JOHN O' LONDON'S LITTLE BOOKS.

ODD MOMENTS

ESSAYS IN LITTLE

BY

H. GREENHOUGH SMITH

Editor of "The Strand Magazine"

JOHN O' LONDON'S LITTLE BOOKS. EDITED BY JOHN O' LONDON
No. 3.

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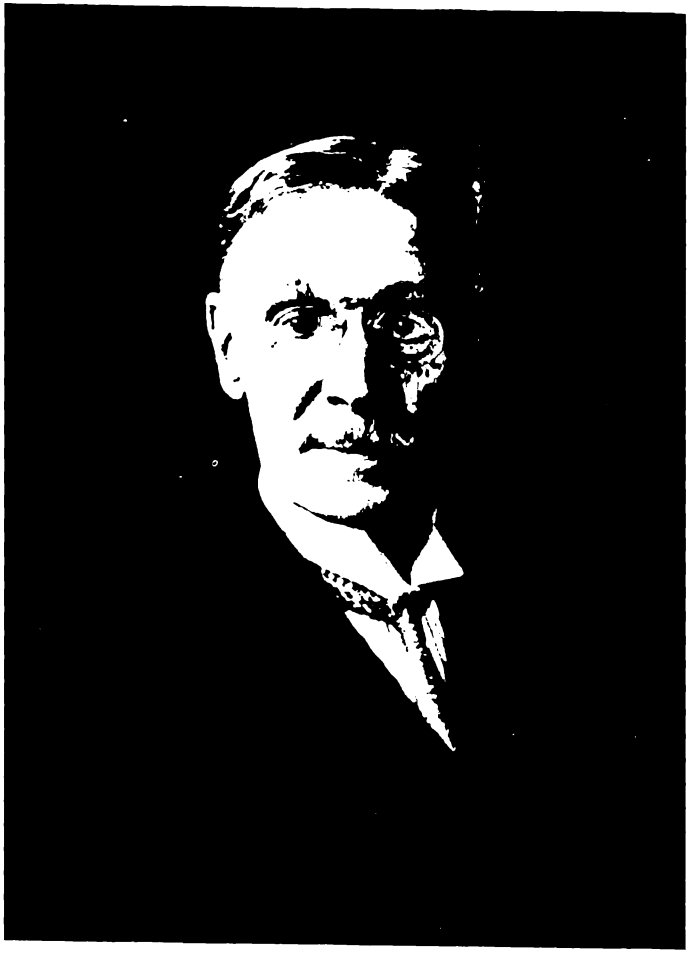
UNIFORM WITH THIS VOLUME

By JOHN O' LONDON

IS IT GOOD ENGLISH
UNPOSTED LETTERS
TREASURE TROVE



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LONDON

GEORGE NEWNES LIMITED

THESE little Essays, which first saw the light in *John o' London's Weekly*, gave me great pleasure in the writing, and I shall be more than gratified if they yield a little to the reader. The fault is altogether mine if they should fail to do so, since it has been my pleasant task to deal, for the most part, with the works of the world's great masters in the art of letters, the creators of the things of beauty that are a joy for ever.

H. G. S.

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ODD MOMENTS

PROSE-POEMS.

The poetry of prose and the poetry of verse must not be compared together. Their laws of expression are different. That the magic of the power of verse is, in its own domain, immensely greater than that of prose, is indisputable. Nevertheless, the poetry of prose has a very real existence. Without aspiring to the peculiar power of verse it has its own perfections; it has its own *curiosa felicitas* of words, its own delectable and haunting melodies. It is true that instances of its perfection are extremely rare. Yet these are sometimes to be found; instances in which a poetic thought is perfectly expressed; so that although verse might say it differently, it could not in that instance say it better, or with more telling power.

Such an instance is the brief but exquisitely beautiful prose-poem which Landor puts into

the mouth of Æsop. He, desiring that in the life of Rhodope "The Summer may be calm, the Autumn calmer, and the Winter never come," and being answered with a fond remonstrance, "I must die then earlier?" replies:—

> Laodameia died; Helen died; Leda, the beloved of Jupiter, went before. There are no fields of amaranth on this side of the grave; there are no voices, O Rhodope, that are not soon mute, however tuneful; there is no name, with whatever emphasis of passionate love repeated, of which the echo is not faint at last.

What verse, except the rarest, was ever sweeter or took the ear more surely captive? And this of Landor's also may compare with it. It may be called the Depths of Love:—

> There is a gloom in deep love, as in deep water: there is a silence in it which suspends the foot, and the folded arms and the dejected head are the images it reflects. No voice shakes its surface; the Muses themselves approach it with a tardy and a timid step, and with a low and tremulous and melancholy song.

There is not much in our language which can really rival this. Landor himself rarely broke into such singing. In truth, the spirit of his prose was "vowed unto austerity"; it loved the hermit's cell, the vigil, and the scourge of cords, better than the "gorgeous storms of music," and the glow of painted panes. His mind was of that curious cast, in this resembling

Browning's, which has the gift of turning words to music, and which yet seems careless or disdainful of its power; in consequence of which misfortune we are accustomed to receive from these great men ten volumes of the words of Mercury to one of Apollo's songs. Let us remember, for our comfort, that the rarity of jewels makes them of a richer value, and be thankful even for what we have.

But such fragments of poetic prose are not, in the strictest sense, prose-poems; for a poem is a work of art, designed to stand alone, rounded, complete, and self-sustained. Prose-poems of this finished kind are among the rarest forms which literature has taken in our language. The specimens which we possess are scattered through the works of a few great writers. If we attempt to reckon up the list of them, we shall find the task before us only too brief and easy; for, in truth, we possess no more than a few scattered jewels. It will not, alas! take long to count them, though we count as slowly and as gloatingly as a miser tells his hoard.

In such a summary as that proposed, the three Dreams of Landor stand almost at the head, "The Dream of Euthymedes," "The Dream of Petrarca," and, above all, "The Dream of

Boccaccio." The last, which is too long for purpose of quotation, and too fine to be disjointed, contains a " Dream within a Dream,"—the scenes which passed before the eyes of Boccaccio when first he drank the waters of forgetfulness from the vase of Fiammetta. One passage may be cited from the introduction to this Dream, as an apt illustration of what prose can do, and of what, except in its last perfection it cannot do. It is spoken by Petrarca to Boccaccio :—

> Poets know the haunts of poets at first sight : and he who loved Laura—O Laura ! did I say he who loved thee ?—hath whisperings where those feet would wander which have been restless after Fiammetta.

The very spirit of poetry is in these words, and yet they seem to fail of full perfection ; they do not fill the soul with music, as does the finest verse ; nor have they quite the sweet and haunting charm of such miracles of prose as this :—

> I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved, that ye tell him that I am sick of love.

Nothing in Landor's work quite equals this. But then—what does ?

Among English authors of prose-poems, three names, after Landor's, stand out pre-eminent—the names of De Quincey, Poe, and

Ruskin. Each of these writers is possessed of a power and charm peculiarly his own. Neither has much in common with the others. The change from Landor to De Quincey is immense ; from Landor's idiom, brief, self-restrained, even when (too rarely) " musical as is Apollo's lute," to De Quincey's Nile-like overflow, at times in its diffuseness spreading like waste waters, yet rising at its best into a movement almost like the " solemn planetary wheelings " of the verse of Milton. Compare a Dream of his with one of Landor's. Both are noble ; but the difference is world-wide.

The dream commenced with a music which now I often heard in dreams—a music of preparation and of awakening suspense ; a music like the opening of the Coronation Anthem, and which, like *that,* gave the feeling of a vast march, of infinite cavalcades filing off, and the tread of innumerable armies. The morning was come of a mighty day, a day of crisis and of final hope for human nature, then suffering some mysterious eclipse, and labouring in some dire extremity. Somewhere, I knew not where—somehow, I knew not how—by some beings, I knew not whom,—a battle, a strife, an agony, was conducting,—was evolving like a great drama or piece of music. Then, like a chorus, the passion deepened. Some greater interest was at stake ; some mightier cause than ever yet the sword had pleaded, or trumpet had proclaimed. Then came sudden alarms : hurryings to and fro : trepidations of innumerable fugitives, I know not whether from the good cause or the bad : darkness

and lights: tempest and human faces: and, at last, with the sense that all was lost, female forms, and the features that were worth all the world to me and but a moment allowed—and clasped hands, and heart-breaking partings, and then—everlasting farewells! And with a sigh, such as the caves of hell sighed when the incestuous mother uttered the abhorred name of Death, the sound was reverberated—everlasting farewells! And again, and yet again reverberated—everlasting farewells!

De Quincey's Dreams, it must not be forgotten, though now embedded in the substance of other work, were separately written, and designed to stand alone. The one above given, together with the three from "Suspiria de Profundis"—the "Mater Lacrymarum" above all—touches the high-water mark of poetic prose. And, like Landor's, De Quincey's highest flights are dreams; a fact which leads one to remark the curious fondness—curious, that is, in extent, though in itself most natural—which minds of great imaginative power have felt for embodying their conceptions in the form of dreams and visions. In all ages has this been the case. In a vision Isaiah saw the Seraph flying with a coal from off the altar. In a vision the Spirit stood before Job. In a vision the author of the Apocalypse saw the woman clothed in scarlet, and Apollyon cast into the pit, and Death on the pale horse. So also in a vision Bunyan saw his pilgrim, journeying through

perils. So Novalis saw visions, so Richter dreamed dreams. In a vision (recorded in the only prose-poem he has left us) Lamb saw the Child-Angel—most beautiful of apparitions—who keeps in heaven perpetual childhood, and still goes lame and lovely.

Poe's prose-poems stand apart. In their peculiar characteristics no other writings in the world resemble these. Nor is this wonderful—for what mortal ever resembled their extraordinary creator? His was a cast of mind beyond all other men's unearthly. His spirit set up her abiding house in a strange and weird land. It was a land haunted by shapes of loveliness and by shapes of terror; a land in which were sights and sounds to freeze the blood; but a land which also held in its odd angles the Island of the Fay and the Valley of the Many-coloured Grass. His style became, when he so desired, a power which added a deeper colour of romance to what was in itself romantic, as sunset wraps some wild land of ruins in its glow of sombre fires. Undoubtedly Poe's finest effort is the piece called "Silence." It is a piece which stands among the finest specimens existing of the power of prose to take poetic tone, the power which loads a sentence with impres-

siveness. The sweet and limpid music of Landor's "Depths of Love" is far away. The words move forward, in the phrase of Casca, like "a tempest dropping fire." Take any paragraph, at random:—

> And, all at once, the moon arose through the thin, ghastly mist, and was crimson in colour. And mine eyes fell upon a huge grey rock which stood by the shore of the river, and was lighted by the light of the moon. And the rock was grey and ghastly, and tall—and the rock was grey. Upon its front were characters engraven in the stone; and I walked through the morass of water-lilies, until I came close unto the shore, that I might read the characters upon the stone. But I could not decipher them. And I was going back into the morass when the moon shone with a fuller red, and I turned and looked again upon the rock and upon the characters; and the characters were *Desolation*.

Poe's other work in this direction, prose-poems which may stand in the same rank with "Silence," are "The Island of the Fay," and "Eleanora." But all his poetry, whether prose or verse, is such as has no counterpart elsewhere. Alike at its best and at its weakest, it bears the recognised impression of his mind. It breathes in every line its own peculiar fragrance, not to be mistaken—as the honey of Hymettus tasted of the wild thyme.

Ruskin comes into our category by reason

rather of his unrivalled mastery of poetic prose than for any deliberate prose-poem, which indeed, he has never set himself to write. There are passages without number in his works in which word-painting and even eloquence—two things vastly different from poetry, however often they are confused with it—are made poetical by sheer excess of beauty. This distinction between description which is poetical, and description which, however fine, is merely graphic, is a distinction which, if rigorously applied, at once puts out of court nine-tenths of what is generally called poetic prose. An illustration here is far better than any argument, for the distinction is one that must be felt, not argued. Compare, then, together these two descriptions of the same scene — the scene of Turner's picture of "Chryses on the Shore." The first is by a recent critic, the second is Ruskin's.

The large picture of Chryses merits attention not only from its fine drawing of rocks, trees, and above all of waves, but also from its departure from the conventional brown landscape-manner of the time. We have here warm and noble colour; the golden light of sunset suffuses the whole scene, and turns from blue to green the sea round the path of the sun.

This is a fair instance of the description which is pictorial, but not poetical. Now take the next :—

There the priest is on the beach alone, the sun setting. He prays to it as it descends ; flakes of its sheeted light are borne to him by the melancholy waves, and cast away with sighs upon the sand.

This is a prose-poem. It is a poem both in tone and cadence. Its words have something of the power usually found only in the finest verse. Like that, it steals upon the soul with music, dies off, and leaves it satisfied.

And what is this on Venice ?

— a ghost upon the sands of the sea, so weak, so quiet, so bereft of all but her loveliness, that we might well doubt, as we watched her faint reflection in the mirage of the lagoon, which was the City and which the Shadow.

Or this on lichens ?

Unfading as motionless, the worm frets them not, and the Autumn wastes not. Strong in loveliness, they neither blanch in heat, nor pine in frost. To them, slow-fingered, constant-hearted, is entrusted the weaving of the dark, eternal tapestries of the hills ; to them, slow-pencilled, iris-dyed, the tender framing of their endless imagery. Sharing the stillness of the unimpassioned rock, they share also its endurance ! and while the winds of departing Spring scatter the white hawthorn blossom like drifted snow, and Summer dims on the parched meadow the drooping of its cowslip-gold, far above, among the mountains, the silver lichen-spots rest, star-like, on the stone ; and the gathering orange stain upon the edge of yonder western peak reflects the sunsets of a thousand years.

Or, as a last example, this on Imagination ?

> Imagination is a pilgrim on the earth, and her home is in heaven. Shut her from the fields of the celestial mountains, bar her from breathing their lofty, sun-warmed air ; and we may as well turn upon her the last bolt of the Tower of Famine, and give the keys to the keeping of the wildest surge that washes Capraja and Gorgona.

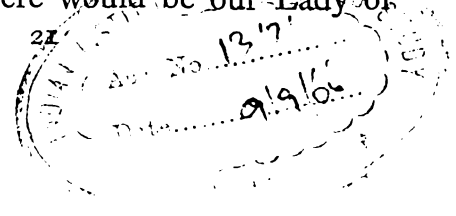
Such a passage bears the highest mark of the poetic mind ; the mind of which even the most abstract thought comes forth in form and shape, calls up a train of glorious imageries, as a sultan calls his slaves, and so appears before the eye in visible presentment—rich, impressive, solemn, or gorgeous as the procession of a king. But a consideration of this power, in which no prose writer ever rivalled Ruskin, would beguile us from our purpose. We must go no more astray. Our design was not to wander in the wild and witching regions of poetic prose, but to reckon up our stock of strict prose-poems. And in truth, when we descend to the work of weaker writers, it is to find, too often, that the Muse, released from building verse into a finished structure, is apt to prove contented with a heap of rich material. The pilgrim whom she undertakes to guide, far from finding himself ushered into some fair Palace of Art, made beautiful with loving skill, firm-built on its

crag-platform, fringed with its golden gallery, a statue poised on every peak, its pictured windows glowing like fixed flames, finds himself perpetually, like Clarence among the wedges of gold and heaps of pearls, surrounded by waste wrecks of futile treasure.

What, then, of strict prose-poems have we left?—of the highest rank, that is, what have we? Hawthorn, to whom some may be disposed to turn, is, at least to certain readers, repellently self-conscious. Coleridge has given us "The Wanderings of Cain" and the "Allegoric Vision"; Dickens has given us, "A Child's Dream of a Star"; Christopher North, "The Fairy's Funeral." But these—and such as these are all we have remaining—rank far below the highest. These are no rivals of the power of verse. On the whole, our list of greatest must consist of five names only—Landor, Poe, Lamb, Ruskin, and De Quincey. *Inter viburna cupressi.*

Collections of verse-poems are not rare; but of prose-poems proper no such collection has as yet been made. And this is strange. It is true that the volume which collected our possessions would, if made, be far from bulky. Yet it is not too much to say that such a volume would con-

tain specimens of the noblest writing in our language. Glowing imagery, rich and varied music, would combine to make its pages "a perpetual feast of nectared sweets." In these would meet together all the lovely and awful creations of the great men at whose writings we have been glancing. There would be Fiammetta, holding the vase of magic water, the lilies gleaming in her hair. There would be the caverns, the warm ocean, the innumerable arches, and the breezy sunshine of the mole of Baiæ; and the grottoes, forts, and dells of Naples. There would be the dust of Posilippo, "soft as the feathers in the wings of Sleep"; the form of Love hiding his arrow-barb behind his heels, and Hope, whose face is always shadowed by a coloured cloud. There would be the crashing forest and the yellow ghastly marsh beside the River Zaire, with the man trembling on the rock, and the demon hiding among the sighing lilies beneath the crimson moon. There would be the ghostly Island, and the frail canoe, and the fading Fay upon the shadowy waters; and the asphodels, the red flamingoes, the singing river and the golden clouds of the Valley of the Many-coloured Grass. There would be the Babe "who goeth lame and lovely," and the grave of Adah by the River Pison; and there would be our Lady of



Tears, with the diadem about her brow, calling by night and day for vanished faces. Well might the slender volume which gathered up such treasures bear for the motto of its title page this inscription, " Infinite Riches in a Little Room."

SHYLOCK HAS IT OUT WITH SHAKESPEARE

It was a winter night in the year 1614, and Mr. William Shakespeare, then living in retirement in his native town of Stratford-upon-Avon, was sitting cosily before the fire, with a bottle of red wine beside him, and his toes upon the fender. He was quite alone, and had no expectation of a caller. The greater, therefore, was his surprise when, as he chanced to lift his eyes, he became aware that someone was sitting in the great chair on the other side of the fire. The figure was that of an old man, dressed in a black gabardine, with white hair and beard, and a pair of singularly piercing eyes.

" Mr. William Shakespeare ? " said the old man, with a somewhat grim smile.

" That is my name," said Mr. Shakespeare. staring, " and you, I make no doubt, are Mr. Shylock. True, except in my mind's eye, I

have not looked upon your face before. But, surely I am not mistaken." The other bowed. " And to what am I indebted for the honour ? "

" That," replied Mr. Shylock gravely, " I have come to tell you. In the limbo where I dwell—the world of Shadows which the men of mighty genius have created, and have so filled with life that we can never die—I have long meditated such a visit. The fact is, Mr. Shakespeare, I have a bone or two to pick with you. An ancient grudge, if I may call it so."

" Indeed," said Mr. Shakespeare. " I regret to hear you say so, yet you touch my curiosity. I pray you, speak."

" In the first place, then," said Mr. Shylock " In that matter of the trial of Shylock *v.* Antonio, you made me out the villain of the piece. And yet you knew—none so well as you—that the men you chose as heroes—Bassanio, Lorenzo, Gratiano, and the rest—were no better than a pack of foul-tongued boors, as well as cheats and sharpers."

" Softly ! Softly ! " urged Mr. Shakespeare.

" Put yourself in my place," returned the other, " and what would you have done ? To

lend out money gratis—is that fair business competition? But let that pass. If *you* had been a merchant, and a fellow-dealer kicked your shins or spat in your face, would *you* have liked it?"

"No," said Mr. Shakespeare slowly.

"If folk had called you misbeliever, cut-throat, dog, would you have borne it with a patient shrug?"

"No," said Mr. Shakespeare as before.

"And what," said Mr. Shylock, his voice rising—"what if a riff-raff stripling had run off with your daughter—nay, had made the girl a thief to rob you of your ducats, of a ring which you would not have given for a wilderness of monkeys?"

"Softly," said Mr. Shakespeare again. "All this may be true; but touching that matter of the pound of flesh——"

"Which I never got," broke in the other, "which I was jockeyed out of by so vile a quibble! And that was all your fault—your doing. If you had acted fairly by me I should have won the case hands down."

"I fail to follow you," said Mr. Shakespeare.

"Your Portia made the point that I had the right to claim my pound of flesh—that was never in doubt, nor could be—yet I had no right to a single drop of blood. A clever girl, I grant.

But I had a perfect answer, as you must be well aware."

"A perfect answer, eh?" said Mr. Shakespeare, his eyebrows rising.

"Most certainly I had," said Mr. Shylock. "if you, who knew my character, had left me free to act according to it I should at once have handed over the grocer's scales and the butcher's knife with which you armed me—with some absurdity, I think—and have replied that all I wanted was my pound of flesh—a claim never in dispute—and it was for them, not me, to cut it off and hand it over. If they preferred to keep the blood, why, well and good. I was perfectly prepared to accept delivery of the goods on that condition. What reply was open to them? Instead of crawling out of court like a whipped cur, I should have had them writhing. And this is my chief grievance: not so much that you held me up before the public as a villain as that you made me act like a fool."

"You speak in heat," said Mr. Shakespeare. "And perhaps it is too much to expect that you will think of *me*. I will grant you that in that respect I did not fully hold the mirror up to nature. But, as man to man, I put it to you: if I had let you act as you suggest—and which

would, no doubt, have been much more in accordance with your natural sagacity—where would have been my play ? "

" Plague take your play ! " was Mr. Shylock's answer. And with so much energy was it delivered that Mr. Shakespeare started—and awoke. And, behold, it was a dream.

PARODY IN PERFECTION.

What is a perfect parody ? If we regard a parody as a burlesque, a caricature of a writer's style, a study of his mannerisms rather than of his manner, we shall find few specimens more excellent than that which Calverley, that mocking-bird of genius, made on " The Ring and the Book " of Robert Browning.

Here is the description of the poet preparing to go out for a walk :—

> Then I popp'd pen i' stand, scratch'd ear, wip'd snout,
> Sniff'd—tch !—at snuffbox ; tumbled up, he-hee'd,
> Haw-haw'd (not hee-haw'd, that's another guess thing :)
> Then fumbled at, and stumbled out of, door ;
> I shoved the timber ope wi' my omoplat ;
> And *in vestibulo*, i' the lobby, to-wit
> (Iacobi Facciolati's rendering, sir,)
> Donn'd galligaskins, antigropeloes,

And so forth ; and, complete with hat and gloves,
One on and one a-dangle i' my hand,
And ombrifuge (Lord love you !), case o' rain,
I flopp'd forth, 'sbuddikins ! on my own ten toes.

