

man who decided to commit suicide and invited a friend to pass the evening with him over a bottle of poisoned port. There is neither rhyme nor reason in such uncharitable conduct; it is simply devilish.

The Earl of Surrey was as dejected as Wyatt in the course of his shooting the rapids of love; but he turned rather to Nature, as we may gather from his "Description of Spring, wherein each thing renews, save only the lover"; he invoked no evil wishes on his rivals, but merely registered his poetic "Vow to love faithfully, howsoever he be rewarded."

From these few titles the characters of the poets may be read. Wyatt appears rugged, morose, unforgiving and revengeful. It is fairly supposed that he was in love with Anne Boleyn and the only possible rival he could or rather would have to put up tamely with, was the King. Had Bluff Hal been a courtier, we can well believe Wyatt would soon have caused a quarrel. Very likely he would have shouldered and jostled him, or bidden his serving men attack the other's followers, or arranged to meet him at full tilt in a tourney, with the intention of doing him some mischief during the horse-play. We cannot conceive otherwise of Wyatt; but against the King he dared not tilt or jostle, nor could he set his men against the body-guard; but he did not hesitate to pillory his royal master with his faithless mistress in a sonnet or two and so bring himself into disfavour. On the other hand, Surrey, though quite as valorous and bold, was not such a *vengeur*. Disappointed of his Geraldine, he walked out into the parks and green fields, scattered his sighs among the clover and consoled himself with Nature. It is said that he starred as a Don Quixote through Europe and fought all-comers for the sake of his lady; but the story is doubtful, and it is more likely that he lived on in erotic discomfort until he placed his head on the block at Tower Hill in 1547, partly, perhaps, to pay for his insult to the King contained in his sonnet "Of Sardanapalus' Dishonourable Life and Miserable Death."

The custom of writing series of sonnets (or sonnet-sequences, as Rossetti called it) came in soon after and the individual sonnets were seldom named; titles being given to the whole book, as Spenser's "Amoretti," Griffin's "Fidessa," Brooke's "Cellica," Constable's "Diana," Watson's "Tears of Fancie," Drayton's "Idea," and Daniel's "Delia." Sonnets were sometimes individually entitled, as "Francesco's Sonnet, called his parting blow," by Robert Green.

Shakespeare's sonnets were not originally named; but in the 1640 edition they were entitled either individually or in groups of several. Some of these are curious, viz:—"Magazine of Beauty," indicating an explosion; "Beauty's Valuation," suggesting an auction sale;—"In praise of her beauty, though black," recalling the critic who maintained that Shakespeare's dark lady was a quadroon. Other titles are Love's Labor Lost; Familiarity Breeds Contempt; Go and Come Quickly; Ancient Antipathy, *Sat Fuisse*; *Patient Armatus* and *Nil magnis Invidia*. But these are all apocryphal, beyond a doubt, and must also be regarded as an impertinent addition to the poems.

Sonneteers, old and modern, have wasted hours in writing "To Time," and been wide awake enough to address "Sleep;" they have been all alive to the cheerful subject of "Death," and sung in a superior air of rivalry

"To the Nightingale." These may be called stock subjects, without which no sonnet writer's collection is complete; but there are other titles of sonnets that are entirely typical of the nature of the particular occasion, event, or individual which inspired them. Some will fix in a vivid manner personal trivialities that otherwise would have been swept into the oblivion they deserved; and there are also sonnets of supposition, wherein the writer has assumed the air and attitude, if not the feelings, of a totally different being, human or otherwise, thereby leaving a false impression for posterity; and there are yet further sonnets written on particular matters with general application, like Mark Twain's famous speech that could be adapted to a wedding, funeral, dinner, temperance meeting, or any other speech-requiring occasion. Let us now cull a few titles from genuine sonnets.

"On the advanced guard of 4000 Spaniards nearly destroyed at the Battle of Albuera, 16 May, 1811." There is a synopsis of martial facts which may be useful to the coming New Zealander searching for historical data long after the British Museum has been auctioned off by Time. "On the Command declined to General Blake and as honourably declined at the same battle between Marshals Beresford and Soult." If we care not for such martial matters, here are a few titles suggesting the piping times of peace:—"On a Fawn, kept at the White Horse, Ipswich;" "On Romney's Sensibility with the Mimosa;" "To the Village Children of Kent, who present travellers passing with nosebags."

