VARIOUS

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THE THEATER IN RUSSIA AND POLAND

The following interesting sketch of the Drama in the empire of the Czar is translated for the *International* from the Leipzig *Grenzboten*. The facts it states are not only new to most readers, but throw incidentally a good deal of light on the condition of that vast empire, and the state of its population in respect of literature and art in general:

The dramatic taste of a people, the strength of its productive faculty, the gradual development of its most popular sphere of art, the theater, contain the key to phases of its character which cannot always be recognized with the same exactness from other parts of its history. The tendencies and disposition of the mass come out very plainly in their relations to dramatic art, and from the audience of an evening at a theater some inference may be drawn as to the whole political scope of the nation. In truth, however, this requires penetration as well as cautious judgment.

In the middle of the last century there were in the kingdom of Poland, beside the royal art institutions at Warsaw, four strong dramatic companies, of genuine Polish stamp, which gave performances in the most fashionable cities. Two of them were so excellent that they often had the honor to play before the court. The peculiarity of these companies was that they never performed foreign works, but literally only their own. The managers were either themselves poets, or had poets associated with them in business. Each was guided by his poet, as Wallenstein by his astrologer. The establishment depended on its dramatic ability, while its performances were limited almost exclusively to the productions of its poet. The better companies, however, were in the habit of making contracts with each other, by which they exchanged the plays of their dramatists. This limitation to native productions perhaps grew partly out of the want of familiarity with foreign literature, partly from national feeling, and partly from the fact that the Polish taste was as yet little affected by that of the Germans, French, or English. In these circumstances there sprung up a poetic creative faculty, which gave promise of a good and really national drama. And even now, after wars, revolutions, and the schemes of foreign rulers have alternately destroyed and degraded the stage, and after the Poles have become poetically as well as politically mere satellites of French ideas and culture, there still exist, as respectable remains of the good old time, a few companies of players, which, like their ancient predecessors, have their own poets, and perform only his pieces, or at least others of Polish origin that he has arranged and adapted. Such a company, whose principal personage is called Richlawski, is now in Little Poland, in the cities Radom, Kielce, Opatow, Sandomir, &c. A second, which generally remains in the Government of Kalisch, is under the direction of a certain Felinski, and through his excellent dramatic compositions has gained a reputation equal to that of the band of Strauss in music. Yet these companies are only relics. The Polish drama in general has now a character and destiny which was not to be expected a hundred years since.

The origin of the Russian theater is altogether more recent. It is true that Peter the Great meddled a good deal with the theater as well as with other things, but it was not till the Empress Catharine that dramatic literature was really emancipated by the court. Under Alexander and Nicholas the most magnificent arrangements have been made in every one of the cities that from time to time is honored by the residence of the Emperor, so that Russia boasts of possessing five theaters, two of

which excel everything in Europe in respect to size and splendor, but yet possesses no sort of taste for dramatic art. The stage, in the empire of the Muscovites, is like a rose-bush grafted on a wild forest tree. It has not grown up naturally from a poetic want in the people, and finds in the country little or nothing in the way of a poetic basis. Accordingly, the theater in Russia is in every respect a foreign institution. Not national in its origin, it has not struck its roots into the heart of the people. Only here and there a feeble germ of theatrical literature has made its way through the obstinate barbarism of the Russian nature. The mass have no feeling for dramatic poetry, while the cultivated classes exhibit a most striking want of taste.

But in Russia everything is inverted. What in other nations is the final result of a long life, is there the beginning. A natural development of the people appears to its rulers too circuitous, and in fact would in many things require centuries of preparation. Accordingly, they seek to raise their subjects to the level of other races by forcing them outwardly to imitate their usages. Peter the Great says in his testament: "Let there be no intermission in teaching the Russian people European forms and customs." The theater in Russia is one of these forms, and from this it is easy to understand the condition it is in.

