VARIOUS

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SOME AMERICAN POETS.[1]

It is probable that there has been written much excellent poetry on the other side of the Atlantic with which we are unacquainted, which perhaps has never crossed the water at all. We should therefore be very unwise if we professed to give here, even if such a plan could be executed within the compass of a few pages, a general review of American poetry. All that we propose is, to make some critical observations on the writers before us, accompanied by such extracts as shall not unworthily occupy the attention of our readers. Even the list of names which we have set down at the head of this paper is the result more of accident than design: the works of these authors lay upon our table. The two first names will be recognised directly as the fittest representatives of American poetry; they rise immediately

[1] Longfellow's Poetical Works. Bryant's Poetical Works. Whittier's Poetical Works. Poems. By James Russell Lowell. Poems. By O. W. Holmes

to the lips of every one who speaks upon the subject. The two last will probably be new to our readers, and if so, it will be our pleasant task to introduce them. One name only, familiar to all ears, has been purposely omitted. We have elsewhere spoken, and with no stinted measure of praise, of the writings of Mr Emerson. That writer has found in prose so much better a vehicle of thought than verse has proved to him, (and that even when the thought is of a poetic cast,) that to summon him to receive judgment here amongst the poets, would be only to detract from the commendation we have bestowed upon him.

We say it is not improbable that there is much poetry published in America which does not reach us, because there is much, and of a very meritorious character, published here at home in England, which fails of obtaining any notoriety. Its circulation is more of a private than a public nature, depending perhaps upon the social position of the author, or following, for a short distance, in the wake of a literary reputation obtained by a different species of writing. Not that our critics are reluctant to praise. On the contrary, they might be accused of rendering their praise of no avail by an indiscriminate liberality, if it were not the true history of the matter that a growing indifference of the public to this species of literature led the way to this very diffuse and indiscriminate commendation. If no one reads the book to test his criticism, the critic himself loses his motive for watchfulness and accuracy: he passes judgment with supreme indifference on a matter the world is careless about; and saves

himself any further trouble by bestowing on all alike that safe, moderate, diluted eulogy, which always has the appearance of being fair and equitable. Much meritorious poetry may therefore, for aught we know, both in England and America, exist and give pleasure amongst an almost private circle of admirers. And why not sing for a small audience as well as for a great? It is not every Colin that can pipe, that can now expect to draw the whole countryside to listen to him. What if he can please only a quite domestic gathering, his neighbours or his clan? We are not of those who would tell Colin to lay down his pipe: we might whisper in his ear to mind his sheep as well, and not to break his heart, or to disturb his peace, because some sixty persons, and not six thousand, are grateful for his minstrelsy.

One fine summer's day we stood upon a little bridge thrown over the deep cutting of a newly constructed railway. It was an open country around us, a common English landscape – fields with their hedgerows, and their thin elm-trees stripped of their branches, with here and there a slight undulation of the soil, giving relief to, or partially concealing, the red and white cottage or the red-tiled barn. We were looking, however, into the deep cutting beneath us. Here the iron rails glistened in the sun, and still, as the eye pursued their track, four threads of glittering steel ran their parallel course, but apparently approximating in the far perspective, till they were lost by mere failure of the power of vision to follow them: the road itself was straight as an arrow. On the steep banks, fresh from the spade and pick-axe, not a

shrub was seen, not a blade of grass. On the road itself there was nothing but clods of earth, or loose gravel, which lay in heaps by the side of the rails, or in hollows between them: it was enough that the iron bars lay there clear of all obstruction. No human foot, no foot of man or of beast, was ever intended to tread that road. It was for the engine only. From time to time the shrill whistle is heard – the train, upon its hundred iron wheels, shoots through the little bridge, and rolls like thunder along these level grooves. It is soon out of sight, and the country is not only again calm and solitary, but appears for the moment to be utterly abandoned and deserted. It has its old life, however, in it still.

Well, as we were standing thus upon the little bridge, in the open country, and looking down into this deep ravine of the engineer's making, we noticed, fluttering beneath us, a yellow butterfly, sometimes beating its wings against the barren sides, and sometimes perching on the glistering rails themselves. Clearly, most preposterously out of place was this same beautiful insect. What had it to do there? What food, what fragrance, what shelter could it find? Or who was to see and to admire? There was not a shrub, nor an herb, nor a flower, nor a playmate of any description. It is manifest, most beautiful butterfly, that you cannot live here. From these new highways of ours, from these iron thoroughfares, you must certainly depart. But it follows not that you must depart the world altogether. In yonder hollow at a distance there is a cottage, surrounded by its trees and its flowers, and there are little children whom you may sport with, and tease,

and delight, taking care they do not catch you napping. There is still *garden-ground* in the world for you, and such as you.

Sometimes, when we have seen pretty little gilded volumes of song and poetry lying about in the great highways of our industrial world, we have recalled this scene to mind. There is garden-ground left for them also, and many a private haunt, solitary or domestic, where they will be welcome.

We have heard it objected against American poets, but chiefly by their own countrymen, that they are not sufficiently *national*. This surely is a most unreasonable complaint. The Americans inhabit what was once, and is still sometimes called, the New World, but they are children of the Old. Their religion grew, like ours, in Asia; they receive it, as we do, through the nations of the west of Europe; they are, like us, descendants of the Goth and the Roman, and are compounded of those elements which Rome and Palestine, and the forests of Germany, severally contributed towards the formation of what we call the Middle Ages. They have the same intellectual pedigree as ourselves. No Tintern Abbey, or Warwick Castle, stands on their rivers, to mark the lapse of time; but they must ever look back upon the days of the monk and of the knight, as the true era of romance. Proud as they may be of their Pilgrim Fathers, one would not limit them to this honourable paternity. It is very little poetry they would get out of the *Mayflower*– or philosophy either.

There are, it is true, subjects for poetry native to America – new aspects of nature and of humanity – the aboriginal forest, the

aboriginal man, the prairie, the settler, and the savage. But even in these the American poet cannot keep a monopoly. Englishmen and Frenchmen have visited his forests; they have stolen his Red Indian; and have made the more interesting picture of him in proportion as they knew less of the original. Moreover, many of the peculiar aspects of human life which America presents may require the mellowing effect of time, the half obscurity of the past, to render them poetic. The savage is not the only person who requires to be viewed at a distance: there is much in the rude, adventurous, exciting life of the first settlers which to posterity may appear singularly attractive. They often seem to share the power and the skill of the civilised man, with the passions of the barbarian. What a scene – when viewed at a distance – must be one of their *revivals*! A camp-meeting is generally described by those who have witnessed it, in the language of ridicule or reproof. But let us ask ourselves this question – When St Francis assembled *five thousand* of his followers on the plains of Assisi, and held what has been called, in the history of the Franciscan order, "the Chapter of Mats," because the men had no other shelter than rude tents made of mats – on which occasion St Francis himself was obliged to moderate the excesses of fanaticism and fanatical penance in which his disciples indulged – what was this but a camp-meeting? In some future age, a revival in the "Far West," or a company of Millerites expecting their translation into heaven, will be quite as poetical as this Chapter of Mats. For ourselves, we think that any genuine exhibition

of sentiment, by great numbers of our fellow-men, is a subject worthy of study, and demands a certain respect. Those, however, who can see nothing but absurdity and madness in a camp-meeting, would have walked through the five thousand followers of St Francis with the feeling only of intolerable disgust. Yet so it is, that merely from the lapse of time, or the obscurity it throws over certain parts of the picture, there are many who find something very affecting and sublime in the fanaticism of the thirteenth century, who treat the same fanaticism with pity or disdain when exhibited in the nineteenth.

"Miltons and Shakspeares," says an editor of one of the volumes before us, "have not yet sprung from the only half-tilled soil of the mighty continent; giants have not yet burst from its forests, with a grandeur equal to their own; but," &c. &c. Doubtless the giant will make his appearance in due course of time. But what if he should never manifest himself in the epic of twelve, or twenty-four books, or in any long poem whatever? A number of small poems, beautiful and perfect of their kind, will constitute as assuredly a great work, and found as great a reputation. We are far from thinking that the materials for poetry are exhausted or diminished in these latter days. As a general rule, in proportion as men *think*, do they *feel*, – more variously, if not more deeply, themselves – and more habitually through sympathy with others. Love and devotion, and all the more refined sentiments, are heightened in the cultivated mind; and speculative thought itself becomes a great and general source

of emotion. As almost every man has felt, at one period of his life, the passion of love, so almost every cultivated mind has felt, at one period of his career, what Wordsworth describes as —

> "The burden and the mystery
> Of all this unintelligible world."

We are persuaded that both the materials and the readers of poetry will increase and multiply with the spread of education. But there is apparently a revolution of taste in favour of the lyric, and at the expense of the epic poet. A long narrative, in verse of any kind, is felt to be irksome and monotonous: it could be told so much better in prose. We do not speak of such narrations as *The Paradise Lost*, where religious feeling presides over every part, and where, in fact, the narrative is absorbed in the sentiment. If Milton were living at this day, there is no reason why he should not choose the same theme for his poem. But Tasso and Ariosto would think long before they would now select for their flowing stanzas the *Jerusalem Delivered*, or the *Orlando Furioso*. Such themes, they would probably conclude, might be far more effectively dealt with in prose.

Fiction, told as Sir Walter Scott tells it – history, as Macaulay narrates – such examples as these put the reading world, we think, quite out of patience with verse, when applied to the purpose of a lengthy narrative. They and others have shown that prose is so much the better vehicle. It may be rendered

almost equally harmonious, and admits of far greater variety of cadence; it may be polished and refined, and yet adapt itself, in turns, to every topic that arises. No need here to omit the most curious incident, or the most descriptive detail, because it will not comport with the dignified march of the verse, or of the versified style. The language here rises and falls naturally with the subject, or may be made to do so; nor is it ever necessary to obscure the meaning, for the sake of sustaining a wearisome rhythm. If you have a long story to tell, by all means tell it in prose.

But the short poem – need we say it? – is not ephemeral because it is brief. The most enduring reputation may be built upon a few lyrics. They should, however, not only contain some beautiful verses – they should be beautiful throughout. And this brings us to the only real complaint which we, in our critical capacity, have to allege against the tuneful brethren in America. We find too much haste, far too much negligence, and a willingness to be content with what has first presented itself. Instead of recognising that the short poem ought to be almost perfect, they seem to proceed on the quite contrary idea, that because it is brief, it should therefore be hastily written, and that it would be a waste of time to bestow much revision upon it. We often, meet with a poem where the sentiment is natural and poetic, but where the effect is marred by this negligent and unequal execution. A verse of four lines shall have three that are good, and the fourth shall limp. Or a piece shall consist but of five verses, and two out of the number must

be absolutely effaced if you would re-peruse the composition with any pleasure. Meanwhile there is sufficient merit in what remains to make us regret this haste and inequality. To our own countrymen, as well as to the American, we would suggest that the small poem may be a great work; but that, to become so, it should not only be informed by noble thought, it should exhibit no baser metal, no glaring inequalities of style, and, above all, no conflicting, obscure, or half-extricated meanings. We believe that it would be generally found, if we could penetrate the secret history of really beautiful compositions, that, however brief, and although they were written at first during some happy hour of inspiration, they had received again and again new touches, and the "fortunate erasures" of the poet. By this process only did they grow to be the completely beautiful productions which they are. Such exquisite lyrics are very rare, and we may depend upon it they are not produced without much thought and labour, joined, as we say, to that happy hour of inspiration.

Mr Longfellow occupies, and most worthily, the first place on our list. He has obtained, as well by his prose as his poetry, a certain recognised place in that literature of the English language which is common to both countries. His *Hyperion* has been for some time an established favourite amongst a class of readers with whom to be popular implies a merit of no vulgar description. Mr Longfellow has relied too much, for an independent and permanent reputation, on his German and his Spanish friends. An elegant and accomplished writer, a cultivated mind – a critic

would be justified in praising his works, more than the author of them. He has studied foreign literature with somewhat too much profit. We have no critical balance so fine as would enable us to weigh out the two distinct portions of merit which may be due to an author, first as an original writer, and then as a tasteful and skilful artist, who has known how and where to gather and transplant, to translate, or to appropriate. It is a distinction which, as readers, we should be little disposed to make, but which, as critics, we are compelled to take notice of. We should not impute to Mr Longfellow any flagrant want of originality; but a fine appreciation of thoughts presented to him by other minds, and the skill and tact of the cultivated artist, are qualities very conspicuous in his writings. Having once taken notice of this, we have no wish to press it further; still less would we allow his successful study, and his bold and felicitous imitations of the writings of others, to detract from the merit of what is really original in his own.

What a noble lyric is this, "The Building of the Ship!" It is full of the spirit of Schiller. A little more of the file – something more of harmony – and it would have been quite worthy of the name of Schiller. The interweaving of the two subjects, the building and launching of the vessel, with the marriage of the shipbuilder's daughter, and the launching of that *other bride* on the waters of life, is very skilfully managed; whilst the name of the ship, The Union, gives the poet a fair opportunity of introducing a third topic in some patriotic allusions to the great vessel of the state: —

"Build me straight, O worthy Master!
Stanch and strong, a goodly vessel,
That shall laugh at all disaster,
And with wave and whirlwind wrestle!"

