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FANNY

WITH

OTHER POEMS.



WEEHAWKEN.

NEW-YORK

FANNY,

"A fairy vision
Of some gay creatures of the element,
That in the colours of the rainbow live,
And play in the plighted clouds."

MILTON.

FROM THE EDITION OF 1821.

F. G. Halleck.

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FANNY.

[Pg 5]

I.

Fanny was younger once than she is now,
And prettier of course: I do not mean
To say that there are wrinkles on her brow;
Yet, to be candid, she is past eighteen—
Perhaps past twenty—but the girl is shy
About her age, and Heaven forbid that I

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II.

Should get myself in trouble by revealing
A secret of this sort; I have too long
Loved pretty women with a poet's feeling,

And when a boy, in day dream and in song,
Have knelt me down and worshipp'd them: alas!
They never thank'd me for't—but let that pass.

III.

I've felt full many a heart-ache in my day,
At the mere rustling of a muslin gown,
And caught some dreadful colds, I blush to say,
While shivering in the shade of beauty's frown.
They say her smiles are sunbeams—it may be—
But never a sunbeam would she throw on me.

IV.

But Fanny's is an eye that you may gaze on
For half an hour, without the slightest harm;
E'en when she wore her smiling summer face on
There was but little danger, and the charm
That youth and wealth once gave, has bade farewell.
Hers is a sad, sad tale—'tis mine its woes to tell.

[Pg 7]

V.

Her father kept, some fifteen years ago,
A retail dry-good shop in Chatham-street,
And nursed his little earnings, sure though slow,
Till, having muster'd wherewithal to meet
The gaze of the great world, he breathed the air
Of Pearl-street—and "set up" in Hanover-square.

VI.

Money is power, 'tis said—I never tried;
I'm but a poet—and bank-notes to me
Are curiosities, as closely eyed,
Whene'er I get them, as a stone would be,
Toss'd from the moon on Doctor Mitchill's table,
Or classic brickbat from the tower of Babel.

VII.

But he I sing of well has known and felt
That money hath a power and a dominion;
For when in Chatham-street the good man dwelt,
No one would give a sous for his opinion.
And though his neighbours were extremely civil,
Yet, on the whole, they thought him—a poor devil,

[Pg 8]

VIII.

A decent kind of person; one whose head
Was not of brains particularly full;
It was not known that he had ever said
Any thing worth repeating—'twas a dull,
Good, honest man—what Paulding's muse would call
A "cabbage head"—but he excelled them all

IX.

In that most noble of the sciences,
The art of making money; and he found
The zeal for quizzing him grew less and less,
As he grew richer; till upon the ground
Of Pearl-street, treading proudly in the might
And majesty of wealth, a sudden light

X.

Flash'd like the midnight lightning on the eyes
Of all who knew him; brilliant traits of mind,
And genius, clear and countless as the dies
Upon the peacock's plumage; taste refined,
Wisdom and wit, were his—perhaps much more.
'Twas strange they had not found it out before.

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XI.

In this quick transformation, it is true
That cash had no small share; but there were still
Some other causes, which then gave a new
Impulse to head and heart, and join'd to fill
His brain with knowledge; for there first he met
The editor of the New-York Gazette,

XII.

The sapient Mr. L**G. The world of him
Knows much, yet not one half so much as he
Knows of the world. Up to its very brim
The goblet of his mind is sparkling free
With lore and learning. Had proud Sheba's queen,
In all her bloom and beauty, but have seen

XIII.

This modern Solomon, the Israelite,
Earth's monarch as he was, had never won her.
He would have hang'd himself for very spite,
And she, bless'd woman, might have had the honour
Of some neat "paragraphs"—worth all the lays
That Judah's minstrel warbled in her praise.

[Pg 10]

XIV.

Her star arose too soon; but that which sway'd
Th' ascendant at our merchant's natal hour
Was bright with better destiny—its aid
Led him to pluck within the classic bower
Of bulletins, the blossoms of true knowledge;
And L**G supplied the loss of school and college.

XV.

For there he learn'd the news some minutes sooner
Than others could; and to distinguish well
The different signals, whether ship or schooner,
Hoisted at Staten Island; and to tell
The change of wind, and of his neighbour's fortunes,
And, best of all—he there learn'd self-importance.

XVI.

Nor were these all the advantages derived
From change of scene; for near his domicil,
He of the pair of polish'd lamps then lived,
And in my hero's promenades, at will,
Could he behold them burning—and their flame
Kindled within his breast the love of fame,

[Pg 11]

XVII.

And politics, and country; the pure glow
Of patriot ardour, and the consciousness
That talents such as his might well bestow
A lustre on the city; she would bless
His name; and that some service should be done her,
He pledged "life, fortune, and his sacred honour."

XVIII.

And when the sounds of music and of mirth,
Bursting from Fashion's groups assembled there,
Were heard, as round their lone plebeian hearth
Fanny and he were seated—he would dare
To whisper fondly, that the time might come
When he and his could give as brilliant routs at home.

XIX.

And oft would Fanny near that mansion linger,
When the cold winter moon was high in heaven,
And trace out, by the aid of Fancy's finger,
Cards for some future party, to be given
When she, in turn, should be a *belle*, and they
Had lived their little hour, and pass'd away.

[Pg 12]

XX.

There are some happy moments in this lone
And desolate world of ours, that well repay
The toil of struggling through it, and atone
For many a long, sad night and weary day.
They come upon the mind like some wild air
Of distant music, when we know not where,

XXI.

Or whence, the sounds are brought from, and their power,
Though brief, is boundless. That far, future home,
Oft dream'd of, beckons near—it's rose-wreathed bower,
And cloudless skies before us: we become
Changed on the instant—all gold leaf and gilding:
This is, in vulgar phrase, call'd "castle building."

XXII.

But these, like sunset clouds, fade soon; 'tis vain
To bid them linger longer, or to ask
On what day they intend to call again;
And, surely, 'twere a philosophic task,
Worthy a Mitchill, in his hours of leisure,
To find some means to summon them at pleasure.

[Pg 13]

XXIII.

There certainly are powers of doing this,
In some degree at least—for instance, drinking.
Champagne will bathe the heart a while in bliss,
And keep the head a little time from thinking
Of cares or creditors—the best wine in town
You'll get from Lynch—the cash must be paid down.

XXIV.

But if you are a bachelor, like me,
And spurn all chains, even though made of roses,
I'd recommend segars—there is a free
And happy spirit, that, unseen, reposes

On the dim shadowy clouds that hover o'er you,
When smoking quietly with a warm fire before you.

XXV.

Dear to the exile is his native land,
In memory's twilight beauty seen afar:
Dear to the broker is a note of hand,
Collaterally secured—the polar star
Is dear at midnight to the sailor's eyes,
And dear are Bristed's volumes at "half price;"

[Pg 14]

XXVI.

But dearer far to me each fairy minute
Spent in that fond forgetfulness of grief;
There is an airy web of magic in it,
As in Othello's pocket-handkerchief,
Veiling the wrinkles on the brow of sorrow,
The gathering gloom to-day, the thunder cloud to-morrow

XXVII.

And these are innocent thoughts—a man may sit
Upon a bright throne of his own creation;
Untortured by the ghastly sprites that flit
Around the many, whose exalted station
Has been attained by means 'twere pain to hint on,
Just for the rhyme's sake—instance Mr. Cl*n*on.

XXVIII.

He struggled hard, but not in vain, and breathes
The mountain air at last; but there are others
Who strove, like him, to win the glittering wreaths
Of power, his early partisans and brothers,
That linger yet in dust from whence they sprung,
Unhonour'd and unpaid, though, luckily, unhung.

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XXIX.

'Twas theirs to fill with gas the huge balloon
Of party; and they hoped, when it arose,
To soar like eagles in the blaze of noon,
Above the gaping crowd of friends and foes.
Alas! like Guillé's car, it soar'd without them,
And left them with a mob to jeer and flout them.

XXX.

Though Fanny's moonlight dreams were sweet as those
I've dwelt so long upon—they were more stable;
Hers were not "castles in the air" that rose
Based upon nothing; for her sire was able,
As well she knew, to "buy out" the one half
Of Fashion's glittering train, that nightly quaff

XXXI.

Wine, wit, and wisdom, at a midnight rout,
From dandy coachmen, whose "exquisite" grin
And "ruffian" lounge flash brilliantly without,
Down to their brother dandies ranged within,
Gay as the Brussels carpeting they tread on,
And sapient as the oysters they are fed on.

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XXXII.

And Rumour (she's a famous liar, yet
'Tis wonderful how easy we believe her)
Had whisper'd he was rich, and all he met
In Wall-street, nodded, smiled, and "tipp'd the beaver;"
All, from Mr. Gelston, the collector,
Down to the broker, and the bank director.

XXXIII.

A few brief years pass'd over, and his rank
Among the worthies of that street was fix'd;
He had become director of a bank,
And six insurance offices, and mix'd
Familiarly, as one among his peers,
With grocers, dry-good merchants, auctioneers,

XXXIV.

Brokers of all grades—stock and pawn—and Jews
Of all religions, who at noonday form,
On 'Change, that brotherhood the moral muse
Delights in, where the heart is pure and warm,
And each exerts his intellectual force
To cheat his neighbour—legally, of course.

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XXXV.

And there he shone a planetary star,
Circl'd around by lesser orbs, whose beams
From his were borrow'd. The simile is not far
From truth—for many bosom friends, it seems,
Did borrow of him, and sometimes forget
To pay—indeed, they have not paid him yet.

XXXVI.

But these he deem'd as trifles, when each mouth
Was open in his praise, and plaudits rose
Upon his willing ear, "like the sweet south
Upon a bank of violets," from those
Who knew his talents, virtues, and so forth;
That is—knew how much money he was worth.

XXXVII.

Alas! poor human nature; had he been
But satisfied with this, his golden days
Their setting hour of darkness had not seen,
And he might still (in the mercantile phrase)
Be living "in good order and condition;"
But he was ruined by that jade Ambition,

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XXXVIII.

