

gifted with the ordinary powers of understanding and education, who does not manifest it to be his first wish to seem smart, to say funny things, to win a character for humour, and blaze away in his small world of dotting connexions and simple young ladies, as a comet whose every movement results in a shower of sparks as brilliant as they are numerous. Who has not been annoyed, when met with other friends to enjoy a few hours of rational and instructive conversation at the attempts of these would-be-wits, who have studied Joe Miller and endeavoured to understand Punch, and in virtue of their acquaintance with these publications endeavour to pass off the reflection of the masters they have studied as their own natural lucubrations, and annoy all, who otherwise compassionate their folly, by their smart sayings, bad puns, and weak imitations of long exploded wit. These young men are the nuisances of society, and we regret to say their example is sometimes followed by young ladies also, who destroy the enjoyment of others by their mutual sharpshooting, and rehash of absurdities which have disfigured the variety column of some daily print. We regret to see this disposition on the increase, and think it is in a measure excited by the unqualified admiration which has been awarded to the humourists who now write for the public. When weak witty sayings are applauded in print, we must only expect them to be imitated by punsters of a lesser growth. If each one of Dickens' mawkish and overdone absurdities is lauded as the ne plus ultra of good things, we need not marvel that our budding men should take their cue from his works, and win a similar admiration in a more contracted sphere. We wish that some one of our real humourists, such as Jerrold or Thackeray, would devote an hour or two to the exposure of those soaring youths; after the dissection these writers could give them, the keen lashing by pen, ink, and paper, if not too case-hardened to know their own characters when faithfully represented, we doubt much if the jackdaw plumage would again be stirred, or the old marvel of Balaam's ass be rehearsed for our benefit.

It seems no difficult task to guide the public taste, if we may judge from the few instances we could easily point to, of persons who, while not even propounding a new system, manage by the manner in which they convey their own peculiar style of sentiment to the world, to secure the plaudits and attention of a wide class of readers. As a proof we would cite Dickens, whose popularity in literature is perhaps unprecedented. Fortunately for himself he fell in with the popular humour. Eschewing the more important and more erudite themes which improve and benefit mankind, he chose to draw upon the comicalities of life, and clothing them in language quaint and at times most forcible, has succeeded in building up for himself a reputation whose value altogether depends upon the merit people choose to attribute to his style. Those who look upon life as one holiday time in which to laugh and revel as we may, who think the meanest puerilities and the broadest allusions worth