remarks,

'Sir Courtly says, if you'll but vote for him,
He'll fill your pockets to the very brim.'

But John is not to be corrupted:

'Honest John no bribe can charm;
His heart is like his oven, warm;
 Though poor as Job,
 He will not rob,
Nor sell his truth to fill his fob.'

[Pg 21]

Nay, not though by so doing he may secure a husband for his daughter Sally. He votes for Trusty, and Sally's sweetheart respects him all the more for it. As the lover says to the lady:

'Your father's merit sets him up to view,
And more enhances my esteem for you.'

And, in truth, everybody is delighted, for, as they sing in chorus:

'What to a Briton so grateful can be,
As the triumph of Freedom and Virtue to see?'

Then there is that forgotten play of Joanna Baillie, also called 'The Election,' printed in 1802, and turned into an opera in 1817. Here, again, we have two candidates—one Baltimore, of ancient but decayed family, and one Freeman, a *nouveau riche* of equally familiar type—neighbours, but not friends, and rivals for the representation of the borough of Westown. Of Tom Taylor's 'Contested Election,' produced in 1859, most people have heard, if they have not had an opportunity of seeing it performed. It gives a fairly faithful picture of the unreformed method of carrying on electoral warfare. There is an attorney, originally played by Charles Mathews, who undertakes to secure the success of Honeybun, and is quite prepared to pay for the votes which may be promised to him. There is also one Peekover, President of the Blue Lambs, who is equally prepared to accept the proffered payment for himself and friends. Honeybun does not get in, but that is hardly the fault of his attorney, or due to any general unwillingness to sell votes to the highest bidder. Bribery, it will be remembered, is an important element in Robertson's 'M.P.,' which dates no further back than 1870, though the action of the comedy, if I remember rightly, belongs also to pre-reforming times. Cecilia is willing to buy votes for Talbot, and three typical electors are willing to dispose of her money to the best advantage. The last scene is tolerably exciting. Talbot addresses the crowd from his window, and there is much exhilaration when the result of the contest is announced. To more recent representations of elections on the stage, it is scarcely necessary to allude.

[Pg 22]

[Pg 23]

Turning from drama to song, one thinks at once of the poem 'in seven books' which its author, Carlyle's John Sterling, dubbed 'The Election' and published in 1841. Sterling had

been anticipated, a few years previously—in 1835—by the author of a satire called ‘Election Day,’ which supplied quite an elaborate description of such a day under the respective heads of ‘The Inn,’ ‘The Hustings,’ ‘The Chairing,’ and ‘The Dinner.’ ‘Although,’ said the writer, in his preface, ‘there are some great improvements in the manner in which elections are now conducted, still the immoral and degrading principles that accompany them appear to remain nearly the same.’ According to this earnest and depressed observer—

‘Mud and stones and waving hats,
And broken heads and putrid cats,
Are offerings made to aid the cause
Of order, government, and laws.’

But especially is he struck by the amount of eating and drinking that appears inseparable from an election in his time:

[Pg 24]

‘‘Tis strange how much a splendid larder
Lights up electioneering ardour;
You soon awake to *patriæ amor*
When stirred about with ale and clamour.’

Sterling, though singing of

‘Those high days when Aleborough proudly sent
Her man to sit in England’s Parliament,’

makes the plot of his poem turn upon a love affair in which one of the candidates embarks, and for the sake of which, indeed, he pretends to solicit the votes of the electors. There are, however, a few passages descriptive of electioneering phenomena. We are told, for instance, how one of the candidates went out to canvass:

‘With smiling look and word, and promise bold,
And dainty flatteries meet for young and old,
The tender kiss on squalling mouths impressed,
The glistening ribbon for the maiden’s breast,
Grave talk with men how this poor Empire thrives,
The high-priced purchase for their prudent wives,
The sympathizing glance, the attentive ear,
The shake of hands laboriously sincere.’

We have, too, a graphic picture of the nomination day, telling how

[Pg 25]

‘Ten public-houses opening for the Blues
Their floods of moral influence diffuse,
And each of seven its blameless nectar sheds
To nerve the spirits of the valiant Reds.’

By-and-by we read:

‘And now the poll begins. The assessors sit
Sublimely sure that what is writ is writ.
The lawyers watch the votes. The skies look down
Unpardonably calm, nor heed the town.’

In how many novels elections figure, I need not say. The name of political tales is legion, and merely to enumerate them would occupy a fair amount of space. Who, for example, does not remember the contest pictured by George Eliot in ‘Felix Holt’—that which leads to the riot in which Felix becomes unintentionally and unfortunately embroiled? ‘The nomination day,’ says the novelist, ‘was a great epoch of successful trickery, or, to speak in a more parliamentary manner, of war-stratagem, on the part of skilful agents.’ And she goes on to describe

‘the show of hands, and the cheering, the bustling and the pelting, the roaring and the hissing, the hard hits with small missiles and the soft hits with small jokes.’

[Pg 26]

Of the polling day, she writes:

‘Every public-house in Treby was lively with changing and numerous company. Not, of course, that there was any treating; treating necessarily had stopped, from moral scruples, when once “the writs were out;” but there was drinking, which did equally well under any name.’

This was in 1832. In 1840 there was published at Dublin a tale, entitled ‘The Election,’ in which the author bluntly declared that ‘bribery and perjury are the returning officers.’ He was, in truth, a very ‘high-toned’ writer, for we find him declaiming vigorously against that which Sterling mentions as one of the canvassing weapons of a candidate—‘the practice of

shaking hands with all and every person whose vote is solicited, whether they be old friends or the acquaintance of the moment.' There are, we are told, 'cases when such buxom familiarity is out of place—when it assumes too much the appearance of vulgar cajolery to be received as a compliment.' Elsewhere we come across an instructive bit of talk between an Irish maiden lady of a certain age, and one of the gentlemen who desires her 'vote and interest.' The lady protests that she does not know the difference between the Whigs, the Tories, and the Radicals:

[Pg 27]

'I know two of them are in the history of England, where they gave trouble enough, whatever they were. But as for the Radicals, it is a newspaper word that I can't say I'm well acquainted with.'

Whereupon the candidate replies that all he can say for the Whigs is that

'they are very fair spoken, when it suits their convenience. But the Radicals are a foul-mouthed race, on all and every occasion, and are the bitter enemies to Church and State.'

Nevertheless, the contest (of course an Irish one) which forms the main feature of the tale, ends in the return of Sir Andrew Shrivel, the Radical, together with Thaddeus O'Sullivan Gaffrey, Esq., representing the Nationalists.



[Pg 28]

FAMILIAR VERSE.

There is a species of verse, hitherto not classified distinctively, for which it seems desirable to find a name. In the first place, it may be necessary, perhaps, to emphasize once more the simple distinction between verse and poetry. There are, indeed, excellent and happy people for whom there is no difference between the two—for whom all that is not prose is poetry, and who recognise no other varieties in literature. Fortunate are they, and great is their reward. They are not disturbed by the necessity of distinguishing between this and that—of pronouncing upon what is poetry, and what is not. And, no doubt, if the critic were careful only for his individual comfort, he would adopt this rough-and-ready classification, and say no more about it. Unluckily, the distinction must be made. Rhythmical poetry must needs be in verse of some sort, but verse need not be poetry. What rhythmical poetry is in essence, the critics have not yet agreed to say; but, roughly speaking, it may be described as the language of imagination and of passion, as opposed to verse which is the vehicle, merely, of fancy and of feeling. Many can attain to the latter; the former is open only to the few. The one is the natural expression of poetic genius; the other is that of the natures which can lay claim only to poetic sentiment. The one is exceptional; the other, luckily, is tolerably widespread. The writers of verse which is not poetry have been many and able, and much enjoyment is derivable from their work.

[Pg 29]

They must not, however, all be grouped together under one embracing appellation. If there is poetry and verse, there is also verse and verse. Poetry may be said to be a fixed quality; but that is not so with the inferior article. There are many different sorts of verse. There is that which is strongly sentimental, there is that which is broadly comic, and there is that which is something between the two—neither over-sentimental nor over-comic, but altogether light in tone, and marked in the main by wit and humour. Now, to this last class of verse has been given, in general, the name of *vers de société* or *vers d'occasion*—verse of society or for the moment. Mr. Frederick Locker, nearly twenty years ago, thus labelled his volume of 'Lyra Elegantiarum'—still, even at this distance of time, the best available collection of our lighter verse. But the label is not sufficiently distinguishing; it is too haphazard and too narrow. The term *vers de société* will not include all that is commonly ranged under it. For what, in reality, is *vers de société*? It is what it professes to be—it is the verse of society, the verse which deals with the various phenomena of the fashionable world. The writers of genuine *vers de société* have themselves been men and women of society, who had caught its tone and could reproduce it in their rhythmic exercises. Mr. Locker's 'St. James's Street,' Mr. Dobson's 'Rotten Row,' Prior's lines 'To a Child of Quality,' and Sir Charles Hanbury Williams's 'Ode to Miss Harriet Bunbury'—these are the true *vers de*

[Pg 30]

[Pg 31]

société, the true 'poetry' of the ball-room and the *salon*.

What, then, is to become of the large amount of verse which remains unaccounted for—which is neither distinctively sentimental nor distinctively comic, and yet has no right to the designation of society-verse? Well, this is the class of verse which, as we have said, has hitherto not been christened, and for which it is desirable to find a name. It is a very delightful species of rhythmic work, and deserves a denomination of its own. It has the tone, less of society and of the Court, than of the familiar intercourse of every day—of the intercourse, that is, which goes on between people of ordinary breeding and education. It does not dabble in the phrase of drawing-rooms, nor does it rise to the height of sentiment or sink to the depths of low comedy. It is 'familiar, but by no means vulgar.' Its first quality is ease—absence of effort, spontaneity, freedom, a *dégagé* air. It is in rhythm what the perfect prose letter should be and is—flowing and unpremeditated without slovenliness—having the characteristics of the best conversation, as differentiated from mere argument or harangue. Its second quality is playfulness—a refusal to be too much in earnest in any direction, and a determination not to go to any unwelcome extreme. It has touches of sentiment and traces of wit and humour; but its dominant note is one of tempered geniality. Sometimes it may lean to the sentimental, sometimes to the witty, sometimes to the humorous; but always the style and atmosphere are those of familiar life, of everyday reunions; and hence the suggestion that it should be recognised as 'Familiar Verse.'

[Pg 32]

I have said how numerous are its producers. Often it has been written by those who were poets as well as verse-writers; often by those who are well-known as wits and humourists. It has flourished, naturally, in periods of tolerance rather than in strenuous times, and has been at its best, therefore, in the Caroline, Augustan, and Victorian ages of our literature. There was not much of it in the Elizabethan days, though some bears the signature of rare Ben Jonson. It came in, in full force, with the mob of gentlemen who wrote with ease—with Suckling, whose 'Prithee, why so pale, fond lover?' is in exactly the right tone; and with Dorset, whose 'To all you ladies now on land' is another typical specimen. By-and-by Dryden showed how well he could write in the familiar style, when he composed the song about fair Iris:

[Pg 33]

'She's fickle and false, and there we agree,
For I am as false and as fickle as she;
We neither believe what either can say,
And neither believing, we neither betray.'

Then came the reign of Pope, and Swift, and Prior, and Peterborough—Pope, with his truly playful 'What is Prudery?' Swift, with his charming lines to Stella; Prior, with his 'Dear Chloe, how blubber'd is that pretty face!' and Peterborough, with that masterpiece of the familiar *genre*:

[Pg 34]

'I said to my heart, between sleeping and waking,
Thou wild thing, that always art leaping and aching,
What black, brown, or fair, in what clime, in what nation,
By turns has not taught thee this pit-a-pat-ation?'

Then there were the Lady Wortley Montagu, with her lines to Congreve; and Chesterfield, with his 'Advice to a Lady in Autumn'; Fielding, with his inimitable epistles to Walpole; and Goldsmith, with his incomparable 'Retaliation.' Later, again, came Cowper, with his 'Nose and Eyes' and 'Names of Little Note'; Byron, with his verses 'To Tom Moore'; Moore himself, with his 'Time I've Lost in Wooing'; Barham, with his 'Lines left at Hook's'; Peacock, Canning, James Smith, Praed, and Mahony; and, still later, Hood, with his 'Clapham Academy'; Brough, with his 'Neighbour Nelly'; Mortimer Collins, with his tribute to his 'Old Coat'; and a hundred others, all of whom could play delightfully on the familiar string.

[Pg 35]

And, happily, the manufacture of familiar verse still goes on swimmingly. The Laureate has engaged in it, and even Mr. Browning has condescended to it. It has never, in the whole course of its career, been written better than by Mr. Holmes and Mr. Lowell, and, among ourselves, by Mr. Frederick Locker and Mr. Austin Dobson. No age, indeed, was ever more favourable than our own for the composition of verse which should, above all things, never be betrayed into exaggeration—which may have, if it please, a *souçon* of wit and humour, and even of sentiment, but which should, in particular, be tolerant and urbane.



[Pg 36]

SHAKESPEARE'S ENGLAND.



It was with true instinct that one of our most vigorous orators, desiring the other day to emphasize by quotation an appeal to the patriotic sentiments of his audience, went to a play of Shakespeare's for the passage. For the bard of Avon is *par excellence* the poet of England. Keen as, in later years, has been the love of country displayed by such men as Thomson, Wordsworth, Lord Tennyson, and Mr. Swinburne, it is in the pages of Shakespeare that we find the most magnificent outbursts of national feeling. Let it be granted that the poet has not hesitated to throw a few satiric pebbles at his countrymen. Everybody will recall the amusing colloquy in 'Hamlet,' in which the Gravedigger humorously reflects upon the sanity of the English people, declaring that, if Hamlet be mad, it will not be noted in England, for there the men are as mad as he is. And then there is that other diverting colloquy in 'Othello,' wherein Iago stigmatizes Englishmen as 'most potent in potting,' asserting that they 'drink with facility your Dane dead drunk,' so expert is your Englishman in his drinking.

[Pg 37]

But these be the gibes of Danes and Italians—not of the man Shakespeare or of Englishmen speaking with his voice. True it is that if Shakespeare was strongly patriotic, he was so only in common with the Englishmen of his day. He lived in an age when the English people were consumed with a spirit of burning affection for the isle which they inhabited—when the great religious upheaval which we call the Reformation had set the blood coursing through their veins, and infused new life into their heart and brain—and when the fear of Spanish domination had joined all classes in an indissoluble bond of love and loyalty. Probably the English nation never was more thoroughly united, more profoundly in earnest, more closely attached to its traditions and its soil, than in those spacious times of great Elizabeth. And if Shakespeare produced play after play dealing with the history of his country, and presenting on the boards many of the most famous Englishmen of the past, he was led to do so, no doubt, not only because the topic had attractions for him, but because the Englishmen of his day revelled in such reminders of the stirring years gone by—of the great soldiers, statesmen, clerics, and the like, who had shed lustre on the national name. There must have been a decided and continuous demand for these elaborate chronicle-dramas, and it may be argued that the poet, in supplying them, did but comply with the call made upon him by his public patrons.

[Pg 38]

The fact, however, that Shakespeare found historical plays a paying product will not wholly account for the powerfully patriotic strain in which they were composed. It is not only that the long series stretching from 'King John' to 'Henry VIII.' pulses from beginning to end with love of, and pride in, country; it is not only that the poet makes great Englishmen speak greatly—that, placing them in positions in which declarations of patriotism are natural and necessary, he makes those declarations eloquent and thrilling;—it is that he charges all his passages about England and the English with a passion of enthusiasm which can be explained only on the hypothesis that he was throwing his whole heart into the work, and sympathized deeply with the utterances of his creations. There is, for instance, something more than mere appropriateness to the character and the occasion in that marvellous piece of eulogy of which, in 'Richard II.,' John of Gaunt is made the spokesman. The poet seems unable to hold his admiration within bounds:

[Pg 39]

'This royal throne of kings, this sceptred isle,
This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars,
This other Eden—demi-paradise—....
This happy breed of men, this little world,
This precious stone set in a silver sea,....
This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England,
This nurse, this teeming womb of Royal Kings...
This land of such dear souls, this dear, dear land,
Dear for her reputation through the world'—

on what other country has such magnificent praise been poured out by her poets? One can see, too, how sincere Shakespeare was in his feelings as an Englishman by the phrases and the epithets he everywhere bestows upon his fatherland. There is Chorus's famous description of it in 'Henry V.' as 'Little body with a mighty heart;' there is the Queen's allusion, in 'Henry VI.,' to its 'blessed shore.' Now it is called 'fair,' now 'fertile,' and now 'happy.' 'Dear mother England,' cries the Bastard in 'King John.' Bolingbroke rejoices that, though banished, he yet can boast that he is 'a true-born Englishman;' and elsewhere we read of 'our lusty English,' our 'noble English,' our 'hearts of England's breed'—Rambures, the Frenchman, admitting that 'that island of England breeds very valiant creatures.'

[Pg 40]

And mark how Shakespeare causes one and all of his patriots to congratulate themselves that Britain is an island. Tennyson has called upon his countrymen to

'Thank Him who isled us here, and roughly set
His Briton in blown seas and storming showers;'

and elsewhere has made a 'Tory member's elder son' say—

[Pg 41]

'God bless the narrow sea...
Which keeps our Britain whole within herself.'

Thomson, too, tells how 'the rushing flood' turned 'this favoured isle' 'flashing from the continent aside,' 'its guardian she.' But Shakespeare had been before both in these expressions of gratitude for our insularity. The Archduke of Austria, in 'King John,' speaks of England as

'That pale, that white-faced shore,
Whose foot spurns back the ocean's roaring tides,
And coops from other lands her islanders...
That England, hedged in with the main,
That water-walled bulwark, still secure
And confident from foreign purposes.'

So, in 'Richard II.,' John of Gaunt describes England as

'This fortress built by Nature for herself
Against infection and the hand of war.

'The silver sea,' he says, serves it

'In the office of a wall,
Or, as a moat, defensive to a house,
Against the envy of less happier lands;

while once again he refers to England as

'Bound in with the triumphant sea,
Whose rocky shore beats back the envious siege
Of watery Neptune.'

[Pg 42]

There is one thing, however, without which, in Shakespeare's view, even our lucky isolation cannot avail to save us, as a nation, from destruction. 'If they (the English) were true within themselves they need not to fear, although all nations were set against them.' So wrote Andrew Borde, when Henry VIII. was King; and in the old play of 'John, King of England' the author made one of his *personæ* say:

'Let England live but true within itself,
And all the world can never wrong her state.'

So Shakespeare, when he came to treat of the same subject, made the Bastard declare that

'This England never did, nor never shall
Lie at the proud foot of a conqueror,
But when it first did help to wound itself...
Nought shall make us rue,
If England to itself do rest but true.'

There is much virtue in an 'if,' and the poet repeats the warning in another play. In '3 Henry VI.' Hastings says:

'Why, knows not Montague that of itself
England is safe, if true within itself?'

[Pg 43]

That, again, which most troubles John of Gaunt, in the passage already quoted, is the fact that England, which was wont to conquer others, 'Hath made a shameful conquest of itself;' while Chorus, in 'Henry V.,' laments that France has found in England 'a nest of hollow bosoms, which he fills with treacherous crowns,' adding,

'What might'st thou do, that honour would thee do,
Were all thy children kind and natural?'

Here, then, is a lesson for our times. What Shakespeare felt to be true in his own day is equally, nay more, true now—that England, 'set in a silver sea,' is safe from all assaults, save those which she may suffer at the hands of her own 'degenerate and ingrate' sons.



[Pg 44]

HEREDITY IN SONG.



It is said that the verses in a recent number of *Macmillan's Magazine*, entitled 'In Capri,' and signed 'W. Wordsworth,' are from the pen of a grandson of the famous author of 'The Excursion.' They are gracefully written, in an agreeable rhythm, and with much command of felicitous expression. If, therefore, the writer has indeed the relationship to the great Wordsworth which rumour assigns him, the fact is interesting, and suggests some considerations as to the transmission of the poetic faculty from one generation to another.

One might have thought that this transmission would have been tolerably common; that the sons at least, if not the grandsons, of a genuine poet could scarcely fail to inherit something of their progenitor's peculiar powers. One might even have supposed that poetry would run—as other things have run—in families, making the 'bards' almost a *gens*, or class, by themselves. Poetry, after all, is an affair mainly of the temperament—of fancy and imagination, of feeling and passion; and these are qualities which one might have imagined would be handed down, not greatly impaired, from father to son, and so on, for at least a fairly prolonged period.

[Pg 45]

There have, indeed, been instances in which literary capacity has been a special characteristic of persons in close relationship to each other: one thinks at once of the Sheridans, the Coleridges, the Wordsworths, and others who have been notable for their productiveness in prose and verse. But the cases in which the purely poetic gift—the vision and the faculty divine—has been inherited and exercised are few indeed. A certain intellectual power will mark the members of a family, and exhibit itself in various attractive ways, but less in the domain of poetry than any other. It would seem that sheer mental force can be communicated, but that the higher qualities of the human spirit are not so readily transmitted; are, in fact, hardly transmissible, at any rate in quite the same degree. Not only are the examples of poetic heredity rare, but there are still fewer, certainly in the history of English literature, in which the son or the daughter has equalled the parent in poetic capacity.

[Pg 46]

The case of the Colmans and the Dibdins is one of literary rather than poetic faculty. In each instance the father and son wrote verse, much of it excellent in its way, but assuredly not of the first order. The one name will always be associated with admirably humorous performances, while the other will continue to shine resplendent on the roll of writers of sea-songs. But work of that sort is a matter of knack rather than of inspiration, and 'poetry' is a word hardly to be mentioned in remote connection with it. Very different are the circumstances when we come to the children of Samuel Taylor Coleridge—to Hartley and to Sara, and to Hartley in particular. Sara had less than a half share of the poetic patrimony. She penned very pleasant rhymes for children, and some still linger in the collections; but they are not of singular merit. Much better than these are the lyrics which are to be found scattered through her prose romance, 'Phantasmion'—lyrics which undoubtedly have imaginative value. They are much less known than they deserve to be, though a few of them have recently been reprinted. They are not, however, to be compared with the best that Hartley furnished. Sara had ideas, but her mode of expression inclined to the turgid. Hartley was clearer and smoother in his style, and now and then, as in some of his sonnets, and especially in the lines beginning,

[Pg 47]

'She is not fair to outward view,
As many maidens be,'

he actually attained perfection. The last-named gem is likely to last as long as anything written by the elder Coleridge.