"That last infirmity of noble minds,"
Whose spell, like whiskey, your true patriot liquor,
To politics the lofty hearts inclines
Of all, from Clinton down to the bill-sticker
Of a ward-meeting. She came slyly creeping
To his bedside, where he lay snug and sleeping.

XXXIX.

Her brow was turban'd with a bucktail wreath,
A broach of terrapin her bosom wore,
Tompkins' letter was just seen beneath

Her arm, and in her hand on high she bore
A National Advocate—Pell's polite Review
Lay at her feet—'twas pommell'd black and blue.

XL.

She was in fashion's elegant undress,
Muffled from throat to ankle; and her hair
Was all "*en papillotes*," each auburn tress
Prettily pinn'd apart. You well might swear
She was no beauty; yet, when "made up," ready
For visiters, 'twas quite another lady.

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XLI.

Since that wise pedant, Johnson, was in fashion,
Manners have changed as well as moons; and he
Would fret himself once more into a passion,
Should he return (which heaven forbid!), and see,
How strangely from his standard dictionary,
The meaning of some words is made to vary.

XLII.

For instance, an *undress* at present means
The wearing a pelisse, a shawl, or so;
Or any thing you please, in short, that screens
The face, and hides the form from top to toe;
Of power to brave a quizzing-glass, or storm—
'Tis worn in summer, when the weather's warm.

XLIII.

But a full dress is for a winter's night.
The most genteel is made of "woven air;"
That kind of classic cobweb, soft and light,
Which Lady Morgan's Ida used to wear.
And ladies, this aërial manner dress'd in,
Look Eve-like, angel-like, and interesting.

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XLIV.

But Miss Ambition was, as I was saying,
"*Dèshabillée*"—his bedside tripping near,
And, gently on his nose her fingers laying,
She roar'd out Tammany! in his frightened ear.
The potent word awoke him from his nap,
And then she vanish'd, whisp'ring *verbum sap.*

XLV.

The last words were beyond his comprehension,
For he had left off schooling, ere the Greek
Or Latin classics claim'd his mind's attention:
Besides, he often had been heard to speak
Contemptuously of all that sort of knowledge,
Taught so profoundly in Columbia College.

XLVI.

We owe the ancients something. You have read
Their works, no doubt—at least in a translation;
Yet there was argument in what he said,
I scorn equivocation or evasion,
And own it must, in candour, be confess'd,
They were an ignorant set of men at best.

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XLVII.

'Twas their misfortune to be born too soon
By centuries, and in the wrong place too;
They never saw a steamboat, or balloon,
Velocipede, or Quarterly Review;
Or wore a pair of Baehr's black satin breeches,
Or read an Almanac, or Clinton's Speeches.

XLVIII.

In short, in every thing we far outshine them,—
Art, science, taste, and talent; and a stroll
Through this enlighten'd city would refine them
More than ten years hard study of the whole
Their genius has produced of rich and rare—
God bless the Corporation and the Mayor!

XLIX.

In sculpture, we've a grace the Grecian master,
Blushing, had own'd his purest model lacks;
We've Mr. Bogart in the best of plaster,
The Witch of Endor in the best of wax,
Besides the head of Franklin on the roof
Of Mr. Lang, both jest and weather proof.

[Pg 22]

L.

And on our City Hall a Justice stands;
A neater form was never made of board,
Holding majestically in her hands
A pair of steelyards and a wooden sword;
And looking down with complaisant civility—
Emblem of dignity and durability.

LI.

In painting, we have Trumbull's proud *chef d'œuvre*,
Blending in one the funny and the fine:
His "Independence" will endure for ever,
And so will Mr. Allen's lottery sign;
And all that grace the Academy of Arts,
From Dr. Hosack's face to Bonaparte's.

LII.

In architecture, our unrivall'd skill
Cullen's magnesian shop has loudly spoken
To an admiring world; and better still
Is Gautier's fairy palace at Hoboken.
In music, we've the Euterpian Society,
And amateurs, a wonderful variety.

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LIII.

In physic, we have Francis and M'Neven,
Famed for long heads, short lectures, and long bills;
And Quackenboss and others, who from heaven
Were rain'd upon us in a shower of pills;
They'd beat the deathless Esculapius hollow,
And make a starveling druggist of Apollo.

LIV.

And who, that ever slumber'd at the Forum,

But owns the first of orators we claim;
Cicero would have bow'd the knee before 'em—
And for law eloquence, we've Doctor Graham.
Compared with him, their Justins and Quintillians
Had dwindled into second-rate civilians.

LV.

For purity and chastity of style,
There's Pell's preface, and puffs by Horne and Waite.
For penetration deep, and learned toil,
And all that stamps an author truly great,
Have we not Bristed's ponderous tomes? a treasure
For any man of patience and of leisure.

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LVI.

Oxonian Bristed! many a foolscap page
He, in his time, hath written, and moreover
(What few will do in this degenerate age)
Hath read his own works, as you may discover
By counting his quotations from himself—
You'll find the books on any auction shelf.

LVII.

I beg Great Britain's pardon; 'tis not meant
To claim this Oxford scholar as our own:
That he was shipp'd off here to represent
Her literature among us, is well known;
And none could better fill the lofty station
Of Learning's envoy from the British nation.

LVIII.

We fondly hope that he will be respected
At home, and soon obtain a place or pension.
We should regret to see him live neglected,
Like Fearon, Ashe, and others we could mention;
Who paid us friendly visits to abuse
Our country, and find food for the reviews.

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LIX.

But to return.—The Heliconian waters
Are sparkling in their native fount no more,
And after years of wandering, the nine daughters
Of poetry have found upon our shore
A happier home, and on their sacred shrines
Glow in immortal ink, the polish'd lines

LX.

Of Woodworth, Doctor Farmer, Moses Scott—
Names hallow'd by their reader's sweetest smile;
And who that reads at all has read them not?
"That blind old man of Scio's rocky isle,"
Homer, was well enough; but would he ever
Have written, think ye, the Backwoodsman? never.

LXI.

Alas! for Paulding—I regret to see
In such a stanza one whose giant powers,
Seen in their native element, will be
Known to a future age, the pride of ours.
There is none breathing who can better wield

LXII.

The wreath he fought for he has bravely won,
 Long be its laurel green around his brow!
 It is too true, I'm somewhat fond of fun
 And jesting; but for once I'm serious now.
 Why is he sipping weak Castalian dew?
 The muse has damn'd him—let him damn the muse

LXIII.

But to return once more: the ancients fought
 Some tolerable battles. Marathon
 Is still a theme for high and holy thought,
 And many a poet's lay. We linger on
 The page that tells us of the brave and free,
 And reverence thy name, unmatch'd Thermopylæ.

LXIV.

And there were spirited troops in other days—
 The Roman legion and the Spartan band,
 And Swartwout's gallant corps, the Iron Grays—
 Soldiers who met their foemen hand to hand,
 Or swore, at least, to meet them undismay'd;
 Yet what were these to General Laight's brigade

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LXV.

Of veterans? nursed in that Free School of glory,
 The New-York State Militia. From Bellevue,
 E'en to the Battery flagstaff, the proud story
 Of their manœuvres at the last review
 Has rang; and Clinton's "order" told afar
 He never led a better corps to war.

LXVI.

What, Egypt, was thy magic, to the tricks
 Of Mr. Charles, Judge Spencer, or Van Buren?
 The first with cards, the last in politics,
 A conjuror's fame for years have been securing.
 And who would now the Athenian dramas read
 When he can get "Wall-street," by Mr. Mead.

LXVII.

I might say much about our letter'd men,
 Those "grave and reverend seigniors," who compose
 Our learn'd societies—but here my pen
 Stops short; for they themselves, the rumour goes,
 The exclusive privilege by patent claim,
 Of trumpeting (as the phrase is) their own fame.

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LXVIII.

And, therefore, I am silent. It remains
 To bless the hour the Corporation took it
 Into their heads to give the rich in brains,
 The worn-out mansion of the poor in pocket,
 Once "the old almshouse," now a school of wisdom,
 Sacred to Scudder's shells and Dr. Griscom.

LXIX.

But whither am I wandering? The esteem
I bear "this fair city of the heart,"
To me a dear enthusiastic theme,
Has forced me, all unconsciously, to part
Too long from him, the hero of my story.
Where was he?—waking from his dream of glory.

LXX.

And she, the lady of his dream, had fled,
And left him somewhat puzzled and confused.
He understood, however, half she said;
And that is quite as much as we are used
To comprehend, or fancy worth repeating,
In speeches heard at any public meeting.

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LXXI.

And the next evening found him at the Hall;
There he was welcomed by the cordial hand,
And met the warm and friendly grasp of all
Who take, like watchmen, there, their nightly stand,
A ring, as in a boxing match, procuring,
To bet on Clinton, Tompkins, or Van Buren.

LXXII.

'Twas a propitious moment; for a while
The waves of party were at rest. Upon
Each complacent brow was gay good humour's smile;
And there was much of wit, and jest, and pun,
And high amid the circle, in great glee,
Sat Croaker's old acquaintance, John Targee.

LXXIII.

His jokes excell'd the rest, and oft he sang
Songs, patriotic, as in duty bound.
He had a little of the "nasal twang
Heard at conventicle;" but yet you found
In him a dash of purity and brightness,
That spoke the man of taste and of politeness.

[Pg 30]

LXXIV.

For he had been, it seems, the bosom friend
Of England's prettiest bard, Anacreon Moore.
They met when he, the bard, came here to lend
His mirth and music to this favourite shore;
For, as the proverb saith, "birds of a feather
Instinctively will flock and fly together."

LXXV.

The winds that wave thy cedar boughs are breathing,
"Lake of the Dismal Swamp!" that poet's name;
And the spray-showers their noonday halos wreathing
Around "Cohoes," are brighten'd by his fame.
And bright its sunbeam o'er St. Lawrence smiles,
Her million lilies, and her thousand isles.

LXXVI.

We hear his music in her oarsmen's lay,
And where her church-bells "toll the evening chime;"
Yet when to him the grateful heart would pay

Its homage, now, and in all coming time,
Up springs a doubtful question whether we
Owe it to Tara's minstrel or Targee.

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LXXVII.

