

sestet; the octave describing the place, song and nest, and the sestet treating of the eggs and the young. The last six lines form a quatrain and couplet, as to rhyme; but make two complete tercets so far as the theme is concerned. The whole sonnet, therefore, is a self-contradiction, and is remarkable as showing the tendency of his verse to arrange itself in process of composition into the specific form adopted by its earliest and best masters, notwithstanding the attempt to force it into another form by a displacement of its proper parts. To return to Clare's thrush, the description of the nest and eggs is accurate. The nest is deep, of a cup-shape, built of twigs and broken wood, bound into place with moss and hay, and plastered very smoothly on the inside with mud or clay. Unlike many birds that use clay for the interior of their nests, the thrush does not cover the floor with softer material, but deposits its eggs on the hard bottom. The eggs are of a sea-green or "greeny-blue" colour, as the poet has it, dotted with black spots which predominate at the larger end. "Ink-spotted-over" is a good description of their appearance, as any oologist can testify. On account of their beauty the eggs of the thrush are particularly tempting to boys, and as they are plentiful, and as there is no curse laid upon the thief by any superstitious rhyme, many a nest is robbed and the world loses many a sweet song. For the music of the thrush is peculiarly sweet, and has sometimes been mistaken for that of the nightingale. Its natural song is not imitative; but in captivity the thrush will echo the singing of other birds.

David Gray was particularly fond of its song, and in his series of sad sonnets entitled "In the Shadows" tells us that "the thrush's song enchants the captive ear;" the ill-fated poet has left us, moreover, a whole sonnet dedicated to the bird, which reads thus:—

Sweet Mavis! at this cool delicious hour
Of gloaming, when a pensive quietness
Hushes the odorous air,—with what a power
Of impulse unsubdued dost thou express
Thyself a spirit! while the silver dew
Holy as manna on the meadow falls,
Thy song's impassioned charity, trembling through
This omnipresent stillness, disenthals
The soul to adoration. First I heard
A low thick lubric gurgle, soft as love,
Yet sad as memory, through the silence poured
Like starlight. But the mood intenser grows,
Precipitate rapture quickens, move on move
Lucidly linked together, till the close.

It will be noticed that the form of this sonnet is also Shakespearian, so far as it is composed of quatrains and couplet; but it is a striking example of the overlapping of lines, which Milton used with such telling effect. The spirit is also Petrarchan, and the octave with its unequal division runs into the sestet, which is again composed of two tercets broken by a sectional pause. The effect of this overlapping is a smooth and sweet continuity. The movement of the sonnet is very marked and carefully worked up from "pensive quietness" to "precipitate rapture" with an arrangement of excellently chosen words. One sentence is particularly fine as an instance of accurate description and imaginative endowment:—

First I heard
A low thick lubric gurgle, soft as love,
Yet sad as memory, through the silence poured
Like starlight.

In an article on "Sonnets to the Lark" we pointed out the curious error about the mountain lark. Tennyson, in "In Memoriam," has a passage which recalls the word:—

When rosy plumelets tuft the larch
And rarely pipes the mounted thrush.

The mounted thrush, observe; unlike the mounting lark; for the thrush will perch high on a tree and sing for a long stretch; but it cannot sing upon the wing.

And larks in air and throistles in the trees
Thrill the moist air with murmurs musical.

John Todhunter, in a sonnet on "The First Spring Day," published in his "Laurella and other Poems," has this passage:—

About the hedge the small birds peer and dart,
Each bush is full of amorous flutterings
And little rapturous cries. The thrush apart
Sits throned, and loud his ripe contralto rings.
Music is on the wind and in my heart,
Infinite love for all created things.

The attribution of a contralto voice to the thrush is not unhappy; for the song is rich and mellow, set in a lower key than most bird music,—a low, thick, lubric gurgle," as David Gray said.

Just as we have observed that the notes of the nightingale seem sad or glad to the moody or the merry listener, so the song of the thrush conveys lessons of hope or despair to the poet, according to his mood of soul. Let us hear the late Miss Lucy Larcom on the subject. This lady was one of the Lowell cotton mills operatives, who gained the friendship of Whittier and afterwards wrote much poetry. The following appeared first in the *Atlantic Monthly*:—

THE WOOD THRUSH.

What is it you are whispering, solemn woods?
What hide and hint ye, slopes of sombre green,
Whose dark reflections blur the crimson sheen
Of the lake's mirror, whereon sunset broods,
Trance-like and tender? Speechless, conscious moods,
Are yours, ye purple mountain shapes, that lean
Out of Day's dying glory. What may mean
This stillness through whose veil no thought intrudes

With earth-shod feet? Can any voice unfold
The tremulous secret of an hour like this,
So burdened with unutterable bliss?
Oh, hush! Oh, hear the soul of Twilight sing!
One poet knows this mystery. Everything
The landscape dreamed of has the wood-thrush told.