Mrs. Norton and Lady Dufferin are instances of ability descending from grandfather to granddaughters, and of ability, moreover, which, as regards poetical writing, grew and improved in the process of descent. The author of 'The Duenna' produced a number of neat and lively rhymes, but, great as Sheridan was as a dramatist, he was certainly not a poet. Now, his granddaughters were really poets, though by no means of the front rank. Scarcely any of Mrs. Norton's verse is now habitually read, but some of it is well worth reading. On the other hand, Lady Dufferin, who published much less than her sister did, is much better remembered, if only because she was the author of 'Katie's Letter' and 'The Irish Emigrant's Lament.' These pieces are distinguished by true human feeling, and hence their continued popularity. Of Adelaide Anne Procter, daughter of 'Barry Cornwall,' it is not necessary to say much, for certain of her lyrics are familiar (in feminine mouths, at any rate) as household words. Everyone, alas! knows 'The Lost Chord;' many of us wish that we did not. That the 'Legends and Lyrics' of Adelaide are considerably more widely known than anything produced by her father is, it is to be feared, only too true; and yet, full as they are of tenderness and grace, they have not the claims to attention possessed by the songs and dramatic fragments of 'Barry Cornwall.' The latter are unduly neglected; while the songs are among the most virile and vigorous in the language. The father's was altogether the stronger nature; the daughter set an example of gentle lachrymoseness, which has been followed, unfortunately, by too many female rhymers.

[Pg 48]

[Pg 49]

Of more recent years, several examples of heredity in song have been vouchsafed to us. The younger Hood had his father's fluency, but, apparently, very little of his imaginative power. Philip Bourke Marston was, in the lyric vein, as successful, perhaps, as Dr. Westland Marston had been in the dramatic, and it is probable that he will always be more largely read, 'sicklied o'er' though his poetic outcome be 'with the pale cast of thought.' The works of the present Lord Lytton and of Mr. Aubrey de Vere are too well appreciated to need much characterization. These writers would no doubt deprecate any comparison of their products with those of the first Lord Lytton and Sir Aubrey de Vere, but it is one from which, on the score of absolute merit, they would have no occasion to shrink. Mr. Oscar Wilde and Mr. Eric Mackay have written verse, no doubt, because Lady Wilde and Dr. Charles Mackay wrote verse before them; and the Hon. Hallam Tennyson has shown, in a rhythmical version of a nursery tale, that some measure of poetic faculty has been meted out to him.

[Pg 50]



[Pg 51]

STINGS FOR THE STINGY.

Few frailties of mankind have been more bitterly scouted than that of meanness in money matters. Of the two, prodigality has been thought the better. The man who is poor has not been censured for being careful; rather has he been praised for not being ashamed to own his poverty. But the spectacle of the rich man hoarding his wealth and not living according to his means has always excited the displeasure of mankind—not only, perhaps, because money kept in store seems for the time useless, but because if expended it would be very acceptable to its recipients. The world has commended the man who gives out of his superfluity, but it has condemned him who keeps too much to himself. All literature, from the earliest times, is full of denunciation of such a character. The miserly and the stingy have been impaled over and over again on the sword of the satirist.

[Pg 52]

Meanness has not been confined to the obscure; it has had some distinguished votaries—as, for example, his Gracious Majesty King James I., whose economical propensities were notorious. Of him it was admirably written that

'At Christ Church "Marriage," done before the King,
Lest those learn'd mates should want an offering,
The King himself did offer—What, I pray?
He offer'd, twice or thrice, to go away.'

Take, again, the great Duke of Marlborough, whose two chief qualities of mind were very happily hit off in the couplet 'On a High Bridge over a Small Stream at Blenheim':

'The lofty arch his high ambition shows,
The stream an emblem of his bounty flows.'

Garrick was accused of money-grubbing, and his weakness in that respect was the subject of more than one smart jest by Foote. When somebody, *à propos* of a remark made by Garrick on the parsimony of others, asked, 'Why on earth doesn't Garrick take the beam out of his own eye before attacking the mote in other people's?'—Foote replied, 'He is not sure of selling the timber.' And again, when Garrick, after dropping a guinea and failing to find it, said it had 'gone to the devil, he thought,' Foote remarked, 'Well, David, let you alone for making a guinea go farther than anybody else'—a repartee which was perhaps in the mind

[Pg 53]

of Shirley Brooks when, referring to the excellence of Scotch shooting at long distances, he wrote:

‘But this we all knew
That a Scotchman can do—
Make a small piece of metal go awfully far.’

Then there was Lord Eldon, whose nearness was proverbial, and whose unwillingness to spend displayed itself markedly in his commissariat department. An anonymous epigram professed to record an ‘Inquest Extraordinary’:

‘Found dead, a rat—no case could sure be harder:
Verdict—Confined a week in Eldon’s larder.’

We are also told that, when Eldon and Sir Arthur Pigott quarrelled over the proper pronunciation of the legal term ‘lien’—the former calling it ‘lion,’ and the latter ‘lean’—Jekyll produced the following:

[Pg 54]

‘Sir Arthur, Sir Arthur, why what do you mean
By saying the Chancellor’s *lion* is *lean*?
D’ye think that his kitchen’s so bad as all that,
That nothing within it can ever get fat?’

Of Lord Kenyon, another judge of like inhospitable tendencies, someone said that in his house it was always Lent in the kitchen and Passion Week in the parlour. On another occasion it was remarked that ‘in his lordship’s kitchen the fire is dull, but the spits are always bright;’ to which Jekyll, pretending to be angry, replied, ‘Spits! in the name of common-sense, don’t talk about his spits—for nothing turns on them!’ When his lordship died, the words ‘Mors Janua *Vita*’ were by an error of the undertaker painted on the coffin; but, someone commenting on the substitution of ‘*Vita*’ for ‘*Vitæ*,’ Lord Ellenborough protested that there was no mistake. Kenyon, he declared, had directed that it should be ‘*Vita*,’ so that his estate might be saved the expense of a diphthong.

[Pg 55]

Most people know the story of Foote and Lord Stormont, the latter of whom had asked the former to dinner, and had placed before him wine served in the smallest of decanters and dispensed in the smallest of glasses. The peer enlarged upon the growth and age of the liquor; whereupon the player, holding up one of the glasses, demurely said, ‘It is very little of its age!’ This recalls an experience of Theodore Hook, when invited to dine with an unnamed nobleman, at the Star and Garter, Richmond. There were four of the party, and when covers were removed it was found that the fare consisted of four loin chops, four mealy potatoes, and a pint of sherry. These things despatched, the peer asked Hook for a song, and the wit responded with, of all things in the world, the National Anthem, which he gave correctly until, arriving at the line ‘Happy and glorious,’ he added—as if under the influence of drink—‘A pint between four of us—God save the King!’ A different form of stinginess, it would seem, was shown by Brigham Young, when (if we may believe the tale) he gave as a reason for marrying a certain male-garbed lady-doctor, that he would be able to have her clothes ‘made down’ for his boys.

[Pg 56]

The mean host has always been a special target for the scorn of his fellows. It was a Greek satirist who related how

‘A miser in his chamber saw a mouse,
And cry’d, dismay’d, “What dost thou in my house?”
She, with a laugh, “Good landlord, have no fear,
’Tis not for board, but lodging, I came here.”’

And since then the flood of banter has rolled on. Herrick complains of an unknown person that he invited him home to eat, and showed him there much plate but little meat. Garrick (who had evidently again forgotten the mote and the beam) wrote of a certain nobleman who had built a big mansion:

‘A little house would best accord
With you, my very little lord!
And then exactly matched would be
Your house and hospitality!’

Much in the same way, Richard Graves wrote of the master of a house which was well kept but not open to company:

[Pg 57]

‘If one may judge by rooms so neat,
It costs you more in mops than meat!’

Note, again, Egerton Warburton’s versification of a remark attributed to Lord Alvanley. A gentleman had drawn attention to the fact that his house was furnished *à la* Louis Quatorze:

“‘Then I wish,” said a guest, “when you ask us to eat,
You would furnish your board *à la* Louis Dixhuit.
The eye, can it feast when the stomach is starving?”

Pray less of your gilding and more of your carving.”

John Headley, describing dinner at one Lady Anne’s, tells us that

‘A silver service loads the board,
Of eatables a slender hoard;’

and the sarcasm reminds one of the address with which Theodore Hook once bore himself under somewhat similar circumstances. Invited to dine with an old lady, he was horrified when the servant, lifting the cover, displayed a couple of chops. ‘Mr. Hook,’ said the hostess, ‘you see your dinner.’ ‘Thank you, ma’am,’ observed Hook; ‘but where’s yours?’

[Pg 58]

The niggardliness which displays itself in smaller subscriptions to public or private objects than the donor’s means will justify has naturally met with keen reproach. Herrick has a quatrain directed against the failing; and everyone remembers the lines about the man who declared that at the sound of woe his hand was always open:

‘Your hand is open, to be sure,
But there is nothing in it.’

Perhaps the happiest satire on meanness of this sort is contained in the anonymous couplet ‘On Close-fist’s Subscription’:

‘The charity of Close-fist, give to fame:
He has at last subscribed—how much?—his name.’



[Pg 59]

DIALOGUES OF THE DEAD.



leading Review lately contained a contribution entitled ‘The Old School of Classics and the New.’ It was, as regards its literary form, a ‘Dialogue of the Dead’—a discussion supposed to take place between the famous scholars Bentley and Madvig, with a brief intervention on the part of Euripides and Shakespeare. It was written with much smartness, and one could wish that such lucubrations were more common nowadays than they are. Not that they are by any means rare. It was only the other day that Mr. Marion Crawford published a work which had the conventional shape of fiction, but which was really little more than a series of colloquies in which some famous men of the past took part, talking throughout with a characteristic flavour which did the author considerable credit. Dialogues of the dead, pure and simple, have also been written of recent years by Mr. H. D. Traill, some of the best of whose efforts were republished in a volume called ‘The New Lucian.’

[Pg 60]

In the less immediate past, dialogue-writing after the fashion of the witty and audacious Syrian was not very frequently adventured. Just twenty years ago some writer or writers supplied to a weekly miscellany a few imaginative conversations between deceased worthies; but these were not particularly brilliant. They were in verse—in the heroic couplet, to which a good deal of point might have been imparted; but advantage was not taken of the opportunity. There was one ‘dialogue’ in which Shakespeare, Thackeray, and a critic were supposed to be engaged, and in the course of which Thackeray was made to say to the critic:

‘Don’t crack your jokes, but flit.’

To which the critic:

‘Your pardon, sir; I took you for a wit.’

[Pg 61]

To which Thackeray again:

‘Did you, indeed? Then, compliments to pass,
I took you just for what you are—an ass.’

But this, which one hesitates to pronounce Thackerayan, was surely even trite. However, these dialogues at least remind us of what English society was saying and doing in the year of grace 1868. Thus, Thackeray tells Shakespeare that his dramas are played but scarcely acted:

‘For I won’t deny
That people now are tickled through the eye.
No one to thought a deep attention lends,
And if a play’s successful it depends
Far less upon the language than the scene.’

Again, in another colloquy, Meyerbeer informs Mozart that

‘The “Traviata” and the “Trovatore”
Of “Il Barbiere” have eclipsed the glory.
As Margarita Patti fills the stage,
And Marta sung by Nilsson is the rage.’

He who dips into *Colburn’s New Monthly* for the year 1822 or thereabouts will be rewarded (or otherwise) by coming across a ‘Dialogue of the Dead’ in prose, and there may be other such fugitive lucubrations. But so far as the English literature of the past is concerned, ‘dialogues of the dead’ were written by only two persons worthy of celebration—Walter Savage Landor and George, Lord Lyttelton, the author of ‘Letters from a Persian in England to his friend in Ispahan.’ Landor’s ‘Imaginary Conversations’ are among those numerous works which everybody is supposed to have read, and, having read them, to admire. And unfortunate indeed would be he who could not recognise and appreciate the varied beauty and charm of these prose masterpieces. Here Menelaus and Helen, Æsop and Rhodope, Tiberius and Vipsania, Leofric and Godiva, Roger Ascham and Jane Grey, and a hundred other heroes and heroines of the past, converse not only with dramatic appropriateness, but with rhetorical force—with amplitude of thought and spontaneity of image. By the side of such a wonderful flower-show (as one of our poets said of a selection from a brother poet’s lyrics), Lyttelton’s trim parterre shows, no doubt, but dimly; nevertheless, to that accomplished nobleman there is due something more than the small credit of having been Landor’s predecessor in this form of English composition. Of that form Lyttelton says, in the preface to his ‘Dialogues,’ that

[Pg 62]

[Pg 63]

‘It sets before us the history of all times and all nations, presents to the choice of a writer all characters of remarkable persons which may be best opposed to, or compared with, each other; and is, perhaps, one of the most agreeable methods that can be employed of conveying to the mind any critical, moral, or political observations.’

Lyttelton brings together in his work such people as Plato and Fénelon, Lucian and Rabelais, Addison and Swift, Boileau and Pope; and, if he scarcely has the power to make these masters talk as we know they wrote, still he puts into their mouths much which it might be worth the while of the modern reader to assimilate.

Early in the eighteenth century there appeared a little *brochure* called ‘English Lucian,’ but it proved to be nothing more edifying than a few ‘modern dialogues’ between a vintner and his wife, between ‘a reformer of manners,’ his wife and a captain of the guards, and between a Master of Arts and ‘a lady’s woman.’ Of the humorous satire of Lucian himself there was no jot or tittle.

[Pg 64]

The works of Lucian have, in various ways, found many translators in England—notably Dr. Thomas Francklin, who prefaced his version with a dialogue (in prose) in which Lucian and Lyttelton, after an exchange of compliments, proceed to discuss the writings of the former at some length and with much dulness. Dulness is certainly not the characteristic of the rhyming paraphrases of certain dialogues of Lucian which Charles Cotton wrote and published late in the seventeenth century under the title of ‘Burlesque upon Burlesque, or the Scoffer Scoft.’ ‘We bring you here,’ said Cotton, ‘a fustian-piece, Writ by a merry Wag of Greece’—‘a piece of raillery writ,’ as he went on to say, ‘when Paganism was in fashion’:

‘Wherein his meaning further is
To take away th’ authorities
Of lies and fables, which did pigeon
The rabble into false religion.’

[Pg 65]

Herein the mission and the achievement of Lucian—first and greatest of the writers of ‘Dialogues of the Dead’—are not inaptly stated. Fontenelle and Fénelon both derived inspiration for their ‘Dialogues’ from the brilliant pages of the Syrian, and within recent years his abounding merits have been sung in eloquent prose by Mr. Froude. There is yet room, however, for someone who shall prove himself the ‘new Lucian’ indeed, by writing dialogues in which the illustrious dead shall be made to express themselves (as they have not yet been made to do in English colloquy) with superlative sarcasm and inimitable scorn.



[Pg 66]

SERMONS IN FLOWERS.

Every year a 'flower-sermon' is preached in London, in accordance with an admirable custom; and the orator, we may be sure, has no difficulty in 'improving the occasion.' The materials lie rich and ready to his hand. The Laureate, indeed, has asked to what uses we shall put the wildweed flower which simply blows, and has inquired further if there be any moral shut within the bosom of the rose. He was answered long ago by Horace Smith:

'Your voiceless lips, O Flowers! are living preachers,
Each cup a pulpit, every leaf a book;'

and a living poetess has assured us, likewise, that flowers will preach to us if we will hear, the rose telling us that all her loveliness is born upon a thorn, and the poppy urging that, though her scarlet head is held in scorn,

[Pg 67]

'Yet juice of subtle virtues lies
Within my cup of curious dyes.'

There is one lesson which the flowers have been made to teach with rather wearisome iteration. The poets have never been tired of dwelling upon their brief existence and seeing in it a reflection of our own. This rather trite melody has been sounded from the earliest to the latest times. Drummond of Hawthornden draws attention to the flower 'which lingeringly doth fade,' and sees in it a type of his own life, which 'scarce shows now what it hath been.' Herrick, apostrophizing blossoms, deduces from them the fact that all things have their end, though ne'er so brave. 'Fade, flowers, fade!' cries Waller; "'Tis but what we must in our autumn do.' And so Dryden:

'The rose is fragrant, but it fades in time...
Such is your blooming youth, and withering so.'

'Youth's withered flowers' made John Clare sigh to think that in him they would never bloom again.

[Pg 68]

But this, which may be said to be the orthodox teaching of the flowers, has found many influential questioners, who have dwelt upon the brighter side of the contention. And it is pleasant to listen to their more cheerful voices. 'Not an opening blossom breathes in vain,' wrote Thomson; and the sentiment is heartily corroborated by Mr. Lowell:

'There never yet was flower fair in vain;
Let classic poets rhyme it as they will.'

If the flowers have a short career, they make no complaint of it, says Landor:

'Fast fall the leaves; this never says
To that, "Alas! how brief our days!"
All have alike enjoyed the sun,
And each repeats, "So much is won."'

They enjoy life, and they help to make it enjoyable for others.

'Gay without toil and lovely without art,
They spring to clear the sense and glad the heart.'

So Mrs. Barbauld; while Mrs. Howitt similarly proclaims it to be their business as well as pleasure to minister delight to man, to beautify the earth.

[Pg 69]

The present Lord Lytton has remarked of flowers that their scent outlives their bloom, and has expressed the aspiration that, in like manner, his mortal hours may 'grow sweeter towards the tomb.' But the main point made by the more optimistic observers of Nature is that, though blossoms fade, they revive again, in equal beauty, by-and-by. 'Ye are to me,' wrote Horace Smith, 'a type of resurrection and second birth.' To W. C. Bryant the delicate flower, arising from the shapeless mould, seemed

'An emanation of the indwelling Life,
A visible token of the upholding Love,
That are the soul of this wide universe.'

Mrs. Hemans—a little unnecessarily, perhaps—dwells upon the fact that though the flowers sleep in dust through the wintry hours, they break forth in glory in the spring. For Longfellow, as for Horace Smith, they are 'emblems of our own great resurrection.' George Morine, in verses little known, reminds us that while cities fall away, and arts flourish and decay, these 'frailer things' will continue to adorn the world 'unchangingly the same.' Though covered for a time by 'the wee white fairies of the snow,' they come back, says Gerald Massey, 'with their fragrant news,' and tell in a thousand hues their dream of beauty. For their annual disappearance from our midst, Thomas Westwood gives a poetical explanation:

[Pg 70]

'Wearied out with shine and shade,
It rejoiced them, one and all,
To escape from daylight's ken
To their chambers subterranean,
There to rest awhile, and then
Weave them fresh, and weave them fair,
And their fragrant spells prepare.'

Alas! there are those who must needs draw a melancholy moral from the most consolatory phenomena. And so Charlotte Smith, while admitting that

'Another May new buds and flowers shall bring,'

must needs exclaim,

'Ah! why has happiness no second Spring?'

And the dismal reflection finds an echo in the heart of D. M. Moir:

[Pg 71]

'Green Spring again shall bid
Your boughs with bloom be crown'd;
But alas! to Man,
In earth's brief span,
No second Spring comes round!'

The truth is, the imagination derives from Nature precisely what the former's capacity and quality admit of. As the Laureate said, years ago, any man may find in bud, or blade, or bloom, a meaning suited to his mind. Spenser, pondering on the rose and its thorns, and other such floral combinations, was led to remark that

'Every sweet with sour is tempered still.'

Equally impressed was he by the bounteous ease with which Nature scatters flowers all over the world. In Barry Cornwall's view, this facile profusion is Earth's expression of gratitude for the effulgence of the Sun:

'When on earth he smileth, she bursts forth
In beauty like a bride, and gives him back,
In sweet repayment for his warm bright love,
A world of flowers.'

Beddoes had a quaint and curious fancy that 'when the dead awake or talk in sleep' the flowers 'hear their thoughts, and write them on their leaves, for heaven to look on.' Campbell seems to have loved flowers most for the associations they called up. 'I dote upon you,' he wrote, in an address to them, 'for ye waft me to summers of old;'

[Pg 72]

'I love you for lulling me back into dreams
Of the blue Highland mountains and echoing streams.'

And we find another Scotchman, William Anderson, giving utterance to a similar expression of feeling.

There is a lesson which the flowers have taught to at least two of our poets, which, though it may have sympathizers, will scarcely find many practical adherents. It is embodied in a little lyric by Mrs. Webster, in which that lady, celebrating the beauty of a solitary blossom, describes how it is seen and gathered, and adds, ironically:

'Why should a flower be fair for its own?
Choose it, pluck it to die.'

'Let woman's beauty wear the sterling gold,
The imperishable gem.
They give to her a brightness manifold,
She adds a charm to them.

'But flowers that strew the earth with fragrant grace,
As stars the welkin fill,
Look loveliest, live the longest, in their place;
To pluck them is to kill.'

That is true, and yet the gathering of flowers will go on. And, after all, what more can a blossom desire than to 'exist beautifully' and exhale its sweetness, whether it lies hidden by the wayside hedge, or decks the bosom of a woman as sweet and beautiful as itself?



'DON QUIXOTE' IN ENGLAND.



he announcement that Mr. W. G. Wills had completed his dramatic version of 'Don Quixote' naturally excited much interest, and no doubt set many minds at play upon the general subject of the history of 'Don Quixote' in this country. That the renowned romance has appeared in many prose translations, from that of Shelton in 1620 to that of Mr. Ormsby only two or three years ago, is known to most people. It will be remembered that an early English version was prepared by the nephew of Milton; the once-famous Peter Motteux made himself responsible for one 'by several hands'; that by Jarvis, which dates from the middle of last century, has lately been reproduced by Professor Morley; and then there are those by Smollett, the novelist, and Mr. A. J. Duffield. There is no lack of them, any more than there has been of pictorial illustrations. Shelton's translation, revised by Stevens, was republished with 'cuts' by Coypel. When Lockhart prefixed his well-known essay to Motteux's version, the work was accompanied by etchings by De Los Rios. Jarvis's rendering exercised successively the skill of Westall, Cruickshank, Johannot, Doré, and Mr. A. B. Houghton; another was illuminated by R. Smirke, R.A.; and in later years there have been the drawings contributed by Sir John Gilbert and by Kenny Meadows.

