

From the Knickerbocker for May.

OLLAPODIANA. — No. x x i v.

It is no long time, respected reader, since we communed together. Yet how many matters have happened since that period, which should give us pause and solemn meditation. We are still extant; the beams of our spirit will shine from our eyes; yet there are many who, since last my sentences came to yours, have dropped their lids for ever upon things of earth. Numberless ties have been severed; numberless hearts rest from their pantings—and sleep—"no more to fold the robe o'er secret pain." All the deceits—the masks of life—are ended with them. Policy no more bids them to kindle the eye with deceitful lustre—no more prompts to semblance, which feeling condemns. They are gone!—"ashes to ashes, and dust to dust;" and when I think of the number who thus pass away, I am pained within me; for I know from them, that our life is not only as a dream which passeth away, but that the garniture, or the carnival of it, is indeed a vapor—sun-gilt for a moment, then coloured with the dun hues of death—or stretching its dim folds afar until their remotest outlines catch the imperishable glory of eternity.—Such is life; made up of successful or unsuccessful accidents; its movers and actors, from the cradle to three-score-and-ten, pushed about by Fate; not their own; aspiring, but impotent—impelled as by visions, and rapt in a dream—which who can dispel?

To those who take every event in their lives as a matter of "special providence"—who make a shop-keeper and supercargo of Omnipotence—who refer to celestial interposition for the recovery of a debt, the acknowledgment of a larceny, or the profits on a box of candles, or a bundle of ten-penny nails; who perceive something more than a special providence in the death of a sparrow, or the fall of a brick-bat, sent from vagrant hand; to those, all argument of reason would be useless, even if they who employed it were warm and sincere, as I know I am, in a belief of the general watchfulness of my Creator over men's woe and weal. But, as in things that are of the earth earthy, there is but a step from the sublime to the ridiculous, as was said by the great captain of his age, so it appears to me it is with things celestial.

It seems impossible for the human intellect to appreciate that tripling ubiquity of supervision which some credulous persons—more devout than intelligent—impute to the supervision of the Almighty. That God is every where, admits of no dispute; but when we ransack his discernments into the scrutiny of those minutest matters which would scarcely attract for a moment the observation even of low-minded men, we create an anomaly which has, in proportion to its indifference, an aspect of frivolity, and an attitude of common-place. It seems to establish or defend that theory, which pronounces that whatever is is right. This is a phrase of Pope's which in my humble opinion contains much more poetry than philosophy. To maintain that all which is, is right, does away, in my poor sense, with all true appreciation of rectitude and wrong. It nullifies the Decalogue. If the postulate be true, why the tablets of the law, or that divine mountainous sermon? What need of statutes, or the jury of a man's peers? Why arraign a man who abstracts the horse from his stable, without a "by y'r leave" from the owner, or seduces a ram from the pasture, without clover or salt? Why should penitentiaries be filled? Why Auburn or Sing-Sing hear the groans of the prisoners? If all that is, is right, these prisoners have but done their duty; counterfeiting is but a pastime, though fruitful; perjury is a species of verbal romance, sanctified by a kiss on calf or sheep-skin; larceny and burglary, the acts of brief visitors who make strong attachments; and even murder itself, a modification of the code of honor—a kind of "popping the question" in the great matter of the future; sometimes put with leads to the aorta, or with steel to the jugular.

But while I impugn the philosophy of Pope, in the phrase herein before mentioned, let me not arraign his verse, or cast one doubtful shade upon the brightness of his thoughts, or the sweet harmony of his numbers. How often have their cadences satisfied my ear, and enriched my mind! In his Eloise, the actual, solemn swell of the music which distracted the nun betwixt the choice of Earth or Heaven, seems pouring from the stream. He brings to my mind those sunny seasons when my sense of harmony, though less acute, was perhaps more rapturous, than now; when the rustle of leaves, the casual trills of summer birds, the chiming dance of waters, and the zephyrs, floating from the fragrant south or balmy west, seemed to breathe of the concord, and herald the dulcet airs, of Paradise. Sometimes, in the jostling din and bustle of active life, I lose these harmonies for a little season, and I feel oppressed with the spirit of discontent and complaining—and could say within me, as do the Hebrews in their service of the morning of the ninth of Ab, lamenting the sweet bells lost from the priestly robes of Israel—the lost language of seers and poets—the ephod, and the memorial—"The voice of wailing hath passed over my melodious psalteries; wo is me!"