Together oft they wander'd—many a spot
Now consecrated, as the minstrel's theme,
By words of beauty ne'er to be forgot,
Their mutual feet have trod; and when the stream
Of thought and feeling flow'd in mutual speech,
'Twere vain to tell how much each taught to each.

LXXVIII.

But, from the following song, it would appear
That he of Erin from the sachem took
The model of his "Bower of Bendemeer,"
One of the sweetest airs in Lalla Rookh;
'Tis to be hoped that in his next edition,
This, the original, will find admission.

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SONG.

There's a barrel of porter at Tammany Hall,
And the bucktails are swigging it all the night long;
In the time of my boyhood 'twas pleasant to call
For a seat and segar, mid the jovial throng.

That beer and those bucktails I never forget;
But oft, when alone, and unnoticed by all,
I think, is the porter cask foaming there yet?
Are the bucktails still swigging at Tammany Hall?

No! the porter was out long before it was stale,
But some blossoms on many a nose brightly shone;
And the speeches inspired by the fumes of the ale,
Had the fragrance of porter when porter was gone.

How much Cozzens will draw of such beer ere he dies,
Is a question of moment to me and to all;
For still dear to my soul, as 'twas then to my eyes,
Is that barrel of porter at Tammany Hall.

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SONG.

There's a bower of roses by Bendemeer's stream,
And the nightingale sings round it all the night long,
In the time of my childhood 'twas like a sweet dream
To sit in the roses and hear the bird's song.

That bower and its music I never forget;
But oft, when alone, in the bloom of the year,
I think, is the nightingale singing there yet?
Are the roses still bright by the calm Bendemeer?

No! the roses soon wither'd that hung o'er the wave,
But some blossoms were gather'd while freshly they
shone;
And a dew was distill'd from their flowers, that gave
All the fragrance of summer when summer was gone.

Thus memory draws from delight ere it dies,
An essence that breathes of it many a year;
Thus bright to my soul, as 'twas then to my eyes,
Is that bower on the banks of the calm Bendemeer.

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LXXIX.

For many months my hero ne'er neglected
To take his ramble there, and soon found out,

In much less time than one could have expected,
What 'twas they all were quarrelling about.
He learn'd the party countersigns by rote,
And when to clap his hands, and how to vote.

LXXX.

He learn'd that Clinton became Governor
Somehow by chance, when we were all asleep;
That he had neither sense, nor talent, nor
Any good quality, and would not keep
His place an hour after the next election—
So powerful was the voice of disaffection.

LXXXI.

That he was a mere puppet made to play
A thousand tricks, while Spencer touch'd the springs—
Spencer, the mighty Warwick of his day,
"That setter up, and puller down of kings,"
Aided by Miller, Pell, and Doctor Graham,
And other men of equal worth and fame.

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LXXXII.

And that he'd set the people at defiance,
By placing knaves and fools in public stations;
And that his works in literature and science
Were but a schoolboy's web of misquotations;
And that he'd quoted from the devil even—
"Better to reign in hell than serve in heaven."

LXXXIII.

To these authentic facts each bucktail swore;
But Clinton's friends averr'd, in contradiction,
They were but fables, told by Mr. Noah,
Who had a privilege to deal in fiction,
Because he'd written travels, and a melo-
Drama; and was, withal, a pleasant fellow.

LXXXIV.

And they declared that Tompkins was no better
Than he should be; that he had borrow'd money,
And paid it—not in cash—but with a letter;
And though some trifling service he had done, he
Still wanted spirit, energy, and fire;
And was disliked by—Mr. M'Intyre.

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LXXXV.

In short, each one with whom in conversation
He join'd, contrived to give him different views
Of men and measures; and the information
Which he obtain'd, but aided to confuse
His brain. At best, 'twas never very clear;
And now 'twas turn'd with politics and beer.

LXXXVI.

And he was puff'd, and flatter'd, and caress'd
By all, till he sincerely thought that nature
Had form'd him for an alderman at least—
Perhaps, a member of the legislature;
And that he had the talents, ten times over,
Of H*n*y M**gs, or P*t*r H. W*nd*ver.

LXXXVII.

The man was mad, 'tis plain, and merits pity,
Or he had never dared, in such a tone,
To speak of two great persons, whom the city,
With pride and pleasure, points to as her own.
Men, wise in council, brilliant in debate,
"The expectancy and rose of the fair state."

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LXXXVIII.

The one—for a pure style and classic manner,
Is—Mr. Sachem Mooney far before.
The other, in his speech about the banner,
Spell-bound his audience until they swore
That such a speech was never heard till then,
And never would be—till he spoke again.

LXXXIX.

Though 'twas presumptuous in this friend of ours
To think of rivalling these, I must allow
That still the man had talents; and the powers
Of his capacious intellect were now
Improved by foreign travel, and by reading,
And at the Hall he'd learn'd, of course, good breeding.

XC.

He had read the newspapers with great attention,
Advertisements and all; and Riley's book
Of travels—valued for its rich invention;
And Day and Turner's Price Current; and took
The Edinburgh and Quarterly Reviews;
And also Colonel Pell's; and, to amuse

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XCI.

His leisure hours with classic tale and story,
Longworth's Directory, and Mead's Wall-street,
And Mr. Delaplaine's Repository;
And Mitchill's scientific works complete,
With other standard books of modern days,
Lay on his table, cover'd with green baize.

XCII.

His travels had extended to Bath races;
And Bloomingdale and Bergen he had seen,
And Harlæm Heights; and many other places,
By sea and land, had visited; and been,
In a steamboat of the Vice President's,
To Staten-Island once—for fifty cents.

XCIII.

And he had dined, by special invitation,
On turtle, with "the party" at Hoboken;
And thank'd them for his card in an oration,
Declared to be the shortest ever spoken.
And he had stroll'd one day o'er Weehawk hill:
A day worth all the rest—he recollects it still.

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XCIV.

Weehawken! In thy mountain scenery yet,
All we adore of nature in her wild
And frolic hour of infancy, is met;
And never has a summer's morning smiled
Upon a lovelier scene, than the full eye
Of the enthusiast revels on—when high

XCV.

Amid thy forest solitudes, he climbs
O'er crags, that proudly tower above the deep,
And knows that sense of danger which sublimed
The breathless moment—when his daring step
Is on the verge of the cliff, and he can hear
The low dash of the wave with startled ear,

XCVI.

Like the death-music of his coming doom,
And clings to the green turf with desperate force,
As the heart clings to life; and when resume
The currents in his veins their wonted course,
There lingers a deep feeling—like the moan
Of wearied ocean, when the storm is gone.

[Pg 40]

XCVII.

In such an hour he turns, and on his view,
Ocean, and earth, and heaven, burst before him;
Clouds slumbering at his feet, and the clear blue
Of summer's sky in beauty bending o'er him—
The city bright below; and far away,
Sparkling in golden light, his own romantic bay.

XCVIII.

Tall spire, and glittering roof, and battlement,
And banners floating in the sunny air;
And white sails o'er the calm blue waters bent,
Green isle, and circling shore, are blended there
In wild reality. When life is old,
And many a scene forgot, the heart will hold

XCIX.

Its memory of this; nor lives there one
Whose infant breath was drawn, or boyhood's days
Of happiness were pass'd beneath that sun,
That in his manhood's prime can calmly gaze
Upon that bay, or on that mountain stand,
Nor feel the prouder of his native land.

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C.

"This may be poetry, for aught I know,"
Said an old, worthy friend of mine, while leaning
Over my shoulder as I wrote, "although
I can't exactly comprehend its meaning.
For my part, I have long been a petitioner
To Mr. John M'Comb, the street-commissioner,

CI.

"That he would think of Weehawk, and would lay it
Handsomely out in avenue and square;
Then tax the land, and make its owners pay it
(As is the usual plan pursued elsewhere);

Blow up the rocks, and sell the wood for fuel—
'Twould save us many a dollar, and a duel."

CII.

The devil take you and John M'Comb, said I;
Lang, in its praise, has penn'd one paragraph,
And promised me another. I defy,
With such assistance, yours and the world's laugh;
And half believe that Paulding, on this theme,
Might be a poet—strange as it may seem.

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CIII.

For even our traveller felt, when home returning
From that day's tour, as on the deck he stood,
The fire of poetry within him burning;
"Albeit unused to the rhyming mood;"
And with a pencil on his knee he wrote
The following flaming lines

TO THE HORSEBOAT.

1

Away—o'er the wave to the home we are seeking,
Bark of my hope! ere the evening be gone;
There's a wild, wild note in the curlew's shrieking;
There's a whisper of death in the wind's low moan.

2

Though blue and bright are the heavens above me,
And the stars are asleep on the quiet sea;
And hearts I love, and hearts that love me,
Are beating beside me merrily,

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3

Yet, far in the west, where the day's faded roses,
Touch'd by the moonbeam, are withering fast;
Where the half-seen spirit of twilight reposes,
Hymning the dirge of the hours that are past,

4

There, where the ocean-wave sparkles at meeting
(As sunset dreams tell us) the kiss of the sky,
On his dim, dark cloud is the infant storm sitting,
And beneath the horizon his lightnings are nigh.

5

Another hour—and the death-word is given,
Another hour—and his lightnings are here;
Speed! speed thee, my bark; ere the breeze of even
Is lost in the tempest, our home will be near.

6

Then away o'er the wave, while thy pennant is streaming
In the shadowy light, like a shooting star;
Be swift as the thought of the wanderer, dreaming,
In a stranger land, of his fireside afar.

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7

And while memory lingers I'll fondly believe thee
A being with life and its best feelings warm;
And freely the wild song of gratitude weave thee,
Bless'd spirit! that bore me and mine from the storm.

CIV.

But where is Fanny? She has long been thrown
Where cheeks and roses wither—in the shade.
The age of chivalry, you know, is gone;
And although, as I once before have said,
I love a pretty face to adoration,
Yet, still, I must preserve my reputation,

CV.

As a true dandy of the modern schools.
One hates to be oldfashion'd; it would be
A violation of the latest rules,
To treat the sex with too much courtesy.
'Tis not to worship beauty, as she glows
In all her diamond lustre, that the beaux

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CVI.

