

VARIOUS

THE ALDINE, VOL. 5, NO.
1., JANUARY, 1872

Various

**The Aldine, Vol. 5,
No. 1., January, 1872**

«Public Domain»

Various

The Aldine, Vol. 5, No. 1., January, 1872 / Various — «Public Domain»,

Содержание

AT NEWPORT	6
MILLERISM	7
THE REAL ROMANCE	9
A FROSTY DAY	13
COMING OUT OF SCHOOL	14
A GLIMPSE OF VENICE	16
WINTER PICTURES FROM THE POETS	18
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	19

Various

The Aldine, Vol. 5, No. 1., January, 1872 / A Typographic Art Journal

"MAUD MÜLLER looked and sighed: 'Ah, me!
That I the Judge's bride might be!

"He would dress me up in silks so fine,
And praise and toast me at his wine.

"My father should wear a broad-cloth coat:
My brother should sail a painted boat.'

"I'd dress my mother so grand and gay,
And the baby should have a new toy each day.

"And I'd feed the hungry and clothe the poor.
And all should bless me who left our door.

"The Judge looked back as he climbed the hill,
And saw Maud Müller standing still.

"A form more fair, a face more sweet,
Ne'er hath it been my lot to meet.

"And her modest answer and graceful air,
Show her wise and good as she is fair.

"Would she were mine, and I to-day,
Like her a harvester of hay."

—*Whittier's Maud Müller.*

AT NEWPORT

I stand beside the sea once more;
Its measured murmur comes to me;
The breeze is low upon the shore,
And low upon the purple sea.

Across the bay the flat sand sweeps,
To where the helméd light-house stands
Upon his post, and vigil keeps,
Far seaward marshaling all the lands.

The hollow surges rise and fall,
The ships steal up the quiet bay;
I scarcely hear or see at all,
My thoughts are flown so far away.

They follow on yon sea-bird's track.
Beyond the beacon's crystal dome;
They will not falter, nor come back,
Until they find my darkened home.

Ah, woe is me! 'tis scarce a year
Since, gazing o'er this moaning main,
My thoughts flew home without a fear.
And with content returned again.

To-day, alas! the fancies dark
That from my laden bosom flew,
Returning, came into the ark,
Not with the olive, with the yew.

The ships draw slowly towards the strand,
The watchers' hearts with hope beat high;
But ne'er again wilt thou touch land—
Lost, lost in yonder sapphire sky!

—*Geo. H. Boker.*

MILLERISM

Toward the close of the last century there was born in New England one William Miller, whose life, until he was past fifty, was the life of the average American of his time. He drank, we suppose, his share of New England rum, when a young man; married a comely Yankee girl, and reared a family of chubby-cheeked children; went about his business, whatever it was, on week days, and when Sunday came, went to meeting with commendable regularity. He certainly read the Old Testament, especially the Book of Daniel, and of the New Testament at least the Book of Revelation. Like many a wiser man before him, he was troubled at what he read, filled as it was with mystical numbers and strange beasts, and he sought to understand it, and to apply it to the days in which he lived. He made the discovery that the world was to be destroyed in 1843, and went to and fro in the land preaching that comfortable doctrine. He had many followers—as many as fifty thousand, it is said, who thought they were prepared for the end of all things; some going so far as to lay in a large stock of ascension robes. Though no writer himself, he was the cause of a great deal of writing on the part of others, who flooded the land with a special and curious literature—the literature of Millerism. It is not of that, however, that we would speak now.

But before this Miller arose—we proceed to say, if only to show that we are familiar with other members of the family—there was another, and very different Miller, who was born in old England, about one hundred years earlier than our sadly, or gladly, mistaken Second Adventist. His Christian name was Joseph, and he was an actor of repute, celebrated for his excellence in some of the comedies of Congreve. The characters which he played may have been comic ones, but he was a serious man. Indeed, his gravity was so well known in his lifetime that it was reckoned the height of wit, when he was dead, to father off upon him a Jest Book! This joke, bad as it was, was better than any joke in the book. It made him famous, so famous that for the next hundred years every little *bon mot* was laid at his door, metaphorically speaking, the puniest youngest brat of them being christened "Old Joe."