A gentle person with hermaphroditic name, Thomas Clio Rickman, presents some curious matter in his sonnet titles. He has one "Written with a pencil in the wood at Firle Place. Respectfully inscribed to the Lady Viscountess Gage, 19 Oct. 1804." Now, whatever else happened on that day that has been forgotten, we have it on record that Mr. Clio Rickman left "His Wife and Seven Children" (to whom he afterwards wrote another sonnet, perhaps as a means of reconciliation) left them on the 19th Oct., 1804, and walked in the woods at Firle Place, where he arranged himself no doubt on a decayed stump and wrote with a stubby piece of broken pointed pencil a sonnet—probably on the back of an unpaid bill resting on a fungus, (Nature being prolific of old stumps and fungi in the fall)—which sonnet he inscribed respectfully to the Lady Viscountess Gage. Mr. Rickman was a husband and the father of seven children, consequently no remarks can be made upon his conduct on that memorable day. After the lapse of nearly a century, we have made his little pilgrimage known and it is left for each reader to form his own judgment thereon.

Miss Seward composed a sonnet on a "December morning, written in an apartment of the West Front of the Bishop's Palace, Lichfield, 19 Dec., 1782." Miss Seward was "one of those chilly women of the North, who live only through the head," as Prosper Mérimée wrote of another lady to the Incognita; but she has very judiciously supplied posterity with particulars of the occasion of this sonnet's composition which could not have been guessed at otherwise. Firstly, it was "written"—simply written—not "sung to music" or "dictated" or "extemporized" as other sonnets have been. Then it was composed "in an apartment." Without this piece of information, one might have supposed, from the time of year mentioned, that the lady had composed

it on the roof or in a summer-house; but it was done within doors and "in an apartment" of the West Front. This tells us Miss Seward chose the warmest side of the house, from which we may infer that she suffered from asthma or rheumatics; or else that she was not partial to being awakened by the rising of the sun.

Miss Seward and all the little Sewardlings, or whatever her many followers were called, were eminently respectable and churchy. They patronized curates and bowed to Bishops, wherefore Miss S. has left it on record that it was in no curate's cottage, but in the Bishop's palace at Lichfield, that the sonnet was composed. We regret to state that all research has proved futile to discover the date when Mr Carr, while at Brighton, wrote that melancholy sonnet "On seeing a dying hectic upon the last cliff." When this title was first seen it was thought that the italicized word was a misprint for "heretic" and that the poem would present a vision of some old Marian martyrdom; but during its perusal we gradually settled down to the conviction that it was a veritable hectic after all—some wretched consumptive on his last legs on the last cliff. Had we often seen that dying hectic in that perilous but suggestive position we should have been tempted to anticipate Silas Wegg and asked "Will you 'decline and fall off' this evening?"

This pleasant subject leads us to a sonnet by Miss Maria Logan, written in 1798, "On the Spring of a seventh year of uninterrupted sickness." We have not been able to discover the nature of this procrastinating complaint; but after six years' uninterruptedness we cannot believe there was enough spring left to start a seventh with, unless perchance the fair patient suffered from St. Vitus' Dance, which is, we have heard, one perpetual spring.

Here is a title which contains a valuable fact for meteorological antiquarians, and was recorded by the Rev. J. Black in a sonnet "written on the evening of the 11th Nov. 1784 when the wind was high."

Miss Seward was a prolific writer and wrote sonnets on all subjects—some peculiar. As an old maid she was of course peculiarly qualified to address one "To a young lady, purposing to marry a man of immoral character in the hope of his reformation." We cannot find any record of the young lady's acknowledgment of this monitory blast; but it was probably given in a form shorter than the sonnet and not as poetical, and may have been the usual clinching rejoinder of good advice given in such cases of interference—"Mind your own business."

Miss Seward wrote a sonnet "To Honora Sneyd, whose health was always best in winter." Now, judging from her name and nature, Honora Sneyd could not have been all a poetical subject, except for the Canadian winter versifier who loves to write with frozen fingers and who is apparently dying off. We do not see why Miss H. S. should have been selected as the honorary recipient of a Perseus rarehan verse, even if she was in poor health for the best part of the year. The selection was rather slighting to the healthy females of Miss Seward's acquaintance. Another sonnet, we are assured by the title, was "Written on the volcanic disturbance, which is represented in the style but not commemorated by the contents of the poem."

Such titles as "On the Funeral of an Amiable Young Person;" "On a Lock of Miss