

for your father. So I lets him have it. Here's the paper, see—the what-d'ye-call't?—the bill of sale. And I offered him my girl, with £5000 to her portion; not letting out who she was. And here I've just got a letter from him to Master Byrne, saying as how 'twill break your heart to marry her; not thinking, mind, that she's she. And I s'pose as how you are come to say that you won't have her, 'cause o' your father—eh? So she's refused o' both hands—eh, Bess? Well! I love a good father, and I love a good son; he'll be sure to make a good husband. And if Bess don't make thee a good wife, my lad, there's no faith in woman. So take her!—and take this bit o' paper; that's four thousand pounds; and there's one thousand that I promised," continued he, going to one of his corner heaps, and taking a couple of dirty bank notes out of an old shoe; "and another that I give, 'cause of these two refusals. A good father makes a good son, and a good son 'll make a good husband. And I've heard to-day, from a real Jew, who knows a good deal of what goes on 'Change, that Master Arnott is likely to get his money back again. So now off wi' ye to Master Morris, and tell him the news. And, hark ye, my boy, don't forget to come back for the Wedding Slippers!"

From the Monthly Chronicle.

PRESENT STATE OF POETRY.

That the power of Poetry over the multitude of readers has come to an abrupt pause, is, we fear, an acknowledged and incontestable fact. It is not only that there is an extreme reluctance in the public mind to look with favour upon any new aspirants to the honours of the lyre and laurel, but the ancient masters of the art are treated with an almost equal neglect. The popularity of writers of prose, especially Scott, has served for a season to dislodge poetry from the familiar post it once held by the social hearth, as well as in the student's closet. Neither in criticism nor in conversation do verse and verse-makers form that general and welcome staple of discussion which they did some fifteen or twenty years ago. Like a once idolised beauty whose charms are faded, the Muse has retired into private life, and rails to indifferent ears against the fickleness of mankind and the caprices of the world. The fact is, that each species of literature has its alternate fits of activity and torpor; it comes into fashion to-day and goes out of it to-morrow, and is liable to all the whims and crotchets of the popular taste;—like other fashions, we shall find moreover that it is established in vogue by individuals, and with those individuals dies away till revived again by fresh dictators of the mode.

The influence of the vast popularity enjoyed by Scott and Byron extended far beyond the immediate effect of their own works,—their poems brought poetry itself into familiar notice and hourly discussion. We went back to the ancient writers for comparison with the merits of their successors; we listened attentively to new aspirants, and sympathised with their emulation. Then it was that, far from concentrating our studies upon the two most popular authors (as vulgar critics believed), we gave the most earnest consideration to all their predecessors and rivals in the art. Then it was that the Elizabethan authors received the most thoughtful and investigating criticism; then it was that Pope and his school were the most attentively canvassed and discussed; then it was that Goethe and Schiller were at length separated from the herd of horror-writers, with whom they had previously been confounded, and to the great German wells of Intellect and Imagination came the Wanderers of the Enchanted Wilderness: then was it that every Poet of real genius found at once an audience,—and the glory that surrounded Byron brought into light every footstep that ventured into his domain. It may be doubted whether Moore would have been so popular, but for the universal attention which the authors of *Marmion* and *Childe Harold* had attracted towards poetry itself. It may be doubted whether Wordsworth would have been so intensely idolised by the few, or now so generally appreciated by the world, but for the indignation of his disciples at the more dazzling celebrity of his contemporaries, and their earnest struggles, at a time when the public listened to their eloquence, even though half incredulous of its truth, to obtain for their master the station to which he aspired. In fact, poetry for some years engrossed a disproportionate and undue share of attention and discussion, and not till Byron had begun to outlive the personal interest which so long chained to his genius the heart of the public,—while the rapid succession of the *Waverley Novels* created a new literature, which to all the fascination of poetry united all the familiarity of prose,—did the fashion begin to pass away. Byron died,—and Poetry, like the mistress of some eastern king whose career of despotism and pomp had closed, seemed sacrificed at his tomb. When the multitude ceased to speak of Lord Byron, they ceased to talk about poetry itself. Even his contemporaries, who in his lifetime would have received a ready hearing for their most careless measures, would now strike their harps and sound their cymbals to empty benches. Though Mr. Leigh Hunt might write a yet better poem than his charming "*Rimini*," we suspect it would not, in our time, pass through seven editions, or even three. Though Mr. Moore might introduce to the world another "*Lalla Rookh*," yet more dazzling than her predecessor, she would never fetch three thousand guineas in the Book-Bazaar. Poetry has retired to her strong-

hold with her faithful few, and her empire, lately so vast, is parcelled out among a hundred little principalities of prose.

