

❁POETRY.❁

THE SPARROW.

O'ER all the land a mantle white
Has been by nature spread,
And all the birds have taken flight;
On wings southward they sped.

Yet no, not all, the sparrow comes
Amid the ice and snow,
The sole petitioner for our crumbs
When wintry winds do blow.

This hardy little foreigner,
From o'er the ocean's brine;
A thorough little Britisher,
Thrives at the pole or line.

SCIENCE AND LOVE.

PRAY tell me, my own dainty darling,
About your *centripital* nerve;
Is your *cerebral ganglion* working
In a manner I like to observe.

Does the gray matter answer my pleading,
And cause *vaso motors* to move?
Ah, dearest, do let the *medulla*
Oblongata respond to my love.

Your *corpora quadrigemini*, sweet one,
As also the *pons varolii*,
I love with an earnest affection,
The result of complex *stimuli*.

And this co-ordination of atoms
My *cerebrum* will still carry on,
Till *cardiac* motion be ended,
And peripheral feeling be gone.

Then relax all your facial muscles,
As the nerves of ambition vibrate;
Of your heterogeneous feelings
Make a dear homogeneous state.

When the *ganglia* growing compounded,
In the great *bi-lobed* mass *effloresce*,
Let them send through the thorax sensation
To prompt an articulate "Yes!"

THE MEETING.

FAR severed on time's rolling tide,
Our barques were drifted far and wide
Through storm and calm.

But fortune's star of golden light,
Lured on our vessels in their flight
To meet at Queen's.

Oft may we on our voyage meet,
To hoist our signal lights and greet
As on we drift.

May portal lights of heaven that gleam
Along the waves of time's dark stream
Guide us to heaven.

❁LITERARY.❁

WOODEN CRITICISM.

IN the last number of the *Journal* we showed into what absurdities an able man may be led when he approaches a question from a false point of view. Bentley, great scholar as he was, in his edition of Milton suggested "emendations" that would destroy the very soul of "Paradise Lost." We propose now to present to the reader one or two of the hardly less absurd criticisms of a living writer, who enjoys a considerable reputation, and whose books have commended themselves even to the wise heads who "authorise" the educational works used in our schools. We refer to Dr. Alexander Bain, ex-professor of logic and English literature in the University of Aberdeen. This psychologist's animalversions on Bacon and Shelley well entitle him to be regarded as the intellectual heir of the pedant Bentley. To Mr. P. A. Barrett, in the *London Academy* for 27th August, we are indebted for most of what we shall here say.

Mr. Barrett, after reading Dr. Bain's books on *Teaching English* and *English Composition and Rhetoric*, comes to the conclusion, that "the chief object that seems likely to be served by them is that they should be examples to the end of time of how 'English' never should be 'taught,' and never could be 'taught.'" As specimens of the sort of criticism to be found in the former he cites the following inspiring extract (*On Teaching English*, p. 42), in which Bacon's essay on "Truth" is thus maltreated:

"Take first the essay on 'Truth.' The first sentence—'What is truth?' said jesting Pilate, and would not stay for an answer"—might be cited as an interesting way of announcing the topic of an essay, while the phraseology would be open to improvement. For 'said' he ought to have used the word 'asked'; but the remark is superfluous, because no one would now commit the impropriety. The 'and' should clearly be 'but.' 'What is truth?' asked jesting Pilate, but would not stay for an answer."

What does the reader think of that for criticism? Mr. Barrett's criticism of this critic will, we feel sure, be endorsed by every one but a psychologist. "As for us," he says, "we sincerely believe that Bacon did not write the famous sentence as his critic has written it, simply because he did not mean what Dr. Bain apparently means. Bacon meant *said*, and he meant *asked*. On the face of it, Pilate, so far from asking any question, is actually uttering a jest, and his waiting for an answer is in no sense an antithesis to his jest, but merely a further indication of the indifference which the story illustrates. We get this meaning out of Bacon, not by anatomizing him and saying that here we should find this and there that, but by taking his words as they stand, and asking, What *do* they mean?"

But it is in his remarks on Shelley's Skylark that Dr. Bain best proves his utter unfitness for literary criticism. Shelley's "glorious third stanza," as everyone knows, runs thus: