

SOME SPECIMENS OF INVECTIVE.

IN the whole sphere of literature, both prose and poetry, perhaps no species of composition has had more able exponents or found more general popularity than the ever-welcome satire or the consummately arranged invective.

Needless to say, the admirers of this style of composition have not themselves been made the butts of ridicule, nor have they earned the unenviable immortality of standing pilloried in the stocks of blasting dunciads.

They have stood at safe distances and viewed with delight the exquisite thrusts with which the intellectual giant pierced the reputations of his less fortunate brethren and left them to lie on the field of literature, as striking object-lessons of puerile and inordinate ambition. But they have never challenged his magic blade, they have never received the incurable wound, which blasts forever all hopes of victory, which, as some affirm, brought a Keats to an untimely end, and which broke the heart of many a youth whose powers of rejoinder were impotent.

And yet such are not cowards. Intellectually inferior they may be to the giant censor who wields the rod, but they are undoubtedly competent to appreciate the justice of the castigation and to admire the nature of the punishment and the excellence of its application.

It is not at all uncharitable or unreasonable to distinguish good writers by discouraging the bad. In fact, it would seem an act of charity in relation to those upon whom the reflections are made.

True, it may deprive them a little the sooner of a short profit and transitory reputation, but then it may have a good effect, and oblige them to decline that for which they are so very unfit and to have recourse to something in which they may be more successful.

While stating this as a commendation of satirical writing, we would not have it understood that we think the mediocre writer worthy of no consideration. No, far is this from our idea. We are at one with Dr. Johnson in No. 145 of the *Rambler*, when he says that, though such writers cannot aspire to honor, they may be exempted from ignominy and adopted in that order of men which deserve our kindness, though not our reverence. "These papers of the day—the ephemerae of learning—have uses more adequate to the purposes of common life than more pompous and durable volumes, and the humble author of journals and gazettes must be considered as a liberal dispenser of beneficial knowledge." Cowper voices similar sentiments in the lines:

"Unless a love of virtue light the
flame,
Satire is more than those he brands
to blame;
He hides behind a magnificent air
His own offences, and strips others'
bare."

True as this may be, it is not the whole truth. When poetasters, social humbugs, political opponents, or literary rivals attempt to "swim beyond their depth," when they attempt illegally to overthrow the rightful