Such is the merchant's injunction to the master-builder, who forthwith proceeds to fulfil it.

"Beside the master, when he spoke,
A youth, against an anchor leaning,
Listened to catch the slightest meaning.
Only the long waves, as they broke
In ripples on the pebbly beach,
Interrupted the old man's speech.

Beautiful they were in sooth,
The old man and the fiery youth!
The old man, in whose busy brain
Many a ship that sailed the main
Was modelled o'er and o'er again; —
The fiery youth, who was to be
The heir of his dexterity,
The heir of his house and his daughter's hand,
When he had built and launched from land
What the elder head had planned.

'Thus,' said he, 'will we build this ship!
Lay square the blocks upon the slip,

And follow well this plan of mine:
Choose the timbers with greatest care,
Of all that is unsound beware;
For only what is sound and strong
To this vessel shall belong.
Cedar of Maine and Georgia pine
Here together shall combine.
A goodly frame and a goodly fame,
And the Union be her name!
For the day that gives her to the sea
Shall give my daughter unto thee!'"

Under such auspices the vessel grows day by day. The mention of the tall masts, and the slender spars, carry the imagination of the poet to the forest where the pine-trees grew. We cannot follow him in this excursion, but here is a noble description of some part of the process of the building of the ship: —

"With oaken brace and copper band
Lay the rudder on the sand,
That, like a thought, should have control
Over the movement of the whole;
And near it the anchor, whose giant hand
Should reach down and grapple with the land,
And immovable, and fast
Hold the great ship against the bellowing blast!"

At length all is finished – the vessel is built: —

"There she stands,
With her foot upon the sands,
Decked with flags and streamers gay,
In honour of her marriage-day;
Her snow-white signals fluttering, blending,
Round her like a veil descending,
Ready to be
The bride of the grey old sea.

On the deck another bride
Is standing by her lover's side,
Shadows from the flags and shrouds,
Like the shadows cast by clouds,
Broken by many a sunny fleck,
Fall around them on the deck.

Then the master
With a gesture of command,
Waved his hand.
And at the word,
Loud and sudden there was heard,
All around them and below,
The sound of hammers, blow on blow,
Knocking away the shores and spurs.
And see! she stirs!
She starts – she moves – she seems to feel
The thrill of life along her keel,
And spurning with her foot the ground,

With one exulting joyous bound
She leaps into the ocean's arms!

And lo! from the assembled crowd
There rose a shout prolonged and loud,
That to the ocean seemed to say —
'Take her, O bridegroom old and grey,
Take her to thy protecting arms,
With all her youth and all her charms!'

How beautiful she is! How fair
She lies within those arms that press
Her form with many a soft caress
Of tenderness and watchful care!

Sail forth into the sea, O ship!
Through wind and wave right onward steer!
The moistened eye, the trembling lip,
Are not the signs of doubt or fear!
Sail forth into the sea of life,
O gentle, loving, trusting wife,
And safe from all adversity
Upon the bosom of that sea
Thy comings and thy goings be!
For gentleness, and love, and trust,
Prevail o'er angry wave and gust.

Thou too, sail on, O ship of state!
Sail on, O Union, strong and great!

Humanity, with all its fears,
With all its hopes of future years,
Is hanging breathless on thy fate!
We know what master laid thy keel,
What workmen wrought thy ribs of steel,
Who made each mast and sail and rope,
What anvils rang, what hammers beat,
In what a forge, and what a heat
Were shaped the anchors of thy hope!
Fear not each sudden sound and shock!
'Tis of the wave, and not the rock;
'Tis but the flapping of the sail
And not a rent made by the gale!
In spite of rock and tempest roar,
In spite of false lights on the shore,
Sail on, nor fear to breast the sea!
Our hearts, our hopes, are all with thee,
Our hearts, our hopes, our prayers, our tears,
Our faith triumphant o'er our fears,
Are all with thee – are all with thee!"

This noble ode leads the van of a small collection of poems called, "By the Seaside." A series of companion-pictures bear the name of, "By the Fireside." We may as well proceed with a few extracts from these. The following are from some verses on "The Lighthouse."

"The mariner remembers when a child

On his first voyage, he saw it fade and sink;
And, when returning from adventures wild,
He saw it rise again on ocean's brink.

Steadfast, serene, immovable, the same
Year after year, thro'all the silent night
Burns on for evermore that quenchless flame,
Shines on that inextinguishable light!

The startled waves leap over it; *the storm*
Smotes it with all the scourges of the rain,
And steadily against its solid form
Press the great shoulders of the hurricane."

This is bold and felicitous: the following, to "The Twilight," is in a more tender strain. The first verse we cannot quote: we suspect there is some misprint in our copy. Mr Longfellow could not have written these lines —

"And like the wings of sea-birds
Flash the *white caps* of the sea."

Whether women's caps or men's nightcaps are alluded to, the image would be equally grotesque. The poem continues —

"But in the fisherman's cottage
There shines a ruddier light,
And a little face at the window

Peers out into the night.

Close, close it is pressed to the window,
As if these childish eyes
Were looking into the darkness
To see some form arise.

And a woman's waving shadow
Is passing to and fro,
Now rising to the ceiling,
Now bowing and bending low.

What tale do the roaring ocean,
And the night-wind, bleak and wild,
As they beat at the crazy casement,
Tell to that little child?

And why do the roaring ocean,
And the night-wind, wild and bleak,
As they beat at the heart of the mother,
Drive the colour from her cheek?"

Mr Longfellow understands how to *leave off*– how to treat a subject so that all is really said, yet the ear is left listening for more. "By the Fireside" is a series, of course, of mere domestic sketches. The subjects, however, do not always bear any distinct reference or relation to this title. That from which we feel most disposed to quote is written on some "Sand of the Desert in an

Hour-Glass." It has been always a favourite mode of composition to let some present object carry the imagination, by links of associated thought, whithersoever it pleased. This sort of reverie is natural and pleasing, but must not be often indulged in. It is too easy; and we soon discover that any topic thus treated becomes endless, and will lead us, if we please, over half the world. At length it becomes indifferent where we start from. Without witchcraft, one may ride on any broomstick into Norway. But the present poem, we think, is a very allowable specimen of this mode of composition. The poet surveys this sand of the desert, now confined within an hour-glass; he thinks how many centuries it may have blown about in Arabia, what feet may have trodden on it – perhaps the feet of Moses, perhaps of the pilgrims to Mecca; then he continues —

"These have passed over it, or may have passed!
Now in this crystal tower,
Imprisoned by some curious hand at last,
It counts the passing hour.

And as I gaze, these narrow walls expand;
Before my dreamy eye
Stretches the desert, with its shifting sand,
Its unimpeded sky.

And, borne aloft by the sustaining blast,
This little golden thread

Dilates into a column high and vast,
A form of fear and dread.

And onward and across the setting sun,
Across the boundless plain,
The column and its broader shadow run,
Till thought pursues in vain.

The vision vanishes! These walls again
Shut out the lurid sun,
Shut out the hot immeasurable plain;
The half-hour's sand is run!"

We notice in Mr Longfellow an occasional fondness for what is *quaint*, as if Quarles' *Emblems*, or some such book, had been at one time a favourite with him. In the lines entitled "Suspiria," solemn as the subject is, the thought trembles on the verge of the ridiculous. But, leaving these poems, "By the Seaside," and "By the Fireside," we shall find a better instance of this tendency to a certain quaintness in another part of the volume before us. The "Old Clock on the Stairs" is a piece which invites a few critical observations. It is good enough to be quoted almost entirely, and yet affords an example of those faults of haste and negligence and incompleteness which even Mr Longfellow has not escaped.

THE OLD CLOCK ON THE STAIRS

"*L'éternité est une pendule, dont le balancier dit et redit sans cesse ces deux mots seulement dans le silence des tombeaux. 'Toujours! Jamais! – Jamais! Toujours!'*" – Jacques Bridaine.

"Somewhat back from the village street
Stands the old-fashioned country-seat:
Across its antique portico
Tall poplar-trees their shadows throw;
And from its station in the hall
An ancient time-piece say to all —
'For ever – never!
Never – for ever!'

Half-way up the stairs it stands,
And points and beckons with its hands,
From its case of massive oak,
Like a monk who, under his cloak,
Crosses himself, and sighs, 'Alas!'
With sorrowful voice to all who pass —
'For ever – never!
Never – for ever!'

By day its voice is low and light,
But in the silent dead of night,

Distinct as a passing footstep's fall,
It echoes along the vacant hall,
Along the ceiling, along the floor,
And seems to say at each chamber door —
'For ever – never!
Never – for ever!'

In that mansion used to be
Free-hearted Hospitality;
His great fires up the chimney roared,
The stranger feasted at his board;
But, like the skeletons at the feast,
That warning timepiece never ceased —
'For ever – never!
Never – for ever!'

There groups of merry children played,
There youths and maidens dreaming strayed:
O precious hours! O golden prime,
And affluence of love and time!
Even as a miser counts his gold,
Those hours, the ancient timepiece told —
'For ever – never!
Never – for ever!'

All are scattered now and fled,
Some are married, some are dead;
And when I ask, with throbs of pain,
'Ah, when shall they all meet again!'

As in the days long since gone by,
The ancient timepiece makes reply —
'For ever – never!
Never – for ever!'

Never here, for ever there,
Where all parting, pain, and care,
And death and time shall disappear —
For ever there, but never here!
The horologe of Eternity
Sayeth this incessantly —
'For ever – never!
Never – for ever!'"

Mr Longfellow has not treated Jacques Bridaine fairly – certainly not happily. The pious writer intended that his clock, which represents the voice of Eternity, or the Eternal Destiny of each man, should, by the solemn ticking of its pendulum, utter to the ear of every mortal, according to his conscience, the happy "Toujours!" or the mournful "Jamais!" for the joys of Heaven are either "Always" or "Never." But no clock could utter to the conscience of any man a word of *three* syllables, and by translating the "Tou-jours! – Ja-mais!" into "For ever! – Never!" we lose the voice of the pendulum. The point of the passage is the same, in this respect, as that of the well-known story of the Dutch widow who consulted her pastor whether she should marry again or not. Her pastor, knowing well that, in these cases, there

is but one advice which has the least chance of being followed, referred her to the bells of the church, and bade her listen to them, and mark what they said upon the subject. They said very distinctly, "Kempt ein mann!" – "Take a husband!" Thereupon the pastor re-echoed the same advice. Jacques Bridaine intended that, according to the conscience which the listener brought, the swinging pendulum of his eternal clock would welcome him with the "Toujours!" or utter the knell of "Jamais!" This *conceit* Mr Longfellow does not preserve. But, what is of far more importance, he preserves no one distinct sentiment in his piece; nor is it possible to detect, in all cases, what *his* clock means by the solemn refrain, "For ever – never! Never – for ever!" When at the last verse the pendulum explains itself distinctly, the sentiment is diluted into what Jacques Bridaine would have thought, and what we think too, a very tame commentary on human life. At the fifth verse, as it stands in our quotation, the old clock quite forgets his character of monitor, and occupies himself with registering the happy hours of infancy. Very amiable on its part; but, if endowed with this variety of sentiment, it should be allowed to repeat something else than its "ever – never."

> "Even as a miser counts his gold,
> Those hours the ancient time-piece told —
> 'For ever – never!
> Never – for ever!'"

These remarks may seem very gravely analytical for the

occasion that calls them forth. But if it were worth while to adopt a *conceit* of this description as the text of his poem, it was worth the author's pains to carry it out with a certain distinctness and unity.

Considering the tact and judgment which Mr Longfellow generally displays, we were surprised to find that the longest poem in the volume, with the exception, perhaps, of "The Spanish Student, a play in three acts," has been written in Latin hexameters – is, in fact, one of those painful unlucky metrical experiments which poets will every now and then make upon our ears. They have a perfect right to do so: happily there is no statute which compels us to read. A man may, if he pleases, dance all the way from London to Norwich: one gentleman is said to have performed this feat. We would not travel in that man's company. We should grow giddy with only looking upon his perpetual shuffle and *cinq-a-pace*. The tripping dactyle, followed by the grave spondee, closing each line with a sort of *curtsey*, may have a charming effect in Latin. It pleased a Roman ear, and a scholar learns to be pleased with it. We cannot say that we have been ever reconciled by any specimen we have seen, however skilfully executed, to the imitation of it in English; and we honestly confess that, under other circumstances, we should have passed over *Evangeline* unread. If, however, the rule *de gustibus*, &c., be ever quite applicable, it is to a case of this kind. With those who assert that the imitation hexameter does please them, and that they like, moreover, the idea of *scanning* their

English, no controversy can possibly be raised.