Of these enlighten'd days at evening crowd,
Where fashion welcomes in her rooms of light,
That "dignified obedience; that proud
Submission," which, in times of yore, the knight
Gave to his "ladye-love," is now a scandal,
And practised only by your Goth or Vandal.

CVII.

To lounge in graceful attitudes—be stared
Upon, the while, by every fair one's eye,
And stare one's self, in turn; to be prepared
To dart upon the trays, as swiftly by
The dexterous Simon bears them, and to take
One's share, at least, of coffee, cream, and cake,

CVIII.

Is now to be "the ton." The pouting lip,
And sad, upbraiding eye of the poor girl,
Who hardly of joy's cup one drop can sip,
Ere in the wild confusion, and the whirl,
And tumult of the hour, its bubbles vanish,
Must now be disregarded. One must banish

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CIX.

Those antiquated feelings, that belong
To feudal manners and a barbarous age.
Time was—when woman "pour'd her soul" in song,
That all was hush'd around. 'Tis now "the rage"
To deem a song, like bugle-tones in battle,
A signal note, that bids each tongue's artillery rattle.

CX.

And, therefore, I have made Miss Fanny wait
My leisure. She had changed, as you will see, as
Much as her worthy sire, and made as great
Proficiency in taste and high ideas.
The careless smile of other days was gone,
And every gesture spoke "*q'en dira-t' on?*"

CXI.

She long had known that in her father's coffers,
And also to his credit in the banks,
There was some cash; and therefore all the offers
Made her, by gentlemen of the middle ranks,
Of heart and hand, had spurn'd, as far beneath
One whose high destiny it was to breathe,

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CXII.

Ere long, the air of Broadway or Park Place,
And reign a fairy queen in fairy land;
Display in the gay dance her form of grace,
Or touch with rounded arm and gloveless hand,
Harp or piano.—Madame Catilani
Forgot a while, and every eye on Fanny.

CXIII.

And in anticipation of that hour,
Her star of hope—her paradise of thought,
She'd had as many masters as the power
Of riches could bestow; and had been taught
The thousand nameless graces that adorn
The daughters of the wealthy and high born.

CXIV.

She had been noticed at some public places
(The Battery, and the balls of Mr. Whale),
For hers was one of those attractive faces,
That when you gaze upon them, never fail
To bid you look again; there was a beam,
A lustre in her eye, that oft would seem

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CXV.

A little like effrontery; and yet
The lady meant no harm; her only aim
Was but to be admired by all she met,
And the free homage of the heart to claim;
And if she show'd too plainly this intention,
Others have done the same—'twas not of her invention.

CXVI.

She shone at every concert; where are bought
Tickets, by all who wish them, for a dollar;
She patronised the Theatre, and thought
That Wallack look'd extremely well in Rolla;
She fell in love, as all the ladies do,
With Mr. Simpson—talked as loudly, too,

CXVII.

As any beauty of the highest grade,
To the gay circle in the box beside her;
And when the pit—half vex'd and half afraid,
With looks of smother'd indignation eyed her,
She calmly met their gaze, and stood before 'em,
Smiling at vulgar taste and mock decorum.

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CXVIII.

And though by no means a *bas bleu*, she had
For literature a most becoming passion;
Had skimm'd the latest novels, good and bad,
And read the Croakers, when they were in fashion;
And Doctor Chalmers' sermons, of a Sunday;
And Woodworth's Cabinet, and the new Salmagundi.

CXIX.

She was among the first and warmest patrons
Of Griscom's *conversaziónes* where
In rainbow groups, our bright-eyed maids and matrons,
On science bent, assemble; to prepare
Themselves for acting well, in life, their part
As wives and mothers. There she learn'd by heart

CXX.

Words, to the witches in Macbeth unknown.
Hydraulics, hydrostatics, and pneumatics,
Dioptrics, optics, katoptrics, carbon,
Chlorine, and iodine, and aërostatics;
Also,—why frogs, for want of air, expire;
And how to set the Tappan sea on fire!

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CXXI.

In all the modern languages she was
Exceedingly well versed; and had devoted,
To their attainment, far more time than has,
By the best teachers lately, been allotted;
For she had taken lessons, twice a week,
For a full month in each; and she could speak

CXXII.

French and Italian, equally as well
As Chinese, Portuguese, or German; and,
What is still more surprising, she could spell
Most of our longest English words off hand;
Was quite familiar in Low Dutch and Spanish,
And thought of studying modern Greek and Danish.

CXXIII.

She sang divinely: and in "Love's young dream,"
And "Fanny dearest," and "The soldier's bride;"
And every song, whose dear delightful theme,
Is "Love, still love," had oft till midnight tried
Her finest, loftiest "pigeon-wings" of sound,
Waking the very watchmen far around.

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CXXIV.

For her pure taste in dress, I can appeal to
Madame Bouquet, and Monsieur Pardessus;
She was, in short, a woman you might kneel to,
If kneeling were in fashion; or if you
Were wearied of your duns and single life,
And wanted a few thousands and a wife.
1819.

CXXV.

* * * * *
* * * * *

CXXVI.

"There was a sound of revelry by night;"
Broadway was throng'd with coaches, and within
A mansion of the best of brick, the bright
And eloquent eyes of beauty bade begin
The dance; and music's tones swell'd wild and high,
And hearts and heels kept tune in tremulous ecstasy.

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CXXVII.

For many a week, the note of preparation
Had sounded through all circles far and near;
And some five hundred cards of invitation
Bade beau and belle in full costume appear;
There was a most magnificent variety,
All quite select, and of the first society.

CXXVIII.

That is to say—the rich and the well-bred,
The arbiters of fashion and gentility,
In different grades of splendour, from the head
Down to the very toe of our nobility:
Ladies, remarkable for handsome eyes
Or handsome fortunes—learned men, and wise:

CXXIX.

Statesmen, and officers of the militia—
In short, the "first society"—a phrase,
Which you may understand as best may fit you
Besides the blackest fiddlers of those days,
Placed like their sire, Timotheus, on high,
With horsehair fiddle-bows and teeth of ivory.

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CXXX.

The carpets were roll'd up the day before,
And, with a breath, two rooms became but one,
Like man and wife—and, on the polish'd floor,
Chalk in the artists' plastic hand had done
All that chalk could do—in young Eden's bowers
They seemed to tread, and their feet press'd on flowers.

CXXXI.

And when the thousand lights of spermaceti
Stream'd like a shower of sunbeams—and free tresses
Wild as the heads that waved them—and a pretty
Collection of the latest Paris dresses
Wander'd about the rooms like things divine,
It was, as I was told, extremely fine.

CXXXII.

The love of fun, fine faces, and good eating,
Brought many who were tired of self and home;
And some were there in the high hope of meeting
The lady of their bosom's love—and some
To study that deep science, how to please,
And manners in high life, and high-soul'd courtesies.

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CXXXIII.

And he, the hero of the night, was there,

In breeches of light drab, and coat of blue.
Taste was conspicuous in his powder'd hair,
And in his frequent *jeux de mots*, that drew
Peals of applauses from the listeners round,
Who were delighted—as in duty bound.

CXXXIV.

'Twas Fanny's father—Fanny near him stood,
Her power, resistless—and her wish, command;
And Hope's young promises were all made good;
"She reign'd a fairy queen in fairy land;"
Her dream of infancy a dream no more,
And then how beautiful the dress she wore!

CXXXV.

Ambition with the sire had kept her word.
He had the rose, no matter for its thorn,
And he seem'd happy as a summer bird,
Careering on wet wing to meet the morn.
Some said there was a cloud upon his brow;
It might be—but we'll not discuss that now.

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CXXXVI.

I left him making rhymes while crossing o'er
The broad and perilous wave of the North River.
He bade adieu, when safely on the shore,
To poetry—and, as he thought, for ever.
That night his dream (if after deeds make known
Our plans in sleep) was an enchanting one.

CXXXVII.

He woke, in strength, like Samson from his slumber,
And walk'd Broadway, enraptured the next day;
Purchased a house there—I've forgot the number—
And sign'd a mortgage and a bond, for pay.
Gave, in the slang phrase, Pearl-street the go-by,
And cut, for several months, St. Tammany.

CXXXVIII.

Bond, mortgage, title-deeds, and all completed,
He bought a coach and half a dozen horses
(The bill's at Lawrence's—not yet receipted—
You'll find the amount upon his list of losses),
Then fill'd his rooms with servants, and whatever
Is necessary for a "genteel liver."

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CXXXIX.

This last removal fix'd him: every stain
Was blotted from his "household coat," and he
Now "show'd the world he was a gentleman,"
And, what is better, could afford to be;
His step was loftier than it was of old,
His laugh less frequent, and his manner told

CXL.

What lovers call "unutterable things"—
That sort of dignity was in his mien
Which awes the gazer into ice, and brings
To recollection some great man we've seen,
The Governor, perchance, whose eye and frown,

'Twas shrewdly guess'd, would knock Judge Skinner down.

CXLI.

And for "Resources," both of purse and head,
He was a subject worthy Bristed's pen;
Believed devoutly all his flatterers said,
And deem'd himself a Cræsus among men;
Spread to the liberal air his silken sails,
And lavish'd guineas like a Prince of Wales.

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CXLII.

He mingled now with those within whose veins
The blood ran pure—the magnates of the land—
Hail'd them as his companions and his friends,
And lent them money and his note of hand.
In every institution, whose proud aim
Is public good alone, he soon became

CXLIII.

A man of consequence and notoriety;
His name, with the addition of esquire,
Stood high upon the list of each society,
Whose zeal and watchfulness the sacred fire
Of science, agriculture, art, and learning,
Keep on our country's altars bright and burning.

CXLIV.

At Eastburn's Rooms he met, at two each day,
With men of taste and judgment like his own,
And play'd "first fiddle" in that orchestra
Of literary worthies—and the tone
Of his mind's music, by the listeners caught,
Is traced among them still in language and in thought.

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CXLV.

He once made the Lyceum a choice present
Of muscle shells pick'd up at Rockaway;
And Mitchill gave a classical and pleasant
Discourse about them in the streets that day,
Naming the shells, and hard to put in verse 'twas,
"Testaceous coverings of bivalve moluscas."

