

vices of the life of defiance, full of passion and resource (for Mr. Miller has the art of making us respect the intellectual calibre of all his characters, whatever they may do, and however closely they may approximate to savages), he is lifted at once above the mild and mediocre or the merely photographic levels of work: on the other hand, he exhibits life not only under the rudimentary and incomplete conditions which his subject-matter suggests, but with an effect of abortiveness and gloom due partly, no doubt, to the Byronic tradition, and so extreme as to be almost morbid. His interest in life seems to be very much that of a gambler, who plays at stake, conscious that the chances are against him; or, one might rather say, of a man who watches a game played with loaded dice, and who sees his friend ruined by an undeniable conspiracy. In *Ina*, for instance, gratuitous misery is poured forth, as from a bucket, with a liberally cruel hand. It is intensely unsatisfactory to be told of a lovely, girlish, and wealthy widow, steeped in amorous grace, constancy, and spirit, making love to the hot-blooded youth who has adored her all his life, and whom she has confessedly adored—only to be repulsed with a stolid obtuse *morgue*, and then to wrap herself round in her dignity, and close the last avenue to a right mutual understanding. We see love assassinated before our eyes by two lovers, who can find no better employment than persistently carving the death's-head and marrow-bones over his head-stone. In this tale the very *motif* has a twist of dislocation: in some others, as our summary will have shown, the conception, though mainly monotonous, is interesting in a high degree, but the poet shows little gift for constructing a story. In *Arizonian*, for example—an excellent and truly engrossing poem—the reader is unable to credit the central fact; namely, that the gold-washer, having for twenty-one years lost sight of his early love so entirely as not to know that she had been married for a long series of years, travels in good faith to search her out and wed her, and accepts at first sight her daughter as being her authentic self. It might perhaps be added, without cynicism that the daughter, who so absolutely realizes to the many-labored gold-washer,

the person of his long-lost love, should really have stood to his feelings in that relation; and that his natural and compensatory course would have been to court her on the spot.

Excitement and ambition may be called the twin geniuses of Mr. Miller's poetical character. Everything is to him both vital and suggestive; and some curious specimens might be called of the fervid interfusion of external nature and the human soul in his descriptive passages. The great factors of the natural world—the sea, the mountains, the sun, moon, and stars—become personalities, animated with an intense life and a dominant possession. He loves the beasts and birds, and finds them kin to him; a snake has its claim of blood-relationship. At times he runs riot in overcharged fancies, which, in *Ina* especially, recall something of the manner of Alexander Smith, whether in characterizing the objects of nature, or in the frenzied aspirations of the human spirit. It should be understood, however, that the only poet to whom he bears a considerable or essential analogy is Byron. In *Arizonian* indeed the resemblance of diction and versification is rather Browning, and some passages might seem to be directly founded on the *Flight of the Duchess*: but I learn that this resemblance is merely fortuitous. As such, it is an interesting reciprocal confirmation of the value of the peculiarities of narrative form belonging to both poems. At times also there is a recognizable ring of Swinburne, especially as regards alliteration, and a vigorous elastic assonance not only in the syllables but in the collocation of words and phrases.

There is little space, and not much occasion, for dwelling on verbal or other minute defects. The swing and melody of the verse are abundant; yet many faulty lines or rhymes, with some decided perversities in this way, could be cited; along with platitudes of phrase, or odd and inadmissible words. All these are minor matters. Mr. Miller has realised his poetic identity under very exceptional conditions, very favourable to spirit and originality, but the contrary so far as united completion or the accepted rules of composition are concerned. He is a poet, and an admirable poet. His first