After Joseph Miller had become what Mercutio calls "a grave man," his descendants went into literature largely, as any one may see by turning to Allibone's very voluminous dictionary, where upwards of seventy of the name are immortalized, the most noted of whom are Thomas Miller, basket-maker and poet, and Hugh Miller, the learned stone-mason of Cromarty, whose many works, we confess with much humility, we have not read. To the sixty-eight Millers in Allibone (if that be the exact number), must now be added another—Mr. Joaquin Miller, who published, two or three months since, a collection of poems entitled "Songs of the Sierras." From which one of the Millers mentioned above his ancestry is derived, we are not informed; but, it would seem, from the one first-named. For clearly the end of all things literary cannot be far off, if Mr. Miller is the "coming poet," for whom so many good people have been looking all their lives. We are inclined to think that such is not the fact. We think, on the whole, that it is to the other Miller—Joking Miller—his genealogy is to be traced.

But who is Mr. Miller, and what has he done? A good many besides ourselves put that question, less than a year ago, and nobody could answer it. Nobody, that is, in America. In England he was a great man. He went over to England, unheralded, it is stated, and was soon discovered to be a poet. Swinburne took him up; the Rossettis took him up; the critics took him up; he was taken up by everybody in England, except the police, who, as a rule, fight shy of poets. He went to fashionable parties in a red shirt, with trowsers tucked into his boots, and instead of being shown to the door by the powdered footman, was received with enthusiasm. It is incredible, but it is true. A different state of society existed, thirty or forty years ago, when another American poet went to England; and we advise our readers, who have leisure at their command, to compare it with the present social lawlessness of the upper classes among the English. To do this, they have only to turn to the late N.P. Willis's "Pencilings by the Way," and contrast his descriptions of the fashionable life of London then,

with almost any journalistic account of the same kind of life now. The contrast will be all the more striking if they will only hunt up the portraits of Disraeli, with his long, dark locks flowing on his shoulders, and the portrait of Bulwer, behind his "stunning" waistcoat, and his cascade of neck-cloth, and then imagine Mr. Miller standing beside them, in his red shirt and high-topped California boots! Like Byron, Mr. Miller "woke up one morning and found himself famous."

We compare the sudden famousness of Mr. Miller with the sudden famousness of Byron, because the English critics have done so; and because they are pleased to consider Mr. Miller as Byron's successor! Byron, we are told, was the only poet whom he had read, before he went to England; and is the only poet to whom he bears a resemblance. How any of these critics could have arrived at this conclusion, with the many glaring imitations of Swinburne—at his worst—staring him in the face from Mr. Miller's volume, is inconceivable. But, perhaps, they do not read Swinburne. Do they read Byron?

There are, however, some points of resemblance between Byron and Mr. Miller. Byron traveled, when young, in countries not much visited by the English; Mr. Miller claims to have traveled, when young, in countries not visited by the English at all. This was, and is, an advantage to both Byron and Mr. Miller. But it was, and is, a serious disadvantage to their readers, who cannot well ascertain the truth, or falsehood, of the poets they admire. The accuracy of Byron's descriptions of foreign lands has long been admitted; the accuracy of Mr. Miller's descriptions is not admitted, we believe, by those who are familiar with the ground he professes to have gone over.

Another point of resemblance between Byron and Mr. Miller is, that the underlying idea of their poetry is autobiographic. We do not say that it was really so in Byron's case, although he, we know, would have had us believe as much; nor do we say that it is really so in Mr. Miller's case, although he, too, we suspect, would have us believe as much.

Mr. Miller resembles Byron as his "Arizonian" resembles Byron's "Lara." *Lara* and *Arizonian* are birds of the same dark feather. They have journeyed in strange lands; they have had strange experiences; they have returned to Civilization. Each, in his way, is a Blighted Being! "Who is she?" we inquire with the wise old Spanish Judge, for, certainly, *Woman* is at the bottom of it all. If our readers wish to know *what* woman, we refer them to "Arizonian:" they, of course, have read "Lara."

Byron was a great poet, but Byronism is dead. Mr. Miller is not a great poet, and his spurious Byronism will not live. We shall all see the end of Millerism.