David Gray sang of the song-thrush at the same hour of day and exclaimed: "With what a power of impulse unsubdued dost thou express thyself a spirit!"

Lucy Larcom has told us what spirit the bird is, and "the soul of twilight" is beautifully expressive of the thrush's last song, when the softness of the falling even seems to enter it and make more mellow the notes that have enriched the day.

The sonnet has a Petrarchan octave and an irregular sestet, unseparated; but however defective in form, it is a good specimen of quiet reflection and subdued feeling.

To cross the Atlantic once more, Mr. H. D. Rawnsley, in his sonnets of the Bristol Channel, has a fine specimen addressed to "A Thrush Heard on Clifton Downs":—

Clear throated minstrel! What desires can move
Thee, in thy branchy, mist-empurpled swing,
When woods are cold, and winds are sorrowing,
Thus to rehearse thy last-year notes of love,
To thrill with all thy heart the listening grove,
To sit and with no surety of the spring
To answer every voice the breezes bring,
And thine excellent championship to prove?
In the dead winter of an early sorrow,
No thought of quickening spring my spirit cheers;
But as I hearken, of thy strength I borrow,
Hope with thy music mingles in mine ears,
Thou, who so cheerily settest forth the morrow,
While round thee million buds are wet with tears!

Here we have a reference to the hardness of the thrush, which will endure the rigour of an English winter. Large numbers, however, leave England at the end of November, with their fellows from northern Europe who visit Britain about the end of August; they all go over to France and Germany, where their advent is eagerly watched for by bird-catchers, ready for the *Chasse aux Grives* or *Drossel zug*, for the thrush is an article of diet in those countries. In the later German *drossel* we see the parallel form to *throistle*, both being diminutives. The Old German *drosce* corresponded to our *thrush* and more closely to the Anglo Saxon *thrysc*. The Scandinavian word *traste* is cognate; as is the Icelandic *throstr*. The Italian name is *tordo*, evidently the modernized Latin *turdus*; but the French equivalent is *grive*, which may be allied to the word *grivois*—jolly, though the latter has been curiously enough derived from *grivoise*, a tobacco grater. The word *mavis* (which is now little used in England; but is still common in Scotland) seems to be connected with the French *mauvie*, a redwing, or in old French, a blackbird, and *mauviette*, a field-lark. But there is no time for philological speculation.

In his sonnet tribute to John Dyer, Wordsworth wrote as follows:—

Yet pure and powerful minds, hearts meek and still
A grateful few shall love thy modest lay,
Long as the shepherd's bleating flock shall stray
O'er naked Snowden's wild aerial waste;
Long as the thrush shall pipe on Grongar Hill.

The poet of Rydal Mount was correct in his predictive estimate of the poet of Grongar Hill, for only students care to read the Welshman's works to-day. The thrush-reference was occasioned directly by the closing lines of Dyer's poem, Grongar Hill, published in 1726:—

Be full, ye courts, be great who will;
Search for peace with all your skill:
Open wide the lofty door,
Seek her on the marble floor,
In vain you search, she is not there;
In vain ye search the domes of care!
Grass and flowers Quiet treads,
On the meads, and mountain-heads,
Along with pleasure, close allied,
Ever by each other's side;
And often, by the murmuring rill,
Hears the thrush, while all is still,
Within the groves of Grongar Hill.

More than a century later Wordsworth wrote two sonnets to "The Thrush," each of which is reflective and didactic, after his manner. One is to the bird at twilight, the other at dawn.

THE THRUSH AT TWILIGHT.

Hark! 'tis the thrush, undaunted, undeprest,
By twilight premature of cloud and rain;
Nor does that roaring wind deaden his strain
Who carols thinking of his love and nest,
And seems, as more incited, still more blest.
Thanks, thou hast snapped a fire-side prisoner's chain,
Exulting warbler! eased a fretted brain,
And in a moment charmed my cares to rest.
Yes, I will forth, bold bird! and front the blast,
That we may sing together, if thou wilt,
So loud, so clear, my partner through life's day,
Mute in her nest love-chosen, if not love-built,
Like thine, shall gladden, as in seasons past,
Thrilled by loose snatches of the social lay.

THE THRUSH AT DAWN.

'Tis He, whose yester-evening's high disdain
Beat back the roaring storm—but how subdued
His day-break note, a sad visciditude!
Does the hour's drowsy weigh his glee restrain?
Or, like the nightingale, her joyous vein
Pleased to renounce, does this dear thrush attune
His voice to suit the temper of yon moon
Doubly depressed, setting, and in her wane?
Rise, tardy sun! and let the songster prove
(The balance trembling between night and morn
No longer) with what ecstasy upborne
He can pour forth his spirit. In heaven above
And earth below, they best can serve true gladness
Who meet most feelingly the calls of sadness.