But although *Evangeline* has not reconciled us to this experiment, there is so much sweetness in the poetry itself, that, as we read on, we forget the metre. The story is a melancholy one, and forms a painful chapter in the colonial history of Great Britain. Whether the rigour of our Government was justified by the necessity of the case, we will not stop to inquire; but a French settlement, which had been ceded to us, was accused of favouring our enemies. The part of the coast they occupied was one which could not be left with safety in unfriendly hands; and it was determined to remove them to other districts. The village of Grand Pré was suddenly swept of its inhabitants. Evangeline, in this dispersion of the little colony, is separated from her lover; and the constancy of the tender and true-hearted girl forms the subject of the poem.

Our readers will be curious, perhaps, to see a specimen of Mr Longfellow's hexameters. *Evangeline* is one of those poems which leave an agreeable impression as a whole, but afford few striking passages for quotation. The following is the description of evening in the yet happy village of Grand Pré: —

> "Now recommenced the reign of rest and affection and stillness.
> Day with its burden and heat had departed, and twilight descending
> Brought back the evening star to the sky, and the herds to the homestead.

Pawing the ground they came, and resting their necks on each other,
And, with their nostrils distended, inhaling the freshness of evening.
Foremost, bearing the bell, Evangeline's beautiful heifer,
Proud of her snow-white hide, and the ribbon that waved from her collar,
Quietly paced and slow, as if conscious of human affection.
Then came the shepherd back with his bleating flocks from the sea-side,
Where was their favourite pasture. Behind them followed the watch-dog,
Patient, full of importance, and grand in the pride of his instinct,
Walking from side to side with a lordly air." —

All this quiet happiness was to cease. The village itself was to be depopulated.

"*There* o'er the yellow fields, in silent and mournful procession,
Came from the neighbouring hamlets and farms the Acadian women,
Driving in ponderous wains their household goods to the sea-shore,
Pausing, and looking back to gaze once more on their dwellings,
Ere they were shut from sight by the winding roads and the woodlands.

Close at their sides their children ran, and urged on the oxen,
While in their little hands they clasped some fragments of playthings."

If in "Evangeline," Mr Longfellow has hazarded a trial upon our patience, in the "Spanish Student," on the contrary – which, being in the dramatic form, had a certain privilege to be tedious – he has been both indulgent and considerate to his reader. It is properly called a play, for it does not attempt the deep passion of tragedy. It is spirited and vivacious, and does not exceed three acts. Hypolito, a student who is not in love, and therefore can jest at those who are, and Chispa, the roguish valet of Victorian, the student who is in love, support the comic portion of the drama. Chispa, by his Spanish proverbs, proves himself to be a true countryman of Sancho Panza. We must give a specimen of Chispa; he is first introduced giving some very excellent advice to the musicians whom he is leading to the serenade: —

"*Chispa.*– Now, look you, you are gentlemen that lead the life of crickets; you enjoy hunger by day, and noise by night. Yet I beseech you, for this once, be not loud, but pathetic; for it is a serenade to a damsel in bed, and not to the Man in the Moon. Your object is not to arouse and terrify, but to soothe and bring lulling dreams. Therefore each shall not play upon his instrument as if it were the only one in the universe, but gently, and with a certain modesty, according with the others. What instrument is that?

1st Mus.– An Arragonese bagpipe.

Chispa.– Pray, art thou related to the bagpiper of Bujalance, who asked a maravedi for playing, and ten for leaving off?

1st Mus.– No, your honour.

Chispa.– I am glad of it. What other instruments have we?

2d and 3d Mus.– We play the bandurria.

Chispa.– A pleasing instrument. And thou?

4th Mus.– The fife.

Chispa.– I like it; it has a cheerful, soul-stirring sound, that soars up to my lady's window like the song of a swallow. And you others?

Other Mus.– We are the singers, please your honour.

Chispa.– You are too many. Do you think we are going to sing mass in the cathedral of Cordova? *Four men can make little use of one shoe, and I see not how you can all sing in one song.* But follow me along the garden-wall. That is the way my master climbs to the lady's window. It is by the vicar's skirts the devil climbs into the belfry. Come, follow me, and make no noise.

[Exeunt."

Chispa is travelling with his master, Victorian. When they come to an inn, the latter regales himself with a walk in the moonlight, meditating on his mistress. Not so Chispa.

"*Chispa.*– Hola! ancient Baltasar! Bring a light and let me have supper.

Bal.– Where is your master?

Chispa.– Do not trouble yourself about him. We have

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

Bal. (*setting a light on the table.*) – Stewed rabbit.

Chispa (*eating.*) – Conscience of Portalegre! Stewed kitten, you mean!

Bal.– And a pitcher of Pedro Ximenes with a roasted pear in it.

Chispa (*drinking.*) – Ancient Baltasar amigo! You know how to cry wine and sell vinegar. – Moreover, your supper is like the hidalgo's dinner, *very little meat, and a great deal of table-cloth*.

Bal.– Ha! ha! ha!

Chispa.– And more noise than nuts.

Bal.– Ha! ha! ha! You must have your jest, Master Chispa. But shall not I ask Don Victorian in to take a draught of the Pedro Ximenes?

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

Bal.– Why does he go so often to Madrid?

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

Bal.– I was never out of it, good Chispa.

Chispa.– What! you on fire too, old haystack? Why, we shall never be able to put you out.

Vict. (*without.*) – Chispa!

Chispa.– Go to bed – the cocks are crowing."

This Chispa changes masters in course of the piece, and enters into the service of Don Carlos; but the change does not seem to have advanced his fortunes, for we find him thus moralising to himself at the close of the play —

> "Alas! and alack-a-day! Poor was I born, and poor do I remain. I neither win nor lose. Thus I wag through the world half the time on foot, and the other half walking… And so we plough along, as the fly said to the ox. Who knows what may happen? Patience, and shuffle the cards! I am not yet so bald that you can see my brains."

It would not be difficult to select other favourable specimens both of the graver and lighter manner of Mr Longfellow; but we must now proceed to the second name upon our list.

Mr Bryant is a poet who not unfrequently reminds us of Mrs Hemans. Perhaps we could not better, in a few words, convey our impression of his poetical *status*. His verse is generally pleasing – not often powerful. His good taste rarely deserts him; but he has neither very strong passions, nor those indications of profounder thought which constitute so much of the charm of modern poetry. For he who would take a high rank amongst our lyric poets should, at one time or other, have dwelt and thought with the philosophers. He should be seen as stepping from the Porch; he should have wandered, with his harp concealed beneath his robe, in the gardens of the Academy.

Short as Mr Bryant's poems generally are, they still want

concentration of thought – energy – unity. In quoting from him, we should often be disposed to make omissions for the very sake of *preserving* a connection of ideas. The omission of several verses, even in a short poem, so far from occasioning what the doctors would call a "solution of continuity," would often assist in giving to the piece a greater distinctness, and unity of thought and purpose. This ought not to be.

Mr Bryant's poems, we believe, are by this time familiar to most readers of poetry; we must, therefore, be sparing of our quotations. In the few we make, we shall be anxious to give the most favourable specimens of his genius: the faults we have hinted at will sufficiently betray themselves without seeking for especial illustration of them. Our first extract shall be from some very elegant verses on a subject peculiarly American – "The Prairie." We quote the commencement and the conclusion. The last strikes us as singularly happy. Mr Bryant starts with rather an unfortunate expression; he calls the Prairie "the garden of the desert;" he rather meant "the garden-desert." He may describe the Prairie, if he pleases, as one green and blooming desert; but the garden *of the* desert implies a desert to which it belongs – would be an oasis, in short: —

THE PRAIRIES

"These are the gardens of the desert, these
The unshorn fields, boundless and beautiful,
For which the speech of England has no name —
The Prairies. I behold them for the first,
And my heart swells while the dilated sight
Takes in the encircling vastness. Lo! they stretch
In airy undulations far away,
As if the ocean, in his gentlest swell,
Stood still, with all his rounded billows fixed,
And motionless forever. Motionless?
No! – they are all unchained again. The clouds
Sweep over with the shadows, and beneath
The surface rolls and fluctuates to the eye;
Dark hollows seem to glide along, and chase
The sunny ridges…

Still this great solitude is quick with life.
Myriads of insects, gaudy as the flowers
They flutter over, gentle quadrupeds,
And birds that scarce have learned the fear of man,
Are here, and sliding reptiles of the ground
Startlingly beautiful. The graceful deer
Bounds to the wood at my approach. The bee,
A more adventurous colonist than man,
With whom he came across the Eastern deep,

Fills the savannas with his murmurings,
And hides his sweets, as in the golden age,
Within the hollow oak. I listen long
To his domestic hum, and think I hear
The sound of that advancing multitude
Which soon shall fill these deserts. *From the ground*
Comes up the laugh of children, the soft voice
Of maidens, and the sweet and solemn hymn
Of Sabbath worshippers. The low of herds
Blends with the rustling of the heavy grain
Over the dark brown furrows. All at once
A fresher wind sweeps by, and breaks my dream,
And I am in the wilderness alone."

It is a natural sentiment, though somewhat difficult to justify, which poets, and others than poets, entertain when they look about for some calm and beautiful spot, some green and sunny slope, for their final resting-place. Imagination still attributes something of sensation, or of consciousness, to what was once the warm abode of life. Mr Bryant, in a poem called "June," after indulging in this sentiment, gives us one of the best apologies for it we remember to have met with. There is much grace and pathos in the following verses: —

"I know, I know I should not see
The seasons' glorious show,
Nor would its brightness shine for me,
Nor its wild music flow;

But if around my place of sleep,
The friends I love should come to weep,
They might not haste to go.
Soft airs, and song, and light and bloom
Should keep them lingering by my tomb.

These to their softened hearts should bear
The thought of what has been,
And speak of one who *cannot share*
The gladness of the scene;
Whose part, in all the pomp that fills
The circuit of the summer hills,
Is – that his grave is green;
And deeply would their hearts rejoice
To hear again his living voice."

"The Lapse of Time" is a piece which might be quoted as a favourable specimen of Mr Bryant's poetry. It might also serve as an instance of its *shortcoming*– of its want of concentration – of a distinct, firm tone of thought. As it is not long, we will quote the whole of it. Our complaint of a certain weakness – the want of a steady and strong grasp of his subject – could not be less disagreeably illustrated, nor brought to a more rigid test. Our italics here are not complimentary, but simply serve the purpose of drawing attention to the train of thought or sentiment: —

THE LAPSE OF TIME

"Lament who will, in fruitless tears,
The speed with which our moments fly;
I sigh not over vanished years,
But watch *the years that hasten by*.

Look how they come– a mingled crowd
Of bright and dark, but rapid days;
Beneath them, like a summer cloud,
The wide world changes as I gaze.

What! grieve that time *has brought so soon*
The sober age of manhood on!
As idly might I weep, at noon,
To see the blush of morning gone.

Could I give up the hopes that glow
In prospect like Elysian isles,
And let the cheerful future go,
With all her promises and smiles?

The Future! cruel were the power
Whose doom would tear thee from my heart,
Thou sweetener of the present hour!
We cannot – no – we will not part.

Oh, leave me still the rapid flight
That makes the changing seasons gay —
The grateful speed that brings the night,
The swift and glad return of day;

The months that touch with added grace
This little prattler at my knee,
In whose arch eye and speaking face
New meaning every hour I see.

The years that o'er each sister land
Shall lift the country of my birth,
And nurse her strength till she shall stand
The pride and pattern of the earth:

Till younger commonwealths, for aid,
Shall cling about her ample robe,
And from her frown shall shrink afraid
The crowned oppressors of the globe.

True – time will seam and blanch my brow;
Well – I shall sit with aged men,
And my good glass shall tell me how
A grizzly beard becomes me then.

And then should no dishonour lie
Upon my head when I am grey,
Love yet shall watch my fading eye,
And smooth the path of my decay.

Then, haste thee, Time – 'tis kindness all
That speeds thy wingèd feet so fast;
Thy pleasures stay not till they pall,
And all thy pains are quickly past.

Thou fliest and bearest away our woes,
And, as thy shadowy train depart,
The memory of sorrow grows
A lighter burden on the heart."

Brief as the poem is, it should have been divided into two; for it is a song of resignation and a song of hope mingled together. It must strike the least reflective reader that no man needs consolation for the lapse of time, who is occupied with hopeful anticipations of the future. It is because Time carries away our hopes with it, and leaves us the very tranquil pleasures of age, that we "sigh over vanished years." Every sentiment which Mr Bryant expresses in this poem is natural and reasonable; but it follows not that they should have been brought together within the compass of a few verses. At one moment we are looking at *the past*, or we are told not to grieve the next, we are called upon to sympathise in some unexpected rapture, by no means happily expressed, about *the future*– "The future!" &c., – as if some one had been threatening to cut us off from our golden anticipations. The only result we are left in unquestioned possession of is, that if the present time did not move on, the future could not advance.

But it is not such an abstraction or truism as this, we presume, that the poet intended to teach; he intended to portray the natural sentiments which arise as we reflect on human life, whether passing or past, or as seen in the hopeful future; and these he should not have mingled confusedly together. It would be tedious to carry on the analysis any farther; but we may add, that it is hardly wise, in the same short poem, to speak rapturously of the Elysian glories of the future, and mournfully of "Time's shadowy train," which can be no other than these Elysian glories *seen from behind*.