But we are not therefore to suppose that the inspiration is over, or the vein dried up. The muse is not dead, neither does she sleep. They who listen may hear her voice in her immemorial haunts; they who watch may mark the glory of her robes amidst the adoring votaries that still gather round her,—

"Where roam Corycian nymphs the glorious mountain,
And all melodious flows the old Castalian fountain." *

It is not always when there is the greatest taste for poetry that her loftiest efforts are made. A taste for poetry is generally the prevalent imitation of fashionable poets:—as the taste languishes, the mimicry subsides, and, after a pause, a new melody is invented,—a fresh school founded: and he who thus re-awakens the world from its apathy becomes the progenitor of another race of listeners—the inventor of another string to the ever-varying lyre.

But before the general taste for poetry is revived, we must be enabled to trace the first signs and symptoms of a new school. The traces of the old one must be all worn away. The winter must have done its work before we can welcome in the May. It is by a thousand small signs and indices invisible to the vulgar, that we can trace the heralds and advent of an original and master genius. Thus, after Pope and his followers were become defunct and lifeless in their influence, we saw, in the struggling and dim revival of the old national spirit of song, the germs of an excellence sure to ripen into brilliant and imperishable fruit. The publication of Percy's *Ballads*—the robust vigour and masculine tenderness of Burns (the most purely poetical mind that Scotland ever produced)—the simple truthfulness of Cowper—the first sonnets of Bowles—the promising dawn of Coleridge; even the distorted sentiment and extravagant horrors borrowed from the worst and wildest of the German poets and play writers,—all, to a discerning critic, must have foretold that a perfectly new world of art was in the process of construction. The very errors of taste and judgment—some of them bold and monstrous enough—which characterised the outbreak of the reforming spirit, had more of promise than the very excellence, trite and inanimate, which they superseded. The dross of the Della Cruscan school, worthless as it was, might have been an index to a more discerning satirist than Gifford of the neighbourhood of a mine. But that small though sinewy intellect would have brained the butterflies that foretold the coming summer, only to revive the insects of the one departed. He could not extricate his taste from the narrow circle to which Pope had charmed and crippled it; and he was as dull to the real marvels wrought by Scott as he was acute to the balderdash of Rosa Matilda.

At present we confess that we can recognise no clear and definite symptoms of a second spring in poetry. We fear we are only amidst the decay of autumn, and that the winter must have its day. The eyes of our rising generation are yet too much dazzled by the lustre of their immediate predecessors; they turn to a Past too close to them for dispassionate survey, and their inspiration can be too distinctly traced to oracles with whose devices we have grown familiar. Their affection for a shore so recently hallowed, does not suffer them to put boldly out to sea. They may gather pearls and coral by the shoals, but they discover not the untrodden regions that lie far away.

It is remarkable that Scott, whose poetry at one time was so wonderfully popular, and so largely imitated, (and which we are convinced the world never will let die,) now affords no model for the ambition of our young poets. If we look through the mass of duodecimos and octavos, dedicated to "the thankless muse," we see little or nothing of the imitation of Scott in style or spirit: it is as if "*Marmion*" and "*Triermain*" were things unborn. Byron, on the other hand, still retains a strong hold over the rising generation; and we may hear the murmur of his deep tide of melody and solemn thought in almost every shell we pick up by the shores of song. But yet more apparent, haunting, and oppressive appears the influence of Wordsworth and of Shelley. Perhaps of their imitation of Byron our new minstrels are unconscious; nor is there any accusation they will resent more loudly. But of the two last, they scarcely affect to conceal the influence; and they are often as proud of their models as the disciples of Pythagoras, who took cummin juice in order to attain the paleness of the master mystic, were of theirs. This preference is easily accounted for. Young men of genius are fond of the beauties which are not for the vulgar. Scott, in most qualities, and Byron in some (and those his greatest) addressed feelings and thoughts common to a very wide range of readers, however varying their pursuits, however ordinary their understandings. But Shelley and Wordsworth each address minds of philosophical or poetic bower and hall. Their very faults have a charm to their worshippers; and the Obscure, and even the Conceited, appear to the latter but as veils thrown over beauties intended only for the initiated. They become intolerant in their faith; and if we cannot swallow every one of its articles, they consider us as infidels in beauty, or dunces in art. All this will wear away by time; and Shelley and Wordsworth, to a more distant posterity, will be-

