

of a mother for her child; it is altogether unreserved. Hensley is always poetical, because it is in earnest—it means what it says—it does what it has to do with its whole heart—in word and deed, it is sincere. And whoever inspects human nature closely, will find that the least trust-worthy is the least poetical of his acquaintance; because to him the love of the true, the beautiful, the good, if it visit him at all, is a bird of passage—it is seldom hoined, never bosomed with him. Poetry, then, is sincerity in earnest—impassioned truth—the heart, not the head, speaking to itself. If you think I am wrong, read for yourselves the introductory lines of the “Lay of the Last Minstrel,” which remarkably confirm my opinion; our second Shakspeare having entered in the feelings of his old bard, with all the heart’s unreserve and self-forgetfulness.

But we will now ask the *dead who cannot die*, what two things differ more than the poetry of truth, and that of convention? “Here oft,” says Burns—

“Here oft, by sweet endearing stealth,  
Shall meet the loving pair,  
Despising worlds and all their wealth,  
As empty, idle care:  
The flowers shall vie, in all their charms,  
The hear of heaven to grace,  
And birks extend their fragrant arms,  
To screen the dear embrace.  
Here, haply, too, at vernal morn,  
Some musing bard may stray,  
And eye the smoking dewy lawn,  
And misty mountain grey.”

Contrast, now, these simple lines with a far-famed passage from Moore—

“Now over Syria’s land of roses  
Sattly the light of eve reposes,  
And, like a glory, the broad sun  
Hangs over sainted Lebanon,  
Whose head in wintry grandeur towers  
And whitens with eternal snow;  
While Summer, in a vale of flowers,  
Is sleeping rosy at his feet.”

This description must have great merit of some sort, for it has been praised as far as our language is known; but, with the exception of one word from Milton, and another from Homer, it is not poetry, for it is not truth. The light of evening is light in transition, not in repose, for repose is rest. The remaining lines (though three of them, if they stood alone, are good) do not convey to my mind any adequate idea of a mountain older than death, frowning over the stern wildness of arid and sun-smitten regions, spread in immensity beneath and around. Moore was not writing from the heart for it, *what he compounded this description*. It is precisely such a one as a man of extraordinary cleverness, without a single home-thought in his soul, or an atom of poetry in his nature, might have made to order, and per receipt and inventory. It is as pretty as if it had this moment been taken out of a French milliner’s sample-box of artificial flowers, newly scented. But I do not like dead things, not even roses. If Moore’s national melodies themselves are without vitality, and if the author of such things can conquer time, what writer need fear oblivion? I cannot help feeling, when I read his “Loves of the Angels,” that, if it had been fashionable in his time for men to wear false hair and ribbons, he would have placed on the heads of his celestial dandies, periwigs of the most approved twizzle, and on each wing, a shoulder-knot of the best-bred pink and blue. I grant his inimitable instinct of versification, but the noblest poetry under heaven, in the prose of the Bible, laughs to scorn the rhymester’s skill; and I contend that the versifying and the poetic power are frequently found in inverse ratios to each other. The persual of Moore’s compositions, in prose and verse alike, is to me a humiliating task, like that of a full-grown man-child, listlessly seeking, in a box filled with moss, for pretty insects, not worth finding. How unlike him are earnest, conscientious Cowper, and fervid, intense, passion-souled, *all-hearted* Burns!

It is impossible, however, not to admire the elegance of the lines which, for two reasons, I have quoted from Moore. Many persons suppose that elegance is essential to the perfection of poetical composition; but, so far is this from being the case, that beauty itself is not essential to poetry, except inasmuch as beauty is truth. Poetry, like truth, is a common flower. God has sown it over the earth, like his daisies, sprinkled with tears or glowing in the sun, even as he places the crocus and the March frisks together, “and beautifully mingles life and death.” Wherever there are hearts that can feel, it is found—in the budding rose and the fading leaf, in the palace and the cottage, in the workshop and the jail. Harken, and I will recite to you a poem of God’s making! But don’t raise your expectations too high. It is only too true a tale of a young woman who became an inmate of a workhouse, after having known better days. She had saved from the wreck of her prosperity a silk gown, which she was allowed to keep locked in a box, and which she carefully examined every day. At the end of about three years, she was observed, with the gown in her hands, rushing from the place where it was usually deposited, and exclaiming, “O poor Jane! what wilt thou do?” She had discovered in the gown a failing thread. Nobody else could perceive it. Raising the gown in her trembling hands, she asked her companions in misfortune, if the thread would