THE REAL ROMANCE

The author laid down his pen, and leaned back in his big easy chair. The last word had been written—Finis—and there was the complete book, quite a tall pile of manuscript, only waiting for the printer's hands to become immortal: so the author whispered to himself. He had worked hard upon it; great pains had been expended upon the delineations of character, and the tone and play of incident; the plot, too, had been worked up with much artistic force and skill; and, above all, everything was so strikingly original; no one, in regarding the various characters of the tale, could say: this is intended for so-and-so! No, nothing precisely like the persons in his romance had ever actually existed; of that the author was certain, and in that he was very probably correct. To be sure, there was the character of the country girl, Mary, which he had taken from his own little waiting-maid: but that was a very subordinate element, and although, on the whole, he rather regretted having introduced anything so incongruous and unimaginative, he decided to let it go. The romance, as a whole, was too great to be injured by one little country girl, drawn from real life. "And by the way," murmured the author to himself, "I wish Mary would bring in my tea."

He settled himself still more comfortably in his easy chair, and thought, and looked at his manuscript; and the manuscript looked back; but all *its* thinking had been done for it. Neither spoke—the author, because the book already knew all he had to say; and the book, because its time to speak and be immortal had not yet arrived. The fire had all the talking to itself, and it cackled, and hummed, and skipped about so cheerfully that one would have imagined it expected to be the very first to receive a presentation copy of the work on the table. "How I would devour its contents!" laughed the fire.

Perhaps the author did not comprehend the full force of the fire's remark, but the voice was so cosy and soothing, the fire itself so ruddy and genial, and the easy chair so softly cushioned and hospitable, that he very soon fell into a condition which enabled him to see, hear, and understand a great many things which might seem remarkable, and, indeed, almost incredible.

The manuscript on the table which had hitherto remained perfectly quiet, now rustled its leaves nervously, and finally flung itself wide open. A murmur then arose, as of several voices, and presently there appeared (though whether stepping from between the leaves of the book itself, or growing together from the surrounding atmosphere, the author could not well make out) a number of peculiar-looking individuals, at the first glance appearing to be human beings, though a clear investigation revealed in each some odd lack or exaggeration of gesture, feature, or manner, which might create a doubt as to whether they actually were, after all, what they purported to be, or only some *lusus naturæ*. But the author was not slow to recognize them, more especially as, happening to cast a glance at the manuscript, he noticed that it was such no longer, but a collection of unwritten sheets of paper, blank as when it lay in the drawer at the stationer's—unwitting of the lofty destiny awaiting it.

Here, then, were the immortal creations which were soon to astound the world, come, in person, to pay their respects to the author of their being. He arose and made a profound obeisance to the august company, which they one and all returned, though in such a queer variety of ways, that the author, albeit aware that every individual had the best of reasons for employing, under certain special circumstances, his or her particular manner of salute, could scarcely forbear smiling at the effect they all together produced in his own unpretending study.

"Your welcome visit," said the author, addressing his guests with all the geniality of which he was master (for they seemed somewhat stiff and ill-at-ease), "gives me peculiar gratification. I regret not having asked some of my friends, the critics, up here to make your acquaintance. I am sure you would all come to the best possible understanding directly."

"They cannot fathom *me*," exclaimed a strikingly handsome young man, with pale lofty brow, and dark clustering locks, who was leaning with proud grace against the mantel-piece. "They may take my life, but they cannot read my soul." And he laughed, scornfully, as he always did.

This was a passage from that famous ante-mortem soliloquy in which the hero of the romance indulges in the last chapter but one. The author, while, of course, he could not deny that the elegance of the diction was only equaled by the originality of the sentiment, yet felt a slight uneasiness that his hero should adopt so defiant a tone with those who were indeed to be the arbiters of his existence.

"I'm afraid there's not enough perception of the *comme il faut* in him to suit the every-day world," muttered he. "To be sure, he was not constructed for ordinary ends. Do you find yourself at home in this life, madame?" he continued aloud, turning to a young lady of matchless beauty, whose brief career of passionate love and romantic misery the author had described in thrilling chapters. She raised her luminous eyes to his, and murmured reproachfully: "Why speak to me of Life? if it be not Love, it is Life no longer!"

