

And students with their pensive citadels :
Maids at the wheel, the weaver at his loom,
Sit blithe and happy ; bees that soar for
bloom,

High as the highest peak of Furness Fells,
Will murmur by the hour in fox-glove bells :
In truth the prison, unto which we doom
Ourselves, no prison is ; and hence to me,
In sundry moods, 'twas pastime to be bound
Within the Sonnet's scanty plot of ground ;
Pleased if some souls—for such there needs
must be—

Who have felt the weight of too much liberty,
Should find brief solace there, as I have found.

Rogers was not so easily content as Wordsworth, for he said that he never attempted to write a sonnet, because he did not see why a man, if he has anything worth saying, should be tied down to fourteen lines.

The sonnets of William Lisle Bowles are plaintive and philosophical ; of Kirke White, melancholy ; of Shelley, enigmatic ; of Coleridge, ecstatic ; of Lamb, quaint and sportive ; of Barry Cornwall, mostly descriptive ; of Mrs. Hemans, devotional ; of Leigh Hunt, imaginative. Of Keats and Tennyson, all that need be said is that their sonnets rank among the best of their works.

II.

The Sonnet has always been a favourite in American literature, and with the single exception of Poe, who has left only one example, all the American poets of distinction have attempted that measure. I may begin the series with Washington Allison, the contemporary of Coleridge, whom he met in Europe in 1804, and with whom he was associated as a literary colleague. Next comes Richard Henry Dana, the author of the 'Buccaneer,' who died lately at the age of ninety. His sonnets are few but well constructed and full of feeling. The same may be said of Joseph Rodman Drake's, the famous author of the 'Culprit Fay.' Drake was a genius, and, but for the mental misfortune which overtook him prematurely, would have become an American Keats. Bryant's sonnets, although few, are worthy of

the poet whose only fault was that he wrote too little. I have not room for an example, but cannot refrain from citing these lines from the sonnet on 'Midsummer :

For life is driven from all the landscape
brown ;
The bird has sought his tree, the snake his
den,
The trout floats dead in the hot stream, and
men
Drop by the sun-stroke in the populous town.

Longfellow is by far the first of American sonneteers. Indeed, I do not see that he is second to any in the whole of English literature. His sonnets are not very many, but they are nearly all perfect. Nowhere is this great poet's artistic skill so exquisite, while his range of subjects is comparatively wide, and, strange to say, he oftener reaches the sublime in them than in any other of his forms of verse. I am embarrassed by my choice, and may as well quote a couple at random. Here is one from that delicious series, entitled 'Divina Commedia :

How strange the sculptures that adorn these
bowers !

This crowd of statues, in whose folded
sleeves

Birds build their nests ; while canopied
with leaves,

Parvis and portal bloom like trellised bowers,
And the vast minster seems a cross of flowers !

But fiends and dragons on the gargoyled
eaves

Watch the dead Christ between the living
thieves,

And, underneath, the traitor Judas lowers !
Ah ! from what agonies of heart and brain,

What excitations trampling on despair,
What tenderness, what tears, what hate of

wrong,
What passionate outcry of a soul in pain.

Uprose this poem of the earth and air.
This mediæval miracle of song !

The following is a cabinet or *genre* picture of Chaucer at Woodstock, and a charming development of the same thought expressed in a few lines of the author's 'Morituri Salutamus :

An old man in a lodge within a park ;
The chamber walls depicted all around,
With portraits of huntsman, hawk and
hound,
And the hurt deer. He listened to the lark,
Whose song came with the sunshine through
the dark