

the salon of the Champs Elysees. The artist has been on and off with the picture since 1870. It is a very large picture, and was completed to go to Chicago. But its size exceeded the regulation measurement, so it was put aside among several hundred, disqualified for other reasons. By chance the picture caught the eye of a member of the Hanging Committee of the salon; he drew the attention of his colleagues to the find, and it was hung up. Roybet only knew of the fact when he went to visit the show like other artists. The State intends to purchase it, but the Municipal Council of Nancy long for the picture which illustrates the most important event in the history of their city, as well as in the life of the Valois dukes of Burgundy.

Z.

DIALECT LITERATURE.

Any lover of literature cannot help noticing that dialect writing is coming more into vogue than formerly. From India, in the east, where Kipling has been celebrating the praises of "Tommy Atkins," as the "hero of the barrack-room," in strains that go off with a rush and a crackle and a sparkle that fairly take one's breath away—to the free and almost boundless cattle-ranches of America, in the west, where the cow-boy also finds his poet, dialect literature has been making strong claims upon the attention of the reading public. It is evident, however, that the bulk of this literature is an imitation of dialect, rather than the genuine article itself.

A writer in a recent issue of *The Week* made some reference to dialect poetry, observing that it ought to be cultivated as worthy of a place in a nation's literature. His remark, though true with some qualification, can scarcely be regarded as very original, seeing that dialect poetry has held no mean place in our literature ever since the time (to go no further back) when Robbie Burns opened up the flood-gates of Scottish poetry and song.

It seems of more consequence to inquire on what grounds should dialect poetry, or dialect writing, be deemed worthy of a permanent place in any literature. For it is plain that, while there may be dialect poetry or dialect literature, worthy of the name, there is also such a thing as dialect rubbish.

Dialect forms of expression are such as prevail in outlying localities of any country among the uncultured and illiterate; or such as are used by certain classes, more or less circumscribed, at the very centres, it may be, of a nation's life and thought. There is perhaps no influence so democratic as that which goes to build up a nation's language. Pure English, as a spoken language, is just that which is in use by the great majority of the Anglo-Saxon race to-day. The usage of the educated middle classes has been the chief factor in the formation and preservation of it. Hence the speech of the English Cockney may vary as much from pure English and be as much a dialect as that of the native of the Orkney Islands. The same is true also of that of the English Rude, or Upper Ten-dom, the "la-de-da" speech to which a recent correspondent of *The Week*, Mr. Hamilton, refers—so far, at least, as regards the peculiarities which it has taken on, such, e. g., as the broad, almost nasal (and therefore objectionable) sound given

to the vowel "a" in many words, the effeminate, lisping pronunciation of the letter "s" and the ridiculous pronunciation, or rather non-pronunciation, of the letter "r," exemplified in making the word "morn" rhyme with "dawn." Although these peculiarities are sometimes observable even in the services of the Church, yet they are as much impurities in the "well of English undefiled" as the part, ridiculous and incomprehensible, which the letter "h" is made to play in the speech of many Englishmen.

By a dialect, however, is generally understood the rude, uncultured speech of the peasantry of a province or district. When deliberately employed in literature it is for the purpose of producing more graphic, realistic effects; for it is taken to be the natural expression of genuine, unsophisticated feeling. Dialect writing seems to bring the reader nearer to nature's heart; and therefore it may possess a charm of its own, and yield a pleasure akin to that which we derive from the artless prattling of a little child. The use of dialect is likely to attract attention and impart a quaint and piquant character to a composition. But for that very reason it is evident that it should not be often indulged in. Hence Tennyson, although a master of that style of writing, showed his good taste by only making use of it occasionally. No man of culture will make it the constant vehicle of his ideas.

Dialect poetry or prose—while it may possibly possess some extrinsic, illustrative value to the linguist, or some one else—can only win a permanent place in a nation's literature on the ground of intrinsic literary merit, just like any worthy composition in the pure and genuine language of that nation. The mere employment of dialect forms cannot make up for the want of original ideas, clearness and vigour of thought, constructive skill, or any other good qualities that render any composition meritorious. Scott and Burns did much for the Scottish dialect; but it cannot be denied that a vast amount of rubbish has been written in imitation of them. In America the late James Russell Lowell made a hit with his *Biglow Papers*; but just as we sometimes see writers making use of slang (the vernacular of the street Arab) under the impression that it is humour, so many American writers, since Lowell's successful venture, have sought apparently to make dialect serve the purpose of original thought and genuine literary merit. The writer who has perhaps been led most astray in this respect is J. Whitecomb Riley, who has already dumped a good deal of dialect rubbish upon the outskirts—the vacant or empty lots, so to speak—of the literary world.