It was very beautiful, and the author recollected having thought, at the time he wrote it down, that it was about the most forcible sentence in that most powerful passage of his book. But it was rather an exaggerated tone to adopt in the face of such common-place surroundings. Had this exquisite creature, after all, no better sense of the appropriate?

"No one can know better than I, my dear Constance," said the author, in a fatherly tone, "what a beautiful, tender, and lofty soul yours is; but would it not be well, once in a while, to veil its lustre—to subdue it to a tint more in keeping with the unvariegated hue of common circumstance?"

"Heartless and cruel!" sobbed Constance, falling upon the sofa, "hast thou not made me what I am?"

This accusation, intended by the author to be leveled at the traitor lover, quite took him aback when directed, with so much aptness, too, at his respectable self. But whom but himself could he blame, if, when common sense demanded only civility and complaisance, she persisted in adhering to the tragic and sentimental? He was provoked that he had not noticed this defect in time to remedy it; yet he had once considered Constance as, perhaps, the completest triumph of his genius! There seemed to be something particularly disenchanting in the atmosphere of that study.

"I'm afraid you're a failure, ma'am, after all," sighed the author, eyeing her disconsolately. "You're so one-sided!"

At this heartless observation the lady gave a harrowing shriek, thereby summoning to her side a broad-shouldered young fellow, clad in soldier's garb, with a countenance betokening much boldness and determination. He faced the author with an angry frown, which the latter at once recognized as being that of Constance's brother Sam.

"Now then, old bloke!" sang out that young gentleman, "what new deviltry are you up to? Down on your knees and beg her pardon, or, by George! I'll run you through the body!"

On this character the author had expended much thought and care. He was the type of the hardy and bold adventurer, rough and unpolished, perhaps, but of true and sterling metal, who, by dint of his vigorous common sense and honest, energetic nature, should at once clear and lighten whatever in the atmosphere of the story was obscure and sombre; and, by the salutary contrast of his fresh and rugged character with the delicate or morbid traits of his fellow beings, lend a graceful symmetry to the whole. The sentence Sam had just delivered with so much emphasis ought to have been addressed to the traitor lover, when discovered in the act of inconstancy, and, so given, would have been effective and dramatic. But at a juncture like the present, the author felt it to be simply ludicrous, and had he not been so mortified, would have laughed outright!

"Don't make a fool of yourself, Sam," remonstrated he. "Reflect whom you're addressing, and in what company you are, and do try and talk like a civilized being."

"Come, come! no palaver," returned Sam, in a loud and boisterous tone (to do him justice, he had never been taught any other); "down on your marrow-bones at once, or here goes for your gizzard!" and he drew his sword with a flourish.

So this was the rough diamond—the epitome of common sense! Why, he was a half-witted, impertinent, overbearing booby, and his author longed to get him across his knee, and correct him in the good old way. But meantime the point of the young warrior's sword was getting unpleasantly near the left breast-pocket of the author's dressing gown (which he wore at the time), and the latter happened to recollect, with a nervous thrill, that this was the sword which mortally wounded the traitor lover (for whom Sam evidently mistook him) during the stirring combat so vividly described in the twenty-second chapter. Could he but have foreseen the future, what a different ending that engagement should have had! But again it was too late, and the author sprang behind the big easy chair with astonishing agility, and from that vantage ground endeavored to bring on a parley.

Yet how could he argue and expostulate against himself? How arraign Sam of harboring murderous designs which he had himself implanted in his bosom? How, indeed, expect him to comprehend conversation so entirely foreign to his experience? It was an awkward dilemma.

It was Sam who took it by the horns. Somebody, he felt, must be mortally wounded; and finding himself defrauded of one subject, he took up with the next he encountered, which chanced to be none other than the venerable and white-haired gentleman who filled the position, in the tale, of a wealthy and benevolent uncle. The author, having always felt a sentiment of exceptional respect and admiration for this reverend and patriarchal personage, who by his gentle words and sage counsels, no less than his noble generosity, had done so much to elevate and sweeten the tone of his book, fell into an ecstasy of terror at witnessing the approach of his seemingly inevitable destruction; especially as he perceived that the poor old fellow (who never in his life had met with aught but reverence and affection, and knew nothing of the nature of deadly weapons and impulses) was, so far, from attempting to defend himself, or even escape, actually opening his arms to the widest extent of avuncular hospitality, and preparing to take his assassin, sword and all, into his fond and forgiving heart!