So much for the story as it has been read in English and adorned by English (and other) artists. But how about Mr. Wills's predecessors? How about 'Don Quixote's' previous connection with the English stage? Well, it was scarcely to be expected that so popular a tale would never excite the attention of the playwright or the musician. Sooner or later, everything which has vogue finds its way, somehow, to the boards, and it is a little surprising that seventy-four years should have elapsed, after the publication of the first English translation, before 'Don Quixote' received the distinction of dramatization. Was it, indeed, a distinction? There's the rub. The dramatist was Thomas d'Urfey; and what could be looked for from that free-speaking worthy? The original is not without a certain breadth in certain passages, and what Cervantes made broad D'Urfey might be trusted to make broader. That, again, was only according to the practice of the day; and if the virtuous Collier fulminated against the trilogy which D'Urfey wrought out of the epical extravaganza—if some ladies of the time were found to object to the coarser humours of Mary the Buxom (a creation on which D'Urfey prided himself)—there can be no doubt of the success of the venture. The third of the three plays had not, it seems, quite the acceptability of the other two, but the author's explanation of its virtual failure—that the piece was not adequately

presented—was possibly, for once, well founded, and the fact that the third play was produced at all speaks volumes for the triumphs of its precursors.

A 'Don Quixote'—probably D'Urfey's 'second part'—held the stage, more or less firmly, till the eighteenth century was well upon its way; and then there suddenly appeared a rival, in the shape of a farce or vaudeville by Fielding, entitled 'Don Quixote in England,' and bringing both the Don and Sancho upon English soil. The author was well aware of his temerity, and, indeed, apologized for it. The piece, he pleaded, was

'originally writ for his private amusement, as it would, indeed, have been little less than Quixotism itself to hope any other fruits from attempting characters wherein the inimitable Cervantes so far excelled.'

He found it, he says, infinitely more difficult than he imagined to give his knight an opportunity of displaying himself in a different manner from that wherein he appears in the romance. However, he was induced to allow his work to be performed, and then it was seen that he had brought the Don and Sancho to an English inn, where the landlord, Guzzle, tries in vain to get the former to pay his bill, and whither comes one Dorothea Loveland to meet her sweetheart, Fairlove, spending the interval between her coming and his arrival in persuading the Don that she is a persecuted princess and that her maid Jezebel is Dulcinea. Dorothea is promised by her father to one Squire Badger, but the squire proves to be a sot, and at the Don's especial request the lady and her lover are united. The piece is by no means without humour, and it would deserve to live in remembrance if only because it was for 'Don Quixote in England' that Fielding wrote the song of 'The Roast Beef of Old England,' which consisted of two verses only until Richard Leveridge added five more and wrote the music for the whole.

[Pg 78]

'Don Quixote' has made other appearances on the English boards, but none of any very great importance. There was an entertainment written in verse, and 'sung at Marybone Gardens,' for which Dr. Arnold wrote the music, and in which the Don, Sancho, Nicholas, Teresa, and Maritornes figure. There was a pantomime at Covent Garden, 'Harlequin and Quixote; or, The Magic Arm,' for which Reeve composed the melodies, and in which Harlequin, the son of Inca, carries off Columbine, the daughter of a Spanish grandee, to whom Don Quixote is affianced. There was, too, a 'ballad-farce' called 'Don Quixote in Barcelona; or, The Beautiful Moor,' which, however, was never represented; and there were at least two other efforts of the kind, an 'opera-comedy' and a 'farce-comedy,' which had the illustrious Sancho for their hero, portraying him in the character of 'the mock Governor' of Barataria.

[Pg 79]

It was, no doubt, inevitable that 'Don Quixote,' having been translated into English prose, should make its appearance also in English verse. And so it did—early in the eighteenth century—in the form of 'The Life and Notable Adventures of that Renown'd Knight, Don Quixote de la Mancha, Merrily translated into Hudibrastick Verse.' Mr. Edward Ward was the perpetrator of this work, in which various episodes of the original were reproduced with a vulgarity, not to say a coarseness, not unworthy of the great D'Urfey himself. The bard was tolerable enough in such passages as this, descriptive of the knight's appearance:

[Pg 80]

'The Don himself that rul'd the Roast
(Whose Fame we are about to Boast),
Did by his solid Looks appear
Not much behind his Fiftieth year.
In Stature he was Lean and Tall,
Big Bon'd, and very Strong withall;
Sound Wind and Limb, of healthful Body,
Fresh of Complexion, somewhat Ruddy;
Built for a Champion ev'ry way,
But turn'd with Age a little Grey.'

But, as a whole, 'Don Quixote,' as rendered into rhyme by Mr. Ward, cannot be recommended for general perusal.

There is, however, a 'Quixote' literature apart from 'Don Quixote' itself. The great romance suggested more than one English counterpart, such as 'The Spiritual Quixote,' by Richard Graves, and 'The Female Quixote,' by Mrs. Lennox. The latter, published in the middle of last century, was devoted to the adventures of one Arabella. Of her we read that, supposing the fictions of the Scudéri school to be 'real pictures of life,' 'from them she drew all her notions and expectations.' She became, in fact, quite a monomaniac upon the subject, and, as a sample, is for ever expecting that her lover, Glanville, will speak and act like the heroes of her favourite tales. In the end she throws herself into a river, gets brain-fever, and is brought back to sanity by a benevolent divine. Then there is 'The Amiable Quixote; or, The Enthusiasm of Friendship,' a novel issued later in the century, and having for central figure a young gentleman named Bruce, who

[Pg 81]

'found in the slightest acquaintance some virtue or some recommendation. As soon as the enthusiasm of friendship was excited, it overwhelmed his discretion and clouded his perspicacity.'

But this work owed very little to 'Don Quixote'—not more than did 'Tarrataria; or, Don

[Pg 82]

Quixote the Second,' a romantic poetical medley in two cantos, which appeared in the interval between the two stories just noticed. Early in this century there was issued, for a short space, a literary miscellany, called *The Knight Errant*, edited by 'Sir Hercules Quixote, K.E.,' who, said the prospectus,

'following the example of his illustrious namesake and ancestor of La Mancha, has, with the assistance of his friends, commenced an era of Civil Knight Errantry, and zealously devoted himself to the comforting of distressed Damsels and disconsolate Widows, the fathering of wronged and destitute Orphans, the promotion of Virtue and chivalrous feeling generally'—

and so on, and so on. To 'Don Quixote,' in some form or other, there will, of course, be literary allusions to the end of time.



[Pg 83]

BEDSIDE BOOKS.



o begin with, ought there to be any such things? Ought we to accustom ourselves to having books by our bedside? Ought not 'early to bed and early to rise' to be the motto of every well-conducted person, and is not reading in bed calculated to render the carrying out of that axiom virtually impossible? This is the problem we have first to solve, and it may be said at once that this discourse does not apply *virginibus puerisque*. Girls and boys, young men and young women, are hereby solemnly exhorted to abjure all nocturnal or matutinal reading of the kind suggested. To them all the lines in the copybooks apply unreservedly. Nay, even for those of mature years it may be allowed that bed is not the proper place for intellectual study. Let the hours for reading and for repose be kept rigidly apart, if the reading is to be systematic and prolonged. So far, everybody is agreed. To make a habit of perusing books in bed is to encourage laziness, and to encourage laziness is (we all know) to sap the foundations of the moral nature. That way destruction lies.

[Pg 84]

And I am bound to say that habitual, sustained reading in bed is quite as uncomfortable for the human frame as it is dangerous to the human character. It cannot be undertaken with entire success. It looks easy to do, but it is not. If you are sceptical, try it. You begin swimmingly enough. You lie down, say, on your back, settle your head cosily on to the pillow, and perhaps, to start with, hold the book before you in both hands: For a time all goes well, but not for long. The position of the arms becomes fatiguing. You withdraw one from the book and commence again. But the utilized arm speedily grows weary, and the chances are that you drop the volume and go off to sleep, leaving gas, lamp, or candle alight—which is not very safe and not very healthy—nay, is positively unhealthy and unsafe. Perchance you try the effect of reclining on one side, leaning on one arm, and holding the book by means of the other. That, also, is charming for the moment, but has a similar tendency to tire very readily. Your elbow—the one on which your weight is thrown—soon gives signs of boredom. 'I don't like this at all,' it says virtually; and perhaps you turn round and try the other for a spell. But in these matters one elbow is very like its brother, and before long you are on the look-out for another attitude.

[Pg 85]

What may be called the last infirmity of the determined reader in bed is his final decision to sit up and read in that fashion. Nothing could be better—for a certain more or less brief period. At the expiration of a few minutes, you realize that you are getting a sort of cramp in the knees; moreover, there is a disagreeable strain on your head; you are stooping too much, and bending your spine, and altogether making a toil of pleasure. The situation, it need hardly be said, is still less attractive when the weather is cold, and the effort to keep warm is added to the endeavour to read. You have wrapped yourself up, but apparently not to much purpose. You are conscious of growing chillier and chillier every moment. And, indeed, a very low temperature is usually fatal to the cultivation of bedside books. Even if you lie down, and almost smother yourself in the clothes, you are bound to obtrude one hand out of shelter, or how is the book to be held up? And how quickly that hand gets cold—and how often one's two hands have to be alternated for the purpose in view—and what a nuisance it is to have to make the continual change! One begins to think that, under the circumstances, reading is not so pleasant as one fancied, and that sleep (as the poet says) is the only certain knot of peace.

[Pg 86]

One thing is incontrovertible, and that is, that bedside books, if they are to be acceptable, must be, in the first place, small in size and, therefore, not very weighty. The hand must be asked to hold as little as possible. Bed is not the place for heavy tomes; it is the appropriate *locale* of the duodecimo. And yet the type must not be too small, or the eyesight will suffer, unless the reader can command plenty of illumination—which is not always the case. And the book must be not only fairly diminutive, but bound and stitched in such a way as to allow the hand to clutch it and hold it with ease. There must be no unnecessary extension of the palm and fingers, for it adds so much to the fatigue. Unhappily, every volume does not fulfil this requirement, and the requisite selection must be made with care. Moreover, the ideal bedside book should be not only small, and light, and agreeable to the touch, but distinguished by special internal characteristics. Not only must the print be legible; the matter it furnishes must be in brief instalments. What is wanted is a series of short somethings which the mind can readily grasp and as easily retain. Sustained reading is for the library or the study; the last thing at night and the first thing in the morning, what you desire is simply a number of brevities, at any one of which you can glance with the certainty of being interested.

[Pg 87]

Wherefore, such works as novels must be discouraged in the bedside library. There is nothing to be gained by perusing a romance, by bits, in such fragments of time as the intending sleeper is inclined or able to accord to it. Keep a novel beside you, if you like, to turn to if the night should prove an obstinately sleepless one, and to that end let the tale be by 'Miss Braddon or Gaboriau'—one which shall really fix your imagination fast, and finish, perhaps, by sending you to rest. But for ordinary uses let the book which you take up be one of 'Jewels, five words long,' or thereabouts! Let it be a volume of short essays—let it be, for instance, Bacon's, or the 'Roundabout Papers,' now accessible in a handy form. Let it be a volume of brief verse, such as Mr. Gilbert's 'Bab Ballads,' or Mr. Lang's 'Ballades in Blue China,' or Calverley's immortal 'Fly Leaves;' or let it be a collection of more serious lyrics—say, Mr. Palgrave's 'Golden Treasury,' or the selections from Lord Tennyson and Mr. Matthew Arnold. Or, if you like, let it be a treasury of maxims, such as those by Vauvenargues or Chamfort; or a series of select passages, such as those from the works of Lord Beaconsfield or Heine: or let it be a casquet of choice anecdotes, of which happily the supply is large—that incomparable volume of Dean Ramsay's, for example, or even the triter production by Mark Lemon. There is a whole world from which to choose.

[Pg 88]

[Pg 89]

Only, take care that, whatever the literature is, it is not disturbing. The mission of the bedside book is to soothe the mind, not irritate it. When one lies down after a hard day's work, one's desire is not that the brain should be stimulated, but that it should be refreshed. It needs, not exercise, but diversion. It wants to be prepared for sleep. And if a book will effect that object, while at the same time adding to the stock of one's ideas—humorous or sentimental, it does not matter which—that volume is to be thanked and cherished. The difficulty of putting down one's book and extinguishing the light before the exposition of sleep comes upon one, must be left to be dealt with by the individual man. I have heard of a popular vocalist who was wont, when he had read sufficiently, to extinguish the candle by plumping down upon it whatever book he happened to have in his hand. But this is a rough and ready mode which cannot be generally recommended—at any rate, not in those cases where the book is one's own! Some other means must be discovered. And let them be efficacious, for when any element of danger or unhealthiness is allowed to attend the use of bedside books, the sooner that use is discontinued the better.

[Pg 90]



[Pg 91]

THEIR MUCH SPEAKING.

The 'dreary drip of dilatory declamation' to which Lord Salisbury, in one of his happiest phrases, once drew attention, shows no sign of exhaustion, or even of diminution; and the Conservative chief has followed up his admirable epigram by picturing the time when, all rational discussion and all beneficial legislation being out of the question, the House of Commons may become a mere mechanical puppet-show, and may present the spectacle of 'a steam Irish Party, an electric Ministry, and a clockwork Speaker.' It is certain that there never was so much talk in the Lower House as at the present moment; but it is also certain that the complaint of 'much speaking' has before now been frequently preferred against both Chambers. Politicians have always been a wordy race, and many a sharp shaft has been aimed at their besetting weakness. A last-

[Pg 92]

century satirist once wrote:

“Do this,” cries one side of St. Stephen’s great hall;
“Do just the reverse,” the minority bawl....
And what is the end of this mighty tongue-war?
—Nothing’s done for the State till the State is done for!’

And, unfortunately, the quality of the talk has often been as poor as the quantity was considerable. It was, we believe, a pre-Victorian pen which perpetrated this couplet on the House of Commons:

‘To wonder now at Balaam’s ass were weak:
Is there a night that asses do not speak?’

Fun has constantly been made of the typical drawbacks of political oratory—of the dull men, of the heavy, of the shallow, of the unintelligible, and what not. We have been told how ‘a lord of senatorial fame’ was known at once by his portrait, because the painter had so ‘play’d his game’ that it ‘made one even yawn at sight.’ It has been said of an M.P., that his speeches ‘possessed such remarkable weight’ that it was ‘really a trouble to bear them.’ Of a third it was written that his discourses had some resemblance to an hour-glass, because, the longer time they ran, the shallower they grew. Of yet another orator we read that his reasoning was really deep, his argument profound, ‘for deuce a bit could anybody see the ground.’ Nor have certain historical personages been able to escape the lash. When Admiral Vernon was appointed to take charge of the herring fishery, Horace Walpole wrote:

‘Long in the Senate had brave Vernon rail’d,
And all mankind with bitter tongue assail’d;
Sick of his noise, we wearied Heav’n with pray’r
In his own element to place the tar.
The gods at length have yielded to our wish,
And bade him rule o’er Billingsgate and fish.’

From which it will be gathered anew that a somewhat bitter style of debate is no novelty in this country—that strong language has been heard in the House of Commons *ante Agamemnona*.

Within living memory a member has dared to suggest that certain of his opponents had come into the House not wholly sober. Who does not remember the epigrams which were based on Pitt’s addiction, real or supposed, to intoxicating liquors? Porson is said to have composed one hundred such ‘paper pellets’ in one night, as, for example:

“Who’s up?” inquired Burke of a friend at the door;
“Oh, no one,” said Paddy, “tho’ Pitt’s on the floor.”

After this, most other insinuations become almost harmless; and the accusation of mere twaddling, such as that which was brought against Mr. Urquhart in the following lines, seems, by comparison, trivial:

‘When Palmerston begins to speak,
He moves the House—as facts can prove.
Let Urquhart rise, with accents weak,
The House itself begins to move.’

By the side of twaddling, again, mere rambling grows venial. One of H. J. Byron’s burlesque heroes says of Cerberus:

‘My dog, who picks up everything one teaches,
Has got “three heads,” like Mr. Gladstone’s speeches.
But, as might naturally be expected,
His are considerably more connected.’

But it is against Parliamentary long-windedness, in particular, that most sarcasm, whether in verse or in prose, has been directed. Everybody remembers Moore’s comparison of the Lord Castlereagh of his time to a pump, which up and down its awkward arm doth sway,

‘And coolly spout, and spout, and spout away,
In one weak, washy, everlasting flood.’

This has always been a stock quotation to use against oratory of the ‘dreary’ and ‘dilatatory’ order. Then, Brougham had the good sense to recognise his own sins in respect to ‘much speaking.’ *Punch* made someone ask himself ‘if Brougham thinks as much as he talks;’ but the Lord Chancellor removed the pungency from gibes of that sort by writing his own epitaph, in which he declares that

‘My fate a moral teaches,
The ark in which my body lies
Would not contain one-half my speeches.’

[Pg 93]

[Pg 94]

[Pg 95]

It was asserted of Lord George Bentinck that true sportsmen 'loved his prate,' because his speech recalled the 'four-mile course,' his arguments the 'feather-weight.' One is reminded, in this connection, of the preacher of whom it was observed that he 'so lengthily his subject did pursue,' that it was feared 'he had, indeed, eternity in view.' And, perhaps, a long discourse is none the more acceptable when it is palpable to the hearers that the discourser has committed it to memory, and is bound to go on to the bitter end. Possibly this adds to the feeling of exasperation. Nevertheless, there are those who must learn their speeches by heart, or else not speak at all. As Luttrell contended that Lord Dudley had said of himself:

[Pg 96]

'In vain my affections the ladies are seeking;
If I give up my heart, there's an end to my speaking.'

However, it is, perhaps, scarcely fair of laymen to dwell too sternly on the joy which so many legislators seem to feel in hearing their own voices. Man is a talking animal, and can 'hold forth' outside the Houses of Parliament as well as in. And though in the term 'man' we may include woman, let us give no countenance to the old calumny, that the fairer and weaker is also the more talkative sex. There are some old lines to the effect that Nature wisely forbade a beard to grow on woman's chin,

[Pg 97]

'For how could she be shaved, whate'er the skill,
Whose tongue would never let her chin be still?'

There is also a certain epitaph on an old maid,

'Who from her cradle talk'd till death,
And ne'er before was out of breath,'

and of whom it was opined that in heaven she'd be unblest, because she loathed a place of rest. But these flouts and sneers are as cheap as they are venerable. Let the ladies take heart. Men have been censured for their 'much speaking' at least as frequently as women. Prior declared of one Lysander that he ought to possess the art of talk, if he did not, for he practised 'full fourteen hours in four-and-twenty.' And we owe to a more recent writer this paraphrase of an epigram by Macentinus:

'Black locks hath Gabriel, beard that's white—
The reason, sir, is plain:
Gabriel works hard from morn till night,
More with his jaw than brain.'

[Pg 98]

It is well that satire should go that way for a change. All the talking is not done by women or by Parliament. There is, at times, as much chatter in the smoking-room as in the boudoir and the Senate. Tongues, as well as beards, 'wag all,' when we are 'merry in hall.'



[Pg 99]



he succession of the Hon. J. Leicester Warren to the barony of De Tabley was something more than a change in the *personnel* of the House of Lords; it amounted to a conspicuous addition to the Chamber's intellectual power, and especially to the number of its poetic votaries. The author of 'Philoctetes' and 'Orestes,' of 'Rehearsals' and 'Searching the Net,' is no mere versifier. He has felt the influence of the old Greek dramatists, and apparently also that of Mr. Swinburne; but, for all that, his work has undoubted individuality, as well as solid interest.

It must be admitted that the House of Lords does not at this moment contain many hereditary peers who are also poets. Lord Tennyson, of course, is an ennobled commoner, and the Bishop of Derry (Dr. Alexander), who has written so much excellent verse, both in the thoughtful and in the imaginative vein, is no longer one of the spiritual lords. But there is Lord Lytton, there is Lord Southesk, and there is Lord Rosslyn; and by all of these Lord de Tabley will be welcomed as a brother in the literary art. What Lord Lytton has done in poetry, need scarcely be recapitulated. He would be remembered as 'Owen Meredith' if, since his accession to the peerage, he had not made a new reputation as the author of 'Fables in Song,' 'Glenaveril,' and other performances. As 'Owen Meredith' he was, no doubt, more fresh and spontaneous than he has ever been as Lord Lytton; but his poetic work, as a whole, is of good quality, and some of it will find its way down the stream of time. Equally certain may we be that the 'Jonas Fisher' of Lord Southesk, with its unquestionable vigour, both of satire and of sentiment, will remain alive, whatever may be the fate of the author's 'Greenwood's Farewell' and 'Meda Maiden.' Lord Rosslyn, it will be remembered, was one of the most successful of the Jubilee Laureates; but, even before that, he had made himself esteemed by many trustworthy judges as the producer of numerous good sonnets.

"'Tis ridiculous," says Selden, 'for a lord to print verses; 'tis well enough to make them to please himself, but to make them public is foolish.' He goes on to add that

'If a man in his private chamber twists his band-strings, or plays with a rush to please himself, 'tis well enough; but if he should go into Fleet Street, and sit upon a stall, and twist a band-string, or play with a rush, then all the boys in the street would laugh at him.'

No doubt they would have done so in Selden's time; and much more readily would they do so now. But that is scarcely to the point. *Pace* Master Selden, there is nothing ridiculous in a lord printing his verses—if they be but good enough for the process. A peer is not necessarily a poet, but a poet is none the worse for being a peer. Nay, there are even certain kinds of verse in which a peer may, other things being equal, be actually expected to excel. There is nothing to prevent his being—as Byron was—a poet of passion; there is every reason why, if he have the requisite literary capacity, he should shine in the poetry of the library, the *salon*, and the boudoir. He has usually the education for the first, and the leisure for the other two. He generally has culture, he always has breeding, he often has gallantry; and, with these endowments, the poetry *par excellence* of the peerage is well within his reach.

Considerable, indeed, would be the loss to English literature if by any chance the productions of our noble poets should disappear. Apart from Byron, who, of course, stands a head and shoulders above all his brethren, there is that Henry, Earl of Surrey, who ranks highest of all poets between Chaucer and Spenser, and who did so much to popularize in England both blank verse and the sonnet. But for Surrey both those accomplishments, since so popular among us, might have been long in establishing themselves in English poetry. The other poet-peers of the sixteenth century were admittedly not of the first class. Yet Buckhurst's share in 'The Mirror for Magistrates' and in the tragedy of 'Gorboduc' was of undoubted value, both intrinsic and relative; and the world of letters would not willingly let die the work, slight as it was, of Lord Vaux, the Earls of Essex and Oxford, the Earls of Ancrum and Stirling, Lord Brooke, and Francis Bacon, although the great Chancellor wrote but one lyric of any moment—the well-known lines upon 'The World.' Lord Vaux's 'Of a Contented Mind,' Lord Essex's 'There is None, O None but You,' Lord Oxford's 'If Woman could be Fair and yet not Fond,' are among the treasures of our verse; while the tragedies of Lord Stirling and Lord Brooke, and the sonnets of Lord Ancrum, are at least curious and interesting, if they are not substantively great.

