

words put us much in mind of the "nonsense verses" of Du Bartas.

"And thus, in the end each soul may to itself,  
With truth before it as its polar guide,  
Become both Time and Nature, whose fixt paths  
Are spiral, and when lost will find new stars,  
And in the universal MOVEMENT join."

The upper current of the theme is based upon the various Greek fables about Orion. The author, in his brief preface, speaks about "writing from an old Greek fable"—but his story is, more properly, a very judicious selection and modification of a great variety of Greek and Roman fables concerning Orion and other personages with whom these fables bring Orion in collision. And here we have only to object that the really magnificent abilities of Mr. Horne might have been better employed in an entirely original conception. The story he tells is beautiful indeed,—and *nil tetigit*, certainly, *quod non ornavit*—but our memories—our classic recollections are continually at war with his claims to regard, and we too often find ourselves rather speculating upon what he might have done, than admiring what he has really accomplished.

The narrative, as our poet has arranged it, runs nearly thus: Orion, hunting on foot amid the mountains of Chios, encounters Artemis (Diana) with her train. The goddess, at first indignant at the giant's intrusion upon her grounds, becomes, in the second place, enamoured. Her pure love spiritualizes the merely animal nature of Orion, but does not render him happy. He is filled with vague aspirations and desires. He buries himself in sensual pleasures. In the mad dreams of intoxication, he beholds a vision of Merope, the daughter of Cœnopion, king of Chios. She is the type of physical beauty. She cries in his ear, "Depart from Artemis! She loves thee not—thou art too full of earth." Awaking, he seeks the love of Merope. It is returned. Cœnopion, dreading the giant and his brethren, yet scorning his pretensions, temporizes. He consents to bestow upon Orion the hand of Merope, on condition of the island being cleared, within six days, of its savage beasts and serpents. Orion, seeking the aid of his brethren, accomplishes the task. Cœnopion again hesitates. Enraged, the giants make war upon him, and carry off the princess. In a remote grove, Orion lives, in bliss, with his earthly love. From this delirium of happiness, he is aroused by the vengeance of Cœnopion, who causes him

to be surprised while asleep, and deprived of sight. The princess, being retaken, immediately forgets and deserts her lover, who, in his wretchedness, seeks, at the suggestion of a shepherd, the aid of Eos (Aurora) who, also becoming enamoured of him, restores his sight. The love of Eos, less earthly than that of Merope, less cold than that of Artemis, fully satisfies his soul. He is at length happy. But the jealousy of Artemis destroys him. She pierces him with her arrows while in the very act of gratefully renovating her temple at Delos. In despair, Eos flies to Artemis, reproves her, represents to her the baseness of her jealousy and revenge, softens her, and obtains her consent to unite with herself—with Eos—in a prayer to Zeus (Jupiter) for the restoration of the giant to life. The prayer is heard. Orion is not only restored to life, but rendered immortal, and placed among the constellations, where he enjoys for ever the pure affection of Eos, and becomes extinguished, each morning, in her rays.

In ancient mythology, the giants are meant to typify various energies of Nature. Pursuing, we suppose, this idea, Mr. Horne has made his own giants represent certain principles of human action or passion. Thus Orion himself is the Worker or Builder, and is the type of Action or Movement itself—but, in various portions of the poem, this allegorical character is left out of sight, and that of speculative philosophy takes its place; a mere consequence of the general uncertainty of purpose, which is the chief defect of the work. Sometimes we even find Orion a Destroyer in place of a Builder—as, for example when he destroys the grove about the temple of Artemis, at Delos. Here he usurps the proper allegorical attribute of Rhexergon (the second of the seven giants named), who is the Breaker-down, typifying the Revolutionary Principle. Autarces, the third, represents the Mob, or, more strictly, Waywardness—Capricious Action. Harpax, the fourth, serves for Rapine—Briastor, the fifth, for Brute Force—Encolyon, the sixth, the “Chainer of the Wheel,” for Conservatism—and Akinetos, the seventh, and most elaborated, for Apathy. He is termed “The Great Unmoved,” and in his mouth is put all the “worldly wisdom,” or selfishness, of the tale. The philosophy of Akinetos is, that no merely human exertion has any appreciable effect upon the *Movement*; and it is amusing to perceive how this great *Truth* (for most sincerely do we hold it to be such) speaks out from the real heart of the poet, through his Akinetos, in spite of

all endeavour to overthrow it by the example of the brighter fate of Orion.

The death of Akinetos is a singularly forcible and poetic conception, and will serve to show how the giants are made to perish, generally, during the story, in agreement with their allegorical natures. The "Great Unmoved" quietly seats himself in a cave after the death of all his brethren, except Orion.

" Thus Akinetos sat from day to day,  
 Absorbed in indolent sublimity,  
 Reviewing thoughts and knowledge o'er and o'er ;  
 And now he spake, now sang unto himself,  
 Now sank to brooding silence. From above,  
 While passing, Time the rock touch'd, and it oozed  
 Petrific drops—gently at first and slow.  
 Reclining lonely in his fixed repose,  
 The Great Unmoved unconsciously became  
 Attached to that he pressed ; and soon a part  
 Of the rock. *There clung th' excrescence, till strong hands,  
 Descended from Orion, made large roads,  
 And built steep walls, squaring down rocks for use.*"

The italicised conclusion of this fine passage affords an instance, however, of a very blameable concision, too much affected throughout the poem.

In the deaths of Autarces, Harpax, and Encolyon, we recognise the same exceeding vigour of conception. These giants conspire against Orion, who seeks the aid of Artemis, who, in her turn, seeks the assistance of Phoibos (Phœbus). The conspirators are in a cave, with Orion.

" Now Phoibus thro' the cave  
 Sent a broad ray ! and lo ! the solar beam  
 Filled the great cave with radiance equable  
 And not a cranny held one speck of shade.  
 A moony halo round Orion came,  
 As of some pure protecting influence,  
 While with intense light glared the walls and roof,  
 The heat increasing. The three giants stood  
 With glazing eyes, fixed. Terribly the light  
 Beat on the dazzled stone, and the cave hummed  
 With reddening heat, till the red hair and beard  
 Of Harpax showed no difference from the rest,  
 Which once were iron-black. The sullen walls  
 Then smouldered down to steady oven heat,  
 Like that with care attain'd when bread has ceased  
 Its steaming and displays an angry tan.  
 The appalled faces of the giants showed

Full consciousness of their immediate doom.  
 And soon the cave a potter's furnace glow'd  
 Or kiln for largest bricks, and thus remained  
 The while Orion, in his halo clasped  
 By some invisible power, beheld the clay  
 Of these his early friends change. Life was gone.  
 Now sank the heat—the cave walls lost their glare,  
 The red lights faded, and the halo pale  
 Around him into chilly air expanded.  
 There stood the three great images, in hue  
 Of chalky white and red, like those strange shapes  
 In Egypt's ancient tombs; but presently  
 Each visage and each form with cracks and flaws  
 Was seamed, and the lost countenance brake up,  
 As, with brief toppling, forward prone they fell."

The deaths of Rhexergon and Biastor seem to discard (and this we regret not) the allegorical meaning altogether, but are related with even more exquisite richness and delicacy of imagination than those of the other giants. Upon this occasion it is the *jealousy* of Artemis which destroys.

"— But with the eve  
 Fatigue o'ercame the giants, and they slept.  
 Dense were the rolling clouds, starless the glooms;  
 But o'er a narrow rift, once drawn apart,  
 Showing a field remote of violet hue,  
 The high moon floated, and her downward gleam  
 Shone on the upturned giant faces. Rigid  
 Each upper feature, loose the nether jaw;  
 Their arms cast wide with open palms; their chests  
 Heaving like some large engine. Near them lay  
 Their bloody clubs, with dust and hair begrimed,  
 Their spears and girdles, and the long-noosed thongs.  
 Artemis vanished; all again was dark.  
 With day's first streak Orion rose, and loudly  
 To his companions called. But still they slept.  
 Again he shouted; yet no limb they stirred,  
 Tho' scarcely seven strides distant. He approached,  
 And found the spot, so sweet with clover flower  
 When they had cast them down, was now arrayed  
 With many-headed poppies, like a crowd  
 Of dusky Ethiops in a magic cirque  
 Which had sprung up beneath them in the night,  
 And all entranced the air."

There are several minor defects in "Orion," and we may as well mention them here. We sometimes meet with an instance of bad taste in a revolting picture or image; for example, at page 59 of this edition:—

"Naught fearing, swift, brimful of raging life,  
 Stifning they lay in pools of jellied gore."

Sometimes—indeed very often—we encounter an altogether purposeless oddness or foreignness of speech. For example, at page 78:—

“As in Dodona once, ere driven thence  
Be Zeus for that Rhexergon burnt some oaks.”

Mr. Horne will find it impossible to assign a good reason for not here using “because.”

Pure *vaguenesses* of speech abound. For example, page 89:—

“— one central heart wherein  
Time beats twin pulses with Humanity.”

Now and then sentences are rendered needlessly obscure through mere involution—as at page 103:—

“Star-rays that first played o'er my blinded orbs,  
E'en as they glance above the lids of sleep,  
Who else had never known surprise, nor hope,  
Nor useful action.”

Here the “who” has no grammatical antecedent, and would naturally be referred to sleep; whereas it is intended for “me,” understood, or involved, in the pronoun “my;” as if the sentence were written thus—“rays that first played o'er the blinded orbs of me, who,” &c. It is useless to dwell upon so pure an affectation.

The versification throughout is, generally, of a very remarkable excellence. At times, however, it is rough, to no purpose; as at page 44:—

“And ever tended to some central point  
In some place—nought more could I understand.”

And here, at page 81:—

“The shadow of a stag stoops to the stream  
Swift rolling toward the cataract and drinks deeply.”

The above is an unintentional and false Alexandrine—including a foot too much, and that a trochee in place of an iambus. But here, at page 106, we have the utterly unjustifiable anomaly of half a foot too little:—

“And Eos ever rises circling  
The varied regions of mankind,” &c.

All these are mere inadvertences, of course; for the general handling of the rhythm shows the profound metrical sense of the poet. He is, perhaps, somewhat too fond of “making the sound an echo to the sense.” “Orion” embodies some of the most re-

markable instances of this on record; but if smoothness—if the true rhythm of a verse be sacrificed, the sacrifice is an error. The effect is only a beauty, we think, where *no* sacrifice is made in its behalf. It will be found possible to reconcile *all* the objects in view. Nothing can justify such lines as this, at page 69:—

“As snake-songs midst stone hollows thus has taught me.”

We might urge, as another minor objection, that all the giants are made to speak in the same manner—with the same phraseology. Their characters are broadly distinctive, while their words are identical in spirit. There is sufficient individuality of sentiment, but little, or none, of language.

We *must* object, too, to the personal and political allusions—to the Corn-Law question, for example—to Wellington's statue, &c. These things, *of course*, have no business in a poem.

We will conclude our fault-finding with the remark that, as a consequence of the one radical error of conception upon which we have commented at length, the reader's attention, throughout, is painfully *diverted*. He is always pausing, amid poetical beauties, in the expectation of detecting among them some philosophical, allegorical moral. Of course, he does not fully, because he cannot uniquely, appreciate the beauties. The absolute necessity of re-perusing the poem, in order thoroughly to comprehend it, is also most surely to be regretted, and arises, likewise, from the one radical sin.

But of the *beauties* of this most remarkable poem, what shall we say? And here we find it a difficult task to be calm. And yet we have never been accused of enthusiastic encomium. It is our deliberate opinion that, in all that regards the loftiest and holiest attributes of the true poetry, “Orion” has *never* been excelled. Indeed, we feel strongly inclined to say that it has never been *equalled*. Its imagination—that quality which is all in all—is of the most refined—the most elevating—the most august character. And here we deeply regret that the necessary limits of this review will prevent us from entering, at length, into specification. In reading the poem, we marked passage after passage for extract—but, in the end, we found that we had marked nearly every passage in the book. We can now do nothing more than select a few. This, from page 3, introduces Orion himself, and we quote it, not only as an instance of refined and picturesque imagination, but as evincing

the high artistical skill with which a scholar in spirit can paint an elaborate picture by a few brief touches.

“The scene in front two sloping mountains’ sides  
 Displayed; in shadow one and one in light.  
 The loftiest on its summit now sustained  
 The sunbeams, raying like a mighty wheel  
 Half seen, which left the forward surface dark  
 In its full breadth of shade; the coming sun  
 Hidden as yet behind; the other mount,  
 Slanting transverse, swept with an eastward face,  
 Catching the golden light. Now while the peal  
 Of the ascending chase told that the rout  
 Still midway rent the thickets, suddenly  
 Along the broad and sunny slope appeared  
*The shadow of a stag that fled across*  
*Followed by a giant’s shadow with a spear.”*

These shadows are those of the coming Orion and his game. But who can fail to appreciate the intense beauty of the heralding shadows? Nor is this all. This “Hunter of shadows, he himself a shade,” is made symbolical, or suggestive, throughout the poem, of the speculative character of Orion; and occasionally, of his pursuit of visionary happiness. For example, at page 81, Orion, possessed of Merope, dwells with her in a remote and dense grove of cedars. Instead of directly describing his attained happiness—the perfected bliss—the poet, with an exalted sense of art, *for which we look utterly in vain in any other poem*, merely introduces the image of the tamed or subdued *shadow-stag*, quietly browsing and drinking beneath the cedars.

“There, underneath the boughs, mark where the gleam  
 Of sunrise, thro’ the roofing’s chasm is thrown  
 Upon a grassy plot below, whereon  
 The shadow of a stag stoops to the stream,  
 Swift rolling toward the cataract, and drinks.  
 Throughout the day unceasingly it drinks,  
 While ever and anon the nightingale,  
 Not waiting for the evening, swells his hymn—  
 His one sustained and heaven-aspiring tone—  
 And when the sun hath vanished utterly,  
 Arm over arm the cedars spread their shade,  
 With arching wrist and long extended hands,  
 And grave-ward fingers lengthening in the moon,  
 Above that shadowy stag whose antlers still  
 Hung o’er the stream.”

There is nothing more richly—more weirdly—more chastely—more sublimely imaginatively—in the wide realm of poetical litera-

ture. It will be seen that we *have* enthusiasm—but we reserve it for pictures such as this.

At page 62, Orion, his brethren dead, is engaged alone in extirpating the beasts from Chios. In the passages we quote, observe in the beginning, the singular *lucidity* of detail; the arrangement of the barriers, &c., by which the hunter accomplishes his purpose, is given in a dozen lines of verse, with far more perspicuity than ordinary writers could give it in as many pages of prose. In this species of narration Mr. Horne is approached only by Moore in his "Alciphron." In the latter portions of our extract, observe the vivid picturesqueness of the description.

"Four days remain. Fresh trees he felled and wove  
More barriers and fences; inaccessible  
To fiercest charge of droves, and to o'erleap  
Impossible. These walls he so arranged  
That to a common centre each should force  
The flight of those pursued; and from that centre  
Diverged three outlets. One, the wide expanse  
Which from the rocks and inland forests led;  
One was the clear-skyed windy gap above  
A precipice; the third, a long ravine  
Which through steep slopes, down to the seashore ran  
Winding, and then direct into the sea.

"Two days remain. Orion, in each hand  
Waving a torch, his course at night began,  
Through wildest haunts and lairs of savage beasts.  
With long-drawn howl, before him trooped the wolves—  
The panthers, terror-stricken, and the bears  
With wonder and gruff rage; from desolate crags,  
Leering hyenas, griffin, hippogriph,  
Skulked, or sprang madly, as the tossing brands  
Flashed through the midnight nooks and hollows cold,  
Sudden as fire from flint; o'er crashing thickets,  
*With crouched head and curled fangs dashed the wild boar,*  
Gnashing forth on with reckless impulses,  
While the clear-purposed fox crept closely down  
Into the underwood, to let the storm,  
Whate'er its cause, pass over. Through dark fens,  
Marshes, green rushy swamps, and margins reedy,  
Orion held his way—and rolling shapes  
Of serpent and of dragon moved before him  
*With high-reared crests, swan-like yet terrible,*  
*And often looking back with gem-like eyes.*

"All night Orion urged his rapid course  
In the vex'd rear of the swift-droving din,  
And when the dawn had peered, the monsters all  
Were hemmed in barriers. These he now o'erheaped  
With fuel through the day, and when again



Night darkened, and the sea a gulf-like voice  
Sent forth, the barriers at all points he fired,  
Mid prayers to Hephæstos and his Ocean-Sire.

“Soon as the flames had eaten out a gap  
In the great barrier fronting the ravine  
That ran down to the sea, Orion grasped  
Two blazing boughs; one high in air he raised,  
The other, *with its roaring foliage trailed*  
*Behind him as he sped.* Onward the droves  
Of frantic creatures with one impulse rolled  
Before this night-devouring thing of flames,  
With multitudinous voice and downward sweep  
Into the sea, which now first knew a tide,  
And, ere they made one effort to regain  
The shore, had caught them in its flowing arms,  
And bore them past all hope. The living mass,  
Dark heaving o'er the waves resistlessly,  
At length, in distance, seemed a circle small,  
*Midst which one creature in the centre rose,*  
*Conspicuous in the long, red quivering gleams*  
*That from the dying brands streamed o'er the waves.*  
*It was the oldest dragon of the fens,*  
*Whose forked flag-wings and horn-crested head*  
*O'er crags and marshes regal sway had held;*  
*And now he rose up like an embodied curse,*  
*From all the doomed, fast sinking—some just sunk—*  
*Looked landward o'er the sea, and flapped his vans,*  
*Until Poseidon drew them swirling down.”*

Poseidon (Neptune) is Orion's father, and lends him his aid. The first line italicised is an example of sound made echo to sense. The rest we have merely emphasized as peculiarly imaginative.

At page 9, Orion thus describes a palace built by him for Hephæstos (Vulcan).

“But, ere a shadow-hunter I became—  
A dreamer of strange dreams by day and night—  
For him I built a palace underground,  
Of iron, black and rough as his own hands.  
Deep in the groaning disembowelled earth,  
The tower-broad pillars and huge stanchions,  
And slant supporting wedges I set up,  
Aided by the Cyclops who obeyed my voice,  
*Which through the metal fabric rang and pealed*  
*In orders echoing far, like thunder-dreams.*  
With arches, galleries and domes all carved—  
*So that great figures started from the roof*  
*And lofty coignes, or sat and downward gazed*  
*On those who stood below and gazed above—*  
I filled it; in the centre framed a hall;  
Central in that, a throne: *and for the light,*

Forged mighty hammers that should rise and fall  
 On slanted rocks of granite and of flint,  
 Worked by a torrent, for whose passage down  
 A chasm I hewed. And here the God could take,  
 Midst showery sparks and swathes of broad gold fire  
 His lone repose, lulled by the sounds he loved :  
 Or, casting back the hammer-heads till they choked  
 The water's course, enjoy, if so he wished,  
 Midnight tremendous, silence, and iron sleep."

The description of the Hell in "Paradise Lost" is altogether inferior in graphic effect, in originality, in expression, in the true imagination—to these magnificent—to these unparalleled passages. For this assertion there are tens of thousands who will condemn us as heretical ; but there are a "chosen few" who will feel, in their inmost souls, the simple truth of the assertion. The former class would at least be silent, could they form even a remote conception of that contempt with which we hearken to their conventional jargon.

We have room for no further extracts of length; but we refer the reader who shall be so fortunate as to procure a copy of "Orion," to a passage at page 22, commencing

"One day at noontide, when the chase was done."

It is descriptive of a group of lolling hounds, intermingled with sylvans, fawns, nymphs, and oceanides. We refer him also to page 25, where Orion, enamoured of the naked beauty of Artemis, is repulsed and frozen by her dignity. These lines end thus :

"And ere the last collected shape he saw  
 Of Artemis dispersing fast amid  
 Dense vapoury clouds, the aching wintriness  
 Had risen to his teeth, and fixed his eyes,  
 Like glistening stones in the congealing air."

We refer especially, too, to the description of *Love*, at page 29 ; to that of a Bacchanalian orgie, at page 34 ; to that of drought succeeded by rain, at page 70 ; and to that of the palace of Eos, at page 104.

Mr. Horne has a very peculiar and very delightful faculty of enforcing, or giving vitality to a picture, by some one vivid and intensely characteristic point or touch. He seizes the most salient feature of his theme, and makes this feature convey the whole. The combined naïveté and picturesqueness of some of the passages thus enforced, cannot be sufficiently admired. For example :—

"The archers soon  
 With bow-arm forward thrust, on all sides twanged  
 Around, above, below."

Now, it is this thrusting forward of the bow-arm which is the idiosyncrasy of the action of a mass of archers. Again: Rhexergon and his friends endeavour to persuade Akinetos to be king. Observe the silent refusal of Akinetos—the peculiar *passiveness* of his action—if we may be permitted the paradox.

“Rise, therefore, Akinetos, thou art king.  
So saying, in his hand he placed a spear.  
*As though against a wall 'twere sent aslant,*  
*Flatly the long spear fell upon the ground.”*

Here again: Merope departs from Chios in a ship.

“And, as it sped along, she closely pressed  
The rich globes of her bosom on the side  
O'er which she bent with those black eyes, and gazed  
Into the sea *that fled beneath her face.*”

The fleeing of the sea beneath the face of one who gazes into it from a ship's side, is the idiosyncrasy of the action—of the subject. It is that which chiefly impresses the gazer.

We conclude with some brief quotations at random, which we shall not pause to classify. Their merits need no demonstration. They *gleam* with the purest imagination. They abound in picturesqueness—force—happily chosen epithets, each in itself a picture. They are redolent of all for which a poet will value a poem.

“— her silver sandals glanc'd i' the rays,  
As doth a lizard playing on a hill,  
And on the spot where she that instant stood  
Naught but the bent and quivering grass was seen.”

“Above the Isle of Chios, night by night,  
The clear moon lingered ever on her course  
Covering the forest foliage, where it swept  
In its unbroken breadth along the slopes,  
With placid silver; edging leaf and trunk  
Where gloom clung deep around; but chiefly sought  
*With melancholy splendour to illumine*  
*The dark-mouthed caverns where Orion lay,*  
*Dreaming among his kinsmen.”*

“The ocean realm below, and all its caves  
And bristling vegetation, plant and flower,  
And forests in their dense petrific shade  
*Where the tides moan for sleep that never comes.”*

“A fawn, who on a quiet green knoll sat  
Somewhat apart, sang a melodious ode,  
*Made rich by harmonies of hidden strings.”*

"Autarces seized a satyr, with intent,  
Despite his writhing freaks and furious face  
To dash him on a gong, but that amidst  
The struggling mass Encolyon thrust a pine,  
Heavy and black as Charon's ferrying pole,  
O'er which they, *like a bursting billow*, fell....."

"— then round the blaze,  
*Their shadows brandishing afar and athwart*,  
Over the level space and up the hills,  
Six giants held portentous dance....."

"— his safe return  
To corporal sense, by shaking off these nets  
Of moonbeams from his soul....."

"— old memories  
Slumbrously hung above the purple line  
Of distance, to the East, while odorously  
Glistened the tear-drops of a new-fall'n shower ....."

"Sing on !  
Sing on, great tempest ! in the darkness sing !  
Thy madness is a music that brings calm  
Into my central soul ; and from its waves,  
That now with joy begin to heave and gush  
The burning image of all life's desire,  
Like an absorbing, fire breathed, phantom god,  
Rises and floats ! here touching on the foam,  
There hovering o'er it ; *ascending swift*  
*Starward then swooping down the hemisphere*  
*Upon the lengthening javelins of the blast !....."*

"Now a sound we heard,  
Like to some well-known voice in prayer ; and next  
An iron clang *that seemed to break great bonds*  
*Beneath the earth*, shook us to conscious life....."

"It is Oblivion ! In his hand—though naught  
Knows he of this—a dusky purple flower  
Droops over its tall stem. Again ! ah see !  
He wanders into mist and now is lost !—  
Within his brain what lovely realms of death  
Are pictured, *and what knowledge through the doors*  
*Of his forgetfulness of all the earth*  
*A path may gain !"*

But we are positively forced to conclude. It was our design to give "Orion" a careful and methodical analysis—thus to bring clearly forth its multitudinous beauties to the eye of the American public. Our limits have constrained us to treat it in an imperfect and cursory manner. We have had to content ourselves chiefly with assertion, where our original purpose was to demonstrate. We have left unsaid a hundred things which a well-grounded en-

thusiasm would have prompted us to say. One thing, however, we must and will say, in conclusion. "Orion" will be admitted, by every man of genius, to be one of the noblest, if not the very noblest poetical work of the age. Its defects are trivial and conventional—its beauties intrinsic and *supreme*.