> "That time has brought so soon
> The sober age of manhood on!"

Like Mr Longfellow, Mr Bryant is both a German and a Spanish scholar; and he has enriched his own collection of poems with some very pleasing translations. We are tempted to conclude our extracts from this poet by two brief specimens of these translations – the one from the Spanish, the other from the German: —

> "Alexis calls me cruel —
>
> I would that I could utter
> My feelings without shame,
> And tell him how I love him,
> Nor wrong my virgin fame.

Alas! to seize the moment
When heart inclines to heart,
And press a suit with passion,
Is not a woman's part.

If man comes not to gather
The roses where they stand,
They fade among their foliage;
They cannot seek his hand."

Here the maiden is very maidenly. Our next is far more piquant. We often hear of young ladies angling; they catch, and they are caught; and they are sometimes not a little frightened at their own success in this perilous species of angling. Uhland has put all this before us in a very pictorial manner, and Mr Bryant has very happily translated him —

"There sits a lovely maiden
The ocean murmuring nigh;
She throws the hook and watches
The fishes pass it by.

A ring with a ring jewel,
Is sparkling on her hand;
Upon the hook she binds it,
And flings it from the land.

Uprises from the water
A hand like ivory fair.
What gleams upon its finger?
The golden ring is there.

Uprises from the bottom
A young and handsome knight;
In golden scales he rises,
That glitter in the light.

The maid is pale with terror —
'Nay, knight of ocean, nay,
It was not thee I wanted;
Let go the ring, I pray.'

'Ah, maiden, not to fishes
The bait of gold is thrown;
The ring shall never leave me,
And thou must be my own.'"

It cannot be complained of *Mr Whittier's* poems that they are not sufficiently national; but they are national in a very disagreeable point of view – they introduce us into the controversies of the day. Mr Whittier appears to be one of those who write verses, hymns, or odes, instead of, or perhaps in addition to, sundry speeches at popular assemblies in favour of some popular cause. His rhymes have the same relation to poetry that the harangues delivered at such meetings bear to eloquence.

We were at a loss to understand on what wings (certainly not those of his poetic genius) he had flown hither, till we discovered that his intemperate zeal against slavery, as it exists in the southern States of America, had procured for him a welcome amongst a certain class of readers in England. If we insert his name here, it is simply to protest against the adoption by any party, but especially by any English party, of such blind, absurd, ungovernable zeal, upon a question as difficult and intricate as it is momentous. Both Mr Longfellow and Mr Bryant write upon slavery; and both have produced some very touching poems on the subject; but they treat the topic as poets. Mr Whittier treats the subject with the rabid fury of a fierce partisan. No story so preposterous or ridiculous but he can bend it to his purpose. He throws contumely upon the ministers of the gospel in the Southern States, because instead of attempting, every moment of their lives, to overthrow the unfortunate organisation of society that is there established, they endeavour to make the slave contented with his lot, and the master lenient in the exercise of his authority. Sentence of death was passed, it seems, on a man of the name of Brown, for assisting a slave to escape. The sentence was commuted, but this does not prevent Mr Whittier from hanging the man in his own imagination, and then, *à propos* of this imaginary execution, thus addressing the clergy of South Carolina: —

"Ho! thou who seekest late and long

A license from the Holy Book
For brutal lust and hell's red wrong,
Man of the pulpit, look!
Lift up those cold and atheist eyes,
This ripe fruit of thy teaching see;
And tell us how to Heaven will rise
The incense of this sacrifice —
This blossom of the gallows-tree!"

And thus he proceeds, lashing himself into frenzy, through the whole of the piece. We dismiss Mr Whittier, and venture to express a hope that those who appear to be looking into American literature, for the purpose of catering for the English public, will be able to discover and import something better than strains such as these – which administer quite as much to the love of calumny, and an appetite for horrors, as to any sentiment of philanthropy.

The next person whom we have to mention, and probably to introduce for the first time to our readers, is not one whom we can commend for his temperate opinions, or knowledge of the world, or whatever passes under the name of strong common sense or practical sagacity. He is much a dreamer; he has little practical skill, even in his own craft of authorship; but there runs a true vein of poetry through his writings; it runs zig-zag, and is mixed with much dross, and is not extracted without some effort of patience; but there is a portion of the true metal to be found in the works of *James Russell Lowell*.

Mr Lowell has, we think, much of the true poet in him – ardent feelings and a fertile fancy; the last in undue proportion, or at least under very irregular government. But he lacks taste and judgment, and the greater part of the two small volumes before us is redolent of youth, and we presume that those compositions which stand first in order were really written at an early age. To the very close, however, there is that immaturity of judgment, and that far too enthusiastic view of things and of men, which is only excusable in youth; as witness certain lines "To De Lamartine," towards the end of the second volume.

With one peculiarity we have been very much struck – the combination of much original power with a tendency to imitate, to an almost ludicrous extent, other and contemporary poets. We find, especially in the first volume, imitations which have all the air of a theme or exercise of a young writer, sitting down deliberately to try how far he could succeed in copying the manner of some favourite author. Sometimes it is Keats, sometimes it is Tennyson, who seems to have exercised this fascination over him: he is in the condition of a bewildered musician, who can do nothing but make perpetual *variations* upon some original melody that has bewitched his ear. He revels with Keats in that poetic imagery and language which has a tendency to separate itself too widely from the substratum of an intelligible meaning, which ought always to be kept at least *in sight*. At other times he paints ideal portraits of women after the manner of Tennyson. On these last he was perfectly welcome

to practise his pictorial art: he might paint as many *Irenes* as he pleased; but when, in his piece called "The Syrens," he recalls to mind the beautiful poem of "The Lotus Eaters!" our patience broke down – we gave him up – we closed the book in despair. However, at another time we reopened it, and read on, and we are glad we did so; for we discovered that, notwithstanding, this proneness to imitate, and often to imitate what should have been avoided, there was a vein of genuine poetry in the book, some specimens of which we shall proceed to give. It is a task which we the more readily undertake because we suspect that most readers of taste would be disposed, after a cursory perusal, to lay the book aside: they would not have the motive which prompted us to explore further, or to renew their examination.

Mr Lowell's faults lie on the surface; they cannot be disguised, nor will there be the least necessity to quote for the purpose of illustrating them. He is an egregious instance of that *half excellence* which we have ventured to attribute to such American poets as have come under our notice. The genius of the poet is but partially developed. The peach has ripened but on one side. We want more sun, we want more culture. To speak literally, there is a haste which leads the writer to extravagance of thought, to extravagance of language and imagery; an impatience of study, and of the long labour that alone produces the complete work. The social and economical condition of America has probably something to do with this. It is a condition more favourable to the man and the citizen than propitious to the full development

of the poet. In England, or any other old established country, the educated class crowd every profession, and every avenue to employment; if a youth once gives himself up to the fascination of literature, he will probably find himself committed to it for life, and be compelled to accept as a career, what perhaps at first only tempted him as a pleasure. If he wishes to retrace his steps, and resume his place in any profession, he finds that the ranks are closed up; no opening at all presents itself – certainly none which, if he is only wavering in his resolution, will solicit his return. He has wandered from his place in the marching regiment; it has marched on without him, in close order, and there is no room for the repenting truant. Now in America there cannot yet be such over-crowding in all the recognised pursuits of life as to render it difficult or impossible for the truant to return. He is probably even invited, by tempting prospects of success, to re-enter some of those avenues of life which lead to wealth, or to civic prosperity. This must act materially upon the young poet. He indulges his predilections, yet does not feel that he has irrevocably committed himself by so doing. Or if he adopts literature as the main object and serious occupation of his life, he can at the first discouragement – he can, as soon as he has learnt the fact that authorship is a labour, as well as a pleasure – abandon his hasty choice, and adopt an easier and a more profitable career. He has not burnt his ships. They lie in the offing still; they are ready to transport him from this enchanted island to which some perverse wind has blown him, and restore

him to the stable continent. Retreat is still open; he does not feel that he must here conquer or be utterly lost; there is no desperate courage, nothing to induce strenuous and indefatigable labour.

But to Mr Lowell. The first piece in his collection of poems is entitled "A Legend of Brittany." The subject is as grotesque as legendary lore could have supplied him with. A knight-templar, a soldier-priest who has taken the vow of chastity at a time and place when that vow was expected to be kept, has fallen in love with a beautiful girl. He seduces her; then to hide his own disgrace he murders her; and he buries the body, with the unborn infant, under the altar of the church! One day at high mass, when the guilty templar is there himself standing, with others, round the altar, a voice is heard, a vision is seen – it is the spirit of the murdered girl and mother. She appears – not to denounce the assassin – she regrets to expose his guilt – there is so much woman in the angel that she loves him still – she appears to claim the rite of baptism for her unborn infant, who, till that rite is performed, wanders in darkness and in pain. The legend must have received this turn during some *Gorham controversy* now happily forgotten. Notwithstanding the very strange nature of the whole story, there is a pleasing tenderness in this address of the spirit to the wicked templar. After glancing more in sadness than in anger at his falsehood, it continues: —

> "And thou hadst never heard such words as these,
> Save that in heaven I must ever be

Most comfortless and wretched, seeing this
Our unbaptisèd babe shut out from bliss.

This little spirit, with imploring eyes,
Wanders alone the dreary wild of space;
The shadow of his pain forever lies
Upon my soul in this new dwelling-place;
His loneliness makes me in paradise
More lonely; and unless I see his face,
Even here for grief could I lie down and die,
Save for my curse of immortality.

I am a mother, spirits do not shake
This much of earth from them, and I must pine,
Till I can feel his little hands, and take
His weary head upon this heart of mine.
And might it be, full gladly for his sake
Would I this solitude of bliss resign,
And be shut out of heaven to dwell with him
For ever in that silence drear and dim.

I strove to hush my soul, and would not speak
At first for thy dear sake. A woman's love
Is mighty, but a mother's heart is weak,
And by its weakness overcomes; I strove
To smother better thoughts with patience meek,
But still in the abyss my soul would rove,
Seeking my child, and drove me here to claim
The rite that gives him peace in Christ's dear name.

I sit and weep while blessed spirits sing:
I can but long and pine the while they praise,
And, leaning o'er the wall of heaven, I fling
My voice to where I deem my infant stays,
Like a robbed bird that cries in vain to bring
Her nestlings back beneath her wings' embrace;
But still he answers not, and I but know
That heaven and earth are but alike in woe."

The sacred rite, so piteously pleaded for, was of course duly performed. This poem seems to have been written when Keats was in the ascendant, and predominated over the imagination of our author. Nor has he failed to catch a portion of the finer fancy of that exuberant poet. Such lines as the following are quite in the manner of Keats.

"The deep sky, *full-hearted with the moon*."
… "*the nunneries of silent nooks,*
The murmured longing of the wood."

Or this description: —

"In the courtyard a fountain leaped alway,
A Triton blowing jewels through his shell
Into the sunshine."

In the second volume we have another legend, or rather a

legendary vision, of the author's own invention, which is of a higher import, and still more redolent of poetry. It is called "The vision of Sir Launfal." This knight has a vision, or a dream, in which he beholds himself going forth from his proud castle to accomplish a vow he had made, namely, to seek "over land and sea for the Holy Grail." What the Holy Grail is, Mr Lowell is considerate enough to inform, or remind his readers, in a note which runs thus, – "According to the mythology of the Romancers, the San Greal, or Holy Grail, was the cup out of which Jesus partook of the Last Supper with his disciples. It was brought into England by Joseph of Arimathea, and remained there, an object of pilgrimage and adoration, for many years in the keeping of his lineal descendants. It was incumbent upon those who had charge of it to be chaste in thought, word, and deed; but one of the keepers having broken this condition, the Holy Grail disappeared. From that time it was a favourite enterprise of the knights of Arthur's court to go in search of it." Well, Sir Launfal, in his vision, starts forth upon this knightly and pious enterprise. It is the month of June when he sallies from his castle, and the poet revels in a description of the glories of the summer: —

"Whether we look, or whether we listen,
We hear life murmur, or see it glisten:
Every clod feels a stir of might,
An instinct within it that reaches and towers,
And, *grasping blindly above it for light,*

Climbs to a soul in grass and flowers.
The cowslip startles in meadows green,
The buttercup catches the sun in its chalice,
And there's never a leaf or a blade too mean
To be some happy creature's palace;
The little bird sits at his door in the sun
Atilt like a blossom among the leaves,
And lets his illumined being o'errun
With the deluge of summer it receives.
His mate feels the eggs beneath her wings,
And the heart in her dumb breast flutters and sings —
He sings to the wide world, she to her nest.

Joy comes, grief goes, we know not how;
Everything is happy now,
Everything is upward striving;
'Tis as easy now for the heart to be true
As for grass to be green or skies to be blue, —
'Tis the natural way of living:
Who knows whither the clouds have fled?
In the unscarred heaven they leave no wake;
And the eyes forget the tears they have shed,
And the heart forgets its sorrow and ache;
And the soul partakes the season's youth."