And when we come to the noble poets of the Stuart and the early Georgian period, we find that the national indebtedness is not less marked. Who would be prepared to surrender the spirited effusions of Montrose? And is there not much to be said for the outcome, flimsy and over-free as it often was, of that mob of noblemen who wrote with ease—including the Earls of Roscommon, Dorset, and Rochester, and the Duke of Buckinghamshire? Had these writers not at least the virtues of lightness and of brightness? Did not Dorset pen the lines, 'To all you ladies now on land?' Did not Buckinghamshire produce 'The Election of the Laureat'—the prototype of Leigh Hunt's 'Feast of the Poets,' and of a still more recent *jeu d'esprit* by Mr. Robert Buchanan? The great Lord Peterborough is even now less remembered for his military triumphs than for his 'Song by a Person of Quality;' while Chesterfield, if thought of most frequently in connection with his letters and his essays, still lives in poetry as the author of some admirable society verses. Horace Walpole claims mention in the list as Earl

of Orford, and room must fairly be made, too, for Lords Lansdowne, Halifax, Nugent, Lyttelton, Egremont, and De la Warre, most of whom left behind them a few fugitive pieces which deserve to be embalmed in poetical collections.

[Pg 105]

The annals of nineteenth-century song will commemorate, besides Byron, those agreeable versifiers—Lord Holland, Lord Melbourne, and Lord Winchilsea, and those cultured translators—Lord Strangford, Lord Ellesmere, and Lord Derby. It would scarcely be fair to include among noble poets Lord Macaulay, Lord Houghton, or the first Lord Lytton, for they, like Lord Tennyson, were created peers, and won their laurel-wreaths in the character of commoners. In the same way, I have taken no account of the poetical peeresses, or I should have had to dwell upon the achievements of such ladies as Sidney's sister, Lady Pembroke; the Duchess of Newcastle, the Countess of Winchilsea, the Baroness Nairne, and so on. Enough, indeed, has been said to show how prominent a part the peerage has played in the history of English poetry—not, indeed, in the front rank, in which (omitting Lord Tennyson) it is represented only by Byron, but in the second, where Montrose (for example) is eminent, and wherever, in short, the rhetorical, the amatory, and the witty elements are in the ascendant.

[Pg 106]



[Pg 107]

THE PRAISE OF THAMES.



fluent versifier of to-day has complained that, though many a poet has 'dearer made the names' of Tweed and Nith and Doon, and what not, no one has 'sung our Thames;' and he goes on especially to rate 'green Kent and Oxfordshire and Middlesex,' because those counties have offered, he says, no rhythmical tribute to our premier stream. Now, the Thames has not, perhaps, found many laureates of late. The glories of Henley may be celebrated annually in the comic or 'society' press, but in these times we hear more, no doubt, of sewage and steam-launches than of any other phenomena of the Thames. We are a practical generation, with a keen eye to business, and disposed to take not only as read, but as written, the praises which might well be bestowed upon the river even as it is.

[Pg 108]

If, however, the Thames does not often or greatly inspire the rhymers of to-day, it cannot, certainly, be described as songless. On the contrary, it has received from the poets more magnificent and more frequent eulogium than any of its compeers. If one goes back even so far as Spenser, one finds that writer picturing it in one poem as 'noble Thamis'—a 'lovely bridegroom,' 'full, fresh and jolly,' 'all decked in a robe of watchet hew,' and adorned by a coronet 'in which were many towres and castels set;' while, in another work from the same hand, it figures as a 'gentle river,' is characterized as 'christall Thamis,' and is lauded for its 'pure streames' and 'sweete waters.' Chapman, in his 'Ovid's Banquet of Sense,' discourses eloquently of the 'wanton Thamysis that hastes to greet The brackish coast of old Oceanus':

'And as by London's bosom she doth fleet,
Casts herself proudly through the bridge's twists,
Where, as she takes again her crystal feet,
She curls her silver hair like amourists,
Smooths her bright cheeks, adorns her brow with ships,
And, empress-like, along the coast she trips'—

[Pg 109]

a description almost as impressive as the thing described. Among the lovers of the Thames must be ranked, too, Herrick, who, in one of his pieces, sends to his 'silver-footed Thamasis' his 'supremest kiss.' 'No more,' he regrets, will he 'reiterate' its strand, whereon so many stately structures stand; no more, in the summer's sweeter evenings, will he go to bathe in

it, as thousand others do:

'No more shall I along thy christall glide,
The barge with boughes and rushes beautifi'd....
To Richmond, Kingstone, and to Hampton Court.
Never againe shall I with finnie ore
Cut from or draw unto the faithfull shore,
And landing here, or safely landing there,
Make way to my beloved Westminster.'

Milton, in his 'Vacation Exercise,' bestows upon the Thames the epithet of 'Royal-towered.' How Denham celebrated it is well known to most. In his view it was 'the most loved of all the Ocean's sons,' and he commended it especially for its freedom from sudden and impetuous wave, from the unexpected inundations which spoil the mower's hopes and mock the ploughman's toil.

[Pg 110]

'Though deep, yet clear, though gentle, yet not dull,
Strong without rage, without o'erflowing full'—

such was the famous panegyric he passed upon it. From Denham, too, came an early poetical recognition of the growth of London's commerce. The Thames, he says, brings home to us, and makes the Indies ours; his fair bosom is the world's exchange. To Pope, in his 'Windsor Forest,' the Thames appears as the 'great father of the British floods,' on whose shores figure future navies.

'No seas so rich, so gay no banks appear,
No lakes so gentle, and no spring so clear.'

And the poet ends by prophesying the time when 'unbounded Thames shall flow for all mankind,' whole nations entering with each swelling tide. Elsewhere he assures us that 'blest Thames's shores the brightest beauties yield.' Thomson, again, dwells on the extent of the trade fostered by the river. Commerce, he says, has chosen for his grand resort 'Thy stream, O Thames, large, gentle, deep, majestic, King of floods!' And he describes how, on either hand,

[Pg 111]

'Like a long wintry forest, groves of masts
Shot up their spires.'

Then, as now, 'the sooty hulk steered sluggish on,' while

'The splendid barge
Row'd, regular, to harmony; around,
The boat, light-skimming, stretched its oary wings.'

Up to this time, the river had been called 'clear' and 'crystal,' in spite of 'sooty hulks;' but, with the advent of Cowper, another note is struck. With him the Thames is

'The finest stream
That wavers to the noon-day beam,'

but it is not, alas! absolutely pure:

'Nor yet, my Delia, to the main
Runs the sweet tide without a stain,
Unstained as it seems;
The nymphs of many a sable flood
Deform with streaks of oozy mud
The bosom of the Thames.'

Happily, this is about the only word of depreciation which the poets have permitted themselves. Wordsworth, standing on Westminster Bridge in 1803, notes that 'the river glideth at its own sweet will,' and if his olfactory nerves were at all distressed he has not said so in verse. Of later singers, none has been more enthusiastic about the Thames than Eliza Cook, who has told us that, though it bears no azure wave and rejoices in no leaping cascades, yet she ever loved to dwell where she heard its gushing swell—in which expression, we may be sure, there is no allusion to the British 'dude.' Another lady—Mrs. Isa Craig Knox—has supplied a very pretty description of the Thames in its more idyllic phases, pointing out how

[Pg 112]

'It glimmers
Through the stems of the beeches;
Through the screen of the willows it shimmers
In long-winding reaches;
Flowing so softly that scarcely
It seems to be flowing;
But the reeds of the low little island
Are bent to its going;

And soft as the breath of a sleeper
Its heaving and sighing,
In the coves where the fleets of the lilies
At anchor are lying.'

Finally, there is that austere teacher, Mr. Aubrey de Vere, who, addressing the Thames, exhorts it to go on soothing,

'With murmur low and ceaseless cheer,
The Imperial City's agitated ear,'

but beseeches it also to add a warning voice, telling her, to whom the pomp of gold is dear, of 'Tyre that fell, of Fortune's perfidy.'

Other poetic celebrations—such as those of Mr. Ernest Myers, Mr. Ashby-Sterry, and 'C. C. R.'—might be recorded; but the above will suffice to show how prominent a place the Thames has always held in the heart and mind of those poets who have come within the sphere of its influence. Even if it were never made the subject of a future song, it would still figure largely and conspicuously in the British *corpus poetarum*.



[Pg 113]

[Pg 114]

ENGLISH EPIGRAPHS.

The student of English poetry must often have been struck by its richness in that form of verse which may best be called the Epigraph—the brief sententious effort, answering somewhat to the epigram as understood and practised by the Greeks, but unlike the Latin, French, and English epigram in being sentimental instead of witty, and aiming rather at all-round neatness than at pungency or point. Our language abounds, of course, in examples of short lyrical compositions, such (to name familiar instances) as Beaumont and Fletcher's 'Lay a garland on my hearse,' Congreve's 'False though she be to me and love,' Goldsmith's 'When lovely woman stoops to folly,' Shelley's 'Music, when soft voices die,' and MacDonald's 'Alas, how easily things go wrong!'—all of these being only eight lines long. There are, indeed, plenty of lyrical performances even more brief than this; such as Mr. Marzials' 'tragedy' in quatrain:

'She reach'd a rosebud from the tree,
And bit the tip and threw it by;
My little rose, for you and me
The worst is over when we die!'

But, then, the epigraph is never lyrical. It belongs to the order of reflective poetry, and consists of a single thought, expressed with as much brevity and grace as possible. A common form of it is the epitaph; another is the inscription; while at other times the poets have used it for the purpose of enshrining some occasional or isolated utterance.

The thoroughly successful epitaphs—at once short, and wholly poetical in expression—are among the most famous and popular things in literature. Who does not remember the admirable tribute to 'Sidney's sister, Pembroke's mother'—usually ascribed to Ben Jonson, but sometimes attributed to Browne? Jonson penned an epitaph on 'Elizabeth L. H.,' which would have been exquisite had it consisted only of the following:

'Underneath this stone doth lie
As much beauty as could die;
Which, in life, did harbour give
To more virtue than doth live.'

[Pg 115]

[Pg 116]

Even as they stand, the lines, as a whole, may fairly compare with those on Lady Pembroke. How happy Pope was in his epitaphs is familiarly known. The art was just that in which he might naturally be expected to excel. The time-honoured couplet on Newton need not be quoted: the 'octave' on Sir Godfrey Kneller is most notable for the final bit of hyperbole:

'Living, great Nature fear'd he might outvie
Her works, and, dying, fears herself may die.'

And, talking of epitaphs, one is reminded of the quaint comment by Sir Henry Wotton 'On the Death of Sir A. Morton's Wife':

'He first deceased; she, for a little, tried
To live without him, liked it not, and died'—

surely a piece of work as nearly as possible perfect in its way. In the matter of inscriptions, we have, of course, that by Ben Jonson on Shakespeare's portrait, and that by Dryden under Milton's picture—the last-named being by no means deserving of its reputation. We have also the well-known lines by Pope, 'written on glass with Lord Chesterfield's diamond pencil;' the equally well-known sentence on Rogers by Lord Holland; and the less-hackneyed and even more flattering couplet composed by Lord Lyttelton for Lady Suffolk's bust (erected in a wood at Stowe):

[Pg 117]

'Her wit and beauty for a Court were made,
But truth and goodness fit her for a shade.'

The writers of verse have naturally shone in such concentrated testimonies to the merits of those whom they delighted to honour. Our literature is full of eloquent and graceful summaries of individual gifts and acquirements, apart altogether from the ordinary inscription or epitaph. Pope celebrated Lady Wortley Montagu's beauty in a couple of lines too frequently cited to need reproduction. Less often quoted is David Graham's concise but sufficient criticism on Richardson's 'Clarissa':

[Pg 118]

'This work is Nature's; every tittle in't
She wrote, and gave it Richardson to print.'

James Montgomery, in a well-turned quatrain, said of Burns that he 'pass'd through life ... a brilliant trembling northern light,' but that 'thro' years to come' he would shine from far 'a fix'd unsetting polar star.' It will be remembered that, in another quatrain, Lord Erskine besought his contemporaries to 'mourn not for Anacreon dead,' for they rejoiced in the possession of 'an Anacreon Moore.' James Smith wrote of Miss Edgeworth that her work could never be anonymous—'Thy writings ... must bring forth the name of their author to light.' And so on, and so on: the poetry of compliment presents many such conceits.

A treatise, indeed, might be written on the epigraphs in which poets have praised their lady-loves or their friends—from Herrick's Julia to, say, Tennyson's General Gordon. Rather, however, let us turn to what the bards have been at pains to say about themselves, recalling, for example, Herrick's 'Jocund his Muse was, but his Life was chaste,' and Matthew Prior's triplet 'On Himself.' Colman the Younger wrote:

[Pg 119]

'My muse and I, ere youth and spirits fled,
Sat up together many a night, no doubt;
But now I've sent the poor old lass to bed,
Simply because my fire is going out.'

But how inferior is this, both in feeling and in expression, to the dignified epigraph in which Landor celebrated the seventy-fifth anniversary of his birthday:

'I strove with none, for none was worth my strife;
Nature I loved, and, next to Nature, Art;
I warmed both hands before the fire of life;
It sinks, and I am ready to depart.'

In the couplet and quatrain of pure sentiment and reflection, some of the most delightful of our poetry is embodied. Herrick was conspicuously fond of this species of verse, and his works abound in gems of style and fancy, the difficulty being, not to find them, but to select from them. The beauty of one is apt to be rivalled by that of its neighbour. Thus we find on one page:

[Pg 120]

'When words we want, Love teaches to indite;
And what we blush to speak, she bids us write.'

And on another:

'Love's of itself too sweet; the best of all
Is when love's honey has a dash of gall.'

Then there is Lord Lyttelton's distich about 'Love can hope when reason would despair;' there are Aaron Hill's famous lines on 'modest ease in beauty,' which, though it 'means no

mischief, does it all.' There are Sir William Jones's 'To an Infant Newly Born;' Wolcot's 'To Sleep;' Luttrell's 'On Death;' and many, many others.

Of nineteenth-century writers, the most admirable composer of the epigraph has been Landor, who in this, as in some other respects, may be placed in the same category with Herrick. What, for instance, could be prettier than this?

'Your pleasures spring like daisies in the grass,
Cut down, and up again as blithe as ever;
From you, lanthe, little troubles pass
Like little ripples in a sunny river.'

How well-phrased, again, is this:

'Various the roads of life; in one
All terminate, one lonely way.
We go; and "Is he gone?"
Is all our best friends say.'

[Pg 121]

Among living authors, Mr. Aubrey de Vere can lay claim to a quatrain which is entirely faultless:

'For me no roseate garlands twine,
But wear them, dearest, in my stead;
Time has a whiter hand than thine,
And lays it on my head.'

To this, Sir Henry Taylor wrote a pendant scarcely less fortunate in idea and wording. Lord Tennyson has in his day written several epitaphs, inscriptions, and other trifles; but none of them have quite the perfection which might have been looked for from so great a master of poetic form. Mr. Matthew Arnold produced, with others, this excellent epigraph:

'Though the Muse be gone away,
Though she move not earth to-day,
Souls erewhile who caught her word,
Ah! still harp on what they heard.'

Finally, the reader may be recommended to glance at Mr. William Allingham's little book of 'Blackberries,' in which they will find a large number of such 'snatches of song,' many of them fresh in conception and finished in execution.

[Pg 122]



[Pg 123]

THE 'SEASON' IN SONG.

'**T**o live in hearts we leave behind is not to die,' and the Season, when 'dead,' yet speaks to many through the mouths of the men who have given it perennial life in verse. Its first laureate, one may say, was Mackworth Praed, whose 'Good-night' to it still remains the most brilliant epitome of its characteristics ever written. Nothing was omitted from that remarkable series of coruscating epigrams. From

'The breaches and battles and blunders
Performed by the Commons and Peers,'

we are taken to 'the pleasures which fashion makes duties'—'the dances, the fillings of hot little rooms,' 'the female diplomatists, planners of matches for Laura and Jane,' 'the rages, led off by the chiefs of the throng,' the ballet, the bazaar, the horticultural fête, and what not. Of later years the Season, as a whole, has been celebrated only by Mr. Alfred Austin, who published, more than a quarter of a century ago, a satire which was indeed formidable in its tone. Mr. Austin was severe about everybody—about the

[Pg 124]

'Unmarketable maidens of the mart,
Who, plumpness gone, fine delicacy feint,
And hide their sins in piety and paint;'

about the Gardens, where

'The leafy glade
Prompts the proposal dalliance delayed;'

about the ballrooms, where

'Panting damsels, dancing for their lives,
Are only maidens waltzing into wives;'

about the theatre, where

'Toole or Compton, perfect in his part,
Touches each sense, except the head and heart;'

and about a number of other things too censurable to be mentioned here.

And, in truth, when one thinks of the Season in song, one thinks less of the satire than of the sarcasm, less of the cynicism than of the sympathy, with which it has been treated by its poets. Take, for example, that most conspicuous feature of the Season—the walking, riding, driving in the Row. It was Tickell who made a woman of fashion of his day tell how she

[Pg 125]

'Mounted her palfrey as gay as a lark,
And, followed by John, took the dust in Hyde Park,'

and how

'On the way she was met by some smart Macaroni,
Who rode by her side on a little bay pony.'

In our own time the glories and the humours of the Row have been described with geniality by Mr. Frederick Locker and Mr. Ashby-Sterry, with point by Mr. Austin Dobson, and with smartness by H. S. Leigh. Says Mr. Locker:

'Forsooth, and on a livelier spot
The sunbeam never shines;
Fair ladies here can talk and trot
With statesmen and divines.

'What grooms! what gallant gentlemen!
What well-appointed hacks!
What glory in their pace, and then,
What beauty on their backs!'

Mr. Dobson, in a different mood, assures his Roman prototype that the world to-day is very much what it was in the time of 'Q. H. F.':

[Pg 126]

'Walk in the Park—you'll seldom fail
To find a Sybaris on the rail
By Lydia's ponies;
Or hap on Barrus, wiggled and stayed,
Ogling some unsuspecting maid.

'Fair Neobule, too! Is not
One Hebrus here—from Aldershot?
Aha, you colour!
Be wise. There old Canidia sits;
No doubt she's tearing you to bits.'

The Eton and Harrow match, like lawn-tennis, *caret vate sacro*; but the delights of Henley and Hurlingham have been sung in verse, and the Inter-University Boat-race was the subject of some admirable lines by Mortimer Collins and G. J. Cayley:

'Sweet amid lime-trees' blossom, astir with the whispers of
springtide,
Maiden speech to hear, eloquent murmur and sigh
Ah! but the joy of the Thames when, Cam with Isis contending,
Up the Imperial stream flash the impetuous Eights!
Sweeping and strong is the stroke, as they race from Putney to

Mortlake,
Shying the Crab Tree bight, shooting through Hammersmith
Bridge;
Onward elastic they strain to the deep low moan of the rowlock;
Louder the cheer from the bank, swifter the flash of the oar!’

[Pg 127]

Pretty again, in its way, is the better-known ‘Boat-race Sketch,’ by Mr. Ashby-Sterry, whose heroine

‘Twines her fair hair with the colours of Isis,
Whilst those of the Cam glitter bright in her eyes.’

The joys of Epsom and of Goodwood have not, I believe, been versified by any prominent rhymer, and, concerning those of Ascot, I know of but one elaborate celebration—that which describes, among other things,

‘Tall bottles passing to and fro,
And clear-cut crystal’s creamy flow,
Where vied with velvet Veuve Clicquot,
Moët and Chandon;’

as well as

‘The homeward drive that came too soon
By parks and lodges bright with June,
And how we mocked the afternoon
With lazy laughter.’

Nothing, of course, is more peculiar to the Season than the devotion displayed by Society at the shrine of Art. The Academy and the Grosvenor are institutions without which the Season would not be itself. The latter has not figured very conspicuously in song, but at least it has managed to creep into one of the Gilbert-Sullivan operas, in the shape of a rhyme to ‘greenery-yallery.’ Mr. Andrew Lang, too, has told us of the critic who had

[Pg 128]

‘Totter’d, since the dawn was red,
Through miles of Grosvenor Gallery;’

and, in another of his ‘verses vain,’ has practically limned the Gallery itself under the guise of ‘Camelot’:

‘In Camelot, how gray and green
The damsels dwell, how sad their teen;
In Camelot, how green and gray
The melancholy poplars sway.
I wis I wot not what they mean,
Or wherefore, passionate and lean,
The maidens mope their loves between.’

The character of Burne-Jonesian art is here very happily hit off. Happy, too, is Mr. Lang’s sketch of the Philistian features of the Academy:

[Pg 129]

‘Philistia! Maids in muslin white
With flannelled oarsmen oft delight
To drift upon thy streams, and float
In Salter’s most luxurious boat;
In buff and boots the cheery knight
Returns (quite safe) from Naseby fight.’

But did not Praed long ago address ‘The Portrait of a Lady at the Exhibition of the Royal Academy’? Has not Mr. Ashby-Sterry addressed ‘Number One’ in the said exhibition—also ‘the portrait of a lady’? And, moreover, has not Mr. Austin Dobson made the Academy the scene of one of his brightly-written dialogues?—that in which the lady says:

‘From now until we go in June
I shall hear nothing but this tune:
Whether I like Long’s “Vashti,” or
Like Leslie’s “Naughty Kitty” more;
With all that critics, right or wrong,
Have said of Leslie or of Long.’

Among the events of every season are the fashionable marriages, one of which is described for us by Mr. Frederick Locker in his ‘St. George’s, Hanover Square.’ On the subject of the belles of the season I need not dwell. Praed’s ‘Belle of the Ballroom’ was a provincial beauty; but not so, assuredly, was Pope’s and Lord Peterborough’s Mrs. Howard, Congreve’s Miss Temple, Lord Chesterfield’s Duchess of Richmond, Fox’s Mrs. Crewe, Lord Lytton’s La Marquise, Mr. Aïdè’s Beauty Clare, or Mr. Austin Dobson’s Avicé. Of London balls and routs the poets have been many, including Edward Fitzgerald, C. S. Calverley, and Mr. Dobson again. The opera, so far as I know, has had very few celebrants in rhyme. The ‘Monday Pops’

[Pg 130]

figure in 'Patience' with the Grosvenor Gallery, but have not otherwise, I fancy, been distinguished in song. On the whole, however, the Season has received poetic tributes at once numerous and interesting.