No caricature could be cleverer—but it is a caricature. No one could ever mistake it for an original piece of Browning's verse. Now, where shall we find the parody that reproduces so exactly, not the style alone, but the very soul and spirit of an author that the result could palm itself upon an expert as the writer's own production, just as a forged painting has more than once been known to cheat the world of critics as the work of a great master ? Real successes of this kind are very rare. I can think of only two or three—and one of these was not intended as a parody at all. The lines that follow appeared, unsigned, in a periodical in 1820—so exactly in the style of Keats that they have been republished in editions of his works as, self-evidently, lines that no other poet could have written :—

Oh ! what a voice is silent. It was soft
As mountain-echoes, when the winds aloft
(The gentle winds of summer) meet in caves ;
Or when in sheltered places the white waves
Are wakened into music, as the breeze
Dimples and stems the current : or as trees
Shaking their green locks in the days of June :
Or Delphic girls when to the maiden moon
They sang harmonious prayers. . . .

—Like the low voice of Syrinx, when she ran
Into the forests from Arcadian Pan :
Or sad Œnone's, when she pined away
For Paris, or (and yet 'twas not so gay)
As Helen's whisper when she came to Troy,
Half sham'd to wander with that blooming boy.
Like air-touch'd harps in flowery casements hung ;
Like unto lovers' ears the wild words sung
In garden bowers at twilight : or the tone
Of flutes upon the waters heard alone.

These lovely lines deceived the finest critics, including even one of the elect, Rossetti. Yet, as was afterwards discovered, they were not the work of Keats at all, but of Bryan Procter.

Many years ago the following paragraph and verses appeared in an American newspaper :—

In the house of a gentleman in this city we saw a poem written on the fly-leaf of an old book. Noticing the initials " E. A. P." at the bottom, it struck us that possibly we had run across a bonanza.

The owner of the book said that he did not know who was the author of the poem. His grandfather, who gave him the book, kept an inn in Chesterfield, near Richmond, Virginia. One night a young man who showed plainly the marks of dissipation rapped at the door, asked if he could stay all night, and was shown to a room.

That was the last they saw of him. When they went next morning to call him to breakfast he had gone, but had left the book, on the fly-leaf of which he had written these verses :—

LEONANIE.

Leonanie—angels named her,
And they took the light
Of the laughing stars, and framed her
In a veil of white ;
And they made her hair of gloomy
Midnight, and her eyes of bloomy
Moonshine, and they brought her to me
In the silent night.

In a solemn night of summer,
When my heart of gloom
Blossomed up to greet the comer
Like a rose in bloom ;
All forebodings that distressed me
I forgot as joy caressed me,—
Lying joy that caught and pressed me
In the arms of doom.

Only spake the little lisper
In the angels' tongue,
Yet I, listening, heard her whisper,
" Songs are only sung
Here below that they may grieve you,—
Tales are told you to deceive you,—
So must Leonanie leave you
While her love is young."

Then God smiled, and it was morning
Matchless and supreme,
Heaven's glory seemed adorning
Earth with many a gleam.
Every heart but mine seemed gifted
With the voice of prayer, and lifted
Where my Leonanie drifted
From me like a dream.

E. A. P.

"E. A. P."—Edgar Allan Poe! So many of the finest judges were convinced—and not without a reason. For the lines have all Poe's spirit of romance. I confess I like them strangely. The poem seems to have come from that enchanted land of his where all the forms of things are "vaporous and unaccountable," where the air is ghostly with the scent of last year's roses, and where words are melodies without a meaning, or but the meaning of a sorcerer's tune.

I take this to be the finest parody on record. For a parody it is. It was written by J. Whitcomb Riley, as a hoax.

PHARAOH IN FICTION.

Was Tutankhamen Pharaoh—the Pharaoh of Moses? Some experts are inclined to think so. Perhaps his mummy, if discovered, will throw light upon the question. In the meantime, let us call to mind that, seventy years or so ago, there was discovered, in this same Valley of Kings, the mummy of the Queen who followed Pharaoh on the throne. This queen, wonderful to state, was not of royal blood, but a young girl of the people, whom he loved to madness and to

whom he left the kingdom. The whole story was found written on papyrus in her coffin.

So, at least, it is recorded in "Le Roman de la Momie." And this romance of Gautier's, in which the scenes of ancient Thebes are pictured with a wealth of splendid detail which renders it a perfect miracle of word-painting, is well worth consideration at the present time.

On a day of summer heat, Tahoser, orphan daughter of the high-priest Petamounoph, is sitting, wrapped in melancholy, in a chamber of her palace, listening idly to the music of her waiting-women in the cool lilac-tinted room. Beside her chair of gilded woodwork, touched with red, with arms of carven lions and purple cushions starred with gold, stands a little table, with a pot of lotus-blossom, a bronze mirror on an ivory stand, a box of perfumes carried by a young girl, naked to the waist, carved as the figure of a swimming nymph lifting her box above the water.

Tahoser's face was of the pure Egyptian type. Shadows of faint gold and rose just kindled its dark pallor, in which shone large sombre eyes, the eyebrows lined with antimony, the lids just touched with paint. Her parted lips, coloured like the bloom of a pomegranate, showed between them a moist gleam of bluish pearl. Her nose, depressed a little at the base, was as pure in line as that

of a carved Isis. The round curve of her chin shone like ivory. On the black brilliance of her hair she wore a kind of casque, formed by a guinea-hen, the wings half spread beside her temples, the bird's pretty head above her forehead, the starred tail sweeping down her neck. Her ear-rings were large discs of gold. A pendant dropped with gold and with cornelian hung upon her breast, which showed white and rosy through her filmy dress. Three bracelets, set with gold and lapis-lazuli, ringed her slender wrists. Her small feet, in shoes of creamy leather arabesqued with gold, rested on a cedar stool enamelled green and red.

There she sits in melancholy, for she is sick of love—love for a young Israelite, Poeri, whom she has only seen. But that morning Pharaoh is to ride in triumph through the city, as a conqueror of war. She puts off her day-dream and goes out with her women to behold the spectacle And as it files before her in its unending splendour, it seems to file before the reader also—the musicians with their tambours of wild asses's skin and sistrums of bronze rings, the long lines of wooden-collared captives, the dusky slave-girls smirking even in their tears, the standards of the sacred hawk—the heralds calling out the list of spoils—the elephants, giraffes and panthers—and then the censers and the ostrich-fans before the form of Pharaoh in his jewelled litter, a tame lion at his feet, his

hands carrying the bow and sceptre, his dark, pale sharp-cut features like a granite god's, with enormous eyes that seem aware of nothing round him, but, like a sphinx's, to gaze into eternity alone.

Yet these mysterious eyes had seen Tahoser. That glance was big with fate. Pharaoh had received a love-shaft through the heart. Next day he sends a love-gift to Tahoser's house—gold, gems, rich silken tissues, ankle-rings. But the slaves who bear it are met with a surprise. Tahoser has disappeared!

"Blood in those regions is not blood but flame." She has gone wild with love. Unknown, even to her slaves, she has stolen away to the villa of Poeri, and taken service with him as a lute-player. Her first duty is to sing him into slumber. But this romance is broken by the fact that Poeri is in love with a young Hebrew beauty, to whom he pays a visit every evening. One night Tahoser, resolved to see her rival, follows him. He takes the only boat to cross the Nile. Not to be shaken off, she swims behind him. Few scenes in fiction have a stranger glamour of romance than the description of the unconscious lover rowing to the girl he loves, with the girl who loves him swimming

softly in the moonlight after him, hardly daring to break the surface of the water.

She lands half-dazed, half-dead. But she follows Poeri to Rachel's dwelling and peeps in upon the happy lovers. There, after Poeri has departed, she is found by Rachel, exhausted, on the threshold. Rachel takes her in, nurses her, and saves her life. When Poeri comes next evening, he is amazed and mystified to find his lute-player under Rachel's care. But, as one of the King's stewards, he is aware that Pharaoh's emissaries are searching for Tahoser. He guesses at the truth. And so also does the ancient slave of Rachel, Thamar, who instantly steals off to Pharaoh with the tidings.

Then comes the striking scene.

Pharaoh is sitting, hour after hour, upon the terrace of his palace, waiting for a messenger to bring him news that Tahoser has been discovered. There he sits, silent, unmoving, " like a statue of black basalt." The giant city spreads itself before him in its splendour, the palm-tree balancing its fan above the mirrored Nile, the street of the two thousand sphinxes, the temples from whose mighty pylons Time itself runs off, untracing, like a water-drop from marble, where the mystic Orb expands its

everlasting wings, or where the sacred Ibis, poised upon a single leg, stands motionless, his body sharp against the calcined blue. But the master of them all sits lonely, aching for a girl he cannot find. Only at intervals, when a messenger arrives with the repeated news of failure, "a granite arm is lifted from the sculptured torso, the sceptre comes down like a thunder-bolt, and the messenger crashes dead upon the stones."

Then comes the old witch, Thamar, with her tidings. In an instant the granite king springs into life. He leaps into his chariot, drives headlong to the house of Rachel, seizes Tahoser, shrieking, in his arms, and, like Pluto bearing Proserpine to Hell, thunders with her through the streets of Thebes.

At the palace, however, his mood softens. He tells her that he will not claim her until she gives him back a lotus-flower in token that she loves him. When he leaves her it is to give audience to a strange old man who comes to seek his favour. This old man is Moses.

Then the tale follows the Bible story. We live through the plagues of Egypt. The Israelites depart. Pharaoh, who has lost his only son among the first-born, mad with fury

and despair, names Tahoser his successor, and followed by six hundred chariots of his army, drives after them upon the road between the waters of the sea.

The last of the Israelites, among whom were Poeri, Rachel and Thamar, gave themselves up as lost. But at that moment Moses made a sign. The chariot wheels fell off, the mighty walls of water rolled in, crashed together, and the sea, re-forming, tossed men, cars and horses like straws among the foam. Only Pharaoh, erect upon his floating chariot, mad with pride and fury, launched his last arrows at the landing foe; then, half engulfed, he seized his javelin, and, his right arm alone above the waters, hurled it, powerless but defiant, against the unknown God.

And that is how it was that Tahoser became Queen of Egypt.

A PEN-PAINTER OF WOMEN.—THEOPHILE GAUTIER.

How do the writers of romance, in prose or verse, set their heroines before the reader so that he may realise their beauty? In three ways. First, by not describing them at all, but only their effect on those who see them. Thus Homer paints no portrait of his Helen, but only tells us that when she walked abroad in Troy the old men, even while they cursed her as the cause

of evils, muttered that she was lovely as the queens of Heaven.

The second method is a rapid sketch, touched off in a few strokes with a free brush. Such, for example, is Tennyson's little colour-drawing of Lynette :—

> A damsel of high lineage and a brow
> May-blossom, and a cheek of apple-blossom ;
> Hawk-eyes ; and lightly was her slender nose
> Tip-tilted like the petal of a flower.

Such, again, is his vignette of Cleopatra :—

> I turning saw, throned on a flowery rise,
> One sitting on a crimson scarf unrolled ;
> A queen with swarthy cheeks and bold black eyes,
> Brow-bound with burning gold.

Of this, however, it is safe to say that, however vivid, it is, as a portrait, nothing like the sitter. The sketch is one of an Egyptian beauty. But Cleopatra was a Ptolemy—that is, a Greek. She is much more likely to have been, like Helen, clear-cut and lily-skinned, with eyes of violet and locks of gold. Though that also is not quite as Gautier painted her, as we are going to see.

For now we come to the third method, which is to paint a portrait at full length, as rich in detail as a canvas by Van Eyck. Of this method Gautier was the master without rival, not only

as a craftsman, as one of the greatest of virtuosos in the art of words, but in the infinite variety of his work. It is hardly too much to say that he has left in his romances studies of types of beauty from half the nations of the world.

What does *he* make of Cleopatra ?

At the end of the garden-alley lay a large wide bath, a swimming-pool, with four flights of porphyry steps descending through the diamond water to a sand of powdered gold. Carved women-figures, round the margin, threw up a spray of perfume, starring the mirror with a silvery rain. Upon the topmost step, in all the pride and grace of beauty, Cleopatra stood erect, inclined a little forward, like a carven Venus just about to quit her pedestal. Her transparent cheeks, pale with the imprint of strange passions, were just kindled from their pallor by a tinge of lightest rose. Her temples, blond as amber, showed a faint tracery of azure veins. Her smooth brow, low and broad, like the brows of antique statues, ran in a line of beauty to her small straight nose, clear-cut as a cameo, with rosy nostrils palpitating, like a tiger's. Her eyes were narrow-lidded, with eyebrows hardly curved from the straight line. Her mouth, small and rounded, the upper lip carved into a fine arc, showed in the red and dewy under-lip a fire, a zest unspeakable of life and all its joys. Into her hair was woven, like a water-spirit's, a twine of reeds and lotus-blossom, while her linen tunic, dropt from its golden buckle, lay in a snowy drift beside her feet.

She tried the water with one rosy heel.

That is a Leighton picture, though painted with the pen.

Now, by way of contrast, let us take his study of " the purest type of English beauty," Musidora. The background of this picture is a gorgeous banquet chamber, the black oak walls adorned with carven figures and aglow with Titian paintings, a buffet borne on silver dolphins, a table gleaming under crystal lustres, with flagons, salvers, and Venetian glass. There Musidora sits in languid loveliness, a negro boy behind her chair :—

Musidora, with the sea-green eyes, was a beauty of eighteen. Never was poet's dream so like a painted angel. Her ethereal flesh, filmed over, like a fruit, with its own bloom, seemed to be illumined by a light within. Her hair, of threads so silky-fine that the least breath made them waver, cascaded in their sunny spirals from a diadem of pearls. Her gown, of faintest green, set off the limpid whiteness of her neck and arms, the wrist encircled by an asp of emerald with diamond eyes. Her small mouth, like a child's, was touched with melancholy—sad as a marble Virtue looking on an evil world.

Yet a keen eye might have caught a glimpse of something less seraphic. Those languid eyes with yellow fibrils in the iris, had something of the eyes of a Delilah, sweet and cruel. At the corners of that mouth, so rosy-tender, there came at times a twitch of petulance or passion—a flicker of the dragon's tail within.

There she sat, with glass unlifted, her glance roving and her red lips parted—a fallen angel, weary of the world.

Such are but two examples from that palace of painting which the great French artist has made splendid with the pictures of his dreams.

"JEWELS FIVE WORDS LONG."

When Tennyson wrote of

> Jewels five-words long
> That on the stretched fore-finger of all Time
> Sparkle for ever,

he wrought, himself, a jewel-phrase of purest water. It is true that it exceeds the five-words limit, but he has many such that come within it. Here is one :—

> Laburnums, dropping-wells of fire.

Or again, in one of his first poems, the description of Egyptian statues in their sphinx-like majesty :—

> Dreadful Memnonian countenances calm—

A tremendous line to have been written by a boy !

But indeed, all the great poets have their jewel-phrases. Let us pick out a few, and watch them sparkle.

Many of these jewels consist of a single happy word—the *curiosa felicitas* of Horace—as when

Byron speaks of " the starry Galileo "—Shelley, of " the moonlight-coloured may "—Keats, of old Saturn, disenthroned, lifting up his " realmless eyes " ; of a girl taking off at night her " warmed jewels " ; of the guests at a Greek wedding talking in " a vowelled undersong."

When Æschylus in three words described a sea in sunshine he created a jewel-phrase which has taxed translators to rival in its compressed beauty. " The innumerable laughter of the waves " is the most literal. " The many-twinkling smile of Ocean " perhaps comes nearer to the poetic spirit of it.

Here is one of Wordsworth's. It is an image of Time.

Passing on with starry crest—

One of the most mysteriously sublime lines ever written.

Keats, of all poets except Shakespeare, has most jewel-phrases. Here is just one :—

Lucent syrops tinct with cinnamon,

a line which, as Leigh Hunt observed, requires to be read with the tip of the tongue.

If we go outside the strict five words, if we allow ourselves a little latitude, there is literally no end to these jewel-phrases which the great poets have wrought for our delight. De

Quincey thought that Wordsworth's image of the Lady of the Lake, "Sole-sitting by the shores of old Romance," excelled in beauty any single line in literature.

♣

For my own part, I should be hard put to it to choose a single line; but if I might go as far as two I think I should incline to Shelley's description of the statues in the temple of Prometheus :—

> Praxitelean shapes whose marble smiles
> Fill the hushed air with everlasting love.

♣ ♣ ♣

SIMILES.

It is remarkable how many of the wisest and wittiest sayings in the world have been conveyed to it in the form of similitude. Similitude, indeed, in its widest sense, embraces many forms—Metaphor, Allegory, Fable, Parable, Parody, even Pun. But even of simile, pure and simple, it is astonishing how vast a number of the very best things in every branch of literature owe their effect to its employment. And it is curious also to observe how the effect of a fine simile (a *rara avis*) depends upon almost as many different causes as there are branches of

literature in which it may occur. Whether it be employed merely as an illustration, or whether it be introduced, as is often the case in poetry, solely for the sake of its own power, or beauty, or *grotesquerie* of effect, a really fine simile, as Johnson said of Goldsmith, touches nothing which it does not adorn.

Of the lowest order, that of the grotesque, the following, from "Hudibras," is a fair example :—

> And, like a lobster boiled, the morn
> From black to red began to turn.

In this case it will be observed that neither image has anything ludicrous in itself—the great heavens flushed with sunrise, and the lobster boiled to redness. The effect of *grotesquerie* results from the utter dissimilarity of the objects of comparison in all except their single point of resemblance.

If the imageries compared are, one or both, ridiculous in themselves, the simile, of course, gains effect. In Hood's "Epping Hunt," Huggins is shot over his horse's head into a furze-bush—

> Where, sharper set than hunger is,
> He squatted all forlorn,
> *And like a bird was singing out*
> *While sitting on a thorn.*

These objects of comparison have again as little as possible in common. It is true that both Huggins and the bird sit and sing upon a thorn—but it is the extreme dissimilarity between the motive and the nature of their melodies which makes the simile effective. It will be seen, moreover, that only one side of the comparison is ludicrous *per se*—namely, that of Huggins on his thorn ; the figure of the bird is, in itself, quite the reverse. Take now a case where both imageries are separately ludicrous. Mr. Horatio Sparkins asks Miss Theresa Malderton to dance with him :—

" Miss Malderton," said Horatio, after the ordinary salutations, and bowing very low, " may I be permitted to presume to hope that you will allow me to have the pleasure——"

" I don't *think* I'm engaged," said Miss Theresa with a dreadful affectation of indifference, " but really—so many——"

Horatio looked *handsomely miserable, like Hamlet slipping on a piece of orange-peel.*

The more this simile is considered, the better will it appear—in fact, a finer burlesque simile will not easily be found.

Nothing gives point to a piece of satire like an apt simile. A capital instance may be found in Boswell's " Johnson." Boswell had been to hear a woman preach. " Sir," said the Doctor,

" a woman preaching is like a dog dancing on his hind legs. It is not done well ; but we are surprised to see it done at all."

A good simile lives long—its root strikes deep. No phrase of Lord Beaconsfield was more effective than that in which he compared his silent opponents to a range of extinct volcanoes. Nothing in the speeches of John Bright is better known, or oftener quoted, than the comparison of the seceders from his party to the followers of David at the cave of Adullam. Sir Fitzjames Stephen in his book on the impeachment of Sir Elijah Impey, says of the impassioned peroration of Sir Gilbert Elliot's charge, " To me, like most eloquence, it resembles nothing so much as mouldy wedding-cake." The effect of second-rate eloquence, as of second-rate poetry, on others besides Sir Fitzjames Stephen could hardly be more happily described.

Impey reminds one of Macaulay. No one knew the value of simile better than Macaulay himself. To take a single example from his " Essays." Speaking of Southey's changes of political opinion, and desiring to imply that Southey's opinions, whatever change they might

undergo, were always in the wrong, he thus proceeds :—

> He has passed from one extreme of political opinion to another, as *Satan in Milton went round the globe, contriving constantly to "ride with darkness."* Wherever the thickest shadow of the night may at any moment chance to fall, there is Mr. Southey. It is not everybody who could have so dexterously avoided blundering on the daylight in the course of a journey to the antipodes.

The bitterest invective would not have half the force of this comparison. Surely a more stinging passage never was penned.

Every one knows Macaulay's observation upon a certain simile in Robert Montgomery's poem:—

> The Soul aspiring pants its source to mount,
> As streams meander level with their fount.

"We take this," says Macaulay, with characteristic energy, "to be on the whole the worst similitude in the world. In the first place, no stream meanders, or can possibly meander, level with its fount. In the next place, if streams did meander level with their founts, no two motions can be less like each other than that of meandering level and that of mounting upwards."

❧

But there are greater poets (thank Heaven !) than Robert Montgomery ; and with poetic similes one might easily fill a bulky volume, and a very interesting and striking volume it would be. The first association of the words

"poetic simile" is with those long-drawn chains of imageries introduced in succession, chiefly for the sake of their own beauty of detail, in which Homer and Virgil delighted, and which later poets have imitated from them. Quotation here is needless, and would be superfluous. But there is another class of poetic simile which ought not to be passed over in silence. It consists in the same seizure of a chance resemblance which is the essence of *burlesque* similitude, but which, when it occurs in serious poetry, becomes what it used to be the fashion among critics to call "conceit." The following from Alexander Smith's "Life Drama" is an example :—

> His heart held a dead hope,
> As holds the wretched west the sunset's corse.

This is a pure conceit. There is no fitness, nor resemblance, in the imageries. The west is not wretched; the setting sun bears no resemblance to a corpse. The simile has neither power of illustration nor beauty of detail. In the same poem occurs another simile, which has also been criticised as a conceit :—

> I saw the moon
> Rise from dark waves that plucked at her.

But a little consideration will show that this is

a piece of imagery of a nature and effect quite different from the first. It is a piece of *description.* It shows with one brief touch what a page of laborious word-painting could not render more vivid—the plunging of the dark and restless waters, and the circle of the slow, white, rising moon. And so in the case of the famous simile of Alfred de Musset, which excited such a storm among the critics at the time of its appearance—it may be defended on the same principle :—

C'était, dans la nuit brune,
Sur le clocher jauni
La lune
Comme un point sur un i.

Now, to compare the moon over a church-spire to a dot over an "i," may or may not be a conceit. If such a simile occurred in a poem of passion and deep feeling, it would undoubtedly seem cold, fantastic, and out of place. But as part of a drawing of scenery, marking the position of the moon, it suggests, by a touch, a vast amount of detail which it would have taken long to describe ; it indicates not only the lateral position of the moon, but also her height in the sky—as far in proportion over the spire as the dot is over the "i." And yet perhaps the illustration is *too* ingenious ; the mind of the reader is

startled by a sense of incongruity. It is clever —but it is a trick.

Of all poets, Moore is the most addicted to the use of simile. His pages absolutely swarm with specimens, generally good, never very bad, always more or less ingenious.

> He knew no more of fear than one who dwells
> Beneath the tropics knows of icicles.

This is a fair example of his style. Perhaps a better one is the following :—

> And memory, like a drop that night and day
> Falls cold and ceaseless, wore my heart away.