It is true there are in the country a few independent companies of players, but they are not Russian, or at least were formed as a speculation by some foreigner. For example, Odessa has often two such, and sometimes three. The Italian company is said to be good. The Russian, which has now become permanent, has hitherto been under the management of a German, and has been very poor. The company in Kiew consists mostly of Poles, from the old Polish provinces incorporated with Russia, and has a high reputation. In Poland it would be possible in every little nest of a city to get together a tolerable company for dramatic performance. In Russia it would be much easier to raise an army. The ultimate reason of this striking contrast is the immense dissimilarity in the character of the two nations. The Pole is remarkably sanguine, fiery, enthusiastic, full of ideality and inspiration; the Russian is through and through material, a lover of coarse physical pleasures, full of ability to fight and cut capers, but not endowed with a capacity quickly to receive impressions and mentally elaborate them.

In this respect, the mass and the aristocracy, the serfs and their masters, are as alike as twins. The noble is quite as coarse as the peasant. In Poland this is quite otherwise. The peasant may be called a rough creature, but the noble is almost always a man of refinement, lacking indeed almost always in scientific information, but never in the culture of a man of the world. The reason of this is, that his active, impetuous soul finds constant occasion for maintaining familiarity with the world around him, and really needs to keep up a good understanding with it. The Russians know no such want.

Even in St. Petersburg the German was long much more successful than the native theater, though the number of Russians there is seventeen times larger than that of the Germans. The Russians who there visit the theater are the richest and most prominent members of the aristocracy. They however consider the drama as simply a thing of fashion. Hence results the curious fact that it is thought a matter of good taste to be present at the beginning but not to wait for the end of a piece. It has happened that long before the performance was over the house was perfectly empty, everyone following the fashion, in order not to seem deficient in public manners. If there is ever a great attraction at the theater, it is not the play, but some splendid show. The Russian lady, in studying the *coiffure* or the trailing-robe of an actress, forgets entirely her part in this piece, if indeed she has ever had an adequate conception of it. For this reason, at St. Petersburg and Moscow the ballet is esteemed infinitely higher than the best drama; and if the management should have the command of the Emperor to engage rope-dancers and athletes, circus-riders and men-apes, the majority of Russians would be of opinion that the theater had gained the last point of perfection. This was the case in Warsaw several years ago, when the circus company of Tourniare was there. The theaters gave their best and most popular pieces, in order to guard against too great a diminution of their receipts.

The Poles patriotically gave the preference for the drama, but the Russians were steady adorers of Madame Tourniare and her horse. In truth, the lady enjoyed the favor of Prince Paskiewich. General O—— boasted that during the eleven months that the circus staid he was not absent from a single performance. The Polish Count Ledochowski, on the other hand, said that he had been there but once when he went with his children, and saw nothing of the performance, because he read Schiller's William Tell every moment. This was Polish opposition to Russian favoritism, but it also affords an indication of the national peculiarities of the two races.

From deficiency in taste for dramatic art arises the circumstance that talent for acting is incomparably scarce among the Russians. Great as have been the efforts of the last emperors of Russia to add a new splendor to their capitals by means of the theater, they have not succeeded in forming from their vast nation artists above mediocrity, except in low comedy. At last it was determined to establish dramatic schools in connection with the theaters and educate players; but it appears that though talent can be developed, it cannot be created at the word of command. The Emperor Nicholas, or rather his wife, was, as is said, formerly so vexed at the incapacity of the Russians for dramatic art, that it was thought best to procure children in Germany for the schools. The Imperial will met with hindrance, and he contented himself with taking children of the German race from his own dominions. The pride of the Russians did not suffer in consequence.

While poetry naturally precedes dramatic art, the drama, on the other hand, cannot attain any degree of excellence where the theater is in such a miserable state. It is now scarcely half a century since the effort was begun to remove the total want of scientific culture in the Russian nation, but what are fifty years for such a purpose, in so enormous a country? The number of those who have received the scientific stimulus and been carried to a degree of intellectual refinement is very small, and the happy accident by which a man of genius appears among the small number must be very rare. And in this connection it is noteworthy, that the Russian who feels himself called to artistic production almost always shows a tendency to epic composition.

The difficulties of form appear terrible to the Russian. In romance-writing the form embarrasses him less, and accordingly they almost all throw themselves into the making of novels.

