

# OLD:

lian Homes.

*and Moral Sentiment of the Dominion.*

No. 4.

## PHILOLOGICAL FILBERTS.

No. 2.

IT has been laid down as a canon of criticism, that comic incidents and characters may be introduced into a serious poem without injuring the higher tone of the general colouring, but giving to it the effect of light and shade, provided the due mock heroic stateliness be kept up in the language. It was some feeling of this rule, we suppose that led Mr. Lowell to employ so many new and hard words in the lighter portions of his picturesque and philosophic poem, "the Cathedral." Among these "mock heroic," "stately" expressions we find "loudened,"—"de-saxonized"—"rumorous"—"invirile"—"disnated"—and the very formidable, polly-syllabic word "undisprivacied."

For the benefit of those who have not read the poem, I give the passage in which the last word occurs, fearing that without the context its meaning may be undiscovered. Mr. Lowell visits a pleasure garden in the neighborhood of his cathedral and is struck with the contrast between the constrained manners of an Englishman or American when the public eye is on him, and the ease which the Frenchman enjoys when similarly circumstanced. He can

"Play with his child, make love, and shriek his mind,  
By throngs of strangers UNDISPRIVACIED"

In this instance and in regard to the other words named, Mr. Lowell is excused, if not justified by the rule laid down, though he strains it rather severely; but we are disposed to quarrel with him when he obscures the sense of one of his finest passages by employing unusual words, thereby retarding all but thoroughly classical readers from enjoying a sublime and beautiful comparison. After quitting the pleasure grounds, with eyes cast down "in hopes to take his Minster unawares," the poet suddenly looks up and beholds it,

"Silent and gray as forest-leaguered cliff  
Left inland by the ocean's slow retreat,  
That hears afar the breeze-borne rote, and longs,  
Remembering shocks of surf that clomb, and fell,  
Spume-sliding down the baffled decuman,  
It rose before me, patiently remote  
From the great tides of life it breasted once,  
Hearing the noise of men as in a dream

This is glorious poetry, though not transparently clear, and the ordinary reader, annoyed at not taking in at once all the meaning which he knows is there, perhaps irreverently asks, "what is a *decuman* a baffled *decuman*?" He may ever be puzzled by the phrase "breeze-borne rote," but a little thought soon solves that riddle. "Rote" is of course the repeated sound of the waves beating on the seacoast, "borne" inland by the "breeze," and very fine is the image thus painted by a single word; but we are sorry to say that we consulted our dictionaries.—English, French, Latin—for *decuman* in vain. The latter gave us just a glimpse—that "little learning" which, as Pope says "is a dangerous thing." We found that "Decuman" were tything men—collectors of tythe; and that *decumanus*, the tenth, was sometimes used in the sense of fair, of huge, or vast; the trouble was how to apply our "little learning" to the text. Could a rock, upon which a portion of the water dashed against it remains, be called on that account a collection of tythes? but if so, why baffled? Moreover it would be absurd to

education. Hence the high claims of the subject on the vast importance of enforcing it as a duty and a condition that no one is qualified to exercise the prerogative of freedom, who is not in the highest sense an intelligent and rational being.

But in this view that education is the salvation of a free people, there presses upon us another consideration—that of the *quality* of the education. We admit that all knowledge is good, and better than ignorance. A child who passes through the commonest routine of a common school education is safer—nearer to all the conditions that make a good citizen than one who wanders from infancy to manhood in the unrestrained liberty of our city savages. The discipline of the school, the morbid culture, the power to read and to think more logically, which are inevitable to any school education, cannot fail to do good. Whatever evil comes from defective education, is not the result of education, but of its want. There has not been enough of it. But above all it has not been established on a firm basis. The end of all education is the moral and religious culture of man. Literature and science, when the first is pure, and the second sound, cannot do harm, except as they aim not at the final purpose, and are not pervaded of the sentiments of duty to man, and reverence and love to God. The state is not called upon to educate the people for special and temporal advantages—to make mechanics, or professional men, or merchants. These objects are no doubt important to the temporal prosperity of the nation; but the final purpose, and that which makes national education an imperative duty, to neglect which will bring inevitable disaster and ruin on the nation, is that the moral law sustained and pervaded by a deep religious sentiment, shall be the supreme guide of every man in the State. We do not mean by this that education shall