[Pg 131]

THE 'RECESS' IN RHYME.

If the Season has had its laureates, so has the Recess. Why not? Of the two, the latter has the more numerous elements of poetry. Town has its charms for the versifier; there is much to say about its streets, its parks, its belles, its balls, its many diversions. But there is even more, surely, to say about the country, with its ancestral halls, its watering-places, and its shootings, as well as about the seaside and the various attractions *outré-mer*. Surely, of the two, life out of town has even more delights, for the poet, at any rate, than life in town. Sylvester is reported to have said that people, after tiring in town, go to re-tire in the country. But the saying, if epigrammatic, is not strictly true. No doubt some of us feel bored, wherever we may go, or whatever we may do. But to most people, I imagine, the Recess, if spent out of London, is a time of genuine enjoyment, and certainly it is a time which deserves to be distinguished in song.

[Pg 132]

The Recess, as spent in London, has been drawn by the rhymers in depressing tints. The picture painted by Haynes Bayly remains—for the fashionable world, at least—almost as true as it ever was. As he said:

'In town, in the month of September,
We find neither riches nor rank;
In vain we look out for a member
To give us a nod or a frank.
Each knocker in silence reposes,
In every mansion you find
One dirty old woman who dozes,
Or peeps through the dining-room blind.'

This may be compared with the soliloquy put by H. S. Leigh in the mouth of 'the last man' left in London:

'The Row is dull, as dull can be;
Deserted is the Drive;
The glass that stood at eighty-three,
Now stands at sixty-five.
The summer days are over,
The town, ah me! has flown,
Through Dover, or to clover—
And I am all alone.'

It has long been held, among a certain class, that to be seen in town during the Recess is to forfeit all pretensions to *haut ton*. And so 'the last man' of the Season is naturally represented by Bayly as somewhat ashamed of himself. 'He'll blush,' we are told, 'if you ask him the reason Why he with the rest is not gone':

[Pg 133]

'He'll seek you with shame and with sorrow,
He'll smile with affected delight;
He'll swear he leaves London to-morrow,
And only came to it last night!'

He will tell you that he is in general request—that the difficulty is to know where not to go:

‘So odd you should happen to meet him;
So strange, as he’s just passing through.’

The Season may be said to go to its grave with parting volleys from the sportsmen on the moors. One is fired on ‘the Twelfth,’ the other on ‘the First.’ The one is associated with grouse, the other with partridges. And Haynes Bayly makes his fashionable matron only too conscious of these facts. ‘Don’t talk of September,’ she says; ‘a lady

‘Must think it of all months the worst;
The men are preparing already
To take themselves off on the First.’

[Pg 134]

‘Last month, their attention to quicken,
A supper I knew was the thing;
But now, from my turkey and chicken,
They’re tempted by birds on the wing!
They shoulder their terrible rifles
('Tis really too much for my nerves!)
And, slighting my sweets and my trifles,
Prefer my Lord Harry’s preserves!’

And she goes on to say:

‘Oh, marriage is hard of digestion,
The men are all sparing of words;
And now ‘stead of popping the question,
They set off to pop at the birds.’

Life at English country houses has been depicted by more than one poet. Pope, for instance, tells us what happened when Miss Blount left town—how

‘She went, to plain-work, and to purling brooks,
Old-fashion’d halls, dull aunts, and croaking rooks...
(To) divert her eyes with pictures in the fire,
Hum half a tune, tell stories to the squire.’

Lord Lyttelton’s ‘beauty in the country’ complains that

‘Now with mamma at tedious whist I play,
Now without scandal drink insipid tea;’

while Lady Mary Montagu’s ‘bride in the country’ deplores the fact that she is

[Pg 135]

‘Left in the lurch,
Forgot and secluded from view,
Unless when some bumpkin at church
Stares wistfully over the pew.’

Agreeably descriptive of rural pleasures is Lord Chesterfield’s ‘Advice to a Lady in Autumn.’ Of recent years the subject has been treated by a versifier who has at least a measure of the neatness of Praed, and who enumerates among the typical guests at a country house

‘A sporting parson, good at whist,
A preaching sportsman, good at gateways;’

and, again:

‘A lady who once wrote a book,
And one of whom a book’s been written...
One blonde whose fortune is her face,
And one whose face caught her a fortune.’

As for the daily round:

‘We dance, we flirt, we shoot, we ride,
Our host’s a veritable Nimrod:
We fish the river’s silver tide,’

and so on. There are, of course, the county balls, and the fancy balls, and the private theatricals, and what not, all of them celebrated by the inevitable Praed. It was at the county ball that he saw ‘the belle of the ballroom’:

[Pg 136]

‘There, when the sounds of flute and fiddle
Gave signal sweet in that old hall
Of hands across and down the middle.’

It was to the county ball, as well as to the theatricals at Fustian Hall, that Praed’s ‘Clarence’

was so prettily invited. As for fancy balls:

'Oh, a fancy ball's a strange affair!
Made up of silks and leathers,
Light heads, light heels, false hearts, false hair,
Pins, paint, and ostrich feathers.'

Of inland watering-places, Bath and Cheltenham have been perhaps most often poetized. Bath found its *vates sacer* in the author of the 'New Bath Guide'; it has rarely found one since; its glories have virtually departed. It was at Cheltenham—

'Where one drinks one's fill
Of folly and cold water'—

that Praed met his 'Partner.' And C. S. Calverley has told us how

[Pg 137]

'Year by year do Beauty's daughters
In the sweetest gloves and shawls
Troop to taste the Chattenham waters,
And adorn the Chattenham balls.

'*Nulla non donanda lauru*
Is that city: you could not,
Placing England's map before you,
Light on a more favoured spot.'

Praed has a poem called 'Arrivals at a Watering-Place,' but it is not one of the most successful of his efforts. Nor have seaside places in general been made the subject of very excellent verse. Brighton is the one exception. Of that 'favoured spot,' James Smith, of 'Rejected Addresses' fame, was, perhaps, the first to write flatteringly. 'Long,' he declared—

'Long shalt thou laugh thy enemies to scorn,
Proud as Phœnicia, queen of watering-places!
Boys yet unbreech'd, and virgins yet unborn,
On thy bleak downs shall tan their blooming faces.'

The prophecy, one need not say, has been amply fulfilled. And the poets still conspire to sing the praises of 'Old Ocean's bauble, glittering Brighton.' Everybody remembers the stirring exhortation of Mortimer Collins:

[Pg 138]

'If you approve of flirtations, good dinners,
Seascapes divine, which the merry winds whiten;
Nice little saints, and still nicer young sinners,
Winter at Brighton!'

Nor has Mr. Ashby-Sterry proved himself at all less enthusiastic. Brighton in November, he says, 'is what one should remember':

'If spirits you would lighten,
Consult good Doctor Brighton,
And swallow his prescriptions and abide by his decree;
If nerves be weak or shaken,
Just try a week with Bacon;
His physic soon is taken at our London-by-the-Sea.'

Something might be said of the delights of foreign sojourn in the Recess; but space fails me. Reference may, however, be made to Mr. Locker's graceful 'Invitation to Rome' and 'The Reply' to it, from which I take this typical tribute to the Italian capital:

'Some girls, who love to ride and race,
And live for dancing, like the Bruens,
Confess that Rome's a charming place—
In spite of all the stupid ruins!'

[Pg 139]



JAQUES IN LOVE.



hat Jaques is in Shakespeare's pages most people know. In the very first reference made to him he is described as 'melancholy,' and as 'weeping and commenting' upon a stricken deer. He has 'sullen fits,' we read. He himself tells us he 'can suck melancholy out of a song.' He protests that the banished Duke is 'too disputable' for him—that he (Jaques) thinks of as many matters, but makes no boast of them. The Duke, on his side, speaks of Jaques as 'compact of jars' (made up of discords), and when Jaques offers to 'cleanse the foul body of the infected world,' retorts on him that it would be a case of 'most mischievous foul sin chiding sin,' Jaques having been himself a notorious evil liver. To Orlando Jaques suggests that they should rail at the world and their misery, while to Rosalind he confesses that he loves melancholy better than laughing. "'Tis good to be sad and say nothing.' He has, he says, a melancholy of his own, the result of his experience and reflection, which wraps him in a most humorous sadness. Jaques, in fact, is a rake turned cynical philosopher. He regards man and nature as only so much material for observation and for moralizing.

[Pg 140]

Such is the Jaques of 'As You Like It'—a purely original creation, embodying a familiar type of humanity, but nevertheless not good enough for certain of Shakespeare's successors in the dramatic art. Jaques has more than once been revised and edited, in common with other characters in the sylvan comedy. He did not quite satisfy the fastidious taste of Mr. Charles Johnson, the ingenious author of 'The Country Lassies' and other pieces, who, as was said with more point than truth, was 'famous for writing a play every year and being at Button's coffee-house every day.' Still less did Shakespeare's Jaques commend himself to the 'J. C.' who was so kind as not merely to adapt 'As You Like It,' but to elaborate and paraphrase it. Nor did the 'melancholy' one prove acceptable even to the judgment of Georges Sand, when that intellectual lady set to work to 'arrange' the play for the French stage. Shakespeare, it appeared to all these writers, had perpetrated an unaccountable mistake. He had failed to make Jaques pair off with Celia. That charming maiden is handed over to the converted Oliver, while Jaques goes off to study the humours of the repentant Duke. Happy thought! Transform Jaques and Celia into a species of minor Benedick and Beatrice, and marry them in the end!

[Pg 141]

Mr. Charles Johnson adopted this idea almost literally. His 'Love in a Forest'—brought out at Drury Lane in 1723—is 'As You Like it' cut down and altered, with scraps from 'Much Ado About Nothing,' 'Love's Labour's Lost,' and other Shakespearean pieces, introduced at various points, the whole welded together by means of wondrous emanations from the compiler's fancy. To Jaques are assigned a number of lines spoken elsewhere by Benedick or by Biron. We have the well-known gibing scene between Jaques and Orlando up to a certain stage, when, commenting on Jaques' questions about Rosalind, Orlando says: 'But why are you so curious?—you who are an obstinate heretic in the despite of beauty and the whole female world?' Then Jaques replies to this speech, which belongs to Don Pedro in 'Much Ado,' in the familiar words of Benedick in that play, asserting that he will 'live a bachelor,' and that if ever he breaks that vow his friends may put round his neck the legend, 'Here you may see Jaques, the married man.' At this juncture Rosalind and Celia appear, and, while Rosalind as Ganymede has her first colloquy with Orlando, 'Jaques talks with Celia—they walk in another glade of the forest.' When they return it is at once evident that Jaques' celibate intentions have already been shaken. He calls the lady 'destructively handsome,' and says his heart 'gallops away in her praise most dangerously.' She avers he will be in love if he does not take heed, and he says, 'I doubt so—yet I hope not.' A moment or two after, encouraged and fired by her words, he asks her plump to marry him, and she promises so to do, 'two years hence, if my brother Ganymede consents.' Then he admits, in soliloquy, that he is 'in love, horribly in love,' his spirits 'caught at last by a pair of bugle eyeballs and a cheek of cream.' And then come more quotations from Benedick, as well as an annexation of Touchstone's remark about the honourableness of the forehead of a married man. Celia by-and-by confesses to Rosalind that 'her heart doth incline a little to the philosopher,' whose love, she allows, 'does not sit easy upon him,' but whose words are 'full of sincerity.' Still later Jaques comes to Rosalind for her approval of the match, speaking this time in language used by Biron. She, however, refuses, declaring that he cannot be polished into a modern husband; and he retires disconsolate. But with Orlando he is more successful. He is promised that Ganymede shall give way, and that his wedding shall take place to-morrow. And so all ends happily.

[Pg 142]

[Pg 143]

[Pg 144]

The 'J. C.' who, in 1739, published 'The Modern Receipt, or a Cure for Love,' as 'altered

from Shakespeare,' went much farther than Johnson in the way of embellishing the unhappy poet. He used his lines occasionally, but in general either turned them into prose or expanded them beyond all recognition. Virtually he supplies a comedy based, only, on 'As You Like It.' Even the names of the characters are changed. Jaques now figures as Marcellus, 'a sullen, morose lord, a great woman-hater, but at length in love with Julia—the Julia being, of course, Celia. He is described by a shepherd as 'a melancholy sort of fellow,' who 'reads much, thinks more, eats little, sleeps little, and speaks least of all. And if he sees a woman he runs away, shuts himself up in his cave, and prays for an hour or two after.' Julia, hearing this, cries: 'Oh, the brute! I'm resolved to take a revenge upon him in behalf of the whole sex.' Jaques, on his part, is struck by Julia's charms as soon as he beholds them—'What can this mean? I'm wondrous ill o' the sudden'—and is fain to sit down, lest he should fall. In the scene which follows there is a great war of words. The lady talks, purposely, at an agonizing speed, and the gentleman roundly tells her that he would rather have her room than her company. At last the wrangle is interrupted, and Julia, as a parting shot, calls Marcellus 'a bear in breeches.' He himself is inclined, after all, to think her 'something more than the rest of her detested sex—some being, perhaps, of a superior order.' He praises her gay innocence and noble simplicity. Julia, on her side, 'prays Heaven that she is not in love with the brute,' but is afraid she must be. Then there is a scene in which, by way of drawing him on, she pretends to love him, but afterwards says that she was mocking him, and so covers him with confusion. Nevertheless, he is not cured. He is still her slave, and, as he says, what is love 'but an epidemic disease, and what all the world has, at one time or other, been troubled with as well as myself? Why should I endeavour to curb a passion the greatest heroes have with pride indulged? No.... He alone is wise who nobly loves.' So he returns to the charge, makes the lady admit the soft impeachment, and obtains the Duke's consent to their union. He says, in the end, that he is afraid he makes but an odd sort of figure—that he has acted a little out of character, and a great deal below the dignity of a philosopher. But, having the aforesaid disease, he has sought the remedy, and has found it; for, in his view, 'Marriage is the surest cure of love.'

[Pg 145]

[Pg 146]

Georges Sand, in her 'Comme il Vous Plaira'—a comedy in three acts, 'tirée de Shakespeare, et arrangée'—diverges still further from the original text. Her work is, even more markedly than 'The Modern Receipt,' founded, only, on 'As You Like It.' 'In dealing with this uncurbed genius, which owned no restraint,' she thought herself justified in 'condensing, abstracting, and modifying' his work. But, as a matter of fact, her play is indebted to Shakespeare only in idea. Jaques is introduced early in the piece as sent by the banished Duke with a message to Rosalind. Of course, he meets Celia, and at first is *brusquerie* itself. But in the second act he comes to think there is something in her name 'qui résonne autrement que dans tout nature. Est-ce une douceur qui charme l'oreille?' Celia for a long time plays with him, but in the end they arrive at a mutual declaration of affection. 'I have always tenderly loved Jaques,' says Georges Sand in her preface, and 'I have taken the great liberty of bringing him back to love. Here is my own romance inserted in that of Shakespeare, and, although romantic, it is not more improbable than the sudden conversion of Oliver.' That may be; and yet one might have thought that Georges Sand, of all people, would not have set herself the interesting but somewhat futile task of improving upon 'As You Like It.'

[Pg 147]



[Pg 148]

MOCKING AT MATRIMONY.



he world has reason to be grateful to the writer who lately demonstrated the possibility of being happy 'though married.' Some exposition of the sort was sadly needed. Hitherto the estate of matrimony has met with a long succession of jibes and sneers. It has had its apologists, even its prophets and eulogists; but it has had many more detractors. There is, indeed, no subject on which the satirists of the world, both great and small, have so largely and so persistently made merry. It has been a stock subject with them. It is as if they had said to themselves, 'When at a loss, revile the connubial condition.' Married life has been the sport of every wit, and, sorrowful to relate, society has been well content to join in the pastime. There is nothing so common as sarcasm on matrimony, and nothing, apparently, so welcome, even to the married.

[Pg 149]

The banter in question has been of all sorts—sometimes vague, sometimes particular, in its

import. A few censors have confined themselves to simple condemnation. 'A fellow that's married's a *felo-de-se,*' wrote the late Shirley Brooks; and he had been anticipated in the stricture. An anonymous satirist had written:

"Wedlock's the end of life," one cried;
"Too true, alas!" said Jack, and sigh'd—
"Twill be the end of mine."

And if matrimony was not suicide, it was ruin. Old Sir Thomas More had said of a student who had married that 'in knitting of himself so fast, himself he had undone.' And a later rhymer, contrasting wedding with hanging, had come to the conclusion that

'Hanging is better of the twain—
Sooner done and shorter pain.'

To the suggestion that a youth should not marry till he has more wisdom, the Italian epigrammatist replies that if he waits till he has sense he will not wed at all. Marriage, said the famous Marshal Saxe, in effect, is a state of penance; Rome declares there are seven sacraments, but there are really only six, because penance and matrimony are one.

[Pg 150]

Hymen, says Chamfort, comes after love, like smoke after flame. It is the high sea, observes Heine, for which no compass has yet been invented. Its melancholy uncertainty is illustrated by the remark of Samuel Rogers, that it does not matter whom you marry—she will be quite another woman the next day. It was Rogers, too, who, when he heard of a certain person's nuptials, declared that if his friends were pleased his enemies were delighted. Selden's complaint against marriage was that it is 'a desperate thing,' out of which it is impossible to extract one's self; but then he lived before the era of Sir Cresswell Cresswell. And the utmost that the conventional detractor will admit is, that the institution gives to man two happy hours. 'Cursed be the hour I first became your wife,' cries the lady in the well-known quotation; to which her spouse replies that—'That's too bad; you've cursed the only happy hour we've had.' But Palladas, the Greek, as translated by Mr. J. H. Merivale, goes a little farther than this, declaring that

[Pg 151]

'All wives are bad; yet two blest hours they give:
When first they wed, and when they cease to live.'

A favourite notion with the satirists is that marriage is a state of mutual recrimination. John Heywood has the couplet:

"Wife, I perceive thy tongue was made at Edgware."
"Yes, sir, and your's made at Rayly, hard by there."

And this is typical of many another utterance; for example, this:

'Know ye not all, the Scripture saith,
That man and wife are *one* till death?
But Peter and his scolding wife
Wage such an endless war of strife,
You'd swear, on passing Peter's door,
That man and wife at least were *four*.'

Doctor Johnson, too, draws attention to the fact—if it be one—that all the reasons which a man and a woman have for remaining in the estate of matrimony, and the restraints which civilized society imposes to prevent separation, are hardly sufficient to keep them together. Or, as Mr. William Allingham has, of recent years, more pithily put it:

[Pg 152]

'If any two can live together well,
'Tis (and yet such things are) a miracle!'

If we are to believe the aforesaid satirists, this is all the fault of the wives. Now and again one comes across a jest in which the lady has the better of the gentleman, as in the following:

"Wife, from all evil, when shalt thou delivered be?"
"Sir, when I" (said she) "shall be delivered from thee."

But such things are rare. Usually the laugh is on the other side. As the Frenchman wrote:

'While Adam slept, Eve from his side arose:
Strange! his first sleep should be his last repose!'

Everybody knows the epitaph which Dryden intended for his wife; and side by side with it may be placed the lines by an anonymous author:

'God has to me sufficiently been kind,
To take my wife, and leave me here behind.'

[Pg 153]

So again:

'Brutus unmoved heard how his Portia fell;
Should Jack's wife die, he would behave as well.'

The story of the man who, at his spouse's funeral, deprecated hurry, on the ground that one should not make a toil of a pleasure, need only be alluded to.

The chief charge against the wives is that they will insist upon being the heads of the households. That is the refrain of many a flout hurled against them. To marry—such is the moral of some lines by Samuel Bishop—is to lose your liberty. The lady will have everything her way:

'For ne'er heard I of woman, good or ill,
But always lovèd best her own sweet will.'

So says a seventeenth-century writer; and the complaint is general.

'Men, dying, make their wills—why cannot wives?
Because wives have their wills during their lives.'

'Here,' wrote Burns—'here lies a man a woman ruled; the Devil ruled the woman.' And Landor makes someone say to a scholar about to marry:

[Pg 154]

'So wise thou art that I foresee
A wife will make a fool of thee.'

That wives are talkative is a venerable commonplace. The historic husband thought that the fact of his spouse's likeness not being a 'speaking' one was its principal merit. And Lessing makes a man excuse himself for marrying a deaf woman on the ground that she was also dumb. We all remember Hood's particular trouble:

'A wife who preaches in her gown,
And lectures in her night-dress.'

And so with those who are more than merely talkative—who are positively scolds; while sometimes the conventional helpmeet is as active with her fists as with her tongue—as in the case of the lady whose picture, her husband thought, would soon 'strike' him, it was so exceedingly like her.

It is, however, unnecessary to carry the tale further. This mocking at matrimony has always been a feature of life and literature, and probably will always remain so—partly because it is so easy of achievement; partly because it is not less easy of comprehension; and also, perhaps, because humanity has ever been inclined to chasten that which it loves. It rails against marriage, but it marries all the same. Or is it that it recognises the wedded life as a necessity, which cannot be put away, but which it is a pleasure to ridicule? Perhaps that is the best explanation one can offer. All this satire may be mankind's way of revenging itself upon one of the laws of nature.

[Pg 155]



[Pg 156]

PARSON POETS.



he publication of a memoir of Archbishop Trench has sufficed to recall prominently to the public mind the virtues, endowments, and achievements of one of the most notable of latter-day divines. Richard Chenevix Trench was one of the most versatile of writers. He discoursed with equal knowledge and effect on Biblical and philological topics, and his prose work will always be respectfully regarded by the students alike of divinity and of language. But though, on these subjects, his pronouncements may in time grow stale or require correction, he will ever hold an honourable place in English literature as one of the most thoughtful and vigorous of those parson poets of whom this country has always had so large and valuable a supply.

There is, indeed, a natural connection between parsons and poetry. It is precisely in the ranks of the clerical body in all civilized countries that one would look for successful cultivators of the art of verse. For what is, above all things, necessary for such cultivation? In the first place, polite learning; in the second, sufficient leisure. It is in the atmosphere of culture that good verse, as apart from high poetry, takes its rise. There are probably few educated men who have not at one time or another essayed to pen a stanza. The busy city clergyman may nowadays have no time for such elegant diversions, but at all periods the lettered country parson has been inclined to occupy some of his spare moments in wooing the Muse of Song. There are other things than learning and leisure which impel him to the task. There is the nature of his profession, with the experience it brings him and the reflections it induces. The most unliterary pastor cannot but be a meditative man. The literary pastor cannot but be disposed to turn his meditations into verse, often finding in that 'mechanic exercise' the means of 'numbing pain.'