### THOMAS BABINGTON MACAULAY.\*

**M**ACAULAY has obtained a reputation which, although deservedly great, is yet in a remarkable measure undeserved. The few who regard him merely as a terse, forcible and logical writer, full of thought, and abounding in original views, often sagacious and never otherwise than admirably expressed—appear to us precisely in the right. The many who look upon him as not only all this, but as a comprehensive and profound thinker, little prone to error, err essentially themselves. The source of the general mistake lies in a very singular consideration—yet in one upon which we do not remember ever to have heard a word of comment. We allude to a tendency in the public mind towards logic for logic's sake—a liability to confound the vehicle with the conveyed—an aptitude to be so dazzled by the luminousness with which an idea is set forth, as to mistake it for the luminousness of the idea itself. The error is one exactly analogous with that which leads the immature poet to think himself sublime wherever he is obscure, because obscurity is a source of the sublime—thus confounding obscurity of expression with the expression of obscurity. In the case of Macaulay—and we may say *en passant* of our own Channing—we assent to what he says, too often because we so very clearly understand what it is that he intends to say. Comprehending vividly the points and the sequence of his argument, we fancy that we are concurring in the argument itself. It is not every mind which is at once able to analyze the satisfaction it receives from such Essays as we see here. If it were merely *beauty* of style for which they were distinguished—if they were remarkable only for rhetorical flourishes—we would not be apt to estimate these flourishes at more than their due value. We would

\* "Critical and Miscellaneous Essays." By T. Babington Macaulay. Carey & Hart: Philadelphia.

not agree with the doctrines of the essayist on account of the elegance with which they were urged. On the contrary, we would be inclined to disbelief. But when all ornament save that of simplicity is disclaimed—when we are attacked by precision of language, by perfect accuracy of expression, by directness and singleness of thought, and above all by a logic the most rigorously close and consequential—it is hardly a matter for wonder that nine of us out of ten are content to rest in the gratification thus received as in the gratification of absolute truth.

Of the terseness and simple vigour of Macaulay's style it is unnecessary to point out instances. Everyone will acknowledge his merits on this score. His exceeding *closeness* of logic, however, is more especially remarkable. With this he suffers nothing to interfere. Here, for example, is a sentence in which, to preserve entire the chain of his argument—to leave no minute gap which the reader might have to fill up with thought—he runs into most unusual tautology:—

“The books and traditions of a sect may contain, mingled with propositions strictly theological, other propositions, purporting to rest on the same authority, which relate to physics. If new discoveries should throw discredit on the physical propositions, the theological propositions, unless they can be separated from the physical propositions, will share in their discredit.”

These things are very well in their way; but it is indeed questionable whether they do not appertain rather to the trickery of thought's vehicle, than to thought itself—rather to reason's shadow than to reason. Truth, for truth's sake, is seldom so enforced. It is scarcely too much to say that the style of the profound thinker is never closely logical. Here we might instance George Combe—than whom a more candid reasoner never, perhaps, wrote or spoke—than whom a more complete antipode to Babington Macaulay there certainly never existed. The former *reasons* to discover the true. The latter *argues* to convince the world, and, in arguing, not unfrequently surprises himself into conviction. What Combe appears to Macaulay it would be a difficult thing to say. What Macaulay is thought of by Combe we can understand very well. The man who looks at an argument in its details alone, will not fail to be misled by the one; while he who keeps steadily in view the *generality* of a thesis will always at least approximate the truth under guidance of the other.

Macaulay's tendency—and the tendency of mere logic in general—to concentrate force upon minutæ, at the expense of a subject as a whole, is well instanced in an article (in the volume now before us) on Ranke's "History of the Popes." This article is called a review—possibly because it is anything else—as *lucus is lucus a non lucendo*. In fact it is nothing more than a beautifully written treatise on the main theme of Ranke himself; the whole matter of the treatise being deduced from the History. In the way of criticism there is nothing worth the name. The strength of the essayist is put forth to account for the progress of Romanism by maintaining that divinity is not a progressive science. The enigmas, says he in substance, which perplex the natural theologian are the same in all ages, while the Bible, where alone we are to seek revealed truth, has always been what it is.

The manner in which these two propositions are set forth, is a model for the logician and for the student of *belles lettres*—yet the error into which the essayist has rushed headlong is egregious. He attempts to deceive his readers, or has deceived himself, by confounding the nature of that proof from which we reason of the concerns of earth, considered as man's habitation, and the nature of that evidence from which we reason of the same earth regarded as a unit of that vast whole, the universe. In the former case the *data* being palpable, the proof is direct: in the latter it is purely *analogical*. Were the indications we derive from science, of the nature and designs of Deity, and thence, by inference, of man's destiny—were these indications proof direct, no advance in science would strengthen them—for, as our author truly observes, "nothing could be added to the force of the argument which the mind finds in every beast, bird, or flower"—but as these indications are rigidly *analogical*, every step in human knowledge—every astronomical discovery, for instance—throws additional light upon the august subject, *by extending the range of analogy*. That we know no more to-day of the nature of Deity—of its purposes—and thus of man himself—than we did even a dozen years ago—is a proposition disgracefully absurd; and of this any astronomer could assure Mr. Macaulay. Indeed, to our own mind, the *only* irrefutable argument in support of the soul's immortality—or, rather, the only conclusive proof of man's alternate dissolution and re-juvenescence *ad infinitum*—is to be found in analogies deduced from the modern

established theory of the nebular cosmogony.\* Mr. Macaulay, in short, has forgotten that he frequently forgets, or neglects, the very gist of his subject. He has forgotten that analogical evidence cannot, at all times, be discoursed of as if identical with proof direct. Throughout the whole of his treatise he has made no distinction whatever.

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## CHARLES LEVER,†

**T**HE first point to be observed in the consideration of "Charles O'Malley" is the great *popularity* of the work. We believe that in this respect it has surpassed even the inimitable compositions of Mr. Dickens. At all events it has met with a most extensive sale; and, although the graver journals have avoided its discussion, the ephemeral press has been nearly if not quite unanimous in its praise. To be sure the commendation, although unqualified, cannot be said to have abounded in specification, or to have been, in any regard, of a satisfactory character to one seeking precise ideas on the topic of the book's particular merit. It appears to us, in fact, that the cabalistical words "fun," "rollicking," and "devil-may-care," if indeed words they be, have been made to stand in good stead of all critical comment in the case of the work now under review. We first saw these dexterous expressions in a fly-leaf of "Opinions of the Press" appended to the renowned "Harry Lorrequer," by his publisher in Dublin. Thence transmitted, with complacent echo, from critic to critic, through daily, weekly and monthly journals without number, they have come at length to form a pendant and a portion of our author's celebrity—have come to be regarded as sufficient response to the few ignoramuses, who, obstinate as ignorant, and fool-hardy as obstinate, venture to propound a question or two about the true claims of "Harry Lorrequer" or the justice of the pretensions of "Charles O'Malley."

We shall not insult our readers by supposing any one of them

\* This cosmogony *demonstrates* that all existing bodies in the universe are formed of a nebular matter, a rare ethereal medium, pervading space—shows the mode and laws of formation—and *proves* that all things are in a perpetual state of progress—that nothing in nature is *perfected*.

† "Charles O'Malley, the Irish Dragoon." By Harry Lorrequer. With Forty Illustrations by Phiz. Complete in one volume. Carey & Hart: Philadelphia.



unaware of the fact, that a book may be even exceedingly *popular* without *any* legitimate literary merit. This fact can be proven by numerous examples which, now and here, it will be unnecessary and perhaps indecorous to mention. The dogma, then, is absurdly false, that the popularity of a work is *prima facie* evidence of its excellence in some respects; that is to say, the dogma is false if we confine the meaning of excellence (as here of course it must be confined) to excellence in a literary sense. The truth is, that the popularity of a book is *prima facie* evidence of just the converse of the proposition—it is evidence of the book's *demerit*, inasmuch as it shows a "stooping to conquer"—inasmuch as it shows that the author has dealt largely, if not altogether, in matters which are susceptible of appreciation by the mass of mankind—by uneducated thought—by uncultivated taste, by unrefined and unguided passion. So long as the world retains its present point of civilization, so long will it be almost an axiom that no extensively *popular* book, in the right application of the term, can be a work of high merit, *as regards those particulars of the work which are popular*. A book may be readily sold, may be universally read, for the sake of some half or two-thirds of its matter, which half or two-thirds may be susceptible of popular appreciation, while the one-half or one-third remaining may be the delight of the highest intellect and genius, and absolute *caviare* to the rabble. And just as

"Omne tulit punctum qui miscuit utile dulci,"

so will the writer of fiction, who looks most sagaciously to his own *interest*, combine all votes by intermingling with his loftier efforts such amount of less ethereal matter as will give general currency to his composition. And here we shall be pardoned for quoting some observations of the English artist, H. Howard. Speaking of *imitation*, he says :

"The pleasure that results from it, even when employed upon the most ordinary materials, will always render that property of our art the most attractive with the majority, because it may be enjoyed with the least mental exertion. *All* men are in some degree judges of it. The cobbler in his own line may criticise Apelles; and popular opinions are never to be wholly disregarded concerning that which is addressed to the public—who, to a certain extent, are generally right; although as the language of the refined can never be intelligible to the uneducated, so the higher styles of art can never be acceptable to the multitude. In proportion as a work rises in the scale of intellect, it must necessarily become limited in the number of its admirers. For this reason the judicious artist, even in his loftiest efforts, will endeavour to introduce some of

those qualities which are interesting to all, as a passport for those of a more intellectual character."

And these remarks upon painting—remarks which are mere truisms in themselves—embody nearly the whole *rationale* of the topic now under discussion. It may be added, however, that the *skill* with which the author addresses the lower taste of the populace, is often a source of pleasure, because of admiration, to a taste higher and more refined, and may be made a point of comment and of commendation by the critic.

In our review of "Barnaby Rudge," we were prevented, through want of space, from showing how Mr. Dickens had so well succeeded in uniting all suffrages. What we have just said, however, will suffice upon this point. While he has appealed, in innumerable regards, to the most exalted intellect, he has meanwhile invariably touched a certain string whose vibrations are omnipotent. We allude to his powers of *imitation*—that species of imitation to which Mr. Howard has reference—the *faithful* depicting of what is called still-life, and particularly of *character* in humble condition. It is his close observation and imitation of nature here which have rendered him popular, while his higher qualities, with the ingenuity evinced in addressing the general taste, have secured him the good word of the informed and intellectual.

But this is an important point upon which we desire to be distinctly understood. We wish here to record our positive dissent (be that dissent worth what it may) from a very usual opinion—the opinion that Mr. Dickens has done justice to his own genius—that any man ever failed to do grievous wrong to his own genius—in appealing to the popular judgment *at all*. As a matter of pecuniary policy alone, is any such appeal defensible? But we speak, of course, in relation to fame—in regard to that

"—— spur which the true spirit doth raise  
To scorn delight and live laborious days."

That a perfume should be found by any "true spirit" in the incense of mere popular applause, is, to our own apprehension at least, a thing inconceivable, inappreciable,—a paradox which gives the lie unto itself—a mystery more profound than the well of Democritus. Mr. Dickens has no more business with the rabble than a seraph with a *chapeau de bras*. What's Hecuba to him or he to

Hecuba? What is he to Jacques Bonhomme\* or Jacques Bonhomme to him? The higher genius is a rare gift and divine. Ἄπολλον οὐ παντὶ φαίνεται, ὅς μιν ἴδῃ, μέγας οὗτος—not to all men Apollo shows himself; *he is alone great* who beholds him.† And his greatness has its office God-assigned. But that office is not a low communion with low, or even with ordinary intellect. The holy—the electric spark of genius is the medium of intercourse between the noble and more noble mind. For lesser purposes there are humbler agents. There are puppets enough, able enough, willing enough, to perform in literature the little things to which we have had reference. For one Fouqué there are fifty Molières. For one Angelo there are five hundred Jan Steens. For one Dickens there are five million Smollets, Fieldings, Marryats, Arthurs, Cocktons, Bogtons, and Frogtons.

It is, in brief, the duty of all whom circumstances have led into criticism—it is, at least, a duty from which *we* individually shall never shrink—to uphold the true dignity of genius, to combat its degradation, to plead for the exercise of its powers in those bright fields which are its legitimate and peculiar province, and which for it alone lie gloriously outspread.

But to return to "Charles O'Malley," and its popularity. We have endeavoured to show that this latter must not be considered in any degree as the measure of its merit, but should rather be understood as indicating a deficiency in this respect, when we bear in mind, as we should do, the highest aims of intellect in fiction. A slight examination of the work (for in truth it is worth no more) will sustain us in what we have said. The plot is exceedingly meagre. Charles O'Malley, the hero, is a young orphan Irishman, living in Galway county, Ireland, in the house of his uncle Godfrey, to whose sadly encumbered estates the youth is heir apparent and presumptive. He becomes enamoured, while on a visit to a neighbour, of Miss Lucy Dashwood, and finds a rival in a Captain Hammersley. Some words carelessly spoken by Lucy, inspire him with a desire for military renown. After sojourning, therefore, for a brief period, at Dublin University, he obtains a commission and proceeds to the Peninsula, with the British army under Wellington. Here he distinguishes himself; is promoted; and meets frequently with Miss Dashwood, whom obstinately, and in spite of the lady's

\* Nickname for the populace in the middle ages.

† Callimachus—*Hymn to Apollo*.

own acknowledgment of love for himself, he supposes in love with Hammersley. Upon the storming of Ciudad Rodrigo he returns home; finds his uncle, of course, *just* dead; and sells his commission to disencumber the estate. Presently Napoleon escapes from Elba, and our hero, obtaining a staff appointment under Picton, returns to the Peninsula, is present at Waterloo (where Hammersley is killed), saves the life of Lucy's father for the second time, as he has already twice saved that of Lucy herself; is rewarded by the hand of the latter; and making his way back to O'Malley Castle, "lives happily all the rest of his days."

In and about this plot (if such it may be called) there are more absurdities than we have patience to enumerate. The author, or narrator, for example, is supposed to be Harry Lorrequer as far as the end of the preface, which by the way, is one of the best portions of the book. O'Malley then tells his own story. But the publishing office of the "Dublin University Magazine" (in which the narrative originally appeared) having been burned down, there ensues a sad confusion of identity between O'Malley and Lorrequer, so that it is difficult, for the nonce, to say which is which. In the want of copy consequent upon the disaster, James, the novelist, comes in to the relief of Lorrequer, or perhaps of O'Malley, with one of the flattest and most irrelevant of love-tales. Meantime, in the story proper are repetitions without end. We have already said that the hero *saves the life of his mistress twice, and of her father twice*. But not content with this, he has *two mistresses, and saves the life of both, at different periods, in precisely the same manner*—that is to say, by causing his horse, in each instance, to perform a Munchausen side-leap, at the moment when a spring forward would have impelled him upon his beloved. And then we have one unending, undeviating succession of junketings, in which "devilled kidneys" are never by any accident found wanting. The unctious and pertinacity with which the author discusses what he chooses to denominate "devilled kidneys," are indeed edifying, to say no more. The truth is, that drinking, telling anecdotes, and devouring "devilled kidneys," may be considered as the sum total, as the *thesis* of the book. Never in the whole course of his eventful life does Mr. O'Malley get "two or three assembled together" without seducing them forthwith to a table, and placing before them a dozen of wine and a dish of "devilled kidneys." This accomplished, the parties begin what seems to be the business of the

author's existence—the narration of unusually broad tales—like those of the Southdown mutton. And here, in fact, we have the plan of that whole work of which the "United Service Gazette" has been pleased to vow it "would rather be the author than of all the 'Pickwicks' and 'Nicklebys' in the world"—a sentiment which we really blush to say has been echoed by many respectable members of our own press. The general plot or narrative is a mere thread upon which after-dinner anecdotes, some good, some bad, some utterly worthless, and *not one truly original*, are strung with about as much method, and about half as much dexterity, as we see ragged urchins employ in stringing the kernels of nuts.

It would, indeed, be difficult to convey to one who has not examined this production for himself, any idea of the exceedingly rough, clumsy, and inartistical manner in which even this bald conception is carried out. The stories are absolutely dragged in by the ears. So far from finding them result naturally or plausibly from the conversation of the interlocutors, even the blindest reader may perceive the author's struggling and blundering effort to introduce them. It is rendered quite evident that they were originally "on hand," and that "O'Malley" has been concocted for their introduction. Among other *niaiseries* we observe the silly trick of whetting appetite by delay. The conversation over the "kidneys" is brought, for example, to such a pass that one of the speakers is called upon for a story, which he forthwith declines for any reason, or for none. At a subsequent "broil" he is again pressed, and again refuses, and it is not until the reader's patience is fairly exhausted, and he has consigned both the story and its author to Hades, that the gentleman in question is prevailed upon to discourse. The only conceivable result of this *fanfarronade* is the ruin of the tale when told, through exaggerating anticipation respecting it.

The anecdotes thus narrated being the staple of the book, and the awkward manner of their interlocution having been pointed out, it but remains to be seen what the anecdotes are, in themselves, and what is the merit of their narration. And here, let it not be supposed that we have any design to deprive the devil of his due. There are several very excellent anecdotes in "Charles O'Malley" very cleverly and pungently told. Many of the scenes in which Monsoon figures are rich—less, however, from the scenes themselves, than from the piquant, but by no means original character of Monsoon—a drunken, maudlin, dishonest old major, given to

communicativeness and mock morality over his cups, and not over-careful in detailing adventures which tell against himself. One or two of the college pictures are unquestionably good, but might have been better. In general, the reader is made to feel that fine subjects have fallen into unskilful hands. By way of instancing this assertion, and at the same time of conveying an idea of the tone and character of the stories, we will quote one of the shortest, and assuredly one of the best:—

“‘Ah, by-the-by, how’s the Major?’

“‘Charming: only a little bit in a scrape just now. Sir Arthur—Lord Wellington, I mean—had him up for his fellows being caught pillaging, and gave him a devil of a rowing a few days ago.’

“‘Very disorderly corps, yours, Major O’Shaughnessy,’ said the general; ‘more men up for punishment than any regiment in the service.’

“‘Shaugh muttered something, but his voice was lost in a loud cock-a-doo-doo-doo, that some bold chanticleer set up at the moment.

“‘If the officers do their duty, Major O’Shaughnessy, these acts of insubordination do not occur.’

“‘Cock-a-doo-doo-doo,’ was the reply. Some of the staff found it hard not to laugh; but the general went on—

“‘If, therefore, the practice does not cease, I’ll draft the men into West India regiments.’

“‘Cock-a-doo-doo-doo!’

“‘And if any articles pillaged from the inhabitants are detected in the quarters, or about the persons of the troops—’

“‘Cock-a-doo-doo-doo!’ screamed louder here than ever.

“‘Damn that cock—where is it?’

“‘There was a general look around on all sides, which seemed in vain; when a tremendous repetition of the cry resounded from O’Shaughnessy’s coat-pocket: thus detecting the valiant Major himself in the very practice of his corps. There was no standing this: every one burst out into a peal of laughter; and Lord Wellington himself could not resist, but turned away muttering to himself as he went—‘Damned robbers every man of them,’ while a final war-note from the Major’s pocket closed the interview.”

Now this is an anecdote at which every one will laugh; but its effect might have been vastly heightened by putting a few words of grave morality and reprobation of the conduct of his troops, into the mouth of O’Shaughnessy, upon whose character they would have told well. The cock, in interrupting the thread of his discourse, would thus have afforded an excellent context. We have scarcely a reader, moreover, who will fail to perceive the want of tact shown in dwelling upon the *mirth* which the anecdote occasioned. The error here is precisely like that of a man’s laughing at his own spoken jokes. Our author is uniformly guilty of this mistake. He has an absurd fashion, also, of informing the reader, at

the conclusion of each of his anecdotes, that, however good the anecdote might be, he (the reader) cannot enjoy it to the full extent in default of the *manner* in which it was orally narrated. He has no business to say anything of the kind. It is his duty to convey the manner not less than the matter of his narratives.

But we may say of these latter that, in general, they have the air of being *remembered* rather than invented. No man who has seen much of the rough life of the camp will fail to recognise among them many very old acquaintances. Some of them are as ancient as the hills, and have been, time out of mind, the common property of the bivouac. They have been narrated orally all the world over. The chief merit of the writer is, that he has been the first to collect and to print them. It is observable, in fact, that the second volume of the work is very far inferior to the first. The author seems to have exhausted his whole hoarded store in the beginning. His conclusion is barren indeed, and but for the historical details (for which he has no claim to merit) would be especially prosy and dull. *Now the true invention never exhausts itself.* It is mere cant and ignorance to talk of the possibility of the really imaginative man's "writing himself out." His soul but derives nourishment from the streams that flow therefrom. As well prate about the aridity of the eternal ocean, *εξ ουπερ παντες ποταμοι.* So long as the universe of thought shall furnish matter for novel combination, so long will the spirit of true genius be original, be exhaustless—be itself.

A few cursory observations. The book is filled to overflowing with songs of very doubtful excellence, the most of which are put into the mouth of Mickey Free, an amusing Irish servant of O'Malley's, and are given as his impromptu effusions. The subject of the improvisos is always the matter in hand at the moment of composition. The author evidently prides himself upon his poetical powers, about which the less we say the better; but if anything were wanting to assure us of his absurd ignorance and inappreciation of Art, we should find the fullest assurance in the mode in which these doggerel verses are introduced.

The occasional sentiment with which the volumes are interspersed there is an absolute necessity for skipping.

Can anybody tell us what is meant by the affectation of the word *L'envoy* which is made the heading of two prefaces?

That portion of the account of the battle of Waterloo which gives O'Malley's experiences while a prisoner, and in close juxtaposition

position to Napoleon, bears evident traces of having been translated, and very literally too, from a French manuscript.

The English of the work is sometimes even amusing. We have continually, for example, *eat*, the present, for *ate*, the perfect—page 17. At page 16 we have this delightful sentence: "Captain Hammersley, however, *never* took further notice of me, but continued to recount, for the amusement of those *about*, several excellent stories of his military career, which I confess were heard with every *test* of delight by all save me." At page 357 we have some sage talk about "the entire of the army;" and at page 368 the accomplished O'Malley speaks of "*drawing* a last look upon his sweetheart." These things arrest our attention as we open the book at random. It abounds in them, and in vulgarisms even much worse than they.

But why speak of vulgarisms of language? There is a disgusting vulgarism of thought which pervades and contaminates this whole production, and from which a delicate or lofty mind will shrink as from a pestilence. Not the least repulsive manifestation of this leprosy is to be found in the author's blind and grovelling worship of mere rank. Of the Prince Regent, that filthy compound of all that is bestial—that lazarhouse of all moral corruption—he scruples not to speak in terms of the grossest adulation—sneering at Edmund Burke in the same villanous breath in which he extols the talents, the graces and the *virtues* of George the Fourth! That any man, to-day, can be found so degraded in heart as to style this reprobate, "one who, in every feeling of his nature, and in every feature of his deportment was every inch a prince"—is matter for grave reflection and sorrowful debate. The American, at least, who shall peruse the concluding pages of the book now under review, and not turn in disgust from the base sycophancy which infects them, is unworthy of his country and his name. But the truth is, that a gross and contracted soul renders itself unquestionably manifest in almost every line of the composition.

And this—*this* is the *work*, in respect to which its author, aping the airs of intellect, prates about his "haggard cheek," his "sunken eye," his "aching and tired head," "his nights of toil," and (good heavens!) "his days of thought!" That the thing is popular we grant—while that we cannot deny the fact, we grieve. But the career of true taste is onward—and now moves more vigorously onward than ever—and the period, perhaps, is not hopelessly distant



when in decrying the mere balderdash of such matters as "Charles O'Malley," we shall do less violence to the feelings and judgment even of the populace, than, we much fear, has been done in this article.

### CHARLES DICKENS.\*

**W**E often hear it said, of this or of that proposition, that it may be good in theory, but will not answer in practice; and in such assertions we find the substance of all the sneers at critical art which so gracefully curl the upper lips of a tribe which is beneath it. We mean the small geniuses—the literary Titmice—animalculæ which judge of merit solely by *result*, and boast of the solidity, tangibility, and infallibility of the test which they employ. The worth of a work is most accurately estimated, they assure us, by the number of those who peruse it; and "does a book sell?" is a query embodying, in their opinion, all that need be said or sung on the topic of its fitness for sale. We should as soon think of maintaining, in the presence of these creatures, the *dictum* of Anaxagoras, that snow is black, as of disputing, for example, the profundity of that genius which, in a run of five hundred nights, has rendered itself evident in "London Assurance." "What," cry they, "are critical precepts to us, or to anybody? Were we to observe all the critical rules in creation we should still be unable to write a good book"—a point, by the way, which we shall not now pause to deny. "Give us *results*," they vociferate, "for we are plain men of common sense. We contend for fact instead of fancy—for practice in opposition to theory."