As is generally the case in the beginning of every nation's literature, any writer in Russia is taken for a miracle, and regarded with stupor. The dramatist Kukolnik is an example of this. He has written a great deal for the theater, but nothing in him is to be praised so much as his zeal in imitation. It must be admitted that in this he possesses a remarkable degree of dexterity. He soon turned to the favorite sphere of romance writing, but in this also he manifests the national weakness. In every one of his countless works the most striking feature is the lack of organization. They were begun and completed without their author's ever thinking out a plot, or its mode of treatment.

Kukolnik's "Alf and Adona," in which at least one hundred and fifty characters are brought upon the stage, has not one whose appearance is designed to concentrate the interest of the audience. Each comes in to show himself, and goes out not to be in the way any longer. Everything is described and explained with equal minuteness, from the pile of cabbages by the wayside, to the murder of a prince; and instead of a historical action there is nothing but unconnected details. The same is the case with his "Eveline and Baillerole," in which Cardinal Richelieu is represented as a destroyer of the aristocracy, and which also is made up of countless unconnected scenes, that in part are certainly done with some neatness. These remarks apply to the works of Iwan Wanenko and I. Boriczewski, to I. Zchewen's "Sunshine", five volumes strong; to the compositions of Wolkow, Czerujawski, Ulitinins, Th. Van Dim, (a pseudonym,) in fact to everything that has yet appeared.

On the part of the Imperial family, as we have already said, everything has been done for the Russian stage that could possibly be done, and is done no where else. The extremest liberality favors the artists, schools are provided in order to raise them from the domain of gross buffoonery to that of true art, the most magnificent premiums are given to the best, actors are made equal in rank to officers of state, they are held only to twenty-five years' service, reckoning from their debut,—and

finally, they receive for the rest of their lives a pension equal to their full salaries. High rewards are given to Russian star-actors, in order if possible to draw talent of every sort forth from the dry steppes of native art. The Russian actors are compelled on pain of punishment to go regularly to the German theater, with a view to their improvement, and in order to make this as effective as may be, enormous compensations attract the best German stars to St. Petersburg. And yet all this is useless, and the Russian theater is not raised above the dignity of a workshop. Only the comic side of the national character, a burlesque and droll simplicity, is admirably represented by actors whose skill and the scope of whose talents may he reckoned equal to the Germans in the same line. But in the higher walks of the drama they are worthless. The people have neither cultivation nor sentiment for serious works, while the poets to produce them, and the actors to represent them, are alike wanting.

Immediately after the submission of Poland in 1831, the theaters, permanent and itinerant, were closed. The plan was conceived of not allowing them to be reöpened until they could be occupied by Russian performers. But as the Government recovered from its first rage, this was found to be impracticable. The officers of the garrisons in Poland, however numerous, could never support Russian theaters, and besides, where were the performers to come from? In Warsaw, however, it was determined to force a theater into existence, and a Russian newspaper was already established there. The power of the Muscovites has done great things, built vast fortresses and destroyed vaster, but it could not accomplish a Russian theater at Warsaw. Even the paper died before it had attained a regular life, although it cost a great deal of money.

Finally came the permission to reöpen the Polish theater, and indeed the caprice which was before violent against it, was now exceedingly favorable, but of course not without collateral purposes. The scanty theater on the Krasinski place, which was alone in Warsaw, except the remote circus and the little theater of King Stanislaus Augustus, was given up, and the sum of four millions of florins ($1,600,000) devoted to the erection of two large and magnificent theaters. The superintendence of the work of building and the management of the performances was, according to the Russian system, intrusted to one General Rautenstrauch, a man seventy years old, and worn out both in mind and body. The two theaters were erected under one roof, and arranged on the grandest and most splendid scale. The edifice is opposite the City Hall, occupies a whole side of the main public place, and is above 750 feet in length. The pit in each is supported by a series of immense, stupid, square pilasters, such as architecture has seldom witnessed out of Russia. Over these pilasters stands the first row of boxes supported by beautifully wrought Corinthian columns, and above these rise three additional rows. The edifice is about 160 feet high and is the most colossal building in Warsaw. As it was designed to treat the actors in military fashion and according to Russian style, the building was laid out like barracks and about seven hundred persons live in it, most of them employed about the theater. The two stages were built by a German architect under the inspection of the General whose peremptory suggestions were frequent and injurious. Both the great theater as it is called, which has four rows of boxes, and can contain six thousand auditors, and the Varieté theater which is very much smaller, are fitted out with all sorts of apparatus that ever belonged to a stage. In fact, new machinery has in many cases been invented for them and proved totally useless. The Russian often hits upon queer notions when he tries to show his gifts.