CXLVI.

He was a trustee of a Savings Bank,
And lectured soundly every evil doer,
Gave dinners daily to wealth, power, and rank,
And sixpence every Sunday to the poor;
He was a wit, in the pun-making line—
Past fifty years of age, and five feet nine.

CXLVII.

But as he trod to grandeur's pinnacle,
With eagle eye and step that never falter'd,
The busy tongue of scandal dared to tell
That cash was scarce with him, and credit alter'd;
And while he stood the envy of beholders,
The Bank Directors grinn'd, and shrugg'd their shoulders.

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CXLVIII.

And when these, the Lord Burleighs of the minute,
Shake their sage heads, and look demure and holy,
Depend upon it there is something in it;
For whether born of wisdom or of folly,
Suspicion is a being whose fell power
Blights every thing it touches, fruit and flower.

CXLIX.

Some friends (they were his creditors) once hinted
About retrenchment and a day of doom;
He thank'd them, as no doubt they kindly meant it,
And made this speech, when they had left the room:
"Of all the curses upon mortals sent,
One's creditors are the most impudent;

CL.

"Now I am one who knows what he is doing,
And suits exactly to his means his ends;
How can a man be in the path to ruin,
When all the brokers are his bosom friends?
Yet, on my hopes, and those of my dear daughter,
These rascals throw a bucket of cold water!

[Pg 60]

CLI.

"They'd wrinkle with deep cares the prettiest face,
Pour gall and wormwood in the sweetest cup,
Poison the very wells of life—and place
Whitechapel needles, with their sharp points up,
Even in the softest feather bed that e'er
Was manufactured by upholsterer."

CLII.

This said—he journey'd "at his own sweet will,"
Like one of Wordsworth's rivers, calmly on;
But yet, at times, Reflection, "in her still
Small voice," would whisper, something must be done;
He ask'd advice of Fanny, and the maid
Promptly and duteously lent her aid.

CLIII.

She told him, with that readiness of mind
And quickness of perception which belong
Exclusively to gentle womankind,
That to submit to slanderers was wrong,
And the best plan to silence and admonish them,
Would be to give "a party"—and astonish them.

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CLIV.

The hint was taken—and the party given;
And Fanny, as I said some pages since,
Was there in power and loveliness that even,
And he, her sire, demean'd him like a prince,
And all was joy—it look'd a festival,
Where pain might smooth his brow, and grief her smiles recall.

CLV.

But Fortune, like some others of her sex,
Delights in tantalizing and tormenting;
One day we feed upon their smiles—the next

Is spent in swearing, sorrowing, and repenting.
(If in the last four lines the author lies,
He's always ready to apologize.)

CLVI.

Eve never walk'd in Paradise more pure
Than on that morn when Satan play'd the devil
With her and all her race. A love-sick wooer
Ne'er ask'd a kinder maiden, or more civil,
Than Cleopatra was to Antony
The day she left him on the Ionian sea.

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CLVII.

The serpent—loveliest in his coiled ring,
With eye that charms, and beauty that outvies
The tints of the rainbow—bears upon his sting
The deadliest venom. Ere the dolphin dies
Its hues are brightest. Like an infant's breath
Are tropic winds, before the voice of death

CLVIII.

Is heard upon the waters, summoning
The midnight earthquake from its sleep of years
To do its task of wo. The clouds that fling
The lightning, brighten ere the bolt appears;
The pantings of the warrior's heart are proud
Upon that battle morn whose night-dews wet his shroud;

CLIX.

The sun is loveliest as he sinks to rest;
The leaves of autumn smile when fading fast;
The swan's last song is sweetest—and the best
Of Meigs's speeches, doubtless, was his last.
And thus the happiest scene, in these my rhymes,
Closed with a crash, and usher'd in—hard times.

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CLX.

St. Paul's toll'd one—and fifteen minutes after
Down came, by accident, a chandelier;
The mansion totter'd from the floor to rafter!
Up rose the cry of agony and fear!
And there was shrieking, screaming, bustling, fluttering,
Beyond the power of writing or of uttering.

CLXI.

The company departed, and neglected
To say good-by—the father storm'd and swore—
The fiddlers grinn'd—the daughter look'd dejected—
The flowers had vanish'd from the polish'd floor,
And both betook them to their sleepless beds,
With hearts and prospects broken, but no heads.

CLXII.

The desolate relief of free complaining
Came with the morn, and with it came bad weather;
The wind was east-northeast, and it was raining
Throughout that day, which, take it altogether,
Was one whose memory clings to us through life,
Just like a suit in Chancery, or a wife.

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CLXIII.

That evening, with a most important face
And dreadful knock, and tidings still more dreadful,
A notary came—sad things had taken place;
My hero had forgot to "do the needful;"
A note (amount not stated), with his name on't,
Was left unpaid—in short, he had "stopp'd payment."

CLXIV.

I hate your tragedies, both long and short ones
(Except Tom Thumb, and Juan's Pantomime);
And stories woven of sorrows and misfortunes
Are bad enough in prose, and worse in rhyme;
Mine, therefore, must be brief. Under protest
His notes remain—the wise can guess the rest.

CLXV.

* * * * *
* * * * *

CLXVI.

For two whole days they were the common talk;
The party, and the failure, and all that,
The theme of loungers in their morning walk,
Porter-house reasoning, and tea-table chat.
The third, some newer wonder came to blot them,
And on the fourth, the "meddling world" forgot them.

CLXVII.

Anxious, however, something to discover,
I pass'd their house—the shutters were all closed;
The song of knocker and of bell was over;
Upon the steps two chimney sweeps reposed;
And on the door my dazzled eyebeam met
These cabalistic words—"this house to let."

CLXVIII.

They live now, like chameleons, upon air
And hope, and such cold, unsubstantial dishes;
That they removed, is clear, but when or where
None knew. The curious reader, if he wishes,
May ask them, but in vain. Where grandeur dwells,
The marble dome—the popular rumour tells;

CLXIX.

But of the dwelling of the proud and poor
From their own lips the world will never know
When better days are gone—it is secure
Beyond all other mysteries here below,
Except, perhaps, a maiden lady's age,
When past the noonday of life's pilgrimage.

CLXX.

Fanny! 'twas with her name my song began;
'Tis proper and polite her name should end it;
If in my story of her woes, or plan
Or moral can be traced, 'twas not intended;
And if I've wrong'd her, I can only tell her

I'm sorry for it—so is my bookseller.

CLXXI.

I met her yesterday—her eyes were wet—
She faintly smiled, and said she had been reading
The Treasurer's Report in the Gazette,
M'Intyre's speech, and Campbell's "Love lies bleeding;"
She had a shawl on, 'twas not a Cashmere one,
And if it cost five dollars, 'twas a dear one.

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CLXXII.

Her father sent to Albany a prayer
For office, told how fortune had abused him,
And modestly requested to be Mayor—
The Council very civilly refused him;
Because, however much they might desire it,
The "public good," it seems, did not require it.

CLXXIII.

Some evenings since, he took a lonely stroll
Along Broadway, scene of past joys and evils;
He felt that withering bitterness of soul,
Quaintly denominated the "blue devils;"
And thought of Bonaparte and Belisarius,
Pompey, and Colonel Burr, and Caius Marius,

CLXXIV.

And envying the loud playfulness and mirth
Of those who pass'd him, gay in youth and hope,
He took at Jupiter a shilling's worth
Of gazing, through the showman's telescope;
Sounds as of far-off bells came on his ears,
He fancied 'twas the music of the spheres.

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CLXXV.

He was mistaken, it was no such thing,
'Twas Yankee Doodle play'd by Scudder's band;
He mutter'd, as he linger'd listening,
Something of freedom and our happy land;
Then sketch'd, as to his home he hurried fast,
This sentimental song—his saddest, and his last.

I.

Young thoughts have music in them, love
And happiness their theme;
And music wanders in the wind
That lulls a morning dream.
And there are angel voices heard,
In childhood's frolic hours,
When life is but an April day
Of sunshine and of showers.

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II.

There's music in the forest leaves
When summer winds are there,
And in the laugh of forest girls
That braid their sunny hair.
The first wild bird that drinks the dew,

From violets of the spring,
Has music in his song, and in
The fluttering of his wing.

III.

There's music in the dash of waves
When the swift bark cleaves their foam;
There's music heard upon her deck,
The mariner's song of home,
When moon and star beams smiling meet
At midnight on the sea—
And there is music—once a week
In Scudder's balcony.

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IV.

But the music of young thoughts too soon
Is faint, and dies away,
And from our morning dreams we wake
To curse the coming day.
And childhood's frolic hours are brief,
And oft in after years
Their memory comes to chill the heart,
And dim the eye with tears.

V.

To-day, the forest leaves are green,
They'll wither on the morrow,
And the maiden's laugh be changed ere long
To the widow's wail of sorrow.
Come with the winter snows, and ask
Where are the forest birds?
The answer is a silent one,
More eloquent than words.

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VI.

The moonlight music of the waves
In storms is heard no more,
When the living lightning mocks the wreck
At midnight on the shore,
And the mariner's song of home has ceased,
His corse is on the sea—
And music ceases when it rains
In Scudder's balcony.

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THE RECORDER.

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THE RECORDER.

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[Pg 75]

A PETITION.
BY THOMAS CASTALY.
Dec. 20, 1828.

"On they move
In perfect phalanx to the Dorian mood
Of flutes and soft RECORDERS."

Milton.

My dear RECORDER, you and I
Have floated down life's stream together,
And kept unharm'd our friendship's tie
Through every change of Fortune's sky,
Her pleasant and her rainy weather.
Full sixty times since first we met,
Our birthday suns have risen and set,
And time has worn the baldness now
Of Julius Cæsar on your brow;
Your brow, like his, a field of thought,
With broad deep furrows, spirit-wrought,
Whose laurel harvests long have shown
As green and glorious as his own;
And proudly would the CÆSAR claim
Companionship with R*k*r's name,
His peer in forehead and in fame.

