

to its growing power. The elevation of the middle classes would be found a sure cure for this monstrosity. The idea that it is a necessity is erroneous, the result of habit, and only needs the use of will or reason to prove its fallacy.

When this is accomplished and not until then, will the press be what it was intended to be, and what it should be, the grandest achievement of the 19th century.

A CRITICISM.

It may be thought very presumptuous to offer any adverse criticisms on a production of the immortal Bard of Avon; but still it is possible that the dramatist may have shared in the common infirmity and imperfection of human nature. It is on this supposition that the remarks which it is designed to present, will be based. The particular portion of the works of the Poet which will be here considered is an "Interlude" in the play of the "Midsummer Night's Dream," namely, that of which Pyramus and Thisbe are the subject. It was to the "Metamorphoses" of Ovid that Shakespeare was indebted for the story, a story of which, as we shall see, he made so singular a use. According to the Roman Poet, Pyramus and Thisbe were lovers, who dwelt in contiguous houses, with a dividing wall common to both. In this wall there was a slight fissure, unknown to all but the lovers, "Quid non sentit amor?" or, as it is translated by King in his admirable metrical and poetical rendering, "The eyes of love are quick to see."

Thro' this fissure the lovers conversed, but secretly; because their cruel or prudent parents disapproved of their intimacy. "The course of true love never did run smooth." Pyramus and Thisbe sought a less restricted intercourse and contrived a freer interview. They agreed to meet, unknown to their guardians, by moon-light, the time sacred to lovers, at the tomb of Nisus, near which were a mulberry tree and a fountain. Thisbe was earliest at the trysting place, having successfully eluded her guards. The first object she saw was a lioness, coming from a recent slaughter, and with bloody mouth seeking to quench her thirst at the well known and welcome spring. Thisbe fled in terror to a neighboring cave, leaving in her haste her encumbering mantle. The lioness having satisfied her desires, saw the mantle, and in headlong wantonness rent it with her ensanguined jaws, and passed into the forest.

Pyramus now reached the spot and beheld the torn and blood-stained robe. Stunned and maddened by the sight, he in his haste and bewilderment concluded that Thisbe had been killed and devoured by wild beasts. In his grief and agony he resolved not to outlive the object of his affections and worship, and thus rashly plunged the sword he carried into his breast.

As soon as Thisbe supposed the danger to which she had been exposed, past, she left her place of concealment to meet her lover. She found him stretched upon the ground weltering in his own blood from a mortal wound. The sight overwhelmed her in misery and despair. With true instinct divining the cause of her lover's death, she seized the sword of Pyramus reeking with his blood, and plunged it into her bosom. Thus the affection and fidelity of the lovers were sealed with the life blood of each.

The story, as told by Ovid, is marked by all the tenderness and grace, of which he is the acknowledged and well nigh unrivalled master, and is most affecting in all its details; few of the ancient legends are as much so. But the great dramatist, in appropriating it to his own use in the play adverted to, changes its character throughout and transforms it into low burlesque. We would not have expected such a *Metamorphosis*; but poets and dramatists are a class by themselves, who live in a world of their own, and who see things with eyes different from those of ordinary mortals.

Another explanation is possible. It has been judged necessary by dramatists to associate in the same play, the sad and stately tragedy with the light and merry farce, in order to furnish matter suited to the varied tastes of the frequenters of the theatre. They must give their regards to the pit no less than to the private boxes. This will account for the presence of an Interlude; but still it seems strange that the poet should have invaded a region so hallowed by tender and faithful love for such a purpose, when the whole world was ever open to his broad survey, from which to command materials adapted to his purpose. Shakespeare possessed marvelous powers of observation and delineation, with a knowledge of human nature which has made his works the wonder and admiration of all succeeding generations; but here many will think he has failed. He not only does the rudest violence to our sympathies and feelings, but he does so at the expense of honesty; he introduces into the story a number of ludicrous incidents, for which there is neither warrant nor excuse; "Homer sometimes nods," and it was possible, it would seem, for Shakespeare to do the same.

In the legend, as given by the Roman poet, there is nothing about "kissing the hole in the wall," as some low clown is made by the Dramatist to express himself. A literal translation of the words of Ovid would be in metrical phrase,

"And empty kisses gave on either side,
Kisses that never met."

I have not the original at hand, and cannot therefore furnish the "*ipsissima verba*" of the Roman poet, for unfortunately, the "*Metamorphosis*," as a whole, is difficult to obtain, our classical purists having tabooed the work in its integrity as unfit for general use, and given us in its stead, their most