The mistake into which the Titmice have been innocently led, however, is precisely that of dividing the practice which they would uphold, from the theory to which they would object. They should have been told in infancy, and thus prevented from exposing themselves in old age, that theory and practice are in so much *one*, that the former implies or includes the latter. A theory is only good as such, in proportion to its reducibility to practice. If the

\* "Barnaby Rudge." By Charles Dickens, (Boz). Author of "The Old Curiosity Shop," "Pickwick," "Oliver Twist," etc., etc. With numerous Illustrations, by Cattermole, Browne and Sibson. Lea & Blanchard: Philadelphia.

practice fail, it is because the theory is imperfect. To say what they are in the daily habit of saying—that such or such a matter may be good in theory but is false in practice,—is to perpetrate a bull—to commit a paradox—to state a contradiction in terms—in plain words, to tell a lie *which is a lie at sight* to the understanding of anything bigger than a Titmouse.

But we have no idea, just now, of persecuting the Tittlebats by too close a scrutiny into their little opinions. It is not our purpose, for example, to press them with so grave a weapon as the *argumentum ad absurdum*, or to ask them why, if the popularity of a book be in fact the measure of its worth, we should not be at once in condition to admit the inferiority of “Newton’s Principia” to “Hoyle’s Games;” of “Ernest Maltravers” to “Jack-the-Giant-Killer,” or “Jack Sheppard,” or “Jack Brag;” and of “Dick’s Christian Philosopher” to “Charlotte Temple,” or the “Memoirs of de Grammont,” or to one or two dozen other works which must be nameless. Our present design is but to speak, at some length, of a book which in so much concerns the Titmice, that it affords them the very kind of demonstration which they chiefly affect—*practical* demonstration—of the fallacy of one of their favourite dogmas; we mean the dogma that no work of fiction can fully suit, at the same time, the critical and the popular taste; in fact, that the disregarding or contravening of critical rule is absolutely essential to success, beyond a certain and very limited extent, with the public at large. And if, in the course of our random observations—for we have no space for systematic review—it should appear, incidentally, that the vast popularity of “Barnaby Rudge” must be regarded less as the measure of its value, than as the legitimate and inevitable result of certain well-understood critical propositions reduced by genius into practice, there will appear nothing more than what has before become apparent in the “Vicar of Wakefield” of Goldsmith, or in the “Robinson Crusoe” of De Foe—nothing more, in fact, than what is a truism to all but the Titmice.

Those who know us will not, from what is here premised, suppose it our intention to enter into any wholesale *laudation* of “Barnaby Rudge.” In truth, our design may appear, at a cursory glance, to be very different indeed. Boccacini, in his “Advertisements from Parnassus,” tells us that a critic once presented Apollo with a severe censure upon an excellent poem. The god asked him

for the beauties of the work. He replied that he only troubled himself about the errors. Apollo presented him with a sack of unwinnowed wheat, and bade him pick out all the chaff for his pains. Now we have not fully made up our minds that the god was in the right. We are not sure that the limit of critical duty is not very generally misapprehended. *Excellence* may be considered an axiom, or a proposition which becomes self-evident just in proportion to the clearness or precision with which it is *put*. If it fairly exists, in this sense, it requires no farther elucidation. It is not excellence if it need to be demonstrated as such. To point out too particularly the beauties of a work, is to admit, tacitly, that these beauties are not wholly admirable. Regarding, then, excellence as that which is capable of self-manifestation, it but remains for the critic to show when, where, and how it fails in becoming manifest; and, in this showing, it will be the fault of the book itself if what of beauty it contains be not, at least, placed in the fairest light. In a word, we may assume, notwithstanding a vast deal of pitiable cant upon this topic, that in pointing out frankly the errors of a work, we do nearly all that is critically necessary in displaying its merits. In teaching what perfection *is*, how, in fact, shall we more rationally proceed than in specifying what it *is not*?

The plot of "Barnaby Rudge" runs thus: About a hundred years ago, Geoffrey Haredale and John Chester were schoolmates in England—the former being the scape-goat and drudge of the latter. Leaving school, the boys become friends, with much of the old understanding. Haredale loves; Chester deprives him of his mistress. The one cherishes the most deadly hatred; the other merely contemns and avoids. By routes widely different both attain mature age. Haredale, remembering his old love, and still cherishing his old hatred, remains a bachelor and is poor. Chester, among other crimes, is guilty of the seduction and heartless abandonment of a gipsy-girl, who, after the desertion of her lover, gives birth to a son, and, falling into evil courses, is finally hung at Tyburn. The son is received and taken charge of at an inn called the Maypole, upon the borders of Epping forest, and about twelve miles from London. This inn is kept by one John Willet, a burly-headed and very obtuse little man, who has a son Joe, and who employs his *protégé*, under the single name of Hugh, as perpetual hostler at the inn. Hugh's father marries, in the meantime, a rich *parvenue*, who soon dies, but not before having presented Mr.

Chester with a boy, Edward. The father (a thoroughly selfish man-of-the-world, whose model is Chesterfield), educates this son at a distance, seeing him rarely, and calling him to the paternal residence, at London, only when he has attained the age of twenty-four or five. He, the father, has, long ere this time, spent the fortune brought him by his wife, having been living upon his wits and a small annuity for some eighteen years. The son is recalled chiefly that by marrying an heiress, on the strength of his own personal merit and the reputed wealth of old Chester, he may enable the latter to continue his gaieties in old age. But of this design, as well as of his poverty, Edward is kept in ignorance for some three or four years after his recall; when the father's discovery of what he considers an inexpedient love-entanglement on the part of the son, induces him to disclose the true state of his affairs, as well as the real tenour of his intentions.

Now the love-entanglement of which we speak, is considered inexpedient by Mr. Chester for two reasons—the first of which is, that the lady beloved is the orphan niece of his old enemy, Haredale, and the second is, that Haredale (although in circumstances, which have been very much and unexpectedly improved during the preceding twenty-two years) is still insufficiently wealthy to meet the views of Mr. Chester.

We say that, about twenty-two years before the period in question, there came an unlooked-for change in the worldly circumstances of Haredale. This gentleman has an elder brother, Reuben, who has long possessed the family inheritance of the Haredales, residing at a mansion called "The Warren," not far from the Maypole Inn, which is itself a portion of the estate. Reuben is a widower, with one child, a daughter, Emma. Besides this daughter, there are living with him a gardener, a steward (whose name is Rudge), and two women servants, one of whom is the wife of Rudge. On the night of the nineteenth of March, 1733, Rudge murders his master for the sake of a large sum of money which he is known to have in possession. During the struggle, Mr. Haredale grasps the cord of an alarm-bell which hangs within his reach, but succeeds in sounding it only once or twice, when it is severed by the knife of the ruffian, who then, completing his bloody business, and securing the money, proceeds to quit the chamber. While doing this, however, he is disconcerted by meeting the gardener, whose pallid countenance evinces

suspicion of the deed committed. The murderer is thus forced to kill his fellow servant. Having done so, the idea strikes him of transferring the burden of the crime from himself. He dresses the corpse of the gardener in his own clothes, puts upon its finger his own ring, and in its pocket his own watch—then drags it to a pond in the grounds, and throws it in. He now returns to the house, and disclosing all to his wife, requests her to become a partner in his flight. Horror-stricken, she falls to the ground. He attempts to raise her. She seizes his wrist, *staining her hand with blood in the attempt*. She renounces him for ever; yet promises to conceal the crime. Alone, he flees the country. The next morning, Mr. Haredale being found murdered, and the steward and gardener being both missing, both are suspected. Mrs. Rudge leaves The Warren, and retires to an obscure lodging in London (where she lives upon an annuity allowed her by Haredale), having given birth, *on the very day after the murder*, to a son, Barnaby Rudge, who proves an idiot, who bears upon his wrist a red mark, and who is born possessed with a maniacal horror of blood.

Some months since the assassination having elapsed, what appears to be the corpse of Rudge is discovered, and the outrage is attributed to the gardener. Yet not universally:—for, as Geoffrey Haredale comes into possession of the estate, there are not wanting suspicions (fomented by Chester) of his own participation in the deed. This taint of suspicion, acting upon his hereditary gloom, together with the natural grief and horror of the atrocity, embitters the whole life of Haredale. He secludes himself at The Warren, and acquires a monomaniac acerbity of temper relieved only by love of his beautiful niece.

Time wears away. Twenty-two years pass by. The niece has ripened into womanhood, and loves young Chester without the knowledge of her uncle or the youth's father. Hugh has grown a stalwart man—the type of man *the animal*, as his father is of man the ultra-civilized. Rudge, the murderer, returns, urged to his undoing by Fate. He appears at the Maypole and inquires stealthily of the circumstances which have occurred at The Warren in his absence. He proceeds to London, discovers the dwelling of his wife, threatens her with the betrayal of her idiot son into vice, and extorts from her the bounty of Haredale. Revolting at such appropriation of such means, the widow, with Barnaby, again

seeks The Warren, renounces the annuity, and refusing to assign any reason for her conduct, states her intention of quitting London for ever, and of burying herself in some obscure retreat—a retreat which she begs Haredale not to attempt discovering. When he seeks her in London the next day, she is gone; and there are no tidings, either of herself or of Barnaby, *until the expiration of five years*—which brings the time up to that of the celebrated “No Popery” Riots of Lord George Gordon.

In the meanwhile, and immediately subsequent to the reappearance of Rudge, Haredale and the elder Chester, each heartily desirous of preventing the union of Edward and Emma, have entered into a covenant, the result of which is that, by means of treachery on the part of Chester, permitted on that of Haredale, the lovers misunderstand each other and are estranged. Joe, also, the son of the inn-keeper, Willet, having been coquetted with, to too great an extent, by Dolly Varden, (the pretty daughter of one Gabriel Varden, a locksmith of Clerkenwell, London), and having been otherwise maltreated at home, enlists in His Majesty’s army and is carried beyond seas to America, not returning until towards the close of the riots. Just before their commencement, Rudge, in a midnight prowling about the scene of his atrocity, is encountered by an individual who had been familiar with him in earlier life, while living at The Warren. This individual, terrified at what he supposes, very naturally, to be the ghost of the murderer, Rudge, relates his adventure to his companions at the Maypole, and John Willet conveys the intelligence, forthwith, to Mr. Haredale. Connecting the apparition, in his own mind, with the peculiar conduct of Mrs. Rudge, this gentleman imbibes a suspicion, at once, of the true state of affairs. This suspicion (which he mentions to no one) is, moreover, very strongly confirmed by an occurrence happening to Varden, the locksmith, who, visiting the woman late one night, finds her in communion of a nature apparently most confidential, with a ruffian whom the locksmith knows to be such, without knowing the man himself. Upon an attempt, on the part of Varden, to seize this ruffian, he is thwarted by Mrs. R.; and upon Haredale’s inquiring minutely into the personal appearance of the man, he is found to accord with Rudge. We have already shown that the ruffian was in fact Rudge himself. Acting upon the suspicion thus aroused, Haredale watches, by night, alone, in the deserted house formerly occupied by Mrs. R.,

in hope of here coming upon the murderer, and makes other exertions with the view of arresting him ; but all in vain.

It is, also, at the conclusion of *the five years*, that the hitherto uninvaded retreat of Mrs. Rudge is disturbed by a message from her husband, demanding money. He has discovered her abode by accident. Giving him what she has at the time, she afterwards eludes him, and hastens, with Barnaby, to bury herself in the crowd of London, until she can find opportunity again to seek retreat in some more distant region of England. But the riots have now begun. The idiot is beguiled into joining the mob, and becoming separated from his mother (who growing ill through grief, is borne to a hospital) meets with his old playmate Hugh, and becomes with him a ringleader in the rebellion.

The riots proceed. A conspicuous part is borne in them by one Simon Tappertit, a fantastic and conceited little apprentice of Varden's, and a sworn enemy to Joe Willet, who has rivalled him in the affection of Dolly. A hangman, Dennis, is also very busy amid the mob. Lord George Gordon, and his secretary Gashford, with John Grueby, his servant, appear, of course, upon the scene. Old Chester, who, during the five years, has become Sir John, instigates Gashford, who has received personal insult from Haredale, (a Catholic, and consequently obnoxious to the mob) to procure the burning of The Warren, and to abduct Emma during the excitement ensuing. The mansion is burned, (Hugh, who also fancies himself wronged by Haredale, being chief actor in the outrage), and Miss H. carried off, in company with Dolly, who had long lived with her, and whom Tappertit abducts upon his own responsibility. Rudge, in the meantime, finding the eye of Haredale upon him, (since he has become aware of the watch kept nightly at his wife's), goaded by the dread of solitude, and fancying that his sole chance of safety lies in joining the rioters, hurries upon their track to the doomed Warren. He arrives too late—the mob have departed. Skulking about the ruins he is discovered by Haredale, and finally captured without a struggle, within the glowing walls of the very chamber in which the deed was committed. He is conveyed to prison, where he meets and recognizes Barnaby, who had been captured as a rioter. The mob assail and burn the jail. The father and son escape. Betrayed by Dennis, both are again retaken, and Hugh shares their fate. In Newgate, Dennis, through accident, discovers the parentage of Hugh, and an

effort is made in vain to interest Chester in behalf of his son. Finally, Varden procures the pardon of Barnaby; but Hugh, Rudge, and Dennis are hung. At the eleventh hour, Joe returns from abroad with one arm. In company with Edward Chester, he performs prodigies of valour (during the last riots) on behalf of the government. The two, with Haredale and Varden, rescue Emma and Dolly. A double marriage, of course, takes place; for Dolly has repented her fine airs, and the prejudices of Haredale are overcome. Having killed Chester in a duel, he quits England for ever, and ends his days in the seclusion of an Italian convent. Thus, after summary disposal of the understrappers, ends the drama of "Barnaby Rudge."

We have given, as may well be supposed, but a very meagre outline of the story, and we have given it in the simple or natural sequence. That is to say, we have related the events, as nearly as might be, in the order of their occurrence. But this order would by no means have suited the purpose of the novelist, whose design has been to maintain the secret of the murder, and the consequent mystery which encircles Rudge, and the actions of his wife, until the catastrophe of his discovery by Haredale. The *thesis* of the novel may thus be regarded as based upon curiosity. Every point is so arranged as to perplex the reader, and whet his desire for elucidation:—for example, the first appearance of Rudge at the Maypole; his questions; his persecution of Mrs. R.; the ghost seen by the frequenter of the Maypole; and Haredale's impressive conduct in consequence. What *we* have told, in the very beginning of our digest, in regard to the shifting of the gardener's dress, is sedulously kept from the reader's knowledge until he learns it from Rudge's own confession in jail. We say sedulously; for, *the intention once known*, the *traces* of the design can be found upon every page. There is an amusing and exceedingly ingenious instance, at page 145, where Solomon Daisy describes his adventure with the ghost.

"'It was a ghost—a spirit,' cried Daisy.

"'Whose?' they all three asked together.

"'In the excess of his emotion (for he fell back trembling in his chair and waved his hand as if entreating them to question him no farther) *his answer was lost upon all* but old John Willet, who happened to be seated close beside him.

"'Who!' cried Parkes and Tom Cobb—'Who was it?'

"'Gentlemen,' said Mr. Willet, after a long pause, 'you needn't ask. The likeness of a murdered man. This is the nineteenth of March.'

"A profound silence ensued."



The impression here skilfully conveyed is, that the ghost seen is that of Reuben Haredale; and the mind of the not too-acute reader is at once averted from the true state of the case—from the murderer, Rudge, living in the body.

Now there can be no question that, by such means as these, many points which are comparatively insipid in the natural sequence of our digest, and which would have been comparatively insipid even if given in full detail in a natural sequence, are endued with the interest of mystery; but neither can it be denied that a vast many more points are at the same time deprived of all effect, and become null, through the impossibility of comprehending them without the key. The author, who, cognizant of his plot, writes with this cognizance continually operating upon him, and thus *writes to himself* in spite of himself, does not, of course, feel that much of what is effective to his own informed perception, must necessarily be lost upon his uninformed readers; and he himself is never in condition, as regards his own work, to bring the matter to test. But the reader may easily satisfy himself of the validity of our objection. Let him *re-peruse* "Barnaby Rudge," and with a pre-comprehension of the mystery, these points of which we speak break out in all directions like stars, and throw quadruple brilliance over the narrative—a brilliance which a correct taste will at once declare unprofitably sacrificed at the shrine of the keenest interest of mere mystery.

The design of *mystery*, however, being once determined upon by an author, it becomes imperative, first, that no undue or inartistical means be employed to conceal the secret of the plot; and, secondly, that the secret be well kept. Now, when, at page 16, we read that "the body of *poor Mr. Rudge, the steward, was found*" months after the outrage, &c., we see that Mr. Dickens has been guilty of no misdemeanour against Art in stating what was not the fact, since the falsehood is put into the mouth of Solomon Daisy, and given merely as the impression of this individual and of the public. The writer has not asserted it in his own person, but ingeniously conveyed an idea (false in itself, yet a belief in which is necessary for the effect of the tale) by the mouth of one of his characters. The case is different, however, when Mrs. Rudge is repeatedly denominated "the widow." It is the author who, himself, frequently so terms her. This is disingenuous and inartistical: accidentally so, of course. We speak of the matter merely by

way of illustrating our point, and as an oversight on the part of Mr. Dickens.

That the secret be well kept is obviously necessary. A failure to preserve it until the proper moment of *dénouement*, throws all into confusion, so far as regards the *effect* intended. If the mystery leak out, against the author's will, his purposes are immediately at odds and ends; for he proceeds upon the supposition that certain impressions *do* exist, which do *not* exist, in the mind of his readers. We are not prepared to say, so positively as we could wish, whether, by the public at large, the whole *mystery* of the murder committed by Rudge, with the identity of the Maypole ruffian with Rudge himself, was fathomed at any period previous to the period intended, or, if so, whether at a period so early as materially to interfere with the interest designed; but we are forced, through sheer modesty, to suppose this the case; since, by ourselves individually, the secret was distinctly understood immediately upon the perusal of the story of Solomon Daisy, which occurs at the seventh page of this volume of three hundred and twenty-three. In the number of the "Philadelphia Saturday Evening Post" for May the first, 1841, (the tale having then only begun), will be found a *prospective notice* of some length, in which we made use of the following words:—

"That Barnaby is the son of the murderer may not appear evident to our readers—but we will explain. The person murdered is Mr. Reuben Haredale. He was found assassinated in his bed-chamber. His steward (Mr. Rudge, senior), and his gardener (name not mentioned), are missing. At first both are suspected. 'Some months afterward'—here we use the words of the story—'the steward's body, scarcely to be recognised but by his clothes, and the watch and ring he wore—was found at the bottom of a piece of water in the grounds, with a deep gash in the breast, where he had been stabbed by a knife. He was only partly dressed; and all people agreed that he had been sitting up reading in his own room, where there were many traces of blood, and was suddenly fallen upon and killed, before his master.'

"Now, be it observed, it is not the author himself who asserts that the steward's body was found; he has put the words in the mouth of one of his characters. His design is to make it appear, in the *dénouement*, that the steward Rudge first murdered the gardener, then went to his master's chamber, murdered *him*, was interrupted by his (Rudge's) wife, whom he seized and held *by the wrist*, to prevent her giving the alarm—that he then, after possessing himself of the booty desired, returned to the gardener's room, exchanged clothes with him, put upon the corpse his own watch and ring, and secreted it where it was afterwards discovered at so late a period that the features could not be identified."

The differences between our pre-conceived ideas, as here stated, and the actual facts of the story, will be found immaterial. The

gardener was murdered, not before but after his master; and that Rudge's wife seized *him* by the wrist, instead of his seizing *her*, has so much the air of a mistake on the part of Mr. Dickens, that we can scarcely speak of our own version as erroneous. The grasp of a murderer's bloody hand on the wrist of a woman *enceinte*, would have been more likely to produce the effect described (and this everyone will allow) than the grasp of the hand of the woman upon the wrist of the assassin. We may therefore say of our supposition as Talleyrand said of some cockney's bad French—*que s'il ne soit pas Français, assurément donc il le doit être*—that if we did not rightly prophecy, yet, at least, our prophecy *should have been* right.

We are informed in the preface to "Barnaby Rudge" that "no account of the Gordon Riots having been introduced into any work of fiction, and the subject presenting very extraordinary and remarkable features," our author "was led to project this tale." But for this distinct announcement (for Mr. Dickens can scarcely have deceived himself) we should have looked upon the riots as altogether an afterthought. It is evident that they have no necessary connexion with the story. In our digest, which carefully includes all *essentials* of the plot, we have dismissed the doings of the mob in a paragraph. The whole event of the drama would have proceeded as well without as with them. They have even the appearance of being *forcibly* introduced. In our compendium above, it will be seen that we emphasized several allusions to an interval of *five years*. The action is brought up to a certain point. The train of events is, so far, uninterrupted—nor is there any apparent need of interruption—yet all the characters are now thrown forward for a period of *five years*. And why? We ask in vain. It is not to bestow upon the lovers a more decorous maturity of age—for this is the only possible idea which suggests itself—Edward Chester is already eight-and-twenty, and Emma Haredale would, in America at least, be upon the list of old maids. No—there is no such reason; nor does there appear to be any one more plausible than that, as it is now the year of our Lord 1775, an advance of five years will bring the *dramatis personæ* up to a very remarkable period, affording an admirable opportunity for their display—the period, in short, of the "No Popery" Riots. This was the idea with which we were forcibly impressed in perusal, and which nothing less than Mr. Dickens' positive assurance to the contrary would have been sufficient to eradicate.

It is, perhaps, but one of a thousand instances of the disadvantages, both to the author and the public, of the present absurd fashion of periodical novel-writing, that our author had not sufficiently considered or determined upon *any* particular plot when he began the story now under review. In fact, we see, or fancy that we see, numerous traces of indecision—traces which a dexterous supervision of the complete work might have enabled him to erase. We have already spoken of the intermission of a lustrum. The opening speeches of old Chester are by far too *truly* gentlemanly for his subsequent character. The wife of Varden, also, is too wholesale a shrew to be converted into the quiet wife—the original design was to punish her. At page 16 we read thus—Solomon Daisy is telling his story :—

“ ‘I put as good a face upon it as I could, and muffling myself up, started out with a lighted lantern in one hand and the key of the church in the other’—at this point of the narrative the dress of the strange man rustled as if he had turned to hear more distinctly.”

Here the design is to call the reader's attention to a *point* in the tale; but no subsequent explanation is made. Again a few lines below :—

“The houses were all shut up, and the folks in-doors, and perhaps there is only one man in the world who knows how dark it really was.”

Here the intention is still more evident, but there is no result. Again, at page 54, the idiot draws Mr. Chester to the window, and directs his attention to the clothes hanging upon the lines in the yard :—

“ ‘Look down,’ he said softly ; ‘do you mark how they whisper in each other's ears, then dance and leap to make believe they are in sport? Do you see how they stop for a moment, when they think there is no one looking, and mutter among themselves again; and then how they roll and gambol, delighted with the mischief they've been plotting? Look at 'em now! See how they whirl and plunge. And now they stop again, and whisper cautiously together, little thinking, mind, how often I have lain upon the ground and watched them. I say—what is it that they plot and hatch? Do you know?’ ”

Upon perusal of these ravings, we at once supposed them to have allusion to some *real* plotting; and even now we cannot force ourselves to believe them not so intended. They suggested the opinion that Haredale himself would be implicated in the murder, and that the counsellings alluded to might be those of that gentleman with Rudge. It is by no means impossible that some such

conception wavered in the mind of the author. At page 32 we have a confirmation of our idea, when Varden endeavours to arrest the murderer in the house of his wife:—

“ ‘Come back—come back!’ exclaimed the woman, wrestling with and clasping him. ‘Do not touch him on your life. *He carries other lives beside his own.*’ ”

The *dénouement* fails to account for this exclamation.

In the beginning of the story much emphasis is placed upon the two female servants of Haredale, and upon his journey to and from London, as well as upon his wife. We have merely said, in our digest, that he was a widower, italicizing the remark. All these other points are, in fact, singularly irrelevant, in the supposition that the original design has not undergone modification.

Again, at page 57, when Haredale talks of “his dismantled and beggared hearth,” we cannot help fancying that the author had in view some different wrong, or series of wrongs, perpetrated by Chester, than any which appear in the end. This gentleman, too, takes extreme and frequent pains to acquire dominion over the rough Hugh—this matter is particularly insisted upon by the novelist—we look, of course, for some important result—but the filching of a letter is nearly all that is accomplished. That Barnaby’s delight in the desperate scenes of the rebellion is inconsistent with his horror of blood, will strike every reader; and this inconsistency seems to be the consequence of the *after-thought* upon which we have already commented. In fact, the title of the work, the elaborate and pointed manner of the commencement, the impressive description of The Warren, and especially of Mrs. Rudge, go far to show that Mr. Dickens has really deceived himself—that the soul of the plot, as originally conceived, was the murder of Haredale, with the subsequent discovery of the murderer in Rudge—but that this idea was afterwards abandoned, or rather suffered to be merged in that of the Popish riots. The result has been most unfavourable. That which, of itself, would have proved highly effective, has been rendered nearly null by its situation. In the multitudinous outrage and horror of the Rebellion, the *one* atrocity is utterly whelmed and extinguished.