Hardly can it be said of Moore's muse, as of the heroine of one of his own songs, " Rich and rare were the gems she wore." The adornments with which he decked her in such profusion do not always keep her from appearing tawdry. For a really great simile one must not search his works. He has diamond-dust in abundance, but no Koh-i-noor.

Many poets have a favourite piece of imagery which they do not hesitate to employ several times over. Coleridge, in his earlier days, was constantly bringing in the example of the upas-

tree as an illustration of faithlessness or treachery —a tree which, if it be not slandered, is accustomed to lull the weary traveller with its specious shade, and then kill him, while sleeping, with its poisonous fumes. Shelley was extremely fond of the image, which occurs many times in his works, of an eagle fighting with a serpent in mid-air.

There is in one of Alexander Smith's poems a rare instance of striking and impressive simile :—

> Across his sea of mind
> A thought came streaming like a blazing ship
> Upon a mighty wind.

Wordsworth's finest line, perhaps, indeed, the finest in the language, is that simile contained in his apostrophe to Milton :—

> Thy soul was like a star and dwelt apart.

Dante's similes are unrivalled for their illustrative power. For example, that of the Souls at Charon's ferry, who fall from the crags into the boat *like withered leaves*. How finely does this give the twirling motion of aimless, unresisting and despairing fall ! Again, the Spirits in Purgatory gaze with such intentness at the

figure of Dante, unfamiliar to their regions, that their brows are wrinkled

Like an old tailor at the needle's eye.

There is nothing ornamental about this image of the old tailor. It is the vividness with which it depicts the expression on the faces of the peering Spirits that makes the comparison effective.

There is in one of Dobell's poems a simile which involves an extraordinarily accurate piece of observation. The song of the nightingale, he says, falling out of the leafy tree,

Rings like a golden jewel down a golden stair.

The excellence of this comparison does not force itself irresistibly in an instant ; one might even pass it over without perceiving its full beauty. But observe it closely—the slow beginning—the likeness of the fall of note on note to the ring of gold on gold, as the jewel drops from stair to stair—the gathering swiftness—the distinct sounds at length blending into each other, as the rushing jewel grows in speed, as the notes pour faster and faster from the throat of the rapturous songster, until at last, too swift for utterance, they " close in a thick-warbled ecstacy."

The more closely these points of resemblance

are considered, the more clearly will it become apparent that the simile is both fine and bold.

Boldness is often the life of simile—but it requires a great artist to be at once bold and fine. In this respect, no poet can compare with Victor Hugo. The number, the originality, and the power of the similes to be found in his verses almost surpass belief. Who was it that compared to *ebony* the style of Tertullian, in its rich gloom and splendour? It was an admirable simile, whoever made it. But instances as bold and as fine as this, and not unlike it in character, swarm in the verses of Victor Hugo as thick as bees upon a bank of thyme. For boldness of imagination, indeed, he has no rival, except, perhaps, among the Eastern poets—a certain Chinese author, for example, who in one of his poems describing a flock of cranes in full flight says, with a fine excess of fancy :—

They lifted up their voices like a sail.

Nothing quite so audacious as this will be found in Victor Hugo or any other poet of the Western world. But as a single example of the exuberance with which his genius could pour forth a continued stream of rich and strik-

ing fantasies, take the following from a short poem entitled " Sunsets." And here, the object not being to render the poetry of the language, which would be hopeless, but merely to set forth the imageries which it contains, a prose translation may be forgiven :—

O, regard the sky !

There the moving clouds take strange forms under the breath of the winds. At times beneath their waves the lightning gleams, as if some giant of the sky had swiftly drawn his sword among the clouds ;

Then appears, hanging in the heavens, a monstrous beast, an alligator broad and striped, with fangs in ranks, against whose leaden flanks the bright clouds shine like golden scales ;

Then a palace arises—till the air trembles, and all fades, and, strewn along the sky, its vermeil cones hang overhead, down-pointed, like inverted hills ;

Then—that cloud of lead, of gold, of copper, of iron, wherein, with sounds of heavy murmurs, repose the tempest, the waterspout, the thunderbolt, and hell—it is God who hangs them there in throngs, even as within the niches of a dome a warrior suspends his clashing arms.

Then—all disappears ! The sun, dashed down from high, like a red globe of bronze cast back into the furnace, which falls with a shock upon the waves, up-flings like flakes of flame into the zenith the burning foam of the clouds.

The peculiar characteristics of Victor Hugo's style are, generally speaking, not to be found in any writing in our language. There is, however,

a passage in Landor, and that, curiously enough, a simile, which reads exactly as if it were a fine prose rendering from some work of Victor Hugo's—so curiously (and of course by mere coincidence) does it reflect the distinguishing marks both of his imagination and of his power. The passage in question describes the funeral pyre, in which is about to perish the last surviving citizen of Numantia :—

> He extended his withered arms, he thrust forward the gaunt links of his throat, and upon gnarled knees, which smote each other audibly, tottered into the civic fire. It, like some hungry and strangest beast in the innermost wild of Africa, pierced, broken, prostrate, motionless, gazed at by its hunter in the impatience of glory, in the delight of awe, panted once more, and seized him ! "

What themes have oftenest allured the minds of poets and of dreamers ? Love—and Life. Similitudes of love alone would fill a volume. And Life ! How, before the musing mind, its multitudinous comparisons come crowding up in their familiar forms ! A flower that fades—a vision in the night—a river flowing to the great ocean—a lamp not everlasting—a frail bridge trembling above a roaring water—a ship storm-beaten and threatened by every blast—a pilgrimage through many scenes of peril —a strengthless breath " servile to all the skyey influences "—a streak of mist which

melts at morning " into the infinite azure of the Past."

THE STYLE OF DANTE.

In this the sixth centenary of the death of Dante much is being written about the man, and much about his style. It is with regard to the latter topic that I propose to add my pebble to the pile.

Perhaps there is not in all the domain of Art a more curious study than that of power or suggestion over the soul of man. It is still a debated question whether the greatest art is that which allows, or that which disavows, its power. The spirit of Greek art allows no mystery. Romantic art takes it as its essence.

Dante, the mightiest of poet-painters who worked in the Greek spirit, sets his scenes before the mind's eye with a graphic power which leaves nothing to the imagination. The great sights of the " Inferno " stand out like pictures—an unforgettable series. There are the routs of the Giddy-aimless, stung by gad-flies and fierce hornets, running behind the whirling flag ; the crowds at Charon's ferry

" staying for waftage," and the fierce old man with eyes like wheels of flame ; the lovers of the second Circle, blown like cranes upon a mighty wind ; the awful marsh in the slime of which the Sullen writhed like eels, and in whose dark waters fought the spirits of the Angry ; the city with the domes and towers of fire, upon the walls of which the bloodstained Furies, shrieking for Medusa, tore the serpents of their hair ; the rapt and disdainful angel who sped dry-footed across the lake amidst the terror-stricken throngs ; the great plain rough with lidless sepulchres, each filled with fire and holding its tormented spirit in a red-hot bed ; the Tyrants standing in the river of blood, and the Centaurs galloping upon the bank ; the forest whose stunted trees were spirits, with the Harpies tearing their poisonous fruit ; the wilderness of raining flames and sands of lurid fire ; the Simonists set head-downwards in their narrow holes, with feet which burned like lamps above the level of the rock ; the black-winged demons, Dragagnazzo and Barbariccia, hovering with their prongs above the lake of pitch ; the Hypocrites weighed down with gilded cowls of lead ; the valley where sinners changed with agony to serpents, and serpents back to sinners ; the flame-pent spirits dancing like strange fireflies in the gloomy gorge ; the

trunk of Bertrand de Born holding up by the hair his speaking head ; the sea of everlasting ice, where the forms of the tormented appeared like flies in crystal, and where Ugolino lifted his teeth from the skull of his enemy to relate his awful story.

Now set beside this a passage in which the power of mystery, of suggestion, is strong. Set beside it, for instance, Mad Tom's snatch of song in " King Lear "—" Childe Rowland to the dark tower came." Scarcely a better instance could be found of the power which springs from richness of suggestion. Who was this Childe Rowland ? What was the dark tower ? What wild and strange adventures had its spectral walls beheld ? Imagination wakens. A thousand shadowy memories arise, like phantoms, in the mind's eye, of legendary lands ; of battle-dinted knights-at-arms ; of dragon-guarded dungeons ; of soft lutes heard pleading from barred casements ; of combats against tenfold odds ; of wild vows given and received ; of " trumpets blown and hymns of festival " ; of heads of enemies set up to bleach on battlemented towers. Or perhaps the story rises up complete before the mind, as Browning imagined it—the story of the band of knights, of whom

Childe Rowland was the last, sworn to the quest of the dark tower in the midst of its wild waste of deathful country, to perish one by one before its walls.

Or consider the exquisitely beautiful series of pictures in De Musset's " Nuit de Mai," in the invitation of the Muse to the poet :—

> Shall we sing of Hope, or Sorrow, or Joy ? Shall we steep in blood the battalions of steel ? Shall we suspend the lover on his silken ladder ? Shall we dash to the winds the foam of the steed ? Shall we cry to Tarquin, " Night is come " ? Shall we seek the pearl in the caves of ocean ? Shall we lead the goat to the bitter ebony ? Shall we lift to heaven the eyes of Melancholy ? Shall we follow the hunter over the mountain crags ? Shall we picture a maiden moving to Mass, a page behind her, her cheek aflame, her glance roving from the side of her mother, her parted lips forgetting her prayer, trembling to hear among the echoing pillars the clinking spur of a bold cavalier ?

Every piece of imagery here is penetrated with the power of charm, the power of suggestion. Like the image of Childe Rowland coming to the dark tower, every line epitomises a romance. " Shall we lead the goat to the bitter ebony ? " Behold the pastorals of Virgil and of Theocritus, the pipes of the shepherds, the songs and the ivy-woven bowls. " Shall we dash to the winds the foam of the steed ? " Behold Mazeppa bound on his wild horse, swept like

a whirlwind through the waste. "Shall we suspend the lover on his silken ladder?" Behold the high-walled orchard-gardens of Verona, and Juliet looking from her window as the moon tips with silver the fruit-tree tops.

Let us take one more example; one, moreever, which is sufficient of itself to display the essential difference between the art which suggests and the art which excludes suggestion:—

> The picture represented clouds low and lurid, rolling over a swollen sea; all the distance was in eclipse; so, too, was the foreground—or rather the nearest billows, for there was no land. One gleam of light lifted into relief a half-submerged mast, on which sat a cormorant, dark and large, with wings flecked with foam. In its beak it held a bracelet, set with gems, touched with as brilliant tints as the palette could yield, and as glittering distinctness as the pencil could impart.

Now, supposing this to be a complete description of the scene—for though Jane Eyre's picture contained other details, we may consider, for our purpose, that nothing was visible but what is here described—the whole power of it as a piece of romantic art lies in the bracelet. Without the bracelet the picture is merely a study of waves and sky. It may be fine and valuable as such, full of the most rare and precious qualities of landscape; but, whatever these may

be, the interest of such a picture lies evidently in what it accurately depicts, not in what it suggests. But add the bracelet, add the power of suggestion, the mystery of romance, and the picture is now no longer a study of scenery, but a wild and mournful poem.

These, then, are the two styles, the Greek and the Romantic, upon which all the world's great works of the imagination depend for their effect. And it is in the first of these that Dante was supreme.

PUCK'S FLIGHT.

When Puck put a girdle round the earth to fetch the enchanted flower of love-in-idleness for jealous Oberon, he performed a journey of more curious interest than is apparent at first sight. Let us fly with him in fancy. We shall see things which no man ever saw with mortal eyes, and which, until science presents us with an aeroplane as speedy as the wings of Puck, no man will ever see.

It is broad moonlight in "the wood near Athens," as he springs aloft and darts due west, and it so chances that the zone of earth round which he flies is that which is the best worth

seeing in the world. At Puck's rate of flying—round the globe in forty minutes—the landscape runs beneath him with the swiftness of a diorama. Within a minute from the time of starting he has swept across the mountain citadel of Corinth, across the Ionian Islands, above the moonlight waters of the Mediterranean, and has felt the glow of Etna on his wings as he has skimmed the peaks of Sicily. Two minutes more, and he is looking down upon the vines and orange groves of Spain, and forward to the gleam of the Atlantic ; two more, and the sprinkled isles of the Azores dot the starry waste of waters, where as yet no mariner has spread a sail. Five minutes more, and the vast bulk of North America, a world without a name, comes up like a sea-monster from the deep ; and here or hereabouts (for the exact locality will vary with the seasons) appears the spectacle of which we spoke, a sight which never eye of man beheld. For on the jungles and the prairies, where the Red Man builds before his wigwam door his evening fire of twigs, on the mountain-caverns of the grizzly bear, on the solitary peaks where sits the eagle, the sun is setting, or has set already ; but on the flying voyager the sun is rising.

Straight before him, without warning, in the

west, instead of in the east, the sun leaps up into the heavens, and rises, not with his accustomed slowness, but with a motion easy to be traced. To Puck, in fact, it is as if the earth were spinning the wrong way at six-and-thirty times its old velocity. His speed is making his own dawns and sunsets. As a poet might express it, he has outstripped the flight of time; he has outraced the rosy-footed hours; the wings of night are sweeping after him in vain. A few minutes more, and by the time he is above the mid-Pacific, the sun is straight above him; it is already noon. And hereabouts it is, unless our theory errs, that he sweeps down upon some lonely island to pluck "the little western flower," which Cupid's arrow, aimed in vain at a far-distant vestal, has transfigured to a blossom of enchantment. For it is only where the distance east and west to Athens is the same, that to complete "the girdle of the earth" will take no longer than to return the way he came; and so again he flies due west.

At once the sun begins to sink behind him, so that about the instant when he sights Japan, it drops into the Eastern sea. But the people of the almond eyes and yellow faces are just getting out of bed; for to them the sun is

rising. To Puck, who in two minutes more is flying over China, the roofs of palaces and the turrets of pagodas are shining white again in the ascending moon. Broader and higher climbs the moon over the pictured stripe of Asia which is sweeping under him; over the vast steppes of Tartary, where the waggon-houses of the wandering shepherd rests amid his flock; over the icy pinnacles of Hindoo Koosh; over the desert where the lion prowls, and the hot sand-pillars stalk before the wind, and where the camel-drivers sit in circles in the moonlight about the reed-fringed wells; over the early rills of Tigris, not yet sending down the waters that in time will mirror "Bagdad's shrines of fretted gold"; over cities swarming with dusky faces and white turbans; over the fanes of Aphrodite rising from the myrtle-groves of Cyprus; over the blue Cyclades asleep in the Ægean Sea.

Ten minutes from the coast of China and Puck's flight is at an end. There is Athens, and the wood from which he sprung—the wood where, not an hour before, Titania quarrelled with her Oberon, where the lovers still are roaming, and where Bully Bottom, rehearsing Pyramus with Quince and Snug, has little

thought that ere the morning he shall wear an ass's head and tempt the love-sick fairy queen to deck his ears with roses.

♣ ♣ ♣

CONFESSIONS OF A PHILISTINE.

Reader, when you pay a visit to a picture-gallery do you bring to the paintings the eye of an artist or the regard of a Philistine? The difference is world-wide. For example, to an artist the "Mona Lisa" is a gem among the world's great things of beauty; to me it is the portrait of a fat old woman with no eyebrows and a lickerish leer, who turns me sick at heart. For I am a Philistine myself—like the vast majority of people—non-artistic to the core. And as I have just been round an exhibition with a famous painter as companion, this vital difference between our view-points has been scored anew into my soul.

First, we stopped before a painting of a classic subject—a band of Corybantes in a glade of Ida, with light limbs blossom-bound and bright hair lifted, dancing to the sound of pipe and cymbal about the lion-car of Dindymene. To me this was delectable. Not so to my companion. Eyeing its rich and vivid details he murmured with an inward voice the one

word "photographic!" It was the word of doom.

Next we came upon an eastern scene—a Persian maiden in a dim, enchanted garden, lying, all languid, under the shadow of the myrrh-bloom, lulled by the drone of bees among the myrtle-blossoms and by the porphyry fountain's showery sound. I liked this strangely. But my companion looked upon it with a different eye. "Where," he demanded, "*Where* is the composition?" The syllables were as the death-notes of a knell.

We passed on. Here was a picture representing three girls bathing in a pool beneath a giant cedar, their white limbs, blurred by the bubbles round them, seen through the blue veil of water, a sun-ray between the branches writing their wayward shadows below them on the sand. A delightful picture! Yet my friend misliked it. Something was wrong, presumedly, with the "values," the "decorative spacing," or the balance of the light and shade.

So we went on, to picture after picture—a winter woodland, with a kingfisher, a thing of sapphires, arrowing up a frosty brook—a twilight land of ruined towers and streams of melancholy glamour—a stretch of breezy shore, with fairy rainbows irised in the spray—a scene of rosy-ruined Thebes, its sunset-fired

Memnonian altar-stairs ancient and tranquil as the desert sand. But the face of my companion remained as that of Rhadamanthus still.

And then came, to my thinking, the finest picture of them all. "Hermes and Flora" was the title of it; and the painter, no doubt after the example of Rossetti, had written a sonnet on his picture and inscribed the same upon the frame. It ran—

Hermes, the sly god, in a vale at morning,
Twined a wild net of tangles of the vine
For the fair goddess, who held love in scorning—
Then he lay waiting for her step divine,
Screened, with thick dingle roundabout him, o'er him,
Till she came dancing o'er the dews unstirred.
Then, the swift net enwound her; so, before him,
Now she stands taken like a rosy bird . . .
Eager the sly god from the thicket peeping!
Lovely the lady of all blossomed bowers!
Letting her poppies tumble round her, heaping
Bells of white lilies and blue violet-showers,
Penned, a fair trembler, in the vine-net's keeping,
Glows the flower-goddess in a drift of flowers.

While I was copying the verses—which, like the picture, took my fancy—my companion had passed on and was looking at another painting. I joined him. Ah! Here was something really bad! There could be no two opinions about that—an old woman gazing at a rubbish-heap,

her face, in which one eye was set two inches higher than the other, roughly carved out of a beetroot. I turned to my companion. His eyes, half closed, were those of one in ecstasy, while his thumb described a mystic curve in air.

That is the artist's point of view. As for the subject of a picture, he scarcely sees it. The Philistine sees nothing else. The gulf between the two has neither bridge nor crossing. Yet to one class or the other do we all belong. I, as I have admitted, am a Philistine. Reader, which are you ?

♣ ♣ ♣

"IMPROVERS" OF THE BIBLE AND THE PRAYER BOOK.

In the year of 1689 there was a proposal set on foot to rewrite and to "improve" the Prayer Book. The project came to nothing, which was the best thing that could happen to it, for the strength and beauty of the Liturgy are such that an archangel might fear to dull its splendour. But there is ever a fool ready to rush in—and such a one was Simon Patrick, Dean of Peterborough. This is the way in which Macaulay, in his History, deals with the methods of the worthy Dean :—

The style of the Liturgy did not satisfy the Doctors of the Jerusalem Chamber. They voted the Collects too short and too dry; and Patrick was entrusted with the duty of expanding and ornamenting them. In one respect, at least, the choice seems to have been unexceptionable; for if we may judge by the way in which Patrick paraphrased the most sublime Hebrew poetry, we shall probably be of opinion that, whether he was or was not qualified to make the Collects better, no man that ever lived was more competent to make them longer.

I will give a specimen of Patrick's workmanship: "He maketh me," says David, "to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters." Patrick's version is as follows: "For as a good shepherd leads his sheep in the violent heat to shady places, where they may lie down and feed (not in parched, but) in fresh and green pastures, and in the evening leads them (not to muddy and troubled waters, but) to pure and quiet streams; so hath he already made a fair and plentiful provision for me, which I enjoy in peace without any disturbance."

The pride of place in which Macaulay set the Dean, as the worst translator in the world, was his by right unquestioned at the time at which he wrote. But it would be a mistake, I think, to assert that he has held it ever since without a rival. A century later there arose a certain Reverend Edward Harwood, Doctor of Divinity, who set out to achieve for the New Testament what Patrick had done before him for the Old. And the Doctor, while quite as lengthy, was,

impossible as it may seem, more ridiculous even than the Dean.

Here is his version of the opening of the Magnificat, that grandest of all hymns :—

> My soul with reverence adores my Creator, and all my faculties with transport join in celebrating the goodness of God, my Saviour, who hath in so signal a manner condescended to regard my poor and humble station. Transcendent goodness! Every future age will now conjoin in celebrating my happiness.

This might well have been the handiwork of a disciple of Dean Patrick. But the Doctor, whose aim it was to clear away, as rubbish, " the bald and barbarous language of the old vulgar version," and to " attempt to diffuse over the sacred page the elegance of modern English," had other methods, all his own. His watchword was " gentility." Accordingly, the father of the Prodigal becomes " a gentleman of splendid family." St. Paul's convert, briefly mentioned in the Acts as a woman named Damaris, receives a lift into society as " a lady of distinction." The daughter of Jairus is restored to life with the courteous exhortation, " Young lady, rise." The daughter of Herodias becomes " a young lady who danced with inimitable grace and elegance." When Paul informed Timothy

that he had left his cloak at Troas, he must have been suffering from a lapse of memory—the missing property was really a " portmanteau "—a true touch of the genteel.

But the Doctor's sense of the elegant sometimes seems to let him trip. When St. Peter, on the Mount, was supposed—erroneously—to have exclaimed, " Master, let us build three tabernacles," the Doctor makes him give utterance to these stupefying words, " Oh, sir ! What a delectable residence we might fix here." It sounds like an American land agent out to " boost " the beauties of a site.

These things, and a thousand others, are set down by the worthy Doctor with an owl-like lack of humour which is surely without a parallel in the history of the world. His complacency, his pride in his own " elegance," is such as the English language is too weak to utter. His version, he informs us, " leaves the most exacting velleity without ground for quiritation." Solving this problem with the aid of a dictionary, I find that it renders, as a literal meaning, " The most exacting reader will not experience a desire to emit a cry of pain."

On the contrary, I think he will

Matthew Arnold thought that Shelley's prose writings " would resist the wear and tear of time better, and finally come to stand higher, than his poetry." The words, like Hamlet's, are rather wild and whirling. No prose ever written is likely to do that. But if not, like his verse, unique in splendour, Shelley's prose is of a beauty all its own. There is a charm about it which is new and strange, like Chopin's music. Perhaps the best of it is in his letters, with their travel-pictures, the pen-paintings of a poet, like nothing of the kind before them.