On one side a very large and strong bridge has been erected leading from the street to the stage, to be used whenever the piece requires large bodies of cavalry to make their appearance, and there are machines that can convey persons with the swiftness of lightning down from the sky above the stage, a distance of 56 feet. A machine for which a ballet has been composed surpasses everything I ever saw in its size; it serves to transport eighty persons together on a seeming cloud from the roof to the foot-lights. I was astonished by it when I first beheld it although I had seen the machines of the grand opera at Paris: the second time I reflected that it alone cost 40,000 florins [$16,000].

Under the management of two Russian Generals, who have hitherto been at the head of the establishment, a vast deal has in this way been accomplished for mere external show.

The great Russian theatre of St. Petersburg has served for a model, and accordingly nothing has really been improved except that part of the performance which is farthest removed from genuine art, namely the ballet. That fact is that out of Paris the ballet is nowhere so splendid as in the great theater at Warsaw, not even at St. Petersburg, for the reason that the Russian is inferior to the Pole in physical beauty and grace. Heretofore the corps of the St. Petersburg ballet has twice been composed of Poles, but this arrangement has been abandoned as derogatory to the national honor. The sensual attractions of the ballet render it the most important thing in the theater. A great school for dancers has been established, where pupils may be found from three to eighteen years old. It is painful to see the little creatures, hardly weaned from their mothers' breasts—twisted and tortured for the purposes of so doubtful an occupation as dancing. The school contains about two hundred pupils, all of whom occasionally appear together on the boards, in the ballet of Charis and Flora, for instance, when they receive a trifling compensation. For the rest the whole ballet corps are bound to daily practice.

The taste of the Russians has made prominent in the ballet exactly those peculiarities which are least to its credit. It must be pronounced exaggerated and lascivious. Aside from these faults, which may be overlooked as the custom of the country, we must admit that the dancing is uncommonly good.

The greater the care of the management for the ballet, the more injurious is its treatment of the drama. This is melancholy for the artists and especially those who have come to the imperial theater from the provinces, who are truly respectable and are equally good in comedy and tragedy. The former has been less shackled than the latter for the reason that it turns upon domestic life. But tragedy is most frightfully treated by the political censorship, so that a Polish poet can hardly expect to see his pieces performed on the stage of his native country. Hundreds of words and phrases such as freedom, avenging sword, slave, oppression, father-land, cannot be permitted and are stricken out. Accordingly nothing but the trumpery of mere penny-a-liners is brought forward, though this sometimes assumes an appearance of originality. These abortions remain on the stage only through the talent of the artists, the habit of the public to expect nothing beyond dullness and stupidity in the drama, and finally, the severe regulation which forbids any mark of disapprobation under pain of imprisonment. The best plays are translated from the French, but they are never the best of their kind. To please the Russians only those founded on civic life are chosen, and historical subjects are excluded. Princely personages are not allowed to be introduced on the stage, nor even high officers of state, such as ministers and generals. In former times the Emperor of China was once allowed to pass, but more recently the Bey of Tunis was struck out and converted into an African nobleman. A tragedy is inadmissible in any case, and should one be found with nothing objectionable but its name, it is called drama.

In such circumstances we would suppose that the actors would lose all interest in their profession. But this is not the case. At least the cultivated portion of the public at Warsaw never go to the theater to see a poetic work of art, but only to see and enjoy the skill of the performers. Of course there is no such thing as theatrical criticism at Warsaw; but everybody rejoices when the actors succeed in causing the wretchedness of the piece to be forgotten. The universal regret for the wretched little theater on the Krasinski place, where Suczkowska, afterward Mad. Halpert, founded her reputation in the character of the Maid of Orleans, is the best criticism on the present state of the drama.