[Pg 157]

[Pg 158]

Other things being equal, the modern cleric would take serious subjects for his verse, and it is characteristic of the whole race of parson poets that the first poetic effort in English literature should be the Scriptural paraphrases supplied by Caedmon, monk of Whitby. But it was not in the sphere of Bible history that the immediate successors of Caedmon, monks (or friars) like himself, sought to disport themselves most largely. Our early clerical versifiers set themselves rather to give rhythmical renderings to the romances and chronicles of their time. They were the secular as well as sacred teachers of the day; and so we find the names of Wace, Layamon, Robert of Gloucester, Robert of Brunne, Archdeacon Barbour, Andrew of Wyntoun, and John Lydgate, all associated with the recital of the deeds of ancient or modern heroes. Not that the claims of religion or morality were forgotten: they were remembered by Richard Rolle in his 'Prick of Conscience,' and indirectly recognised by Barclay in his 'Ship of Fools.' The interests of the poor were served by Langland in his 'Piers the Plowman,' and poetry, pure and simple, had its devotees in the persons of the Bishop of Dunkeld and the Franciscan friar who produced respectively 'The Palace of Honour' and 'The Golden Terge.'

[Pg 159]

When we come down to more recent times, we find even greater variety than this in the writings of the parson poets. But the serious element prevails. There have been clerical wits and humorists, but they have been, of necessity, in the minority. A large proportion of the verse composed by clergymen has been, as one would naturally expect, of a distinctly didactic, not to say depressing, tendency. One thinks at once of the 'Temple' of George Herbert, the 'Epigrammata Sacra' of Richard Crashaw, the 'Night Thoughts' of Young, the 'Grave' of Blair, the 'Sabbath' of Grahame, the 'Course of Time' of Pollok, the 'Christian Year' of Keble; the hymns of Wesley, Alford, and Stanley; the 'Dream of Gerontius' of Newman, and a dozen others, differing very much indeed in all the qualities of poetry, but alike in the earnestness of their intention. Even Herrick, 'jocund' though his muse was, left behind him some 'Noble Numbers.' And though clerical satire, as furnished by men like John Bramston, Charles Churchill, Samuel Bishop, John Wolcot, and Francis Mahoney, has frequently been flippant both in form and phrase, it has at other times—and especially in the works of Bishop Hall, of Norwich—been very vivid and uncompromising. Hall, indeed, was the Juvenal of his century, filled with the spirit of righteous indignation.

[Pg 160]

From Donne, Dean of St. Paul's, downwards, the clerical singers who have not been markedly professional in their outcome have exhibited an agreeable freedom from monotony. In Donne himself we see the sad perfection of the metaphysic method, mitigated, however, by a few lapses into the lucid and the simple. Pomfret gave us in 'The Choice' the typical poem of the country parson, sounding the praises of rural scenes and lettered ease. In Parnell we have a sample of the pleasing versifier, touching nothing which he does not adorn, but making no very particular impression. Bishop Percy is less celebrated for the ballads which he wrote than for those which he collected. Logan is remembered only by his verses on 'The Cuckoo.' To the reverend brothers Warton we owe respectively 'The Pleasure of Melancholy' and some lines 'To Fancy'; while of Thomas Blacklock, alas! the most remarkable feature was his blindness. One would like to have forgotten Robert Montgomery, of Satanic fame, but Macaulay will not let us do so. Blanco White lives on the strength of one good sonnet, Lisle Bowles on that of many good ones; and there is no need nowadays to distinguish the work of Crabbe, of Moultrie, of John Sterling, and of Charles Kingsley, much as they differed from each other. One of the latest additions to this choir of voices is Mr. Stopford Brooke, and there are other living lyrists, belonging to one or other of the Churches, who might be named if there were no fear of making invidious selection.

[Pg 161]

[Pg 162]

There is a certain department of verse-writing in which a cultivated class like the clergy would of necessity make its mark—that of rhythmical translation. In a body whose members are all more or less scholarly, there will always be some, of special scholarship, who will endeavour to put works of classic or foreign literature into an English mould. Thus we have had Francis Fawkes, with his versions from the Greek; Christopher Pitt, with his translation of the 'Æneid'; H. F. Carey, with his Dante in blank verse; and more others than need be specified. These clergymen followed the excellent instincts of their cloth. But what are we to say of those otherwise estimable parsons who have from time to time attempted, and occasionally with success, to win fame as the authors of poetical drama? The connection between the cassock and the buskin has, to this extent, always been fairly intimate—from the time when Bishop Bale wrote mystery plays, to the recent years in which Sheridan Knowles, after having been a dramatist and an actor, closed his days as a preacher. Shirley, Mason, Home, Milman, Croly, Maturin, White—these are names well known in the history of the theatre, and they are all names of clerical association. Such has been the fascination of the 'boards' even for those whose home has been the pulpit and the cloister.

[Pg 163]



[Pg 164]

THE OUTSIDES OF BOOKS.



This may fairly be claimed as a popular subject. It is one in which nearly everybody—perhaps everybody—is interested. There can surely be few, if any, who do not care about the outside of a book. Even if a man never opens a volume, he likes its exterior to be pleasing. Nay, there are books which may be said to be produced and utilized only for their outward garb. How often does one find a volume described as a charming one 'for the table'! It is for the table that certain publications are destined. Enter a drawing-room, and you will find a few books scattered here and there 'with artful care.' I do not say they are intended never to be opened, but their primary function is to look nice—to 'set off' the table-cloth, and, generally, to give a bright appearance to the room. And their adaptability for this purpose is so widely recognised that you can scarcely go anywhere without coming across books of this complexion. You find them exposed to view in your doctor's or your dentist's ante-chamber; you find them placed before you, usually very much the worse for wear, in hotel waiting-rooms. And the instinct which prompts all this display is genuine enough. It is perfectly true—there is no furniture so agreeable to the eye as books. Nothing makes a room look at once so picturesque and home-like, if the volumes be but sufficiently varied in size and hue.

[Pg 165]

And that brings us in presence of a point of controversy. Ought there to be so much variety in the exteriors of books? Ought they to be 'got up' in so many different styles? Some people would answer these questions with a decided negative. These are the persons who like uniformity in their libraries, who would have one shelf look for all the world like the facsimile of the other. These are the persons who, almost as soon as they buy a book, are desirous to have it rebound after some fantastic notion of their own. There is a class of purchaser which revels in long lines of volumes in 'full calf gilt.' You see that sort of thing in most old-fashioned collections. And the effect is not bad in some respects. The rows look handsome enough. They have solidity and richness. Nor do I say that for a certain species of publication 'full calf gilt' is not a very judicious form of binding. One likes to see the quarterlies and higher-class monthlies done up in that style. It befits the seriousness of their contents. But do not let everything be put into 'full calf gilt,' solid and rich though it appears. Let us give full play to the element of variety. Let every book have an individuality, a character, of its own. Let us be able to identify it easily. Let it retain its original garb, so that we may always be able to distinguish it. Surely it is one of the greatest charms of a row of volumes that each has its special features, and can readily be found when wanted.

[Pg 166]

[Pg 167]

It may be laid down as a general rule that the binding of a book should have a distinct reference to the nature of its contents. It should be appropriate to the author and to the subject. One sympathizes with Posthumus in the play, when, apostrophizing the volume in his prison, he says:

‘O rare one!
Be not, as is our fangled world, a garment
Nobler than that it covers: let thy effects
So follow, to be most unlike our courtiers,
As good as promise.’

Juliet, when she hears that Romeo has slain Tybalt, asks:

‘Was ever book containing such vile matter
So fairly bound?’

And in a like spirit Charles Lamb, in his well-known essay, complains of the ‘things in books’ clothing’ which, by reason of their inappropriate exteriors, afford so much disappointment to the reader. ‘To reach down a well-bound semblance of a volume, and hope it is some kind-hearted play-book, then, opening what “seem its leaves,” to come bolt upon a withering population essay’—‘to expect a Steele or a Farquhar, and find—Adam Smith’—those, indeed, are doleful and dispiriting experiences, to which the unsuspecting student ought not in enlightened times to be subjected. If Mr. Gilbert’s Mikado be right in the view that the punishment ought to ‘fit the crime,’ so assuredly ought a book’s binding to fit the matter that is contained within it. It should be the outward sign of the inward grace.

[Pg 168]

I am ready to admit that, as a rule, this is so. In general, it is quite easy to tell the nature of a volume from its cover. And for this the publishers are greatly to be thanked. An amateur, publishing for himself, may every now and then insist upon dressing up the product of his brains incongruously; but, for the most part, the booksellers of to-day have a very excellent sense of what is fitting. The result is that those who care about books can differentiate them at a glance. They know what is the approved style and line for biography and history, for poetry and fiction, for sermons, for gift-books, and so *ad infinitum*. The ‘Life’ of So-and-so, and the ‘Annals’ of Such-and-such, are unmistakable; they have respectability written on every corner and angle of them. The dull brown or the dull green is sufficiently obvious to everyone. And so with poetry. You know minor verse directly you see it. It has a *cachet* concerning which there can be no possible error. Happily, a Tennyson, a Browning, or a Swinburne is equally recognisable. A novel, of course, bears its character on its face. The three-volume form is notorious. But it scarcely matters what shape fiction may take. It can be identified by instinct, whether it be in yellow boards or in some more quiet habit. Sermons cannot be misapprehended; there is no fear of their being taken on a railway journey instead of the latest book of memoirs. As for gift-books, whether for boy or girl, adult or juvenile, they have their destination marked upon them in all the colours of the rainbow. Some complain of this, and call it vulgar. No doubt it often is so. But a gift-book is produced for a definite purpose, and the public would be surprised, and probably annoyed, if it were not as gorgeous in gold and colours as it was expected to be. Gold and colours are what are wanted, and the publishers do well to supply them.

[Pg 169]

[Pg 170]

One thing, perhaps, is too little considered—that a book is, in most cases, intended to be read and to be preserved. Certain books are not issued for that purpose, but are deliberately manufactured to be thrown away when read. The shilling novel, one may presume, is not designed for a permanent existence. If it is, why is it so frequently brought out in a paper cover, which either comes off altogether, or else curls up at the edges in the most irritating fashion? It must be confessed that a paper cover is an infliction, demanding the eventual destruction of the book or its prompt rebinding in more durable style. But it is not sufficient only that a volume should be bound. It should be bound so that it can be opened and perused with comfort. It should not be in too stiff a cover, or it will be awkward to hold. And the cover should not be in white or in too delicate a colour, or one will not care to handle it. Nor should a book be bound too limply, for the cover will soon begin to look shapeless. A parchment binding is charming to gaze at for a time, but how quickly its glory fades! I should say to the ordinary bookbuyer, in metaphoric language, Avoid the kickshaws and stick to the solids! In other words, leave the delicacies to the connoisseur, and give your attention to the books so clothed that you can read and keep them as you will.

[Pg 171]





THE NOT IMPOSSIBLE SHE.

I make no allusion here to the heroine of Mr. Haggard's well-known romance. What I am thinking of at the moment is not the impossible 'She' of recent fiction, but the 'not impossible She' of Master Richard Crashaw—the 'perfect monster,' in female form, who was to 'command his heart and him,' and whom he was good enough to sketch for us in advance within the limits of some forty verses—the damsel whose beauty was to

'Owe not all its duty
To gaudy tire or glistering shoe-tye;'

whose face was to be

'Made up
Out of no other shop
Than what Nature's white hand sets ope;'

who was to have 'a well-tamed heart,'

'Sidneian showers
Of sweet discourse,'

[Pg 173]

and so on, and of whom the poet was so kind as to say that, if Time knew of anyone who answered the description,

'Her that dares be
What these lines wish to see—
I seek no further—it is She.'

Master Crashaw is not the only man by many who in the past has been seduced into putting into words and verse the aspirations, on this subject, which filled his soul. It would probably be found, if anyone had the requisite patience to go through with it, that there has been scarcely a poet who has not thus given expression to his conception of an ideal woman and to his desire for her companionship. Much more numerous, to be sure, are the rapturous tributes which have been paid to actual persons of the other sex: the poetry of praise, as written by men of women, has not yet been exhausted, and probably never will be. But the ideal description has generally come first, and very notable it has usually been. Sir Thomas Wyatt declared that

[Pg 174]

'A face that should content me wondrous well
Should not be fair, but lovely to behold;
Of lively look, all grief for to repel;
With right good grace,'

et cætera. He further asserted that 'her tress also should be of crispèd gold,' and intimated graciously that

'With wit, and these, perchance I might be tied,
And knit again with knot that should not slide.'

His contemporary, Lord Surrey, included among 'the means to attain happy life,' 'the faithful wife, without debate'—that is, I suppose, a lady without forty-parson-power of talk—a not impossible, nay, fairly common, She.

In a lyric by Beaumont and Fletcher, we find the supposed speaker giving utterance to a series of such wishes. 'May I,' he says, 'find a woman fair, And her mind as clear as air!'

'May I find a woman rich,
And of not too high a pitch!...
May I find a woman wise,
And her falsehood not disguise!...
May I find a woman kind,
And not wavering like the wind!...'

[Pg 175]

And, in truth, he talks throughout as if he did not expect to discover any such rarity. Everyone knows the little poem in which Ben Jonson details his preferences in women's dress, declaring that 'a sweet disorder' does more bewitch him 'than when art Is too precise in every part.' But elsewhere he paints for us, not a perfect feminine attire, but the faultless

maid herself, as he would have her:

'I would have her fair and witty,
Favouring more of Court than City,
A little proud, but full of pity,
Light and humorous in her toying,
Oft building hopes and soon destroying...
Neither too easy nor too hard,
All extremes I would have barr'd.'

That, it would seem, was rare Ben's ideal.

Carew, it is notorious, professed to despise 'lovely cheeks or lips or eyes,' if they were not combined with 'A smooth and steadfast mind, Gentle thoughts, and calm desires.' A rosy cheek, a coral lip, and even star-like eyes, as he sagely said, would waste away. And in this somewhat priggish, and perhaps not wholly sincere, vein, he finds a rival in the anonymous bard who declared that he did not demand

[Pg 176]

'A crystal brow, the moon's despair,
Nor the snow's daughter, a white hand,
Nor mermaid's yellow pride of hair,'

and so on, but instead,

'A tender heart, a loyal mind,
Which with temptation I would trust,
Yet never link'd with error find—

'One in whose gentle bosom I
Could pour my secret heart of woes,
Like the care-burthen'd honey-fly
That hides his murmurs in the rose.'

So Bedingfield, conceding to friend Damon 'the nymph that sparkles in her dress,' avows his own fondness for the maid 'whose cheeks the hand of Nature paints.' Of this young person he says:

'No art she knows or seeks to know;
No charm to wealthy pride will owe;
No gems, no gold she needs to wear;
She shines intrinsically fair.'

Cowley, it will be remembered, in sketching his notion of true happiness, included in it the picture of

[Pg 177]

'A mistress moderately fair,
And good as guardian angels are,
Only beloved and loving me!'

With that 'one dear She'—and a few other things—he thought he could get on pretty comfortably. But probably at once the most obliging and most exigent of modern lovers was the sentimental gentleman to whose feelings Mrs. Bowen-Graves ('Stella') gave appropriate voice in the over-familiar 'My Queen.'

'I will not dream of her tall and stately—
She that I love may be fairy light;'

nay, more:

'I will not say she should walk sedately—
Whatever she does, it will sure be right.

'And she may be humble or proud, my lady,
Or that sweet calm which is just between'

(as if anyone could be a 'sweet calm!'); moreover:

'Whether her birth be noble or lowly,
I care no more than the spirit above;'

[Pg 178]

but there is at least one point upon which this gentleman insists:

'She must be courteous, she must be holy,
Pure in her spirit, that maiden I love'—

and, being that, she may depend upon the stars falling, and the angels weeping, ere he ceases to love her, his Queen, his Queen!

Ah! the poets have much to answer for. Here is Mr. Longfellow assuring his readers that

'No one is so utterly desolate,

But some heart, though unknown,
Responds unto his own;'

and here is Sir Edwin Arnold declaring, with equal confidence, that

'Somewhere there waiteth in this world of ours
For one lone soul another lonely soul'—

et cætera, et cætera. Is it any wonder that, in the face of such encouragement, young men go on dreaming, each of the *dimidium suæ animæ* whom he is to meet by-and-by, and framing to that end all sorts of beautiful ideals? It may be that the Shes thus dreamed of are 'not impossible'—they may 'arrive;' but it is as well not to be too sanguine. And, above all, it is as well not to draw too extravagant a picture, if only because you may not be worthy of the original when you see it. Corydon is too disposed to expect in Phyllis charms and virtues for which he might find it difficult to show counterparts in himself. If the lady is to be the pattern of beauty and of goodness, ought not the gentleman to bring an equal amount of capital into the matrimonial firm?

[Pg 179]



[Pg 180]

NONSENSE VERSES.



hen Bunthorne has recited his 'wild, weird, fleshy thing,' called 'Oh, Hollow! Hollow! Hollow!' the Duke of Dunstable remarks that it seems to him to be nonsense. 'Nonsense, perhaps,' replies the Lady Saphir, 'but oh, what precious nonsense!' And there really is a sense in which nonsense—genuine, diverting nonsense—is precious indeed. There is so little of it. The late Edward Lear bubbled over with true whimsicality. His 'Book of Nonsense' is what it professes to be—the most delightful non-sense possible. But of how much of that sort of thing does English literature boast? There is plenty of unconscious nonsense, of course, but it is not of the right quality. Dryden said of Shadwell that he reigned, 'without dispute, throughout the realms of nonsense absolute'—he 'never deviated into sense'—and yet he was the dullest of dull dogs. The fact is, that nothing is more difficult than to write amusing nonsense, and it is worth noting how few people, comparatively speaking, have ever attempted to produce it.

[Pg 181]

One of the earliest efforts of the kind in the language is a certain passage in Udall's 'Ralph Roister Doister,' where Dame Christian receives from the hero a letter which seems, on the face of it, insulting:

'Sweete mistresse, where as I love you nothing at all,
Regarding your substance and richesse chief of all,
To your personage, beauty, demeanour, and wit,
I commend me unto you never a whit,'

and so on—the joke lying, of course, in the incorrectness of the punctuation adopted. In general, the Elizabethans were too much in earnest to write absolute nonsense. Nonsense is to be found in Shakespeare, but usually in parody of the euphemists of his time. Some of the *personæ* are made to talk sad stuff, but it has not the merit of being 'precious' in the Lady Saphir's sense. It is very tedious indeed, and one likes to think that Shakespeare, perhaps, did not write it, after all. Drummond, in his 'Polemo-Middinia,' gave an early example of a

[Pg 182]

kind of *jeu d'esprit* which has since been frequently imitated—a species of dog-Latin *in extremis*:

'Hic aderunt Geordy Akinhedius and little Johnus,
Et Jamy Richæus, et stout Michel Hendersonus,
Qui jolly tryppas ante alios dansare solebat,
Et bobbare bene, et lassas kissare boneas.'

But though this is not wholly unamusing, it is hardly, as nonsense, up to the standard instituted for us by Mr. Lear.

The real thing is more nearly visible in Swift's macaronic lines about Molly—'Mollis abuti, Hasan acuti,' etc.—another vein of fun which has been exceedingly well worked out by successive writers. But such inspirations as these have too much method in them to be quite admissible. Much better was Swift's 'Love Song in the Modern Taste,' beginning:

'Fluttering spread thy purple pinions,
Gentle Cupid, o'er my heart.'

Even this, however, has too much sense for it to pass muster. Nor can one receive Johnson's

[Pg 183]

'If a man who turnips cries,
Cry not when his father dies,'

and so on, as sufficiently nonsensical. It is simply a *jeu de mots*, and no more, though funny enough as it stands. One is better satisfied when one comes to the 'Tom Thumb' of Henry Fielding and the 'Chrononhotonthologos' of Henry Carey, though even in those diverting squibs it is rarely that the versifier surrenders himself wholly to 'Divine Nonsensia.' That charming goddess was saluted to more purpose in 'The Anti-Jacobin,' where she was invoked to make charming fun of 'The Loves of the Plants.' In 'The Progress of Man' (in the same delectable collection) occurs the inspired passage:

'Ah, who has seen the mailèd lobster rise,
Clap her broad wings, and, soaring, claim the skies
When did the owl, descending from her bower,
Crop, 'mid the fleecy flocks, the tender flower?
Or the young heifer plunge, with pliant limb,
In the salt wave and, fish-like, strive to swim?'

But even this is too consistent in its grotesqueness to be perfect nonsense.

[Pg 184]

One becomes acquainted with better nonsense the nearer one gets to one's own times. How clever, for instance, was that well-known 'dream' of Planché's, in which he fancied that he

'Was walking with Homer, and talking
The very best Greek I was able—was able—
When Guy, Earl of Warwick, with Johnson and Garrick,
Would dance a Scotch-reel on the table—the table;
When Hannibal, rising, declared 'twas surprising
That gentlemen made such a riot—a riot—
And sent in a bustle to beg Lord John Russell
Would hasten and make them all quiet—all quiet.'

It may be that Mr. W. S. Gilbert had this in his mind when, in 'Patience,' he pictured the processes by which to manufacture a heavy dragoon; but here, again, the design is too obvious, the incongruity a little too apparent. The late Shirley Brooks extracted much fun out of a mosaic of quotations from the poets, beginning:

'Full many a gem of purest ray serene,
That to be hated needs but to be seen,
Invites my lay; be present, sylvan maids,
And graceful deer reposing in the shades.'

Very good nonsense is this, if not of the best; and it leads us up naturally to the more consummate performances of Mr. Calverley, whose exquisite mimicry of Mr. Browning and Miss Ingelow, in their most incomprehensible or most affected moods, is too well known to need description. Favourable mention may also be made of a certain ballad composed by the late Professor Palmer, in illustration of his inability to master nautical terms, which he furbishes up in mirth-provoking fashion.

[Pg 185]

But, putting aside Mr. Lear, the most successful, the most precious nonsense ever written has been supplied by writers still, happily, in our midst. And of these, of course, Mr. Lewis Carroll is obviously *facile princeps*—not only by reason of the immortal 'Jabberwocky,' but by reason, also, of 'The Hunting of the Snark,' in which there are some very felicitous passages.