Take his picture of the cataract of the Velino :—

Imagine a river sixty feet in breadth, with a vast volume of waters, the outlet of a great lake among the higher mountains, falling three hundred feet into a sightless gulf of snow-white vapour, which bursts up for ever and for ever from a circle of black crags, anp thence leaping downwards, makes five or six other cataracts, each fifty or a hundred feet high, which exhibit, on a smaller scale, and with beautiful and sublime variety, the same appearances. But words (and far less could painting) will not express it. Stand upon the brink of the platform of cliff, which is directly opposite. You see the ever-moving water stream down. It comes in thick and tawny folds, flaking off like solid snow gliding down a mountain. It does not seem hollow within, but without it is unequal, like the folding

of linen thrown carelessly down; your eye follows it, and it is lost below; not in the black rocks which gird it around, but in its own foam and spray, in the cloud-like vapours boiling up from below, which is not like rain, nor mist, nor spray, nor foam, but water, in a shape wholly unlike anything I ever saw before. It is as white as snow, but thick and impenetrable to the eye. The very imagination is bewildered in it. A thunder comes up from the abyss wonderful to hear; for, though it ever sounds, it is never the same, but, modulated by the changing motion, rises and falls intermittingly.

There was no writing of this kind before Shelley, though Ruskin did something like it later.

Here is his description of the baths of Caracalla :—

Never was any desolation more sublime and lovely. The perpendicular wall of ruin is cloven into steep ravines filled up with flowering shrubs whose thick twisted roots are knotted in the rifts of the stones. At every step the aerial pinnacles of shattered stone group into new combinations of effect, and tower above the lofty yet level walls. Still further, winding up one half of the shattered pyramids, by the path through the blooming copsewood, you come to a little mossy lawn, surrounded by the wild shrubs; it is overgrown with anemones, wallflowers, and violets, whose stalks pierce the starry moss, and with radiant blue flowers, whose names I know not, and which scatter through the air the divinest odour, which, as you recline under the shade of the ruin, produces sensations of voluptuous faintness, like the combinations of sweet music.

Sometimes Shelley painted the same scene both in prose and verse, so that we are able to set the two pictures side by side. His description of Pompeii is an excellent example :—

Above and between the multitudinous shafts of sunshining columns was seen the sea, reflecting the purple heaven of noon above it, and supporting, as it were, on its line the dark lofty mountains of Sorrento, of a blue inexpressibly deep, and tinged towards their summits with streaks of new-fallen snow. Between was one small green island. Behind was the single summit of Vesuvius, rolling forth volumes of thick white smoke, whose foam-like column was sometimes darted into the clear dark sky, and fell in little streaks along the wind. Between Vesuvius and the nearer mountains, as through a chasm, was seen the main line of the loftiest Apennines, to the east. The day was radiant and warm. Every now and then we heard the subterranean thunder of Vesuvius ; its distant deep peals seemed to shake the very air and light of day, which interpenetrated our frames, with the sullen and tremendous sound.

The Tombs were the most impressive things of all. The wild woods surround them on either side ; and along the broad stones of the paved road which divides them you hear the late leaves of autumn shiver and rustle in the stream of inconstant wind, as it were, like the steps of ghosts.

Now here is the replica in verse :—

I stood within the city disinterred,
And heard the autumnal leaves like light footfalls

Of spirits passing through the streets, and heard
The mountain's slumbrous voice at intervals
Thrill through those roofless halls.

The oracular thunder penetrating shook
The listening soul in my suspended blood.
I felt that Earth out of her deep heart spoke.
I felt, but heard not. Through white columns glowed
The isle-sustaining ocean-flood.

The prose is very fine descriptive writing—splendid. But is it equal to the verse? Oh, no! Where in it is that penetrating music which has the power, like the very mountain-voice, to shake the soul in the suspended blood? Prose has no gift to soar into such regions. Pegasus galloping on earth has less of beauty than when he towers into the empyrean on his wings of flame. Armado's saying is for ever true: "The words of Mercury are harsh after the songs of Apollo."

♣ ♣ ♣

THE PHILOSOPHY OF FLOWER-NAMES.

The other day I came upon a girl whose name was new to me—Bluebell. The name is sweet and lovely; why should it be so rare? Rose, Violet, Lily, Daisy, and a hundred others, are all about us. Why should Bluebell come upon us with "shock of mild surprise?" When one begins to try to think out the reason, the philo-

sophy, of this—why one flower-name should be taken and another left—one comes up against a series of Dick Swiveller's "bafflers." Why so many Daisies and no Cowslip? Why Roses by the thousand, and yet never a Nasturtium? A tulip is a flower of splendour—who has ever known a girl named Tulip? Holly is by no means an uncommon name—but can you find me a Miss Mistletoe? Clover is among the sweetest blossoms—why do we seldom come upon a human Clover? I believe one may discover, here and there, a Crocus; but no traveller, that I know of, has made record of an Orchid. Perhaps the latter is too gorgeous, too florid; and the same reason may apply to Hollyhock or Foxglove, Snapdragon or Sunflower. I can conceive a girl objecting to the name of Cactus—though I know one or two whom it would suit. But why not Celandine or Lupine? Can any one explain?

♣ ♣ ♣

THE MUSIC OF VERSE.

Is verse-music dying out among our rising poets? Have they lost the sense of lyric charm? Do these gritty lines which will not scan, these chopped lengths of prose, *vers libres*, entirely satisfy their sense of sound? Do they really think that there is no reason why every poem

which has lived, in every language, from Homer down to Swinburne, is " musical as is Apollo's lute," and yet is written in strict metre ? Why, except John Masefield and one or two besides, do they set our teeth on edge " as a dry wheel grates on its axle-tree ? " How welcome, after discords such as these, one touch of the real singing :—

Lost Echo sits amid the voiceless mountains.

or

We wandered to the pine forest
That skirts the ocean's foam.
The lightest wind was in its nest,
The tempest in its home. . . .

Or again, if we require something more sustained :—

A ship is floating in the harbour now ;
A wind is hovering o'er the mountain's brow ;
The halcyons brood around the foamless isles ;
The treacherous ocean has forsworn its wiles ;
The merry mariners are bold and free—
Say, my heart's sister, wilt thou sail with me ?

From Shelley turn to Swinburne. He was too fond of the loud pedal—and yet, what strength and beauty—

So with keen rains vexing his crownless hair,
With bright feet bruised from no delightful way,
Through darkness and the disenchanted air
Lost Love went weeping half a winter's day.

And on the soft pedal, when he chose it, who is more sweet and tender ?—

> I shall remember while the light lives yet,
> And in the night-time I shall not forget.

or, in a different key—

> And from the war-worn wastes without,
> In twilight, in the time of doubt,
> One sound comes of one whisper, where,
> Moved by low motions of slow air,
> The great trees nigh the castle swing
> In the sad coloured evening.

But Swinburne, as Tennyson said of him, was "a reed through which all things blow into music."

❧

Of course, verse-music, like tone-music, is of every kind, and for every mood. Like the spirit-melody which beguiled the ancient mariner,

> Now 'tis like all instruments,
> Now like a lonely flute,
> And now it is an angel's song
> That makes the heavens be mute.

Sometimes it has "the gorgeous storms of music" of the orchestra—sometimes the single melody,

> the long slow slope
> And vast curves of the gradual violin.

Hear how Milton opens " Lycidas "—

Yet once more, O ye laurels, and once more,
Ye myrtles brown, with ivy never sere,
I come to pluck your berries harsh and crude,
And with forced fingers rude
Shatter your leaves before the mellowing year.

Is this not like the opening of a Beethoven symphony ? When Christiana Rossetti sings—

I shall not see the shadows,
I shall not feel the rain,
I shall not hear the nightingale
Sing on, as if in pain—

this sweet, simple, limpid movement, is it not Mozart ?

❧

And how it dwells in the memory and will not be forgotten ! This clinging power, like that of a loved tune, belongs to certain scraps of melody of verse, not always by the greatest poets. Doctor Johnson, as Boswell tells us, often " retained in his memory fragments of obscure or neglected poetry." Here is one of these, from an unknown poem :—

Song sweetens toil, however rude the sound.
All at her work the village maiden sings,
Nor, as she turns the giddy wheel around,
Revolves the sad vicissitude of things.

Most lovers of poetry are, I take it, like the Doctor—they carry, floating in their minds, these fragments of verse-music, read long years ago, they know not where. I do, myself; and I will ask leave to quote a few—

1. The wide-arched bridge, the scented elder-flowers,
   The wondrous watery rings that died too soon,
   The echo of the quarry, the still hours
   With white robe sweeping on the shadeless moon.

2. Darling, can you endure the liquid weather,
   The jasmine-scented twilights, O my dear?
   Or, do you still remember how together
   We read the sad sweet idyll "Guenevere,"
   Love, in our last year's twilight?

3. Yet tremble not, sweet veinéd hand and soft,
   And press not mine with such a cold farewell,
   Lest I remember, now too late, how oft
   My heart has moved thee with its ebb and swell.

4. I got me flowers to strew thy way,
   I got me boughs off many a tree,
   But thou wast up by break of day
   And brought thy sweets along with thee.

Though not great poetry, there is something in these fragments quite unlike the jew's-harp twangling of our modern bards—something which has kept them, in my mind, perennially sweet.

What is the most stinging piece of satire ever penned? The reply, I think, is easier than it appears. When Dante met with Branca d'Oria in Hell he stared at him, bewildered. "What! Branca here!" he said. "Why, I left him still alive upon the earth!" "So it seems to you," was the reply; "but in point of fact he has been dead for years. You see, when Branca died he left his body to a devil, who goes about in it to-day."

Branca d'Oria, of Genoa, who thus became the subject of the most terrific of lampoons on record, had murdered his wife's father at a feast, to get possession of his money.

This is the satire of ferocity. Of the satire of light ridicule there are few things better than Byron's vision of Southey spouting his own poetry in heaven:—

> Those grand heroics acted as a spell;
> The angels stopped their ears and plied their pinions;
> The devils ran howling, deafened, down to hell;
> The ghosts fled, gibbering, for their own dominions;
> Michael took refuge in his trump, but, lo,
> His teeth were set on edge, he could not blow!

This is as good as anything of Pope's except when Pope was at his greatest, as in the lines on

Sporus, or such delightful miniatures as "Papillia":—

> Papillia, wedded to her amorous spark,
> Sighs for the shades—"How charming is a park!"
> A park is purchased, but the fair he sees
> All drowned in tears—"Oh, odious, odious trees!"

Who does not know Papillia? I know more than one.

Women have ever been the butts of playful satire. Even that destroying angel, Swift, has his lighter moments:—

> A very little wit is valued in a woman, as we are pleased with a few words spoken plain by a parrot.

So Alfred de Musset, a woman-worshipper if ever there was one, speaks somewhere of "*Le sexe adorable et absurde*"—a bitter-sweet indeed!

It is, perhaps, a little strange that women have never turned upon their mockers. No woman has ever written, or attempted, a great satire. The world still lacks a Pope in petticoats or a Juvenal in a jumper.

Most of the great satirists have been poets. Even Ruskin, though he wrote in prose, was essentially a poet. As for his satire, no man could make a thing which he disliked look more ridiculous. He disliked Claude's paintings. How did he go to work? This is the way in

which he treats the picture of " St. George and the Dragon " :—

The dragon is about the size of ten bramble-leaves, and is being killed by the remains of a lance, barely the thickness of a walking-stick, in his throat, curling his tail in a highly-offensive and threatening manner. St. George, notwithstanding, on a prancing horse, brandishes his sword, at about thirty yards distance from the offensive animal. A semi-circular shelf of rocks encircles the foreground, by which the theatre of action is divided into pit and boxes. Some women and children, having descended unadvisedly into the pit, are helping each other out of it again, with marked precipitation. A prudent person of rank has taken a front seat in the boxes—crosses his legs, leans his head on his hand, and contemplates the proceedings with the air of a connoisseur. Two attendants stand in graceful attitudes behind him, and two more walk away under the trees, conversing on general subjects.

The reader can hardly keep himself from feeling, as he is meant to feel, that the painter must have been half-witted. Yet the picture, after all is said, might be a gem of the first water as a work of art.

Some of the great poets who were not satirists by nature have deviated into satire now and then. Shelley's " Adonais " is a perfect blast of scorn against the critics of the works of Keats :—

The sun comes forth and many reptiles spawn ;
He sets, and each ephemeral insect then
Is gathered into death without a dawn,
And the immortal stars awake again.

It is hard to say which is the finer—the annihilating lightning of the satire or the transcendent splendour of the verse.

Who thinks of Tennyson as a satirist? Yet his lines on Bulwer are like a bunch of nettles. Bulwer had written "The New Timon" against Tennyson, a dull piece of satire, all venom and no sting. What was Tennyson's reply?—

We know him out of Shakespeare's art,
And those fine curses which he spoke;
Old Timon with his noble heart,
Which, strongly loathing, greatly broke.

So died the Old; now comes the New;
Regard him; a familiar face;
I thought we knew him. "What, it's you,
The padded man, that wears the stays!"

What profits now to understand
The merits of a spotless shirt,
A dapper boot, a little hand,
If half the little soul is dirt?

A Timon, you? Nay, nay, for shame!
It looks too arrogant a jest—
The fierce old man—to take his name!
You bandbox! Off, and let him rest!

We seem to have no satirists among us in these days. Yet, after all, this is but natural. Our age is too idyllic. How should we have a satirist when there are no more fools or knaves?

Setting books of the last hundred years aside, let us glance at some of the best sellers of the past. We shall come across some curious cases, and amusing also.

Of course, best-sellers have been mostly fiction. That is only natural. "Don Quixote" was not only in the hands of every nobleman, but in those of every page and scullion. The "Lame Devil" of Le Sage—that sly, Puck-like demon who let Cleofas look through the city roofs and watch the lives of the inhabitants—could not be printed fast enough to meet the rage of the demand; the shops of the book-sellers were chock-a-block with buyers; a duel was fought for a last copy. The "Nouvelle Héloïse" of Rousseau, when the stocks ran dry, was hired out at a sou for an hour's reading.

These things we can understand. But the "Arcadia" of Sir Philip Sidney (1590) one of the first of the best-sellers beats us altogether. It is a wild romance, five hundred pages long, written in a wondrous euphuism of which this is a fair example:—

> Certainly, as her eyelids are more pleasant to behold than two white kids climbing up a fair tree and browsing on his tenderest branches, and yet are nothing to compare to the day-shining stars contained in them—no more, all that our eyes can see of her is to be matched

with the flock of unspeakable virtues laid up delightfully in that best-builded fold.

Kids that climb trees are remarkable as freaks of nature, but they do not strike us as the best of all possible comparisons with the eyelids of a pretty girl.

❧

But fiction has not provided all the best-sellers—far from that. Almost every class of book is represented in the list, including the most unlikely, psalm-books and sermons. "Eikon Basilike," a volume of Devotions and Confessions, outsold all the romances of the day. But then it was supposed to have been written by King Charles the First in prison; and although a strong claim for the authorship was put in by Bishop Gauden, it is very possible that the Royal Martyr was the writer, after all.

And what of sermons as best-sellers? The most famous case, no doubt, is that of the two sermons of Sacheverell, preached in 1709 against the toleration of Dissenters. Godolphin, the Prime Minister, stung by the nickname of Volpone which the parson had applied to him, after the rascal in Ben Jonson's play, haled him before the House of Commons for malicious libel. The sermons were ordered to be burnt by the hangman and the preacher to be sus-

pended for three years. But, as it was said at the time, the men who wished to roast a parson burnt their fingers in the flame. The clergy, the country squires, and the riff-raff of the people, who had made the sermons a best-seller, stirred up such riots that the Government resigned, and the new one forthwith signed the Peace of Utrecht. And so it came to pass that a couple of bad sermons by the vilest of fanatics changed the whole future policy of England.

But perhaps the oddest work that was ever a best-seller was the great Bishop Berkeley's treatise on the virtues of tar-water. In a letter written in 1744 Horace Walpole comments in his lively style :—

> We are now mad about tar-water, on the publication of a book by Doctor Berkeley, Bishop of Cloyne. The book contains every subject, from tar-water to the Trinity ; however, all the women read and understand it no more than they would do if it were intelligible. A man came into an apothecary's shop the other day : " Do you sell tar-water ? " " Tar-water ! " replied the apothecary, " why, I sell nothing else."

Tar-water, which was prepared by stirring tar in water and allowing it to settle, and of which the dose was from a pint to a quart a day, was, according to the Bishop, a cure for all the ills

that flesh is heir to. It appeared on every table in the kingdom. The eating-houses supplied it free of charge. Henry Fielding, the author of "Tom Jones," took it for his dropsy. And the Bishop testified, with natural pride, that it had cured the bite of a mad donkey.

If this is the oddest of best-sellers, what is the weakest, the least deserving of its pride of place? Hayley's "Triumphs of Temper" will take a lot of beating. The poet and his book are half-forgotten now, and would be wholly so if Byron had not chosen to enshrine, or rather gibbet, them in "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers":—

> His style in youth and age is still the same,
> For ever feeble and for ever tame.
> Triumphant first see *Triumph's Tempers* shine!
> At least I'm sure they triumphed over mine.

In the preface to the volume (a poem in six cantos—1809) the author tells us that his aim was "to unite some touches of the sportive wildness of Ariosto and the more serious, sublime painting of Dante, with some portion of the enchanting elegance, the refined imagination, and the moral graces of Pope." This modest programme is hardly carried out. The adventures of the heroine, Serena, a most

insipid damsel, are all namby-pamby. The following description of her will serve also as a sample of the style :—

Daughters of beauty, who the Song inspire,
To your enchanting notes attune my lyre !
In your bright circle young Serena grew ;
A lovelier nymph the pencil never drew ;
For now she entered those important years
When the full bosom swells with hopes and fears,
When noble joys the female heart trepan,
And dolls, rejected, yield their place to man.

How shall any one predict what will make a volume a best-seller when Pope-and-water will achieve the feat ?

BAUDELAIRE'S "LITTLE POEMS IN PROSE."

Baudelaire's " Little Poems in Prose " was the work of a true poet, though no one would compare them with his verse in " Flowers of Evil." Still, they are often striking.

Baudelaire was fond, we know, of dusky beauties. Indeed, he tells us somewhere that he preferred a black Venus to a white one. And just as Gautier composed a " Symphony in White " about a certain lady, so Baudelaire composed a " Symphony in Black " about another. Here it is :—

All about her is of black. She seems a spirit of the night and darkness. Her eyes are caverns, in the depth

of which a secret glimmers. But their glance is like the lightning, a flash that breaks the night.

She is like a sun of ebony, a black star, yet darting rays of light and joy. Or rather, she is like the moon, who has surely marked her for her own ; not the pallid planet of the idylls, who is like a chilly bride, but the wild and dizzy moon suspended in a stormy night ; not the silver star that smiles upon the dreams of quiet men, but a dark and angry goddess, rapt from heaven by incantation, whom the necromancers forced to dance of old upon the frightened earth.

In her little head there lurks a will of iron, and a thirst for prey. Yet in that spirit-haunting face of hers, where the carven nostrils seem to breathe a magic air, the sweet mouth, red and white and lovely, glows with colour, like the splendour of a passion-flower on the brink of a volcano.

Now let us take another of his woman-studies—one of an altogether lighter kind :—

Ah ! You ask me why, my darling, I am cold to you to-day. That is an easier thing for me to tell you than for you to understand—for you possess, I verily believe, the most impenetrable soul of any woman on the earth.

We had passed together a long day, though it seemed short enough to me. We had vowed that all our thoughts should be in common, that the very pulses of our hearts should beat as one—a dream not altogether novel, since every man has dreamed it, although so far it has been realised by none. In the evening, being tired, we took our seats before a *café*—a new *café*, littered still with planks and ladders, but showing all the glories of its raw

designs. The *café* was ablaze with light. The very gas seemed new, and as it glared upon the mirrors, upon the gilding of the rods and cornices, it showed the paintings on the walls, of pages, plump and rosy, holding hounds in leash, of ladies laughing at the falcons on their wrists, of nymphs and goddesses uplifting baskets of fruit, cakes, and game, of Hebes bearing wine-jars, or pyramids of coloured ices—all history, all mythology, depicted for the gaze of sots and gluttons.

Just before us on the pavement stood a man of about forty, with a tired face and grizzling beard, holding with one hand a little boy and carrying on the other arm a tiny creature who seemed to be too weak to walk. He was acting as a nurse, and taking out his children in the evening air. All three were in rags. Their three faces were intensely serious, and all six eyes were fixed upon the glories of the *café* with an equal admiration, but varying in expression with the age of each. The father's eyes expressed: "How beautiful it is! How beautiful! What gold! Who would think there was so much in all the world!" The boy's eyes said: "How beautiful it is! How beautiful! But such a place is not for ragged folks like us!" As for the child's eyes, they spoke of nothing save a sheer unthinking joy.

This poor family of gazers touched me to the heart. I even felt a twinge of shame for all our glasses and decanters. I turned, my darling angel, to see my thought reflected in your own. I gazed into your eyes, those eyes so beautiful, so strangely sweet, those eyes of green, as changing, as capricious as the moon. And even as I did so, you observed: "What horrid people, with their staring eyes! Tell the manager to move them on!"

So hard it is, my angel, for one soul to understand another—so hard for but a single thought to be transmitted, even between those who are in love.

What a portrait! What a satire! Even Pope's must yield to it :—

> Narcissa's nature, tolerably mild,
> To make a wash would hardly stew a child.

Narcissa and the poet's " angel " would have understood each other. They are spirit-sisters.

BYRON'S MAZEPPA—AND VICTOR HUGO'S.

Byron wrote a poem on the story of Mazeppa —and so did Victor Hugo. In both the story is the same—how Mazeppa, fastened by the jealous Count upon the fiery steed, was whirled for days across the wilderness, until he fell at last among the desert people, who elected him their king. But the treatment is completely different, and a comparison between them may be found of interest.

Victor Hugo's is a sketch beside a finished picture, but done with no less vigour and picturesque effect. But he tells it, not for its own sake entirely, but to make of it a fine and striking allegory. It may thus be rendered, freely, into prose :—

So Mazeppa, bound upon the wild horse of the desert, mad with rage and terror, writhing like a knotted reptile, with beads of agony upon his brow and in his ears the yells of his tormentors, was swept away across the waste.

Man and horse were in a moment but a cloud of sand, from which there came a clamour like thunder from a cloud. In a moment more they were a dot of black on the horizon—and then the dot had vanished like a foam-flake on the sea.

Alone they flew. The horse's hoofs struck sparks, and his nostrils volleyed smoke. The cords about the victim crushed him like a serpent's tightening coils; his eyes glittered, his hair floated, his head hung slack and drooping, his blood dripped red upon the thorny sand. Past him streamed the desert and its scenes—great woods, black chains of mountains, ruined donjons, peaks struck red with sunset, vast troops of startled mares. Then clouds of evil birds pursued him—owls, ravens, kites, and eagles, the great osprey, the gaunt vulture with his bald red neck which thrusts, like a bare arm, into the body of the prey—a swarm that seemed to his delirious eyes as if some mighty demon of the air were spreading his black fan across the sky.