"You old fool!" shrieked the author, in the excess of his irritation and despair; "he isn't your repentant nephew! Why can't you keep your forgiveness until it's wanted?"

But Uncle Dudley having been created solely to forgive and benefit, was naturally incapable of taking care of himself, and would certainly have been run through the ample white waistcoat, had not an unexpected and wholly unprecedented interruption averted so awful a catastrophe.

A small, graceful figure, wearing a picturesque white cap, with jaunty ribbons, and a short scarlet petticoat, from beneath which peeped the prettiest feet and ancles ever seen, stepped suddenly between the philanthropic victim and his would-be-murderer, dealt the latter a vigorous blow across the face with a broom she carried, thereby toppling him over ignominiously into the coal-scuttle, and then, placing her plump hands saucily akimbo, she exclaimed with enchanting *naivete*: "There! Mr. Free-and-easy! take *that* for your imperance."

This little incident caused the author to fall back into his easy chair in a condition of profound emotion. It appeared to have corrected a certain dimness or obliquity in his vision, of the existence of which its cure rendered him for the first time conscious. The appearance of the little country girl (whose very introduction into the romance the author had looked upon with misgivings) had afforded the first gleam of natural, refreshing, wholesome interest—in fact, the only relief to all that was vapid, irrational, and unreal—which the combined action of the characters in his romance had succeeded in producing. But the enchantress who had effected this, so far from being the most unadulterated product of his own brain and genius, was the only one of all his *dramatis personæ* who was not in the slightest degree indebted to him for her existence. She was nothing more than an accurate copy of Mary the house-maid, while the others—the mis-formed, ill-balanced, one-sided creations, who, the moment they were placed beyond the pale of their written instructions—put out of the regular and pre-arranged order of their going—displayed in every word and gesture their utter lack and want

of comprehension of the simplest elements of human nature: *these* were the unaided offspring of the author's fancy. And yet it was by help of such as these he had thought to push his way to immortality! How the world would laugh at him! and, as he thought this, a few bitter tears of shame and humiliation trickled down the sides of the poor man's nose.

Presently he looked up. The warlike Sam remained sitting disconsolately in the coal-hod; his instructions suggested no means of extrication. Forsaken Constance lay fainting on the sofa, waiting for some one to chafe her hands and bathe her temples. The strikingly handsome betrayer leant in sullen and gloomy silence against the mantel-piece, ready to treat all advances with stern and defiant obduracy. The benevolent uncle stood with open arms and bland smile, never doubting but that everybody was preparing for a simultaneous rush to, and participation in, his embrace; and, finally, the pretty little country girl, with her arms akimbo and her nose in the air, remained mistress of the situation. Her unheard of innovation, of having done something timely, sensible, and decisive, even though not put down in the book, seemed to have paralyzed all the others. Ah! she was the only one there who was not less than a shadow. The author felt his desolate heart yearn towards her, and the next moment found himself on his knees at her feet.

"Mary," cried he, "you are my only reality. The others are empty and soulless, but you have a heart. They are the children of a conceited brain and visionary experience; you, only, have I drawn simply and unaffectedly, as you actually existed. Except for you, whom I slighted and despised, my whole romance had been an unmitigated falsehood. To you I owe my preservation from worse than folly, and my initiation into true wisdom. Mary—dear Mary, in return I have but one thing to offer you—my heart! Can you—*will* you not love me?"—

To his intense surprise, Mary, instead of evincing a becoming sense of her romantic situation, burst forth into a merry peal of laughter, and, catching him by one shoulder, gave him a hearty shake.

"La sakes! Mr. Author, do wake up! did ever anybody hear such a man!"

There was his room, his fire, his chair, his table, and his closely-written manuscript lying quietly upon it. There was he himself on his knees on the carpet, and—there was Mary the house-maid, one hand holding the brimming tea-pot, the other held by the author against his lips, and laughing and blushing in a tumult of surprise, amusement and, perhaps, something better than either.