The taste for dialect writing is one that should be sparingly indulged in by a professional writer if he wants to leave behind him an enduring name. The reason is obvious. The purity of literature would be endangered, if we were to foster the growth of what is abnormal or merely an excrescence. Hence one does not like to see the youth of our land, who are daily in our schools supposed to be acquiring a knowledge of and a taste for genuine English literature, so liberally supplied outside of school with stories, etc., in dialect, in which words are misspelt and the language distorted almost out of recognition. There has been too much dialect

trash appearing of late. Lovers of pure literature should join their voices to that of the "poet of the Sierras" in protesting against the influx of so much "cow-boy" or slang literature, which does not even need to be turned into good English to disclose its utter worthlessness. Why, for example, should a bar-room yarn, merely because rhyming syllables occur in it at regular intervals, be regarded as worthy of a place in the poets' corner of a respectable journal? A poem that is intelligible only to card-players or gamblers is not worthy of a place in literature.

As a worthy and remarkable example of genuine dialect poetry the following is submitted. It was written by a local celebrity of Yorkshire, Ben Preston, and for intensely graphic and pathetic power could scarcely have been excelled by Tennyson himself:—

COME TO THI GRONNY, BOY!

Come to thi gronny, boy! come to thi gronny,

Bless tha, to me tha'rt as precious as ony;
Murtherless barn of a dowter unwed,
Little tha knaws, boy, the tears 'at ah've

shed—
Trials ah've knawn boath fur't heart an

fur't head;
Shortness o' wark, ey, an shortness o'

bread.
These ah kud bide—but thaw none to blame
Bless tha, tha browt ma boath sorrow an

shame;
Gronny, poor soul, fur a two-month or

moar,
Hardly kud feshun to lewk aht o' door;
T'nabors called aht to ma, "Dunnot

stand that;
Aht wi' the hussy an aht wi' hur brat."

Deary me, deary me; what kud I say;
T'first thing uv all, ah thowt "Let ma go

pray."
Next time ah slept ah'd a dream, d'ya see,

Ey, an ah knew that dream was fur me;
Tears o' Christ Jesus, ah saw em that neet

Fall drop be drop on to one at His feet;
After that saw Him wi' barns rohind His

knee,
Some on em, happen, poor cratur's like thee.

Says ah at last, tho ah soarily wur tried,
Suarily a sinner a sinner sud bide:

Naburs may think an may say what they

will,
T'mother an t'dowter sall stop w' ma still.

Come on't what will, I' my cot thea sall

cahr;
Woe be t' thame that maks bad into war.

Some folk may call tha a name that ah

hate,
Wishin fro t'heart tha wur weel aht o't

gate.
Of't this hard world into t'gutter ul shur

tha—
Poor little lamb, wi no daddy to luv tha—

Dunnot tha fret, boy, woll gronny hads up
Niver sall tha want a bite ur a sup:

What if ah work these owd fingers ta

t'boan.
Happen, tha'lt luv ma long after ah'm

goan.
T'last bite I't cupbord wi' tha ah kud

share't,—
Ha! bud tha's stown a rare slice o' ma

heart:
Spite o' all t'sorra, all t'shame that ah've

seen,
Sunshine comes back to my heart thru thi

een,
Cuddle thi gronny, boy,—

Bless tha, tha'rt bonny, boy—
Rosy an sweet, fro thi brow to thi feet!

Kludoms an crawns wodn't buy tha ta-

neet.

WILLIAM KAY.

Instead of saying that man is the creature of circumstances, it would be nearer the mark to say that man is the architect of circumstances. It is character which builds an existence out of circumstances. Our strength is measured by our plastic power. From the same material one man builds palaces, another hovels; one warren, another villas.—G. H. Lewes.