'They sought it with thimbles, they sought it with care,
They pursued it with forks and hope;
They threatened its life with a railway share;
They charmed it with smiles and soap.'

It requires genius, of a kind, to conceive and execute such lines as these, easy as (no doubt) it seems to write them. Not that Mr. Carroll is unapproachable. There are probably many who think that his 'Jabberwocky' is at least equalled by Mr. Gilbert's 'Sing for the Garish Eye,' in which the invented words are truly 'Carrollian':

[Pg 186]

'Sing for the garish eye,
When moonless brandlings cling;
Let the froddering crooner cry,
And the braddled sapster sing!'—

though, to be sure, Mr. Gilbert could hardly be expected to do anything better than that lovely quatrain of Bunthorne's about 'The dust of an earthy to-day' and 'The earth of a dusty to-morrow.'

The example set by Mr. Lear has been followed by many versifiers, who have sought to create their effects after a manner now sufficiently familiar. Thus, we have had multitudinous efforts like the following:

'There was an old priest in Peru
Who dreamt he'd converted a Jew:
He woke in the night
In a deuce of a fright,
And found it was perfectly true.'

[Pg 187]

Performances of that sort are, however, easy; and more merit attaches to such studies in unintelligibility as Bret Harte's 'Songs without Sense,' of which the 'Swiss Air' is a good example:

'I'm a gay tra, la, la,
With my fal, lal, la, la,
And my bright—
And my light—
Tra, la, le. [*Repeat.*]
Then laugh, ha, ha, ha,
And ring, ting, ling, ling,
And sing fal, la, la,
La, la, le.' [*Repeat.*]

Probably, however, the poetry of pure nonsense has never been better represented than in these contemporary verses on the suitable topic of 'Blue Moonshine':

'Ay! for ever and for ever
Whilst the love-lorn censors sweep,
Whilst the jasper winds dissever,
Amber-like, the crystal deep;
Shall the soul's delirious slumber,
Sea-green vengeance of a kiss,
Teach despairing crags to number
Blue infinities of bliss.'



[Pg 188]

SINGLE-SPEECH HAMILTONS.

Most people have heard of that Mr. Gerard Hamilton who, suddenly and unexpectedly making in the House of Commons an oration which 'threw into the shade every other orator except Pitt,' was henceforth known by the nickname of 'Single-Speech'—not because he never addressed the House again, but because those who so nicknamed him chose to regard this performance as the distinguishing feature of his career. He continued to be known by that one discourse, and it is by virtue of it that he has a place in history. The fact is notable, and yet by no means uncommon. The world is, and always has been, full of Single-Speech Hamiltons—male and female—who have gained and maintained their notoriety by one special effort. Human nature is so constituted that the man or woman who is unable to produce a series of

[Pg 189]

successes may yet have the capacity to compass one—may possess the energy and the ability to make at least one strong impression before retiring wholly into the background.

The truth of this is observable, for example, in the sphere of poetry. How many are the excellent versifiers whose reputation is based wholly upon a solitary effusion! They have been inspired once, and the outcome is literary immortality. They cannot always be regarded strictly as poets, and yet they have a vogue which any poet might envy. They reign and shine by virtue of what may be called a happy accident. Thus, Lady Ann Barnard is known, in the world of verse, only by her 'Auld Robin Gray,' just as Miss Elliott and Mrs. Cockburn are known only by their respective 'Flowers of the Forest.' We remember Oldys merely by his 'Busy, curious, thirsty fly,' Sir William Jones by his 'What constitutes a State?' Blanco White by his one Sonnet upon Night, Charles Wolfe by his 'Burial of Sir John Moore,' John Collins by his 'In the Downhill of Life,' and Herbert Knowles by his 'Lines in a Churchyard.' As Artemus Ward said of the oil-painting achieved by the Old Masters: 'They did this, and then they expired.' Some of them wrote other things, but the world received them not. It took count only of the single occasion on which they had been influenced by the divine *afflatus*—of the one thing which they had done 'supremely' well.

[Pg 190]

Authors themselves are, no doubt, surprised at the caprices of the public, and somewhat piqued by the preferences of their patrons. Some are Single-Speech Hamiltons only because their readers have taken a special fancy to particular performances—not always because the achievements were obviously the best, but simply because circumstances brought them to the fore. It is, one may assume, to the charm of Haydn's musical setting that Mrs. Hunter owes the fame and popularity of 'My mother bids me bind my hair': it is to the composer, in that case, that the acceptance of the words are owing. Obvious causes, again, have given precedence to Heber's 'From Greenland's icy mountains' over all his other work in verse; just as the fact of having got into the extract books has accorded to Blake's 'Tiger, tiger, burning bright' a pre-eminence in the public mind over all his other efforts. In these matters the world will have its own way. It still extends recognition to Young's 'Night Thoughts,' but is apparently indifferent to his 'Universal Passion.' It thinks of Bloomfield only in connection with 'The Farmer's Boy,' and ignores the rest; just as it faintly recollects 'The Sabbath' of James Grahame, but has forgotten even the titles of 'Biblical Pictures' and 'The British Georgics.'

[Pg 191]

This dependence of literary fame upon special public favourites is, perhaps, most strikingly represented in the field of fiction and the drama. Nothing is more common than that a novelist or a dramatist should remain in the popular memory by virtue of a single production. Beckford is for most people only the author of 'Vathek'; it is only the bibliophile who troubles himself about 'Azemia' or 'The Elegant Enthusiast.' Miss Porter is remembered by her 'Scottish Chiefs'—scarcely at all, perhaps, by her 'Thaddeus of Warsaw.' Everybody knows how strongly 'The Monk' took the fancy of the reading world—so strongly that the writer was 'Monk' Lewis, and 'Monk' Lewis only, ever after. Mackenzie's 'Man of Feeling' survives, but the 'Man of the World' and 'Julia Roubigné' are as if they had never existed. And look at the playwrights! 'She Stoops to Conquer' is a classic, but 'The Good-Natured Man' is not even good-naturedly tolerated. 'The Road to Ruin' has eclipsed 'Duplicity' and 'The Deserted Daughter.' We all know 'The Honeymoon,' but who has seen, how many have read, 'The Curfew' and 'The School for Authors'? We flock to 'Wild Oats,' but alas for 'The Agreeable Surprise'! 'The Man of the World' keeps Macklin's name before us, but we have said good-bye to 'Love à la Mode.'

[Pg 192]

[Pg 193]

In truth, it is not a bad thing thus to be associated with one definite, unmistakable success. Gerard Hamilton did more for himself by that single brilliant speech than if he had delivered a whole multitude of less striking orations. There is nothing more fatal to a man than middlingness—a sort of dead level of mediocre performance. The world loses count of merely respectable outcome. To obtain its regard you must take its imagination captive at least once. You may be a very excellent person, and do very useful work; but, if you desire to be kept in mind, you must achieve something to which your name can be popularly attached. It is thus that Beattie and 'The Minstrel,' Green and 'The Spleen,' Somerville and 'The Chase,' Blair and 'The Grave,' Falconer and 'The Shipwreck,' Pollok and 'The Course of Time'—to name no others—are inseparably associated the one with the other. The works in question, probably, are rarely opened, but their titles at any rate have stuck in the general memory. Even in our own time, for the great majority of people, Miss Braddon will always be the author of 'Lady Audley's Secret,' Mrs. Oliphant always the author of 'The Chronicles of Carlingford,' Mrs. Henry Wood always the author of 'East Lynne'—and so on. That is the way in which they are remembered.

[Pg 194]

Generally speaking, versatility is undesirable when reputation is the object aimed at. The world has not a very good memory, or, rather, it has so much to think about that it desires not to be more encumbered than it can help. Such men as the late Lord Lytton, for example, are, in one respect, a nuisance to it. Bulwer was about equally distinguished as a novelist, as a dramatist, and as an essayist; and, ever since, the average man has been puzzled whether to think of him as the author of 'Pelham,' the author of 'The Lady of Lyons,' or the author of 'Caxtoniana.' Bulwer tried hard to establish a position as a poet, but, happily, there is no need to trouble one's self greatly about 'King Arthur.' As it is, the fame of Bulwer's dramas appears likely, by-and-by, to eclipse altogether the fame of his novels. And this, if it ever happens, will prove once more that a man can be the worst enemy of himself. Single-Speech

[Pg 195]

Hamilton was not satisfied with his big success, but spoke again. Nothing could have been more unwise. He should have rested on his laurels—unless indeed, he could have been quite sure that he would surpass his former triumph. Unless one can be perfectly certain of that, it is, best, in general, to let well alone.



[Pg 196]

DRAMATIC NOMENCLATURE.



he production on the London stage of a piece called 'The Schoolmistress' no doubt caused many lovers and students of the drama to consider for a moment whether—and, if so, to what extent—the general subject of school-life had been dealt with by preceding playwrights.

Mr. Pinero was fortunate, to begin with, in the fact that he had hit upon a title for his piece hitherto unused—so far as I am aware—by any dramatist of whom history bears record. And this piece of originality is in itself remarkable, seeing that novelty in title is nowadays sufficiently rare. There is no official registry of such things, and, where so many active pens have been at work, a playwright must be self-confident indeed who can be sure that he has alighted upon a name which has never been used by any other native dramatist. To give only a few instances out of dozens:—Mr. Albery's play of 'The Spendthrift' had been anticipated, so far as title was concerned, by 'The Spendthrift' of Matthew Draper, acted in 1731, and by 'The Spendthrift' of Dr. Kenrick, performed in 1758, to say nothing of two anonymous plays, each called 'The Spendthrift,' dating from 1680 and 1762 respectively. And to come down to quite recent days, the 'Loyal Lovers' played lately at the London Vaudeville had had a predecessor, in the matter of name, in the 'Loyal Lovers,' by Major Manuche, which saw the light so long ago as 1652. Similarly, the 'Woman of the World,' performed at the Haymarket in 1886, had had its prototype, so far as the title was concerned, in the 'Woman of the World' of Nelson Lee and Stirling Coyne.

[Pg 197]

Exceptionally lucky, indeed, is the dramatic writer who can now discover a wholly new name for his production. A wholly fresh subject is, of course, even more difficult to achieve. Take what phase of life you will—make what use of it you please—you cannot secure absolute novelty. You cannot find a piece of ground which has not been trodden, however slightly, however differently, by a predecessor. The author of 'The Schoolmistress' introduces his audiences to a very charming lady pupil-teacher, and to three scarcely less charming lady pupils. But one thinks at once of the still more delightful bevy of tutors and scholars presented to us just nineteen years ago, by T. W. Robertson, who, inspired by a German original, gave us not only Bella and Naomi Tighe, but a 'rosebud garden of girls,' of which the attraction has by no means yet departed. Mr. Ruskin has sneered at Bella as 'an amiable governess who, for the general encouragement of virtue in governesses, is rewarded by marrying a lord.' But for all that, she is a pleasant figure, and Naomi is a piquant one, and the English stage has witnessed few more agreeable scenes than those in which Dr. and Mrs. Sutcliffe's young ladies take part in the course of 'School.'

[Pg 198]

As everybody knows, there is an 'angry schoolboy' in 'The Alchemist,' who is likely to survive not only in literature, but in history, by reason of the effective use which Sheridan once made of him when retorting upon Pitt in the House of Commons. Is there not, too, a comedy of Brome's—'The Antipodes'—in which the fathers go to school instead of their sons, and are made to ape the habits of the youthful scholar? Richard Lovelace, we read, wrote a comedy called 'The Scholar,' but it was never printed, and probably had reference to the adult rather than the juvenile student. In the early years of last century, 'The Schoolboy' was the title given to a farce played at Drury Lane, a piece of which one Johnny was the hero—a Johnny who had the honour of being impersonated by the great Roscius himself, and by actors, too,

[Pg 199]

of the calibre of Woodward, Shuter, and J. W. Dodd. Early, again, in the present century, 'The Scholar' was the name of a play adapted from the French by Buckstone; but in this case, as, no doubt, there was in Lovelace's, there is more of the scholastic than of the school. The subject and title of 'Schoolfellows' was taken by Douglas Jerrold, the schoolfellows in it being, however, no longer under the tutelage of their old master. A 'Schoolboy's Masque' was printed in 1742; a 'School Moderator' was included in Garrick's collection; a 'School Play,' it is recorded, was performed at a private grammar school in Middlesex, in 1663; and of recent years an extravaganza has been endowed with the suggestive title of 'School Bored.'

[Pg 200]

There is, of course, a sense in which the word 'school' can be used for the larger opportunities of education given by contact with the world. And in this sense the word has been used by English dramatists with remarkable and characteristic frequency. In the second quarter of the seventeenth century Shirley printed, as 'the firstfruits of his Muses,' his comedy called 'The School of Compliment,' which had been played at Drury Lane; and in the list of comedies of the nineteenth century will be found 'The School of Reform,' by Thomas Morton, and the 'School of Intrigue,' by Mr. Mortimer; the former devoted to instructing ladies 'how to rule a husband,' and the latter to a fresh treatment of the world-famous story of the Count and Countess Almaviva. But the dramatic pieces whose titles begin with 'The School of' are few indeed in comparison with those whose names begin with 'The School for.' Of the latter the most famous is, of course, 'The School for Scandal,' now just 111 years old. But Sheridan's work had been preceded, in the following order, by 'The School for Lovers,' 'The School for Guardians,' 'The School for Rakes,' 'The School for Fathers,' and 'The School for Wives.' Nor is it surprising that, the fashion having once been set, Sheridan's comedy should be followed successively by 'The School for Eloquence,' 'The School for Ladies,' 'The School for Vanity,' 'The School for Greybeards,' 'The School for Widows,' 'The School for Arrogance,' 'The School for Prejudice,' 'The School for Friends,' 'The School for Authors,' 'The School for Grown Children,' 'The School for Grown Gentlemen,' and 'The School for Scheming'—this last being one of the numerous performances of Mr. Boucicault.

[Pg 201]

[Pg 202]

Nor is this all. History relates that Steele began a comedy named 'The School for Action,' and there are records of pieces called 'The School for Husbands,' 'The School for Women,' 'The School for Coquettes,' 'The School for Daughters,' and 'The School for Tigers.' Probably no word has been so often utilized by the dramatists as 'School,' and probably, too, no modern playwright would be disposed to add lightly to the number of those who have 'annexed' it.



[Pg 203]

PUNS AND PATRONYMICs.

Probably there are few things more common, and at the same time more opposed to good taste, than punning upon people's names. Possibly the impertinence of it has some attraction; for, of course, all such 'witticisms' are impertinent—unless, indeed, a man puns on his own name, or, if he puns upon another's, takes care to make the observation complimentary. No doubt, neither Mrs. Cuffe nor Mrs. Tighe was very offended when Sydney Smith described one as 'the cuff that every one would wear,' and the other as 'the tie that no one would loose.' These are word-plays of the innocuous sort. Would that all such jests were equally inoffensive!

However, it is of little use to complain of a 'stream of tendency' which cannot be diverted from its course. The most distinguished people have had to tolerate the liberties taken with their names. Even the first of men has had to suffer, Hood having long ago said what a pity it was that, when Eve offered him the apple, poor Adam was not adam-ant. And when one

[Pg 204]

turns to the celebrities of one's own country, one finds that many of them have had to endure attentions of the kind. There was, for example, that distinguished Marquis of whom it was said on one occasion that 'The nation's asleep, and the minister Rockingham.' There was also that Mr. Ward, afterwards Lord Dudley, of whom Byron declared that he would return to the Whigs if they would re-Ward him. How hard, again, was *Punch* upon Sir Francis Head, for his well-known apologia for Louis Napoleon:

'He wrote to the *Times*
In defence of the crimes
Disgraceful to the heart and to the Head, Head, Head.'

Hood pretended that, when he heard 'Those Evening Bells,' they did but remind him of the statesman who had invented and established the income-tax: [Pg 205]

'Recalling only how a Peel
Has taxed the comings-in of Time!'

That Mr. Disraeli's popular diminutive should suggest punning was inevitable, and so we find Shirley Brooks proposing, in 1865, that,

'Having finished his Iliad and ceased to be busy,
Lord Derby should try and translate his Odd-Dizzy.'

The annals of the Church are no more free from jingles on names than those of any other institution. Familiar to many is the laconic epitaph on Archbishop Potter:

'Alack and well-a-day:
Potter himself is turned to clay!'

Horace Walpole wrote bitterly of Thomas Secker, Archbishop of Canterbury, that 'His grace signed his own proper name—Thomas *Cant.*,' which would certainly have read better as 'Thomas Cantuar.' But the bishops' signatures have always been regarded as fair game. What puns have been made on the unhappy, because so obvious, 'Oxon!' In 1848, when Bishop Hampden was accused of heresy by the party headed by the Bishop of Oxford, the would-be satirist wrote that [Pg 206]

'As once the Pope with fury full,
When Luther laid his heavy knocks on,
At the Reformer loosed a Bull—
So these at Hampden set an Ox-on.'

Again, when Archdeacon Hale figured prominently in the old churchyard controversy, *Punch* observed:

'The intramural churchyard's reeking pale
Breathes health around it, says a reverend party;
But though the spot may keep a parson Hale,
Can people who in-hale its fumes be hearty?'

Turning to the records of the other professions, one finds a good deal of the same sort of thing. Literature affords such examples as those which are supplied in the well-known lines by John Henley on William Broome and by Lord Byron on Tom Moore ('Now 'tis Moore that's Little'). There were journal writers before Greville and Carlyle, and, when Lady Bury published her 'Diary of the Times of George IV.,' Hood, no doubt, was justified in crying, as he did:

'Oh, may I die without a Diary,
And be interred without a Bury-ing!' [Pg 207]

In a very different spirit were James Smith's lines on Miss Edgeworth's works:

'Good and bad join in telling the source of their birth;
The bad own their *edge*, and the good own their *worth*.'

The vocal and histrionic arts have often had their victims. Who can possibly have forgotten Luttrell's famous compliment to Miss Tree:

'On this Tree when a nightingale settles and sings,
The Tree will return her as good as she brings.'

Here, if ever, was a pun on a name defensible. Less well known is this quatrain on the famous actor, William Farren, who died in 1861:

'If Farren, cleverest of men,
Should go to right-about,
What part of town will he be then?
Why, "Farren-done-Without"!'

Those ladies of beauty and fashion whose names were susceptible at once of pun and compliment have naturally inspired the wits of their respective days. Thus, it was said of the charming sisters Gunning, that Cupid, perceiving that the beaux of the time were proof against his darts, had now laid down his bow and conquered by 'gunning.' But perhaps the best thing of the sort ever composed was Lord Lyttelton's tribute to Lady Brown:

[Pg 208]

'When I was young and debonair,
The brownest nymph to me was fair;
But now I'm old and wiser grown,
The fairest nymph to me is Brown.'

Other celebrities could be named who came off badly in their encounter with the punsters. But, indeed, the list of such jests might be indefinitely extended, for the habit of making puns on patronymics has always been very widely spread, and has found many a sympathetic historian.



[Pg 209]

'YOURS TRULY.'



body ever yet found very great difficulty in starting a letter. Young lovers may have hesitated from time to time between such modes of address as 'Dear,' 'Dearest,' 'Sweetest,' 'Darling,' and the like; but only for a moment. Usually, the overburdened heart hits at once upon the exact word or phrase which best expresses its ecstatic feeling. And so with less impassioned matters. There is a well-recognised gradation in the methods of epistolary salutation. The stranger is addressed as 'Sir,' the person of whom something is known as 'Dear Sir.' 'My Dear Sir' accompanies a rather better acquaintance; 'Dear Mr. Brown' marks an approach to intimacy; while 'Dear Brown' signifies the acme of friendship and of *camaraderie*. Here, again, there may be a temporary pause before passing from 'Sir' to 'Dear Sir,' and so forth, but in general the transitions are sufficiently well emphasized to be obvious to the average intelligence.

[Pg 210]

Very different is it with the other end of the letter. There we find opportunity for the widest divergence. Royal or official, pompous or irate, people have been known to finish an epistle, abruptly, with the simple appendix of their name; but these are the exceptions which prove the rule. And the rule is certainly to preface the name by some expression of feeling, however brief and perfunctory. The least you can do is to describe yourself as 'yours.' We find Sterne thus describing himself to Garrick; while, by way of slight variety, Cowper, writing to Joseph Hill, ends with a 'Yours, dear Joe.' Still further variety is secured when, as in the case of Lord Eglinton addressing his countess in 1619, the hackneyed 'I remain, yours' takes the form of 'I rest, yours'—a phrase which is not, however, likely to be often used. And let it not be supposed that plenty of meaning cannot be thrown into the 'yours' alone. Take, for instance, the reply made by 'The' Macdonald, when Glengarry claimed the chieftainship of the clan. 'As soon,' said the former, 'as you can prove yourself my chief I shall be ready to acknowledge you as such, but in the meantime I am yours, Macdonald.' There, for once in a way, the 'yours' meant something.

[Pg 211]

When we go farther than the mere 'yours,' the possible variations are, of course, endless. There is 'yours truly'—perhaps the most widely used of all such combinations; but there are

persons who rebel against its tyranny, and who with daring originality substitute the heartier and less conventional 'very truly,' 'most truly,' or 'right truly.' Second only to 'yours truly' come 'yours faithfully' and 'yours sincerely,' with their comparative 'very faithfully' and superlative 'most sincerely;' and many people are well content to keep within the safe borders of these wholly innocent and uncompromising forms. On the other hand, less indifferent minds will go farther afield for their qualifying adverbs, and say, with Sterne, 'very cordially yours,' or, with Father Matthew, 'yours devotedly,' and so on. Whewell, asked once for his autograph, signed himself 'yours autographically,' and of such deviations there are abundant examples, mostly with a tendency to the flippant. 'Yours ever' Byron declared himself to John Murray; 'yours ever and evermore,' wrote Cowper to a friend; while Steele, in a letter to his wife, protested that he was, with his whole heart, hers for ever—which may be pronounced the best of the three.

[Pg 212]

But there is no reason in the world, to be sure, why we should cling to the 'yours' in any shape or modification. There are multitudinous other ways of being valedictory with effect. There is the simple word 'Adieu.' 'And so, my dear madam, adieu,' writes Pepys to a lady. 'With all my love, and those sort of pretty things, adieu!' wrote the future Mrs. Scott to her sweetheart, the Great Magician. And then there is the English equivalent of the word—surely not less available. 'I wish you were at the devil,' wrote Sir Philip Francis to Burke, 'for giving me all this trouble, and so farewell!' In the old days, as we read in the 'Paston Letters,' they had a sufficiently formal fashion of concluding epistles. 'By your cousin, Dame Elizabeth Brews'—'By your man, Thomas Kela;' such are two examples of the custom. 'Written at Norwich, on St. Thomas's even, in great haste, by your mother, Agnes Paston'—there is another. 'From your Russell,' is the end of a letter from the famous Lady Russell to her husband; and it does not read or sound untenderly. Junius signed himself to Woodfall, 'your friend.' Less cold was Mrs. Maclehose to Burns: 'I may sign, for I am already sealed, your friend, Clarinda.'