The Russians take great delight in the most trivial pieces. Even Prince Paskiewich sometimes stays till the close of the last act. To judge by the direction of his opera-glass, which is never out of his hand, he has the fortune to discover poetry elsewhere than on the stage. In truth the Warsaw boxes are adorned by beautiful faces. Even the young princess Jablonowska is not the most lovely.

The arrangements of the Warsaw theaters are exactly like those of the Russian theater at St. Petersburg, but almost without exception, the pupils of the dramatic school, of whom seventeen have come upon the boards, have proved mere journeymen, and have been crowded aside by performers from the provincial cities. None of the eminent artists of late years have enjoyed the advantages of the

school. The position of the actors at Warsaw is just the same as at St. Petersburg. The day after their first appearance they are regularly taken into duty as imperial officials, take an oath never to meddle with political affairs, nor join in any secret society, nor ever to pronounce on the stage anything more or anything else than what is in the stamped parts given them by the imperial management.

Actors' salaries at Warsaw are small in comparison with those of other countries. Forty or fifty silver rubles a month ($26 to $33) pass for a very respectable compensation, and even the very best performers rarely get beyond a thousand rubles a year ($650). Madame Halpert long had to put up with that salary till once Taglioni said to Prince Paskiewich that it was a shame for so magnificent an artist to be no better paid than a writer. Her salary was thereupon raised one-half, and subsequently by means of a similar mediation she succeeded in getting an addition of a thousand rubles yearly under the head of wardrobe expenses. This was a thing so extraordinary that the managing General declared that so enormous a compensation would never again be heard of in any imperial theatre. The pupils of the dramatic school receive eighteen rubles monthly, and, according to their performances, obtain permission every two years to ask an increase of salary. The period of service extends to twenty-five years, with the certainty of a yearly pension equal to the salary received at the close of the period.

For the artist this is a very important arrangement, which enables him to endure a thousand inconveniences.

There is no prospect of a better state of the Polish drama. Count Fedro may, in his comedies, employ the finest satire with a view to its restoration, but he will accomplish nothing so long as the Generals ride the theater as they would a war horse. On the other hand, no Russian drama has been established, because the conditions are wanting among the people. That is a vast empire, but poor in beauty; mighty in many things, but weak in artistic talents; powerful and prompt in destruction, but incapable spontaneously and of itself to create anything.

"DEATH'S JEST BOOK, OR THE FOOL'S TRAGEDY."

The *Examiner*, for July 20, contains an elaborate review, with numerous extracts, of a play just published under this title in London. "It is radiant," says the critic, "in almost every page with passion, fancy, or thought, set in the most apposite and exquisite language. We have but to discard, in reading it, the hope of any steady interest of story, or consistent development of character: and we shall find a most surprising succession of beautiful passages, unrivaled in sentiment and pathos, as well as in terseness, dignity, and picturesque vigor of language; in subtlety and power of passion, as well as in delicacy and strength of imagination; and as perfect and various, in modulation of verse, as the airy flights of Fletcher or Marlowe's mighty line.

"The whole range of the Elizabethan drama has not finer expression, nor does any single work of the period, out of Shakspeare, exhibit so many rich and precious bars of golden verse, side by side with such poverty and misery of character and plot. Nothing can be meaner than the design, nothing grander than the execution."

In conclusion, the *Examiner* observes—"We are not acquainted with any living author who could have written the Fool's Tragedy; and, though the publication is unaccompanied by any hint of authorship, we believe that we are correct in stating it to be a posthumous production of the author of the Bride's Tragedy; Mr. Thomas Lovell Beddoes. Speaking of the latter production, now more than a quarter of a century ago, (Mr. Beddoes was then, we believe, a student at Pembroke College, Oxford, and a minor,) the *Edinburgh Review* ventured upon a prediction of future fame and achievement for the writer, which an ill-chosen and ill-directed subsequent career unhappily intercepted and baffled. But in proof of the noble natural gifts which suggested such anticipation, the production before us remains: and we may judge to what extent a more steady course and regular cultivation would have fertilized a soil, which, neglected and uncared for, has thrown out such a glorious growth of foliage and fruit as this Fool's Tragedy."