So for three days the wild flight lasted—and then at length the horse fell suddenly, and the sparks flew from his hoofs no more.

And there lay the pale victim, writhing, bleeding, in the midst of beaks by thousands ready for his eyes. And yet—who could have dreamt it?—it was that same victim whom the people of the desert were to make their king. From his very torment was to spring his splendour. Grand to the dazzled eye, he was to pass, a prince, among a prostrate people, while the trumpets sang in triumph round his march.

Thus, when a man is bound to the wild steed of Genius, he writhes and cries—in vain. It flies with him beyond the world of mortals, whose gates it shatters with its hoofs of steel. A thousand evil beings crowd about his track—he flies on wings of flame through all

the realms of flesh and spirit—he drinks the waters of eternal streams. Strange lightnings glitter in his eyes. Cold wings of darkness sweep his brows. Pale, panting, thrilled with terror, he flies—he falls—he rises. And behold, he is a king!

When we think of the "mighty poets in their misery dead"—of Chatterton,

> . . . the marvellous boy,
> The sleepless soul that perished in his pride—

of Keats, advised to mind his gallipots—of Shelley, whose ethereal lyrics came into the world still-born—of Beethoven, of Wagner, made the laughing-stocks of critics—of Schubert, selling his immortal songs for coppers to buy an apple or a draught of milk—when we think of these, and of a hundred like them, the bitter allegory chills the blood. And yet the other side of it is true. To one and all of these, swept through the wilderness of life upon the fiery steed of Genius, there comes at last an end of tribulation, and the scarred Mazeppas of the spirit rise up—kings!

A GAME WITH SCHOPENHAUER.

Schopenhauer was a kind of Doctor Johnson. Not that the doctor was a great philosopher. But the two had the same gift of saying the

shrewdest things about the practical affairs of life—things which, though often "deep as the centre," go straight to the understanding of the plainest man. In turning over Schopenhauer's Essays (as I have just been doing) we find on almost every page something which only requires to be peppered here and there with "Sirs" to be in the very manner of the Doctor. "Sir, we only learn at intervals, we are forgetting all day long." "Sir, no money is better invested than that which we are cheated out of—it buys us wisdom." "Sir, with a selfish or conceited man, his character peeps out of him, in every detail of his daily life, like a dirty shirt through the holes in a tattered jacket." Is this not the Doctor to the life?

Both, however, among much worldly wisdom, put forth opinions which, however striking, will not bear a close inspection. Macaulay, in the case of Johnson, gave a number of examples of these cobweb fallacies. It is not difficult to do the same with Schopenhauer, and it is a pleasant game to play. To catch a philosopher tripping is always a delight.

Let us take a few examples :—

Could we prevent all rascals from becoming fathers, shut up the numskulls in asylums, and provide every

girl of sense and spirit with a worthy husband, we might look for an age excelling that of Pericles.

Now, the Athenians neither sterilised their rascals, nor shut up their numskulls, nor provided clever girls with brainy husbands. Why, then, should we expect to rival or excel them by doing, not what they did, but the opposite? Moreover, it is well to note that another of the Greek States, Sparta, did put this plan of Schopenhauer's into practice, or something very like it. The lives of every man and woman were regulated by the State in every detail, including marriage, from the cradle to the grave. And what was the result? At the very time that Athens was producing a long series of the greatest men the world has ever seen, how many men of genius were alive in Sparta? Not a single one.

Genius produces no works of practical value. Music is composed, poetry conceived, pictures painted, but a work of genius is never anything of use. To be useless is its glory.

If this statement is intended to include *all* works of genius it is obviously false. A steam engine is a work of genius. Is it of no practical value? —is its uselessness its glory? Even if it refers to works of art alone, the proposition will not hold. A war-song, or a marching tune, have

had their value, from primæval ages. As Tennyson has put it—

> And here the poet for his art
> Not all in vain may plead—
> The song that nerves a nation's heart
> Is in itself a deed.

❧

But we may go much further. The musicians, poets, painters, are the great creators of the things of beauty—the things that tend to keep life sweet, to lift a man above a monkey, to lighten and refresh the spirit when " the world is too much with us "—even in the narrowest material sense are these things useless? Is civilisation useless? The two questions are, in reality, the same.

Only one lying creature exists on the face of the earth —man. Every other is upright and true, behaving as it feels, and without pretending to be anything but what it is.

Now, man has learnt the art of camouflage from other living creatures—from the stick-insect resembling a twig; the young fish, invisible, transparent as the water; the harmless insect, yellow-banded, to look as deadly as a wasp. What trick could be better than the lapwing's, who flutters as if wounded from her nest to draw the enemy away? The hunter who, when a bear attacks him, pretends that he is dead, is only copying the trick of other animals more

cunning than himself. It would be nearer to the truth to say that every living creature who is not protected by its strength, its armour, or its speed of foot, is protected by pretending to be something different from what it really is.

> Only the male intellect, befogged by the sex-impulse, could regard as beautiful that undersized, narrow-shouldered, broad-hipped, short-legged animal, a woman.

Schopenhauer, who was no woman-lover, is trying to say something nasty. But his venom lacks a sting. In every age, the world's great artists have rejoiced to paint or carve the beauty of a woman—moved not the least by any sex-impulse, but solely by their sense of beauty. Their divinities are but the counterparts of living models ; Aphrodite rising from the foam, Psyche holding up her lamp—

> Praxitelean shapes whose marble smiles
> Fill the hushed air with everlasting love.

But stay ! There may be an excuse for Schopenhauer. We have no knowledge of his lady friends. Their figures may have soured his mind.

♣ ♣ ♣

POETS' PICTURES.

The power of using words to paint a picture —the power of setting a scene, distinct as life, before the reader's eye—this is a gift which varies greatly, according to the mind in which it

springs. It is curious to consider the works of the great English poet-painters from this point of view. Infinite are their points of difference in style, subject, and effect. From one we have a scene in black and white ; from another, a landscape dipped in all the colours of the sunset ; from a third, perhaps a cunning sketch, called into being almost by a touch, yet sharp as life itself, we know not how. And the last of these are not the least delightful. Elaborate descriptive pictures, even when by master hands, are apt to lack effect. But there is often a peculiar charm about some little study, of no more substance than those with which Jane Eyre was wont to fill the pages of her sketch-book : " A glimpse of sea betwen two rocks ; the rising moon, and a ship crossing its disk ; a group of reeds and water-flags, and a naiad's head, crowned with lotus-flowers, rising out of them ; an elf, sitting in a hedge-sparrow's nest, under a wreath of hawthorn-bloom."

In the following pages we are going to glance at the peculiar characteristics of certain poet-painters. We shall be able, also, as we proceed, to note some of the points in which a painted picture differs from a picture drawn in words.

We will begin with Wordsworth.

Wordsworth, it is true, was not a poet-painter first of all. His peculiar power was of another kind. He loved with an immortal love the woods, the lakes, the mountains, and the starry heavens; but not alone for their external beauty, it was the mysterious life of things, the spirit that may be felt, but is not seen, that woke his inmost passion. His heart was haunted by the sounding cataract; his soul received into herself, in still communion,

> The silence that is in the starry sky,
> The sleep that is among the lonely hills.

Nevertheless, although he was the poet of sensations rather than of pictures, Wordsworth comes among the poet-painters, and very notably. Not by his long descriptions; these, as a rule, though deep in feeling, impress no vivid image on the mind. But scattered up and down his works are passages, of few lines in length, which fill the eye at once with an abiding picture. Such, for example, is this little sketch, taken on a bright and sunny morning, after a night of rain and roaring wind :—

> On the moors
> The hare is running races in her mirth,
> And with her feet she from the plashy earth
> Raises a mist, that, glittering in the sun,
> Runs with her all the way, wherever she doth run.

The running hare—the little cloud of shining

mist—start up before the eye as if it saw them. It will be noticed that the scene is one of light and shade; brilliant, but not needing colour. It is in such that we have Wordsworth at his best. He had graphic power in plenty, but small sense of colour. It would be impossible to find in all his works a picture in pure colour, such as are to be found in multitudes in the works of Shelley and Keats and Tennyson. The fact is, Wordsworth had no great love of colour for itself; and this in so profound a lover of Nature is very curious. Yellow, indeed, he uses frequently; but his love of yellow (saffron, gold and orange) is probably owing mainly to its brightness. His delight in his one colour—or rather lustre—is quite remarkable. Crimson and scarlet and purple—the passion of great colourists—he scarcely uses; his very sunsets are without them. But gleams of shining yellow rarely miss his eye. Never has there been so great a poet of the twilight; and constantly in scenes of twilight he finds his favourite effect. He sees, at one time, half a village shining, arrayed in golden light, while the other half is veiled in shadow, and from among the darkened roofs the tall spire seems to mount like fire; at another time, he sees the ranging herds, clear in the liquid light, stand out along the mountain side :—

And glittering antlers are descried,
And gilded flocks appear.

Glittering antlers, gilded flocks—such are the high lights with which he loves to fill his pictures. No one who has studied Wordsworth will consider it at all an extravagant conjecture that what first attracted him in Matthew's epitaph was the fact that its letters glittered and were of gold. His chosen flowers were yellow—and not "the golden host of daffodils" alone. When he is leaving home—his "little nook of mountain-ground"—it is on two yellow flowers that his last glance lingers :—

Thou, like the morning in thy saffron coat,
Bright gowan, and marsh-marigold, farewell !

And again, in the same poem :—

Here, thronged with primroses, the steep rock's breast
Glittered at evening like a starry sky.

Perhaps the primrose was Wordsworth's best-beloved of flowers ; but it may be doubted whether he ever loved it better than when, as in this exquisitely beautiful scene of evening, the dusk had robbed it even of its own faint tinge, and left it blanched and shining.

In scenes in which no colour is required Wordsworth often has effects of faultless beauty.

As a characteristic example, we may take the little study in the last book of the " Excursion ":—

> In a deep pool we saw
> A two-fold image ; on a grassy bank
> A snow-white ram, and in the crystal flood
> Another and the same ! Most beautiful !—
> On the green turf, with his imperial front
> Shaggy and bold, and wreathed horns superb,
> The breathing creature stood ; as beautiful
> Beneath him showed his shadowy counterpart.
> Each had his glowing mountains, each his sky,
> And each seemed centre of his own fair world.

Shelley's style is the reverse of Wordsworth's. It is a style of glowing colour, but not often boldly graphic. Sometimes, indeed, Shelley not only colours, but draws also, like a master ; as in the noble picture of the Hours, in the " Prometheus " — the wild-eyed charioteers, with bright hair streaming, leaning forward in their cars to lash their rainbow-winged and flying steeds. Sometimes, also, he has a little passing piece of imagery such as this :—

> Two sister-antelopes,
> By one fair dam, snow-white and swift as wind,
> Nursed among lilies near a brimming stream—

A little picture, half-painted, half-suggested, of an indescribable witchery of effect. As a rule, however, Shelley cares far less for definite

imagery than for effects of light and colour; effects varying through all the scale, from scenes of vast dim tracts "robed in the lustrous gloom of leaden-coloured even"—from wild waves lighted awfully

> By the last glare of day's red agony,
> Which from a rent among the fiery clouds
> Burns far along the tempest-wrinkled deep—

down to the light-dissolving star-showers of soft-breaking seas, or the green and golden fire of glow-worms gleaming at twilight from the bells of lilies.

But what chiefly separates Shelley's pictures from those of other poets is his amazingly fine sense of tenderness of colour. There is nothing equal to his work in this respect; nothing that glows like it, yet is so delicate. Some of his effects stand quite apart—alone in an unearthly beauty. Take the description of the mystic shell which Proteus gave to Asia:—

> See the pale azure fading into silver,
> Lining it with a soft yet glowing light;
> Looks it not like lulled music sleeping there?

The secret of this sort of colouring, so rich, yet so etherial, belongs to Shelley only among poet-painters.

We will take one more of Shelley's pictures;

this time a scene of sunrise. It will serve not only as an example of his style, but as an illustration of one of the points in which a poet's picture may differ from a painter's :—

The point of one white star is quivering still
Deep in the orange light of widening morn
Beyond the purple mountains : through a chasm
Of wind-divided mist the darker lake
Reflects it. Now it wanes ; it gleams again,
As the waves fade, and as the burning threads
Of woven cloud unravel in pale air.
'Tis lost ! and through yon peaks of cloud-like snow
The roseate sunlight quivers.

Now, if we consider this picture for a moment we shall see that it is one which it is beyond the power of a painter to represent. A painter, strictly speaking, cannot paint a sunrise ; he can paint a single, momentary aspect of it, and no more. But a poet can depict it wholly ; he can follow the rise, the progress, and the fulness of the imagery. A painter, in this instance, could depict the glittering planet, and the orange sky, the purple mountains, the mist, the dark lake, the reflected star ; but he could do no more. His sunrise has no changes ; it is fixed for ever. His mist can never drift and part ; his lake can never shine and fade ; his glittering star can never wane, nor gleam again, nor die at last among the snowy peaks that redden with the morning.

This, then, is the distinction. A poet's picture can present a scene complete; a painter's can present a single aspect of it only. We will take another illustration. Here are the last lines of Keat's Sonnet "On a Picture of Leander":—

'Tis young Leander toiling to his death . . .
O horrid dream! See how his body dips
Dead-heavy; arms and shoulders gleam awhile;
He's gone; up-bubbles all his amorous breath!

It is clear that the picture on which these lines are written could have had no real existence; it is a picture of the mind—a poet's picture. The dipping body and the gleaming shoulders might, indeed, be painted; but not on the same canvas as the vacant waters and the bubbling breath.

❧

We will here note another point in which a poet's picture may exceed the limit of a painter's. Painting has no power, as language has, of suggesting the effect of scents and sounds; it appeals to the eye only. But the impression of a scene of Nature on the mind is often far less owing to the sense of sight than to the breath of some faint perfume in the air, or to the presence, rather felt than heard, of some soft murmuring sound. A painted picture cannot render these.

It cannot render, in a scene of Autumn, " The moist rich smell of the rotting leaves "—a line which seems to breathe across the mind a sense of the dank days and dying flowers. It cannot represent, in such a picture as that of Peona watching Endymion's sleep in the mid-forest, the impression of loneliness and silence which is given by the words—

> —a whispering blade
> Of grass, a wailful gnat, or a bee bustling
> Down in the blue-bells, or a wren light-rustling
> Among sere leaves and twigs, might all be heard.

A painter could present the imageries of this scene ; but not those stilly forest sounds which make the spirit of it.

Keats must, on the whole, we think, be placed at the head of poet-painters. He had, in unapproached degree, the two essential gifts of a great artist—the sense of beauty, and the sense of colour. He is the greatest colourist in literature. His influence has been so great—the mere reflection of his style has so steeped in colour the work of later poets—that we are apt to forget that in this point he was emphatically the master of them all. Before him, there was nothing of that passionate delight in colour, for its own sake—nothing even in the best of

Chaucer or of Spenser—which can bear comparison for a moment with such a study, for example, as that of Lamia, the witch-serpent :—

> She was a gordian shape of dazzling hue,
> Vermilion-spotted, golden, green and blue;
> Striped like a zebra, freckled like a pard,
> Eyed like a peacock, and all crimson-barred.

This is the style of " fine excess," the art of " loading every rift with ore." No poems in the language are so rich in coloured imageries as " Lamia," " The Eve of St. Agnes," and " Hyperion." Keats, like all great colourists, loved crimson in his soul. It would not have been possible to him, as it was to Chaucer and to Wordsworth, to glut his passion on a daisy rather than on " the wealth of globed peonies." He loved the lustrous bubbling of red wine—the glowing of the tiger-moth's deep-damasked wings—the blood-red scutcheon blazoned in the panes. Imageries of crimson stand along his works like coloured lamps in the treasury of a king.

Exuberance of colour was the gift of Keats to poetry. But in graphic power, besides, he was so great that it is difficult to find his equal. To match the pictures of " Hyperion " we must turn to the " Inferno " ; Hyperion glowing on

his craggy ledge, regarding by the light of his own brilliance the Titans in the den, must be set beside the dragon Geryon wheeling in the gorge, or Farinata lifting his proud head out of his tomb of fire. To match the pictures of "The Eve of St. Agnes" we must come forward to "Œnone" and "The Palace of Art"; and even here they are matched only in distinctness —not at all in charm. The surest mark of a born painter is the tendency to shun abstractions and to think in imageries; and of this tendency perhaps no poet ever really had so great a share as Keats. To a mind in which this tendency is strong, it is not enough to tell us, for example, that a night is "bitter chill"—chillness is an abstract notion; it must have form and substance; it must proceed to set before our eyes a series of vivid little frosty *scenes*:—

> The owl, for all his feathers, was a-cold;
> The hare limped trembling through the frozen grass;
> And silent was the flock in woolly fold.

Scott was a poet of great graphic power. Let us try a piece of his description against a piece, as nearly like it as possible, of the work of Keats. Here, first, is Scott:—

> The corbels were carved grotesque and grim.

And here is Keats :—

> The carvéd angels, ever eager-eyed,
> Stared, where upon their heads the cornice rests,
> With hair blown back and wings put cross-wise on
> their breasts.

" Grotesque and grim " conveys a general impression, but no image ; the reader is left to work out for himself the details of the piece of carving on the corbels. Keats sets the image itself before us, and we have only to regard it.

Tennyson holds the highest place among the disciples of Keats. In graphic power he is equal with his master ; in faculty of colour, not his equal, yet not much below him. But he is nothing like so great a poet. Not only have his pictures no pretence to match the mighty scale of the Hyperions and Infernos ; they want also the deep poetic charm in which the finest work of Keats is " rich to intoxication." Tennyson's Sleeping Beauty, for example, is as vivid, as a picture, as the sleeping Adonis of Keats ; but the Princess sleeps beneath " a silk star-broidered coverlid "—Adonis under a coverlid—

> Gold-tinted like the peach,
> Or ripe October's faded marigolds.

The difference in the painting of these two

coverlids very fairly marks the difference between the gift of Tennyson and the gift of Keats; a difference not of drawing, nor of brilliance, but of glamour—of poetic charm. Whether it is a difference capable of analysis, or of logical expression, we need not care. It is sufficient for our purpose that it can be felt.

Tennyson's workmanship, besides, even at its best, is seldom quite free from the marks of labour. He achieves only by great care and pains what Keats achieves by instinct and at once. Vividness of drawing, variety of subject —these, we think, are the two points in which Tennyson is unexcelled. In range, indeed, he has no rival. He is the only poet who can depict, with equal ease, all things in Nature, from the highest to the lowest. He can set before us Venus, as she stood on Ida, her light foot shining rosy-white among the violets, the glowing sunlights floating on her rounded form between the shadows of the vine-branches, her rosy, slender fingers drawing back

> From her warm brows and bosom, her deep hair
> Ambrosial, golden round her lucid throat
> And shoulder.

Or he can work out such a study as :—

—a pasty, costly-made,
Where quail and pigeon, lark and leveret lay,
Like fossils of the rock, with golden yolks
Imbedded and injellied.

It is not every poet—certainly it is neither Wordsworth, Keats, nor Shelley—who can sit down to paint, with equal felicity, and seemingly with equal gusto, the Goddess of Love and a game-pie.

Such a study makes us marvel at the workmanship ; but such is not the kind on which we love to dwell. And Tennyson's best pictures ought not, in truth, to be compared with those of any other poet. Their excellence is not of the same kind. Yet what a gallery is his !—how many and how beautiful its scenes ! There is the lonely garden on which Marina looked out from the windows of the moated grange, the flower-plots black with moss, the peaches falling from their rusty nails, the black sluice choked with water-weed, the solitary poplar, shaking its melancholy leaves. There is the vale of Ida, the vine-roofed, crocus-paven bower, where Paris is giving the apple to Venus, and Œnone is peeping from her cave behind the whispering pine. There are the arras of the Palace of Art, inwrought with scenes like life ; St. Cecilia sleeping near her

organ—Ganymede flying up to heaven among the eagle's feathers—Europa, in her floating mantle, carried by the bull—King Arthur lying wounded in Avilion, among the weeping queens. There is Sir Bedivere, flinging the sparkling sword into the enchanted lake, and Vivian at the feet of Merlin, and Elaine, like a white lily, on her black slow-gliding barge. And there, too, is many such a piece of painting, as the gorgeous lines which call up before the eye the scene of Camelot, the rich dim city, on the day of the departure of the knights: the pageant passing in the streets, the tottering roofs alive with gazers, the men and boys astride of the carved swans and griffins, crying God-speed at every corner, the grotesque dragons clinging to the walls and bearing on their backs the long rich galleries, the lines of lovely ladies, gazing, weeping, showering down an endless rain of flowers.

A CONVERT TO FREE VERSE

Reader, I am a convert—a convert to the poets of Free Verse. Hitherto, to speak the truth, the work of our young bards has seemed to me but skimble-skamble stuff, such as a lunatic might scrawl up in his cell. I have been all for the old poets, whom the new ones hold

in scorn. I have found a foolish pleasure in their music, charm and glamour, a thrill and magic in their rhythm, in the poignant sweetness of their "lyric cry." I have noted that from Homer down to Swinburne no poem has come down to us across the ages which is not written in strict metre—strict, yet divinely sensitive—a thing of melody in words. For these reasons I had concluded that the productions of our Free-Versers, who look with loathing on these things, are not meant for me. But I was wrong. I have been studying their poems, and I can safely say that in all the works of Shakespeare, Milton, Shelley, Keats, there can be discovered nothing at all like them. And so I am a convert. I will give a few examples of the kind of thing I mean. They are taken from the *Little Review*, one of the chief organs of the cult.

AFFECTIONATE.

Wheels are growing on rose-bushes
gray and affectionate
O Jonathan—Jonathan—dear
Did some swallow Prendergast's silverheels—
be drunk for ever and more
—with lemon appendicitis ?

Nor is this glorious lyric by any means their highest flight. The next, taken from a poem of some fifty pages, double columns, is a passage

which I gather—for limpidity of meaning is not the strongest side of the Free-Verser—describes a prize-fight between a man named Jacob and a Negro :—

Jacob finds
an advantage
of weight
weighs
pants
elastic
crushes
swan's spasm
lying on top
weighs

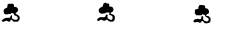
Swan's spasm

on him
fierce male—Leda
the big starred American negro of the match
totters
drunk with pink blows
just a little more courage
are these hands they slip
cocks spread out the dawn

at last
I see my quarry
to face
pants cocks
weighs cocks
grass cocks
dark boxing-ring cocks.

