

REVIEW OF "LUCILE."

Read by Edgar M. Zavitz at the "Olio" at Ellis Cutler's, 1st mo. 5th., 1894.

The book that I chose to review is *Lucile*, Owen Meredith's metrical romance. I feel 'Twould be best, if I could, to present it to you in the form of the book I attempt to review—A species of verse very rare in our tongue, For in it no one before Bulwer had sung, Edward Bulwer, Lord Lytton, you know, I presume, Is his name; Owen Meredith merely his "non de plume."

I will give you the plot first; I feel it will prove somewhat interesting, as its fashioned by love. It plunges in "media res" with a letter From *Lucile* to Lord Alfred Vargrave (and I better

Just here state that she is our heroine, he is Our hero) demanding the letters, well, yes, if it pleases

You better, *love* letters, since it is reported Our hero with some other one has consorted. Which broke off the match, whose fault do you ask?

Well, really, now that's a quite difficult task To decide. 'Twas a misunderstanding between The two wooers, for both were to blame some, I ween.

However it was; 'twas a fatal mistake. It blasted two lives, made oh, the heart ache! He married Miss Darcy, but not out of love. He confesses himself, and his acts plainly prove,

At least, as the flood tide of passion recurs, When meeting again with *Lucile de Nevers*. And *Lucile*, although she may have jilted in yourh,

Proved true to her first love, aye true until death. She came between Alfred and her rival, his wife—

Came not to augment and embitter the strife, But came as an angel unselfish and white, The two estranged souls to adjust and unite, Disappointed in love, her affections unfurled, And closing again they embraced the whole world.

A ministering nun at the close she is seen A sister of charity, sower seraphine. She not only loved, loved her enemy even—The height of pure love—but there also was given

To *Lucile* a mysterious power to bend Man's stern, stubborn will to some glorious end,

Which she was endowed with the insight to see Was the goal of his life, was his true destiny. But it is not the plot half as much as the sense That I feel to consider myself in defence—And the scenery, so charmingly pictured at times,

I will give you a taste in his own polished rhymes.

It's descriptive of France, and is fresh with the breeze

Of the morn, and the lake, and the blue Pyrenees.

And above all the sweet character of *Lucile*, Whene'er, in whose presence, you can't help but feel

You're confronting a woman, a woman whose life

"Was so pure in its purpose, and strong in its strife,

That all life is made purer and stronger thereby."

Now the rest I will let Edward Bulwer supply, And so you will better be able to see How greatly superior is Bulwer to me.

"Alfred Vargrave was one of those men who achieve

So little, because of the much they conceive. The man who seeks one thing in life, and but one,

May hope to achieve it before life is done."

In describing *Lucile*, says the poet, "I fit To this character, also its moral; to wit, Say the world is a nettle, disturb it, it stings; Grasp it firmly, it stings not. On one of two things,

If you would not be stung it behooves you to settle;

Avoid it, or crush it. She crushed not the nettle,

For she could not; nor would she avoid it; she tried,

With the weak hand of women, to thrust it aside,

And it stung her. A woman is too weak a thing

To trample the world without feeling its sting." "Yet there's none so unhappy, but what he hath been

Just about to be happy, at some time, I ween; And none so beguiled and defrauded by chance, But what, once in his life, some minute circumstance

Would have fully sufficed to secure him due bliss

Which, missing it then, he forever must miss. The future's great veil our breath fitfully flaps, And behind it broods ever the mighty perhaps. We but catch at the skirts of the thing we would be,

And fall back on the lap of a false destiny. So it will be, so has been, since this world began;

And the happiest, noblest, and best part of man Is the part which he never hath fully played out; For the first and last word in life's volume is doubt.

The face the most fair to our vision allowed, Is the face we encounter and lose in a crowd. The thought that most thrills our existence is one

Which, before we can frame it in language is gone."