

# Rouge et Noir.

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VOL. I.

## UTOPIA.

BY H. T. NICHOL, B.A.

To sit with thee on the cliffs above  
And sing sweet songs with a god-touched tongue,  
In a voice with intensest passion strung,  
Which yet could not teach thee half my love.

To list to the murmurous rippling wave  
As it fell on the shore with its measured beat,  
With a sound as of long-haired sea nymph's feet  
On the sands which the streams of ocean lave.

To sit at thy feet till the light had waned,  
Till the sun sunk down from his golden way;  
To dream in thine eyes till the close of day,  
Till love alone in our hearts remained:

And then as swallows with warm red breasts  
To float away o'er the infinite main,  
To the asphodel isles that are free from pain,  
But bathed in the sun-flood have love and rest.

## LACONICS.

BY W. M. CHUTTENDEY.

Not the least interesting study to one, who, from the pedestal of his own exclusiveness, deems himself able to stand aloof from the fancies and foibles of the many, is to watch the course of popular manias. They may be developed at first only in a single direction, but time alone is necessary for their general diffusion. The collecting fever, still at its height, was not long in contriving for itself an almost endless variety of subjects; Science and Art have contributed a liberal quota, but antiquarian research has furnished the lion's share, research so minute and detailed, that now not even the fire irons of our ancestors have escaped. Such a contagion as we have been considering is, in the main, irresistible. Each individual may give it the direction whither his interest chiefly centres, but escape it he may not. And so generally, the predominant tendencies of an age are ever found forcing their way to the surface through every allowable vent. They penetrate to all classes, they exert their influence on all temperaments, and appear to exercise a directing control over the energies of all. If reform be the subject chiefly agitated, the work of reformation, or at least of change with that intent, is almost limit-

less. This, we may distinctively characterize as an age of speed. Economy of time seems the all-engrossing design; labour-saving is rather subordinate, of account only in connection with that more important idea. We are always in a hurry, we bustle along, jostling all we meet, we are constantly seeking greater speed in every department of work, we waste no time in long and laborious methods if a short cut will bring us to the same end. "Life is short, art is long," seems the motto, expressed or understood, of the world of stir and bustle. Increased facilities of travel, improvements in machinery and lightning calculators are among the results of this continuous struggle to lengthen life by shortening the methods of its operations. Not only does this tendency affect the industries of hand and brain, but language, too, has felt its influence, and here it is that our preface leads us to the subject in hand.

Yes, language has indeed felt its influence, but in a manner, to say the least, peculiar. For it is certainly passing strange, that in this day of phonetics and phonography, when efforts are so strenuous to encompass in fewness of character a repleteness of words, such signal neglect is bestowed on the quantity of words themselves, employed expressive of thought. Why should we be puzzling ourselves how to rebuild the bridge in the shortest time and with the minimum of material, when we could greatly reduce its size consistently with our purpose? If, then, we would tend a little more towards Gulliver's taciturn philosophers, and strive for the happy medium between them and the average Loquax, greatly reduced would be the phonetic requirements to keep pace with the age. The adoption of an exact style, suffused with ideas, must be a better move in the right direction than the expunging of unnecessary consonants and unsounded vowels. Words, as the instruments of thought communication, should, no doubt, multiply in proportion to the increase of ideas, but in far too many cases are they employed to serve as a cloak for the want of the same. Realizing the wide-spread nature of this fault, we would avoid speaking dogmatically on a principle we may at the very

time be transgressing, however exemplary we may be in theory. To use a common illustration, like air under pressure, and in a higher proportion of increase, as we condense in volume of expression we gain in force. A few concise words, aptly chosen, have more weight than the most elaborate collection of wordy nothings, interspersed with but an occasional idea, and that almost drowned in voluminousness. Apropos of this, a now prominent journalist relates his first experience as a literary aspirant. He had chosen for his theme one of the burning questions of the day, and brought to bear upon it all the book talk he could muster to his aid. Words and sentences of satisfactory length were scarcely obtainable, and the entire article was profuse with hackneyed bombast. But for all that it had its merits, and well it might, considering the author's subsequent career. When finished, it was despatched to one of the leading dailies for insertion. The editor to whose department it appertained, instead of rejecting it summarily, as he might be supposed to do, considering the haste necessarily attendant on his duties, returned it with a laconic "boil it down," coupled with a few suggestions. He took the advice, boiled it down, culling out most of his favourite expressions, and again forwarded it. The result was its acceptance, the wordy wanderings of a column having been compressed into a short and pithy article of a few paragraphs; and this, doubtless, would be the experience of all tyros, if the substance of their efforts had sufficient intrinsic value to deserve so much consideration. The recommendation is not to sacrifice smoothness and finish to brevity, and to have recourse even to curtness, but to remove the unnecessary and purely ornamental, and write facts and opinions, not rhetorical effusions. The ablest and most vigorous writers of the day are those who have learned the value of space, and whose writings, however extensive, will admit of no condensation; and fitly here might we speak of the Johnstonian system of composition, the consideration of which must fall to some extent within the scope of this article. As an example, would the average reader derive any clear notion