The following exquisite lyric is among the passages with which these judgments are sustained:

"If thou wilt ease thine heart
Of love and all its smart,
Then sleep, dear, sleep;
And not a sorrow
Hang any tear on your eyelashes;
Lie still and deep
Sad soul, until like sea-wave washes
The rim o' the sun to-morrow,
In eastern sky.

But wilt thou cure thine heart
Of love and all its smart,
Then die, dear, die;
'Tis deeper, sweeter,
Than on a rose bank to lie dreaming
With folded eye;
And then alone, amid the beaming
Of love's stars, thou'lt meet her
In eastern sky."

WINTHROP MACKWORTH PRAED

Praed, it has always seemed to us, was the cleverest writer in his way that has ever contributed to the English periodicals. His fugitive lyrics and arabesque romances, half sardonic and half sentimental, published with Hookham Frere's "Whistlecraft" and Macaulay's Roundhead Ballads, in *Knight's Quarterly Magazine*, and after the suspension of that work, for the most part in the annual souvenirs, are altogether unequaled in the class of compositions described as *vers de societie*.—Who that has read "School and School Fellows", "Palinodia", "The Vicar", "Josephine", and a score of other pieces in the same vein, does not desire to possess all the author has left us, in a suitable edition? It has been frequently stated in the English journals that such a collection was to be published, under the direction of Praed's widow, but we have yet only the volume prepared by a lover of the poet some years ago for the Langleys, in this city. In the "Memoirs of Eminent Etonians," just printed by Mr. Edward Creasy, we have several waifs of Praed's that we believe will be new to all our readers. Here is a characteristic political rhyme:

VERSES

ON SEEING THE SPEAKER ASLEEP IN HIS CHAIR IN ONE OF THE DEBATES OF THE FIRST REFORMED PARLIAMENT

Sleep, Mr. Speaker, 'tis surely fair
If you mayn't in your bed, that you should in your chair.
Louder and longer now they grow,
Tory and Radical, Aye and Noe;
Talking by night and talking by day.
Sleep, Mr. Speaker, sleep while you may!

Sleep, Mr. Speaker; slumber lies
Light and brief on a Speaker's eyes,
Fielden or Finn in a minute or two
Some disorderly thing will do;
Riot will chase repose away
Sleep, Mr. Speaker, sleep while you may!

Sleep, Mr. Speaker. Sweet to men
Is the sleep that cometh but now and then,
Sweet to the weary, sweet to the ill,
Sweet to the children that work in the mill.
You have more need of repose than they—
Sleep, Mr. Speaker, sleep while you may!

Sleep, Mr. Speaker, Harvey will soon
Move to abolish the sun and the moon;
Hume will no doubt be taking the sense
Of the House on a question of sixteen pence.
Statesmen will howl, and patriots bray—
Sleep, Mr. Speaker, sleep while you may!

Sleep, Mr. Speaker, and dream of the time,
When loyalty was not quite a crime,
When Grant was a pupil in Canning's school,
And Palmerston fancied Wood a fool.
Lord, how principles pass away—
Sleep, Mr. Speaker, sleep while you may.

The following is a spirited version of a dramatic scene in the second book of the Annals of Tacitus:

ARMINIUS

Back, Back;—he fears not foaming flood
Who fears not steel-clad line:—
No warrior thou of German blood,
No brother thou of mine.
Go earn Rome's chain to load thy neck,
Her gems to deck thy hilt;
And blazon honor's hapless wreck
With all the gauds of guilt.

But wouldst thou have *me* share the prey?
By all that I have done,
The Varian bones that day by day
Lie whitening in the sun;
The legion's trampled panoply
The eagle's shattered wing.
I would not be for earth or sky
So scorned and mean a thing,

Ho, call me here the wizard, boy,
Of dark and subtle skill,
To agonize but not destroy,
To torture, not to kill.
When swords are out, and shriek and shout
Leave little room for prayer,
No fetter on man's arm or heart
Hangs half so heavy there.

I curse him by the gifts the land
Hath won from him and Rome.
The riving axe, the wasting brand,
Rent forest, blazing home.
I curse him by our country's gods,
The terrible, the dark,
The breakers of the Roman rods,
The smiters of the bark.

