

This is a fair example of his style. Perhaps a better one is the following :—

And memory, like a drop that night and day
Falls cold and ceaseless, wore my heart away.

Hardly can it be said of Moore's muse, as of the heroine of one of his own songs, "Rich and rare were the gems she wore." The adornments with which he decked her in such profusion do not always keep her from appearing tawdry. For a really great simile one must not search his works. He has diamond dust in abundance, but no Koh-i-noor.

Many poets have a favourite piece of imagery which they do not hesitate to employ several times over. Coleridge, in his earlier days, was constantly bringing in the example of the upas tree as an illustration of faithlessness or treachery—a tree which, if it be not slandered, is accustomed to lull the weary traveller with its specious shade, and then kill him, while sleeping, with its poisonous fumes. Shelley was extremely fond of the image, which occurs many times in his works, of an eagle fighting with a serpent in mid-air.

There is in one of Alexander Smith's poems a rare instance of striking and impressive simile :—

Across his sea of mind
A thought came streaming like a blazing ship
Upon a mighty wind.

Wordsworth's finest line, perhaps indeed the finest in the language, is that simile contained in his apostrophe to Milton :—

Thy soul was like a star, and dwelt apart.

Dante's similes are unrivalled for their *illustrative* power. For example, that of the souls at Charon's ferry, who fall from the crags into the boat *like withered leaves*. How finely does this give the twirling motion of aimless, unresisting and despairing fall!

Again, the spirits in Purgatory gaze with such intentness at the figure of Dante, unfamiliar to their regions, that their brows are wrinkled,

Like an old tailor at the needle's eye.

There is nothing ornamental about this image of the old tailor. It is the vividness with which it depicts the expression on the faces of the peering spirits that makes the comparison effective.

There is in one of Dobell's poems a simile which involves an extraordinarily accurate piece of observation. The song of the nightingale, he says, falling out of the leafy tree,

Rings like a golden jewel down a golden stair.

The excellence of this comparison does not force itself irresistibly in an instant; one might even pass it over without perceiving its full beauty. But observe it closely—the slow beginning—the likeness of the fall of note on note to the ring of gold on gold, as the jewel drops from stair to stair—the gathering swiftness—the distinct sounds at length blending into each other, as the rushing jewel grows in speed, as the notes pour faster and faster from the throat of the rapturous songster, until at last, too swift for utterance, they "close in a thick-warbled ecstasy."

The more closely these points of resemblance are considered, the more clearly will it become apparent that the simile is both fine and bold.

Boldness is often the life of simile—but it requires a great artist to be at once bold and fine. In this respect, no poet can compare with Victor Hugo. The number, the originality and the power of the similes to be found in his verses almost surpass belief. Who was it that compared to *ebony* the style of Tertullian, in its rich gloom and splendour? It was an admirable simile, whoever made it. But instances as bold and as fine as this, and not unlike it in character, swarm in the