I could quote for ever from this noble poem

But these specimens, perhaps, will be enough to show the kind of thing which has converted me, and which, I doubt not, reader, will convert you also.



THE ART OF THE SHORT STORY.

When we study the art of the short story—when we turn to examples of the great masters in our endeavour to pluck out the heart of their mystery—we find that we have three points to consider—characters, dialogue, and plot. Or, rather, we have only two, for the dialogue is a vital part of the characters themselves. No two persons speak alike, and one of the chief distinctions between one man and another is the manner of their speech. Othello does not talk like Falstaff, nor Uriah Heep like Jingle.

Now, although the characters of fiction—people who have been made to speak and act as if they were alive—are essential in a full-length novel, they can, in a short story, very often be dispensed with. Many of the finest novels in the language—"David Copperfield," or "Vanity Fair"—hang together by the merest thread of plot; while, on the other hand, a short story, though a plot is vital to its very being, can do

well enough with only the most shadowy characters and with no dialogue whatever. In such a story as "The Pit and the Pendulum," by Edgar Allan Poe, the effect is gained entirely by a power of style so graphic, that it seems to put the reader into the very skin of the victim of the torture as the great steel blade of the curved pendulum sweeps down nearer and nearer to his heart. So again in a story by Maupassant, the reader seems to be himself the person sitting in a boat upon the misty river, seems to feel a sense of vague, of nightmare, horror stealing over him, he knows not why, until with a thrill in every nerve, he drags the anchor up, and with it—slowly, slowly—surging up through the black water, comes the white face of a corpse.

Ambrose Bierce, one of the greatest masters of the short story who ever lived, has a piece of art of the same kind. A man, calling on a friend, a doctor who has the habit of keeping wild animals at large about his house, is sitting in his room, when he perceives a large snake, with flaming eyes, coiled up just beneath the bed rail. In spite of all his efforts, the dreadful eyes begin to fascinate him—he is drawn nearer, nearer—until at last, with a wild scream, he falls forward into the very jaws of the reptile. He is

picked up dead. The snake is a stuffed one, and the eyes are two shoe-buttons !

Here is no dialogue, but sheer description—no characters, but only incident. But only a great master can write stories of this kind. There is no doubt whatever that, if a thing is to be described, most readers take it in more readily if a person in the story tells it than if it is written by the author. The vast majority are of the same way of thinking as Alice in Wonderland when, peeping into her sister's book, she discovered that it had no conversations in it—" and what is the use of a book," thought Alice, " without conversations ? " When Dumas said that all he required for a dramatic scene was four bare boards and a passion, he meant the same thing, very nearly. He had no need for scenery—which answers to description—but for a man and a woman at a white heat of passion, of love strong as death, or of jealousy cruel as the grave.

What is good dialogue ? It is the talk of real life, coloured a little and refined, but talk which makes the speakers seem as if they were alive. No objection to a story is so common, or so just

as " it doesn't seem as if it really happened." For this reason it is that almost all great writers go to life, though not to copy it too slavishly. H. G. Wells once told me that, while he did not take his characters direct from actual people, he always had a living model in his mind to which he could refer whenever he was doubtful how his character would, in given circumstances, speak or act. This was Dickens's plan also, though at times his imagination ran away with him and brought him to the verge of caricature, of farce. But Dickens not only took his characters from life, but often the minutest details of their actions ; for surely he must have *seen* and not invented, such things as Sarah Gamp sliding her nose back and forwards along the warm brass top of the sick-room fender, or Montague Tigg, the shabby-genteel, diving for his shirt-collar and bringing up a string.

The plot of a story, however, is, more often than not, an act of pure invention. A story that rounds itself off, complete and perfect, is not common in real life. H. G. Wells has somewhere given his opinion that a story can be built up on *any* incident whatever—just as a statue is to be found in every marble block, if only the sculptor has the skill to clip it out. But

the events of real life are, for the most part, little better than suggestions, the raw material which is to be worked up into things of art. If we take a story, for example, by W. W. Jacobs, we shall find that, besides being the work of one of the most delectable of humorists, it is a perfect model of constructed plot. This is why he is looked upon by his fellow craftsmen as one of the great masters of his art.

On the other hand, there are writers, such as Tchekov, whom certain critics have been hailing as a master, who take an incident, write it up, and leave it ragged at the edges. Such a story as "The Kiss" is a typical example. A visitor to a country house, lost in the dusky corridors, finds himself suddenly in a pitch-dark room. Instantly, a pair of girl's arms are thrown about his neck, a girl's voice breathes "At last!" and a passionate kiss is pressed against his lips. The next instant, with a startled cry, the girl has discovered her mistake and fled. Here is the beginning of a dozen stories, all possible and all delightful—but in this story, for page after page, the hero remains lost in wonder. Nothing else occurs whatever—and so, the foundation of the fabric being sandy, it crumbles down into the

dust. Not by any stretch of language can such a thing be called a work of art.

As for the style in which the story should be told, we find that, though every great writer has a method which is all his own, they have all one thing in common—whether the style be plain or splendid it is always crystal-clear. Not for them is the " fine writing " the obscure, affected or unnatural phrases which are the besetting sins of a young writer—a style which the French, with their unfailing instinct in such matters, call " tormented." There is no safer maxim than the old one—" what is said naturally sounds right."

Of course, the gift of telling a story is a thing apart. Conan Doyle once remarked to me that it was strange how few the persons are who, even if they have a story to relate, can tell it with effect. That is why the people who are so fortunate as to possess a natural knack of story-telling are in so great demand. And, of course, there is no reason in the world why *you*, who read these lines, should not be one of them, as well as anybody else.

MUSIC AND LITERATURE.

" With the exception of the fine extravaganza on that subject in ' Twelfth Night,' I do not

recollect more than one thing said adequately on the subject of music in all literature "—such is the observation of De Quincey in the " Opium-Eater." The fine extravaganza to which he alludes is, doubtless, the Duke's meditation with which the play opens :—

> If music be the food of love, play on—
> Give me excess of it, that, surfeiting,
> The appetite may sicken, and so die.
> That strain again ; it had a dying fall—
> Oh, it came o'er my ear like the sweet South
> That breathes upon a bed of violets,
> Stealing and giving odour.

Later in the same play occurs this piece of dialogue :—

> DUKE : How dost thou like this tune ?
> VIOLA : It gives a very echo to the seat
> Where Love is throned.
> DUKE : Thou dost speak masterly !

The Duke's admiration of Viola's reply has been shared, since his time, by every lover of music who has heard it ; and no doubt, if the passage had been in De Quincey's mind at the time of writing, he would have allowed that Viola, at least, has said " one thing adequately " on the theme of music.

But De Quincey is right in his main contention ; and this, when one thinks of it, is very

surprising. It is true that we do not know what Shakespeare might have written if he could have heard the music of Beethoven. But the fact remains that music, the art beyond all others passionate, soul-searching, and unearthly, has left the world of letters almost unaffected.

Not that the contention must be held quite without reserve. Not to speak of other passages in Shakespeare's plays, it is strange that he should have overlooked the forty-eighth letter of the " Nouvelle Héloïse." Surely the following paragraph, at least, might be allowed a place in the brief list :—

> But when, after a succession of agreeable airs, came those vast bursts of inspiration which arouse, and which depict, the turbulence of mighty passions, I lost in a moment all idea of music, of imitation, of song ; I seemed to hear voices of grief, of transport, of despair ; I seemed to gaze on weeping mothers, on forsaken lovers, on fierce kings ; and in the agitation of my mind it was only by strenuous effort that I refrained from leaping from my feet.
>
> Such impressions never *can* be felt by halves ; either they are violent to excess, or they are nothing ; poor, weak, or limited they cannot be ; either the mind remains insensible, or it breaks all bounds. *For music is either the vain and empty babble of an unknown tongue, or else a vast tempestuousness of passion which sweeps away the soul.*

In writers since De Quincey's time, it is more

possible, though still very rare, to find "things adequately said." Cardinal Newman, in the "Development of Doctrine," has a passage of great splendour; unluckily too long to quote. Carlyle also cannot be forgotten :—

> Who is there that, in logical words, can express the effect music has on us? A kind of inarticulate, unfathomable speech, which leads us to the verge of the infinite, and lets us for moments gaze into that!

Such passages, however, in their rareness, leave the strange truth of De Quincey's observation almost unaffected. For where is the great poet, or man of letters, to whom music has been a haunting passion? Where is the great poem of which music has been the very soul of inspiration? The arts of painting and of sculpture have always found their analogues in language; but where is the writer who has been as open to the power of music as Gautier to the power of art, as Wordsworth to the power of Nature, as Ruskin to the power of both?

It may, of course, be argued that the sensations awakened by the melody of music are too subtle—too intangible—to be caught in words. And this is doubtless, to a great extent, quite true. Mysterious mother of emotions, many

are the wild, the joyful, and the melancholy voices with which she shakes the hearts of her adorers, inexpressible by any tongue of man. From Beethoven's power, as of an angel, to trouble or to still the waters of the spirit, to Schubert's long-drawn sweetness or the weird and witching glamour of Chopin, many are the spells of melody which have no counterpart in words. The poetry of perfumes is less subtle, less intangible. Baudelaire can clothe in verse the sensations excited by the scent of a girl's hair; Tennyson can describe the emotion awakened by the sweet, weak odours of an autumn day. But even the powers which can express such shadows of perception must needs pass by as inexpressible, except in melody, "a world of passions, sad, and sweet, and wild." All this is true; but this is not De Quincey's meaning. The curious thing is that so few among the world's immortal voices have spoken of music with a lover's ecstasy.

Among the many mysteries of music, not the least is that which regards the individuals who are open to its influence, and those who are obtuse to it. The St. Cecilia Odes of Pope and Dryden, however fine as literature, show nothing of the sense of music—of the sense which pene-

trates a saying such as this of Edgar Poe: "We are often made to feel, with a shivering delight, that from an earthly harp are stricken notes which *cannot* have been unfamiliar to the angels." A shivering delight! Nothing could be better said, so far as the brief words go.

The fact is, that when we come to inquire, among the great names of the world of letters, and especially among the poets, which of these have been susceptible to music and which have not, we find ourselves in a state of perpetual surprise. Thus, Rossetti, as we learn from Holman Hunt, "thought music positively offensive"; yet Rossetti's was a nature eminently sensitive, not only to the beauty of form and colour, but to the melody of words. Strange indeed it is to find in him a point in common (surely the only one!) with Samuel Johnson, who considered music merely "the least disagreeable of noises." Charles Lamb, as everybody knows, "had no ear."

Keats, on the other hand, loved music well; "would sit for hours, when Severn was playing, following the air with a low kind of recitative." In one of his letters, in which he is speaking of the lady of his love, "She kept me awake one night," he says, "as a tune of Mozart's might do"—a character-revealing phrase. One re-

members also, in the case of Keats, that inspired similitude in the " Eve of St. Agnes " :—

The music yearning like a God in pain.

Shelley also was a music-lover. Who does not know by heart the exquisitely lovely verses, " I pant for the music which is divine," and " To Constantia, Singing " ?—verses which stand among the rare exceptions which prove De Quincey's rule.

A very curious power of music on minds of a certain order of imagination, and one, perhaps, not much observed, is that which may be called, in the absence of a better term, the *visual* effect. Heine, in whom this faculty was strongly marked, has described the effect of music on himself in a very remarkable passage. He is speaking of the playing of Liszt :—

I confess to you that, however much I like Liszt, his music does not affect me pleasantly ; so much the less, as I am a Sunday child, and see spectres where other people only hear them ; for, as you know, at every tone which the hand strikes out from the piano, the corresponding figure of sound arises to my mind—in short, the music becomes visible to my mental eye. My reason trembles in my brain at the recollection of the concert at which I last heard Liszt play ; I forget what, but I could swear that he was playing variations on some theme from the Apocalypse. At first I could not see quite clearly the four mystical beasts ; I only heard

their voices, especially the roaring of the lion and the screaming of the eagle. I saw the ox, with the book in his hand, quite distinctly. The part he played best was the Valley of Jehoshaphat. The scene represented a tournament; and the resuscitated nations, pale as death and trembling, pressed as spectators round the immense arena. First Satan galloped in, with black harness, on a milk-white charger. Death rode slowly behind him on his pale horse. At last the Lord appeared, in golden armour, on a black steed, and with his holy lance first thrust Satan to the earth, and after him Death; and the spectators shouted.

The effect thus strikingly described is probably by no means so rare as one might be disposed to think it. It may be traced with more or less distinctness in many writers—in De Quincey, in Collins, in Baudelaire. It is apparent in the extract from Rousseau above given: "I seemed to gaze on weeping mothers, on forsaken lovers, on fierce kings."

Is it "to consider too curiously" to imagine that this shaping power of music on the imagination was present in the minds of ancient poets when they fabled that the walls of Ilion "Rose slowly to a music slowly breathed"?

"SOMETHING ABOUT EINSTEIN."

Quite recently a case came into court which concerned a violent quarrel between a woman and her son-in-law, the origin of the dispute being that

he "was always trying to improve her mind, and had insisted on teaching her something about Einstein." The conversation was not reported, which is a pity. Let us try to reconstruct it.

HE: "The methods, the mathematics, of Einstein are too difficult for us to follow, but their *results*—which are the only things that really matter—are comparatively easy. I am going to tell you of some of these results, in ideas of one syllable, if I may so express it. What is relativity? What is this new theory of gravity which is to take the place of Newton's? Let me give you a few examples, so that we may get at it step by step."

SHE: "Oh, dear! Oh, dear!"

HE: "Draw a straight line on a sheet of paper. To you, looking only at the paper, the point of the pencil will have travelled in a straight line of, suppose, a foot long in a second. To an observer in the sun it will have moved through space, not only with the motion of your hand, but through the vast curve of the earth's spin round its axis, and the still vaster curve of its rotation round the sun. Where you see a short straight line he will see a curve some forty miles in length. Which is right? Both. The straightness of a line is *relative*—it depends on the observer."

SHE : " But why bore *me* with it ? "

HE : " Now consider motion. A body alone in empty space cannot be said, with any meaning, to be in motion ; for motion implies that it is getting nearer to, or farther from, some other point. Again, if there are two such bodies which start moving side by side, but at different speeds, an observer on the swifter body will see the other apparently *receding* from him. To an outside observer it will appear to be following in his wake. Which is right ? Both. Motion and direction are *relative*—they depend on the observer."

SHE : " This is awful ! "

HE : " It is the same with space. If the whole of our visible universe were compressed into the size of an orange, we should be quite unaware of any change. Our measures, reduced in proportion, would still, for example, show the sun to be ninety-three million miles away. Size—that is, space—is *relative ;* it depends on the observer."

SHE : " *Must* you go on talking ? "

HE : " What is time ? About its reality, if it has any reality, we know nothing whatsoever. We cannot measure time itself—we can only measure it by the motion of something over a space, as a clock-hand or a planet. But motion and space are not real existences, but relative.

They depend on the observer—and so does time."

SHE: "*Can't* you stop?"

HE: "Now, what is gravity? This is the most important point of all. Newton thought the apple fell because the earth exerts upon it an attractive force. Einstein considers that it falls because, wherever there is matter, space itself is curved, just as the space we see in a very slightly concave mirror, where there are no straight lines at all, and where, if any body is in motion, it must move along a curve. Now, suppose a man in a closed room discovers that a marble placed anywhere against a wall rolls towards a hassock in the centre of the room, it will appear to him that the hassock is attracting it. Yet the fact may be that the floor is slightly concave, like a very shallow basin, and the hassock has no connection whatsoever with the motion of the marble. Just in the same way, the earth may have no connection with the falling of the apple, though it seems to us to be the cause of it."

SHE: "Robert, not another word! I warn you——"

HE: "But if space is curved, all things moving through it move in curves—all things, including light. Now, the more matter is present, the more space is curved. And so it

happens that the light from a star just behind the sun will come bending round it, like a train round a railway curve, and fall upon our eyes or cameras—that is, when the sun's glare is shut out during an eclipse—and we can see or photograph the star. It will appear to be shifted from its true position—how far shifted Einstein has worked out. At the last eclipse the stars appeared where he had predicted. And that is why his theory, perhaps the greatest achievement of the human reason——"

SHE: "This is the limit!" She rises in her wrath and slaps him in the face.

No doubt she was hardly tried. Yet there are others who might have found a certain interest in her son-in-law's attempt to explain to her, in the simplest language, "something about Einstein." For interest also is relative—it all depends upon the listener.

♣ ♣ ♣

LECONTE DE LISLE'S POETRY.

Leconte de Lisle is, above all things, a poet-painter. His muse, beyond all other muses, is

The singing maid with *pictures* in her eyes.

To read his poems is like walking through a gallery of paintings—of paintings which in range

of subject are without example. Leconte de Lisle is like Ulysses; he is "for ever roaming with a hungry heart" about the realms of gold. The regions most familiar to the feet of poets have been trodden by him also; but the wild and solitary places of the world are his peculiar ground. He loves, as every poet-painter loves, the figures and the scenes of antique Greece; and in his gallery are many of them, studied with an exquisite felicity. There is the Venus of the foamy locks, rising amidst her dolphins from the azure waters, like a lily from a sea of violets. There is the rugged Cyclops, lofty as a pine-tree, wooing the heartless Galatea with a she-bear's woolly cubs. There is the baby Hercules, with the serpents writhing in his fists, laughing in his cradle of the huge bronze shield. There is the turret-crowned Cybele, riding stately on her lions, amidst the cymballed dances of the Corybantes. There is the Sun-god in his golden mantle, lashing the snow-white stallions of his glistening silver car. There is Pan, goat-footed and goat-horned, with the lynx-skin drooping from his shoulders and the crown of hyacinths about his brows, peeping with a sly laugh from the rushes at a ring of dancing nymphs. These are the common property of poets, and of Leconte de Lisle among the rest; and few have treated them with greater beauty.

But his own peculiar regions are not classic, but barbaric. He loves the rich and coloured East, with all its pictures, from the oasis where the Bedouin ties his mare beneath the solitary date-palm to the verandah with the silver trellis and the scarlet cushions where the Persian beauty, lulled by the music of the porphyry fountains, watches the blue smoke of her hookah in the jasmin-scented air. He knows the desert where the herds of elephants pass ghost-like in the moonlight, and the glade of jungle where the jaguar rests at noon. He has beheld upon its rock the black tower of Runoia amidst the everlasting Polar snows. He has marked the priest of Brahma, with the girdle of white muslin round his loins of amber, sitting cross-armed in trance beneath his fig-tree. He has watched the condor float above the peaks of Chimborazo. He has entered the cavern where the huddled cubs of the black panther mew among the shining bones :—

> La reine de Java, la noire chasseresse,
> Avec l'aube, revient au gîte où ses petits
> Parmi les os luisants miaulent de détresse,
> Les uns sous les autres blottis.

With a poet of this world-wild range, a few examples of his style, as typical as may be, are all that we shall find it possible to glance at.

Leconte de Lisle is famous for his studies of wild animals, and with these we will begin. Here is a picture of a tiger—a piece well known to his admirers :—

Sous l'herbe haute et séche où le naja vermeil
Dans sa spirale d'or se déroule au soleil,
La bête formidable, habitante des jungles,
S'endort, le ventre en l'air, et dilate ses ongles.
De son mufle marbré qui s'ouvre, un souffle ardent
Fume ; la langue rude et rose va pendant.

(To those who do not read French readily, a literal version may perhaps be useful: Under the tall, dry grass, where the rosy naja-blossom unfolds, in its golden spiral, to the sun, the formidable beast, the dweller of the jungle, sleeps upon his back, with claws dilating. Out of his striped jaws his hot breath smokes, and his rough red tongue is lolling.)

Was ever a word-picture better painted? The eye beholds it, like a scene of life—the great cat lying on his back, with claws dilating, smoking breath, and lolling rosy tongue. This, of course, is the chief figure of the picture ; but the " accessories," as the painters say, are put in no less finely :—

Toute rumeur s'éteint autour de son repos ;
La panthère aux aguets rampe en arquant le dos ;
Le python musculeux, aux écailles d'agate,
Sous les nopals aigus glisse sa tête plate ;
Et dans l'air où son vol en cercle a flamboyé
La cantharide vibre autour du roi rayé.

(Round his repose all noise is stilled; the pantheress crawls, with arched back, on the watch ; the sinewy python, with the scales of agate, thrusts his flat head from below the prickly nopals; and where his flight has made a glittering circle in the air, the cantharides darts to and fro around the broad-striped king.)

From this picture of the noonday jungle the poem changes, like a scene in a dissolving view, to the same at twilight. The air grows chill, and stirs the grass-tops ; the tiger wakens, lifts his head, and listens for the tread of the gazelles, if any chance to seek the hidden brooklet where the bamboos lean above the lotus blossoms. But no sound is in the air ; and, rising from the grass with stretching jaws, he sends a melancholy growl into the night.

Here is the existence of a wild beast studied with the feeling and the insight of imagination which other poets only spend on men and women. In this revealing sympathy with wild and savage life, Leconte de Lisle stands quite alone. We will take one more example—one out of many in his volumes. It is the study of a condor. The vast bird, from a summit of the Andes, watches the ocean of the night, which has eclipsed the pampas, rolling upward peak by peak—

> Lui, comme un spectre, seul, au front du pic altier
> Baigné d'une lueur qui saigne sur la neige,
> Il attend cette mer sinistre qui l'assiége.

(Lone, like a spectre, on the lofty peak, bathed in a light which dyes the snow with blood, he awaits the gloomy ocean which surrounds him.)

What a masterpiece of light and shadow is this picture ! How he stands out, the sunset-crim-

soned condor, pinnacled above the sea of night!

And now—to turn to men and women—we will purposely select two sketches of which the subjects are in striking contrast. The first is a picture of a beauty borne in her palanquin, half dreaming "to the rhythmic step of her Hindoos."

Tandis qu'un papillon, les deux ailes en fleur,
Teinté d'azur et d'écarlate,
Se posait par instants sur ta peau délicate,
En y laissant de sa couleur,

On voyait, au travers du rideau de batiste,
Tes boucles dorer l'oreiller,
Et sous leurs cils mi-clos, feignant de sommeiller,
Tes beaux yeux de sombre améthyste.

(While a butterfly, with flower-like wings, tinted with azure and scarlet, alights for an instant on thy tender skin, and leaves there something of his colour, one may discern, through the lace curtain, thy tresses gild the cushions, and under their half-closed lashes, which feign to sleep, thy lovely eyes of sombre amethyst.)