"Did I say I loved you, Mary?" enquired the author, in a state of bewilderment. "Never mind! I say now that I love you with all my heart and soul, and ten times as much when awake, as when I was dreaming! Will you marry me?"

Mary only blushed rosier then ever. But she and the author always thereafter took their tea cosily together.

As for the romance, the author took it and threw it into the fire, which roared a genial acknowledgment, and in five minutes had made itself thoroughly acquainted with every page. There remained a bunch of black flakes, and in the center one soft glowing spark, which lingered a long while ere finally taking its flight up the chimney. It was the description of the little country girl.

"The next book I write shall be all about you," the author used to say to his wife, in after years, as they sat together before the fire-place, and watched the bright blaze roar up the chimney.

—*Julian Hawthorne.*

A FROSTY DAY

Grass afield wears silver thatch,
Palings all are edged with rime,
Frost-flowers pattern round the latch,
Cloud nor breeze dissolve the clime;

When the waves are solid floor,
And the clods are iron-bound,
And the boughs are crystall'd hoar,
And the red leaf nail'd aground.

When the fieldfare's flight is slow,
And a rosy vapor rim,
Now the sun is small and low,
Belts along the region dim.

When the ice-crack flies and flaws,
Shore to shore, with thunder shock,
Deeper than the evening daws,
Clearer than the village clock.

When the rusty blackbird strips,
Bunch by bunch, the coral thorn,
And the pale day-crescent dips,
New to heaven a slender horn.

—*John Leicester Warren.*

Those who come last seem to enter with advantage. They are born to the wealth of antiquity. The materials for judging are prepared, and the foundations of knowledge are laid to their hands. Besides, if the point was tried by antiquity, antiquity would lose it; for the present age is really the oldest, and has the largest experience to plead.—*Jeremy Collier.*

COMING OUT OF SCHOOL

If there be any happier event in the life of a child than coming out of school, few children are wise enough to discover it. We do not refer to children who go to school unwillingly—thoughtless wights—whose heads are full of play, and whose hands are prone to mischief:—that these should delight in escaping the restraints of the school-room, and the eye of its watchful master, is a matter of course. We refer to children generally, the good and the bad, the studious and the idle, in short, to all who belong to the *genus* Boy. Perhaps we should include the *genus* Girl, also, but of that we are not certain; for, not to dwell upon the fact that we have never been a girl, and are, therefore, unable to enter into the feelings of girlhood, we hold that girls are better than boys, as women are better than men, and that, consequently, they take more kindly to school life. What boys are we know, unless the breed has changed very much since we were young, which is now upwards of—but our age does not concern the reader. We did not take kindly to school, although we were sadly in need of what we could only obtain in school, viz., learning. We went to school with reluctance, and remained with discomfort; for we were not as robust as the children of our neighbors. We hated school. We did not dare to play truant, however, like other boys whom we knew (we were not courageous enough for that); so we kept on going, fretting, and pining, and—learning.

Oh the long days (the hot days of summer, and the cold days of winter), when we had to sit for hours on hard wooden benches, before uncomfortable desks, bending over grimy slates and ink-besprinkled "copy books," and poring over studies in which we took no interest—geography, which we learned by rote; arithmetic, which always evaded us, and grammar, which we never could master. We could repeat the "rules," but we could not "parse;" we could cipher, but our sums would not "prove;" we could rattle off the productions of Italy—"corn, wine, silk and oil"—but we could not "bound" the State in which we lived. We were conscious of these defects, and deplored them. Our teachers were also conscious of them, and flogged us! We had a morbid dread of corporeal punishment, and strove to the uttermost to avoid it; but it made no difference, it came all the same—came as surely and swiftly to us as to the bad boys who played "hookey," the worse boys who fought, and the worst boy who once stoned his master in the street. With such a school record as this, is it to be wondered at that we rejoiced when school was out? And rejoiced still more when we were out of school?

