

song-writing. Milton was a musician, and understood all the fine shades and niceties of language which songs require, if they are meant to be sung. He also, had he chosen to devote himself to lyrical instead of epic poetry, might have enriched literature with many matchless compositions. Perhaps if he had done so he might have been dearer and more familiar to his countrymen. As he is, he is too great and too mighty for their love. His poetical character inspires awe and reverence rather than affection. He sits—blind and solitary—on the cold summits of Parnassus, wrapped in a blaze of glory, inaccessible to the plaudits of the crowd who behold him from afar. Yet when we think of him as the author of "*Il Penseroso*" and "*L'Allegro*," of "*Lycidas*," and of "*Comus*," we take him to our hearts, and lose some portion of our reverence in the new love we feel for him. In all his songs and lyrical poems there is an Italian sweetness mixed with an English force which scarcely needs any aid from the art of the composer to shape them into music.

Dryden's songs were better adapted to music than Cowley's ; but, for the most part, they were even less adapted to decent society, and have long since perished from memory, no more to be revived. One or two of them that were of a patriotic character have been preserved, such as "*Come, if you dare!*" His "*Alexander's Feast*," a fine composition set to fine music, was not a song, but a small opera.

But Dryden belongs to the bad period of the Restoration—a period in which courtiers and public men thought it their duty, as well as their pleasure, to imitate the vices of the court of Charles the Second, when every moral sentiment was deadened or debauched ; when hospitality degenerated into boisterous and degrad-

ing intemperance ; when virtue was a jest, and honour, so jealously guarded by the sword and pistol of the duellist, was held to be a thing quite apart from goodness ; and when the only manly virtue that was recognized at all was personal courage. This age was very prolific of bad verse. Poetry was supposed to be something artificial, and not natural, and the consequence was that poetry disappeared, and mere idle rhyme took its place.

Carey was an excellent musician but a very inferior poet. He composed the music to his own songs, and was one of the first in modern days to revive the ancient practice. The world owes to him the music of more than a hundred songs—music that has for the most part been divorced from the service of the stage and concert-room to that of religion, and is attuned to pious hymns and psalms in half of the churches and chapels of England and America. It is not known with certainty who wrote the noble music or the words of "*God Save the King*," but the balance of proof inclines in favour of Carey. Nothing is more difficult than to fix the age or the authorships of songs and ballads published anonymously. Even the production of the first printed copy with an authentic date is not always sufficient to set at rest such doubtful points. This test is unfortunately wanting in most inquiries of the kind, and even when applied is not always adequate to the apparently simple task of giving an author his own property. So difficult is it even in our own day to establish a poet's claim to a song which has happened from any accident to become popular, that when Thomas Moore was accused in jest by Father Prout of translating or stealing the whole of his Irish melodies from Greek and Latin, French, German, and Italian, the world took the good-