The poem in which occur these two delightful stanzas is typical of a great portion of Leconte de Lisle's most lovely work—his Oriental poems. Beside their charm and beauty, let us now, for contrast, place a work of equal power, which may be called a study of the picturesquely horrible. It is the portrait of a Brahmin hermit:—

Ses yeux creux que jamais n'a fermés le sommeil,
Luisaient; ses maigres bras brûlés par le soleil

Pendaient le long du corps ; ses jambes décharnées
Du milieu des cailloux et des herbes fanées
Se dressaient sans ployer comme des pieux de fer ;
Ses ongles recourbés s'enfonçaient dans la chair ;
Et sur l'épaule aiguë et sur l'échine osseuse
Tombait jusqu'aux jarrets sa chevelure affreuse,
Inextricable amas de ronces, noir réseau
De fange desséchée et de fientes d'oiseau,
Où, comme font les vers dans la vase mourante,
S'agitait au hasard la vermine vivante.
Là, gardant à jamais sa rigide attitude,
Il rêvait comme un Dieu fait d'un bloc sec et rude.

The saint is not a captivating spectacle, and we shall not venture to present him in plain prose. But what a picture ! Dante has scarcely anything more vivid and alive. To read it is to see the holy man in person, sitting in silence, like a rough-hewn idol—his glittering hollow eyes, his limbs like iron bars, his nails that curve into the flesh, his hair, a mass of filth and brambles, falling to his knees. The passage occurs in the long poem " Çunacépa "—a splendid specimen of narrative verse. The story tells how Çunacépa, the son of an old Brahmin, volunteers to sacrifice his life in order to appease the anger of the god. Çudra, a beautiful young girl who loves him, persuades him to retract the vow ; and it is to learn how this may be accomplished without sacrilege, that the lovers seek the saintly Vicvamitra. Çuna-

cépa follows his directions. On being knotted to the fatal pillar, he sings seven times the sacred hymn of Idra. Immediately a lightning-flash strikes off his bonds and in his place appears a snow-white horse. The horse is sacrificed, the god is pacified, and the lovers fall into each others' arms. The manner in which this story is related is rich and vivid beyond all description. Nothing can exceed the splendour of the imagery with which the poem rolls along. All Leconte de Lisle is in it, as all Tennyson is in "The Idylls of the King."

"Çunacépa" is an excellent example of the kind of subject which he has made his own. It is strange and splendid; in a word, it is barbaric; and on that account it charms him. There is doubtless also the delight of an intense imagination in living for itself the lives of other times and lands. One might almost say that he has lived in every age of history, as well as in every quarter of the globe, until the spirit of them has become to him as if it were his own. Take, for example, the ballad called 'La Tête du Comte." The scene opens with a piece of painting in Leconte de Lisle's most vivid style. One sees the hall of an old Spanish castle, round the walls of which, between the battle-battered shields and coats-of-mail, stand squires and cup-bearers' and thick-lipped Moors, looking in

silence at the aged Don, who sits alone at the great table, plunged in grief, and tasting nothing of the feast before him. He has been insulted by an enemy, and is too old to guard his honour. No sound is heard except his bitter exclamations and the crackling of the resin dropping from the torches. Suddenly the door flies open, and his son, Don Rui Diaz, enters, bearing the head of the offender by the hair. The old Don falls upon his neck in ecstasy; after which the two sit down together to their venison, "grave and satisfied,"

En regardant saigner la Tête lamentable.

In this terrific picture is the quintessential spirit of the times. For that reason it was painted. No treatise on the Middle Ages could present more vividly its most conspicuous feature—its blend of savagery with jealous honour.

But although in such a study the poet's power is at its height, it is not to these that his admirers love to turn, but rather to his poems of pure beauty. They delight to read a thousand times such verses as "Le Bernica"—a simple picture of a wild and solitary nook among the mountains, where one may dream beyond the ways of men:—

La liane y suspend dans l'air ses belles cloches
Où les frelons, gorgés de miel, dorment blottis;

Un rideau d'aloès en défend les approches ;
Et l'eau vive qui germe aux fissures des roches
Y fait tinter l'écho de son clair cliquetis.

(The bine there hangs in air her lovely bells, in which the honey-drunken hornets sleep ; a fringe of aloes guards the access ; and living waters, born in fissures of the rocks, awake an echo of clear-tinkling rills.)

Lines of such witchery as the last of these are only written by great poets. The sound gives verily an echo to the sense ; the silver tinkle of the rocky rills is in the syllables. In such verse the eye is filled with pictures, and the ear at the same time with music of a haunting sweetness, and this is word-painting made perfect.

Leconte de Lisle does not often seek variety of metre. The grand and splendid Alexandrine seems his natural measure. But sometimes he works in shorter lines, and with the happiest effect. In the last of the three studies called "Les Clairs de lune" there is an exquisite example. The poem is a sea-scene ; it represents an ocean at the hour of twilight, gray, calm, and vast, beneath a starless sky. Very gradually, towards the East, a white light breaks the mist above the sea-line :—

Un feu pâle luit et déferle,
La mer frémit, s'ouvre un moment,
Et, dans le ciel couleur de perle,
La lune monte lentement.

(A pale fire shines and strengthens; the sea trembles, opens for a moment, and in the pearly-coloured sky the moon mounts slowly.")

The magic of this line is owing partly to its picture, partly to its exquisite alliteration, and partly to a cause which English poetry has lost since Chaucer—to its lovely silent e's; silent, that is, in prose, but in poetry touched lightly with the tongue-tip, almost with the effect of rests in music. The line, for all its mellow intonation, compels itself to be read slowly, in correspondence with the slowly dawning moon.

Of this art of representing vivid pictures in lines of striking musical effect—an art in which Leconte de Lisle has been compared with our own Tennyson—the ballad called " Les Elfes " is a remarkable example, and it shall be our last. The ballad—a resetting of an old romance—tells how, while the elves are dancing in the plain, a knight on a black steed rides out of the forest, his gold spurs and his helm of silver glittering in the moonlight:—

Couronnés de thym et de marjolaine,
Les Elfes joyeux dansent sur la plaine.

Du sentier des bois aux daims familier,
Sur un noir cheval. sort un chevalier.
Son éperon d'or brille en la nuit brune;
Et, quand il traverse un rayon de lune,
On voit resplendir, d'un reflet changeant,
Sur sa chevelure un casque d'argent.

(Garlanded with thyme and marjoram, the joyous elves are dancing on the plain.

From the forest, from the haunts of the wild does, a knight-at-arms comes riding a black charger; his gold spurs glimmer in the twilight; and when he traverses a moonbeam, there is seen with changing lustre, the helm of silver glittering on his hair.)

The fairy queen invites him to alight, but vainly; to-morrow is his wedding-morning and his bride awaits him. She presses her request:—

" Reste, chevalier. *Je te donnerai*
L'opale magique et l'anneau doré,
Et, ce qui vaut mieux que gloire et fortune,
Ma robe filée au clair de la lune."
" Non ! " dit-il.—" Va, donc ! "—Et de son doigt blanc
Elle touche au cœur le guerrier tremblant.

(" Stay, Knight-at-arms ! I will give thee the magic opal and the golden ring; and, what is better worth than wealth or glory, my moonlight-woven robe." " No ! " he answers. " Go, then ! " and with her white finger she touches the trembling knight upon the heart.)

He rides away; but soon a figure, all in white, appears before him, which he takes at first to be an elf or demon. It is the ghost of his dead bride; and at that sight of horror the knight with love and agony falls dead beside her:—

Et lui, la voyant ainsi,
D'angoisse et d'amour tombe mort aussi.

And all the while, and at the end of every stanza:—

Couronnés de thym et de marjolaine,
Les Elfes joyeux dansent sur la plaine.

This is, perhaps, the finest ballad of its kind in the French language, as " La Belle Dame Sans Merci " of Keats is the finest of its kind in ours. Who does not feel the profound romantic charm of the lines which we have pointed with italics ?—especially of those which represent the fairy's gift ; the magic opal, the golden ring, and the charmed robe woven in the moonlight. Few things in literature are rarer than this glamour and enchantment—a quality which by comparison turns all other poetry to prose. Such verses differ from mere word-painting, however rich and vivid, as a musk-rose differs from a red camellia. The perfume of poetry is about them, as well as the colour and the form.

" Words, in a poet's eyes," says one who was himself a poet, " have, in themselves, apart from what they signify, a beauty and a costliness like that of precious stones which have not yet been set in bracelets, necklaces, and rings. The connoisseur delights to turn them over with his finger in the little cup in which they lie in readiness, as a goldsmith who designs a piece of jewellery. There are words of diamond, sapphire, ruby, emerald—there are words which shine like phosphorus on being rubbed ; and it is no light task to choose them." So Gautier describes the style of Baudelaire in a charming

simile, which might, with even more felicity, describe his own. But the truth is, that in the art of choosing words of charm and colour, and of setting them in jewelled phrases, the greatest of French poets is neither Baudelaire nor Gautier—it is Leconte de Lisle.

DOROTHY WORDSWORTH.

Imagine a little lady, about thirty, slight yet strong in figure, garbed in a rustic dress of her own making, her face tanned like a gipsy's, with a pair of gipsy eyes, large, wild, and startling, full of a strange spirit-fire—a being tremblingly alive, with a bird's quick-glancing motions, and a tiny stammer. Such was Dorothy Wordsworth at the time she kept her Journals at Dove Cottage, on the shores of Grasmere Lake.

Strange indeed that she, one of the most enchanting writers in the language, should be one of the least known. The fame of her great brother, to whom she was a ministering angel, has so completely swallowed hers that few have any knowledge of her writings, that store of things of beauty. Yet those wild eyes, that eager spirit, were a poet's, and saw things in a new light all their own ; while her gift of sketching them in words is, of its kind, without a rival.

Open the Journals almost anywhere, and you will light on something you will not forget :—

As we were going along we were stopped at once, at the distance of perhaps fifty yards, from our favourite birch tree. It was yielding to the gusty wind with all its tender twigs. The sun shone upon it and it glanced in the wind like a flying sunshiny shower. It was a tree in shape, with stem and branches, but it was like a spirit of water.

Or again :—

As I lay down on the grass, I observed the glittering silver line on the ridge of the backs of the sheep, owing to their situation respecting the sun, which made them look beautiful, but with something of strangeness, like animals of another kind, as if belonging to a more splendid world.

Thus do the simplest objects, a tree, a flock of sheep, seen in " the light that never was on sea or land," become transfigured things.

Many of Wordsworth's finest poems are verse-translations from his sister's prose. There was, of course, no secret about this. As he himself, with perfect truth, acknowledged : " She gave me eyes, she gave me ears." His best-known poem is, perhaps, " The Daffodils." Here is the passage from which it was translated :—

We saw a few daffodils close to the water-side. But as we went along there were more and yet more ; and

at last, under the boughs of the trees, we saw that there was a long belt of them along the shore. They grew among the mossy stones, about and about them; some rested their heads upon these stones, as on a pillow, for weariness; and the rest tossed and reeled and danced, and seemed as if they verily laughed with the wind that blew upon them over the lake, they looked so gay, ever glancing, ever changing.

This piece of word-painting is more elaborate than most of Dorothy's. Her special gift was that of calling up a scene, and all the spirit of it, as by a simple touch of magic :—

The swallows come to the sitting-room window as if wishing to build. They twitter and make a bustle and a little cheerful song, hanging against the panes of glass with their soft white bellies close to the glass and their forked fish-like tails. . . . The moon hung over the northern side of Silver How, like a gold ring snapped in two and shaven off at the ends. Within this ring lay the circle of the round moon, as distinctly to be seen as ever the enlightened moon is. . . . Rydal Lake was very beautiful, with spear-shaped streaks of polished steel. . . . The moon shone like herrings in the water. . . . We watched the crows at a little distance from us become white as silver as they flew in the sunshine, and when they went still further they looked like shapes of water passing over the green fields.

Is this not like looking at a row of pictures? At pictures? No, at *things*.

Here is a final scene—one most significant in the words with which it ends :—

O, the unutterable darkness of the sky, and the earth below the moon, and the glorious brightness of the moon itself! There was a vivid sparkling streak of light at this end of Rydal Water, but the rest was very dark, and Loughrigg Fell and Silver How were white and bright, as if they were covered with hoar-frost. Once there was no moonlight to be seen but upon the island-house and the promontory of the island where it stands. When I saw that lowly building in the waters, among the dark and lofty hills, with the bright soft light upon it, it made me more than half a poet.

More than half a poet? Yes, dear Lady of the Lake, much more. Yours, if ever mortal had it, was "the vision and the faculty divine."

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THE FIRST REIGN OF TERROR.

The French Revolution, with its eternal interest, has lately, owing to the Centenary of Napoleon, drawn the eyes of men once more to its stupendous drama. But no one seems to have recalled its prototype, the Roman Reign of Terror, nor to have compared their respective leaders with one another. Plutarch traced a parallel between Sulla and Lysander. A comparison of Robespierre with Sulla would be more striking still.

In appearance, the two men were opposites. Robespierre we know well enough—that acidu-

lated mawworm with the visage of sea-green. And of Sulla we can form as clear a picture—the young officer of cavalry, high-born but hard-up, with his eagle face, his red-and-white complexion, his steel-blue eyes, and fiery mane, who, like Napoleon, fought his way from victory to victory, until he made himself, in everything but name, the king of Rome. It is strange that, with all his wild adventures, no writer of romance has set him in the limelight—for, if not the greatest, he was assuredly one of the most striking figures of which the world holds record.

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His character was strangely mingled. A trifler, yet a scholar, a virtuoso, fond of manuscripts and statues, fonder still of wine and women, a soldier of such genius that he never lost a battle—as one sees him flirting in the saloons of ladies, roaring drinking songs among his soldiers, hobnobbing with buffoons and actors, even writing farces of his own, he seems a fantastic kind of mixture of Napoleon, Horace Walpole, and Don Juan. Like Napoleon, he was a firm believer in his star. The Goddess of Love was his protector. He carried about him, as a mascot, a golden image of Apollo. He was himself " half-lion and half-fox, and worse as the fox than as the lion." His victories, his

adventures, were too wild for fiction. He led the fierce Jugurtha to his camp in chains—he quelled the fiercer pride of Mithridates—he beat the mighty Marius out of Rome—he made himself the master of the city.

And then began *his* Reign of Terror. He had no guillotine—but his method was as deadly. For the first time in history, a daily list of victims was posted up in public. Any man who murdered one of the proscribed received a pocketful of gold. A slave who thrust a dagger into the body of his master—a discarded mistress who dropped a pinch of poison into her betrayer's wine—obtained not revenge alone, but fortune. No wonder that the Dictator's enemies vanished like the snows in springtime. No wonder that the kennels of the streets ran red with blood. And then, at last, having settled law and order to his liking, having raised the city from a den of anarchists and rebels to a supremacy of glory without rival, he walked one day into the marketplace and there, among his enemies, without a single guard, told the people that he had done enough for one man and that he was going home. There was something in the act so strange and splendid that the very men who, while he was away in Asia had burned his man-

sion to the ground and cast his family adrift, now cheered him to the echo.

Home he went—to his Cuman villa—there to pass the days among his books and pictures, choice wines and lovely women, to angle in his lake, to write his memoirs under the shadow of his cherry trees. A year afterwards he broke a blood-vessel, and died.

Robespierre and Sulla are alike among the world's great murderers. Each was a Prince of Darkness whom all the whitewash in the universe will not avail to whiten. Yet even here there is a difference. The fate of women under the French Terror—the mothers shot with babies at their breasts—the tumbrils moving to the guillotine, packed with bevies of young girls, looking "like bunches of white lilies"—the selling of their hair for periwigs—the tanning of their skins for breeches—such things would have turned the Roman sick. The aristocrat, the man of gallantry, would have regarded Robespierre with loathing, not as a criminal, but as a cad.

Even after death their fates were different. When the knife fell upon the neck of Robespierre there rang from every heart in France a cry of

exultation. When Sulla died, his body, robed in a king's apparel and heaped with golden chaplets, his soldiers, whom he had never led except to victory, bearing his war-worn battle-flags before him, followed by white throngs of priests and youths in golden armour, and then by tens of thousands of the people, was carried through the city to the funeral pile; his urn was set, as by an equal right, among the monuments of ancient kings; and, what he would have valued more, as if each had lost a lover, the women went in mourning for a year.

HOW "OMAR KHAYYAM" NEARLY DIED.

Edward FitzGerald was born in 1809, the son of a country squire, who left him ample means to live according to his liking. He chose to pass his days in rustic solitude, far from the madding crowd, a kind of dreamy hermit, a vegetarian who, in the phrase of his friend Tennyson, "lived on milk and meal and grass." He wrote a multitude of books, but all are half forgotten, with the exception of that single poem which has made his name immortal. He was forty-four when he began to render into English the *Rubáiyát* of Omar Khayyam, the poet-astronomer of Persia—like himself a lounger in the

flowery ways of life. For years on end he worked upon it, and finally submitted it to the editor of the *Fortnightly Review*, who kept it for a year and then returned it to the author. He had it printed at his own expense, but, as it had no sale whatever, he bestowed the copies as a gift on Bernard Quaritch, the bookseller, who first reduced the price from five shillings to half-a-crown, then to a shilling, and finally to a penny in the box outside his shop. By a rare stroke of fortune Rossetti bought a copy, and, bursting with enthusiasm, sent all his friends to buy it. Swinburne became the owner of four copies. And so the book began to sell. It is a curious thought that, but for Rossetti's lucky dip, one of the gems of English poetry might have become lost for ever. Is there such another volume among the penny-boxes of to-day ?

The qualities that have made the little work so famous, apart from the supreme beauty of the verse, are, first, its ever-popular philosophy of life, which is simply that of Herrick's song, " Gather ye rosebuds while ye may " ; and secondly, the glow and colour of its Oriental scenes, from the hour when morning strikes the Sultan's palace with a shaft of light to the glamour and magic of the wizard twilight, when a low large moon is hanging over perfumed gardens, where the guests, with wine-cup and

rosy garlands, sit "star-scattered" on the grass.

Tennyson considered this to be the best translation ever made, alike in music, form, and colour. Here are some of the stanzas in which, like all lovers of great poetry, he especially delighted :—

Come, fill the Cup, and in the fire of Spring
Your Winter-garment of Repentance fling :
The Bird of Time has but a little way
To flutter—and the Bird is on the Wing.

A Book of Verses underneath the Bough,
A Jug of Wine, a Loaf of Bread—and Thou
Beside me singing in the Wilderness—
Oh, Wilderness were Paradise enow !

They say the Lion and the Lizard keep
The Courts where Jamshyd-gloried and drank deep :
And Bahrám, that great Hunter—the Wild Ass
Stamps o'er his Head, but cannot break his Sleep.

Yet ah, that Spring should vanish with the Rose !
That Youth's sweet-scented manuscript should close !
The Nightingale that in the branches sang,
Ah whence, and whither flown again, who knows !

Would but some wingéd Angel ere too late
Arrest the yet unfolded Roll of Fate,
And make the stern Recorder otherwise
Enregister, or quite obliterate !

Ah Love ! could you and I with Him conspire
To grasp this sorry Scheme of Things entire,
Would not we shatter it to bits—and then
Re-mould it nearer to the Heart's Desire !

Yon rising Moon that looks for us again—
How oft hereafter will she wax and wane;
How oft hereafter rising look for us
Through this same Garden—and for *one* in vain!

And when like her, oh Sákí, you shall pass
Among the Guests star-scattered on the grass,
And in your joyous errand reach the spot
Where I made One—turn down an empty glass!

And this flask of essence of the sweetest poetry came nigh to being lost! It turns one cold to think of it.

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"THE LABOUR OF THE FILE."

"Labor Limæ"—the labour of the file, as Horace called it—the labour which comes from the artist's "ache for perfection"—the bitter search for the right word—is one of which, beyond all writers, poets are the greatest victims. It is related that Oscar Wilde, when staying in a country house, remained in his room all one morning, correcting proofs. When he appeared at lunch time, pale and jaded, one of the ladies asked him whether he had been busy with important alterations. "Very important," replied the poet. "I took out a comma." "What!" cried the lady. "Did that take you all the morning?" "Oh, no," was the answer, "on second thoughts I put it back again."

Perhaps the story is not strictly true, but it might be. Poets are always taking out or putting back a comma—or a word, or a line, or a stanza. Sometimes, but not always, the change is for the better. Tennyson's fatal habit, as he tells us, was,

> To add and alter many times,
> Till all be ripe and rotten.

In "Ænone" the silence of a summer noon was, in the first version, thus conveyed :—

> The lizard with his shadow on the stone,
> Rests like a shadow, and the scarlet-winged
> Cicala in the noonday leapeth not.

Nine years later this became :—

> The lizard with his shadow on the stone
> Rests like a shadow, and the cicala sleeps.

It was pointed out by some reviewer that the cicala, so far from sleeping, chirps his loudest in the heat of noon. Nevertheless, the poet let the insect sleep in peace for over forty years, when he suddenly swept it out of his verse altogether. In the edition of 1884 the line became :—

> Rests like a shadow, and the winds are dead.

This put the entomology right, but it completely ruined the line.

In " Mariana " the lines

> The rusted nails fell from the knots
> That held the peach to the garden wall

so remained for twenty-three years. Then the peach fell off. The lines became :—

> That held the *pear* to the garden wall.

Nine years elapsed and the pear tree was transplanted. The line now runs :—

> That held the pear to the gable wall.

If anything, I prefer the first myself ; but perhaps that is only because it calls up a mental picture of an old-world garden of my youth, with the warm brick wall from which a peach dropped often, over-ripe, and lay, a haunt of wasps, on the hot ground.

Tennyson was fond of taking out whole lines and stanzas, some of which can be ill spared. Such is the following from " The Miller's Daughter " :—

> Each coltsfoot down the grassy bent
> Whose round leaves hold the gathered shower,
> Each quaintly-folded cuckoo-pint,
> And silver-paly cuckoo-flower.

And this from " The Palace of Art " :—

Or Venus in a snowy shell alone,
Deep-shadowed in the glassy brine,
Moonlike glowed double on the blue, and shone
A naked shape divine.

And this—never published at all—from " Locksley Hall " :—

All about a summer ocean, leagues on leagues of golden calm
And, within, melodious waters rolling round the knolls of palm.

So Gray " filed " out of the " Elegy " the most beautiful of all its stanzas :—

There scattered oft, the earliest of the year,
By hands unseen, are showers of violets found.
The redbreast loves to build and warble there
And little footsteps lightly print the ground.

Wordsworth was as fond as Tennyson of this labour of the file. But now and then the gems which he had created in the hours when he was a great poet he filed off again when he became, in the phrase of Calverley, " an aged sheep." No line in the language is better known than

The light that never was on sea or land.

So was it written in 1805. In 1820 this had

been completely filed away and, instead, we have the perfectly staggering "improvement":—

The gleam
Of lustre, known to neither sea or land.