The feeling which we had then appears to be shared by the children in our illustration. Not for the same reasons, however; for we question whether the most ignorant of their number does not know more of grammar than we do to-day, and is not better acquainted with the boundaries of Germany than we could ever force ourselves to be. We like these little fellows for what they are, and what they will probably be. And we like their master, a grave, simple-hearted man, whose proper place would appear to be the parish-pulpit. What his scholars learn will be worth knowing, if it be not very profound. They will learn probity and goodness, and it will not be ferruled into them either. Clearly, they do not fear the master, or they would not be so unconstrained in his presence. They would not make snow balls, as one has done, and another is doing. Soon they will begin to pelt each other, and the passers by will not mind the snow balls, if they will only remember how they themselves felt, and behaved, after coming out of school.

There is not much in a group of children coming out of school. So one might say at first sight, but a little reflection will show the fallacy of the remark. One would naturally suppose that in every well-regulated State of antiquity measures would have been taken to ensure the education of all classes of the community, but such was not the case. The Spartans under Lycurgus were educated, but their education was mainly a physical one, and it did not reach the lower orders. The education of Greece generally, even when the Greek mind had attained its highest culture, was still largely physical—philosophers, statesmen, and poets priding themselves as much upon their athletic feats as upon their

intellectual endowments. The schools of Rome were private, and were confined to the patricians. There was a change for the better when Christianity became the established religion. Public schools were recommended by a council in the sixth century, but rather as a means of teaching the young the rudiments of their faith, under the direction of the clergy, than as a means of giving them general instruction. It was not until the close of the twelfth century that a council ordained the establishment of grammar schools in cathedrals for the gratuitous instruction of the poor; and not until a century later that the ordinance was carried into effect at Lyons. Luther found time, amid his multitudinous labors, to interest himself in popular education; and, in 1527, he drew up, with the aid of Melanchthon, what is known as the Saxon School System. The seed was sown, but the Thirty Years' War prevented its coming to a speedy maturity. In the middle of the last century several of the German States passed laws making it compulsory upon parents to send their children to school at a certain age; but these laws were not really obeyed until the beginning of the present century. German schools are now open to the poorest as well as the richest children. The only people, except the Germans, who thought of common schools at an early period are the Scotch.

It cost, we see, some centuries of mental blindness to discover the need of, and some centuries of struggling to establish schools.

A GLIMPSE OF VENICE

The spell which Venice has cast over the English poets is as powerful, in its way, as was the influence of Italian literature upon the early literature of England. From Chaucer down, the poets have turned to Italy for inspiration, and, what is still better, have found it. It is not too much to say that the "Canterbury Tales" could not have existed, in their present form, if Boccaccio had not written the "Decameron;" and it is to Boccaccio we are told that the writers of his time were indebted for their first knowledge of Homer. Wyatt and Surrey transplanted what they could of grace from Petrarch into the rough England of Henry the Eighth. We know what the early dramatists owe to the Italian storytellers. They went to their novels for the plots of their plays, as the novelists of to-day go to the criminal calendar for the plots of their stories. Shakspeare appears so familiar with Italian life that Mr. Charles Armitage Brown, the author of a very curious work on Shakspeare's Sonnets, declares that he must have visited Italy, basing this conclusion on the minute knowledge of certain Italian localities shown in some of his later plays. At home in Verona, Milan, Mantua, and Padua, Shakspeare is nowhere so much so as in Venice.

It is impossible to think of Venice without remembering the poets; and the poet who is first remembered is Byron. If our thoughts are touched with gravity as they should be when we dwell upon the sombre aspects of Venice—when we look, as here, for example, on the Bridge of Sighs—we find ourselves repeating:

"I stood in Venice, on the Bridge of Sighs."

If we are in a gayer mood, as we are likely to be after looking at the brilliant carnival-scene which greets us at the threshold of the present number of *THE ALDINE*, we recall the opening passages of Byron's merry poem of "Beppo:"

"Of all the places where the Carnival
Was most facetious in the days of yore,
For dance, and song, and serenade, and ball,
And masque, and mime, and mystery, and more
Than I have time to tell now, or at all,
Venice the bell from every city bore."