The reasons of this deflection from the first purpose appear to us self-evident. One of them we have already mentioned. The other is that our author discovered, when too late, that *he had anticipated, and thus rendered valueless, his chief effect.* This will

be readily understood. The particulars of the assassination being withheld, the strength of the narrator is put forth, in the beginning of the story, to *whet curiosity* in respect to these particulars; and, so far, he is but in proper pursuance of his main design. But from this intention he unwittingly passes into the error of *exaggerating anticipation*. And error though it be, it is an error wrought with consummate skill. What, for example, could more vividly enhance our impression of the unknown horror enacted, than the deep and enduring gloom of Haredale—than the idiot's inborn awe of blood—or, especially, than the expression of countenance so imaginatively attributed to Mrs. Rudge—"the capacity for expressing terror—something only dimly seen, but never absent for a moment—the shadow of some look to which an instant of intense and most unutterable horror only could have given rise?" But it is a condition of the human fancy that the promises of such words are irredeemable. In the notice before mentioned we thus spoke upon this topic:

This is a conception admirably adapted to whet curiosity in respect to the character of that event which is hinted at as forming the basis of the story. But this observation should not fail to be made—that the anticipation must surpass the reality; that no matter how terrific be the circumstances which, in the *dénouement*, shall appear to have occasioned the expression of countenance worn habitually by Mrs. Rudge, still they will not be able to satisfy the mind of the reader. He will surely be disappointed. The skilful intimation of horror held out by the artist, produces an effect which will deprive his conclusion of all. These intimations—these dark hints of some uncertain evil—are often rhetorically praised as effective—but are only justly so praised where there is *no dénouement* whatever—where the reader's imagination is left to clear up the mystery for itself—and this is not the design of Mr. Dickens.

And, in fact, our author was not long in seeing his precipitancy. He had placed himself in a dilemma from which even his high genius could not extricate him. He at once shifts the main interest—and in truth we do not see what better he could have done. The reader's attention becomes absorbed in the riots, and he fails to observe that what should have been the true catastrophe of the novel, is exceedingly feeble and ineffective.

A few cursory remarks:—Mr. Dickens fails peculiarly in *pure* narration. See, for example, page 296, where the connexion of Hugh and Chester is detailed by Varden. See also in "The Curiosity-Shop," where, when the result is fully known, so many words are occupied in explaining the relationship of the brothers. The effect of the present narrative might have been materially in-

creased by confining the action within the limits of London. The "Notre Dâme" of Hugo affords a fine example of the force which can be gained by concentration, or unity of place. The unity of time is also sadly neglected, to no purpose, in "Barnaby Rudge." That Rudge should so long and so deeply feel the sting of conscience is inconsistent with his brutality. On page 15, the interval elapsing between the murder and Rudge's return, is variously stated at twenty-two and twenty-four years. It may be asked why the inmates of "The Warren" failed to hear the alarm-bell which was heard by Solomon Daisy. The idea of persecution by being tracked, as by blood-hounds, from one spot of quietude to another, is a favourite one with Mr. Dickens. Its effect cannot be denied. The stain upon Barnaby's wrist, caused by fright in the mother at so late a period of gestation as one day before mature parturition, is shockingly at war with all medical experience. When Rudge, escaped from prison, unshackled, with money at command, is in agony at his wife's refusal to perjure herself for his salvation—is it not *queer* that he should demand any other salvation than lay in his heels?

Some of the conclusions of chapters—see pages 40 and 100—seem to have been written for the mere purpose of illustrating tail-pieces.

The leading idiosyncrasy of Mr. Dickens' remarkable humour, is to be found in his *translating the language of gesture, or action, or tone*. For example—

"The cronies nodded to each other, and Mr. Parkes remarked in an under tone, shaking his head meanwhile, *as who should say 'let no man contradict me, for I won't believe him,'* that Willet was in amazing force to-night."

The riots form a series of vivid pictures never surpassed. At page 17, the road between London and the Maypole is described as a horribly rough and dangerous, and at page 97, as an uncommonly smooth and convenient one. At page 116, how comes Chester in possession of the key of Mrs. Rudge's vacated house?

Mr. Dickens' English is usually pure. His most remarkable error is that of employing the adverb "directly" in the sense of "as soon as." For example—"Directly he arrived, Rudge said," &c. Bulwer is uniformly guilty of the same blunder.

It is observable that so original a stylist as our author should occasionally lapse into a gross imitation of what, itself, is a gross

imitation. We mean the manner of Lamb—a manner based in the Latin construction. For example—

“In summer time its pumps suggest to thirsty idlers springs cooler and more sparkling and deeper than other wells; and as they trace the spillings of full pitchers on the heated ground, they snuff the freshness, and, sighing, cast sad looks towards the Thames, and think of baths and boats, and saunter on, despondent.”

The wood-cut *designs* which accompany the edition before us are occasionally good. The copper engravings are pitifully ill-conceived and ill-drawn; and not only this, but are in broad contradiction of the wood-designs and text.

There are many *coincidences* wrought into the narrative—those, for example, which relate to the nineteenth of March; the dream of Barnaby, respecting his father, at the very period when his father is actually in the house; and the dream of Haredale previous to his final meeting with Chester. These things are meant to *insinuate* a fatality which, very properly, is not expressed in plain terms—but it is questionable whether the story derives more in ideality from their introduction, than it might have gained of verisimilitude from their omission.

The *dramatis personæ* sustain the high fame of Mr. Dickens as a delineator of character. Miggs, the disconsolate handmaiden of Varden; Tappertit, his chivalrous apprentice; Mrs. Varden, herself; and Dennis, a hangman—may be regarded as original caricatures, of the highest merit as such. Their traits are founded in acute observation of nature, but are exaggerated to the utmost admissible extent. Miss Haredale and Edward Chester are commonplaces—no effort has been made in their behalf. Joe Willet is a naturally drawn country youth. Stagg is a mere make-weight. Gashford and Gordon are truthfully copied. Dolly Varden is truth itself. Haredale, Rudge, and Mrs. Rudge, are impressive only through the circumstances which surround them. Sir John Chester is, of course, not original, but is a vast improvement upon all his predecessors—his heartlessness is rendered somewhat too amusing, and his end too much that of a man of honour. Hugh is a noble conception. His fierce exultation in his animal powers; his subserviency to the smooth Chester; his mirthful contempt and patronage of Tappertit, and his *brutal* yet firm courage in the hour of death—form a picture to be set in diamonds. Old Willet is not surpassed by any character even among those of Dickens.



He is nature itself—yet a step farther would have placed him in the class of caricatures. His combined conceit and obtusity are indescribably droll, and his peculiar misdirected energy when aroused, is one of the most exquisite touches in all humorous painting. We shall never forget how heartily we laughed at his shaking Solomon Daisy and threatening to put him behind the fire, because the unfortunate little man was too much frightened to articulate. Varden is one of those free, jovial, honest fellows, at charity with all mankind, whom our author is so fond of depicting. And lastly, Barnaby, the hero of the tale—in him we have been somewhat disappointed. We have already said that his delight in the atrocities of the Rebellion is at variance with his horror of blood. But this horror of blood is *inconsequential*; and of this we complain. Strongly insisted upon in the beginning of the narrative, it produces no adequate result. And here how fine an opportunity has Mr. Dickens missed! The conviction of the assassin, after the lapse of twenty-two years, might easily have been brought about through his son's mysterious awe of blood—an awe created in the unborn by the assassination itself—and this would have been one of the finest possible embodiments of the idea which we are accustomed to attach to "poetical justice." The raven, too, intensely amusing as it is, might have been made, more than we now see it, a portion of the conception of the fantastic Barnaby. Its croakings might have been *prophetically* heard in the course of the drama. Its character might have performed, in regard to that of the idiot, much the same part as does, in music, the accompaniment in respect to the air. Each might have been distinct. Each might have differed remarkably from the other. Yet between them there might have been wrought an analogical resemblance, and although each might have existed apart, they might have formed together a whole which would have been imperfect in the absence of either.

From what we have here said—and, perhaps, said without due deliberation—for alas! the hurried duties of the journalist preclude it—there will not be wanting those who will accuse us of a mad design to detract from the pure fame of the novelist. But to such we merely say in the language of heraldry, "ye should wear a plain point sanguine in your arms." If this be understood, well; if not, well again. There lives no man feeling a deeper reverence for genius than ourself. If we have not dwelt so especially upon the high merits as upon the trivial defects of "Barnaby Rudge," we

have already given our reasons for the omission, and these reasons will be sufficiently understood by all whom we care to understand them. The work before us is not, we think, equal to the tale which immediately preceded it; but there are few—very few others to which we consider it inferior. Our chief objection has not, perhaps, been so distinctly stated as we could wish. That this fiction, or indeed that any fiction written by Mr. Dickens, should be based in the excitement and maintenance of curiosity we look upon as a misconception, on the part of the writer, of his own very great yet very peculiar powers. He has done this thing well, to be sure—he would do anything well in comparison with the herd of his contemporaries—but he has not done it so thoroughly well as his high and just reputation would demand. We think that the whole book has been an effort to him—solely through the nature of its design. He has been smitten with an untimely desire for a novel path. The idiosyncrasy of his intellect would lead him, naturally, into the most fluent and simple style of narration. In tales of ordinary sequence he may and will long reign triumphant. He has a *talent* for all things, but no positive *genius* for *adaptation*, and still less for that metaphysical art in which the souls of all mysteries lie. "Caleb Williams" is a far less noble work than "The Old Curiosity-Shop;" but Mr. Dickens could no more have constructed the one than Mr. Godwin could have dreamed of the other.

### LONGFELLOW'S BALLADS.\*

"*L y à parier,*" says Chamfort, "*que toute idée publique, toute convention recue, est une sottise, car elle a convenue au plus grand nombre.*"—One would be safe in wagering that any given public idea is erroneous, for it has been yielded to the clamour of the majority; and this strictly philosophical, although somewhat French assertion, has especial bearing upon the whole race of what are termed maxims and popular proverbs; nine-tenths of which are the quintessence of folly. One of the most deplorably false of them is the antique adage, *De gustibus non est disputandum*—there should be no disputing about taste. Here

\* Ballads and other Poems. By Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Author of "Voices of the Night," "Hyperion," etc: Second Edition. John Owen: Cambridge.

the idea designed to be conveyed is that any one person has as just a right to consider his own taste *the true*, as has any one other—that taste, in itself, in short, is an arbitrary something, amenable to no law, and measurable by no definite rules. It must be confessed, however, that the exceedingly vague and impotent treatises which are alone extant, have much to answer for as regards confirming the general error. Not the least important service which, hereafter, mankind will owe to *Phrenology*, may, perhaps, be recognised in an analysis of the real principles, and a digest of the resulting laws of taste. These principles, in fact, are as clearly traceable, and these laws as readily susceptible of system as are any whatever.

In the meantime, the insane adage above mentioned is in no respect more generally, more stupidly, and more pertinaciously quoted than by the admirers of what is termed the “good old Pope,” or the “good old Goldsmith school” of poetry, in reference to the bolder, more natural, and *more ideal* compositions of such authors as Coëtlogon and Lamartine\* in France; Herder, Körner, and Uhland in Germany; Brun and Baggesen in Denmark; Bellman, Tegnér and Nyberg† in Sweden; Keats, Shelley, Coleridge, and Tennyson in England; Lowell and Longfellow in America. “*De gustibus non,*” say these “good-old-school” fellows; and we have no doubt that their mental translation of the phrase is—“We pity your taste—we pity everybody’s taste but our own.”

It is our purpose to controvert the popular idea that the poets just mentioned owe to novelty, to trickeries of expression, and to other meretricious effects, their appreciation by certain readers:—to demonstrate (for the matter is susceptible of demonstration) that such poetry and *such alone* has fulfilled the legitimate office of the muse; has thoroughly satisfied an earnest and unquenchable desire existing in the heart of man.

This volume of Ballads and Tales includes, with several brief original pieces, a Translation from the Swedish of Tegnér. In attempting (what never should be attempted) a literal version of both the words and the metre of this poem, Professor Longfellow has failed to do justice either to his author or himself. He has striven to do what no man ever did well, and what, from the nature of language itself, never *can* be well done. Unless, for

\* We allude here chiefly to the “David” of Coëtlogon, and *only* to the “*Chute d’un Ange*” of Lamartine.

† C. Julia Nyberg, author of the “*Dikter von Euphrosyne.*”

example, we shall come to have influx of *spondees* in our English tongue, it will always be impossible to construct an English hexameter. Our spondees, or, we should say, our spondaic words, are rare. In the Swedish they are nearly as abundant as in the Latin and Greek. We have only "*compound*," "*context*," "*footfall*," and a few other similar ones. This is the difficulty; and that it *is* so will become evident upon reading "The Children of the Lord's Supper," where the sole *readable* verses are those in which we meet with the rare spondaic dissyllables. We mean to say *readable as hexameters*; for many of them will read very well as mere English dactyls with certain irregularities.

Much as we admire the genius of Mr. Longfellow, we are fully sensible of his many errors of affectation and imitation. His artistical skill is great, and his ideality high. But his conception of the *aims* of poesy is *all wrong*; and this we shall prove at some future day—to our own satisfaction, at least. His didactics are all *out of place*. He has written brilliant poems—by accident; that is to say when permitting his genius to get the better of his conventional habit of thinking—a habit deduced from German study. We do not mean to say that a didactic moral may not be well made the *under-current* of a poetical thesis; but that it can never be well put so obtrusively forth, as in the majority of his compositions. . . .

We have said that Mr. Longfellow's conception of the *aims* of poesy is erroneous; and that thus, labouring at a disadvantage, he does violent wrong to his own high powers; and now the question is, what *are* his ideas of the aims of the Muse, as we gather these ideas from the *general* tendency of his poems? It will be at once evident that, imbued with the peculiar spirit of German song (in pure conventionality) he regards the inculcation of a *moral* as essential. Here we find it necessary to repeat that we have reference only to the *general* tendency of his compositions; for there are some magnificent exceptions, where, as if by accident, he has permitted his genius to get the better of his conventional prejudice. But didacticism is the prevalent *tone* of his song. His invention, his imagery, his all, is made subservient to the elucidation of some one or more points (but rarely of more than one) which he looks upon as *truth*. And that this mode of procedure will find stern defenders should never excite surprise so long as the world is full to overflowing with cant and conventicles.

There are men who will scramble on all fours through the muddiest sloughs of vice to pick up a single apple of virtue. There are things called men who, so long as the sun rolls, will greet with snuffing huzzas every figure that takes upon itself the semblance of truth, even although the figure, in itself only a "stuffed Paddy," be as much out of place as a toga on the statue of Washington, or out of season as rabbits in the days of the dog-star. . . .

We say this with little fear of contradiction. Yet the spirit of our assertion must be more heeded than the letter. Mankind have *seemed* to define Poesy in a thousand, and in a thousand conflicting definitions. But the war is one only of words. Induction is as well applicable to this subject as to the most palpable and utilitarian; and by its sober processes we find that, in respect to compositions which have been really received as poems, the imaginative, or, more popularly, the creative portions alone have ensured them to be so received. Yet these works, on account of these portions, having once been so received and so named, it has happened, naturally and inevitably, that other portions totally unpoetic have not only come to be regarded by the popular voice as poetic, but have been made to serve as false standards of perfection, in the adjustment of other poetical claims. Whatever has been found in whatever has been received as a poem has been blindly regarded as *ex statû* poetic. And this is a species of gross error which scarcely could have made its way into any less intangible topic. In fact, that license which appertains to the Muse herself, it has been thought decorous, if not sagacious to indulge, in all examination of her character. . . .

Poesy is a response—unsatisfactory it is true—but still in some measure a response, to a natural and irrepressible demand. Man being what he is, the time could never have been in which Poesy was not. Its first element is the thirst for supernal BEAUTY—a beauty which is not afforded the soul by any existing collocation of earth's forms—a beauty which, perhaps, *no possible* combination of these forms would fully produce. Its second element is the attempt to satisfy this thirst by *novel* combinations among those forms of beauty which already exist—or by novel combinations of those combinations which our predecessors, toiling in chase of the same phantom, have already set in order. We thus clearly deduce the novelty, the originality, the invention, the imagination, or lastly the creation of BEAUTY, (for the terms as here employed are

synonymous,) as the essence of all Poesy. Nor is this idea so much at variance with ordinary opinion as, at first sight, it may appear. A multitude of antique dogmas on this topic will be found, when divested of extrinsic speculation, to be easily resolvable into the definition now proposed. We do nothing more than present tangibly the vague clouds of the world's idea. We recognise the idea itself floating, unsettled, indefinite, in every attempt which has yet been made to circumscribe the conception of "Poesy" in words. A striking instance of this is observable in the fact that no definition exists, in which either "the beautiful," or some one of those qualities which we have above designated synonymously with "creation," has not been pointed out as the *chief* attribute of the Muse. "Invention," however, or "imagination," is by far more commonly insisted upon. The word *ποίησις* itself (creation) speaks volumes upon this point. Neither will it be amiss here to mention Count Bielfeld's definition of poetry as "*L'art d'exprimer les pensées par la fiction.*" With this definition (of which the philosophy is profound to a certain extent) the German terms *Dichtkunst*, the art of fiction, and *Dichten*, to feign, which are used for "poetry" and "to make verses," are in full and remarkable accordance. It is, nevertheless, in the combination of the two omniprevalent ideas that the novelty, and, we believe, the force of our own proposition is to be found. . . .

The *elements* of that beauty which is felt in sound, *may be* the mutual or common heritage of Earth and Heaven. Contenting ourselves with the firm conviction, that music (in its modifications of rhythm and rhyme) is of so vast a moment to Poesy, as *never* to be neglected by him who is truly poetical—is of so mighty a force in furthering the great aim intended, that he is mad who rejects its assistance—content with this idea, we shall not pause to maintain its absolute essentiality, for the mere sake of rounding a definition. That our definition of poetry will necessarily exclude much of what, through a supine toleration, has been hitherto ranked as poetical, is a matter which affords us not even momentary concern. We address but the thoughtful, and heed only their approval—with our own. If our suggestions are truthful, then "after many days" shall they be understood as truth, even though found in contradiction of *all* that has been hitherto so understood. If false, shall we not be the first to bid them die?

We would reject, of course, all such matters as "Armstrong on

Health," a revolting production ; Pope's "Essay on Man," which may well be content with the title of an "Essay in Rhyme;" "Hudibras" and other merely humorous pieces. We do not gainsay the peculiar merits of either of these latter compositions, but deny them the position held. In a notice of Brainard's Poems, we took occasion to show that the common use of a certain instrument (rhythm), had tended, more than aught else, to confound humorous verse with poetry. The observation is now recalled to corroborate what we have just said in respect to the vast effect or force of melody in itself—an effect which could elevate into even momentary confusion with the highest efforts of mind, compositions such as are the greater number of satires or burlesques. . . .

We have shown our ground of objection to the general *themes* of Professor Longfellow. In common with all who claim the sacred title of poet, he should limit his endeavours to the creation of novel moods of beauty, in form, in colour, in sound, in sentiment ; for over all this wide range has the poetry of words dominion. To what the world terms *prose* may be safely and properly left all else. The artist who doubts of his thesis, may always resolve his doubt by the single question—"might not this matter be as well or better handled in *prose*?" If it *may*, then is it no subject for the Muse. In the general acceptance of the term *Beauty* we are content to rest ; being careful only to suggest that, in our peculiar views, it must be understood as inclusive of *the sublime*.

Of the pieces which constitute the present volume, there are not more than one or two thoroughly fulfilling the ideas we have proposed ; although the volume, as a whole, is by no means so chargeable with didacticism as Mr. Longfellow's previous book. We would mention as poems *nearly true*, "The Village Blacksmith ;" "The Wreck of the Hesperus," and especially "The Skeleton in Armour." In the first-mentioned we have the *beauty* of simple-mindedness as a genuine thesis ; and this thesis is inimitably handled until the concluding stanza, where the spirit of legitimate poesy is aggrieved in the pointed antithetical deduction of a *moral* from what has gone before. In "The Wreck of the Hesperus" we have the *beauty* of child-like confidence and innocence, with that of the father's stern courage and affection. But, with slight exception, those particulars of the storm here detailed are not poetic subjects. Their thrilling *horror* belongs to *prose*, in which it could be far more effectively discussed, as Professor

Longfellow may assure himself at any moment by experiment. There *are* points of a tempest which afford the loftiest and truest poetical themes—points in which pure beauty is found, or, better still, beauty heightened into the sublime, by terror. But when we read, among other similar things, that

“The salt sea was frozen on her breast,  
The salt tears in her eyes,”

we feel, if not positive disgust, at least a chilling sense of the inappropriate. In the “Skeleton in Armour,” we find a pure and perfect thesis artistically treated. We find the beauty of bold courage and self-confidence, of love and maiden devotion, of reckless adventure, and finally of life-contemning grief. Combined with all this, we have numerous *points* of beauty apparently insulated, but all aiding the main effect or impression. The heart is stirred, and the mind does not lament its mal-instruction. The metre is simple, sonorous, well-balanced, and fully adapted to the subject. Upon the whole, there are few truer poems than this. It has but one defect—an important one. The prose remarks prefacing the narrative are really *necessary*. But every work of art should contain within itself all that is requisite for its own comprehension. And this remark is especially true of the ballad. In poems of magnitude the mind of the reader is not, at all times, enabled to include, in one comprehensive survey, the proportions and proper adjustment of the whole. He is pleased, if at all, with particular passages; and the sum of his pleasure is compounded of the sums of the pleasurable sentiments inspired by these individual passages in the progress of perusal. But, in pieces of less extent, the pleasure is *unique*, in the proper acceptance of this term—the understanding is employed, without difficulty, in the contemplation of the picture *as a whole*; and thus its effect will depend, in great measure, upon the perfection of its finish, upon the nice adaptation of its constituent parts, and especially upon what is rightly termed by Schlegel *the unity or totality of interest*. But the practice of prefixing explanatory passages is utterly at variance with such unity. By the prefix, we are either put in possession of the subject of the poem, or some hint, historic fact, or suggestion, is thereby afforded, not included in the body of the piece, which, without the hint, is incomprehensible. In the latter case, while perusing the poem, the reader must



revert, in mind at least, to the prefix, for the necessary explanation. In the former, the poem being a mere paraphrase of the prefix, the interest is divided between the prefix and the paraphrase. In either instance the totality of effect is destroyed.

Of the other original poems in the volume before us, there is none in which the aim of instruction, or *truth*, has not been too obviously substituted for the legitimate aim, *beauty*. We have heretofore taken occasion to say that a didactic moral might be happily made the *under-current* of a poetical theme, and we have treated this point at length, in a review of Moore's "Alciphron;" but the moral thus conveyed is invariably an ill effect when obtruding beyond the upper-current of the thesis itself. Perhaps the worst specimen of this obtrusion is given us by our poet in "Blind Bartimeus," and the "Goblet of Life," where, it will be observed the *sole* interest of the upper-current of meaning depends upon its relation or reference to the under. What we read upon the surface would be *vox et preterea nihil* in default of the moral beneath. The Greek *finales* of "Blind Bartimeus" are an affectation altogether inexcusable. What the small, second-hand, Gibbon-ish pedantry of Byron introduced, is unworthy the imitation of Longfellow.

Of the translations we scarcely think it necessary to speak at all. We regret that our poet will persist in busying himself about such matters. *His* time might be better employed in original conception. Most of these versions are marked with the error upon which we have commented. This error is, in fact, essentially Germanic. "The Luck of Edenhall," however, is a truly beautiful poem; and we say this with all that deference which the opinion of the "Democratic Review" demands. This composition appears to us *one of the very finest*. It has all the free, hearty, *obvious* movement of the true ballad-legend. The greatest force of language is combined in it with the richest imagination, acting in its most legitimate province. Upon the whole, we prefer it even to the "Sword-Song" of Körner. The pointed moral with which it terminates is so exceedingly natural—so perfectly fluent from the incidents—that we have hardly heart to pronounce it in ill taste. We may observe of this ballad, in conclusion, that its subject is more *physical* than is usual in Germany. Its images are rich rather in physical than in moral beauty. And this tendency in Song, is the true one. It is chiefly, if we are not mistaken—

it is chiefly amid forms of physical loveliness (we use the word *forms* in its widest sense as embracing modifications of sound and colour) that the soul seeks the realization of its dreams of BEAUTY. It is to her demand in this sense especially, that the poet, who is wise, will most frequently and most earnestly respond.