Is there any poetry equal in severe simplicity, and quiet, natural beauty, to that of the Hebrews of Israel? I confess that I

think not. In his inspired wanderings, I can conceive that Shakespeare walked as it were arm-in-arm with Moses and the prophets; with that complaining man of Uz, who held colloquies with the Almighty, in whirlwind and storm. In truth, as I have pored over some of the beautiful inspirations of the Dispersed of modern days, they come to my spirit like "the airs of Palestine." Indeed, I have had great doubts, when as I have overlooked the pages which have been lent me by a Rabbi of the Synagogue—written on one page with mysterious characters, and on the other with the pure English version of those venerated Scriptures—whether the renderings of Yarchi and Leeser, and others, were not more beautiful than those which have given to us the Word, from the sovereign command of the First James of England. Let us list the following, as read in the Fast of the ninth of Ab. "The lot of the Lord's inheritance is Jacob. He encircled him, and he watched him, and he guarded him as the apple of his eye. As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth her young, spreadeth abroad her wing, taketh them, beareth them aloft on pinions, so the Lord did lead him." And how eloquently do they complain! "Where," they ask, in their deep and briefest language, "where is the residence of the Divine Glory? the house of the Levitic order, and their desk? Where the glory of the faithful city? Where are the chiefs of thy schools, and where thy judges? Who arrange the answers to them?—who ask concerning thy mysteries? Where are they who walk in the paths of truth, enlightened by the brightness of thy shining?"

There is something extremely touching in these Israelitish lamentations. They were wailed *con amore* and by the card. I truly believe, that all the sackcloth poetry of modern time, put together, would give a mere dividend of the great capital of dolor employed by the olden-time Hebrews. They wept and howled copiously—yea, abundantly. There is something, after all, sacred in sorrow. It has a dignity, which joy never possesses. The sufferings of Medea in Euripides—the scenes betwixt Andromache and Hector—the pangs of Virginius—these are remembered, and will be when the glittering treasures of Cræsus at Delphi shall be forgotten, and the gay measures of Gyges be lost to men. Here is a strain in this kind—one that was spent at the close of a summer day, some year or so agone. It needs a little preliminary blazon.

You must know, reader, that there lieth, some three miles or so from Brotherly Love—a city of this continent, a delectable city—a place of burial, "Laurel Hill" by name. On a sweeter spot, the sun never threw the day-spring of the morning, nor the blush of the evening west. There the odors and colors of nature profusely repose; there, to rest of a spring or summer afternoon, on some rural seat, looking at trees, and dancing waters, and the like, you would wonder at that question of Dean Swift, addressed on his death-bed, to a friend at his side: "Did you ever know of any really good weather in this world?" You would take the affirmative. Well, thus I sang:

Here the lamented dead in dust shall lie,  
Life's lingering languors o'er—its labors done;  
Where waving boughs betwixt the earth and sky,  
Admit the farewell radiance of the sun.

Here the long concourse from the murmuring town,  
With funeral pace and slow, shall enter in;  
To lay the loved in tranquil silence down,  
No more to suffer, and no more to sin.

And here the impressive stone, engraved with words  
Which Grief's sententious gives to marble pale,  
Shall teach the heart, while waters, leaves and birds  
Make cheerful music in the passing gale.

Say, wherefore should we weep, and wherefore pour  
On scented airs the unavailing sigh—  
While sun-bright waves are quivering to the shore,  
And landscapes blooming—that the loved should die?

There is an emblem in this peaceful scene—  
Soon, rainbow colors on the woods will fall;  
And autumn gusts bereave the hills of green,  
As sinks the year to meet its cloudy pall.

Yet, when the warm, soft winds shall rise in Spring,  
Like struggling day-beams o'er a blasted heath,  
The bird returned shall poise her golden wing,  
And liberal nature break the spell of death.

So, when the tomb's dull silence finds an end,  
The blessed Dead to endless youth shall rise,  
And hear the archangel's thrilling summons blend  
Its tones with anthems from the upper skies.

There shall the good of earth be found at last,  
Where dazzling streams and vernal fields expand—  
Where Love her crown attains—her trials past—  
And, filled with rapture, hails the better land!

Thus I strummed the old harpsichord, from which I have aforesaid, at drowsy hours and midnight intervals, extracted a few accidental numbers, (more pleasant doubtless to beget than read,) "sleepless myself, to give to others sleep!"