"And there are dresses splendid, but fantastical,
Masks of all times, and nations, Turks and Jews,
And harlequins and clowns, with feats gymnastical,
Greeks, Romans, Yankee-doodles, and Hindoos
All kinds of dress, except the ecclesiastical,
All people, as their fancies hit, may choose,
But no one in these parts may quiz the clergy,
Therefore take heed, ye Freethinkers! I charge ye."

The Bridge of Sighs (to return to prose) is a long covered gallery, leading from the ducal palace to the old State prisons of Venice. It was frequently traversed, we may be sure, in the days of some of the Doges, to one of whom, our old friend, and Byron's—Marino Faliero—the erection of the ducal palace is sometimes falsely ascribed. Founded in the year 800, A.D., the ducal palace was afterwards destroyed five times, and each time arose from its ruins with increasing splendor until it became, what it is now, a stately marble building of the Saracenic style of architecture, with a grand staircase and noble halls, adorned with pictures by Titian, Tintoretto, Paul Veronese, and other famous masters.

It would be difficult to find gloomier dungeons, even in the worst strongholds of despotism, than those in which the State prisoners of Venice were confined. These "pozzi," or wells, were sunk in the thick walls, under the flooring of the chamber at the foot of the Bridge of Sighs. There were twelve of them formerly, and they ran down three or four stories. The Venetian of old time abhorred them as deeply as his descendants, who, on the first arrival of the conquering French, attempted to block or break up the lowest of them, but were not entirely successful; for, when Byron was in Venice, it was not uncommon for adventurous tourists to descend by a trap-door, and crawl through holes, half choked by rubbish, to the depth of two stories below the first range. So says the writer of the *Notes* to the fourth canto of "Childe Harold" (Byron's friend Hobhouse, if our memory serves), who adds, "If you are in want of consolation for the extinction of patrician power, perhaps you may find it there. Scarcely a ray of light glimmers into the narrow gallery which leads to the cells, and the places of confinement themselves are totally dark. A little hole in the wall admitted the damp air of the passages, and served for the introduction of the prisoner's food. A wooden pallet, about a foot or so from the ground, was the only furniture. The conductors tell you a light was not allowed. The cells are about five paces in length, two and a half in width, and seven feet in height. They are directly beneath one another, and respiration is somewhat difficult in the lower holes. Only one prisoner was found when the Republicans descended into these hideous recesses, and he is said to have been confined sixteen years." When the prisoner's hour came he was taken out and strangled in a cell upon the Bridge of Sighs!

And this was in Venice! The grand old Republic which was once the greatest Power of Eastern Europe; the home of great artists and architects, renowned the world over for arts and arms; the Venice of "blind old Dandolo," who led her galleys to victory at the ripe old age of eighty; the Venice of Doge Foscari, whose son she tortured, imprisoned and murdered, and whose own paternal, patriotic, great heart she broke; the Venice of gay gallants, and noble, beautiful ladies; the Venice of mumming, masking, and the carnival; the bright, beautiful Venice of Shakspeare, Otway, and Byron; joyous, loving Venice; cruel, fatal Venice!

MODERN SATIRE.—A satire on everything is a satire on nothing; it is mere absurdity. All contempt, all disrespect, implies something respected, as a standard to which it is referred; just as every valley implies a hill. The *persiflage* of the French and of fashionable worldlings, which turns into ridicule the exceptions and yet abjures the rules, is like Trinculo's government—its latter end forgets its beginning. Can there be a more mortal, poisonous consumption and asphyxy of the mind than this decline and extinction of all reverence?—*Jean Paul*.

WINTER PICTURES FROM THE POETS

Although English Poetry abounds with pictures of the seasons, its Winter pictures are neither numerous, nor among its best. For one good snow-piece we can readily find twenty delicate Spring pictures—twinkling with morning dew, and odorous with the perfume of early flowers. It would be easy to make a large gallery of Summer pictures; and another gallery, equally large, which should contain only the misty skies, the dark clouds, and the falling leaves of Autumn. Not so with Winter scenes. Not that the English poets have not painted the last, and painted them finely, but that as a rule they have not taken kindly to the work. They prefer to do what Keats did in one of his poems, viz., make Winter a point of departure from which Fancy shall wing her way to brighter days:

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, [купив полную легальную версию](#) на ЛитРес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.