"The Children of the Lord's Supper" is, beyond doubt, a true and most beautiful poem in great part, while, in some particulars, it is too metaphysical to have any pretension to the name. We have already objected, briefly, to its metre—the ordinary Latin or Greek Hexameter—dactyls and spondees at random, with a spondee in conclusion. We maintain that the hexameter can never be introduced into our language, from the nature of that language itself. This rhythm demands, *for English ears*, a preponderance of natural spondees. Our tongue has few. Not only does the Latin and Greek, with the Swedish, and some others, abound in them; but the Greek and Roman ear had become reconciled (why or how is unknown) to the reception of artificial spondees—that is to say, spondaic words formed partly of one word and partly of another, or from an excised part of one word. In short, the ancients were content to read *as they scanned*, or nearly so. It may be safely prophesied that we shall never do this; and thus we shall never admit English hexameters. The attempt to introduce them, after the repeated failures of Sir Philip Sidney, and others, is, perhaps, somewhat discreditable to the scholarship of Professor Longfellow. The "Democratic Review," in saying that he has triumphed over difficulties in this rhythm, has been deceived, it is evident, by the facility with which some of these verses may be read. In glancing over the poem, we do not observe a single verse which can be read, *to English ears, as a Greek hexameter*. There are many, however, which can be well read as mere English dactylic verses; such, for example, as the well-known lines of Byron, commencing

"Know ye the | land where the | cypress and | myrtle."

These lines (although full of irregularities) are, in their perfection, formed of three dactyls and a cæsuræ—just as if we should cut short the initial verse of the *Bucolics* thus—

"Tityre | tu patu | læ recu | bans—"

The "myrtle," at the close of Byron's line, is a double rhyme, and must be understood as one syllable.

Now a great number of Professor Longfellow's hexameters are merely these dactylic lines, *continued for two feet*. For example—

“Whispered the | race of the | flowers and | merry on | balancing | branches.”

In this example, also, “branches,” which is a double ending, must be regarded as the *cæsura*, or one syllable, of which alone it has the force.

As we have already alluded, in one or two regards, to a notice of these poems which appeared in the “Democratic Review,” we may as well here proceed with some few further comments upon the article in question—with whose general tenour we are happy to agree.

The Review speaks of “Maidenhood” as a poem, “not to be understood but at the expense of more time and trouble than a song can justly claim.” We are scarcely less surprised at this opinion from Mr. Langtree than we were at the condemnation of “The Luck of Edenhall.”

“Maidenhood” is faulty, it appears to us, only on the score of its theme, which is somewhat didactic. Its *meaning* seems simplicity itself. A maiden on the verge of womanhood, hesitating to enjoy life (for which she has a strong appetite) through a false idea of duty, is bidden to fear nothing, having purity of heart as her lion of Una.

What Mr. Langtree styles “an unfortunate peculiarity” in Mr Longfellow, resulting from “adherence to a false system,” has really been always regarded by us as one of his idiosyncratic merits. “In each poem,” says the critic, “he has but *one* idea, which, in the progress of his song, is gradually unfolded, and at last reaches its full development in the concluding lines; this singleness of thought might lead a harsh critic to suspect intellectual barrenness.” It leads *us*, individually, only to a full sense of the artistical power and knowledge of the poet. We confess that now, for the first time, we hear unity of conception objected to as a defect. But Mr. Langtree seems to have fallen into the singular error of supposing the poet to have absolutely *but one idea* in each of his ballads. Yet how “one idea” can be “gradually unfolded” without other ideas, is, to us, a mystery of mysteries. Mr. Longfellow, very properly, has but one *leading* idea which forms the basis of his poem; but to the aid and development of this one there are innumerable others, of which the rare excellence is, that all are in keeping, that none

could be well omitted, that each tends to the one general effect. It is unnecessary to say another word upon this topic.

In speaking of "Excelsior," Mr. Langtree (are we wrong in attributing the notice to his very forcible pen?) seems to labour under some similar misconception. "It carries along with it," says he, "a false moral which greatly diminishes its merit in our eyes. The great merit of a picture, whether made with the pencil or pen, is its *truth*; and this merit does not belong to Mr. Longfellow's sketch. Men of genius may, and probably do, meet with greater difficulties in their struggles with the world than their fellow-men who are less highly gifted; but their power of overcoming obstacles is proportionably greater, and the result of their laborious suffering is not death but immortality."

That the chief merit of a picture is its *truth*, is an assertion deplorably erroneous. Even in Painting, which is, more essentially than Poetry, a mimetic art, the proposition cannot be sustained. Truth is not even *the aim*. Indeed it is curious to observe how very slight a degree of truth is sufficient to satisfy the mind, which acquiesces in the absence of numerous essentials in the thing depicted. An outline frequently stirs the spirit more pleasantly than the most elaborate picture. We need only refer to the compositions of Flaxman and of Retzsch. Here all details are omitted—nothing can be farther from *truth*. Without even colour the most thrilling effects are produced. In statues we are rather pleased than disgusted with *the want of the eyeball*. The hair of the Venus de Medicis was *gilded*. Truth indeed! The grapes of Zeuxis as well as the curtain of Parrhasius were received as indisputable evidence of the truthful ability of these artists—but they were not even *classed among their pictures*. If truth is the highest aim of either Painting or Poesy, then Jan Steen was a greater artist than Angelo, and Crabbe is a more noble poet than Milton.

But we have not quoted the observations of Mr. Langtree to deny its philosophy; our design was simply to show that he has misunderstood the poet. "Excelsior" has not even a remote tendency to the interpretation assigned it by the critic. It depicts the *earnest upward impulse of the soul*—an impulse not to be subdued even in Death. Despising danger, resisting pleasure, the youth, bearing the banner inscribed "*Excelsior!*" (higher still!) struggles through all difficulties to an Alpine summit. Warned to be content with the elevation attained, his cry is still "*Excel-*

*sior!*" and even in falling dead on the highest pinnacle, his cry is still "*Excelsior!*" There is yet an immortal height to be surmounted—an ascent in Eternity. The poet holds in view the idea of never-ending *progress*. That he is misunderstood is rather the misfortune of Mr. Langtree than the fault of Mr. Longfellow. There is an old adage about the difficulty of one's furnishing an auditor both with matter to be comprehended and brains for its comprehension.

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## NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE.\*

**H**IS reputation of the author of "Twice-Told Tales" has been confined, until very lately, to literary society; and I have not been wrong, perhaps, in citing him as *the* example, *par excellence*, in this country, of the privately-admired and publicly-unappreciated man of genius. Within the last year or two, it is true, an occasional critic has been urged, by honest indignation, into very warm approval. Mr. Webber, for instance (than whom no one has a keener relish for that kind of writing which Mr. Hawthorne has best illustrated), gave us, in a late number of "The American Review," a cordial and certainly a full tribute to his talents; and since the issue of the "Mosses from an Old Manse," criticisms of similar tone have been by no means infrequent in our more authoritative journals. I can call to mind few reviews of Hawthorne published *before* the "Mosses." One I remember in "Arcturus" (edited by Matthews and Duyckinck) for May, 1841; another in the "American Monthly" (edited by Hoffman and Herbert) for March, 1838; a third in the ninety-sixth number of the "North American Review." These criticisms, however, seemed to have little effect on the popular taste—at least, if we are to form any idea of the popular taste by reference to its expression in the newspapers, or by the sale of the author's book. It was never the fashion (until lately) to speak of him in any summary of our best authors.

The daily critics would say, on such occasions, "Is there not

\* Twice-Told Tales. By Nathaniel Hawthorne. James Munroe & Co., Boston. 1842.

Mosses from an Old Manse. By Nathaniel Hawthorne. Wiley & Putnam, New York. 1846.

Irving and Cooper, and Bryant, and Paulding, and—Smith?" or, "Have we not Halleck and Dana, and Longfellow, and—Thompson?" or, "Can we not point triumphantly to our own Sprague, Willis, Channing, Bancroft, Prescott, and—Jenkins?" but these unanswerable queries were never wound up by the name of Hawthorne.

Beyond doubt, this inappreciation of him on the part of the public arose chiefly from the two causes to which I have referred—from the facts that he is neither a man of wealth nor a quack; but these are insufficient to account for the whole effect. No small portion of it is attributable to the very marked idiosyncrasy of Mr. Hawthorne himself. In one sense, and in great measure, to be peculiar is to be original, and than the true originality there is no higher literary virtue. This true or commendable originality, however, implies not the uniform, but the continuous peculiarity—a peculiarity springing from ever-active vigour of fancy—better still if from ever-present force of imagination, giving its own hue, its own character to everything it touches, and, especially, *self-impelled to touch everything*.

It is often said, inconsiderately, that very original writers always fail in popularity—that such and such persons are too original to be comprehended by the mass. "Too peculiar" should be the phrase, "too idiosyncratic." It is, in fact, the excitable, undisciplined and child-like popular mind which most keenly feels the original.

The criticism of the Conservatives, of the hackneys, of the cultivated old clergymen of the "North American Review," is precisely the criticism which condemns, and alone condemns it. "It becometh not a divine," saith Lord Coke, "to be of a fiery and salamandrine spirit." Their conscience allowing them to move nothing themselves, these dignitaries have a holy horror of being moved. "Give us *quietude*," they say. Opening their mouth with proper caution, they sigh forth the word "*Repose*." And this is, indeed, the one thing they should be permitted to enjoy, if only upon the Christian principle of give and take.

The fact is, that if Mr. Hawthorne were really original, he could not fail of making himself felt by the public. But the fact is, he is *not* original in any sense. Those who speak of him as original, mean nothing more than that he differs in his manner or tone, and in his choice of subjects, from any author of their acquaintance—their acquaintance not extending to the German Tieck, whose

manner, in *some* of his works, is absolutely identical with that *habitual* to Hawthorne. But it is clear that the element of the literary originality is novelty. The element of its appreciation by the reader is the reader's sense of the new. Whatever gives him a new and insomuch a pleasurable emotion, he considers original, and whoever frequently gives him such emotion, he considers an original writer. In a word, it is by the sum total of these emotions that he decides upon the writer's claim to originality. I may observe here, however, that there is clearly a point at which even novelty itself would cease to produce the legitimate originality, if we judge this originality, as we should, by the effect designed: this point is that at which *novelty becomes nothing novel*; and here the artist, to *preserve his originality*, will subside into the commonplace. No one, I think, has noticed that, merely through inattention to this matter, Moore has comparatively failed in his "Lalla Rookh." Few readers, and indeed few critics, have commended this poem for originality—and, in fact, the effect, originality, is not produced by it—yet no work of equal size so abounds in the happiest originalities, individually considered. They are so excessive as, in the end, to deaden in the reader all capacity for their appreciation.

These points properly understood, it will be seen that the critic (unacquainted with Tieck) who reads a single tale or essay by Hawthorne, may be justified in thinking him original; but the tone, or manner, or choice of subject, which induces in this critic the sense of the new—will, if not in a second tale, at least in a third and all subsequent ones—not only fail of inducing it, but bring about an exactly antagonistic impression. In concluding a volume, and more especially in concluding all the volumes of the author, the critic will abandon his first design of calling him "original," and content himself with styling him "peculiar."

With the vague opinion that to be original is to be unpopular, I could, indeed, agree, were I to adopt an understanding of originality which, to my surprise, I have known adopted by many who have a right to be called critical. They have limited, in a love for mere words, the literary to the metaphysical originality. They regard as original in letters only such combinations of thought, of incident, and so forth, as are, in fact, absolutely novel. It is clear, however, not only that it is the novelty of *effect* alone which is worth consideration, but that this effect is *best* wrought, for the end of all fictitious composition, pleasure, by shunning rather than by seeking

the absolute novelty of combination. Originality, thus understood, tasks and startles the intellect, and so brings into undue action the faculties to which, in the lighter literature, we least appeal. And thus understood, it cannot fail to prove unpopular with the masses, who, seeking in this literature amusement, are positively offended by instruction. But the true originality—true in respect of its purposes—is that which, in bringing out the half-formed, the reluctant, or the unexpressed fancies of mankind, or in exciting the more delicate pulses of the heart's passion, or in giving birth to some universal sentiment or instinct in embryo, thus combines with the pleasurable effect of *apparent* novelty, a real egotistic delight. The reader, in the case first supposed (that of the absolute novelty), is excited, but embarrassed, disturbed, in some degree even pained at his own want of perception, at his own folly in not having himself hit upon the idea. In the second case, his pleasure is doubled. He is filled with an intrinsic and extrinsic delight. He feels and intensely enjoys the seeming novelty of the thought, enjoys it as really novel, as absolutely original with the writer—and himself. They two, he fancies, have, alone, of all men, thought thus. They two have, together, created this thing. Henceforward there is a bond of sympathy between them—a sympathy which irradiate every subsequent page of the book.

There is a species of writing which, with some difficulty, may be admitted as a lower degree of what I have called the true original. In its perusal, we say to ourselves, not "how original this is!" nor "here is an idea which I and the author have alone entertained," but "here is a charmingly obvious fancy," or sometimes even, "here is a thought which I am not sure has ever occurred to myself, but which, of course, has occurred to all the rest of the world." This kind of composition (which still appertains to a high order) is usually designated as "the natural." It has little external resemblance, but strong internal affinity to the true original, if, indeed, as I have suggested, it is not of this latter an inferior degree. It is best exemplified, among English writers, in Addison, Irving, and *Hawthorne*. The "ease" which is so often spoken of as its distinguishing feature, it has been the fashion to regard as ease in appearance alone, as a point of really difficult attainment. This idea, however, must be received with some reservation. The natural style is difficult only to those who should never intermeddle with it—to the unnatural. It is but the result of writing with the under-



standing, or with the instinct, that the *tone*, in composition, should be that which, at any given point or upon any given topic, would be the tone of the great mass of humanity. The author who, after the manner of the North Americans, is merely at *all* times *quiet*, is, of course, upon *most* occasions, merely silly or stupid, and has no more right to be thought "easy" or "natural" than has a cockney exquisite, or the sleeping beauty in the wax-works.

The "peculiarity," or sameness, or monotone of Hawthorne, would, in its mere character of "peculiarity," and without reference to what *is* the peculiarity, suffice to deprive him of all chance of popular appreciation. But at his failure to be appreciated, we can, *of course*, no longer wonder, when we find him monotonous at decidedly the worst of all possible points—at that point which, having the least concern with Nature, is the farthest removed from the popular intellect, from the popular sentiment, and from the popular taste. I allude to the strain of allegory which completely overwhelms the greater number of his subjects, and which in some measure interferes with the direct conduct of absolutely all.

In defence of allegory (however, or for whatever object employed), there is scarcely one respectable word to be said. Its best appeals are made to the fancy—that is to say, to our sense of adaptation, not of matters proper, but of matters improper for the purpose, of the real with the unreal; having never more of intelligible connection than has something with nothing, never half so much of effective affinity as has the substance for the shadow. The deepest emotion aroused within us by the happiest allegory, *as* allegory, is a very, very imperfectly satisfied sense of the writer's ingenuity in overcoming a difficulty we should have preferred his not having attempted to overcome. The fallacy of the idea that allegory, in any of its moods, can be made to enforce a truth—that metaphor, for example, may illustrate as well as embellish an argument—could be promptly demonstrated; the converse of the supposed fact might be shown, indeed, with very little trouble—but these are topics foreign to my present purpose. One thing is clear, that if allegory ever establishes a fact, it is by dint of overturning a fiction. Where the suggested meaning runs through the obvious one in a *very* profound under-current, so as never to interfere with the upper one without our own volition, so as never to show itself unless *called* to the surface, there only, for the proper uses of fictitious narrative, is it available at all.

Under the best circumstances, it must always interfere with that unity of effect which, to the artist, is worth all the allegory in the world. Its vital injury, however, is rendered to the most vitally important point in fiction—that of earnestness or verisimilitude. That “The Pilgrim’s Progress” is a ludicrously over-rated book, owing its seeming popularity to one or two of those accidents in critical literature which by the critical are sufficiently well understood, is a matter upon which no two thinking people disagree; but the pleasure derivable from it, in any sense, will be found in the direct ratio of the reader’s capacity to smother its true purpose, in the direct ratio of his ability to keep the allegory out of sight, or of his inability to comprehend it. Of allegory properly handled, judiciously subdued, seen only as a shadow or by suggestive glimpses, and making its nearest approach to truth in a not obtrusive and therefore not unpleasant *appositeness*, the “Undine” of De La Motte Fouqué is the best, and undoubtedly a very remarkable specimen.

The obvious causes, however, which have prevented Mr. Hawthorne’s *popularity*, do not suffice to condemn him in the eyes of the few who belong properly to books, and to whom books, perhaps, do not quite so properly belong. These few estimate an author, not as do the public, altogether by what he does, but in great measure—indeed, even in the greatest measure—by what he evinces a capability of doing. In this view, Hawthorne stands among literary people in America much in the same light as did Coleridge in England. The few, also, through a certain warping of the taste, which long pondering upon books as books merely never fails to induce, are not in condition to view the errors of a scholar as errors altogether. At any time these gentlemen are prone to think the public not right rather than an educated author wrong. But the simple truth is, that the writer who aims at impressing the people, is *always* wrong when he fails in forcing that people to receive the impression. How far Mr. Hawthorne has addressed the people at all, is, of course, not a question for me to decide. His books afford strong internal evidence of having been written to himself and his particular friends alone.

There has long existed in literature a fatal and unfounded prejudice, which it will be the office of this age to overthrow—the idea that the mere bulk of a work must enter largely into our estimate of its merit. I do not suppose even the weakest of the

Quarterly reviewers weak enough to maintain that in a book's size or mass, abstractly considered, there is anything which especially calls for our admiration. A mountain, simply through the sensation of physical magnitude which it conveys, does, indeed, affect us with a sense of the sublime, but we cannot admit any such influence in the contemplation even of "The Columbiad." The Quarterlies themselves will not admit it. And yet, what else are we to understand by their continual prating about "sustained effort?" Granted that this sustained effort has accomplished an epic—let us then admire the effort (if this be a thing admirable), but certainly not the epic on the effort's account. Common sense, in the time to come, may possibly insist upon measuring a work of art rather by the object it fulfils, by the impression it makes, than by the time it took to fulfil the object, or by the extent of "sustained effort" which became necessary to produce the impression. The fact is, that perseverance is one thing and genius quite another; nor can all the transcendentalists in Heathendom confound them.

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THE pieces in the volumes entitled "Twice-Told Tales," are now in their third republication, and, of course, are thrice-told. Moreover they are by no means *all* tales, either in the ordinary or in the legitimate understanding of the term. Many of them are pure essays; for example, "Sights from a Steeple," "Sunday at Home," "Little Annie's Ramble," "A Rill from the Town-Pump," "The Toll-Gatherer's Day," "The Haunted Mind," "The Sister Years," "Snow-Flakes," "Night Sketches," and "Foot-Prints on the Sea-Shore." I mention these matters chiefly on account of their discrepancy with that marked precision and finish by which the body of the work is distinguished.

Of the Essays just named, I must be content to speak in brief. They are each and all beautiful, without being characterised by the polish and adaption so visible in the tales proper. A painter would at once note their leading or predominant feature, and style it *repose*. There is no attempt at effect. All is quiet, thoughtful, subdued. Yet this repose may exist simultaneously with high originality of thought, and Mr. Hawthorne has demonstrated the fact. At every turn we meet with novel combinations; yet these combinations never surpass the limits of the quiet. We are soothed as we read; and withal is a calm astonishment that ideas

so apparently obvious have never occurred or been presented to us before. Herein our author differs materially from Lamb or Hunt or Hazlitt—who, with vivid originality of manner and expression, have less of the true novelty of thought than is generally supposed, and whose originality, at best, has an uneasy and meretricious quaintness, replete with startling effects unfounded in nature, and inducing trains of reflection which lead to no satisfactory result. The Essays of Hawthorne have much of the character of Irving, with more of originality, and less of finish, while compared with the "Spectator," they have a vast superiority at all points. The "Spectator," Mr. Irving, and Hawthorne have in common that tranquil and subdued manner which I have chosen to denominate *repose*; but, in the case of the two former, this repose is attained rather by the absence of novel combination, or of originality, than otherwise, and consists chiefly in the calm, quiet, unostentatious expression of commonplace thoughts, in an unambitious, unadulterated Saxon. In them, by strong effort, we are made to conceive the absence of all. In the essays before me the absence of effort is too obvious to be mistaken, and a strong under-current of *suggestion* runs continuously beneath the upper stream of the tranquil thesis. In short, these effusions of Mr. Hawthorne are the product of a truly imaginative intellect, restrained, and in some measure repressed, by fastidiousness of taste, by constitutional melancholy, and by indolence.

But it is of his tales that I desire principally to speak. The tale proper, in my opinion, affords unquestionably the fairest field for the exercise of the loftiest talent, which can be afforded by the wide domains of mere prose. Were I bidden to say how the highest genius could be most advantageously employed for the best display of its own powers, I should answer, without hesitation—in the composition of a rhymed poem, not to exceed in length what might be perused in an hour. Within this limit alone can the highest order of true poetry exist. I need only here say, upon this topic, that in almost all classes of composition, the unity of effect or impression is a point of the greatest importance. It is clear, moreover, that this unity cannot be thoroughly preserved in productions whose perusal cannot be completed at one sitting. We may continue the reading of a prose composition, from the very nature of prose itself, much longer than we can persevere, to any good purpose, in the perusal of a poem! This latter, if

truly fulfilling the demands of the poetic sentiment, induces an exaltation of the soul which cannot be long sustained. All high excitements are necessarily transient. Thus a long poem is a paradox. And, without unity of impression, the deepest effects cannot be brought about. Epics were the offspring of an imperfect sense of Art, and their reign is no more. A poem *too* brief may produce a vivid, but never an intense or enduring impression. Without a certain continuity of effort—without a certain duration or repetition of purpose—the soul is never deeply moved. There must be the dropping of the water upon the rock. De Béranger has wrought brilliant things—pungent and spirit-stiring—but, like all inmassive bodies, they lack *momentum*, and thus fail to satisfy the Poetic Sentiment. They sparkle and excite, but, from want of continuity, fail deeply to impress. Extreme brevity will degenerate into epigrammatism; but the sin of extreme length is even more unpardonable. *In medio tutissimus ibis.*

Were I called upon, however, to designate that class of composition which, next to such a poem as I have suggested, should best fulfil the demands of high genius—should offer it the most advantageous field of exertion—I should unhesitatingly speak of the prose tale, as Mr. Hawthorne has here exemplified it. I allude to the short prose narrative, requiring from a half-hour to one or two hours in its perusal. The ordinary novel is objectionable, from its length, for reasons already stated in substance. As it cannot be read at one sitting, it deprives itself, of course, of the immense force derivable from *totality*. Worldly interests intervening during the pauses of perusal, modify, annul, or counteract, in a greater or less degree, the impressions of the book. But simple cessation in reading would, of itself, be sufficient to destroy the true unity. In the brief tale, however, the author is enabled to carry out the fulness of his intention, be it what it may. During the hour of perusal the soul of the reader is at the writer's control. There are no external or extrinsic influences—resulting from weariness or interruption.

A skilful literary artist has constructed a tale. If wise, he has not fashioned his thoughts to accommodate his incidents; but having conceived, with deliberate care, a certain unique or single *effect* to be wrought out, he then invents such incidents—he then combines such events as may best aid him in establishing this preconceived

effect. If his very initial sentence tend not to the outbringing of this effect, then he has failed in his first step. In the whole composition there should be no word written, of which the tendency, direct or indirect, is not to the one pre-established design. And by such means, with such care and skill, a picture is at length painted which leaves in the mind of him who contemplates it with a kindred art, a sense of the fullest satisfaction. The idea of the tale has been presented unblemished, because undisturbed; and this is an end unattainable by the novel. Undue brevity is just as exceptionable here as in the poem; but undue length is yet more to be avoided.