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Both eloquent and learn'd and brave,
Born to command and skill'd to rule,
One made the citizen a slave,
The other makes him more—a fool.
The Cæsar an imperial crown,
His slaves' mad gift, refused to wear,
The R*k*r put his fool's cap on,
And found it fitted to a hair;
The Cæsar, though by birth and breeding,
Travel, the ladies, and light reading,
A gentleman in mien and mind,
And fond of Romans and their mothers,
Was heartless as the Arab's wind,
And slew some millions of mankind,
Including enemies and others.
The R*k*r, like Bob Acres, stood
Edgeways upon a field of blood,
The where and wherefore Swartwout knows,
Pull'd trigger, as a brave man should,
And shot, God bless them—his own toes.
The Cæsar pass'd the Rubicon
With helm, and shield, and breastplate on,
Dashing his war-horse through the waters;
The R*k*r would have built a barge
Or steamboat at the city's charge,
And pass'd it with his wife and daughters.

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But let that pass. As I have said,
There's naught, save laurels, on your head,
And time has changed my clustering hair,
And shower'd the snow-flakes thickly there;
And though our lives have ever been,
As different as their different scene;
Mine more renown'd for rhymes than riches
Yours less for scholarship than speeches;
Mine pass'd in low-roof'd leafy bower,
Yours in high halls of pomp and power,
Yet are we, be the moral told,
Alike in one thing—growing old,
Ripen'd like summer's cradled sheaf,
Faded like autumn's falling leaf—
And nearing, sail and signal spread,
The quiet anchorage of the dead.
For such is human life, wherever
The voyage of its bark may be,
On home's green-bank'd and gentle river
Or the world's shoreless, sleepless sea.

[Pg 78]

Yes, you have floated down the tide
Of time, a swan in grace and pride
And majesty and beauty, till
The law, the Ariel of your will,
Power's best beloved, the law of libel

(A bright link in the legal chain)
Expounded, settled, and made plain,
By your own charge, the jurors' Bible,
Has clipp'd the venom'd tongue of slander,
That dared to call you "Party's gander,
The leader of the geese who make

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Our cities' parks and ponds their home,
And keep her liberties awake

By cackling, as their sires saved Rome.
Grander of Party's pond, wherein
Lizard, and toad, and terrapin,
Your alehouse patriots, are seen,

In Faction's feverish sunshine basking;"
And now, to rend this veil of lies,
Word-woven by your enemies,
And keep your sainted memory free
From tarnish with posterity,

I take the liberty of asking
Permission, sir, to write your life,
With all its scenes of calm and strife,
And all its turnings and its windings,
A poem, in a quarto volume—
Verse, like the subject, blank and solemn,

With elegant appropriate bindings,
Of rat and mole skin the one half,
The other a part fox, part calf.
Your portrait, graven line for line,
From that immortal bust in plaster,
The master piece of Art's great master,

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Mr. Praxiteles Browere,
Whose trowel is a thing divine,
Shall smile and bow, and promise there,
And twenty-nine fine forms and faces
(The Corporation and the Mayor),
Linked hand in hand, like loves and graces,
Shall hover o'er it, group'd in air,
With wild pictorial dance and song;
The song of happy bees in bowers,
The dance of Guido's graceful hours,
All scattering Flushing's garden flowers
Round the dear head they've loved so long.

I know that you are modest, know
That when you hear your merit's praise,
Your cheeks quick blushes come and go,
Lily and rose-leaf, sun and snow,
Like maidens' on their bridal days.

I know that you would fain decline
To aid me and the sacred nine,
In giving to the asking earth
The story of your wit and worth;
For if there be a fault to cloud

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The brightness of your clear good sense,
It is, and be the fact allow'd,

Your only failing—Diffidence!
An amiable weakness—given

To justify the sad reflection,
That in this vale of tears not even

A R*k*r is complete perfection,
A most romantic detestation
Of power and place, of pay and ration;
A strange unwillingness to carry

The weight of honour on your shoulders,
For which you have been named, the very
Sensitive Plant of office-holders,
A shrinking bashfulness, whose grace
Gives beauty to your manly face.

Thus shades the green and growing vine
The rough bark of the mountain pine,
Thus round her freedom's waking steel

Harmodius wreathed his country's myrtle;
And thus the golden lemon's peel

Gives fragrance to a bowl of turtle.

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True, "many a flower," the poet sings,

"Is born to blush unseen;"
But you, although you blush, are not
The flower the poets mean.
In vain you wooed a lowlier lot:
In vain you clipp'd your eagle-wings—
Talents like yours are not forgot
And buried with earth's common things.
No! my dear R*k*r, I would give
My laurels, living and to live,
Or as much cash as you could raise on
Their value, by hypothecation,
To be, for one enchanted hour,
In beauty, majesty, and power,
What you for forty years have been,
The Oberon of life's fairy scene.

An anxious city sought and found you
In a blessed day of joy and pride,
Scepter'd your jewell'd hand, and crown'd you
Her chief, her guardian, and her guide.
Honours which weaker minds had wrought
In vain for years, and knelt and pray'd for,
Are all your own, unpriced, unbought,
Or (which is the same thing) unpaid for.
Painfully great! against your will
Her hundred offices to hold,
Each chair with dignity to fill,
And your own pockets with her gold.
A sort of double duty, making
Your task a serious undertaking.

With what delight the eyes of all
Gaze on you, seated in your Hall,
Like Sancho in his island, reigning,
Loved leader of its motley hosts
Of lawyers and their bills of costs,
And all things thereto appertaining,
Such as crimes, constables, and juries,
Male pilferers and female furies,
The police and the *polissons*,
Illegal right and legal wrong.
Bribes, perjuries, law-craft, and cunning,
Judicial drollery and punning;
And all the *et ceteras* that grace
That genteel, gentlemanly place!
Or in the Council Chamber standing
With eloquence of eye and brow,
Your voice the music of commanding,
And fascination in your bow,
Arranging for the civic shows
Your "men in buckram," as per list,
Your John Does and your Richard Roes,
Those Dummys of your games of whist.
The Council Chamber—where authority
Consists in two words—a majority.
For whose contractors' jobs we pay
Our last dear sixpences for taxes,
As freely as in Sylla's day,
Rome bled beneath his lictors' axes.
Where—on each magisterial nose
In colours of the rainbow linger,
Like sunset hues on Alpine snows,
The printmarks of your thumb and finger.
Where he, the wisest of wild fowl,
Bird of Jove's blue-eyed maid—the owl,
That feather'd alderman, is heard
Nightly, by poet's ear alone,
To other eyes and ears unknown,
Cheering your every look and word,
And making, room and gallery through,
The loud, applauding echoes peal,
Of his "*où peut on être mieux*
Qu'au sein de sa famille?"^[A]

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Oh for a herald's skill to rank
Your titles in their due degrees!
At Singing—at the Tradesmen's Bank,
In Courts, Committees, Caucuses:
At Albany, where those who knew
The last year's secrets of the great,
Call you the golden handle to
The earthen Pitcher of the State.
(Poor Pitcher! that Van Buren ceases
To want its service gives me pain,
'Twill break into as many pieces
As Kitty's of Coleraine.)
At Bellevue, on her banquet night,
Where Burgundy and business meet,
On others, at the heart's delight,
The Pewter Mug in Frankfort-street;
From Harlæm bridge to Whitehall dock,
From Bloomingdale to Blackwell's Isles,
Forming, including road and rock,
A city of some twelve square miles,
O'er street and alley, square and block,
Towers, temples, telegraphs, and tiles,
O'er wharves whose stone and timbers mock
The ocean's and its navies' shock,
O'er all the fleets that float before her
O'er all their banners waving o'er her,
Her sky and waters, earth and air—
You are lord, for who is her lord mayor?
Where is he? Echo answers, where
And voices, like the sound of seas,
Breathe in sad chorus, on the breeze,
The Highland mourner's melody—
Oh HONE a rie! Oh HONE a rie!
The hymn o'er happy days departed,
The hope that such again may be,
When power was large and liberal-hearted,
And wealth was hospitality.

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One more request, and I am lost,
If you its earnest prayer deny;
It is, that you preserve the most
Inviolable secrecy
As to my plan. Our fourteen wards
Contain some thirty-seven bards,
Who, if my glorious theme were known,
Would make it, thought and word, their own,
My hopes and happiness destroy,
And trample with a rival's joy
Upon the grave of my renown.
My younger brothers in the art,
Whose study is the human heart—
Minstrels, before whose spells have bow'd
The learn'd, the lovely, and the proud,
Ere their life's morning hours are gone—
Light hearts be theirs, the muse's boon,
And may their suns blaze bright at noon,
And set without a cloud.

[Pg 88]

HILLHOUSE, whose music, like his themes,
Lifts earth to heaven—whose poet dreams
Are pure and holy as the hymn
Echoed from harps of seraphim,
By bards that drank at Zion's fountains
When glory, peace, and hope were hers,
And beautiful upon her mountains
The feet of angel messengers.
BRYANT, whose songs are thoughts that bless
The heart, its teachers, and its joy,
As mothers blend with their caress
Lessons of truth and gentleness
And virtue for the listening boy.
Spring's lovelier flowers for many a day
Have blossom'd on his wandering way,
Beings of beauty and decay,
They slumber in their autumn tomb;

But those that graced his own Green River,
And wreathed the lattice of his home,
Charm'd by his song from mortal doom,
Bloom on, and will bloom on for ever.
And HALLECK—who has made thy roof,
St. Tammany! oblivion-proof—
Thy beer illustrious, and thee
A belted knight of chivalry;
And changed thy dome of painted bricks
And porter casks and politics,
Into a green Arcadian vale,
With St*ph*n All*n for its lark,
B*n B*il*y's voice its watch-dog's bark,
And J*hn T*rg*e its nightingale.

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These, and the other THIRTY-FOUR,
Will live a thousand years or more—
If the world lasts so long. For me,
I rhyme not for posterity,
Though pleasant to my heirs might be
The incense of its praise,
When I, their ancestor, have gone,
And paid the debt, the only one
A poet ever pays.
But many are my years, and few
Are left me ere night's holy dew,
And sorrow's holier tears, will keep
The grass green where in death I sleep
And when that grass is green above me,
And those who bless me now and love me
Are sleeping by my side,
Will it avail me aught that men
Tell to the world with lip and pen
That once I lived and died?
No: if a garland for my brow
Is growing, let me have it now,
While I'm alive to wear it;
And if, in whispering my name,
There's music in the voice of fame
Like Garcia's, let me hear it!