Oh, misery that such a ban
On such a brow should be!
Why comes he not in battle's van
His country's chief to be?
To stand a comrade by my side,

The sharer of my fame,
And worthy of a brother's pride,
And of a brother's name?

But it is past!—where heroes press
And cowards bend the knee,
Arminius is not brotherless,
His brethren are the free.
They come around:—one hour, and light
Will fade from turf and tide,
Then onward, onward to the fight,
With darkness for our guide.

To-night, to-night, when we shall meet
In combat face to face,
Then only would Arminius greet
The renegade's embrace.
The canker of Rome's guilt shall be
Upon his dying name;
And as he lived in slavery,
So shall he fall in shame.

CAMPBELL AND WASHINGTON IRVING

The Editor of *The Albion*, in noticing the republication by the Harpers of the very interesting Life and Letters of Thomas Campbell, by Dr. Beattie, has the following observations upon Mr. Irving's introductory letter:

"WASHINGTON IRVING, at the request of the publishers, contributed a very interesting letter to themselves, directing public notice to the value of this edition. He pays also a hearty and deserved tribute, not only to the genius of Campbell, but to his many excellencies and kindly specialities of character. The author of "Hohenlinden," and the "Battle of the Baltic" stands in need of no man's praise as a lyric poet—but this sort of testimony to his private worth is grateful and well-timed. Here is an interesting passage from Mr. Irving's introductory communication. He is alluding to Campbell's fame and position, when he himself first made Campbell's acquaintance in England.

> "'I had considered the early productions of Campbell as brilliant indications of a genius yet to be developed, and trusted that, during the long interval which had elapsed, he had been preparing something to fulfill the public expectation; I was greatly disappointed, therefore, to find that, as yet, he had contemplated no great and sustained effort. My disappointment in this respect was shared by others, who took the same interest in his fame, and entertained the same idea of his capacity. 'There he is cooped up in Sydenham,' said a great Edinburgh critic to me, 'simmering his brains to serve up a little dish of poetry, instead of pouring out a whole caldron.'
>
> "'Scott, too, who took a cordial delight in Campbell's poetry, expressed himself to the same effect. 'What a pity is it,' said he to me 'that Campbell does not give full sweep to his genius. He has wings that would bear him up to the skies, and he does now and then spread them grandly, but folds them up again and resumes his perch, as if afraid to launch away. The fact is, he is a bugbear to himself. The brightness of his early success is a detriment to all his future efforts. *He is afraid of the shadow that his own fame casts before him*.'
>
> "'Little was Scott aware at the time that he, in truth, was a 'bugbear' to Campbell. This I infer from an observation of Mrs. Campbell's in reply to an expression of regret on my part that her husband did not attempt something on a grand Scale. 'It is unfortunate for Campbell,' said she, 'that he lives in the same age with Scott and Byron.' I asked why. 'Oh,' said she, 'they write so much and so rapidly. Now Campbell writes slowly, and it takes him some time to get under way; and just as he has fairly begun, out comes one of their poems, that sets the world agog and quite daunts him, so that he throws by his pen in despair.'
>
> "'I pointed out the essential difference in their kinds of poetry, and the qualities which insured perpetuity to that of her husband. 'You can't persuade Campbell of that,' said she. 'He is apt to undervalue his own works, and to consider his own lights put out, whenever they come blazing out with their great torches.'
>
> "'I repeated the conversation to Scott sometime afterward, and it drew forth a characteristic comment. 'Pooh!' said he, good-humoredly, 'how can Campbell mistake the matter so much. Poetry goes by quality, not by bulk. My poems are mere cairngorms, wrought up, perhaps, with a cunning hand, and may pass well in the market as long as cairngorms are the fashion; but they are mere Scotch pebbles after all; now Tom Campbell's are real diamonds, and diamonds of the first water.'"