We have said that the tale has a point of superiority even over the poem. In fact, while the *rhythm* of this latter is an essential aid in the development of the poem's highest idea—the idea of the Beautiful—the artificialities of this rhythm are an inseparable bar to the development of all points of thought or expression which have their basis in *Truth*. But Truth is often, and in very great degree, the aim of the tale. Some of the finest tales are tales of ratiocination. Thus the field of this species of composition, if not in so elevated a region on the mountain of Mind, is a table-land of far vaster extent than the domain of the mere poem. Its products are never so rich, but infinitely more numerous, and more appreciable by the mass of mankind. The writer of the prose tale, in short, may bring to his theme a vast variety of modes or inflections of thought and expression—(the ratiocinative, for example, the sarcastic or the humorous) which are not only antagonistical to the nature of the poem, but absolutely forbidden by one of its most peculiar and indispensable adjuncts; we allude, of course, to rhythm. It may be added here, *par parenthèse*, that the author who aims at the purely beautiful in a prose tale is labouring at a great disadvantage. For Beauty can be better treated in the poem. Not so with terror, or passion, or horror, or a multitude of such other points. And here it will be seen how full of prejudice are the usual animadversions against those *tales of effect*, many fine examples of which were found in the earlier numbers of "Blackwood." The impressions produced were wrought in a legitimate sphere of action, and constituted a legitimate although sometimes an exaggerated interest. They were relished by every man of genius; although there were found many men of genius who condemned them without just ground. The true critic will but

demand that the design intended be accomplished, to the fullest extent, by the means most advantageously applicable.

We have very few American tales of real merit—we may say, indeed, none, with the exception of “The Tales of a Traveller” of Washington Irving, and these “Twice-Told Tales” of Mr. Hawthorne. Some of the pieces of Mr. John Neal abound in vigour and originality; but in general, his compositions of this class are excessively diffuse, extravagant, and indicative of an imperfect sentiment of Art. Articles at random are, now and then, met with in our periodicals which might be advantageously compared with the best effusions of the British magazines; but, upon the whole, we are far behind our progenitors in this department of literature.

Of Mr. Hawthorne's Tales we would say, emphatically, that they belong to the highest region of Art—an Art subservient to genius of a very lofty order. We had supposed, with good reason for so supposing, that he had been thrust into his present position by one of the impudent *cliques* which beset our literature, and whose pretensions it is our full purpose to expose at the earliest opportunity; but we have been most agreeably mistaken. We know of few compositions which the critic can more honestly commend than these “Twice-Told Tales.” As Americans, we feel proud of the book.

Mr. Hawthorne's distinctive trait is invention, creation, imagination, originality—a trait which, in the literature of fiction, is positively worth all the rest. But the nature of the originality, so far as regards its manifestation in letters, is but imperfectly understood. The inventive or original mind as frequently displays itself in novelty of *tone* as in novelty of matter. Mr. Hawthorne is original in *all* points.

It would be a matter of some difficulty to designate the best of these tales; we repeat that, without exception, they are beautiful. “Wakefield” is remarkable for the skill with which an old idea—a well-known incident—is worked up or discussed. A man of whims conceives the purpose of quitting his wife and residing *incognito*, for twenty years in her immediate neighbourhood. Something of this kind actually happened in London. The force of Mr. Hawthorne's tale lies in the analysis of the motives which *must* or might have impelled the husband to such folly, in the first instance, with the possible causes of his perseverance. Upon this thesis a sketch of singular power has been constructed. “The

Wedding Knell" is full of the boldest imagination—an imagination fully controlled by taste. The most captious critic could find no flaw in this production. "The Minister's Black Veil" is a masterly composition of which the sole defect is that to the rabble its exquisite skill will be *caviare*. The *obvious* meaning of this article will be found to smother its insinuated one. The *moral* put into the mouth of the dying minister will be supposed to convey the *true* import of the narrative; and that a crime of dark dye (having reference to the "young lady") has been committed, is a point which only minds congenial with that of the author will perceive. "Mr. Higginbotham's Catastrophe" is vividly original and managed most dexterously. "Dr. Heidegger's Experiment" is exceedingly well imagined, and executed with surpassing ability. The artist breathes in every line of it. "The White Old Maid" is objectionable, even more than the "Minister's Black Veil," on the score of its mysticism. Even with the thoughtful and analytic, there will be much trouble in penetrating its entire import.

"The Hollow of the Three Hills" we would quote in full, had we space;—not as evincing higher talent than any of the other pieces, but as affording an excellent example of the author's peculiar ability. The subject is commonplace. A witch subjects the Distant and the Past to the view of a mourner. It has been the fashion to describe, in such cases, a mirror in which the images of the absent appear; or a cloud of smoke is made to arise, and thence the figures are gradually unfolded. Mr. Hawthorne has wonderfully heightened his effect by making the ear, in place of the eye, the medium by which the fantasy is conveyed. The head of the mourner is enveloped in the cloak of the witch, and within its magic folds there arise sounds which have an all-sufficient intelligence. Throughout this article also, the artist is conspicuous—not more in positive than in negative merits. Not only is all done that should be done, but (what perhaps is an end with more difficulty attained) there is nothing done which should not be. Every word *tells*, and there is not a word which does *not* tell.

In "Howe's Masquerade" we observe something which resembles a plagiarism—but which *may be* a very flattering coincidence of thought. We quote the passage in question.

"With a dark flush of wrath upon his brow they saw the general draw his sword and advance to meet the figure in the cloak before the latter had stepped one pace upon the floor. 'Villain, unmask yourself,' cried he;



'you pass no farther!' The figure, without blenching a hair's breadth from the sword which was pointed at his breast, made a solemn pause, and *lowered the cape of the cloak* from his face, yet not sufficiently for the spectators to catch a glimpse of it. But Sir William Howe had evidently seen enough. The sternness of his countenance gave place to a look of wild amazement, if not horror, while he recoiled several steps from the figure, *and let fall his sword upon the floor.*"—See vol. ii., p. 20.

The idea here is, that the figure in the cloak is the phantom or reduplication of Sir William Howe; but in an article called "William Wilson," one of the "Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque," we have not only the same idea, but the same idea similarly presented in several respects. We quote a paragraph, which our readers may compare with what has been already given. We have italicized, above, the immediate particulars of resemblance.

"The brief moment in which I averted my eyes had been sufficient to produce, apparently, a material change in the arrangements at the upper or farther end of the room. A large mirror, it appeared to me, now stood where none had been perceptible before: and as I stepped up to it in extremity of terror, mine own image, but with features all pale and dabbled in blood, *advanced* with a feeble and tottering gait to meet me. Thus it appeared, I say, but was not. It was Wilson, who then stood before me in the agonies of dissolution. Not a line in all the marked and singular lineaments of that face which was not even identically mine own. *His mask and cloak lay where he had thrown them, upon the floor.*"—Vol. ii., p. 57.

Here it will be observed that, not only are the two general conceptions identical, but there are various *points* of similarity. In each case the figure seen is the wraith or duplication of the beholder. In each case the scene is a masquerade. In each case the figure is cloaked. In each there is a quarrel—that is to say, angry words pass between the parties. In each the beholder is enraged. In each the cloak and sword fall upon the floor. The "villain, unmuffle yourself," of Mr. H. is precisely paralleled by a passage at page 56, of "William Wilson."

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I must hasten to conclude this paper with a summary of Mr. Hawthorne's merits and demerits.

He is peculiar and *not* original—unless in those detailed fancies and detached thoughts which his want of general originality will deprive of the appreciation due to them, in preventing them for ever reaching the *public* eye. He is infinitely too fond of allegory, and can never hope for popularity so long as he persists in it. This he will not do, for allegory is at war with the whole tone of his nature,

which disports itself never so well as when escaping from the mysticism of his Goodman Browns and White Old Maids into the hearty, genial, but still Indian-summer sunshine of his Wakefields and Little Annie's Rambles. Indeed, *his* spirit of "metaphor-run-mad" is clearly imbibed from the phalanx and phalanstery atmosphere in which he has been so long struggling for breath. He has not half the material for the exclusiveness of authorship that he possesses for its universality. He has the purest style, the finest taste, the most available scholarship, the most delicate humour, the most touching pathos, the most radiant imagination, the most consummate ingenuity; and with these varied good qualities he has done *well* as a mystic. But is there any one of these qualities which should prevent his doing doubly as well in a career of honest, upright, sensible, prehensible and comprehensible things? Let him mend his pen, get a bottle of visible ink, come out from the Old Manse, cut Mr. Alcott, hang (if possible) the editor of "The Dial," and throw out of the window to the pigs all his odd numbers of "The North American Review."

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## THE POETIC PRINCIPLE.

**I**N speaking of the Poetic Principle, I have no design to be either thorough or profound. While discussing, very much at random, the essentiality of what we call Poetry, my principal purpose will be to cite for consideration, some few of those minor English or American poems which best suit my own taste, or which, upon my own fancy, have left the most definite impression. By "minor poems" I mean, of course, poems of little length. And here, in the beginning, permit me to say a few words in regard to a somewhat peculiar principle, which, whether rightfully or wrongfully, has always had its influence in my own critical estimate of the poem. I hold that a long poem does not exist. I maintain that the phrase, "a long poem," is simply a flat contradiction in terms.

I need scarcely observe that a poem deserves its title only inasmuch as it excites, by elevating the soul. The value of the poem is in the ratio of this elevating excitement. But all excitements

are, through a psychal necessity, transient. That degree of excitement which would entitle a poem to be so called at all, cannot be sustained throughout a composition of any great length. After the lapse of half an hour, at the very utmost, it flags—fails—a revulsion ensues—and then the poem is, in effect, and in fact, no longer such.

There are, no doubt, many who have found difficulty in reconciling the critical dictum that the "Paradise Lost" is to be devoutly admired throughout, with the absolute impossibility of maintaining for it, during perusal, the amount of enthusiasm which that critical dictum would demand. This great work, in fact, is to be regarded as poetical, only when, losing sight of that vital requisite in all works of Art, Unity, we view it merely as a series of minor poems. If, to preserve its Unity—its totality of effect or impression—we read it (as would be necessary) at a single sitting, the result is but a constant alternation of excitement and depression. After a passage of what we feel to be true poetry, there follows, inevitably, a passage of platitude which no critical pre-judgment can force us to admire; but if, upon completing the work, we read it again; omitting the first book—that is to say, commencing with the second—we shall be surprised at now finding that admirable which we before condemned—that damnable which we had previously so much admired. It follows from all this that the ultimate, aggregate, or absolute effect of even the best epic under the sun, is a nullity:—and this is precisely the fact.

In regard to the Iliad, we have, if not positive proof, at least very good reason, for believing it intended as a series of lyrics; but, granting the epic intention, I can say only that the work is based in an imperfect sense of Art. The modern epic is of the supposititious ancient model, but an inconsiderate and blindfold imitation. But the day of these artistic anomalies is over. If, at any time, any very long poem *were* popular in reality—which I doubt—it is at least clear that no very long poem will ever be popular again.

That the extent of a poetical work is, *cæteris paribus*, the measure of its merit, seems undoubtedly, when we thus state it, a proposition sufficiently absurd—yet we are indebted for it to the Quarterly Reviews. Surely there can be nothing in mere *size*, abstractly considered—there can be nothing in mere *bulk*, so far as a volume is concerned, which has so continuously elicited admira-

tion from these saturnine pamphlets ! A mountain, to be sure, by the mere sentiment of physical magnitude which it conveys, *does* impress us with a sense of the sublime—but no man is impressed after *this* fashion by the material grandeur of even “The Columbiad.” Even the Quarterlies have not instructed us to be so impressed by it. *As yet*, they have not *insisted* on our estimating Lamartine by the cubic foot, or Pollok by the pound—but what else are we to *infer* from their continual prating about “sustained effort ?” If, by “sustained effort,” any little gentleman has accomplished an epic, let us frankly commend him for the effort—if this indeed be a thing commendable—but let us forbear praising the epic on the effort's account. It is to be hoped that common sense, in the time to come, will prefer deciding upon a work of Art, rather by the impression it makes—by the effect it produces—than by the time it took to impress the effect, or by the amount of “sustained effort” which had been found necessary in effecting the impression. The fact is, that perseverance is one thing and genius quite another—nor can all the Quarterlies in Christendom confound them. By-and-by, this proposition, with many which I have been just urging, will be received as self-evident. In the meantime, by being generally condemned as falsities, they will not be essentially damaged as truths.

On the other hand, it is clear that a poem may be improperly brief. Undue brevity degenerates into mere epigrammatism. A *very* short poem, while now and then producing a brilliant or vivid, never produces a profound or enduring effect. There must be the steady pressing down of the stamp upon the wax. De Béranger has wrought innumerable things, pungent and spirit-stirring ; but, in general, they have been too imponderous to stamp themselves deeply into the public attention ; and thus, as so many feathers of fancy, have been blown aloft only to be whistled down the wind.

A remarkable instance of the effect of undue brevity in depressing a poem—in keeping it out of the popular view—is afforded by the following exquisite little serenade :—

“ I arise from dreams of thee  
 In the first sweet sleep of night,  
 When the winds are breathing low,  
 And the stars are shining bright.  
 I arise from dreams of thee,  
 And a spirit in my feet  
 Has led me—who knows how?—  
 To thy chamber-window, sweet !

“The wandering airs they faint  
 On the dark, the silent stream—  
 The champak odours fall  
 Like sweet thoughts in a dream ;  
 The nightingale’s complaint,  
 It dies upon her heart,  
 As I must die on thine,  
 O, beloved as thou art !

“O, lift me from the grass !  
 I die, I faint, I fail !  
 Let thy love in kisses rain  
 On my lips and eyelids pale.  
 My cheek is cold and white, alas !  
 My heart beats loud and fast :  
 Oh ! press it close to thine again,  
 Where it will break at last !”

Very few, perhaps, are familiar with these lines—yet no less a poet than Shelley is their author. Their warm, yet delicate and ethereal imagination, will be appreciated by all—but by none so thoroughly as by him who has himself arisen from sweet dreams of one beloved, to bathe in the aromatic air of a southern midsummer night.

One of the finest poems by Willis—the very best, in my opinion, which he has ever written—has, no doubt, through this same defect of undue brevity, been kept back from its proper position, not less in the critical than in the popular view.

“The shadows lay along Broadway,  
 ’Twas near the twilight-tide—  
 And slowly there a lady fair  
 Was walking in her pride.  
 Alone walk’d she ; but, viewlessly,  
 Walk’d spirits at her side.

“Peace charm’d the street beneath her feet,  
 And Honour charm’d the air ;  
 And all astir looked kind on her,  
 — And call’d her good as fair—  
 For all God ever gave to her  
 She kept with chary care.

“She kept with care her beauties rare  
 From lovers warm and true—  
 For her heart was cold to all but gold,  
 And the rich came not to woo—  
 But honour’d well are charms to sell,  
 If priests the selling do.

“Now walking there was one more fair—  
 A slight girl, lily-pale ;  
 And she had unseen company  
 To make the spirit quail—  
 ’Twi’x Want and Scorn she walk’d forlorn,  
 And nothing could avail.

“No mercy now can clear her brow  
 For this world’s peace to pray ;  
 For, as love’s wild prayer dissolved in air,  
 Her woman’s heart gave way !—  
 But the sin forgiven by Christ in heaven  
 By man is cursed away !”

In this composition we find it difficult to recognise the Willis who has written so many mere “verses of society.” The lines are not only richly ideal, but full of energy ; while they breathe an earnestness—an evident sincerity of sentiment—for which we look in vain throughout all the other works of this author.

While the epic mania—while the idea that, to merit in poetry, prolixity is indispensable—has, for some years past, been gradually dying out of the public mind, by mere dint of its own absurdity—we find it succeeded by a heresy too palpably false to be long tolerated, but one which, in the brief period it has already endured, may be said to have accomplished more in the corruption of our poetical literature than all its other enemies combined. I allude to the heresy of *The Didactic*. It has been assumed, tacitly and avowedly, directly and indirectly, that the ultimate object of all poetry is Truth. Every poem, it is said, should inculcate a moral ; and by this moral is the poetical merit of the work to be adjudged. We Americans especially have patronized this happy idea ; and we Bostonians, very especially, have developed it in full. We have taken it into our heads that to write a poem simply for the poem’s sake, and to acknowledge such to have been our design, would be to confess ourselves radically wanting in the true poetic dignity and force : but the simple fact is, that, would we but permit ourselves to look into our own souls, we should immediately there discover that under the sun there neither exists nor *can* exist any work more thoroughly dignified—more supremely noble than this very poem—this poem *per se*—this poem which is a poem and nothing more—this poem written solely for the poem’s sake.

With as deep a reverence for the True as ever inspired the bosom of man, I would, nevertheless, limit, in some measure, its modes of inculcation. I would limit to enforce them I would not enfeeble

them by dissipation. The demands of Truth are severe. She has no sympathy with the myrtles. All *that* which is so indispensable in Song, is precisely all *that* with which *she* has nothing whatever to do. It is but making her a flaunting paradox, to wreath her in gems and flowers. In enforcing a truth, we need severity rather than efflorescence of language. We must be simple, precise, terse. We must be cool, calm, unimpassioned. In a word, we must be in that mood which, as nearly as possible, is the exact converse of the poetical. *He* must be blind indeed who does not perceive the radical and chasmal differences between the truthful and the poetical modes of inculcation. He must be theory-mad beyond redemption who, in spite of these differences, shall still persist in attempting to reconcile the obstinate oils and waters of Poetry and Truth.

Dividing the world of mind into its three most immediately obvious distinctions, we have the pure Intellect, Taste, and the Moral Sense. I place Taste in the middle, because it is just this position which, in the mind, it occupies. It holds intimate relations with either extreme ; but from the Moral Sense is separated by so faint a difference that Aristotle has not hesitated to place some of its operations among the virtues themselves. Nevertheless, we find the *offices* of the trio marked with a sufficient distinction. Just as the Intellect concerns itself with Truth, so Taste informs us of the Beautiful while the Moral Sense is regardful of Duty. Of this latter, while Conscience teaches the obligation, and Reason the expediency, Taste contents herself with displaying the charms :—waging war upon Vice solely on the ground of her deformity—her disproportion—her animosity to the fitting, to the appropriate, to the harmonious—in a word, to Beauty.

An immortal instinct, deep within the spirit of man, is thus plainly, a sense of the Beautiful. This it is which administers to his delight in the manifold forms, and sounds, and odours, and sentiments amid which he exists. And just as the lily is repeated in the lake, or the eyes of Amaryllis in the mirror, so is the mere oral or written repetition of these forms, and sounds, and colours, and odours, and sentiments, a duplicate source of delight. But this mere repetition is not poetry. He who shall simply sing, with however glowing enthusiasm, or with however vivid a truth of description, of the sights, and sounds, and odours, and colours, and sentiments, which greet *him* in common with all mankind—he, I

say, has yet failed to prove his divine title. There is still a something in the distance which he has been unable to attain. We have still a thirst unquenchable, to allay which he has not shown us the crystal springs. This thirst belongs to the immortality of Man. It is at once a consequence and an indication of his perennial existence. It is the desire of the moth for the star. It is no mere appreciation of the Beauty before us—but a wild effort to reach the Beauty above. Inspired by an ecstatic prescience of the glories beyond the grave, we struggle, by multiform combinations among the things and thoughts of Time, to attain a portion of that Loveliness whose very elements, perhaps, appertain to eternity alone. And thus when by Poetry—or when by Music, the most entrancing of the Poetic moods—we find ourselves melted into tears—we weep then—not as the Abbaté Gravina supposes—through excess of pleasure, but through a certain petulant, impatient sorrow at our inability to grasp *now*, wholly, here on earth, at once and for ever, those divine and rapturous joys, of which *through* the poem, or *through* the music, we attain to but brief and indeterminate glimpses.

The struggle to apprehend the supernal Loveliness—this struggle, on the part of souls fittingly constituted—has given to the world all *that* which it (the world) has ever been enabled at once to understand and *to feel* as poetic.

The Poetic Sentiment, of course, may develop itself in various modes—in Painting, in Sculpture, in Architecture, in the Dance—very especially in Music—and very peculiarly, and with a wide field, in the composition of the Landscape Garden. Our present theme, however, has regard only to its manifestation in words. And here let me speak briefly on the topic of rhythm. Contenting myself with the certainty that Music, in its various modes of metre, rhythm, and rhyme, is of so vast a moment in Poetry as never to be wisely rejected—is so vitally important an adjunct, that he is simply silly who declines its assistance, I will not now pause to maintain its absolute essentiality. It is in Music, perhaps, that the soul most nearly attains the great end for which, when inspired by the Poetic Sentiment, it struggles—the creation of supernal Beauty. It *may* be, indeed, that here this sublime end is, now and then, attained *in fact*. We are often made to feel, with a shivering delight, that from an earthly harp are stricken notes which *cannot* have been unfamiliar to the angels. And thus there can be little doubt that in the union of Poetry with Music in its popular sense



we shall find the widest field for the Poetic development. The old Bards and Minnesingers had advantages which we do not possess—and Thomas Moore, singing his own songs, was, in the most legitimate manner, perfecting them as poems.

To recapitulate, then:—I would define, in brief, the Poetry of words as *The Rhythmical Creation of Beauty*. Its sole arbiter is Taste. With the Intellect or with the Conscience, it has only collateral relations. Unless incidentally, it has no concern whatever either with Duty or with Truth.

A few words, however, in explanation. *That* pleasure which is at once the most pure, the most elevating, and the most intense, is derived, I maintain, from the contemplation of the Beautiful. In the contemplation of Beauty we alone find it possible to attain that pleasurable elevation, or excitement, *of the soul*, which we recognise as the Poetic Sentiment, and which is so easily distinguished from Truth, which is the satisfaction of the Reason, or from Passion, which is the excitement of the heart. I make Beauty, therefore—using the word as inclusive of the sublime—I make Beauty the province of the poem, simply because it is an obvious rule of Art that effects should be made to spring as directly as possible from their causes:—no one as yet having been weak enough to deny that the peculiar elevation in question is at least *most readily* attainable in the poem. It by no means follows, however, that the incitements of Passion, or the precepts of Duty, or even the lessons of Truth, may not be introduced into a poem, and with advantage; for they may subserve, incidentally, in various ways, the general purposes of the work:—but the true artist will always contrive to tone them down in proper subjection to that *Beauty* which is the atmosphere and the real essence of the poem.

I cannot better introduce the few poems which I shall present for your consideration, than by the citation of the Pröem to Mr. Longfellow's "Waif:":—

"The day is done, and the darkness  
Falls from the wings of Night,  
As a feather is wafted downward  
From an eagle in his flight.

"I see the lights of the village  
Gleam through the rain and the mist,  
And a feeling of sadness comes o'er me,  
That my soul cannot resist;

- “A feeling of sadness and longing,  
That is not akin to pain,  
And resembles sorrow only  
As the mist resembles the rain.
- “Come, read to me some poem,  
Some simple and heartfelt lay,  
That shall soothe this restless feeling,  
And banish the thoughts of day.
- “Not from the grand old masters,  
Not from the bards sublime,  
Whose distant footsteps echo  
Through the corridors of Time.
- “For, like strains of martial music,  
Their mighty thoughts suggest  
Life's endless toil and endeavour;  
And to-night I long for rest.
- “Read from some humbler poet,  
Whose songs gushed from his heart,  
As showers from the clouds of summer,  
Or tears from the eyelids start;
- “Who through long days of labour,  
And nights devoid of ease,  
Still heard in his soul the music  
Of wonderful melodies.
- “Such songs have power to quiet  
The restless pulse of care,  
And come like the benediction  
That follows after prayer.
- “Then read from the treasured volume  
The poem of thy choice,  
And lend to the rhyme of the poet  
The beauty of thy voice.
- “And the night shall be filled with music,  
And the cares, that infest the day,  
Shall fold their tents, like the Arabs,  
And as silently steal away.”

With no great range of imagination, these lines have been justly admired for their delicacy of expression. Some of the images are very effective. Nothing can be better than—

“—————the bards sublime,  
Whose distant footsteps echo  
Down the corridors of Time.”

The idea of the last quatrain is also very effective. The poem, on the whole, however, is chiefly to be admired for the graceful

*insouciance* of its metre, so well in accordance with the character of the sentiments, and especially for the *ease* of the general manner. This "ease," or naturalness, in a literary style, it has long been the fashion to regard as ease in appearance alone—as a point of really difficult attainment. But not so:—a natural manner is difficult only to him who should never meddle with it—to the unnatural. It is but the result of writing with the understanding, or with the instinct, that *the tone*, in composition, should always be that which the mass of mankind would adopt—and must perpetually vary, of course, with the occasion. The author who, after the fashion of "The North American Review," should be, upon *all* occasions, merely "quiet," must necessarily upon *many* occasions, be simply silly or stupid; and has no more right to be considered "easy," or "natural," than a Cockney exquisite, or than the sleeping Beauty in the wax-works.

Among the minor poems of Bryant, none has so much impressed me as the one which he entitles "June." I quote only a portion of it:—

"There, through the long, long summer hours,  
 The golden light should lie,  
 And thick, young herbs and groups of flowers  
 Stand in their beauty by,  
 The oriole should build and tell  
 His love-tale, close beside my cell;  
 The idle butterfly  
 Should rest him there, and there be heard  
 The housewife-bee and humming bird.

"And what, if cheerful shouts, at noon,  
 Come, from the village sent,  
 Or songs of maids, beneath the moon,  
 With fairy laughter blent?  
 And what if, in the evening light,  
 Betrothed lovers walk in sight  
 Of my low monument?  
 I would the lovely scene around  
 Might know no sadder sight nor sound.

