

POETRY.

POMPEII.

(Cambridge Prize Poem, 1819.)

THE hour is come. E'en now the sulph'rous cloud
Involves the City in its fun'ral shroud,
And far along Campania's azure sky
Expands its dark and boundless canopy.
The Sun, tho' throng'd on heaven's meridian height,
Burns red and rayless thro' that sickly night.
Each bosom felt at once the shudd'ring thrill—
At once the music stopp'd—the song was still.
None in that cloud's portentous shade might trace
The fearful changes of another's face:
But thro' that horrid stillness each could hear
His neighbor's throbbing heart beat high with fear.
A moment's pause succeeds. Then wildly rise
Grief's sobbing plaints and terror's frantic cries.
The gates recoil; and tow'ds the narrow pass
In wild confusion rolls the living mass.
Death,—when thy shadowy sceptre waves away
From his sad couch, the pris'ner of decay
Tho' friendship view the close with glist'ning eye,
And love's fond lips imbibe the parting sigh,
By torture rack'd, by kindness soothed in vain,
The soul still clings to being and to pain:
But when have wilder terrors clothed thy brow,
Or keener torments edged thy darts than now,
When with thy regal horrors vainly strove
The laws of Nature and the power of Love?
On mothers, babes in vain for mercy call,
Beneath the feet of brothers, brothers fall.
Behold the dying wretch in vain upraise
Tow'rd's yonder well-known face the accusing gaze;
See, trampled to the earth, the expiring maid
Clings round her lover's feet, and shrieks for aid.
Vain is the imploring glance, the frenzied cry;
All, all is fear;—To succor is to die—
Say ye how wild, how red, how broad a light
Burst on the darkness of that mid-day night,
As fierce Vesuvius scatter'd o'er the vale
His drifted flames and sheets of burning hail,
Shook hell's wan light'nings from his blazing cone,
And gilded heaven with meteors not his own?
The morn all blushing rose; but sought in vain
The snowy villas and the flow'ry plain,
The purple hills with marshall'd vineyards gay,
The domes that sparkled in the sunny ray.
Where art or nature late had decked the scene
With blazing marble or with spangled green,
There, streak'd by many a fiery torrent's bed,
A boundless waste of hoary ashes spread.
Along that dreary waste where lately rung
The festal lay which smiling virgins sung,
Where rapture echoed from the warbling lute,
And the gay dance resounded, all is mute.—
Mute!—Is it Fancy shapes that wailing sound

Which faintly murmurs from the blasted ground?
Or live there still, who, breathing in the tomb,
Curse the dark refuge which delays their doom,
In massive vaults, on which th' incumbent plain
And ruin'd City heap their weight in vain?
Oh! who may sing that hour of mortal strife,
When Nature calls on Death, yet clings to life?
Who paint the wretch that draws a sepulchral breath,
A living pris'ner in the house of Death?
Pale as the corpse which loads the fun'ral pile,
With face convulsed that writhes a gastly smile,
Behold him speechless move with hurried pace,
Incessant, round his dungeon's cavern'd place,
Now shriek in terror, and now groan in pain
Gnaw his white lips, and strike his burning brain,
Till Fear o'er strain'd in stupor dies away,
And Madness wrests her victim from dismay.
His arms sink down; his wild and stony eye
Glares without sight on blackest vacancy.
He feels not, sees not; wrapp'd in senseless trance
His soul is still and listless as his glance.
One cheerless blank, one rayless mist is there,
Thoughts, senses, passions, live not with despair.

Haste, Famine, haste to urge the destined close,
And lull the horrid scene to stern repose.
Yet, ere, dire Fiend, thy ling'ring tortures cease
And all be hush'd in still sepulchral peace,
These cares shall wilder, darker deeds behold
Than e'er the voice of song or fable told,
Whate'er dismay may prompt, or madness dare,
Feasts of the grave, and banquets despair.—
Hide, hide the scene! and o'er the blasting sight
Fling the dark veil of ages and of night.
Go seek Pompeii now—with pensive tread
Roam thro' the silent city of the dead,
Explore each spot, where still, in ruin grand,
Her shapeless piles and tott'ring columns stand;
Where the pale ivy's clasping wreaths o'er shade
The ruin'd temple's moss-clad colonnade,
Or violets on the hearth's cold marble wave,
And muse in silence on a people's grave.

—T. B. M.

HOBBS' THEORY OF SOCIETY.—HERBERT SPENCER'S RECENT PAMPHLET.

ALTHOUGH Hobbes wrote more than 1,900 years after Epicurus, his theory seems at first sight to be but the Epicurean doctrine made explicit. The Greek thinker was not fully conscious of the essentially selfish character of his theory. The Englishman bluntly says that man is always and unredeemably selfish. But Hobbes immediately adds that to secure his own good a man must seek the common good. Like all pleasure selfish pleasure can be obtained only by not being directly sought. In Hobbes there are two opposite principles, (a) pure individualism, (b) absolute universalism. The changed spirit of Hobbes as compared with Epicurus was due to Christianity.