The drawbridge of the castle is let down, and Sir Launfal, on his charger, springs from under the archway, clothed in his glittering mail —

"To seek in all climes for the Holy Grail."
"As Sir Launfal made morn through the darksome gate
He was ware of a leper, crouched by the same,
Who begged with his hand and moaned as he sate;
And a loathing over Sir Launfal came;
The sunshine went out of his soul with a thrill,
The flesh 'neath his armour did shrink and crawl,

For this man, so foul and bent of stature,
Rasped harshly against his dainty nature,
And seemed the one blot on the summer morn, —
So he tossed him a piece of gold in scorn.

The leper raised not the gold from the dust:
'Better to me the poor man's crust.
Better the blessing of the poor,
Though I turn me empty from his door;
That is no true alms which, the hand can hold.'"

Sir Launfal proceeds in search of the Holy Grail; but he finds it not. He returns an old man, worn with toil, and sad at heart, and full of tender commiseration for all the afflicted and distressed. It is winter when he returns to his castle. There sits the same miserable leper, and moans out the same prayer for alms; but this time it is answered in a very different spirit.

"Straightway he
Remembered in what a haughty guise

He had flung an alms to leprosie,
When he caged his young life up in gilded mail
To set forth in search of the Holy Grail —
The heart within him was ashes and dust;
He parted in twain his single crust,
He broke the ice on the streamlet's brink,
And gave the leper to eat and to drink;
'Twas a mouldy crust of coarse brown bread,
'Twas water out of a wooden bowl, —
Yet with fine wheaten bread was the leper fed,
And 'twas red wine he drank with his thirsty soul.

As Sir Launfal mused with a downcast face,
A light shone round about the place;
The leper no longer crouched at his side,
But stood before him glorified,
And a voice that was calmer than silence said —
'In many climes, without avail,
Thou hast spent thy life for the Holy Grail;
Behold it is here, – this cup which thou
Didst fill at the streamlet for me but now!
The Holy Supper is kept, indeed,
In whatso we share with another's need.'"

Such was the dream or vision of Sir Launfal. We need hardly add that, when he awoke from it, he exclaimed that the Holy Grail was already found – bade his servants hang up his armour on the wall, and open his gates to the needy and the poor.

We shall venture upon one more quotation before we quit Mr Lowell. We must premise that we do not always mark by asterisks the omission that we make, when that omission creates no obscurity whatever in the passage. The following poem we take the liberty of abridging, and we print it, without any interruption of this kind, in its abridged form. In this form it will perhaps remind our readers of some of those tender, simple, and domestic lyrics in which German poetry is so rich. There is no other language from which so many beautiful poems might be collected which refer to childhood, and the love of children, as from the German. It has sometimes occurred to us that our poetesses, or fair translators of poetry, might contrive a charming volume of such lyrics on childhood.

THE CHANGELING

"I had a little daughter,
And she was given to me
To lead me gently onward
To the Heavenly Father's knee.

I know not how others saw her,
But to me she was wholly fair,
And the light of the heaven she came from
Still lingered and gleamed in her hair.

She had been with us scarce a twelvemonth,
And it hardly seemed a day,
When a troop of wandering angels
Stole my little daughter away.

But they left in her stead a changeling,
A little angel child,
That seems like her bud in full blossom,
And smiles as she never smiled.

This child is not mine as the first was,
I cannot sing it to rest,
I cannot lift it up fatherly,
And bless it upon my breast.

Yet it lies in my little one's cradle,
And sits in my little one's chair,
And the light of the heaven she's gone to
Transfigures its golden hair."

We have still a brief space for *Mr Holmes*. It is fit that, amongst our list, there should be one representative of the comic muse. Mr Holmes, however, is not always comic. Some of his serious pieces are not without a certain manly pathos. Some, too, are of a quite didactic character, and have the air of college exercises. But it is only a few of his lighter pieces we should feel any disposition to quote, or refer to. Mr Holmes portrays himself to us as a boon companion; – a physician by profession, and one to whom poetry has been only an occasional amusement – one of those choice spirits who can set the table in a roar, and who can sing himself the good song that he indites. Such being the case, we have only to lay down the critical pen to court amusement ourselves, and conclude our paper by sharing with the reader a few specimens of wit or humour.

Civilised life in New York, or Boston, seems to have the same disagreeable accompaniments as with us – as witness.

THE MUSIC-GRINDERS

"There are three ways in which men take
One's money from his purse,
And very hard it is to tell
Which of the three is worse;
But all of them are bad enough
To make a body curse.

You're riding out some pleasant day,
And counting up your gains;
A fellow jumps from out a bush,
And takes your horse's reins;
Another hints some words about
A bullet in your brains.

It's hard to meet such pressing friends
In such a lonely spot;
It's very hard to lose your cash,
But harder to be shot;
And so you take your wallet out,
Though you had rather not.

Perhaps you're going out to dine,
Some filthy creature begs
You'll hear about the cannon-ball
That carried off his pegs;

He says it is a dreadful thing
For men to lose their legs.

He tells you of his starving wife,
His children to be fed,
Poor little lovely innocents.
All clamorous for bread;
And so you kindly help to put
A bachelor to bed.

You're sitting on your window-seat,
Beneath a cloudless moon;
You hear a sound that seems to wear
The semblance of a tune,
As if a broken fife should strive
To drown a cracked basoon.

And nearer, nearer still, the tide
Of music seems to come,
There's something like a human voice
And something like a drum;
You sit in speechless agony
Until your ear is numb.

Poor 'home, sweet home,' should seem to be
A very dismal place,
Your 'auld acquaintance,' all at once
Is altered in the face —
But hark! the air again is still,

The music all is ground;

It cannot be – it is – it is —
A hat is going round!
No! Pay the dentist when he leaves
A fracture in your jaw;
And pay the owner of the bear,
That stunned you with his paw;

And buy the lobster that has had
Your knuckles in his claw;
But if you are a portly man,
Put on your fiercest frown,
And talk about a constable
To turn them out of town;

Then close your sentence with an oath,
And shut the window down!
And if you are a slender man,
Not big enough for that,
Or, if you cannot make a speech,
Because you are a flat,

Go very quietly and drop
A button in the hat!"

Excellent advice! How many hats there are – and not of music-grinders only – in which we should be delighted to see the button dropped! The next in order is very good, and equally intelligible

on this side of the Atlantic. We give the greater part of it: —

THE TREADMILL SONG

"They've built us up a noble wall,
To keep the vulgar out;
We've nothing in the world to do,
But just to walk about;
So faster now, you middle men,
And try to beat the ends,
Its pleasant work to ramble round
Among one's honest friends.

Here, tread upon the long man's toes,
He shan't be lazy here —
And punch the little fellow's ribs,
And tweak that lubber's ear,
He's lost them both – don't pull his hair,
Because he wears a scratch,
But poke him in the further eye,
That isn't in the patch.

Hark! fellows, there's the supper-bell,
And so our work is done;
It's pretty sport – suppose we take
A round or two for fun!
If ever they should turn me out,
When I have better grown,
Now hang me, but I mean to have

A treadmill of my own!"

"The September Gale," "The Ballad of an Oysterman," "My Aunt," all solicit admission, but we have no space. A few of the verses "On the Portrait of 'A Gentleman,' in the Athenæum Gallery," we will insert. Perhaps we may see the companion picture to it on the walls of our own Exhibition at Trafalgar Square: —

"It may be so, perhaps thou hast
A warm and loving heart;
I will not blame thee for thy face,
Poor devil as thou art.

That thing thou fondly deem'st a nose,
Unsightly though it be,
In spite of all the cold world's scorn,
It may be much to thee.

Those eyes, among thine elder friends,
Perhaps they pass for blue;
No matter – if a man can see,
What more have eyes to do?

Thy mouth – that fissure in thy face,
By something like a chin —
May be a very useful place
To put thy victual in."

Not, it seems, a thing to paint for public inspection. *Apropos* of the pictorial art, we cannot dismiss Mr Holmes' book without noticing the two or three tasteful vignettes or medallions, or by whatever name the small engravings are to be called, which are scattered through its pages. We wish there were more of them, and that such a style of illustration, or rather of decoration, (for they have little to do with the subject of the text,) were more general. Here are two little children sitting on the ground, one is reading, the other listening – a mere outline, and the whole could be covered by a crown-piece. A simple medallion, such as we have described, gives an exquisite and perpetual pleasure; the blurred and blotched engraving, where much is attempted and nothing completed, is a mere disfigurement to a book. The volume before us, we ought perhaps to add, comes from the press of Messrs Ticknor and Co., Boston.

MY NOVEL; OR, VARIETIES IN ENGLISH LIFE

BY PISISTRATUS CAXTON

BOOK V. – INITIAL CHAPTER

"I hope, Pisistratus," said my father, "that you do not intend to be dull!"

"Heaven forbid, sir! what could make you ask such a question? *Intend.* No! if I am dull it is from innocence."

"A very long Discourse upon Knowledge!" said my father; "very long. I should cut it out!"

I looked upon my father as a Byzantian sage might have looked on a Vandal. "Cut it out!" —

"Stops the action, sir!" said my father, dogmatically.

"Action! But a novel is not a drama."

"No, it is a great deal longer – twenty times as long, I dare say," replied Mr Caxton with a sigh.

"Well, sir – well! I think my Discourse upon Knowledge has much to do with the subject – is vitally essential to the subject; does not stop the action – only explains and elucidates the action. And I am astonished, sir, that you, a scholar, and a cultivator of knowledge" —

"There – there!" cried my father, deprecatingly. "I yield – I yield. What better could I expect when I set up for a critic! What author ever lived that did not fly into a passion – even with his own father, if his father presumed to say – 'Cut out!' *Pacem imploro*" —

Mrs Caxton. – "My dear Austin, I am sure Pisistratus did not

mean to offend you, and I have no doubt he will take your" —

Pisistratus, (hastily.) – "Advice *for the future*, certainly. I will quicken the action, and" —

"Go on with the Novel," whispered Roland, looking up from his eternal account-book. "We have lost £200 by our barley!"

Therewith I plunged my pen into the ink, and my thoughts into the "Fair Shadowland."

CHAPTER II

"Halt!" cried a voice; and not a little surprised was Leonard when the stranger who had accosted him the preceding evening got into the chaise.

"Well," said Richard, "I am not the sort of man you expected, eh? Take time to recover yourself." And with these words Richard drew forth a book from his pocket, threw himself back, and began to read. Leonard stole many a glance at the acute, hardy, handsome face of his companion, and gradually recognised a family likeness to poor John, in whom, despite age and infirmity, the traces of no common share of physical beauty were still evident. And, with that quick link in ideas which mathematical aptitude bestows, the young student at once conjectured that he saw before him his uncle Richard. He had the discretion, however, to leave that gentleman free to choose his own time for introducing himself, and silently revolved the new thoughts produced by the novelty of his situation. Mr Richard read with notable quickness – sometimes cutting the leaves of the book with his penknife, sometimes tearing them open with his forefinger, sometimes skipping whole pages altogether. Thus he galloped to the end of the volume – flung it aside – lighted his cigar, and began to talk.

He put many questions to Leonard relative to his rearing, and especially to the mode by which he had acquired his education;

and Leonard, confirmed in the idea that he was replying to a kinsman, answered frankly.

Richard did not think it strange that Leonard should have acquired so much instruction with so little direct tuition. Richard Avenel himself had been tutor to himself. He had lived too long with our go-ahead brethren, who stride the world on the other side the Atlantic with the seven-leagued boots of the Giant-killer, not to have caught their glorious fever for reading. But it was for a reading wholly different from that which was familiar to Leonard. The books he read must be new; to read old books would have seemed to him going back in the world. He fancied that new books necessarily contained new ideas – a common mistake – and our lucky adventurer was the man of his day.

Tired with talking, he at length chucked the book he had run through to Leonard, and, taking out a pocket-book and pencil, amused himself with calculations on some detail of his business, after which he fell into an absorbed train of thought – part pecuniary, part ambitious.

Leonard found the book interesting; it was one of the numerous works, half-statistic, half-declamatory, relating to the condition of the working-classes, which peculiarly distinguish our century, and ought to bind together rich and poor, by proving the grave attention which modern society bestows upon all that can affect the welfare of the last.

"Dull stuff – theory – claptrap," said Richard, rousing himself from his reverie at last: "it can't interest you."

"All books interest me, I think," said Leonard, "and this especially; for it relates to the working-class, and I am one of them."

"You were yesterday, but you mayn't be to-morrow," answered Richard good-humouredly, and patting him on the shoulder. "You see, my lad, that it is the middle class which ought to govern the country. What the book says about the ignorance of country magistrates is very good; but the man writes pretty considerable trash when he wants to regulate the number of hours a free-born boy should work at a factory – only ten hours a-day – pooh! and so lose two to the nation! Labour is wealth: and if we could get men to work twenty-four hours a-day, we should be just twice as rich. If the march of civilisation is to proceed," continued Richard, loftily, "men, and boys too, must not lie a-bed doing nothing *all night*, sir." Then with a complacent tone – "We shall get to the twenty-four hours at last; and, by gad, we must, or we shan't flog the Europeans as we do now."