[Pg 90]

The Christmas holydays are nigh,
Therefore, till Newyear's Eve, good-by,
Then *revenons a nos moutons*,
Yourself and aldermen—meanwhile,
Look o'er this letter with a smile;
And keep the secret of its song
As faithfully, but not as long,
As you have guarded from the eyes
Of editorial Paul Prys,
And other meddling, murmuring claimants,
Those Eleusinian mysteries,
The city's cash receipts and payments.
Yours ever,

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T. C.

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EPISTLES, ETC.

[Pg 93]

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W*LT*R B*WNE, Esq.,

[Pg 95]

MEMBER OF THE COUNCIL OF APPOINTMENT OF THE STATE OF
NEW-YORK, AT ALBANY, 1821.

But go at once."

"I cannot but remember such things were,
And were most precious to me."

Macbeth.

We do not blame you, W*lt*r B*wne,
For a variety of reasons;
You're now the talk of half the town,
A man of talent and renown,
And will be for perhaps two seasons.
That face of yours has magic in it;
Its smile transports us in a minute
To wealth and pleasure's sunny bowers;
And there is terror in its frown,
Which, like a mower's scythe, cuts down
Our city's loveliest flowers.

[Pg 96]

We therefore do not blame you, sir,
Whate'er our cause of grief may be;
And cause enough we have to "stir
The very stones to mutiny."
You've driven from the cash and cares
Of office, heedless of our prayers,
Men who have been for many a year
To us and to our purses dear,
And will be to our heirs for ever,
Our tears, thanks to the snow and rain,
Have swell'd the brook in Maiden-lane
Into a mountain river;
And when you visit us again,
Leaning at Tammany on your cane,
Like warrior on his battle blade,
You'll mourn the havoc you have made.

[Pg 97]

There is a silence and a sadness
Within the marble mansion now;
Some have wild eyes that threaten madness,
Some think of "kicking up a row."
Judge M*ll*r will not yet believe
That you have ventured to bereave
The city and its hall of him:
He has in his own fine way stated,
"The fact must be substantiated,"
Before he'll move a single limb.
He deems it cursèd hard to yield
The laurel won in every field
Through sixteen years of party war,
And to be seen at noon no more,
Enjoying at his office door
The luxury of a tenth segar.
Judge Warner says that, when he's gone,
You'll miss the true Dogberry breed;
And Christian swears that you have done
A most UN-Christian deed.

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How could you have the heart to strike
From place the peerless Pierre Van Wyck?
And the twin colonels, Haines and Pell,
Squire Fessenden, and Sheriff Bell;
M*rr*ll, a justice and a wise one,
And Ned M'Laughlin the exciseman;
The two health officers, believers
In Clinton and contagious fevers;
The keeper of the city's treasures,
The sealer of her weights and measures,
The harbour-master, her best bower
Cable in party's stormy hour;
Ten auctioneers, three bank directors,
And Mott and Duffy, the inspectors
Of whiskey and of flour?

It was but yesterday they stood

All (ex-officio) great and good.
But by the tomahawk struck down
Of party and of W*lt*r B*wne,
Where are they now? With shapes of air,
The caravan of things that were,
Journeying to their nameless home,
Like Mecca's pilgrims from her tomb;
With the lost Pleiad; with the wars
Of Agamemnon's ancestors;
With their own years of joy and grief,
Spring's bud, and autumn's faded leaf;
With birds that round their cradles flew;
With winds that in their boyhood blew;
With last night's dream and last night's dew.

[Pg 99]

Yes, they are gone; alas! each one of them;
Departed—every mother's son of them.
Yet often, at the close of day,
When thoughts are wing'd and wandering, they
Come with the memory of the past,
Like sunset clouds along the mind,
Reflecting, as they're flitting fast
In their wild hues of shade and light,
All that was beautiful and bright
In golden moments left behind.

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TO * * * * *

[Pg 101]

Dear ***, I am writing, not *to* you, but *at* you,
For the feet of you tourists have no resting-place;
But wherever with this the mail-pigeon may catch you,
May she find you with gayety's smile on your face;
Whether chasing a snipe at the Falls of Cohoes,
Or chased by the snakes upon Anthony's Nose;
Whether wandering, at Catskill, from Hotel to Clove,
Making sketches, or speeches, puns, poems, or love;
Or in old Saratoga's unknown fountain-land,
Threading groves of enchantment, half bushes, half sand;
Whether dancing on Sundays, at Lebanon Springs,
With those Madame Hutins of religion, the Shakers;
Or, on Tuesdays, with maidens who seek wedding rings
At Ballston, as taught by mammas and match-makers;
Whether sailing St. Lawrence, with unbroken neck,
From her thousand green isles to her castled Quebec;
Or sketching Niagara, pencil on knee
(The giant of waters, our country's pet lion),
Or dipp'd at Long Branch, in the real salt sea,
With a cork for a dolphin, a Cockney Arion;
Whether roaming earth, ocean, or even the air,
Like Dan O'Rourke's eagle—good luck to you there.

[Pg 102]

For myself, as you'll see by the date of my letter,
I'm in town, but of that fact the least said the better;
For 'tis vain to deny (though the city o'erflows
With well-dressed men and women, whom nobody knows)
That one rarely sees persons whose nod is an honour,
A lady with fashion's own impress upon her;
Or a gentleman bless'd with the courage to say,
Like Morris (the Prince Regent's friend, in his day),
"Let others in sweet shady solitudes dwell,
Oh! give me the sweet shady side of Pall Mall."

[Pg 103]

Apropos—our friend A. chanced this morning to meet
The accomplish'd Miss B. as he pass'd Contoit's Garden,
Both in town in July!—he cross'd over the street,
And she enter'd the rouge-shop of Mrs. St. Martin.
Resolved not to look at another known face,
Through Leonard and Church streets she walked to Park Place,
And he turn'd from Broadway into Catharine-lane,

And coursed, to avoid her, through alley and by-street,
Till they met, as the devil would have it, again,
Face to face, near the pump at the corner of Dey-st.

[Pg 104]

Yet, as most of "The Fashion" are journeying now,
With the brown hues of summer on cheek and on brow,
The few "*gens comme il faut*" who are lingering here,
Are, like fruits out of season, more welcome and dear.
Like "the last rose of summer, left blooming alone,"
Or the last snows of winter, pure ice of *haut ton*,
Unmelted, undimm'd by the sun's brightest ray,
And, like diamonds, making night's darkness seem day.
One meets them in groups, that Canova might fancy,
At our new lounge at evening, the *Opera Français*,
In nines like the Muses, in threes like the Graces,
Green spots in a desert of commonplace faces.
The Queen, Mrs. Adams, goes there sweetly dress'd
In a beautiful bonnet, all golden and flowery:
While the King, Mr. Bonaparte, smiles on Celeste,
Heloise, and Hutin, from his box at the Bowery.

For news, Parry still the North Sea is exploring,
And the Grand Turk has taken, they say, the Acropolis,
And we, in Swamp Place, have discover'd, in boring,
A mineral spring to refine the metropolis.
The day we discover'd it was, by-the-way,
In the life of the Cockneys, a glorious day.
For we all had been taught, by tradition and reading,
That to gain what admits us to levees of kings,
The gentleness, courtesy, grace of high breeding,
The only sure way was to "visit the Springs."
So the whole city visited Swamp Spring *en masse*,
From attorney to sweep, from physician to paviour,
To drink of cold water at sixpence a glass,
And learn true politeness and genteel behaviour.
Though the crowd was immense till the hour of departure,
No gentleman's feelings were hurt in the rush,
Save a grocer's, who lost his proof-glass and bung-starter,
And a chimney sweep's, robb'd of his scraper and brush.
They linger'd till sunset and twilight had come,
Then, wearied in limb, but much polish'd in manners,
The sovereign people moved gracefully home,
In the beauty and pride of "an army with banners."

[Pg 105]

As to politics—Adams and Clinton yet live,
And reign, we presume, as we never have miss'd 'em,
And woollens and Webster continue to thrive
Under something they call the American System.
If you're anxious to know what the country is doing,
Whether ruin'd already or going to ruin,
And who her next president will be, please heaven,
Read the letters of Jackson, the speeches of Clay,
All the party newspapers, three columns a day,
And Blunt's Annual Register, year 'twenty-seven.

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A FRAGMENT.

[Pg 107]

* * * * *

His shop is a grocer's—a snug, genteel place,
Near the corner of Oak-street and Pearl;
He can dress, dance, and bow to the ladies with grace
And ties his cravat with a curl.

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He's ask'd to all parties—north, south, east, and west,
That take place between Chatham and Cherry,
And when he's been absent full oft has the "best
Society" ceased to be merry.

And nothing has darken'd a sky so serene,
Nor disorder'd his beauship's Elysium,
Till this season among our *élite* there has been
What is call'd by the clergy "a schism."

'Tis all about eating and drinking—one set
Gives sponge-cake, a few "kisses" or so,
And is cool'd after dancing with classic sherbet,
"Sublimed" (see Lord Byron) "with snow."

Another insists upon punch and *perdrix*,
Lobster-salad, Champagne, and, by way
Of a novelty only, those pearls of our sea,
Stew'd oysters from Lynn-Haven bay.

[Pg 109]

Miss Flounce, the young milliner, blue-eyed and bright,
In the front parlour over her shop,
"Entertains," as the phrase is, a party to-night,
Upon peanuts and ginger-pop.

And Miss Fleece, who's a hosier, and not quite as young,
But is wealthier far than Miss Flounce,
She "entertains" also to-night with cold tongue,
Smoked herring, and cherry-bounce.

In praise of cold water the Theban bard spoke,
He of Teos sang sweetly of wine;
Miss Flounce is a Pindar in cashmere and cloak,
Miss Fleece an Anacreon divine.

The Montagues carry the day in Swamp Place;
In Pike-street the Capulets reign;
A *limonadière* is the badge of one race,
Of the other a flask of Champagne.