come safe and admirable models, their blemishes being carefully distinguished from their excellencies. But, at present, it is otherwise; and we fear that the mind of many a true poet will be lastingly formed under trees bearing indeed golden fruit, but which cannot fail to draw away the nourishment and obstruct the light from the plants reared so immediately beneath their shadow. Without entering into the controversy whether Wordsworth and Shelley are poets of a higher order than Byron and Scott,—we will confess our belief that they are, at present, much more dangerous as models. The very popularity of the two former is a proof that they went the right way to the human heart: and there is in Scott a vigour and heartiness of purpose—a zest and rapture of inspiration, which have somewhat of the effect of the Demosthenian oratory—and warm and animate at once our fancy, our judgment, and our feelings: it is in this, his *vitality*, that Scott's master excellence as a model is to be found. It is as impossible for a true poet to read Scott, and not feel the poetic impulse strongly stirred and excited,—as for a true orator to read the "*Oration on the Crown*," and not feel braced and invigorated for the rostrum. While Scott's inspiration is thus contagious and effective, his faults, *in poetry*, are not, we think, those that would be caught by a poet formed under different circumstances. Such a disciple is not likely to incur the same mannerism of metre, unless, like Scott, he has imbued himself from childhood with the minstrelsy of ballads; he is not likely to contract the same inadequate and meretricious notions of design, unless, like Scott, he has made it a part of his system to sacrifice at all times the philosophical to the picturesque. The poet-student may take the fire from that great Prometheus, without wishing to walk away with the hollow cane that contained it.

Concluded next week.

FOUR FUNNY FELLOWS.—Theodore Cibber in company with three others, made an excursion. Theodore had a false set of teeth—a second a glass eye—a third a cork leg—but the fourth had nothing in particular except a funny way of shaking his head.

They travelled in a post coach, and while on the first stage, after each had made merry with his neighbor's infirmity, they agreed at every baiting place, to affect the same singularity. When they came to breakfast they were all to squint—and language cannot express how admirably they all squinted—for they went a degree beyond the superlative. At dinner they all appeared to have a cork leg, and their stumping about made more diversion than they had done at breakfast. At tea they were all deaf, but at supper, which was at the "*Ship*" at Dover, each man resumed his character, the better to play his part in the farce they had concerted among them. When they were ready to go to bed, Cibber cried out to the waiter,—"here, you fellow! take out my teeth," "Teeth sir?" said the man. "Ay, teeth, sir. Unscrew that wire, and they they'll come out together." After some hesitation, the man did as he was ordered. This was no sooner done than a second called—"here you! take out my eye." "Sir," said the waiter, "your eye?" "Yes, my eye. Come here you stupid dog! pull up that eyelid, and it will come out as easy as possible." This done, the third cried out—"Here you rascal! take off my leg." This he did with less reluctance, being before apprized that it was cork, and also conceiving that it would be his last job. He was however mistaken; the fourth watched his opportunity, and whilst the frightened waiter was surveying with rueful countenance, the eye, tooth, and leg, lying on the table, cried in a frightful hollow voice—"come here, sir—take off my head." Turning round and seeing the man's head shaking like that of a mandarin upon a chimney-piece, he darted out of the room; and after tumbling down stairs, he ran madly about the house as if terrified out of his senses.—*Flowers of Anecdote.*

INDEPENDENCE OF AUTHORS.—Friendless, isolated, powerless as they appear amidst the noisier applicants that besiege our legislature, the Men of Books are still the authorities and inspirers of Men of Action. Not a legislator that has not borrowed his wisdom or nourished his eloquence from the pages of the tranquil and solitary student. A people has a deep and everlasting interest in the independence of its men of letters: leave them poor, and you make them servile; make them servile, and they become dishonest. The time has passed when a jesting patron could say, "Keep your poet poor;" the maxim was applied to Dryden. Poverty did not make Dryden a poet, but made him a truckler and a slave. Let literature be above the necessity of patrons and of pensions. Do not drive, as in instances alike mournful and illustrious you have too often done, that genius which can equally prevent as enforce the truth, into bartering its divine birthright for the mess of pottage. How many dangerous prejudices, how many rank abuses, how many errors, injurious to a whole nation, have sprung from the bought advocacy of writers, forced to be hirelings, because condemned to be beggars.—*Monthly Chronicle.*

NICE FAMILY.—They were indefatigable children in crying: when one became quiet, another began; and among them they kept up the squall nearly twenty-four hours round. The mother scolded them; and, between these two methods of management there was no peace for any one within hearing.—*Miss Martineau.*