On arriving at the inn at which Richard had first made acquaintance with Mr Dale, the coach by which he had intended to perform the rest of the journey was found to be full. Richard continued to perform the journey in post-chaises, not without some grumbling at the expense, and incessant orders to the postboys to make the best of the way. "Slow country this, in spite of all its brag," said he – "very slow. Time is money – they know that in the States; for why, they are all men of business there. Always slow in a country where a parcel of lazy idle lords, and

dukes, and baronets, seem to think 'time is pleasure.'"

Towards evening the chaise approached the confines of a very large town, and Richard began to grow fidgety. His easy cavalier air was abandoned. He withdrew his legs from the window, out of which they had been luxuriously dangling; pulled down his waistcoat; buckled more tightly his stock: it was clear that he was resuming the decorous dignity that belongs to state. He was like a monarch who, after travelling happy and incognito, returns to his capital. Leonard divined at once that they were nearing their journey's end.

Humble foot-passengers now looked at the chaise, and touched their hats. Richard returned the salutation with a nod – a nod less gracious than condescending. The chaise turned rapidly to the left, and stopped before a smart lodge, very new, very white, adorned with two Doric columns in stucco, and flanked by a large pair of gates. "Hollo!" cried the postboy, and cracked his whip.

Two children were playing before the lodge, and some clothes were hanging out to dry on the shrubs and pales round the neat little building.

"Hang those brats! they are actually playing," growled Dick. "As I live, the jade has been washing again! Stop, boy." During this soliloquy, a good-looking young woman had rushed from the door – slapped the children as, catching sight of the chaise, they ran towards the house – opened the gates, and, dropping a curtsey to the ground, seemed to wish that she could drop

into it altogether, so frightened and so trembling seemed she to shrink from the wrathful face which the master now put out of the window.

"Did I tell you, or did I not," said Dick, "that I would not have these horrid disreputable cubs of yours playing just before my lodge gates?"

"Please, sir – "

"Don't answer me. And did I tell you, or did I not, that the next time I saw you making a drying-ground of my lilacs, you should go out, neck and crop – "

"Oh, please sir – "

"You leave my lodge next Saturday: drive on, boy. The ingratitude and insolence of those common people are disgraceful to human nature," muttered Richard, with an accent of the bitterest misanthropy.

The chaise wheeled along the smoothest and freshest of gravel roads, and through fields of the finest land, in the highest state of cultivation. Rapid as was Leonard's survey, his rural eye detected the signs of a master in the art agronomial. Hitherto he had considered the Squire's model farm as the nearest approach to good husbandry he had seen; for Jackeymo's finer skill was developed rather on the minute scale of market-gardening than what can fairly be called husbandry. But the Squire's farm was degraded by many old-fashioned notions, and concessions to the whim of the eye, which would not be found in model farms now-a-days – large tangled hedgerows, which, though they constitute

one of the beauties most picturesque in old England, make sad deductions from produce; great trees, overshadowing the corn, and harbouring the birds; little patches of rough sward left to waste; and angles of woodland running into fields, exposing them to rabbits, and blocking, out the sun. These and suchlike blots on a gentleman farmer's agriculture, common-sense and Giacomo had made clear to the acute comprehension of Leonard. No such faults were perceptible in Richard Avenel's domain. The fields lay in broad divisions, the hedges were clipped and narrowed into their proper destination of mere boundaries. Not a blade of wheat withered under the cold shade of a tree; not a yard of land lay waste; not a weed was to be seen, not a thistle to waft its baleful seed through the air: some young plantations were placed, not where the artist would put them, but just where the farmer wanted a fence from the wind. Was there no beauty in this? Yes, there was beauty of its kind – beauty at once recognisable to the initiated – beauty of use and profit – beauty that could bear a monstrous high rent. And Leonard uttered a cry of admiration which thrilled through the heart of Richard Avenel.

"This *is* farming!" said the villager.

"Well, I guess it is," answered Richard, all his ill-humour vanishing. "You should have seen the land when I bought it. But we new men, as they call us – (damn their impertinence) – are the new blood of this country."

Richard Avenel never said anything more true. Long may the new blood circulate through the veins of the mighty giantess; but

let the grand heart be the same as it has beat for proud ages.

The chaise now passed through a pretty shrubbery, and the house came into gradual view – a house with a portico – all the offices carefully thrust out of sight.

The postboy dismounted, and rang the bell.

"I almost think they are going to keep me waiting," said Mr Richard, wellnigh in the very words of Louis XIV.

But that fear was not realised – the door opened; a well-fed servant out of livery presented himself. There was no hearty welcoming smile on his face, but he opened the chaise-door with demure and taciturn respect.

"Where's George? why does not he come to the door?" asked Richard, descending from the chaise slowly, and leaning on the servant's outstretched arm with as much precaution as if he had had the gout.

Fortunately, George here came into sight, settling himself hastily into his livery coat.

"See to the things, both of you," said Richard, as he paid the postboy.

Leonard stood on the gravel sweep, gazing at the square white house.

"Handsome elevation – classical, I take it – eh?" said Richard, joining him. "But you should see the offices."

He then, with familiar kindness, took Leonard by the arm, and drew him within. He showed him the hall, with a carved mahogany stand for hats; he showed him the drawing-room, and

pointed out all its beauties – though it was summer the drawing-room looked cold, as will look rooms newly furnished, with walls newly papered, in houses newly built. The furniture was handsome, and suited to the rank of a rich trader. There was no pretence about it, and therefore no vulgarity, which is more than can be said for the houses of many an honourable Mrs Somebody in Mayfair, with rooms twelve feet square, chokeful of buhl, that would have had its proper place in the Tuilleries. Then Richard showed him the library, with mahogany bookcases and plate glass, and the fashionable authors handsomely bound. Your new men are much better friends to living authors than your old families who live in the country, and at most subscribe to a book-club. Then Richard took him up-stairs, and led him through the bedrooms – all very clean and comfortable, and with every modern convenience; and, pausing in a very pretty single gentleman's chamber, said, "This is your den. And now, can you guess who I am?"

"No one but my Uncle Richard could be so kind," answered Leonard.

But the compliment did not flatter Richard. He was extremely disconcerted and disappointed. He had hoped that he should be taken for a lord at least, forgetful of all that he had said in disparagement of lords.

"Pish!" said he at last, biting his lip – "so you don't think that I look like a gentleman? Come, now, speak honestly."

Leonard wonderingly saw he had given pain, and, with the

good breeding which comes instinctively from good nature, replied – "I judged you by your heart, sir, and your likeness to my grandfather – otherwise I should never have presumed to fancy we could be relations."

"Hum!" answered Richard. "You can just wash your hands, and then come down to dinner; you will hear the gong in ten minutes. There's the bell – ring for what you want."

With that, he turned on his heel; and, descending the stairs, gave a look into the dining-room, and admired the plated salver on the sideboard, and the king's pattern spoons and forks on the table. Then he walked to the looking-glass over the mantlepiece; and, wishing to survey the whole effect of his form, mounted a chair. He was just getting into an attitude which he thought imposing, when the butler entered, and, being London bred, had the discretion to try to escape unseen; but Richard caught sight of him in the looking-glass, and coloured up to the temples.

"Jarvis," said he mildly – "Jarvis, put me in mind to have these inexpressibles altered."

CHAPTER III

Apropos of the inexpressibles, Mr Richard did not forget to provide his nephew with a much larger wardrobe than could have been thrust into Dr Riccabocca's knapsack. There was a very good tailor in the town, and the clothes were very well made. And, but for an air more ingenuous, and a cheek that, despite study and night vigils, retained much of the sunburnt bloom of the rustic, Leonard Fairfield might now have almost passed, without disparaging comment, by the bow-window at White's. Richard burst into an immoderate fit of laughter when he first saw the watch which the poor Italian had bestowed upon Leonard; but, to atone for the laughter, he made him a present of a very pretty substitute, and bade him "lock up his turnip." Leonard was more hurt by the jeer at his old patron's gift than pleased by his uncle's. But Richard Avenel had no conception of sentiment. It was not for many days that Leonard could reconcile himself to his uncle's manner. Not that the peasant could pretend to judge of its mere conventional defects; but there is an ill breeding to which, whatever our rank and nurture, we are almost equally sensitive – the ill breeding that comes from want of consideration for others. Now, the Squire was as homely in his way as Richard Avenel, but the Squire's bluntness rarely hurt the feelings; and when it did so, the Squire perceived and hastened to repair his blunder. But Mr Richard, whether kind or cross,

was always wounding you in some little delicate fibre – not from malice, but from the absence of any little delicate fibres of his own. He was really, in many respects, a most excellent man, and certainly a very valuable citizen. But his merits wanted the fine tints and fluent curves that constitute beauty of character. He was honest, but sharp in his practice, and with a keen eye to his interests. He was just, but as a matter of business. He made no allowances, and did not leave to his justice the large margin of tenderness and mercy. He was generous, but rather from an idea of what was due to himself than with much thought of the pleasure he gave to others; and he even regarded generosity as a capital put out to interest. He expected a great deal of gratitude in return, and, when he obliged a man, considered that he had bought a slave. Every needy voter knew where to come, if he wanted relief or a loan; but woe to him if he had ventured to express hesitation when Mr Avenel told him how he must vote.

In this town Richard had settled after his return from America, in which country he had enriched himself – first, by spirit and industry – lastly, by bold speculation and good luck. He invested his fortune in business – became a partner in a large brewery – soon bought out his associates – and then took a principal share in a flourishing corn-mill. He prospered rapidly – bought a property of some two or three hundred acres, built a house, and resolved to enjoy himself, and make a figure. He had now become the leading man of the town, and the boast to Audley Egerton that he could return one of the members, perhaps both,

was by no means an exaggerated estimate of his power. Nor was his proposition, according to his own views, so unprincipled as it appeared to the statesman. He had taken a great dislike to both the sitting members – a dislike natural to a sensible man of moderate politics, who had something to lose. For Mr Slappe, the active member – who was head-over-ears in debt – was one of the furious democrats rare before the Reform Bill – and whose opinions were held dangerous even by the mass of a Liberal constituency; while Mr Sleekie, the gentleman member, who laid by £5000 every year from his dividends in the Funds, was one of those men whom Richard justly pronounced to be "humbugs" – men who curry favour with the extreme party by voting for measures sure not to be carried; while, if there were the least probability of coming to a decision that would lower the money market, Mr Sleekie was seized with a well-timed influenza. Those politicians are common enough now. Propose to march to the Millennium, and they are your men. Ask them to march a quarter of a mile, and they fall to feeling their pockets, and trembling for fear of the footpads. They are never so joyful as when there is no chance of a victory. Did they beat the Minister, they would be carried out of the house in a fit.

Richard Avenel – despising both these gentlemen, and not taking kindly to the Whigs since the great Whig leaders were Lords – looked with a friendly eye to the Government as it then existed, and especially to Audley Egerton, the enlightened representative of commerce. But in giving Audley and his

colleagues the benefit of his influence, through conscience, he thought it all fair and right to have a *quid pro quo*, and, as he had so frankly confessed, it was his whim to rise up "Sir Richard." For this worthy citizen abused the aristocracy much on the same principle as the fair Olivia depreciated Squire Thornhill – he had a sneaking affection for what he abused. The society of Screwstown was, like most provincial capitals, composed of two classes – the commercial and the exclusive. These last dwelt chiefly apart, around the ruins of an old abbey; they affected its antiquity in their pedigrees, and had much of its ruin in their finances. Widows of rural thanes in the neighbourhood – genteel spinsters – officers retired on half-pay – younger sons of rich squires, who had now become old bachelors – in short, a very respectable, proud, aristocratic set – who thought more of themselves than do all the Gowers and Howards, Courtenays and Seymours, put together. It had early been the ambition of Richard Avenel to be admitted into this sublime coterie; and, strange to say, he had partially succeeded. He was never more happy than when he was asked to their card-parties, and never more unhappy than when he was actually there. Various circumstances combined to raise Mr Avenel into this elevated society. First, he was unmarried, still very handsome, and in that society there was a large proportion of unwedded females. Secondly, he was the only rich trader in Screwstown who kept a good cook, and professed to give dinners, and the half-pay captains and colonels swallowed the

host for the sake of the venison. Thirdly, and principally, all these exclusives abhorred the two sitting members, and "idem nolle idem velle de republicâ, ea firma amicta est;" that is, congeniality in politics pieces porcelain and crockery together better than the best diamond cement. The sturdy Richard Avenel – who valued himself on American independence – held these ladies and gentlemen in an awe that was truly Brahminical. Whether it was that, in England, all notions, even of liberty, are mixed up historically, traditionally, socially, with that fine and subtle element of aristocracy which, like the press, is the air we breathe; or whether Richard imagined that he really became magnetically imbued with the virtues of these silver pennies and gold seven-shilling pieces, distinct from the vulgar coinage in popular use, it is hard to say. But the truth must be told – Richard Avenel was a notable tuft-hunter. He had a great longing to marry out of this society; but he had not yet seen any one sufficiently high-born and high-bred to satisfy his aspirations. In the meanwhile, he had convinced himself that his way would be smooth could he offer to make his ultimate choice "My Lady;" and he felt that it would be a proud hour in his life when he could walk before stiff Colonel Pompley to the sound of "Sir Richard." Still, however disappointed at the ill success of his bluff diplomacy with Mr Egerton, and however yet cherishing the most vindictive resentment against that individual – he did not, as many would have done, throw up his political convictions out of personal spite. He resolved still to favour the ungrateful and

undeserving Administration; and as Audley Egerton had acted on the representations of the mayor and deputies, and shaped his bill to meet their views, so Avenel and the Government rose together in the popular estimation of the citizens of Screwstown.