Well, that is the only way to write without fatigue, both to author and reader. In all that pertains in the petty businesses which bow us to the routine of this work-day world, I am as it

were at home. I am distinctly a mover in the great tide of Action sweeping on around me; yet when I enter into the sanctuary of the muses, lo! at one wave of the spiritual wand, this "dim and ignorant present" disappears. I breathe a rarer atmosphere. Visions of childhood throng upon my soul; the blue mountain-tops—the aerial circles of far-off landscapes—the hazy horizon of ocean-waters—the wind-tossed verdure of summer—the hills that burst into singing—and the sweet harmonies of nature—Universal parent!—all appeal to my spirit. This dismemberment of the ideal from the actual, is a fountain of enjoyment, which whoso knows not, has yet the brightest lessons of life to learn. He has yet to enter that fairy dominion which seems the intermediate territory betwixt the airy realms conceived of in this world, and the more radiant glories of that undiscovered country

—"from whose bourne  
No traveller returns."

There is something in the feeling, beyond the impulses of fame, beyond the "mouth honor, breath," which the falsest of the world are the most ready to bestow; something beyond the empty plaudits, the spurious honors, of the multitude, given to-day—withheld to-morrow. Anathemas a moment gone—benedictions now—these are the marks and signals of the multitude. I would not seek their favor, for their disapproval is the same in the end. It is a curious truth, that no man realizes fame until he is beyond it; that the tardy honors which men receive from king-ly or from republican powers, generally come too late to be appreciated—or rather, too late to be of value.

Yet there is something exceedingly solemn in the mutability of a name. 'Tis indeed a vapor, which appeareth but for a little season, and then vanisheth away. I like not this life-after-death-repute—this post-mortem vitality. "Give it to me, if I deserve it, while the breath of existence sports in my nostrils; while I can walk, and bear, and see, and jostle among men!" Such are my aspirations—malgre the littleness of it. To have antiquaries puzzling themselves with one's merits—supposing that they might reach beyond his sepulture—is to my mind a dry and arid prospect. One wants to be quiet. "To subsist in bones," saith my old friend, Sir Thomas Browne, "and to be put pyramidally extant, is a fallacy in duration. Vain ashes, which in the oblivion of Names, Persons, Times, and Sexes, have found unto themselves a fruitless continuation, and only arise unto late posterity, as emblems of mortal vanities, antidotes of pride.—Oblivion blindly scattereth her poppy, and deals with the memory of men, without distinction to merit of perpetuity. Who can but pity the founder of the pyramids? Herodotus lives that burnt the temple of Diana—he is almost lost that built it. Time had spared the epitaph of Adrian's horse—confounded that of himself. In vain we compute our felicities by the advantage of our good names since bad have equal durations; and Thersites is like to live as long as Agamemnon, without the favor of the Everlasting Register. The Canaanitish woman lives more happily without a name, than Herodias with one; and who had not rather have been the good thief than Pilate? Who knows whether the best of men be known? Or whether there be not more remarkable persons forgot, than any that stand remembered in the known account of time?"—*Ollapod.*

#### EXPOSURE OF THE SICK IN INDIA.

Hindoos are extremely anxious to die by the side of the Ganges, that they may have their sins washed away in their last moments. When a person is on the point of death, his relations carry him on a litter to the bank of the river. The litter consists of some bamboos fastened together and slung on ropes. Some persons are carried many miles to the river, and this practice is often attended with very grievous circumstances; a person in his last agonies is dragged from his bed and friends, and carried in the coldest or in the hottest weather, from whatever distance, to the river side, where he lies, if a poor man, without a covering day or night, till he expires; and not only this, but in his last agonies he is put up to the middle in water, and the water poured down him. Leaves of the toolsee plant are also put in his mouth. His relations who carry him to the river call upon him to repeat, and repeat for him, the names of Rama, Huree, Narayuna, Bramla, Gunga, etc. While he has life and the power of speech, he himself repeats one or other of these names. In some cases the family priest goes to the river side, repeats some incantations, and makes an offering to Vocturune. If a person should die in his house, and not by the river side, it is considered as a great misfortune, as he thereby loses the benefit of the goddess in his dying moments. If a person choose to die at home, he is sure to leave a bad name at his death. What the sick and dying suffer, by being exposed to all kinds of weather, in the open air on the banks of the river, and in being choked by the sacred waters in their last moments, is beyond expression. The wish to get rid of a burden is another reason. There is no public provision made for the old or infirm. All who are past labour become dependent upon their relatives; and the consideration of the expense may possibly make them wish to rid themselves of an incumbrance; especially when it can be done in a way, which, instead of ap-