"The foregoing is new to us, and full of a double interest. It is followed, however, by a statement, that needs a word of explanation. Mr. Irving says:

"'I have not time at present to furnish personal anecdotes of my intercourse with Campbell, neither does it afford any of a striking nature. Though extending over a number of years, it was never very intimate. His residence in the country, and my own long intervals of absence on the continent, rendered our meetings few and far between. To tell the truth, I was not much drawn to Campbell, having taken up a wrong notion concerning him, from seeing him at times when his mind was ill at ease, and preyed upon by secret griefs. I thought him disposed to be querulous and captious, and had heard his apparent discontent attributed to jealous repining at the success of his poetical contemporaries. In a word, I knew little of him but what might be learned in the casual intercourse of general society; whereas it required the close communion of confidential friendship, to sound the depth of his character and know the treasures of excellence hidden beneath its surface. Beside, he was dogged for years by certain malignant scribblers, who took a pleasure in misrepresenting all his actions, and holding him up in an absurd and disparaging point of view. In what hostility originated I do not know, but it must have given much annoyance to his sensitive mind, and may have affected his popularity. I know not to what else to attribute a circumstance to which I was a witness during my last visit to England. It was at an annual dinner of the Literary Fund, at which Prince Albert presided, and where was collected much of the prominent talent of the kingdom. In the course of the evening Campbell rose to make a speech. I had not seen him for years, and his appearance showed the effect of age and ill-health; *it was evident, also, that his mind was obfuscated by the wine he had been drinking*. He was confused and tedious in his remarks; still, there was nothing but what one would have thought would have been received with indulgence, if not deference, from a veteran of his fame and standing; a living classic. On the contrary, to my surprise, I soon observed signs of impatience in the company; the poet was repeatedly interrupted by coughs and discordant sounds, and as often endeavored to proceed; the noise at length became intolerable, and he was absolutely clamored down, sinking into his chair overwhelmed and disconcerted. I could not have thought such treatment possible to such a person at such a meeting. Hallam, author of the Literary History of the Middle Ages, who sat by me on this occasion, marked the mortification of the poet, and it excited his generous sympathy. Being shortly afterward on the floor to reply to a toast, he took occasion to advert to the recent remarks of Campbell, and in so doing called up in review all his eminent achievements in the world of letters, and drew such a picture of his claims upon popular gratitude and popular admiration, as to convict the assembly of the glaring impropriety they had been guilty of—to soothe the wounded sensibility of the poet, and send him home to, I trust, a quiet pillow.'

"Now, the very same facts are seen by different observers in a different point of view. It so happened that we ourselves were present at this dinner, which took place in 1842; and the painful circumstance alluded to by Mr. Irving did not produce the effect on us, that it appears to have produced on him. Without making a long story about a trifle, we can call to mind no appearance of hostility or ill-will manifested on that occasion; and on the contrary, recollect, in our immediate neighborhood, a mournful sense of distress at the scene exhibited, and sufficiently hinted in the few unpleasant words we have italicized. A muster of Englishmen preferred coughing down their favorite bard, to allowing him to mouth out maudlin twaddle, before the Prince, then first formally introduced to the public, and before a meeting whereat "was collected much of the prominent talent of the kingdom." Mr. Irving, himself most deservedly a man of mark, looked on with much, surprise.

Looking on ourselves then, and writing now, as one of the public, and as one of the many to whom Campbell's name and fame are inexpressibly dear, we honestly think that of two evils the lesser was chosen. We think Mr. Hallam's lecture must have been inaudible to the greater part of the company."

The Archbishop of Lemburgh has prohibited his clergy from wearing long hair like the peasants, and from smoking in public, "like demagogues and sons of Baal."

The Persians have a saying, that "Ten measures of talk were sent down upon the earth, and the women took nine."

Authors and Books

No man is more enshrined in the heart of the French people than the poet BERANGER. A few weeks since he went one evening with one of his nephews to the *Clos des Lilas*, a garden in the students' quarter devoted to dancing in the open air, intending to look for a few minutes upon a scene he had not visited since his youth, and then withdraw. But he found it impossible to remain unknown and unobserved. The announcement of his presence ran through the garden in a moment, the dances stopped, the music ceased, and the crowd thronged toward the point where the still genial and lovely old man was standing. At once there rose from all lips the cry of *Vive Beranger!*

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.