But, duly to appreciate the value of Richard Avenel, and in just counterpoise to all his foibles, one ought to have seen what he had effected for the town. Well might he boast of "new blood;" he had done as much for the town as he had for his fields. His energy, his quick comprehension of public utility, backed by his wealth, and bold, bullying, imperious character, had sped the work of civilisation as if with the celerity and force of a steam-engine.

If the town were so well paved and so well lighted – if half-a-dozen squalid lanes had been transformed into a stately street – if half the town no longer depended on tanks for their water – if the poor-rates were reduced one-third, – praise to the brisk new blood which Richard Avenel had infused into vestry and corporation. And his example itself was so contagious! "There was not a plate-glass window in the town when I came into it," said Richard Avenel; "and now look down the High Street!" He took the credit to himself, and justly; for, though his own business did not require windows of plate-glass, he had wakened the spirit of enterprise which adorns a whole city.

Mr Avenel did not present Leonard to his friends for more than a fortnight. He allowed him to wear off his rust. He then gave a grand dinner, at which his nephew was formally introduced, and, to his great wrath and disappointment, never

opened his lips. How could he, poor youth, when Miss Clarina Mowbray only talked upon high life; till proud Colonel Pompley went in state through the history of the siege of Seringapatam.

CHAPTER IV

While Leonard accustoms himself gradually to the splendours that surround him, and often turns with a sigh to the remembrance of his mother's cottage and the sparkling fount in the Italian's flowery garden, we will make with thee, O reader, a rapid flight to the metropolis, and drop ourselves amidst the gay groups that loiter along the dusty ground, or loll over the roadside palings of Hyde Park. The season is still at its height; but the short day of fashionable London life, which commences two hours after noon, is in its decline. The crowd in Rotten Row begins to thin. Near the statue of Achilles, and apart from all other loungers, a gentleman, with one hand thrust into his waistcoat, and the other resting on his cane, gazed listlessly on the horsemen and carriages in the brilliant ring. He was still in the prime of life, at the age when man is usually the most social – when the acquaintances of youth have ripened into friendship, and a personage of some rank and fortune has become a well-known feature in the mobile face of society. But though, when his contemporaries were boys scarce at college, this gentleman had blazed foremost amongst the princes of fashion, and though he had all the qualities of nature and circumstance which either retain fashion to the last, or exchange its false celebrity for a graver repute, he stood as a stranger in that throng of his countrymen. Beauties whirled by to the toilet – statesmen

passed on to the senate – dandies took flight to the clubs; and neither nods nor becks, nor wreathed smiles, said to the solitary spectator, "Follow us – thou art one of our set." Now and then, some middle-aged beau, nearing the post of the loiterer, turned round to look again; but the second glance seemed to dissipate the recognition of the first, and the beau silently continued his way.

"By the tombs of my fathers!" said the solitary to himself, "I know now what a dead man might feel if he came to life again, and took a peep at the living."

Time passed on – the evening shades descended fast. Our stranger in London had wellnigh the Park to himself. He seemed to breathe more freely as he saw that the space was so clear.

"There's oxygen in the atmosphere now," said he, half aloud; "and I can walk without breathing in the gaseous fumes of the multitude. O those chemists – what dolts they are! They tell us crowds taint the air, but they never guess why! Pah, it is not the lungs that poison the element – it is the reek of bad hearts. When a periwig-pated fellow breathes on me, I swallow a mouthful of care. *Allons!* my friend Nero; now for a stroll." He touched with his cane a large Newfoundland dog, who lay stretched near his feet; and dog and man went slow through the growing twilight, and over the brown dry turf. At length our solitary paused, and threw himself on a bench under a tree. "Half-past eight!" said he, looking at his watch – "one may smoke one's cigar without shocking the world."

He took out his cigar-case, struck a light, and in another moment reclined at length on the bench – seemed absorbed in regarding the smoke, that scarce coloured ere it vanished into air.

"It is the most barefaced lie in the world, my Nero," said he, addressing his dog, "this boasted liberty of man! Now here am I, a freeborn Englishman, a citizen of the world, caring – I often say to myself – caring not a jot for Kaisar or Mob; and yet I no more dare smoke this cigar in the Park at half-past six, when all the world is abroad, than I dare pick my Lord Chancellor's pocket, or hit the Archbishop of Canterbury a thump on the nose. Yet no law in England forbids me my cigar, Nero! What is law at half-past eight, was not crime at six and a-half! Britannia says, 'Man, thou art free,' and she lies like a commonplace woman. O Nero, Nero! you enviable dog! – you serve but from liking. No thought of the world costs you one wag of the tail. Your big heart and true instinct suffice you for reason and law. You would want nothing to your felicity, if in these moments of ennui you would but smoke a cigar. Try it, Nero! – try it!" And, rising from his incumbent posture, he sought to force the end of the weed between the teeth of the dog.

While thus gravely engaged, two figures had approached the place. The one was a man who seemed weak and sickly. His threadbare coat was buttoned to the chin, but hung large on his shrunken breast. The other was a girl of about fourteen, on whose arm he leant heavily. Her cheek was wan, and there was a patient sad look on her face, which seemed so settled that you would

think she could never have known the mirthfulness of childhood.

"Pray rest here, papa," said the child softly; and she pointed to the bench, without taking heed of its pre-occupant, who now, indeed, confined to one corner of the seat, was almost hidden by the shadow of the tree.

The man sate down, with a feeble sigh; and then, observing the stranger, raised his hat, and said, in that tone of voice which betrays the usages of polished society, "Forgive me, if I intrude on you, sir."

The stranger looked up from his dog, and seeing that the girl was standing, rose at once as if to make room for her on the bench.

But still the girl did not heed him. She hung over her father, and wiped his brow tenderly with a little kerchief which she took from her own neck for the purpose.

Nero, delighted to escape the cigar, had taken to some unwieldy curvets and gambols, to vent the excitement into which he had been thrown; and now returning, approached the bench with a low look of surprise, and sniffed at the intruders of her master's privacy.

"Come here, sir," said the master. "You need not fear him," he added, addressing himself to the girl.

But the girl, without turning round to him, cried in a voice rather of anguish than alarm, "He has fainted! Father! father!"

The stranger kicked aside his dog, which was in the way, and loosened the poor man's stiff military stock. While thus

charitably engaged, the moon broke out, and the light fell full on the pale care-worn face of the unconscious sufferer.

"This face seems not unfamiliar to me, though sadly changed," said the stranger to himself; and bending towards the girl, who had sunk on her knees and was chafing her father's hands, he asked, "My child, what is your father's name?"

The child continued her task, too absorbed to answer.

The stranger put his hand on her shoulder, and repeated the question.

"Digby," answered the child, almost unconsciously; and as she spoke the man's senses began to return. In a few minutes more he had sufficiently recovered to falter forth his thanks to the stranger. But the last took his hand, and said, in a voice at once tremulous and soothing, "Is it possible that I see once more an old brother in arms? Algernon Digby, I do not forget you; but it seems England has forgotten."

A hectic flush spread over the soldier's face, and he looked away from the speaker as he answered —

"My name is Digby, it is true, sir; but I do not think we have met before. Come, Helen, I am well now – we will go home."

"Try and play with that great dog, my child," said the stranger – "I want to talk with your father."

The child bowed her submissive head, and moved away; but she did not play with the dog.

"I must reintroduce myself, formally, I see," quoth the stranger. "You were in the same regiment with myself, and my

name is L'Estrange."

"My lord," said the soldier, rising, "forgive me that – "

"I don't think that it was the fashion to call me 'my lord' at the mess-table. Come, what has happened to you? – on half-pay?"

Mr Digby shook his head mournfully.

"Digby, old fellow, can you lend me £100?" said Lord L'Estrange, clapping his *ci-devant* brother officer on the shoulder, and in a tone of voice that seemed like a boy's – so impudent was it, and devil-me-carish. "No! Well, that's lucky, for I can lend it to you."

Mr Digby burst into tears.

Lord L'Estrange did not seem to observe the emotion. "We were both sad extravagant fellows in our day," said he, "and I dare say I borrowed of you pretty freely."

"Me! Oh, Lord L'Estrange!"

"You have married since then, and reformed, I suppose. Tell me, old friend, all about it."

Mr Digby, who by this time had succeeded in restoring some calm to his shattered nerves, now rose, and said in brief sentences, but clear firm tones, —

"My Lord, it is idle to talk of me – useless to help me. I am fast dying. But, my child there, my only child, (he paused an instant, and went on rapidly.) I have relations in a distant county, if I could but get to them – I think they would at least provide for her. This has been for weeks my hope, my dream, my prayer. I cannot afford the journey except by your help. I have begged without

shame for myself; shall I be ashamed, then, to beg for her?"

"Digby," said L'Estrange with some grave alteration of manner, "talk neither of dying, nor begging. You were nearer death when the balls whistled round you at Waterloo. If soldier meets soldier and says, 'Friend, thy purse,' it is not begging, but brotherhood. Ashamed! By the soul of Belisarius! if I needed money, I would stand at a crossing with my Waterloo medal over my breast, and say to each sleek citizen I had helped to save from the sword of the Frenchman, 'It is your shame if I starve.' Now, lean upon me; I see you should be at home – which way?"

The poor soldier pointed his hand towards Oxford Street, and reluctantly accepted the proffered arm.

"And when you return from your relations, you will call on me? What! – hesitate? Come, promise."

"I will."

"On your honour."

"If I live, on my honour."

"I am staying at present at Knightsbridge, with my father; but you will always hear of my address at No. – Grosvenor Square, Mr Egerton's. So you have a long journey before you?"

"Very long."

"Do not fatigue yourself – travel slowly. Ho, you foolish child! – I see you are jealous of me. Your father has another arm to spare you."

Thus talking, and getting but short answers, Lord L'Estrange continued to exhibit those whimsical peculiarities of character,

which had obtained for him the repute of heartlessness in the world. Perhaps the reader may think the world was not in the right. But if ever the world does judge rightly of the character of a man who does not live for the world, nor talk for the world, nor feel with the world, it will be centuries after the soul of Harley L'Estrange has done with this planet.

CHAPTER V

Lord L'Estrange parted company with Mr Digby at the entrance of Oxford Street. The father and child there took a cabriolet. Mr Digby directed the driver to go down the Edgeware Road. He refused to tell L'Estrange his address, and this with such evident pain, from the sores of pride, that L'Estrange could not press the point. Reminding the soldier of his promise to call, Harley thrust a pocket-book into his hand, and walked off hastily towards Grosvenor Square.

He reached Audley Egerton's door just as that gentleman was getting out of his carriage; and the two friends entered the house together.

"Does the nation take a nap to-night?" asked L'Estrange. "Poor old lady! She hears so much of her affairs, that she may well boast of her constitution: it must be of iron."

"The House is still sitting," answered Audley seriously, "and with small heed of his friend's witticism. "But it is not a Government motion, and the division will be late, so I came home; and if I had not found you here, I should have gone into the Park to look for you."

"Yes – one always knows where to find me at this hour, 9 o'clock P.M. – cigar – Hyde Park. There is not a man in England so regular in his habits."

Here the friends reached a drawing-room in which the

Member of Parliament seldom sat, for his private apartments were all on the ground floor.

"But it is the strangest whim of yours, Harley," said he.

"What?"

"To affect detestation of ground-floors."

"Affect! O sophisticated man, of the earth, earthy! Affect! – nothing less natural to the human soul than a ground-floor. We are quite far enough from heaven, mount as many stairs as we will, without grovelling by preference.

"According to that symbolical view of the case," said Audley, "you should lodge in an attic."

"So I would, but that I abhor new slippers. As for hair-brushes, I am indifferent!"

"What have slippers and hair-brushes to do with attics?"

"Try! Make your bed in an attic, and the next morning you will have neither slippers nor hair-brushes!"

"What shall I have done with them?"

"Shied them at the cats!"

"What odd things you do say, Harley!"

"Odd! By Apollo and his nine spinsters! there is no human being who has so little imagination as a distinguished Member of Parliament. Answer me this, thou solemn right honourable, – Hast thou climbed to the heights of august contemplation? Hast thou gazed on the stars with the rapt eye of song? Hast thou dreamed of a love known to the angels, or sought to seize in the Infinite the mystery of life?"

"Not I indeed, my poor Harley."

"Then no wonder, poor Audley, that you cannot conjecture why he who makes his bed in an attic, disturbed by base catterwauls, shies his slippers at cats. Bring a chair into the balcony. Nero spoiled my cigar to-night. I am going to smoke now. You never smoke. You can look on the shrubs in the Square."

