

The latter is always hopeful in his pathos, the former sometimes not. Then again as to humor, like his pathos, "Elia's" sense of the ludicrous belongs to a higher plane of spiritual insight than does that of Dickens. The humor of the one is broad, well-fed, middle-class, robustious, English merriment; that of the other resembles rather the scintillating ray of the Aurora Borealis, it is colder and more polished. And especially in "Elia" is to be seen the grim humor blended with the spirit of a deep pathos, as instance his "New Year's Eve." Was this the result of his hereditary misfortune, or was it his keener appreciation of the narrow line which separates the sublime from the ridiculous? It is sometimes the toss of a penny whether he cause you to laugh or cry.

I deem that one of the finest bits of pathos in the English, indeed in any language, is the death of the child-wife Dora in "David Copperfield." The master-stroke of inventive genius which conceived the death of the pet dog at the exact moment of his mistress's demise is unique in modern English romance. It is a perfect picture of pathos—sad, exquisitely tender and artistic, yet natural in all its parts: the young husband who answers to the pet name of Doady; the still younger wife so loving, yet so reconciled; the dear, faithful, trusted friend Agnes, than whom no nobler creature adorns the page of fiction; and lastly, the favourite dog Jip, once so inimical to every one save his beloved mistress, now grown old and blind and feeble. Were it not an assured fact, we should hardly credit the author of such a masterpiece of the pathetic, with anything so simply ludicrous as some of the pen vignettes, say from "Pickwick," where Mr. Samuel Weller, as factotum, revels in a very Elysium of quaint drollery and mutilated Queen's "Hinglish."

Now contrast the pathos of Dickens with that of Lamb, as exemplified for instance in the latter's "New Year's Eve," and we shall at once perceive that, though there is an exquisite and tender sadness in the reverie of Elia, yet there is something of a smile, too, lurking in its depths, as fascinating in its way as is the sob upon the surface. It is a sort of dalliance with both, and eminently suggestive of the doggerel:

How happy could I be with either
Were t'other dear charmer away.

Lamb's humor, that is, humor pure and simple, devoid of pathos, is pre-eminently quaint like himself, while the subject is not unusually as quaint as the treatment, "The Praise of Chimney-Sweepers," "A Complaint of the Decay of Beggars in the Metropolis," "A Dissertation upon Roast Pig," etc., etc. We observe too, that whereas Dickens' humor is for the most part objective, the outcome of some personal peculiarity of alien individual temperament, much of Lamb's is subjective or evolved from his own inner consciousness. In Dickens' vignettes the author is lost sight of for the nonce in the personalities portrayed; in Lamb's best passages the writer is himself ever present with the motive of his text.

Of an altogether different type from either of the authors named are the humorists of the American school. I have said elsewhere that there is a something in American poetry which distinguishes it essentially from the poetry of Europe, and that this something is perhaps attributable to the mellow influence of the Indian Summer, the departing trail of golden scarlet splendour shimmering through the pines. I may be permitted another metaphor with regard to Western humor. It, too, is different from that of that old world. It has something of the ruggedness and expansiveness of the primeval wilderness