

COLLEGE SONGS.

What is a College song? Of this we may be certain at the outset, that a college song is a species by itself. Popular songs never penetrate to the recesses of the class-room; college songs are *rara aves*, solicited as a favor at parties for students. This distinction has been recognized, and there are a number of excellent selections published. But so far the work has been exclusively collective, and the compiler seems to think he has done his duty by his songs when he has launched them into the wide, wide world of print. No one seems to think them worthy of notice. We exhaust our critical acumen on elaborate essays on Tennyson and The Novel, and neglect our own peculiar literature that is lying at our door. Our songs are things to sing, well, if by the Glee Club, tolerably, if by the class-room; we never dream of examining them, of expressing an opinion upon them, of rescuing neglected merit, or of exploding a temporary but worthless favorite. An excursion into this neglected realm may prove not uninteresting.

We may distinguish broadly two kinds of college songs,—what we may call the academic or patriotic, and the nonsense song; the latter may be sub-divided into the nonsense song, pure and simple, and the parody. Academic songs are those which can exist only in a University—which are Greek to outsiders, and which are often fervently patriotic. Instances of these are that fine old glee, alas, so neglected here, "Gaudemus igitur," and the patriotic strains of "On the Old Ontario Strand." A student is an intellectual being, but he has one emotional side—his college patriotism—and the man who would write a serious song for him would do well to bear this in mind. The glow of local patriotism, or the wider academic feeling which makes students brothers the whole world over, renders sacred many a song that would otherwise long ago have perished.

The nonsense song is another characteristic feature of University life. Men, whose minds are constantly on the stretch, do not always fly for relaxation to sociological debates and intellectual lyrics; they are more likely to play foot-ball, and to sing "Litoria" and "Bingo." The contrast between lectures on Philology and the unknown tongue of "Kemo Kimo" is delicious to the wearied seeker after truth. Of course the nonsense must be clever—indeed, it takes a very clever man to write nonsense.

Much of what has been already said may be applied to parodies. A parody may be a special one, in which the line of thought, and even the words of some poem are closely followed—as in the numerous versions of "Upidee"—or it may be general, i. e., a *reductio ad absurdum* of a whole class of writings, ideas or sentiments, and of this latter class "Clementine" is a good example. A student enjoys a parody, not because he lacks in respect for the poet parodied, but because of the need for relaxation already spoken of, and because the spirit of fun will bubble out and play upon all the subjects seriously read in lecture room and study. When he talks shop it is to get some fun out of it. He will enjoy a good parody far more than the best serious "original" poem—echoing of

Longfellow, Tennyson, *et al*—that appears in an American College Magazine. Again, the college man, almost exclusively occupied with matters intellectual, and usually unbiassed in his opinions, generally has a sharp eye for incongruities, for tawdry sentimentality and for affectation, and this renders the *reductio ad absurdum* parody especially delicious to him. We may illustrate this last form of parody by the examination of a concrete example, for instance of that well-known and we fear underrated song entitled "Clementine."

"Clementine" is a mock tragedy expressed in verse and has considerable merit

"In a cabin—in a canyon,

"Excavated for a mine,

"Dwelt a miner—forty-niner,

"And his daughter, Clementine."

There is a conciseness and abruptness here that almost reminds us of an old Border ballad. The scenery—the setting of the poem—is outlined in a few vigorous strokes, and the fourth line, introducing the unfortunate heroine, has a mournful cadence that is excellent in its way. The chorus follows:—

"O my darling! O my darling!

"O my darling Clementine!

"You are lost and gone forever—

"Dreadful sorry, Clementine!"

This is a burst of sensuous emotion, thoroughly sentimental, but expressed in a rhythm that admirably fits the thought, and ending with a splendid piece of bathos, that turns the whole into a burlesque. There is some literary merit in it, however, burlesque as it is. The emotional character of the chorus is strictly maintained, and the reiteration of the one idea is in thorough keeping. But the poem goes on with remarkable directness, brevity and force.

"She drove her ducklings to the water

"Every morning just at nine,

"Stubbed her toe against a sliver,

"Fell into the foaming brine."

This is pure burlesque; and it is very clever burlesque. As already noticed, there is great economy of words, and rapidity of action. There is a certain burlesque realism in the details of frontier domestic life, in the naive precision as to the time of day, and in the amusingly prosaic nature of the poor young lady's fall. There is even a sly suggestion as to the size of the feet that stumble over so small an obstacle.

In the last stanza, the metre which in the second is quick, in harmony with the happy succession of events, is slower as the despairing lover looks his last look at his mistress.

"Ruby lips above the water,

"Blowing bubbles soft and fine,

"Alas for me I was no swimmer,

"So I lost my Clementine!"

The rhythm here is slow and melancholy, especially the last line, which in rhythm and feeling alike melts admirably into the chorus. Just at the climax the burlesque element is introduced again most amusingly in the lover's helpless and unheroic attitude. The poem bids