"I know, I know I should not see  
 The season's 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 soften'd 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 rhythmical flow, here, is even voluptuous—nothing could be more melodious. The poem has always affected me in a remarkable manner. The intense melancholy which seems to well up, perforce, to the surface of all the poet's cheerful sayings about his grave, we find thrilling us to the soul—while there is the truest poetic elevation in the thrill. The impression left is one of a pleasurable sadness. And if, in the remaining compositions which I shall introduce to you, there be more or less of a similar tone always apparent, let me remind you that (how or why we know not) this certain taint of sadness is inseparably connected with all the higher manifestations of true Beauty. It is, nevertheless,

“A feeling of sadness and longing  
 That is not akin to pain,  
 And resembles sorrow only  
 As the mist resembles the rain.”

The taint of which I speak is clearly perceptible even in a poem so full of brilliancy and spirit as the “Health” of Edward Coote Pinkney :—

“I fill this cup to one made up  
 Of loveliness alone,  
 A woman, of her gentle sex  
 The seeming paragon ;  
 To whom the better elements  
 And kindly stars have given,  
 A form so fair, that, like the air,  
 'Tis less of earth than heaven.

“Her every tone is music's own,  
 Like those of morning birds,  
 And something more than melody  
 Dwells ever in her words ;  
 The coinage of her heart are they,  
 And from her lips each flows,  
 As one may see the burden'd bee  
 Forth issue from the rose.

“Affections are as thoughts to her,  
 The measures of her hours ;  
 Her feelings have the fragrancý,  
 The freshness of young flowers ;  
 And lovely passions, changing oft,  
 So fill her, she appears  
 The image of themselves by turns,—  
 The idol of past years !

“Of her bright face one glance will trace  
 A picture on the brain,  
 And of her voice in echoing hearts  
 A sound must long remain ;  
 But memory, such as mine of her,  
 So very much endears,  
 When death is nigh my latest sigh  
 Will not be life s, but hers.

“I fill'd this cup to one made up  
 Of loveliness alone,  
 A woman, of her gentle sex  
 The seeming paragon—  
 Her health ! and would on earth there stood,  
 Some more of such a frame,  
 That life might be all poetry,  
 And weariness a name.”

It was the misfortune of Mr. Pinkney to have been born too far south. Had he been a New Englander, it is probable that he would have been ranked as the first of American lyrists, by that magnanimous cabal which has so long controlled the destinies of American Letters, in conducting the thing called “The North American Review.” The poem just cited is especially beautiful ; but the poetic elevation which it induces, we must refer chiefly to our sympathy in the poet's enthusiasm. We pardon his hyperboles for the evident earnestness with which they are uttered.

It was by no means my design, however, to expatiate upon the *merits* of what I should read you. These will necessarily speak for themselves. Boccacini, in his “Advertisements from Parnassus,” tells us that Zoilus once presented Apollo a very caustic criticism upon a very admirable book ; whereupon the god asked him for the beauties of the work. He replied that he only busied himself about the errors. On hearing this, Apollo, handing him a sack of unwinnowed wheat, bade him pick out *all the chaff* for his reward.

Now this fable answers very well as a hit at the critics, but I am by no means sure that the god was in the right. I am by no means

certain that the true limits of the critical duty are not grossly misunderstood. Excellence, in a poem especially, may be considered in the light of an axiom, which need only be properly *put*, to become self-evident. It is *not* excellence if it require to be demonstrated as such:—and thus, to point out too particularly the merits of a work of Art, is to admit that they are *not* merits altogether.

Among the “Melodies” of Thomas Moore is one whose distinguished character as a poem proper, seems to have been singularly left out of view. I allude to his lines beginning—“Come, rest in this bosom.” The intense energy of their expression is not surpassed by anything in Byron. There are two of the lines in which a sentiment is conveyed that embodies the *all in all* of the divine passion of Love—a sentiment which, perhaps, has found its echo in more, and in more passionate, human hearts than any other single sentiment ever embodied in words:—

“Come, rest in this bosom, my own stricken deer,  
Though the herd have fled from thee, thy home is still here;  
Here still is the smile, that no cloud can o’ercast,  
And a heart and a hand all thy own to the last.

“Oh! what was love made for, if ’t is not the same  
Through joy and through torment, through glory and shame?  
I know not, I ask not, if guilt’s in that heart,  
I but know that I love thee, whatever thou art.

“Thou hast call’d me thy angel in moments of bliss,  
And thy angel I’ll be, ’mid the horrors of this,—  
Through the furnace, unshrinking, thy steps to pursue,  
And shield thee, and save thee,—or perish there too!”

It has been the fashion, of late days, to deny Moore Imagination, while granting him Fancy—a distinction originating with Coleridge—than whom no man more fully comprehended the great powers of Moore. The fact is, that the fancy of this poet so far predominates over all his other faculties, and over the fancy of all other men, as to have induced, very naturally, the idea that he is fanciful *only*. But never was there a greater mistake. Never was a grosser wrong done the fame of a true poet. In the compass of the English language I can call to mind no poem more profoundly—more weirdly *imaginative*, in the best sense, than the lines commencing—“I would I were by that dim lake”—which are the composition of Thomas Moore. I regret that I am unable to remember them.

One of the noblest—and, speaking of Fancy, one of the most singularly fanciful of modern poets, was Thomas Hood. His "Fair Ines" had always, for me, an inexpressible charm:—

- "O saw ye not fair Ines?  
 She's gone into the West,  
 To dazzle when the sun is down,  
 And rob the world of rest:  
 She took our daylight with her,  
 The smiles that we love best,  
 With morning blushes on her cheek,  
 And pearls upon her breast.
- "O turn again, fair Ines,  
 Before the fall of night,  
 For fear the moon should shine alone,  
 And stars unrivall'd bright;  
 And blessed will the lover be  
 That walks beneath their light,  
 And breathes the love against thy cheek  
 I dare not even write!
- "Would I had been, fair Ines,  
 That gallant cavalier,  
 Who rode so gaily by thy side,  
 And whisper'd thee so near?  
 Were there no bonny dames at home,  
 Or no true lovers here,  
 That he should cross the seas to win  
 The dearest of the dear?
- "I saw thee, lovely Ines,  
 Descend along the shore,  
 With bands of noble gentlemen,  
 And banners wav'd before;  
 And gentle youth and maidens gay,  
 And snowy plumes they wore;  
 It would have been a beauteous dream,  
 —If it had been no more!
- "Alas, alas! fair Ines,  
 She went away with song,  
 With Music waiting on her steps,  
 And shoutings of the throng;  
 But some were sad and felt no mirth,  
 But only Music's wrong,  
 In sounds that sang Farewell, Farewell,  
 To her you've loved so long.
- "Farewell, farewell, fair Ines,  
 That vessel never bore  
 So fair a lady on its deck,  
 Nor danced so light before,—

Alas for pleasure on the sea,  
 And sorrow on the shore !  
 The smile that blest one lover's heart  
 Has broken many more !"

"The Haunted House," by the same author, is one of the truest poems ever written—one of the *truest*—one of the most unexceptionable—one of the most thoroughly artistic, both in its theme and in its execution. It is, moreover, powerfully ideal—imaginative. I regret that its length renders it unsuitable for the purposes of this Lecture. In place of it, permit me to offer the universally appreciated "Bridge of Sighs."

- " One more Unfortunate,  
 Weary of breath,  
 Rashly importunate  
 Gone to her death !
- " Take her up tenderly,  
 Lift her with care ;—  
 Fashion'd so slenderly,  
 Young, and so fair !
- " Look at her garments  
 Clinging like cerements ;  
 Whilst the wave constantly  
 Drips from her clothing ;  
 Take her up instantly,  
 Loving, not loathing.—
- " Touch her not scornfully ;  
 Think of her mournfully,  
 Gently and humanly ;  
 Not of the stains of her,  
 All that remains of her  
 Now, is pure womanly.
- " Make no deep scrutiny  
 Into her mutiny  
 Rash and undutiful ;  
 Past all dishonour,  
 Death has left on her  
 Only the beautiful.
- " Still for all slips of hers,  
 One of Eve's family—  
 Wipe those poor lips of hers  
 Oozing so clammyly,  
 Loop up her tresses  
 Escaped from the comb,  
 Her fair auburn tresses ;  
 Whilst wonderment guesses  
 Where was her home ?
- " Who was her father ?  
 Who was her mother ?  
 Had she a sister ?  
 Had she a brother ?  
 Or was there a dearer one  
 Still, and a nearer one  
 Yet, than all other ?
- " Alas ! for the rarity  
 Of Christian charity  
 Under the sun !  
 Oh ! it was pitiful !  
 Near a whole city full,  
 Home she had none.
- " Sisterly, brotherly,  
 Fatherly, motherly,  
 Feelings had changed :  
 Love by harsh evidence,  
 Thrown from its eminence,  
 Even God's providence  
 Seeming estranged.
- " Where the lamps quiver  
 So far in the river,  
 With many a light  
 From window and casement  
 From garret to basement,  
 She stood with amazement,  
 Houseless by night.
- " The bleak wind of March  
 Made her tremble and shiver ;  
 But not the dark arch,  
 Or the black flowing river :  
 Mad from life's history,  
 Glad to death's mystery,  
 Swift to be hurl'd—  
 Anywhere, anywhere  
 Out of the world !



“ In she plunged boldly,  
 No matter how coldly  
 The rough river ran,—  
 Over the brink of it,  
 Picture it,—think of it,  
 Dissolute Man !  
 Lave in it, drink of it  
 Then, if you can !

“ Take her up tenderly,  
 Lift her with care ;  
 Fashion'd so slenderly,  
 Young and so fair !

“ Ere her limbs frigidly  
 Stiffen too rigidly,  
 Decently,—kindly,—  
 Smooth and compose them ;  
 And her eyes, close them,  
 Staring so blindly !

“ Dreadfully staring  
 Through muddy impurity,  
 As when with the daring  
 Last look of despairing  
 Fixed on futurity.

“ Perishing gloomily,  
 Spurred by contumely,  
 Cold inhumanity,  
 Burning insanity,  
 Into her rest,—  
 Cross her hands humbly,  
 As if praying dumbly,  
 Over her breast !  
 Owing her weakness,  
 Her evil behaviour,  
 And leaving with meekness  
 Her sins to her Saviour !”

The vigour of this poem is no less remarkable than its pathos. The versification, although carrying the fanciful to the very verge of the fantastic, is nevertheless admirably adapted to the wild insanity which is the thesis of the poem.

Among the minor poems of Lord Byron, is one which has never received from the critics the praise which it undoubtedly deserves :—

“ Though the day of my destiny's over,  
 And the star of my fate hath declined,  
 Thy soft heart refused to discover  
 The faults which so many could find ;  
 Though thy soul with my grief was acquainted  
 It shrunk not to share it with me,  
 And the love which my spirit hath painted  
 It never hath found but in *thee*.

“ Then when nature around me is smiling,  
 The last smile which answers to mine,  
 I do not believe it beguiling,  
 Because it reminds me of thine ;  
 And when winds are at war with the ocean,  
 As the breasts I believed in with me,  
 If their billows excite an emotion,  
 It is that they bear me from *thee*.

“ Though the rock of my last hope is shivered,  
 And its fragments are sunk in the wave,  
 Though I feel that my soul is delivered  
 To pain—it shall not be its slave.

There is many a pang to pursue me :  
 They may crush, but they shall not contemn—  
 They may torture, but shall not subdue me—  
 'Tis of *thee* that I think—not of them.

“ Though human, thou didst not deceive me,  
 Though woman, thou didst not forsake,  
 Though loved, thou forborest to grieve me,  
 Though slandered, thou never couldst shake,—  
 Though trusted, thou didst not disclaim me,  
 Though parted, it was not to fly,  
 Though watchful, 't was not to defame me,  
 Nor mute, that the world might belie.

“ Yet I blame not the world, nor despise it,  
 Nor the war of the many with one—  
 If my soul was not fitted to prize it,  
 'Twas folly not sooner to shun :  
 And if dearly that error hath cost me,  
 And more than I once could foresee,  
 I have found that whatever it lost me,  
 It could not deprive me of *thee*.

“ From the wreck of the past, which hath perished,  
 Thus much I at least may recall,  
 It hath taught me that which I most cherished  
 Deserved to be dearest of all :  
 In the desert a fountain is springing,  
 In the wide waste there still is a tree,  
 And a bird in the solitude singing,  
 Which speaks to my spirit of *thee*.”

Although the rhythm, here, is one of the most difficult, the versification could scarcely be improved. No nobler *theme* ever engaged the pen of poet. It is the soul-elevating idea, that no man can consider himself entitled to complain of Fate while, in his adversity, he still retains the unwavering love of woman.

From Alfred Tennyson—although in perfect sincerity I regard him as the noblest poet that ever lived—I have left myself time to cite only a very brief specimen. I call him, and *think* him the noblest of poets—not because the impressions he produces are, at *all* times, the most profound—not because the poetical excitement which he induces is, at *all* times, the most intense—but because it *is*, at all times, the most ethereal—in other words, the most elevating and the most pure. No poet is so little of the earth, earthy. What I am about to read is from his last long poem, “The Princess” :—

“Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean,  
Tears from the depth of some divine despair  
Rise in the heart, and gather to the eyes,  
In looking on the happy Autumn-fields,  
And thinking of the days that are no more.

“Fresh as the first beam glittering on a sail,  
That brings our friends up from the under world,  
Sad as the last which reddens over one  
That sinks with all we love below the verge ;  
So sad, so fresh, the days that are no more.

“Ah, sad and strange as in dark summer dawns  
The earliest pipe of half-awaken'd birds  
To dying ears, when unto dying eyes  
The casement slowly grows a glimmering square ;  
So sad, so strange, the days that are no more.

“Dear as remember'd kisses after death,  
And sweet as those by hopeless fancy feign'd  
On lips that are for others ; deep as love,  
Deep as first love, and wild with all regret ;  
O Death in Life, the days that are no more.”

Thus, although in a very cursory and imperfect manner, I have endeavoured to convey to you my conception of the Poetic Principle. It has been my purpose to suggest that, while this Principle itself is, strictly and simply, the Human Aspiration for Supernal Beauty, the manifestation of the Principle is always found in *an elevating excitement of the Soul*—quite independent of that passion which is the intoxication of the Heart—or of that Truth which is the satisfaction of the Reason. For, in regard to Passion, alas! its tendency is to degrade, rather than to elevate the Soul. Love, on the contrary—Love—the true, the divine Eros—the Uranian, as distinguished from the Dionæan Venus—is unquestionably the purest and truest of all poetical themes. And in regard to Truth—if, to be sure, through the attainment of a truth, we are led to perceive a harmony where none was apparent before, we experience, at once, the true poetical effect—but this effect is referable to the harmony alone, and not in the least degree to the truth which merely served to render the harmony manifest.

We shall reach, however, more immediately, a distinct conception of what the true Poetry is, by mere reference to a few of the simple elements which induce in the Poet himself the true poetical effect. He recognises the ambrosia which nourishes his soul, in the bright orbs that shine in Heaven—in the volutes of the flower—in the

clustering of low shrubberies—in the waving of the grain-fields—in the slanting of tall Eastern trees—in the blue distance of mountains—in the grouping of clouds—in the twinkling of half-hidden brooks—in the gleaming of silver rivers—in the repose of sequestered lakes—in the star-mirroring depths of lonely wells. He perceives it in the songs of birds—in the harp of Æolus—in the sighing of the night-wind—in the repining voice of the forest—in the surf that complains to the shore—in the fresh breath of the woods—in the scent of the violet—in the voluptuous perfume of the hyacinth—in the suggestive odour that comes to him, at eventide, from far-distant, undiscovered islands, over dim oceans, illimitable and unexplored. He owns it in all noble thoughts—in all unworldly motives—in all holy impulses—in all chivalrous, generous, and self-sacrificing deeds. He feels it in the beauty of woman—in the grace of her step—in the lustre of her eye—in the melody of her voice—in her soft laughter—in her sigh—in the harmony of the rustling of her robes. He deeply feels it in her winning endearments—in her burning enthusiasms—in her gentle charities—in her meek and devotional endurances—but above all—ah, far above all—he kneels to it—he worships it in the faith, in the purity, in the strength, in the altogether divine majesty—of her *love*.

Let me conclude—by the recitation of yet another brief poem—one very different in character from any that I have before quoted. It is by Motherwell, and is called “The Song of the Cavalier.” With our modern and altogether rational ideas of the absurdity and impiety of warfare, we are not precisely in that frame of mind best adapted to sympathize with the sentiments, and thus to appreciate the real excellence of the poem. To do this fully, we must identify ourselves, in fancy, with the soul of the old cavalier.

“ Then mounte ! then mounte, brave gallants, all,  
 And don your helmes amaine :  
 Death's couriers, Fame and Honor, call  
 Us to the field againe.  
 No shrewish tears shall fill our eye  
 When the sword-hilt's in our hand,—  
 Heart-whole we'll part, and no whit sighe  
 For the fayrest of the land ;  
 Let piping swaine, and craven wight,  
 Thus weepe and puling crye,  
 Our business is like men to fight,  
 And hero-like to die !

## THE PHILOSOPHY OF COMPOSITION.

**C**HARLES DICKENS, in a note now lying before me, alluding to an examination I once made of the mechanism of "Barnaby Rudge," says—"By the way, are you aware that Godwin wrote his 'Caleb Williams' backwards? He first involved his hero in a web of difficulties, forming the second volume, and then, for the first, cast about him for some mode of accounting for what had been done."

I cannot think this the *precise* mode of procedure on the part of Godwin—and indeed what he himself acknowledges, is not altogether in accordance with Mr. Dickens' idea—but the author of "Caleb Williams" was too good an artist not to perceive the advantage derivable from at least a somewhat similar process. Nothing is more clear than that every plot, worth the name, must be elaborated to its *dénouement* before any thing be attempted with the pen. It is only with the *dénouement* constantly in view that we can give a plot its indispensable air of consequence, or causation, by making the incidents, and especially the tone at all points, tend to the development of the intention.

There is a radical error, I think, in the usual mode of constructing a story. Either history affords a thesis—or one is suggested by an incident of the day—or, at best, the author sets himself to work in the combination of striking events to form merely the basis of his narrative—designing, generally, to fill in with description, dialogue, or autorial comment, whatever crevices of fact, or action, may, from page to page, render themselves apparent.

I prefer commencing with the consideration of an *effect*. Keeping originality *always* in view—for he is false to himself who ventures to dispense with so obvious and so easily attainable a source of interest—I say to myself, in the first place, "Of the innumerable effects, or impressions, of which the heart, the intellect, or (more generally) the soul is susceptible, what one shall I, on the present occasion, select?" Having chosen a novel, first, and secondly a vivid effect, I consider whether it can be best wrought by incident or tone—whether by ordinary incidents and peculiar tone, or the converse, or by peculiarity both of incident and tone—afterward looking about me (or rather within) for such combinations of event, or tone, as shall best aid me in the construction of the effect.

I have often thought how interesting a magazine paper might be written by any author who would—that is to say, who could—detail, step by step, the processes by which any one of his compositions attained its ultimate point of completion. Why such a paper has never been given to the world, I am much at a loss to say—but, perhaps, the autorial vanity has had more to do with the omission than any one other cause. Most writers—poets in especial—prefer having it understood that they compose by a species of fine frenzy—an ecstatic intuition—and would positively shudder at letting the public take a peep behind the scenes, at the elaborate and vacillating crudities of thought—at the true purposes seized only at the last moment—at the innumerable glimpses of idea that arrived not at the maturity of full view—at the fully matured fancies discarded in despair as unmanageable—at the cautious selections and rejections—at the painful erasures and interpolations—in a word, at the wheels and pinions—the tackle for scene-shifting—the step-ladders, and demon-traps—the cock's feathers, the red paint and the black patches, which, in ninety-nine cases out of the hundred, constitute the properties of the literary *histrion*.

I am aware, on the other hand, that the case is by no means common, in which an author is at all in condition to retrace the steps by which his conclusions have been attained. In general, suggestions, having arisen pell-mell, are pursued and forgotten in a similar manner.

For my own part, I have neither sympathy with the repugnance alluded to, nor, at any time, the least difficulty in recalling to mind the progressive steps of any of my compositions; and, since the interest of an analysis, or reconstruction, such as I have considered a *desideratum*, is quite independent of any real or fancied interest in the thing analyzed, it will not be regarded as a breach of decorum on my part to show the *modus operandi* by which some one of my own works was put together. I select "The Raven" as most generally known. It is my design to render it manifest that no one point in its composition is referable either to accident or intuition—that the work proceeded, step by step, to its completion with the precision and rigid consequence of a mathematical problem.

Let us dismiss, as irrelevant to the poem, *per se*, the circumstance—or say the necessity—which, in the first place, gave rise to the intention of composing a poem that should suit at once the popular and the critical taste.

We commence, then, with this intention.

The initial consideration was that of extent. If any literary work is too long to be read at one sitting, we must be content to dispense with the immensely important effect derivable from unity of impression—for, if two sittings be required, the affairs of the world interfere, and everything like totality is at once destroyed. But since, *cæteris paribus*, no poet can afford to dispense with *anything* that may advance his design, it but remains to be seen whether there is, in extent, any advantage to counterbalance the loss of unity which attends it. Here I say no, at once. What we term a long poem is, in fact, merely a succession of brief ones—that is to say, of brief poetical effects. It is needless to demonstrate that a poem is such, only inasmuch as it intensely excites, by elevating, the soul; and all intense excitements are, through a psychal necessity, brief. For this reason, at least one half of the "Paradise Lost" is essentially prose—a succession of poetical excitements interspersed, *inevitably*, with corresponding depressions—the whole being deprived, through the extremeness of its length, of the vastly important artistic element, totality, or unity, of effect.

It appears evident, then, that there is a distinct limit, as regards length, to all works of literary art—the limit of a single sitting—and that, although in certain classes of prose composition, such as "Robinson Crusoe" (demanding no unity), this limit may be advantageously overpassed, it can never properly be overpassed in a poem. Within this limit, the extent of a poem may be made to bear mathematical relation to its merit—in other words, to the excitement or elevation—again, in other words, to the degree of the true poetical effect which it is capable of inducing; for it is clear that the brevity must be in direct ratio of the intensity of the intended effect:—this, with one proviso—that a certain degree of duration is absolutely requisite for the production of any effect at all.

Holding in view these considerations, as well as that degree of excitement which I deemed not above the popular, while not below the critical, taste, I reached at once what I conceived the proper *length* for my intended poem—a length of about one hundred lines. It is, in fact, a hundred and eight.

My next thought concerned the choice of an impression, or effect, to be conveyed; and here I may as well observe that, throughout the construction I kept steadily in view the design of rendering

the work *universally* appreciable. I should be carried too far out of my immediate topic were I to demonstrate a point upon which I have repeatedly insisted, and which, with the poetical, stands not in the slightest need of demonstration—the point, I mean, that Beauty is the sole legitimate province of the poem. A few words, however, in elucidation of my real meaning, which some of my friends have evinced a disposition to misrepresent. That pleasure which is at once the most intense, the most elevating, and the most pure, is, I believe, found in the contemplation of the beautiful. When, indeed, men speak of Beauty, they mean, precisely, not a quality, as is supposed, but an effect—they refer, in short, just to that intense and pure elevation of *soul*—not of intellect, or of heart—upon which I have commented, and which is experienced in consequence of contemplating “the beautiful.” Now I designate Beauty as the province of the poem, merely because it is an obvious rule of Art that effects should be made to spring from direct causes—that objects should be attained through means best adapted for their attainment—no one as yet having been weak enough to deny that the peculiar elevation alluded to, is *most readily* attained in the poem. Now the object Truth, or the satisfaction of the intellect, and the object Passion, or the excitement of the heart, are, although attainable, to a certain extent, in poetry, far more readily attainable in prose. Truth, in fact, demands a precision, and Passion a *homeliness* (the truly passionate will comprehend me) which are absolutely antagonistic to that Beauty which, I maintain, is the excitement, or pleasurable elevation, of the soul. It by no means follows from anything here said, that passion, or even truth, may not be introduced, and even profitably introduced, into a poem—for they may serve in elucidation, or aid the general effect, as do discords in music, by contrast—but the true artist will always contrive, first, to tone them into proper subservience to the predominant aim; and, secondly, to enveil them, as far as possible, in that Beauty which is the atmosphere and the essence of the poem.

Regarding, then, Beauty as my province, my next question referred to the *tone* of its highest manifestation—and all experience has shown that this tone is one of *sadness*. Beauty of whatever kind, in its supreme development, invariably excites the sensitive soul to tears. Melancholy is thus the most legitimate of all the poetical tones.