[Pg 213]

The elaborate style of description has always largely obtained, as being obviously suitable for so many occasions. Thus one is not surprised to find the future Charles II. professing to be his father's 'most humble and most obedient son and servant,' or to note how that very complete letter-writer, James Howell, claimed to be the Countess of Sunderland's 'most dutiful servant.' Dr. Johnson did well to announce himself haughtily as Chesterfield's 'most humble, most obedient servant;' while what could Sir Walter Scott be to his Duke of Buccleuch other than 'your Grace's truly obliged and grateful'? A similar sense of propriety induced Hood, in a certain memorable epistle, to tell Sir Robert Peel that he had the honour to be, Sir, his most grateful and obedient servant. One cannot object, either, to the 'Your most obliged and faithful friend' of Evelyn when addressed to Pepys, or to the 'Your very faithful, humble servant' of Bishop Percy, when penned to Boswell. It is, however, a little diverting to observe that Sir Simonds d'Ewes, after addressing his ladylove as 'Fairest,' concludes with 'Your humble servant,' and that the *Tatler* of his time, rounding off a dedicatory letter to his 'Prue,' says: 'I am, Madam, your most obliged husband, and most obedient, humble servant, Richard Steele.'

[Pg 214]

Over and over again have letter-writers made their final description of themselves so wholly a part of their last sentence that the former cannot be dissociated from the latter. 'I have not room to tell you any more,' wrote Stephen Duck to Joseph Spence in 1751, 'than that I am, Dear Sir, your most affectionate.' 'These,' said her royal mistress to Mrs. Delany in 1785, 'are the true sentiments of my dear Mrs. Delany's very affectionate Queen, Charlotte.' Hood once finished a charming epistle to a child in this way: 'Give my love to everybody, from yourself down to Willy, with which and a kiss, I remain, up hill and down dale, your affectionate lover, Thomas Hood.' Most people remember the pithy correspondence between Foote and his mother: 'Dear Sam,—I am in prison for debt; come and assist your loving mother, E. Foote.'—'Dear Mother,—So am I; which prevents his duty being paid to his loving mother by her affectionate son, Sam Foote.' Not everybody, however, can wind up a letter so neatly as that. A certain commercial house abroad was, perhaps, over-ingenious in its turn of phrase when, writing to an English correspondent, and desiring to be very civil to him, it said: 'Sugars are falling more and more every day; not so the respect and esteem with which we are,' etc., etc.

[Pg 215]

[Pg 216]





POSTSCRIPTS.



here is, and long has been, a prevalent impression that the penning of postscripts is peculiarly characteristic of the feminine letter-writer. Cynics have even gone so far as to assert that no woman can indite an epistle without the addition of a 'P.S.,' and, in support of this grievous aspersion, have been wont to trot out the venerable 'chestnut' about the lady who accepted from her husband a bet that she would not send him a letter without the inevitable addendum—the result being that, after having composed the epistle and signed her name, she artlessly appended the observation, 'You see I *have* written you a letter without a postscript,' capping it with 'Who has won the wager, you or I?'

It might be argued, even if it could not be proved, that, putting aside mere business communications, and confining one's self to ordinary social correspondence, men are guilty of as many postscripts as women are. But even if the stereotyped charge against the ladies be really well-founded, what of it? Does it convey any tangible reproach? What harm is there in a 'P.S.,' or a 'P.P.S.'? It may be not only a defensible, but positively a praiseworthy, thing. Often it proceeds from nothing more condemnable than a genuine overflow of feeling—a stream of sentiment which, checked by the signature of the writer, bursts its bonds and reasserts its power in a final sentence or two. What could be more charming, for example, than the instances of this afforded in so many of the heroic Lady Russell's letters to her husband—as in that particularly pleasing one in which, after assuring him that all the household are well, and that as he is 'the most enduring husband in the world,' so she is 'the most grateful wife,' she adds her signature, and then recurs to the subject of her children—'Boy is asleep, girls singing abed'—telling of the proposed kindness of a neighbour towards them.

[Pg 218]

[Pg 219]

Note, again, the superabundant playfulness of Cowper in one of his epistles to Lady Hesketh, where, after a few lines of personal description, he appears to conclude, but returns to the topic with a

'P.S.—That the view I give you of myself may be complete I add the following items: That I am in debt to nobody, and that I grow fat.'

Sometimes there will be pathos in a postscript, as in the case of Beethoven's touching communication to his brothers Carl and Johann in the matter of his deafness. In the body of the letter he has been begging them not to think him hostile, morose, or misanthropical, and making clear to them how little they know of the secret cause of his apparent indifference. Then, on the outside of the packet, comes this last melancholy outpouring:

'Thus, then, I take leave of you, and with sadness too. The fond hope I brought with me here [to Heiligenstadt] of being to a certain degree cured, now utterly forsakes me. As autumn leaves fall and wither, so are my hopes blighted.'

[Pg 220]

Of this spontaneous running-over from text into postscript, literature has many specimens—none, perhaps, more effective in its way than the kindly stanza with which Mr. Bret Harte makes Truthful James bring to a close 'His Answer to Her Letter':

'P.S.—Which this same interfering
 Into other folks' ways I despise,
 Yet if it so be I was hearing
 That it's just empty pockets as lies
 Betwixt you and Joseph, it follers
 That, having no family claims,
 Here's my pile; which it's six hundred dollars,
 As is yours, with respect, Truthful James.'

One might, indeed, say more for postscripts than that they are often pardonable; they are often actually useful. They can be bent to the service of the writer; and over and over again, I dare say, have been appended with careful deliberation. They are invaluable as modes of emphasizing matter contained within the limits of the letter proper. They form 'last words' which can be charged with any measure of significance. Many people remember the case of

the sailor who, after mentioning thrice in the course of one short epistle the desired purchase of some pigtail, felt constrained to add yet another reminder in the shape of a 'P.S.—Don't forget the pigtail.' Not less impressive, probably, was Sir Hew Dalrymple when, writing in 1775 to a friend to exhort him to give preferment to a worthy young cleric, he observed, in a postscript:

[Pg 221]

'Think what an unspeakable pleasure it will be to look down from heaven and see Rigby, Masterton, all the Campbells and Nabobs, swimming in fire and brimstone, while you are sitting with Whitefield and his old women, looking beautiful, frisking and singing; all which you may have by settling this man!'

There can be no question that a well-planted 'P.S.' is of great utility in clinching an argument raised in the main portion of a communication. Thus, when Artemus Ward wrote 'to the editor of —,' asking for a line concerning the state of the show business in his locality, he knew what he was about. 'I shall hav my hanbills dun at your offiss,' he observed. 'Depend upon it. I want you should git my hanbills up in flamin' stile. Also git up a tremenjux excitement in yr. paper 'bout my onparaleld Show. We must fetch the public sumhow.' Then, at the end, came the summing-up of the whole transaction: 'P.S.—You scratch my back and Ile scratch your back.' There is at least one instance on record in which a postscript was made to convey a smart reproof. Talleyrand, having one day entrusted a valet with a letter to deliver, happened to look out of the window, and saw the man reading the message *en route*. Next day he despatched another letter to the same address by the same servant, taking care to append to it the following: 'P.S.—You may send a verbal answer by the bearer. He is perfectly acquainted with the whole affair, having taken the precaution to read this previous to delivery.'

[Pg 222]

On the whole, whether postscripts are defensible or not, it is clear that their history is eminently interesting. Some valuable matter has from time to time been put into them. There is at least one letter of Thomas Gray's, written in 1764 to the Rev. Norton Nicholls, the 'P.S.' of which is worth the whole of the remainder of the communication, so charming a bit of descriptive writing is embodied in it. Then, how full of good stuff are the epistolary addenda of Charles Lamb, with whom 'the cream of the correspondence' (as Tony Lumpkin has it) was very often rather in the postscript than in 'the inside of the letter,' in the sense of its larger portion. It is in one of these addenda that one finds the first record of a well-known sentence: 'Summer, as my friend Coleridge waggishly observes, has set in with its usual severity.' Elsewhere one comes across such tributes as: 'My friend Hood, a prime genius and hearty fellow, brings this.' Always characteristic in thought and in expression, Lamb was never more so than in the finales to his letters. 'I do not think your handwriting at all like —'s,' he says to Southey; 'I do not think many things I did think.' He winds up a dog-Latin epistle to Bernard Barton, in 1831, with: 'P.S.—Perdita in toto est Billa Reformatura.' And to Coleridge he says, with delightful frankness:

[Pg 223]

'Write your German as plain as sunshine, for that must correct itself. You know I am *homo unius linguæ*: in English—illiterate, a dunce, a ninny.'

Sometimes a postscript is unconsciously full of humour, as in the case of a note written by a certain Mr. O. to a recent Bishop of Norwich:

[Pg 224]

'Mr. O——'s private affairs turn out so sadly that he cannot have the pleasure of waiting upon his lordship at his agreeable house on Monday next.—N.B. His wife is dead.'

THE END.

Elliot Stock, Paternoster Row, London.

Transcriber's Notes:

Additional spacing after some of the quotes is intentional to indicate both the end of a quotation and the beginning of a new paragraph as presented in the original text.

Printer's inconsistencies in spelling and hyphenation usage have been retained.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK BY-WAYS IN BOOK-LAND: SHORT
ESSAYS ON LITERARY SUBJECTS ***

Updated editions will replace the previous one—the old editions will be renamed.

Creating the works from print editions not protected by U.S. copyright law means that no one owns a United States copyright in these works, so the Foundation (and you!) can copy and distribute it in the United States without permission and without paying copyright royalties. Special rules, set forth in the General Terms of Use part of this license, apply to copying and distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works to protect the PROJECT GUTENBERG™ concept and trademark. Project Gutenberg is a registered trademark, and may not be used if you charge for an eBook, except by following the terms of the trademark license, including paying royalties for use of the Project Gutenberg trademark. If you do not charge anything for copies of this eBook, complying with the trademark license is very easy. You may use this eBook for nearly any purpose such as creation of derivative works, reports, performances and research. Project Gutenberg eBooks may be modified and printed and given away—you may do practically ANYTHING in the United States with eBooks not protected by U.S. copyright law. Redistribution is subject to the trademark license, especially commercial redistribution.

START: FULL LICENSE

THE FULL PROJECT GUTENBERG LICENSE

PLEASE READ THIS BEFORE YOU DISTRIBUTE OR USE THIS WORK

To protect the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting the free distribution of electronic works, by using or distributing this work (or any other work associated in any way with the phrase “Project Gutenberg”), you agree to comply with all the terms of the Full Project Gutenberg™ License available with this file or online at www.gutenberg.org/license.

Section 1. General Terms of Use and Redistributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works

1.A. By reading or using any part of this Project Gutenberg™ electronic work, you indicate that you have read, understand, agree to and accept all the terms of this license and intellectual property (trademark/copyright) agreement. If you do not agree to abide by all the terms of this agreement, you must cease using and return or destroy all copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in your possession. If you paid a fee for obtaining a copy of or access to a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work and you do not agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement, you may obtain a refund from the person or entity to whom you paid the fee as set forth in paragraph 1.E.8.

1.B. “Project Gutenberg” is a registered trademark. It may only be used on or associated in any way with an electronic work by people who agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement. There are a few things that you can do with most Project Gutenberg™ electronic works even without complying with the full terms of this agreement. See paragraph 1.C below. There are a lot of things you can do with Project Gutenberg™ electronic works if you follow the terms of this agreement and help preserve free future access to Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. See paragraph 1.E below.

1.C. The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation (“the Foundation” or PGLAF), owns a compilation copyright in the collection of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. Nearly all the individual works in the collection are in the public domain in the United States. If an individual work is unprotected by copyright law in the United States and you are located in the United States, we do not claim a right to prevent you from copying, distributing, performing, displaying or creating derivative works based on the work as long as all references to Project Gutenberg are removed. Of course, we hope that you will support the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting free access to electronic works by freely sharing Project Gutenberg™ works in compliance with the terms of this agreement for keeping the Project Gutenberg™ name associated with the work. You can easily comply with the terms of this agreement by keeping this work in the same format with its attached full Project Gutenberg™ License when you share it without charge with others.

1.D. The copyright laws of the place where you are located also govern what you can do with this work. Copyright laws in most countries are in a constant state of change. If you are outside the United States, check the laws of your country in addition to the terms of this agreement before downloading, copying, displaying, performing, distributing or creating derivative works based on this work or any other Project Gutenberg™ work. The Foundation makes no representations concerning the copyright status of any work in any country other than the United States.

1.E. Unless you have removed all references to Project Gutenberg:

1.E.1. The following sentence, with active links to, or other immediate access to, the full Project Gutenberg™ License must appear prominently whenever any copy of a Project Gutenberg™ work (any work on which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” appears, or with which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” is associated) is accessed, displayed, performed, viewed, copied or distributed:

This eBook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other

parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this eBook or online at www.gutenberg.org. If you are not located in the United States, you will have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

1.E.2. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is derived from texts not protected by U.S. copyright law (does not contain a notice indicating that it is posted with permission of the copyright holder), the work can be copied and distributed to anyone in the United States without paying any fees or charges. If you are redistributing or providing access to a work with the phrase “Project Gutenberg” associated with or appearing on the work, you must comply either with the requirements of paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 or obtain permission for the use of the work and the Project Gutenberg™ trademark as set forth in paragraphs 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.3. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is posted with the permission of the copyright holder, your use and distribution must comply with both paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 and any additional terms imposed by the copyright holder. Additional terms will be linked to the Project Gutenberg™ License for all works posted with the permission of the copyright holder found at the beginning of this work.

1.E.4. Do not unlink or detach or remove the full Project Gutenberg™ License terms from this work, or any files containing a part of this work or any other work associated with Project Gutenberg™.

1.E.5. Do not copy, display, perform, distribute or redistribute this electronic work, or any part of this electronic work, without prominently displaying the sentence set forth in paragraph 1.E.1 with active links or immediate access to the full terms of the Project Gutenberg™ License.

1.E.6. You may convert to and distribute this work in any binary, compressed, marked up, nonproprietary or proprietary form, including any word processing or hypertext form. However, if you provide access to or distribute copies of a Project Gutenberg™ work in a format other than “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other format used in the official version posted on the official Project Gutenberg™ website (www.gutenberg.org), you must, at no additional cost, fee or expense to the user, provide a copy, a means of exporting a copy, or a means of obtaining a copy upon request, of the work in its original “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other form. Any alternate format must include the full Project Gutenberg™ License as specified in paragraph 1.E.1.

1.E.7. Do not charge a fee for access to, viewing, displaying, performing, copying or distributing any Project Gutenberg™ works unless you comply with paragraph 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.8. You may charge a reasonable fee for copies of or providing access to or distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works provided that:

- You pay a royalty fee of 20% of the gross profits you derive from the use of Project Gutenberg™ works calculated using the method you already use to calculate your applicable taxes. The fee is owed to the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, but he has agreed to donate royalties under this paragraph to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation. Royalty payments must be paid within 60 days following each date on which you prepare (or are legally required to prepare) your periodic tax returns. Royalty payments should be clearly marked as such and sent to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation at the address specified in Section 4, “Information about donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation.”
- You provide a full refund of any money paid by a user who notifies you in writing (or by e-mail) within 30 days of receipt that s/he does not agree to the terms of the full Project Gutenberg™ License. You must require such a user to return or destroy all copies of the works possessed in a physical medium and discontinue all use of and all access to other copies of Project Gutenberg™ works.
- You provide, in accordance with paragraph 1.F.3, a full refund of any money paid for a work or a replacement copy, if a defect in the electronic work is discovered and reported to you within 90 days of receipt of the work.
- You comply with all other terms of this agreement for free distribution of Project Gutenberg™ works.

1.E.9. If you wish to charge a fee or distribute a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work or group of works on different terms than are set forth in this agreement, you must obtain permission in writing from the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the manager of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark. Contact the Foundation as set forth in Section 3 below.

1.F.

1.F.1. Project Gutenberg volunteers and employees expend considerable effort to identify,

do copyright research on, transcribe and proofread works not protected by U.S. copyright law in creating the Project Gutenberg™ collection. Despite these efforts, Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, and the medium on which they may be stored, may contain “Defects,” such as, but not limited to, incomplete, inaccurate or corrupt data, transcription errors, a copyright or other intellectual property infringement, a defective or damaged disk or other medium, a computer virus, or computer codes that damage or cannot be read by your equipment.

1.F.2. LIMITED WARRANTY, DISCLAIMER OF DAMAGES - Except for the “Right of Replacement or Refund” described in paragraph 1.F.3, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, and any other party distributing a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work under this agreement, disclaim all liability to you for damages, costs and expenses, including legal fees. YOU AGREE THAT YOU HAVE NO REMEDIES FOR NEGLIGENCE, STRICT LIABILITY, BREACH OF WARRANTY OR BREACH OF CONTRACT EXCEPT THOSE PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH 1.F.3. YOU AGREE THAT THE FOUNDATION, THE TRADEMARK OWNER, AND ANY DISTRIBUTOR UNDER THIS AGREEMENT WILL NOT BE LIABLE TO YOU FOR ACTUAL, DIRECT, INDIRECT, CONSEQUENTIAL, PUNITIVE OR INCIDENTAL DAMAGES EVEN IF YOU GIVE NOTICE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGE.

1.F.3. LIMITED RIGHT OF REPLACEMENT OR REFUND - If you discover a defect in this electronic work within 90 days of receiving it, you can receive a refund of the money (if any) you paid for it by sending a written explanation to the person you received the work from. If you received the work on a physical medium, you must return the medium with your written explanation. The person or entity that provided you with the defective work may elect to provide a replacement copy in lieu of a refund. If you received the work electronically, the person or entity providing it to you may choose to give you a second opportunity to receive the work electronically in lieu of a refund. If the second copy is also defective, you may demand a refund in writing without further opportunities to fix the problem.

1.F.4. Except for the limited right of replacement or refund set forth in paragraph 1.F.3, this work is provided to you ‘AS-IS’, WITH NO OTHER WARRANTIES OF ANY KIND, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR ANY PURPOSE.

1.F.5. Some states do not allow disclaimers of certain implied warranties or the exclusion or limitation of certain types of damages. If any disclaimer or limitation set forth in this agreement violates the law of the state applicable to this agreement, the agreement shall be interpreted to make the maximum disclaimer or limitation permitted by the applicable state law. The invalidity or unenforceability of any provision of this agreement shall not void the remaining provisions.

1.F.6. INDEMNITY - You agree to indemnify and hold the Foundation, the trademark owner, any agent or employee of the Foundation, anyone providing copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in accordance with this agreement, and any volunteers associated with the production, promotion and distribution of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, harmless from all liability, costs and expenses, including legal fees, that arise directly or indirectly from any of the following which you do or cause to occur: (a) distribution of this or any Project Gutenberg™ work, (b) alteration, modification, or additions or deletions to any Project Gutenberg™ work, and (c) any Defect you cause.

Section 2. Information about the Mission of Project Gutenberg™

Project Gutenberg™ is synonymous with the free distribution of electronic works in formats readable by the widest variety of computers including obsolete, old, middle-aged and new computers. It exists because of the efforts of hundreds of volunteers and donations from people in all walks of life.

Volunteers and financial support to provide volunteers with the assistance they need are critical to reaching Project Gutenberg™’s goals and ensuring that the Project Gutenberg™ collection will remain freely available for generations to come. In 2001, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation was created to provide a secure and permanent future for Project Gutenberg™ and future generations. To learn more about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and how your efforts and donations can help, see Sections 3 and 4 and the Foundation information page at www.gutenberg.org.

Section 3. Information about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation is a non-profit 501(c)(3) educational corporation organized under the laws of the state of Mississippi and granted tax exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service. The Foundation’s EIN or federal tax identification number is 64-6221541. Contributions to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation are tax deductible to the full extent permitted by U.S. federal laws and your state’s laws.

The Foundation's business office is located at 809 North 1500 West, Salt Lake City, UT 84116, (801) 596-1887. Email contact links and up to date contact information can be found at the Foundation's website and official page at www.gutenberg.org/contact

Section 4. Information about Donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

Project Gutenberg™ depends upon and cannot survive without widespread public support and donations to carry out its mission of increasing the number of public domain and licensed works that can be freely distributed in machine-readable form accessible by the widest array of equipment including outdated equipment. Many small donations (\$1 to \$5,000) are particularly important to maintaining tax exempt status with the IRS.

The Foundation is committed to complying with the laws regulating charities and charitable donations in all 50 states of the United States. Compliance requirements are not uniform and it takes a considerable effort, much paperwork and many fees to meet and keep up with these requirements. We do not solicit donations in locations where we have not received written confirmation of compliance. To SEND DONATIONS or determine the status of compliance for any particular state visit www.gutenberg.org/donate.

While we cannot and do not solicit contributions from states where we have not met the solicitation requirements, we know of no prohibition against accepting unsolicited donations from donors in such states who approach us with offers to donate.

International donations are gratefully accepted, but we cannot make any statements concerning tax treatment of donations received from outside the United States. U.S. laws alone swamp our small staff.

Please check the Project Gutenberg web pages for current donation methods and addresses. Donations are accepted in a number of other ways including checks, online payments and credit card donations. To donate, please visit: www.gutenberg.org/donate

Section 5. General Information About Project Gutenberg™ electronic works

Professor Michael S. Hart was the originator of the Project Gutenberg™ concept of a library of electronic works that could be freely shared with anyone. For forty years, he produced and distributed Project Gutenberg™ eBooks with only a loose network of volunteer support.

Project Gutenberg™ eBooks are often created from several printed editions, all of which are confirmed as not protected by copyright in the U.S. unless a copyright notice is included. Thus, we do not necessarily keep eBooks in compliance with any particular paper edition.

Most people start at our website which has the main PG search facility: www.gutenberg.org.

This website includes information about Project Gutenberg™, including how to make donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, how to help produce our new eBooks, and how to subscribe to our email newsletter to hear about new eBooks.