

nearly defunct in all classes of adult men and women, though still to some extent, not a large one, existent among the young who have not begun to reckon their ages among the "teens."

An evil example was set between forty and fifty years ago by many young writers who laid themselves out to be what is called "funny," to become in fact professional punsters, by the composition of drearily comic books—among others by comic English and Latin grammars, by comic geographies, by comic histories of England; and who would in all probability have written "comic" Bibles if they could have found a market for them. These writings had any amount of popularity, which contributed in no small degree to the deterioration of the literary taste of the then rising generation—a deterioration which has extended its baleful influence to their successors of the present day, and has not only invaded the private talk of society, but the theatre, and might even claim the monopoly of the drama were it not for the paramount and benign influence of Shakespeare. To such agency the public of the present and of a not long since departed day owes the hydraulic and pumped-up "fun" which is not funny, of the songs that now achieve the greatest popularity, and retain it for the longest time. Of this inane class are "Pop goes the Weasel," "Jump Jim Crow," "The Ratcatcher's Daughter," "The Chickaleerie Cove," "Tommy, make room for your Uncle," and other vulgarities that seem to fascinate the sons and daughters of the lower middle class. If one would really form an estimate of what popularity signifies and what it is worth, he might discover a humiliating truth in the fact that the street entertainment of Punch and Judy is really more popular than "Hamlet" or "Macbeth," and that the most popular of all the songs still

sung in England is one adapted to the old French melody of "*Malbrook s'en va-t-en guerre*," and that forms the bacchanalian chorus in circles where a spurious conviviality still prevails:—

We won't go home till morning,
Till daylight doth appear;

varied occasionally by another chant of a similarly low order:—

For he's a jolly good fellow,
And so say all of us;

with an extra powerful emphasis upon the final *us*.

Not quite so vulgar, but quite as popular, as these are the vapid sentimental songs—which find favour with what may be considered the great majority of the fair sex, who possess a smattering of literary taste, and a still slighter smattering of musical appreciation—that are issued in shoals by the musical publishers of the present day, to the almost complete displacement of the really good songs and the very excellent music of a bygone generation. As the literary reviews and other periodicals do not bestow much, if any, of their critical attention upon these slight and ephemeral productions, every publisher—in league, it is to be supposed, with the author and composer—becomes his own critic and displays his appreciation of his own wares in the advertising columns of the penny press; calls them "lovely," "soul-entrancing," "awfully attractive," "immensely successful," "pathetic and most perfect," "sentimental but sensible," "always certain of an encore," "most charming and descriptive," "the greatest success of the season," "always uproariously en-cored." Often, as if fearing that these encomia should fail of their effect, these enterprising tradespeople publish *in extenso*, as advertisements, what they call the "words" (words and nothing else) of these effusions, at a cost per line which possibly the