break. From that fatal day, she put the same question to every person who entered the workhouse. She put it to me, not many days before she died; for, whenever she could get out of the house, she wandered in the neighbouring lanes, muttering, in a whisper, “O Poor Jane! what wilt thou do?” and if a passenger approached, she would look up earnestly in his face, and, placing her finger under the failing thread, ask him if it would break. “Will it break? Oh, will it break.” Alas! it broke! And with it broke her heart. For the last link which bound her affections to the beautiful past in which alone she lived, was broken; her sole dependence was a thread—and it failed! But the grave did not refuse her an asylum: she died, I am sorry to say, by her own hand. Now, though any workhouse could furnish incidents as affecting as these, let me not be told that, if no man had condescended to speak or write a word about them, they would not still have been, in principle, genuine poetry. How could they have been otherwise, written as they were and are, by our Almighty Father himself, on his tablet of the universe? Think you the record would perish, if it did not bear man’s sign manual? Think you that God turns in disgust from the memorial of his desolate daughters’ sufferings, to look on the blood-stained trophies of a Wellington, or the tawdry splendours of a Heliogabalus? No, no. When He required of her the failing thread, she had nothing left but Him and the grave; and He makes no erring estimate of the widow’s mite, when, willingly or unwillingly, she casts into the treasury *all she hath*.

We have heard much of the dependence of poetry on style. But poetry is independent of *language* itself. The heart which a thread broke proves this. Indeed, that style which is called poetical, is by no means peculiar to verse; and, in prose and verse alike, nine times in ten, it is disjoined from poetry. To shew you that the poetry which has found words, depends not on style but on sentiment, allow me to quote from the New Testament a few words known to you all:—

“And, as Paul spake for himself, Festus said, with a loud voice, ‘Paul thou art beside thyself: much learning doth make thee mad.’”

“But he said, ‘I am not mad, as noble Festus, but speak forth the words of truth and soberness. For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely; for these things were not done in a corner. King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest.’”

“Then Agrippa said unto Paul, ‘Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.’ And Paul said, ‘I would to God that not only thou, but also all that hear thee to-day, were both almost and altogether such as I am, *except these bonds*.’”

This, you will say, is prose; but I say it is dramatic poetry, the poetry of action. Now, it might be the *language* of action without being poetry, just as a prosaic lecture becomes dramatic without being poetical, if the audience loudly praise or loudly blame it; for, while they give the lecturer time to breathe by interrupting him, they dramatise his discourse, making it for the moment a part of themselves, and, though dead, a living thing. But, if the language of Paul might be that of action, without being poetry, what constitutes it poetry? The last three words—“*except these bonds*.” Plain words were never used; but they were spoken from the heart, by a man who had suffered injustice, a man whose wisdom was not derived from books, but *written on his heart* by the finger of God.

#### A SEAMAN’S FUNERAL:

VERY shortly after poor Jack dies he is prepared for his deep-sea grave by his messmates, who, with the assistance of the sail-maker, and in the presence of the master-at-arms, sew him up in his hammock; and having placed a couple of cannon shot at his feet, they rest the body (which now not a little resembles an Egyptian mummy) on a spare grating. Some portion of the bedding and clothes are always made up in the package, apparently to prevent the form being too much seen. It is then carried off, and being placed across the after-hatchway, the union Jack is thrown over all. Sometimes it is placed between two of the guns, under the half-deck, but generally, I think, he is laid where I have mentioned—just abaft the mainmast. I should have mentioned before, that as soon as the surgeon’s ineffectual professional offices are at an end, he walks to the quarter-deck, and reports to the officer of the watch, that one of his patients has just expired. At whatever hour of the day or night this occurs, the captain is immediately made acquainted with the circumstance.

Next day, generally about eleven o’clock, the bell on which the half hours are struck is tolled for the funeral; and all who choose to be present assemble on the gangways, booms, and round the mainmast, while the forepart of the quarter deck is occupied by the officers. In some ships (and perhaps it ought to be so in all) it is made imperative on the officers and crew to attend the ceremony.