Twelve years later the original was restored, one of the jewels "that on the stretched forefinger of all Time sparkle for ever."

Here is an example of an opposite kind. Milton wrote in "Comus":—

And airy tongues that lure night wanderers.

Not liking the last half of this line he filed it off, and gave us, as by a stroke of magic:—

And airy tongues *that syllable men's names*
On sands and shores and desert wildernesses.

Poe once wrought as great a miracle with the change of but a single word:—

Now all my days are trances,
And all my nightly dreams
Are where thy dark eye glances
And where thy footstep gleams
In what ethereal dances,
By what eternal streams!

"Eternal" for "Italian"—only that—yet the verse soars up at once from earth to heaven.

Great is the truth of the old saying, and in

nothing more so than in poetry : " A little thing makes perfection, but perfection is not a little thing."

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"THE DEVIL'S DICTIONARY" AND "FANTASTIC FABLES"—BY AMBROSE BIERCE.

Ambrose Bierce, man of letters, writer of fiction, essays, fables, satires, epigrams, and verse, is known in England, if he is known at all, by a single volume of supremely fine short stories entitled " In the Midst of Life." Even in America, where the main part of his work was written, he has by no means come into his kingdom. Something has been done, however. Since he went to Mexico in 1914, and vanished for ever from the eyes of men, his complete works have been collected from a host of periodicals and issued in a limited edition of twelve volumes. It is to one of these that I propose to draw attention—surely one of the oddest volumes ever given to the world.

Dr. Johnson, as we are aware, took a sly delight at times in " gingering " his dictionary with an epigram in the mere flash and outbreak of his petulant wit. Thus, Excise he defined as a hateful tax, adjudged by wretches ; Oats as the food of horses in England and of men

in Scotland; a Lexicographer as a harmless drudge. Now, all the Doctor's sallies of this kind would find a fit and proper home in Bierce's pages. Indeed, it would almost seem as though he had turned them over in his mind and resolved to make a volume of such coruscations, all satire, sting, and sparkle, and of nothing else. The result was "The Devil's Dictionary," or, as it was first entitled, "The Cynic's Word-Book."

Let us turn the pages and select, almost at random, a few examples that will serve to show its scope and quality.

Bierce was a soldier—which is perhaps the reason why he seems to have thought little of the rulers of the Navy. Here is his definition of an Admiral: "That part of a warship which does the talking while the figurehead does the thinking." There is a touch of Johnson about this, and yet the peculiar tang of it is Bierce's own.

As a short-story writer pure and simple he has a jape at writers of long works of fiction—at least those of his own time. "Novel—A short story padded. The art of writing novels is long dead. Peace to its ashes, some of which have a large sale."

The Law has been the butt of satirists since laws have had existence. Bierce has a dart or two to throw. Here is his definition of a Litigant: "A person about to give up his skin in the hope of retaining his bones." Then we have the following on the word Appeal "To put the dice into the box for another throw." And, if brevity is the soul of wit, how shall we better this: "Court Fool: The Plaintiff"?

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His views of women vary strangely. Sometimes he is wormwood, as in "Belladonna: In Italian, a beautiful lady; in English, a deadly poison. A striking example of the essential identity of the two languages." And yet Bierce was no woman-hater. What can be of a more subtle sweetness than his remark on Wine: "Wine, madam, is God's next best gift to man"? And what truer compliment, however whimsical, was ever paid to her all-conquering charm than this, under the word Garter: "An elastic band, intended to keep a woman from flying out of her stockings and devastating the country"?

I have called this whimsical, though it is more than that. But some of his definitions are pure whimsies—just freaks of fun and fancy, quaintly

put. Such, for example, is the definition of an Auctioneer: "A man who proclaims with a hammer that he has picked a pocket with his tongue." Or this one, of a Jews'-harp: "An unmusical instrument, played by holding it fast with the teeth and trying to brush it away with the finger." Or the definition of the word Positive: "Mistaken at the top of one's voice." There is, alas, no whimsey in his definition of the word Peace: "A period of cheating between two periods of fighting."

Sometimes he is not satisfied to give a single definition but provides the reader with a rich selection. Such an example is the word Platitude: "A thought that snores in words that smoke. The wisdom of a million fools in the diction of a dullard. All that is mortal of a departed truth. A jelly-fish withering on the shore of the sea of thought. The cackle surviving the egg."

But the book is not all jibe and jeer—it is very far from that. "Brain: The apparatus with which we think we think." This is a sneer at human folly, or a truth, "deep as the centre," as we may choose to take it. Such a truth is also "Accident: An inevitable occur-

rence, due to the action of immutable natural laws."

But the best example of this kind is that given under the word Magnitude :—

> Size. Magnitude being purely relative, nothing is large and nothing small. If everything in the universe were increased in bulk one thousand diameters nothing would be any larger than it was before, but if one thing remained unchanged all the others would be larger than they had been. To an understanding familiar with the relativity of magnitude and distance the spaces and masses of the astronomer would be no more impressive than those of the microscopist. For anything we know to the contrary, the visible universe may be a small part of an atom, with its component ions, floating in the life-fluid (luminiferous ether) of some animal. Possibly the wee creatures peopling the corpuscles of our own blood are overcome with the proper emotion when contemplating the unthinkable distance from one of these to another.

Rather striking, is it not, to find the theory of relativity expressed some twenty years before Professor Einstein had been heard of ?

Ambrose Bierce also left a number of " Fantastic Fables." Some of these are quite original, others are founded upon those of Æsop, but with a twist that lends them quite another kind of

moral. Thus, the well-known fable of the Lion and the Mouse becomes transfigured, by the briefest touch, into something altogether new and unexpected :—

A Lion who had caught a Mouse was about to kill him when the Mouse said :—

" If you will spare my life, I will do as much for you some day."

The Lion good-naturedly let him go. It happened shortly afterwards that the Lion was caught by some hunters and bound with cords. The Mouse, passing that way and seeing that his benefactor was helpless, gnawed off his tail.

" Ingratitude, the marble-hearted fiend," is, unfortunately, not so rare that one can call the bitter sting unjust. Is not Bierce's mouse—or man—as true to life as Æsop's ?

Here is his adaptation of the Belly and the Members, of which Shakespeare had already made good use :—

Some Working Men employed in a shoe factory went on a strike, saying : " Why should we continue to work to feed and clothe our employer when we have none too much to eat and wear ourselves ? "

The Manufacturer, seeing that he could get no labour for a long time and finding the times pretty hard anyhow, burned down his shoe factory for the insurance and when the strikers wanted to resume work there was no work to resume. So they boycotted a tanner.

The moral here is much the same as Æsop's—that all should work together for the common good. But it is more thought-provoking. And by making the employer a rascal and the workers fools, Bierce, who was a cynic and a wit, spiced his fable with a tang of pepper, which makes it all his own.

Bierce never tacks a moral to his fables, so that the reader is left free to find one to his fancy. But this is sometimes not an easy task. Take the following, for example :—

A Wolf passing a Shepherds' hut looked in and saw the shepherds dining.

"Come in," said one of them, ironically, "and partake of your favourite dish, a leg of mutton."

"Thank you," said the Wolf, moving away, "but you must excuse me ; I have just had a saddle of shepherd."

What is the moral here ? I have no idea. I suspect that Bierce just saw the way to give his wolf a pretty gift of repartee, and let the moral slide.

Let us take another, to which he gave the title of "Philosophers Three" :—

"A Bear, a Fox, and an Opossum were attacked by an inundation.

"Death loves a coward," said the Bear, and went forward to fight the flood.

"What a fool!" said the Fox. "I know a trick worth two of that." And he slipped into a hollow stump.

"There are malevolent forces," said the Opossum, "which the wise will neither confront nor avoid. The thing is to know the nature of your antagonist."

So saying the Opossum lay down and pretended to be dead.

The moral I deduce from this—though the reader may perhaps prefer another—is that philosophers are not always skilled in practical affairs. But, moral or no moral, that opossum is a scream.

The moral of the next is obvious—"always look on the bright side of things":—

Two Frogs in the belly of a snake were considering their altered circumstances.

"This is pretty hard luck," said one.

"Don't jump to conclusions," the other said; "we are out of the wet and provided with board and lodging."

"With lodging, certainly," said the First Frog; "but I don't see the board."

"You are a croaker," the other explained. "We are the board."

Ambrose Bierce wrote these fables while he was residing in the United States, where there are many Legislatures. Of one at least of these

he seems to have formed no high opinion, if we may judge by the example following, which is, however, not so much a fable as a piece of cutting satire :—

The Members of a Legislature being told that they were the meanest thieves in the world, resolved to kill themselves. So they bought shrouds and, laying them in a convenient place, prepared to cut their throats. While they were grinding their razors some tramps passing that way stole the shrouds.

"Let us live, my friends," said one of the Legislators; "the world is better than we thought. It contains meaner thieves than we."

Let us take, as a last example, one which deserves our special notice :—

An Editor who was always vaunting the purity, enterprise, and fearlessness of his paper was pained to observe that he got no subscribers. One day it occurred to him to stop saying that his paper was pure and enterprising and fearless, and make it so. "If these are not good qualities," he reasoned, "it is folly to claim them."

Under the new policy he got so many subscribers that his rivals endeavoured to discover the secret of his prosperity, but he kept it, and when he died it died with him.

"UNE NUIT DE CLEOPATRE."

The time is coming when the tomb of Pharaoh will again be opened, and the minds of

men again be drawn towards that ancient life of Egypt on which so much new light is being shed. Now is the time to read again "Une Nuit de Cléopâtre," the most gorgeous story that even Gautier ever wrote—to read it not only for its splendid pictures, but for the sake of some reflections to which the moment lends a special point.

The story, in epitome, is this: Cleopatra, in her palace on the Nile, is alone with her waiting-women, for Anthony is away, and she is bored to death. As a Greek and an alien she is weary of Egypt and of all its ways. She explains her views to Charmian, her chief waiting-woman, in words to which I shall return :—

"And yet, Charmian," she winds up, "if I had an interest in my life, a love-affair, a passion, oh, then I could find this barren Egypt as charming as my own sweet Greece, with its ivory gods and carved white temples, its rose-laurels and its fountains! Oh, for a romance, a wild adventure! But who will dare to love a queen!"

Such is the mood of Cleopatra when she is startled by the sharp sound of an arrow that

comes whizzing through the window and stands trembling in the woodwork of the wall. About the shaft is wrapped a missive of papyrus on which are written these three words, " I love you ! " Here is the very thing her heart desired !

The sender of the arrow is a young lion-hunter named Meiamoun, beautiful as a god of bronze, who has risked his life in a mad passion for the queen. After shooting the arrow he disappears—but only to dive through the conduit which supplies the royal baths and to hide himself among a thicket in the gardens. And so it happens that when Cleopatra, her hair woven like a water-spirit's with a twine of reeds and lotus-blossoms, is emerging from the swimming-pool, she meets a pair of fiery eyes that gaze upon her from between the leaves. At her shriek, her slaves rush up, arrest the bold intruder, and drag him to her feet. To her question why he should not be dismissed to instant death he only murmurs the three words, " I love you ! "

Cleopatra stands astounded. It is the sender of the arrow-letter ! She takes a sudden resolution. The young lion-hunter shall stay with her—but in the morning he must die.

Overjoyed, he is conducted to the palace. The feast is held. But at last the morning breaks. The hour has come. A slave presents the young man with a cup of horn in which a violent poison boils and hisses :—

Cleopatra had turned pale. She laid her hand upon his arm. His courage moved her pity. She was about to say, "Live still and love me," when the sound of a clarion was heard outside the hall. It was the herald of Mark Anthony, returning. She drew her fingers from the young man's arm. He raised the cup, drained the poison at a draught, and dropped, as if struck by lightning—dead.

"By Hercules, my lovely queen," cried Anthony, appearing, "I see I come too late—the feast is over. But what is this dead body on the floor?"

"Oh, nothing," replied Cleopatra, smiling. "A new poison I was trying. Will you take a seat, my lord, and watch these Greek buffoons?"

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So much for the story. Apart from the splendour of the telling its chief point of interest at the moment is Cleopatra's reason for disliking Egypt, to which I now return :—

Oh, Charmian, I am sick of Egypt!—this hard blue sky without a cloud, this sun like a great glaring eye! I would give a pearl for one small drop of rain. Oh, this barren city, dead as the city of the mummies which lies underneath it! Oh, these everlasting mummies, that

eternal smell of naphtha and bitumen from the melting-pots of the embalmers! And all so melancholy, so mysterious—these colossal statues with their hands upon their knees, stupid, staring at nothing, at eternity, with the sphinxes for their watch-dogs—these monster-gods, half man, half jackal, or creatures horrible with scaly wings, hooked beaks, and cruel claws—these stairways that run up to heaven, these labyrinths where one might wander for a year without escaping. Oh, what a race of men, whose pride desires to write its name in granite on the surface of the world! A fine kingdom truly, for a young woman, a young queen!

Now, the time is coming when we shall again be deafened with acclamations of the civilisation and the arts of ancient Egypt. Objects which appear (at least to some of us) intensely ugly, will be extolled as things of deathless beauty—dog-headed idols, reptiles with scaly wings, lions with drain-pipe bodies and four crooked sticks for legs. Cleopatra preferred the gods of Greece, Apollo with his golden bow, Aphrodite wafted by her doves. Reader, do you agree with Cleopatra? *I* do.

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AUTHORS I HAVE KNOWN.—ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE.

Well I remember how, many years ago, when *The Strand Magazine* was making its start in a

tiny room at the top of a building in a street off the Strand—a sanctum approached through a room crammed with typewriters, with machines incessantly clicking—there came to me an envelope containing the first two stories of a series which were destined to become famous over all the world as the "Adventures of Sherlock Holmes." What a God-send to an editor jaded with wading through reams of impossible stuff! The ingenuity of plot, the limpid clearness of style, the perfect art of telling a story! The very handwriting, full of character, and clear as print. That character can be read from handwriting is one of Conan Doyle's own pet theories. I have heard him say that he has never known it fail.

Certainly his own is a case in point; it is lucid, masculine, and strong. And that is Conan Doyle. So far, the test is absolutely true. But it does not go far enough, for it gives no indication of the versatility of the writer. His interests are widespread. Besides being a writer, he is a cricketer, a boxer, a golfer, a great lover of outdoor life. Just to illustrate his last point: I remember once when I was spending a few days with him at his house at Hindhead, as the party was sitting round the hall-fire after dinner, the wild wind suddenly drove a thick spatter of rain against the window.

"Hullo!" exclaimed our host, "rain! I should like to go for a stroll in this." I thought he was joking; nothing could, to *me*, have been less tempting than a tramp across the downs in such a tempest. But no, not at all. Recruiting a younger member of the party, out they started, in caps and waterproofs, across the stormy hills. An hour or so afterwards they reappeared, rosy, laughing, and dripping at every angle, like Neptune rising from the sea. When they had rid themselves of these "dank weeds," we proceeded to the billiard-room, where his opponent (myself, alas!) having scored a couple of points by the assistance of a fluke, he proceeded to run out with a break of 100. Truly, such versatility has an annoying side to it sometimes.

W. W. Jacobs.

In the case of Jacobs the handwriting theory does not seem to be borne out—unless it is one of his forms of humour. Except that of the late George Manville Fenn, which was little better than a wavy line, it is the worst I have ever encountered—illegible as hieroglyphics. Indeed, Jacobs neither writes, nor talks, as this test would lead one to expect. Nor is his talk much like his writing. He is not one of the class

of wits and humorists who give point to an epigram with a twinkle and a laugh. Jacobs murmurs something, and it is only if you have been listening with attention that you find he has said a good thing. An example happens to come into my mind. Once when we were motoring together to Stratford-on-Avon, it was proposed to go first to Shakespeare's House, " as is the duty of the typical tourist," someone said. " The duty of the typical tourist," murmured Jacobs, " is to go first to the house of Miss Marie Corelli, and then to Shakespeare's—if there is time before the train starts." That puts " the typical tourist " in a nutshell.

H. G. Wells.

Of H. G. Wells I may say that, of all the authors I have met, he is the most unimpressive at a casual glance, and the most impressive on a close acquaintance. No one would turn round to look after him in the street ; but it is impossible to talk to him for five minutes without seeing that he is a man of the most striking gifts. Whatever subject may be started, his face brightens, his keen eyes sparkle, and his lips pour forth a stream of vivid speech, giving, most often, a view of things which is quite new,

original, and his own. One would suppose that he could dictate his work to a shorthand-writer as fast as he could talk. But no ; that does not suit him. Every word is written in his small clear, pretty hand, with incessant alterations, and margins covered with " balloons " of script, to be inserted here and there. When he is not working he is playing hard. Everybody knows the " war-game " which he invented for his own little sons. To see him playing hockey on his own lawn is to see a child in full enjoyment of the game in the midst of other children.

ROBERT BARR.

Robert Barr—now, alas ! no more among us —was at best as great a talker as a writer. In a certain club, where I often met him, many is the time that I have left him sitting at the table after lunch, surrounded by a group of listeners, the cloth hidden under glasses of green chartreuse and brown with tobacco-droppings as he rolled his endless cigarettes, only to find him some hours later in the same spot, and still holding forth. In fact, the stories of his rough adventurous life were without number, and were told with a raciness of style which his writing never excelled. I could fill a book with them. But I

must content myself with one—one among hundred of its kind :—

Once I was travelling by train "Out West" in a carriage full of rough and ready cowboys. With one of these I got into an altercation, which soon developed into a quarrel. Every man was armed, and suddenly I whipped out my revolver and swore to shoot down my opponent unless he begged my pardon. His only answer was a movement to throw himself upon me. I had him at my mercy—for half a second. My finger was on the trigger ; but I did not fire. I found out in that moment that I had not the grit of an assassin. In another instant it was too late. The fellow had me in his grip, had seized the pistol, and, throwing open the carriage door, thrust me out, head downwards, while he roared to me to apologize, or I was a dead man. Never shall I forget my sensations as I hung there, my nose close to the whirling wheels, the metalled track racing past just underneath my eye, that voice of doom resounding over me. I caved in ; was hauled back into the car, and made my submission. And that day I learned a lesson which, in great things and in small, I have never since forgotten : "Never pull your revolver unless you mean to shoot."

J. M. Barrie.

I have included Barrie under authors I have known, but I do not know him. The paradox is simple : no one does. With his frail, ethereal body and his eerie look, he strikes one as being half a mortal and half a fairy changeling. Such, indeed, are some of his own characters—Lob, in

"Dear Brutus," and Babbie, in "The Little Minister," and, above all, Peter Pan. But when it comes to real, mortal people, the children of the earth, what characters in fiction were ever more alive, for all the breath of fantasy that hangs about them?

The old joke about a Scotchman's lack of humour—a wheeze which never had much point about it—is refuted in his single person; for Barrie, even if he stood alone, has quite sufficient humour for one nation. And such humour! Was there ever any like it—like "The Old Lady Shows Her Medals," for example—so full of wit, and yet so lovable, so gay, and yet so tender? But there is something Puck-like in him too; a kinship with the imp of mischief. It is said that when he was starting life as a free-lance writer for the papers, he once put forth an article, apparently the serious work of an engineer, entitled "How I Built a Bridge Across the Ganges." Barrie's bridge was built, I take it, of nothing more substantial than the stuff that dreams are made of. And so with the more elfin of his characters. I once asked him whether Babbie was to be taken as a mortal being or as a kind of fay? He looked up at me from the depths of a huge chair in which his tiny form was swallowed up and, with his whimsical glance and smile half-hidden in the

cloud of smoke about his head, replied : " Who knows ? " Who knows, indeed ? Not he. She had come into his brain just as she was, and she remained a thing of mystery still.

E. W. HORNUNG.

No one could be less like Barrie, physically, than the man who gave us " Raffles." Hornung was built on the large scale, and was, indeed—not to put too fine a point upon it—somewhat, like Hamlet, " fat and scant of breath." For that reason he required a deal of exercise, and before the war might have been seen almost any afternoon at Prince's Skating Rink, performing, if not with the lightest fairy grace, at least with energy abounding. Years before he was intensely keen on cricket ; which is, no doubt, one reason why Raffles is represented as one of the best slow bowlers in England. And here I am reminded of a picture which I once came across in a French translation of " Raffles," and which, though meant in perfect seriousness, was, I should think, the very funniest work of art of any age or nation.

It depicted a youth attired in a fencer's leather jerkin, football " shorts," and pads resembling the greaves of a suit of armour, but

without fastenings of any kind, so that they appeared to be glued to his shins. This figure held a bat of which the splice came down the whole length of the blade and projected some three inches from the bottom, like a spike. But the inscription gave the perfect master-touch; this was Raffles *bowling!* No wonder Hornung roared when I brought it to his notice; for he was a man with a strong sense of humour. I once heard him advance a most delicious reason for not taking up the game of golf: "No man with the feelings of a sportsman would hit a sitting ball!"

A. C. SWINBURNE.

When Theodore Watts-Dunton (himself one of the "authors I have known") invited me to dinner with the poet at "The Pines," their Putney villa, I went with the sensations of a man who is about to be introduced to one of the Immortals. He turned out to be, at any rate, one of the very strangest of the sons of man. Into the dining-room he came, or rather glided, like a phantom—short, small of body, with the domed head of Shakespeare's bust, red complexion, beaky nose, his flamy hair mere side-tufts and, like his beard, fast fading—a withered peony. Of my expression of delight at making

his acquaintance he took not the slightest notice ; the fact was, I had forgotten that he was, almost literally, stone-deaf. Gliding into his seat, he poured out his bottle of beer, and just as I, remembering, was about to roar out a remark about his poems, he fixed me with his eye and broke into a rhapsody--on Sherlock Holmes !

The adventures of that eminent detective were at his finger-ends. He would talk of nothing else ; and, as he was only one shade deafer than his friend, the reader must imagine the conversation carried on by three stentorian voices, each like a skipper's with a speaking-trumpet, which made Rossetti's paintings dither on the walls. After dinner we ascended to the poet's study, where I hoped I might prevail upon him to recite—or rather, as his manner was, to chant—some of his own verses. I would have given much to hear from his own lips " the gorgeous storm of music " of " Dolores " or " the Ode to Victor Hugo." But all hints were vain. Pulling from the crowded book-shelves a little old dingy volume, embellished with vile woodcuts, he called my attention to an illustration representing a lady with a beard. So keen was his interest in this work of art—for what reason I quite failed to follow—that I was startled to observe that he

was beginning to quiver like a harp-string. Thereupon Watts-Dunton whispered to me not to prolong my visit, for excitement was apt to rob the poet of his slumbers. Accordingly, I took my leave. And so it came to pass that my recollections of the supreme master of poetic rhythm are linked up for ever with a bearded woman and a detective.

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