[Pg 110]

Now as each the same evening her soiree announces,
What better, he asks, can be done,
Than drink water from eight until ten with the Flounces,
And then wine with the Fleeces till one!

* * * * *

SONG.

[Pg 111]

BY MISS * * * *.

Air, "To ladies eyes a round, boy."
MOORE.

The winds of March are humming
Their parting song, their parting song,
And summer's skies are coming,
And days grow long, and days grow long.
I watch, but not in gladness,
Our garden tree, our garden tree;
It buds, in sober sadness,
Too soon for me, too soon for me.
My second winter's over,
Alas! and I, alas! and I
Have no accepted lover:
Don't ask me why, don't ask me why.

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'Tis not asleep or idle
That love has been, that love has been;
For many a happy bridal
The year has seen, the year has seen;
I've done a bridemaid's duty,
At three or four, at three or four;

My best bouquet had beauty,
Its donor more, its donor more.
My second winter's over,
Alas! and I, alas! and I
Have no accepted lover:
Don't ask me why, don't ask me why.

[Pg 113]

His flowers my bosom shaded
One sunny day, one sunny day;
The next, they fled and faded,
Beau and bouquet, beau and bouquet.
In vain, at ball and parties,
I've thrown my net, I've thrown my net;
This waltzing, watching heart is
Unchosen yet, unchosen yet.
My second winter's over,
Alas! and I, alas! and I
Have no accepted lover:
Don't ask me why, don't ask me why.

They tell me there's no hurry
For Hymen's ring, for Hymen's ring;
And I'm too young to marry:
'Tis no such thing, 'tis no such thing.
The next spring tides will dash on
My eighteenth year, my eighteenth year;
It puts me in a passion,
Oh dear, oh dear! oh dear, oh dear!
My second winter's over,
Alas! and I, alas! and I
Have no accepted lover:
Don't ask me why, don't ask me why.

[Pg 114]

SONG.

[Pg 115]

FOR THE DRAMA OF "THE SPY."

The harp of love, when first I heard
Its song beneath the moonlight tree,
Was echoed by his plighted word,
And ah, how dear its song to me;
But wail'd the hour will ever be
When to the air the bugle gave,
To hush love's gentle minstrelsy,
The wild war music of the brave.
For he hath heard its song, and now
Its voice is sweeter than mine own;
And he hath broke the plighted vow
He breathed to me and love alone.
That harp hath lost its wonted tone,
No more its strings his fingers move,
Oh would that he had only known
The music of the harp of love.

1822.

[Pg 116]

ADDRESS,

[Pg 117]

AT THE OPENING OF A NEW THEATRE.

November, 1831.

Where dwells the Drama's spirit? not alone
Beneath the palace roof, beside the throne,
In learning's cloisters, friendship's festal bowers,
Art's pictured halls, or triumph's laurel'd towers,
Where'er man's pulses beat or passions play,
She joys to smile or sigh his thoughts away:
Crowd times and scenes within her ring of power,
And teach a life's experience in an hour.

[Pg 118]

To-night she greets, for the first time, our dome,
Her latest, may it prove her lasting home;
And we her messengers delighted stand,
The summon'd Ariels of her mystic wand,
To ask your welcome. Be it yours to give
Bliss to her coming hours, and bid her live
Within these walls new hallow'd in her cause,
Long in the nurturing warmth of your applause.

'Tis in the public smiles, the public loves,
His dearest home, the actor breathes and moves,
Your plaudits are to us and to our art
As is the life-blood to the human heart:
And every power that bids the leaf be green,
In nature acts on this her mimic scene.

[Pg 119]

Our sunbeams are the sparklings of glad eyes,
Our winds the whisper of applause, that flies
From lip to lip, the heart-born laugh of glee,
And sounds of cordial hands that ring out merrily,
And heaven's own dew falls on us in the tear
That woman weeps o'er sorrows pictured here,
When crowded feelings have no words to tell
The might, the magic of the actor's spell.

These have been ours; and do we hope in vain
Here, oft and deep, to feel them ours again?
No! while the weary heart can find repose
From its own pains in fiction's joys or woes;
While there are open lips and dimpled cheeks,
When music breathes, or wit or humour speaks;
While Shakspeare's master spirit can call up
Noblest and worthiest thoughts, and brim the cup
Of life with bubbles bright as happiness,
Cheating the willing bosom into bliss;
So long will those who, in their spring of youth,
Have listen'd to the Drama's voice of truth,
Mark'd in her scenes the manners of their age,
And gather'd knowledge for a wider stage,
Come here to speed with smiles life's summer years,
And melt its winter snow with pleasant tears;
And younger hearts, when ours are hushed and cold,
Be happy here as we have been of old.

[Pg 120]

Friends of the stage, who hail it as the shrine
Where music, painting, poetry entwine
Their kindred garlands, whence their blended power
Refines, exalts, ennobles hour by hour
The spirit of the land, and, like the wind,
Unseen but felt, bears on the bark of mind;
To you the hour that consecrates this dome,
Will call up dreams of prouder hours to come,
When some creating poet, born your own,
May waken here the drama's loftiest tone,
Through after years to echo loud and long,
A Shakspeare of the West, a star of song,
Bright'ning your own blue skies with living fire,
All times to gladden and all tongues inspire,
Far as beneath the heaven by sea-winds fann'd,
Floats the free banner of your native land.

[Pg 121]

THE RHYME
OF
THE ANCIENT COASTER.

Written while sailing in an open boat on the Hudson River, between Stony Point and the Highlands, on seeing the wreck of an old sloop, June, 1821.

"And this our life, exempt from public haunt,
Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
Sermons in stones, and good in every thing."
SHAKSPEARE.

Her side is in the water,
Her keel is in the sand,
And her bowsprit rests on the low gray rock
That bounds the sea and land.

[Pg 122]

Her deck is without a mast,
And sand and shells are there,
And the teeth of decay are gnawing her planks,
In the sun and the sultry air.

No more on the river's bosom,
When sky and wave are calm,
And the clouds are in summer quietness,
And the cool night-breath is balm,

Will she glide in the swan-like stillness
Of the moon in the blue above,
A messenger from other lands,
A beacon to hope and love.

No more, in the midnight tempest,
Will she mock the mounting sea,
Strong in her oaken timbers,
And her white sail's bravery.

[Pg 123]

She hath borne, in days departed,
Warm hearts upon her deck;
Those hearts, like her, are mouldering now,
The victims, and the wreck

Of time, whose touch erases
Each vestige of all we love;
The wanderers, home returning,
Who gazed that deck above,

And they who stood to welcome
Their loved ones on that shore,
Are gone, and the place that knew them
Shall know them never more.

* * * * *

[Pg 124]

It was a night of terror,
In the autumn equinox,
When that gallant vessel found a grave
Upon the Peekskill rocks.

Captain, mate, cook, and seamen
(They were in all but three),
Were saved by swimming fast and well,
And their gallows-destiny.

But two, a youth and maiden,
Were left to brave the storm,
With unpronounceable Dutch names,
And hearts with true love warm.

And they, for love has watchers

[Pg 125]

In air, on earth, and sea,
Were saved by clinging to the wreck,
And their marriage-destiny.

From sunset to night's noon
She had lean'd upon his arm,
Nor heard the far-off thunder toll
The tocsin of alarm.

Not so the youth—he listen'd
To the cloud-wing flapping by;
And low he whisper'd in Low Dutch,
"It tells our doom is nigh.

"Death is the lot of mortals,
But we are young and strong,
And hoped, not boldly, for a life
Of happy years and long.

"Yet 'tis a thought consoling,
That, till our latest breath,
We loved in life, and shall not be
Divided in our death.

[Pg 126]

"Alas, for those that wait us
On their couch of dreams at home,
The morn will hear the funeral cry
Around their daughter's tomb.

"They hoped" ('twas a strange moment
In Dutch to quote Shakspeare)
"Thy bride-bed to have deck'd, sweet maid,
And not have strew'd thy bier."

But, sweetly-voiced and smiling,
The trusting maiden said,
"Breathed not thy lips the vow to-day,
To-morrow we will wed?"

"And I, who have known thy truth
Through years of joy and sorrow,
Can I believe the fickle winds?
No! we shall wed to-morrow!"

[Pg 127]

The tempest heard and paused—
The wild sea gentler moved—
They felt the power of woman's faith
In the word of him she loved.

All night to rope and spar
They clung with strength untired,
Till the dark clouds fled before the sun,
And the fierce storm expired.

At noon the song of bridal bells
O'er hill and valley ran;
At eve he call'd the maiden his,
"Before the holy man."

They dwelt beside the waters
That bathe yon fallen pine,
And round them grew their sons and daughters,
Like wild grapes on the vine.

[Pg 128]

And years and years flew o'er them,
Like birds with beauty on their wings,
And theirs were happy sleigh-ride winters,
And long and lovely springs,

Such joys as thrill'd the lips that kiss'd
The wave, rock-cool'd, from Horeb's fountains,
And sorrows, fleeting as the mist
Of morning, spread upon the mountains,

Till, in a good old age,

Their life-breath pass'd away;
Their name is on the churchyard page—
Their story in my lay.

* * * * *

[Pg 129]

And let them rest together,
The maid, the boat, the boy,
Why sing of matrimony now,
In this brief hour of joy?

Our time may come, and let it—
'Tis enough for us now to know
That our bark will reach West Point ere long,
If the breeze keep on to blow.

We have Hudibras and Milton,
Wines, flutes, and a bugle-horn,
And a dozen segars are lingering yet
Of the thousand of yesternorn.

They have gone, like life's first pleasures,
And faded in smoke away,
And the few that are left are like bosom friends
In the evening of our day.

[Pg 130]

We are far from the mount of battle,^[B]
Where the wreck first met mine eye,
And now where twin-forts^[C] in the olden time rose,
Thro' the Race, like a swift steed, our little bark goes,
And our bugle's notes echo through Anthony's Nose,
So wrecks and rhymes—good-by.

FINIS.

FOOTNOTES

- [A] A favourite French air. In English, "where can one be more happy than in the bosom of one's family?"
- [B] Stony Point.
- [C] Forts Clinton and Montgomery.

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