While the people are repairing to the quarter-deck, in obedience to the summons of the bell, the grating on which the body is placed, being lifted from the maindeck by the messmates of the man who has died, is made to rest across the lee gangway. The stanchions for the man-ropes of the side are unshipped, and an

opening made at the after-end of the hammock-netting sufficiently large to allow a free passage. The body is still covered by the flag already mentioned, with the feet projecting a little over the gunwale, while the messmates of the deceased range themselves on each side. A rope, which is kept out of sight in these arrangements, is then made fast to the grating, for a purpose which will be seen presently. When all is ready, the chaplain, if there be one on board, or, if not, the captain, or any of the officers he may direct to officiate, appears on the quarter-deck, and commences the beautiful service which, though but too familiar to most ears, I have observed never fails to rivet the attention even of the rudest and least reflecting. Of course, the bell has ceased to toll, and every one stands in silence and uncovered as the prayers are read. And there can be no more attentive or apparently reverent auditory than assembles on the deck of a ship of war on the occasion of a shipmate’s burial.

The laud service for the burial of the dead contains the following words:—“Forasmuch as it has pleased Almighty God, of his great mercy, to take unto himself the soul of our dear brother here departed, we therefore commit his body to the ground; earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust; in sure and certain hope,” etc. Every one, I am sure, who has attended the funeral of a friend, (and whom will not this include?) must recollect the solemnity of this stage of the ceremony, where, as the above words are pronounced, there are cast into the grave three successive portions of earth, which, falling on the coffin, send up a hollow, mournful sound, resembling no other that I know. In the burial service at sea, the part quoted above is varied in the following very striking and impressive manner:—“Forasmuch,” etc., “we therefore commit his body to the deep, to be turned into corruption, looking for the resurrection of the body, when the sea shall give up her dead, and the life of the world to come,” etc. At the commencement of this part of the service, one of the seamen stoops down and disengages the flag from the remains of his late shipmate, while the others, at the words, “we commit his body to the deep,” project the grating right into the sea. The body being loaded with shot at one end, glances off the grating, plunges at once into the ocean, and

“In a moment, like a drop of rain,  
He sinks into its depths with bubbling groan,  
Without a grave, unknelled, uncoffined, and unknown.”

This part of the ceremony is rather less solemn than the correspondent part on land; but still there is something impressive, as well as startling, in the sudden splash, followed by the sound of the grating, as it is towed along under the main-chains.

Captain Basil Hall’s Sketches.

SAILORS.—As yet little has been done for our sailors by the Christian public, compared to what has done for other classes. Surely this useful, and important, and numerous class, consisting of a quarter of a million of souls, should not be forgotten; and how necessary is it for our missions abroad that the religious and moral character of the sailor be improved? And here the attention of the public might well be called to the admirable Essay of Rev. John Harris, lately published, in which, as a means of improving the condition of the sailor, he has suggested that hospitals be erected for the sick, lodging-houses established for them immediately on landing, savings-banks opened, temperance societies formed, and a sailor’s institution be provided, so that he may be kept from the public-houses, and profitably spend his leisure; that the Bible be distributed to every sailor on his departure, religious tracts be distributed, Sunday schools be opened, and the Gospel be preached to them by agents. Surely, while we so freely give for sending the Gospel abroad, we should remember that our sailors deserve much from us, as Mr. Harris observes, both from their numbers (250,000) as well as their services in time of peace and war; their peculiar perils, religious privations, temptations, and their debased condition, rendering them the means of immense evil to others both at home and abroad. The example of our Divine Master should operate as a powerful incentive to us to do for the sailors to the utmost of our ability; and the British and Foreign Sailors’ Society is ready to our hands as an efficient agency.

R. S.

BOUNTY OF GOD TO HIS CREATURES.—The sluggish cow pastures in the cavity of the valley; the bounding sheep on the declivity of the hill; the scrambling goat browses among the shrubs of the rock; the duck feeds on the water-plants of the river; the hen, with attention, picks up every grain that is scattered and lost in the field; the pigeon, of rapid wing, collects a similar tribute from the refuge of the grove; and the frugal bee turns to account even the small dust on the flower. There is no corner of the earth where the whole vegetable crop may not be reaped. Those plants which are rejected by one are a delicacy to another; and, even among the finny tribes, contribute to their fatness. The hog devours the horse-tail and henbane; the goat, the thistle and hemlock. All return in the evening to the habitation of man, with murmurs, with bleating, with cries of joy, bringing back to him the delicious tributes of innumerable plants, transformed, by a process the most inconceivable, into honey, milk, cream, butter, and eggs.—St. Pierre.