

poem long after it is forgotten as a song. Samuel Lover, a writer of Irish songs, deserves and has received high appreciation, not only from his Irish fellow-countrymen, but from the English people, among whom he cast his lot at an early period of his career. He wrote many excellent songs, full of the peculiar tenderness and humour which are so often found in combination in the Irish character, which promise to enjoy a longer tenure of popular favour than the songs of his more classical predecessor, Thomas Moore. Except in the songs that breathed incipient sympathy with Irish disaffection and rebellion, Moore was far more English than Irish, and scarcely attempted to reach the popular heart, or, if he did so, failed in the endeavour. He was essentially an aristocrat, and might have been compared to a tame canary-bird who never sang well except when he was perched on the finger of a countess; unlike Samuel Lover and Robert Burns, who sang aloft in the sky with the sunlight upon their wings, and cheered the hearts of the common people in the field: below.

Most English poets worthy of the name have written songs—often very beautiful to read, but not always well adapted to be sung. These poets have either not known, or have forgotten, that the essential element of a song is to be singable, and that a fine thought, if expressed by words containing too many harsh and unvocal consonants, though it may appeal to the understanding, may fail to find interpretation from singers who require grace, melody, smoothness and limpidity of meaning in songs, rather than intellectual strength or depth of suggestion, and that the true song should be above all things, as Milton expresses, simple, sensuous, and passionate.

Among living writers of songs, of whom a score at least might be men-

tioned with all befitting honour, the Laureate has been most successful in his efforts to charm his contemporaries in this branch of the poetic art. But his songs, like those of some of his compeers in the higher walks of poetry, have only found favour with the few, and have been of too high an order of literary merit to reach the hearts of the multitude. The serious minds of the age are engrossed with theological, scientific and political questions, and have no real taste for the song, which they consider to be better adapted for the amusement of women than for that of men. The change in the habits and manners of the upper and more educated classes of society which has been in gradual operation for the last fifty or sixty years has been unfavourable to the appreciation of the song in the private circles where it flourished in the days of our great-grandfathers. Among these classes, conviviality, as our ancestors understood it, is a thing of the past; and such bacchanalian orgies as they indulged in are now unknown in decent society, and would be held disgraceful if they were attempted. Songs are no longer sung at the dinner-table after the ladies have retired to the drawing room, and to sit long at the wine is forbidden by the inexorable and unwritten law of society; and when conviviality went out of fashion enthusiasm went also—though not perhaps as a necessary consequence.

The struggle for life and worldly position is so hard among all classes, and the disappointments that attend the struggle are so grievous and so many, as to produce a feeling that hope is a deluder, and that enthusiastic belief in or love for anything is a foolish feeling and a mistake in which the wise will not indulge. And with enthusiasm, reverence for everything except money and the things that money will buy has become pretty