Nothing escapes the philosophical pedagogy of Wordsworth, and the centre of the solar system is here served with an aphorism of philanthropy calculated to bring it up before its time that the thrush may sing for the poet's edification. The sonnet does not lend itself to didactic poetry of this description, and Wordsworth, when he so employs it, falls to the level of Mrs. Seward. Wordsworth correctly makes the thrush the herald of gladness,

and Burns in one of his sonnets also addresses it as the type of content. Burns wrote but three sonnets; but they are all good.

ON HEARING A THRUSH SING IN A MORNING WALK, 25TH JANUARY, 1793.

Sing on, sweet thrush, upon the leafless bough;
Sing on, sweet bird, I listen to thy strain:
See aged winter, 'mid his surly reign,
At thy blithe carol clears his furrow'd brow.
So in lone poverty's dominion drear,
Sits meek content with light unanxious heart,
Welcomes the rapid moments, bids them part,
Nor asks if they bring aught to hope or fear.
I thank thee, Author of this opening day!
Thou whose bright sun now gilds yon Orient skies;
Riches denied, thy boon was purer joys,
What wealth could never give or take away!
Yet come, thou child of poverty and care,
The mite high Heaven bestowed, that mite with thee I'll share.

It will be observed that the last line is Alexandrine, and this defect would have been avoided had the words "that mite" been omitted. However, let us be thankful for the sonnet as it is; for it is graced by Burns' best spirit and breathes forth that natural religion which distinguishes him from many a God-invoking bard.

In the second "Every Day Book," edited by William Hone, is a sonnet to the thrush written by an unknown poet with the initials S. T. R., and it is worth recording. It forms the postscript to a letter, written in 1826, concerning "The Rearing and Treatment of Young Birds," but the poem was occasioned by far more serious sympathies. It reads thus:—

SONNET ON HEARING A THRUSH SINGING IN THE RAIN.

How sweet the song of the awakened thrush—
Mellowed by distance, comes upon the ear,
'Tho' gather'd clouds have made the heavens drear,
And the rain hisses in the hazel bush,
Wherein he warbles with a voice as clear
As if blue skies were over, and he near
The one that loved him,—sweet yet sad to hear!
For it remindeth me of one I've heard,
Singing to other ears, herself unseen,
In her own bower, like that delightful bird,
While yet her bosom's hopes were fresh and green,
One, whom I heard again in after years,
When sorrow smote her,—singing 'midst her tears.

This is a personal and pathetic sonnet, and criticism has no right to intrude upon such loving memories. Let us turn aside and get out of the reach of the thrush's voice. No more appropriate farewell to the sweet singer could be taken than the quoting of a sonnet on the death of a thrush, written by that prolific sonneteer, Mr. J. C. Earle. This writer has composed several hundreds of sonnets; many of mediocrity and some full of quiet beauty and deep reflection; but none of the highest order. The sonnet with this gentleman seems the vehicle of conversation very often rather than of poetry:—

THE THRUSH.

If any death were sweet sure this would be
The sweetest, to expire as I have seen
A thrush beneath a canopy of green
Drop on a sudden lifeless from the tree
All in the midst of her fond melody,
Breaking her little heart for lack of teen—
Without a pause the dulcet bars between,
Pouring her soul forth with excess of glee.
Oh Death, all roads conduct to thy grim gate!
By joy as well as sorrow we are slain:
But this would be of all the happiest fate
To perish in the midst of some glad strain,
And on this side the portal antedate
The music we shall soon begin again.

This is very sweet and peaceful; altogether of Mr. Earle's better sort. It is a curious reversal of the usual breaking of hearts to find that this little thrush sustained the fatal fracture for lack of teen. It is generally sorrow that breaks the heart, and we are so used to this view, that the killing by joy is rather surprising; yet it may be true, a sudden coming of unexpected good news or good fortune has been known to produce such a rush of reversed feelings as to stop the vital machinery in human beings. Why not in thrushes? However, it is to be suspected the sweet singer was not of the sex conveyed by "her fond melody."

SAREPTA.

THE VERGE.

WITHIN a dingle, yellowing in dusk,
I stretched my toil-numbered limbs to dream a space,
For I was tired of munching at the husk
Of Life's desire, dispirited with chase
And strife, and worrying. There came
A dryad, clothed in vestments somnolent,
Who wound a slumberous skein, and held a flame
Along the poplars' silvery cantonnement.
The while my feverish hand she held in hers,
And sang, and sang, my eyelids heavier fell,
Until the twilight and her face were blurs,
Rose, pink and yellow, then a drowsy bell,
Of wizard tone, some sleepy chimings wove
Among the mazes red with poppy stain.
The lisping leaves, the breathings of the grove,
The silken whisper of the distant grain
Commingled, till my dull lids listless met,
And came a deep dim void, a vacancy
Across my soul, an opaque veil of jet
Which, were it death or sleep, was one to me!

JOSEPH NEVIN DOYLE.

NEVER put much confidence in such as put no confidence in others.—Hare.