Audley slightly shrugged his shoulders, but he followed his friend's counsel and example, and brought his chair into the balcony. Nero came too, but at sight and smell of the cigar prudently retreated, and took refuge under the table.

"Audley Egerton, I want something from Government."

"I am delighted to hear it."

"There was a cornet in my regiment, who would have done better not to have come into it. We were, for the most part of us, puppies and fops."

"You all fought well, however."

"Puppies and fops do fight well. Vanity and valour generally go together. Cæsar, who scratched his head with due care of his scanty curls, and, even in dying, thought of the folds in his toga; Walter Raleigh, who could not walk twenty yards, because of the gems in his shoes; Alcibiades, who lounged into the Agora with doves in his bosom, and an apple in his hand; Murat, bedizened in gold-lace and furs; and Demetrius, the City-Taker, who made himself up like a French *Marquise*, – were all pretty good fellows at fighting. A slovenly hero like Cromwell is a paradox in nature,

and a marvel in history. But to return to my cornet. We were rich; he was poor. When the pot of clay swims down the stream with the brass-pots, it is sure of a smash. Men said Digby was stingy; I saw he was extravagant. But every one, I fear, would be rather thought stingy than poor. *Bref.*– I left the army, and saw him no more till to-night. There was never shabby poor gentleman on the stage more awfully shabby, more pathetically gentleman. But, look ye, this man has fought for England. It was no child's play at Waterloo, let me tell you, Mr Egerton; and, but for such men, you would be at best a *sous-prefêt*, and your Parliament a Provincial Assembly. You must do something for Digby. What shall it be?"

"Why, really, my dear Harley, this man was no great friend of yours – eh?"

"If he were, he would not want the Government to help him – he would not be ashamed of taking money from me."

"That is all very fine, Harley; but there are so many poor officers, and so little to give. It is the most difficult thing in the world that which you ask me. Indeed, I know nothing can be done: he has his half-pay?"

"I think not; or, if he has it, no doubt it all goes on his debts. That's nothing to us: the man and his child are starving."

"But if it is his own fault – if he has been imprudent?"

"Ah – well, well; where the devil is Nero?"

"I am so sorry I can't oblige you. If it were anything else – "

"There is something else. My valet – I can't turn him adrift – excellent fellow, but gets drunk now and then. Will you find him

a place in the Stamp Office?"

"With pleasure."

"No, now I think of it – the man knows my ways: I must keep him. But my old wine-merchant – civil man, never dunned – is a bankrupt. I am under great obligations to him, and he has a very pretty daughter. Do you think you could thrust him into some small place in the Colonies, or make him a King's Messenger, or something of the sort?"

"If you very much wish it, no doubt I can."

"My dear Audley, I am but feeling my way: the fact is, I want something for myself."

"Ah, that indeed gives me pleasure!" cried Egerton, with animation.

"The mission to Florence will soon be vacant – I know it privately. The place would quite suit me. Pleasant city; the best figs in Italy – very little to do. You could sound Lord – on the subject."

"I will answer beforehand. Lord – would be enchanted to secure to the public service a man so accomplished as yourself, and the son of a peer like Lord Lansmere."

Harley L'Estrange sprang to his feet, and flung his cigar in the face of a stately policeman who was looking up at the balcony.

"Infamous and bloodless official!" cried Harley L'Estrange; "so you could provide for a pimple-nosed lackey – for a wine-merchant who has been poisoning the king's subjects with white-lead or sloe-juice – for an idle sybarite, who would complain of

a crumpled rose-leaf; and nothing, in all the vast patronage of England, for a broken-down soldier, whose dauntless breast was her rampart!"

"Harley," said the Member of Parliament, with his calm sensible smile, "this would be a very good clap-trap at a small theatre; but there is nothing in which Parliament demands such rigid economy as the military branch of the public service; and no man for whom it is so hard to effect what we must plainly call a job as a subaltern officer, who has done nothing more than his duty – and all military men do that. Still, as you take it so earnestly, I will use what interest I can at the War Office, and get him, perhaps, the mastership of a barrack."

"You had better; for, if you do not, I swear I will turn Radical, and come down to your own city to oppose you, with Hunt and Cobbett to canvass for me."

"I should be very glad to see you come into Parliament, even as a Radical, and at my expense," said Audley, with great kindness. "But the air is growing cold, and you are not accustomed to our climate. Nay, if you are too poetic for catarrhs and rheums, I'm not – come in."

CHAPTER VI

Lord L'Estrange threw himself on a sofa, and leant his cheek on his hand thoughtfully. Audley Egerton sate near him, with his arms folded, and gazed on his friend's face with a soft expression of aspect, which was very unusual to the firm outline of his handsome features. The two men were as dissimilar in person as the reader will have divined that they were in character. All about Egerton was so rigid, all about L'Estrange so easy. In every posture of Harley's there was the unconscious grace of a child. The very fashion of his garments showed his abhorrence of restraint. His clothes were wide and loose; his neckcloth, tied carelessly, left his throat half bare. You could see that he had lived much in warm and southern lands, and contracted a contempt for conventionalities; there was as little in his dress as in his talk of the formal precision of the north. He was three or four years younger than Audley, but he looked at least twelve years younger. In fact, he was one of those men to whom old age seems impossible – voice, look, figure, had all the charm of youth; and, perhaps it was from this gracious youthfulness – at all events, it was characteristic of the kind of love he inspired – that neither his parents, nor the few friends admitted into his intimacy, ever called him, in their habitual intercourse, by the name of his title. He was not L'Estrange with them, he was Harley; and by that familiar baptismal I will usually designate

him. He was not one of those men whom author or reader wish to view at a distance, and remember as "my Lord" – it was so rarely that he remembered it himself. For the rest, it had been said of him by a shrewd wit – "He is so natural that every one calls him affected." Harley L'Estrange was not so critically handsome as Audley Egerton; to a commonplace observer he was, at best, rather goodlooking than otherwise. But women said that he had "a beautiful countenance," and they were not wrong. He wore his hair, which was of a fair chestnut, long, and in loose curls; and instead of the Englishman's whiskers, indulged in the foreigner's moustache. His complexion was delicate, though not effeminate: it was rather the delicacy of a student, than of a woman. But in his clear grey eye there was wonderful vigour of life. A skilful physiologist, looking only into that eye, would have recognised rare stamina of constitution – a nature so rich that, while easily disturbed, it would require all the effects of time, or all the fell combinations of passion and grief, to exhaust it. Even now, though so thoughtful, and even so sad, the rays of that eye were as concentred and steadfast as the light of the diamond.

"You were only, then, in jest," said Audley, after a long silence, "when you spoke of this mission to Florence. You have still no idea of entering into public life."

"None."

"I had hoped better things when I got your promise to pass one season in London. But, indeed, you have kept your promise to the ear to break it to the spirit. I could not presuppose that you

would shun all society, and be as much of a hermit here as under the vines of Como."

"I have sate in the Strangers' Gallery, and heard your great speakers; I have been in the pit of the opera, and seen your fine ladies; I have walked your streets, I have lounged in your parks, and I say that I can't fall in love with a faded dowager, because she fills up her wrinkles with rouge."

"Of what dowager do you speak?" asked the matter-of-fact Audley.

"She has a great many titles. Some people call her fashion, you busy men, politics: it is all one – tricked out and artificial. I mean London life. No, I can't fall in love with her, fawning old harridan!"

"I wish you could fall in love with something."

"I wish I could, with all my heart."

"But you are so *blasé*."

"On the contrary, I am so fresh. Look out of the window – what do you see?"

"Nothing!"

"Nothing – "

"Nothing but houses and dusty lilacs, my coachman dozing on his box, and two women in pattens crossing the kennel."

"I see none of that where I lie on the sofa. I see but the stars. And I feel for them as I did when I was a schoolboy at Eton. It is you who are *blasé*, not I – enough of this. You do not forget my commission, with respect to the exile who has married into

your brother's family?"

"No; but here you set me a task more difficult than that of saddling your cornet on the War Office."

"I know it is difficult, for the counter influence is vigilant and strong; but, on the other hand, the enemy is so damnable a traitor that one must have the Fates and the household gods on one's side."

"Nevertheless," said the practical Audley, bending over a book on the table, "I think that the best plan would be to attempt a compromise with the traitor."

"To judge of others by myself," answered Harley with spirit, "it were less bitter to put up with wrong than to palter with it for compensation. And such wrong! Compromise with the open foe – that may be done with honour; but with the perjured friend – that were to forgive the perjury!"

"You are too vindictive," said Egerton; "there may be excuses for the friend, which palliate even" —

"Hush! Audley, hush! or I shall think the world has indeed corrupted you. Excuse for the friend who deceives, who betrays! No, such is the true outlaw of Humanity; and the Furies surround him even while he sleeps in the temple."

The man of the world lifted his eyes slowly on the animated face of one still natural enough for the passions. He then once more returned to his book, and said, after a pause, "It is time you should marry, Harley."

"No," answered L'Estrange, with a smile at this sudden turn

in the conversation – "not time yet; for my chief objection to that change in life is, that all the women now-a-days are too old for me, or I am too young for them. A few, indeed are so infantine that one is ashamed to be their toy; but most are so knowing that one is a fool to be their dupe. The first, if they condescend to love you, love you as the biggest doll they have yet dandled, and for a doll's good qualities – your pretty blue eyes, and your exquisite millinery. The last, if they prudently accept you, do so on algebraical principles; you are but the X or the Y that represents a certain aggregate of goods matrimonial – pedigree, title, rent-roll, diamonds, pin-money, opera-box. They cast you up with the help of mamma, and you wake some morning to find that *plus* wife *minus* affection equals – the Devil!"

"Nonsense," said Audley, with his quiet grave laugh. "I grant that it is often the misfortune of a man in your station to be married rather for what he has, than for what he is; but you are tolerably penetrating, and not likely to be deceived in the character of the woman you court."

"Of the woman I *court*? – No! But of the woman I *marry*, very likely indeed. Woman is a changeable thing, as our Virgil informed us at school; but her change *par excellence* is from the fairy you woo to the brownie you wed. It is not that she has been a hypocrite, it is that she is a transmigration. You marry a girl for her accomplishments. She paints charmingly, or plays like St Cecilia. Clap a ring on her finger, and she never draws again – except perhaps your caricature on the back of a letter, and never

opens a piano after the honeymoon. You marry her for her sweet temper; and next year, her nerves are so shattered that you can't contradict her but you are whirled into a storm of hysterics. You marry her because she declares she hates balls and likes quiet; and ten to one but what she becomes a patroness at Almacks, or a lady in waiting."

"Yet most men marry, and most men survive the operation."

"If it were only necessary to live, that would be a consolatory and encouraging reflection. But to live with peace, to live with dignity, to live with freedom, to live in harmony with your thoughts, your habits, your aspirations – and this in the perpetual companionship of a person to whom you have given the power to wound your peace, to assail your dignity, to cripple your freedom, to jar on each thought and each habit, and bring you down to the meanest details of earth, when you invite her, poor soul, to soar to the spheres – that makes the to be, or not to be, which is the question."

"If I were you, Harley, I would do as I have heard the author of *Sandford and Merton* did – choose out a child and educate her yourself after your own heart."

"You have hit it," answered Harley seriously. "That has long been my idea – a very vague one, I confess. But I fear I shall be an old man before I find even the child.

"Ah!" he continued, yet more earnestly, while the whole character of his varying countenance changed again – "ah! if indeed I could discover what I seek – one who with the heart of

a child has the mind of a woman; one who beholds in nature the variety, the charm, the never feverish, ever healthful excitement that others vainly seek in the bastard sentimentalities of a life false with artificial forms; one who can comprehend, as by intuition, the rich poetry with which creation is clothed – poetry so clear to the child when enraptured with the flower, or when wondering at the star! If on me such exquisite companionship were bestowed – why, then" – He paused, sighed deeply, and, covering his face with his hand, resumed, in faltering accents, —

"But once – but once only, did such vision of the Beautiful made human rise before me – rise amidst 'golden exhalations of the dawn.' It beggared my life in vanishing. You know only – you only – how – how" —

He bowed his head, and the tears forced themselves through his clenched fingers.

"So long ago!" said Audley, sharing his friend's emotion. "Years so long and so weary, yet still thus tenacious of a mere boyish memory."

"Away with it, then!" cried Harley, springing to his feet, and with a laugh of strange merriment. "Your carriage still waits: set me home before you go to the House."

Then laying his hand lightly on his friend's shoulder, he said, "Is it for you, Audley Egerton, to speak sneeringly of boyish memories? What else is it that binds us together? What else warms my heart when I meet you? What else draws your thoughts from blue-books and beer-bills, to waste them on a vagrant

like me? Shake hands. Oh, friend of my boyhood! recollect the oars that we plied and the bats that we wielded in the old time, or the murmured talk on the moss-grown bank, as we sate together, building in the summer air castles mightier than Windsor. Ah! they are strong ties, those boyish memories, believe me! I remember as if it were yesterday my translation of that lovely passage in Persius, beginning – let me see – ah! —

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.