The length, the province, and the tone, being thus determined,



I betook myself to ordinary induction, with the view of obtaining some artistic piquancy which might serve me as a key-note in the construction of the poem—some pivot upon which the whole structure might turn. In carefully thinking over all the usual artistic effects—or more properly *points*, in the theatrical sense—I did not fail to perceive immediately that no one had been so universally employed as that of the *refrain*. The universality of its employment sufficed to assure me of its intrinsic value, and spared me the necessity of submitting it to analysis. I considered it, however, with regard to its susceptibility of improvement, and soon saw it to be in a primitive condition. As commonly used, the *refrain*, or burden, not only is limited to lyric verse, but depends for its impression upon the force of monotone—both in sound and thought. The pleasure is deduced solely from the sense of identity—of repetition. I resolved to diversify, and so heighten, the effect, by adhering, in general, to the monotone of sound, while I continually varied that of thought: that is to say, I determined to produce continuously novel effects, by the variation of the *application* of the *refrain*—the *refrain* itself remaining, for the most part, unvaried.

These points being settled, I next bethought me of the *nature* of my *refrain*. Since its application was to be repeatedly varied, it was clear that the *refrain* itself must be brief, for there would have been an insurmountable difficulty in frequent variations of application in any sentence of length. In proportion to the brevity of the sentence, would, of course, be the facility of the variation. This led me at once to a single word as the best *refrain*.

The question now arose as to the *character* of the word. Having made up my mind to a *refrain*, the division of the poem into stanzas was, of course, a corollary: the *refrain* forming the close to each stanza. That such a close, to have force, must be sonorous and susceptible of protracted emphasis, admitted no doubt: and these considerations inevitably led me to the long *o* as the most sonorous vowel, in connection with *r* as the most producible consonant.

The sound of the *refrain* being thus determined, it became necessary to select a word embodying this sound, and at the same time in the fullest possible keeping with that melancholy which I had predetermined as the *tone* of the poem. In such a search it would have been absolutely impossible to overlook the word "Nevermore." In fact, it was the very first which presented itself.

The next *desideratum* was a pretext for the continuous use of the one word "nevermore." In observing the difficulty which I at once found in inventing a sufficiently plausible reason for its continuous repetition, I did not fail to perceive that this difficulty arose solely from the pre-assumption that the word was to be so continuously or monotonously spoken by a *human* being—I did not fail to perceive, in short, that the difficulty lay in the reconciliation of this monotony with the exercise of reason on the part of the creature repeating the word. Here, then, immediately arose the idea of a *non-reasoning* creature capable of speech; and, very naturally, a parrot, in the first instance, suggested itself, but was superseded forthwith by a Raven, as equally capable of speech, and infinitely more in keeping with the intended *tone*.

I had now gone so far as the conception of a Raven—the bird of ill omen—monotonously repeating the one word, "Nevermore," at the conclusion of each stanza, in a poem of melancholy tone, and in length about one hundred lines. Now, never losing sight of the object *supremeness*, or perfection, at all points, I asked myself—"Of all melancholy topics, what, according to the *universal* understanding of mankind, is the *most* melancholy?" Death—was the obvious reply. "And when," I said, "is this most melancholy of topics most poetical?" From what I have already explained at some length, the answer, here also, is obvious—"When it most closely allies itself to *Beauty*: the death, then, of a beautiful woman is, unquestionably, the most poetical topic in the world—and equally is it beyond doubt that the lips best suited for such topic are those of a bereaved lover."

I had now to combine the two ideas, of a lover lamenting his deceased mistress and a Raven continuously repeating the word "Nevermore."—I had to combine these, bearing in mind my design of varying, at every turn, the *application* of the word repeated; but the only intelligible mode of such combination is that of imagining the Raven employing the word in answer to the queries of the lover. And here it was that I saw at once the opportunity afforded for the effect on which I had been depending—that is to say, the effect of the *variation of application*. I saw that I could make the first query propounded by the lover—the first query to which the Raven should reply "Nevermore"—that I could make this first query a commonplace one—the second less so—the third still less, and so on—until at length the lover, startled from his

original *nonchalance* by the melancholy character of the word itself—by its frequent repetition—and by a consideration of the ominous reputation of the fowl that uttered it—is at length excited to superstition, and wildly propounds queries of a far different character—queries whose solution he has passionately at heart—propounds them half in superstition and half in that species of despair which delights in self-torture—propounds them not altogether because he believes in the prophetic or demoniac character of the bird (which, reason assures him, is merely repeating a lesson learned by rote), but because he experiences a frenzied pleasure in so modelling his question as to receive from the *expected* “Nevermore” the most delicious because the most intolerable of sorrow. Perceiving the opportunity thus afforded me—or, more strictly, thus forced upon me in the progress of the construction—I first established in mind the climax, or concluding query—that query to which “Nevermore” should be in the last place an answer—that query in reply to which this word “Nevermore” should involve the utmost conceivable amount of sorrow and despair.

Here then the poem may be said to have its beginning—at the end, where all works of art should begin—for it was here, at this point of my preconsiderations, that I first put pen to paper in the composition of the stanza:

“ ‘Prophet!’ said I, ‘thing of evil! prophet still, if bird or devil!  
By that heaven that bends above us—by that God we both adore,  
Tell this soul with sorrow laden, if, within the distant Aidenn,  
It shall clasp a sainted maiden whom the angels name Lenore—  
Clasp a rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore?’  
Quoth the Raven, ‘Nevermore.’ ”

I composed this stanza, at this point, first that, by establishing the climax, I might the better vary and graduate, as regards seriousness and importance, the preceding queries of the lover—and, secondly, that I might definitely settle the rhythm, the metre, and the length and general arrangement of the stanza—as well as graduate the stanzas which were to precede, so that none of them might surpass this in rhythmical effect. Had I been able, in the subsequent composition, to construct more vigorous stanzas, I should, without scruple, have purposely enfeebled them, so as not to interfere with the climacteric effect.

And here I may as well say a few words of the versification. My first object (as usual) was originality. The extent to which

this has been neglected, in versification, is one of the most unaccountable things in the world. Admitting that there is little possibility of variety in mere *rhythm*, it is still clear that the possible varieties of metre and stanza are absolutely infinite—and yet, for centuries, no man, in verse, has ever done, or ever seemed to think of doing, an original thing. The fact is, that originality (unless in minds of very unusual force) is by no means a matter, as some suppose, of impulse or intuition. In general, to be found, it must be elaborately sought, and although a positive merit of the highest class, demands in its attainment less of invention than negation.

Of course, I pretend to no originality in either the rhythm or metre of the "Raven." The former is trochaic—the latter is octameter acatalectic, alternating with heptameter catalectic repeated in the *refrain* of the fifth verse, and terminating with tetrameter catalectic. Less pedantically—the feet employed throughout (trochees) consist of a long syllable followed by a short: the first line of the stanza consists of eight of these feet—the second of seven and a half (in effect two-thirds)—the third of eight—the fourth of seven and a half—the fifth the same—the sixth three and a half. Now, each of these lines, taken individually, has been employed before, and what originality the "Raven" has, is in their *combination into stanza*; nothing even remotely approaching this combination has ever been attempted. The effect of this originality of combination is aided by other unusual, and some altogether novel effects, arising from an extension of the application of the principles of rhyme and alliteration.

The next point to be considered was the mode of bringing together the lover and the Raven—and the first branch of this consideration was the *locale*. For this the most natural suggestion might seem to be a forest, or the fields—but it has always appeared to me that a close *circumscription of space* is absolutely necessary to the effect of insulated incident:—it has the force of a frame to a picture. It has an indisputable moral power in keeping concentrated the attention, and, of course, must not be confounded with mere unity of place.

I determined, then, to place the lover in his chamber—in a chamber rendered sacred to him by memories of her who had frequented it. The room is represented as richly furnished—this in mere pursuance of the ideas I have already explained on the subject of Beauty, as the sole true poetical thesis.

The *locale* being thus determined, I had now to introduce the bird—and the thought of introducing him through the window, was inevitable. The idea of making the lover suppose, in the first instance, that the flapping of the wings of the bird against the shutter, is a “tapping” at the door, originated in a wish to increase, by prolonging, the reader’s curiosity, and in a desire to admit the incidental effect arising from the lover’s throwing open the door, finding all dark, and thence adopting the half-fancy that it was the spirit of his mistress that knocked.

I made the night tempestuous, first, to account for the Raven’s seeking admission, and secondly, for the effect of contrast with the (physical) serenity within the chamber.

I made the bird alight on the bust of Pallas, also for the effect of contrast between the marble and the plumage—it being understood that the bust was absolutely *suggested* by the bird—the bust of *Pallas* being chosen, first, as most in keeping with the scholarship of the lover, and, secondly, for the sonorousness of the word, Pallas, itself.

About the middle of the poem, also, I have availed myself of the force of contrast, with a view of deepening the ultimate impression. For example, an air of the fantastic—approaching as nearly to the ludicrous as was admissible—is given to the Raven’s entrance. He comes in “with many a flirt and flutter.”

“Not the *least obeisance made he*—not a moment stopped or stayed he,  
But, with mien of lord or lady, perched above my chamber door.”

In the two stanzas which follow, the design is more obviously carried out:—

“Then this ebony bird beguiling my sad fancy into smiling  
By the grave and stern decorum of the countenance it wore,  
‘Though thy crest be shorn and shaven, thou,’ I said, ‘art sure no craven,  
Ghastly, grim, and ancient Raven wandering from the Nightly shore—  
Tell me what thy lordly name is on the Night’s Plutonian shore?’  
Quoth the Raven, ‘Nevermore.’”

“Much I marvelled *this ungainly fowl* to hear discourse so plainly,  
Though its answer little meaning—little relevancy bore;  
For we cannot help agreeing that no living human being  
Ever yet was blessed with seeing bird above his chamber door—  
Bird or beast upon the sculptured bust above his chamber door,  
With such name as ‘Nevermore.’”

The effect of the *dénouement* being thus provided for, I immediately drop the fantastic for a tone of the most profound seriousness:—this tone commencing in the stanza directly following the one last quoted, with the line,

“But the Raven, sitting lonely on that placid bust, spoke only,” etc.

From this epoch the lover no longer jests—no longer sees any thing even of the fantastic in the Raven’s demeanour. He speaks of him as a “grim, ungainly, ghastly, gaunt, and ominous bird of yore,” and feels the “fiery eyes” burning into his “bosom’s core.” This revolution of thought, or fancy, on the lover’s part, is intended to induce a similar one on the part of the reader—to bring the mind into a proper frame for the *dénouement*—which is now brought about as rapidly and as *directly* as possible.

With the *dénouement* proper—with the Raven’s reply, “Nevermore,” to the lover’s final demand if he shall meet his mistress in another world—the poem, in its obvious phase, that of a simple narrative, may be said to have its completion. So far, every thing is within the limits of the accountable—of the real. A raven, having learned by rote the single word “Nevermore,” and having escaped from the custody of its owner, is driven at midnight, through the violence of a storm, to seek admission at a window from which a light still gleams—the chamber-window of a student, occupied half in poring over a volume, half in dreaming of a beloved mistress deceased. The casement being thrown open at the fluttering of the bird’s wings, the bird itself perches on the most convenient seat out of the immediate reach of the student, who, amused by the incident and the oddity of the visitor’s demeanour, demands of it, in jest, and without looking for a reply, its name. The raven addressed, answers with its customary word, “Nevermore”—a word which finds immediate echo in the melancholy heart of the student, who, giving utterance aloud to certain thoughts suggested by the occasion, is again startled by the fowl’s repetition of “Nevermore.” The student now guesses the state of the case, but is impelled, as I have before explained, by the human thirst for self-torture, and in part by superstition, to propound such queries to the bird as will bring him, the lover, the most of the luxury of sorrow, through the anticipated answer “Nevermore.” With the indulgence, to the extreme, of this self-torture, the narration, in what I have termed its first or obvious

phase, has a natural termination, and so far there has been no overstepping of the limits of the real.

But in subjects so handled, however skilfully, or with however vivid an array of incident, there is always a certain hardness or nakedness, which repels the artistical eye. Two things are invariably required—first, some amount of complexity, or more properly, adaptation; and, secondly, some amount of suggestiveness—some under-current, however indefinite, of meaning. It is this latter, in especial, which imparts to a work of art so much of that *richness* (to borrow from a colloquy a forcible term) which we are too fond of confounding with *the ideal*. It is the *excess* of the suggested meaning—it is the rendering this the upper instead of the under current of the theme—which turns into prose (and that of the very flattest kind) the so-called poetry of the so-called transcendentalists.

Holding these opinions, I added the two concluding stanzas of the poem—their suggestiveness being thus made to pervade all the narrative which has preceded them. The under-current of meaning is rendered first apparent in the lines—

“Take thy beak from out *my heart*, and take thy form from off my door!  
Quoth the Raven, ‘Nevermore!’”

It will be observed that the words, “from out my heart,” involve the first metaphorical expression in the poem. They, with the answer “Nevermore,” dispose the mind to seek a moral in all that has been previously narrated. The reader begins now to regard the Raven as emblematical—but it is not until the very last line of the very last stanza, that the intention of making him emblematical of *Mournful and Never-ending Remembrance* is permitted distinctly to be seen:—

“And the Raven, never flitting, still is sitting, still is sitting,  
On the pallid bust of Pallas, just above my chamber door;  
And his eyes have all the seeming of a demon’s that is dreaming,  
And the lamplight o’er him streaming throws his shadow on the floor;  
And my soul from out that shadow that lies floating on the floor  
Shall be lifted—nevermore!”

## PHILOSOPHY OF FURNITURE.

**I**N the internal decoration, if not in the external architecture of their residences, the English are supreme. The Italians have but little sentiment beyond marbles and colours. In France, *meliora probant, deteriora sequuntur*—the people are too much a race of gad-about to maintain those household properties of which, indeed, they have a delicate appreciation, or at least the elements of a proper sense. The Chinese and most of the eastern races have a warm but inappropriate fancy. The Scotch are *poor* decorists. The Dutch have, perhaps, an indeterminate idea that a curtain is not a cabbage. In Spain they are *all* curtains—a nation of hangmen. The Russians do not furnish. The Hottentots and Kickapoos are very well in their way. The Yankees alone are preposterous.

How this happens, it is not difficult to see. We have no aristocracy of blood, and having therefore as a natural, and indeed as an inevitable thing, fashioned for ourselves an aristocracy of dollars, the *display of wealth* has here to take the place and perform the office of the heraldic display in monarchical countries. By a transition readily understood, and which might have been as readily foreseen, we have been brought to merge in simple *show* our notions of taste itself.

To speak less abstractly. In England, for example, no mere parade of costly appurtenances would be so likely as with us, to create an impression of the beautiful in respect to the appurtenances themselves—or of taste as regards the proprietor:—this for the reason, first, that wealth is not, in England, the loftiest object of ambition as constituting a nobility; and secondly, that there, the true nobility of blood, confining itself within the strict limits of legitimate taste, rather avoids than affects that mere costliness in which a *parvenu* rivalry may at any time be successfully attempted. The people *will* imitate the nobles, and the result is a thorough diffusion of the proper feeling. But in America, the coins current being the sole arms of the aristocracy, their display may be said, in general, to be the sole means of aristocratic distinction; and the populace, looking always upward for models, are insensibly led to confound the two entirely separate ideas of magnificence and beauty. In short, the cost of an article of furniture has at length come to



be, with us, nearly the sole test of its merit in a decorative point of view—and this test, once established, has led the way to many analogous errors' readily traceable to the one primitive folly.

There could be nothing more directly offensive to the eye of an artist than the interior of what is termed in the United States—that is to say, in Appallachia—a well-furnished apartment. Its most usual defect is a want of keeping. We speak of the keeping of a room as we would of the keeping of a picture—for both the picture and the room are amenable to those undeviating principles which regulate all varieties of art; and very nearly the same laws by which we decide on the higher merits of a painting, suffice for decision on the adjustment of a chamber.

A want of keeping is observable sometimes in the character of the several pieces of furniture, but generally in their colours or modes of adaptation to use. *Very* often the eye is offended by their inartistical arrangement. Straight lines are too prevalent—too uninterruptedly continued—or clumsily interrupted at right angles. If curved lines occur, they are repeated into unpleasant uniformity. By undue precision, the appearance of many a fine apartment is utterly spoiled.

Curtains are rarely well disposed, or well chosen in respect to other decorations. With formal furniture, curtains are out of place; and an extensive volume of drapery of any kind is, under any circumstances, irreconcilable with good taste—the proper quantum, as well as the proper adjustment, depending upon the character of the general effect.

Carpets are better understood of late than of ancient days, but we still very frequently err in their patterns and colours. The soul of the apartment is the carpet. From it are deduced not only the hues but the forms of all objects incumbent. A judge at common law may be an ordinary man; a good judge of a carpet *must* be a genius. Yet we have heard discoursing of carpets, with the air "*d'un mouton qui rêve*," fellows who should not and who could not be entrusted with the management of their own *moustaches*. Every one knows that a large floor *may* have a covering of large figures, and that a small one *must* have a covering of small—yet this is not all the knowledge in the world. As regards texture, the Saxony is alone admissible. Brussels is the preter-pluperfect tense of fashion, and Turkey is taste in its dying agonies. Touching pattern—a carpet should *not* be bedizened out like a Riccaree Indian

—all red chalk, yellow ochre, and cock's feathers. In brief—distinct grounds, and vivid circular or cycloid figures, *of no meaning*, are here Median laws. The abomination of flowers, or representations of well-known objects of any kind, should not be endured within the limits of Christendom. Indeed, whether on carpets, curtains, or tapestry, or ottoman coverings, all upholstery of this nature should be rigidly Arabesque. As for those antique floor-cloths still occasionally seen in the dwellings of the rabble—cloths of huge, sprawling, and radiating devices, stripe-interspersed, and glorious with all hues, among which no ground is intelligible—these are but the wicked invention of a race of time-servers and money-lovers—children of Baal and worshippers of Mammon—Benthams, who, to spare thought and economize fancy, first cruelly invented the Kaleidoscope, and then established joint-stock companies to whirl it by steam.

*Glare* is a leading error in the philosophy of American household decoration—an error easily recognised as deduced from the perversion of taste just specified. We are violently enamoured of gas and of glass. The former is totally inadmissible within doors. Its harsh and unsteady light offends. No one having both brains and eyes will use it. A mild, or what artists term a cool light, with its consequent warm shadows, will do wonders for even an ill-furnished apartment. Never was a more lovely thought than that of the astral lamp. We mean, of course, the astral lamp proper—the lamp of Argand, with its original plain ground-glass shade, and its tempered and uniform moonlight rays. The cut-glass shade is a weak invention of the enemy. The eagerness with which we have adopted it, partly on account of its *flashiness*, but principally on account of its *greater cost*, is a good commentary on the proposition with which we began. It is not too much to say, that the deliberate employer of a cut-glass shade, is either radically deficient in taste, or blindly subservient to the caprices of fashion. The light proceeding from one of these gaudy abominations is unequal, broken, and painful. It alone is sufficient to mar a world of good effect in the furniture subjected to its influence. Female loveliness, in especial, is more than one-half disenchanted beneath its evil eye.

In the matter of glass, generally, we proceed upon false principles. Its leading feature is *glitter*—and in that one word how much of all that is detestable do we express! Flickering, unquiet

lights are *sometimes* pleasing—to children and idiots always so—but in the embellishment of a room they should be scrupulously avoided. In truth, even strong *steady* lights are inadmissible. The huge and unmeaning glass chandeliers, prism-cut, gas-lighted, and without shade, which dangle in our most fashionable drawing-rooms, may be cited as the quintessence of all that is false in taste or preposterous in folly.

The rage for *glitter*—because its idea has become, as we before observed, confounded with that of magnificence in the abstract—has led us, also, to the exaggerated employment of mirrors. We line our dwellings with great British plates, and then imagine we have done a fine thing. Now the slightest thought will be sufficient to convince anyone who has an eye at all, of the ill effect of numerous looking-glasses, and especially of large ones. Regarded apart from its reflection, the mirror presents a continuous, flat, colourless, unrelieved surface,—a thing always and obviously unpleasant. Considered as a reflector, it is potent in producing a monstrous and odious uniformity: and the evil is here aggravated not in merely direct proportion with the augmentation of its sources, but in a ratio constantly increasing. In fact, a room with four or five mirrors arranged at random, is, for all purposes of artistic show, a room of no shape at all. If we add to this evil, the attendant glitter upon glitter, we have a perfect farrago of discordant and displeasing effects. The veriest bumpkin, on entering an apartment so bedizened, would be instantly aware of something wrong, although he might be altogether unable to assign a cause for his dissatisfaction. But let the same person be led into a room tastefully furnished, and he would be startled into an exclamation of pleasure and surprise.

It is an evil growing out of our republican institutions, that here a man of large purse has usually a very little soul which he keeps in it. The corruption of taste is a portion or a pendant of the dollar-manufacture. As we grow rich our ideas grow rusty. It is, therefore, not among *our* aristocracy that we must look (if at all, in Appalachia) for the spirituality of a British *boudoir*. But we have seen apartments in the tenure of Americans of moderate means, which, in negative merit at least, might vie with any of the *ormolu'd* cabinets of our friends across the water. Even *now*, there is present to our mind's eye a small and not ostentatious chamber with whose decorations no fault can be found. The proprietor lies

asleep on a sofa—the weather is cool—the time is midnight: we will make a sketch of the room during his slumber.

It is oblong—some thirty feet in length and twenty-five in breadth—a shape affording the best (ordinary) opportunities for the adjustment of furniture. It has but one door—by no means a wide one—which is at one end of the parallelogram, and but two windows, which are at the other. These latter are large, reaching down to the floor—have deep recesses—and open on an Italian *verandah*. Their panes are of a crimson-tinted glass, set in rose-wood framings, more massive than usual. They are curtained within the recess, by a thick silver tissue adapted to the shape of the window, and hanging loosely in small volumes. Without the recess are curtains of an exceedingly rich crimson silk, fringed with a deep network of gold, and lined with the silver tissue, which is the material of the exterior blind. There are no cornices; but the folds of the whole fabric (which are sharp rather than massive, and have an airy appearance) issue from beneath a broad entablature of rich giltwork, which encircles the room at the junction of the ceiling and walls. The drapery is thrown open also, or closed, by means of a thick rope of gold loosely enveloping it, and resolving itself readily into a knot; no pins or other such devices are apparent. The colours of the curtains and their fringe—the tints of crimson and gold—appear everywhere in profusion, and determine the *character* of the room. The carpet—of Saxony material—is quite half an inch thick, and is of the same crimson ground, relieved simply by the appearance of a gold cord (like that festooning the curtains) slightly relieved above the surface of the *ground*, and thrown upon it in such a manner as to form a succession of short irregular curves—one occasionally overlaying the other. The walls are prepared with a glossy paper of a silver gray tint, spotted with small Arabesque devices of a fainter hue of the prevalent crimson. Many paintings relieve the expanse of the paper. These are chiefly landscapes of an imaginative cast—such as the fairy grottoes of Stanfield, or the lake of the Dismal Swamp of Chapman. There are, nevertheless, three or four female heads, of an ethereal beauty—portraits in the manner of Sully. The tone of each picture is warm, but dark. There are no “brilliant effects.” *Repose* speaks in all. Not one is of small size. Diminutive paintings give that *spotty* look to a room, which is the blemish of so many a fine work of Art overtouched. The frames are broad but not deep, and richly

carved, without being *dulled* or filigreed. They have the whole lustre of burnished gold. They lie flat on the walls, and do not hang off with cords. The designs themselves are often seen to better advantage in this latter position, but the general appearance of the chamber is injured. But one mirror—and this not a very large one—is visible. In shape it is nearly circular—and it is hung so that a reflection of the person can be obtained from it in none of the ordinary sitting-places of the room. Two large low sofas of rosewood and crimson silk, gold-flowered, form the only seats, with the exception of two light conversation chairs, also of rose-wood. There is a pianoforte (rose-wood also), without cover, and thrown open. An octagonal table, formed altogether of the richest gold-threaded marble, is placed near one of the sofas. This is also without cover—the drapery of the curtains has been thought sufficient. Four large and gorgeous Sèvres vases, in which bloom a profusion of sweet and vivid flowers, occupy the slightly rounded angles of the room. A tall candelabrum, bearing a small antique lamp with highly perfumed oil, is standing near the head of my sleeping friend. Some light and graceful hanging shelves, with golden edges and crimson silk cords with gold tassels, sustain two or three hundred magnificently bound books. Beyond these things, there is no furniture, if we except an Argand lamp, with a plain crimson-tinted ground-glass shade, which depends from the lofty vaulted ceiling by a single slender gold chain, and throws a tranquil but magical radiance over all.

THE END.













