

had schools in the first place solely for the training of public orators. Action and intonation were each made a science. The patience with which Demosthenes himself laboured to cure his natural defects—the pebbles he placed in his mouth while he addressed the waves in the Ægean Gulf, and the sword hung above his shoulders are recorded as proofs of his zeal to improve and his determination to excel. Isocrates, Iseus, and Demosthenes himself taught their art to those who wished to cultivate forensic talent.

In the preparation of their orations they expended a degree of labour, not equalled by the public speakers of modern times. To improve his style, Demosthenes, it is said, copied with his own hand the history of Thucydides no less than eight times. Cicero transcribed with equal care the best authors who had preceded him. Independent of the training to which he had subjected himself while a young man, he went, at an advanced age to the School of Molo, a Greek orator who had visited Rome;—he visited Greece itself expressly to study its divine masters; and “while in full practice at the bar, he continued the habit of declaiming upon supposed questions, and it is known he studied delivery under Roscius and Æsopus—two actors, the former in comedy, the latter in tragedy.”

Again, nothing can surpass the exquisite polish of the style of these orations. “The structure of the sentences, the balanced period, the apt and perfect antithesis, the neat and epigrammatic turn, the finished collocation, all indicate,” says a modern author, “an extreme elaboration, which could hardly have been the suggestion of the moment.” Some of these orations are known to have cost months of previous preparation. Passages have been re-written, so as to reconstruct, polish, and improve. Their metaphors, style, and even single expressions were reformed; and speeches, both of the Grecian and Roman Orators, have come down to us ready to be delivered, but which were never spoken, with allusions to the scene and the audience, proving beyond all doubt that they were in the habit of arranging their thoughts, and even clothing them in language, before they subjected them to that critical audience by whom their merits were to be scanned and decided upon.

If we add to this diligence of preparation their loftiness of motive—the state of Greece when Demosthenes occupied the rostrum, Philip threatening to destroy the liberties of these ancient Republics,—and the events which agitated the Roman Empire when Cicero spoke to the Senate and to the people—Catalina's conspiracy, Cesar and Pompey struggling for power;—the grandeur of subject which inspired them, and the rich prizes which followed success—a reputation and influence founded upon national esteem, and won by the triumphs of the intellect—it is less subject of wonder that Oratory should then have reached her loftiest flights, and conferred upon two of her disciples an eloquence, which is said to have equalled that of the gods—for these causes were well fitted to produce magnificent effects.

The liberty of Greece passed away, and Rome lost her virtue—her arts and her greatness. These fine and intellectual regions of the south were invaded by the northern hordes who trampled down and desecrated all the temples and structures, which a refined and exquisite taste in literature and the arts had erected. Then followed the sleep of letters for some centuries, and with the desolation of the ancient world, the human mind itself seemed to have lost for a season the mighty powers which it before had displayed. In this period there were no professors and no style of eloquence which are known.

But this eclipse gradually wore away. Literature and the arts and sciences first returned to Europe in the young Republics of Italy, where the spirit of Commerce, with the generous protection she ever extends to human improvement, had founded and fostered the institutions of social liberty. The fine arts found again under their sanctions a kindred home and vineyard. They produced painters and poets—Titian and Angelo—Dante and Tasso, and their history bears record of the lives of many distinguished men, gifted with transcendent powers of eloquence; but still they found no school, and have left no examples by which we can now judge of their skill.

In the dark ages we should look in vain for any orations which would be precious in our times, or which could stand comparison with the efforts of those great masters who have lived in former and latter ages. Learning then was not scattered abroad among the mass. It was cultivated by the few, in order to hold the many in abject and ignoble thralldom. It consisted in compilation more than in invention; and although in these times there unquestionably existed men, who, like Peter the Hermit, Wickliffe, Luther, Calvin, Erasmus, Knox, had from nature all those elements of mind—quickness of perception, brilliancy of fancy, force and clearness of judgment and deep and impassioned feeling, fitted for the highest efforts, we cannot say they produced them. They, no doubt, exercised their own rough and effective eloquence, fitted to persuade and actuate. Men who were fitted to lead the Crusaders could not but be gifted—Christians who could raise these Gothic temples which adorn the fairest plains of the old world, could not be cold and lifeless at the splendid altars where they worshipped—the Knights at Runnymede, who framed our Magna Charta, did not lay the corner stone of our Constitution in silence,—the adherents of the House of York and Lancaster,

who fought under their banners of the white and red rose, could not conduct their strifes without impassioned appeals to their bands. There must, then, have been eloquent leaders, and fathers, and patriots, who, in happier times, would have left to posterity records of their oratory, which would have placed them among the “illustrious dead.” They have, however, left their works and their fields, not their words—and we can now only judge of their eloquence by the mighty effects it achieved.

(To be continued.)

\* Hallam's State of Europe in the Middle Ages, 2 vols. chapter 9.

### FELICITOUS RAINS.

TRANSLATED FROM THE CHINESE.

The last month of winter was for the most clear and mild,  
And now at length approach the well-timed showers:  
The wide-spread mist has involved yon mountain dwelling,  
Its dews are slowly filling each rocky hollow;  
The vernal winds obscure the clouded sun.  
It is the season for all things to germinate;  
Let us convey an exhortation to the husbandman,  
That he delay not the business of his western fields.

The green foliage of the willows has not yet shaded the path,  
But the peach blossom already covers the grove;  
Every inanimate thing seems to feel the influence of the season,  
Shall I, then, be unmindful of the purposes of Heaven?  
Like some who lean on their tables and grow unprofitably old,  
Who exert not their strength in the proper time:  
—The rain falls in drops before my rude door-way,  
As I stroll about, or sit immersed in such meditations.

From the London Morning Herald.

### A CANADIAN WINTER SKETCH.

Strange, most strange to English eyes is the scene presented to the view by the Canadian winter—every thing seems to assume a foreign aspect; the face of the earth has totally disappeared, and will not look smilingly at us for perhaps three months—the merry dancing of the blue waves of old Ontario, as far almost as eye can reach, is changed to the calm and unbroken expanse of the ice-field, spread like a pall over the late playful waters; the naked branches of the forest trees like shivering phantoms of the summer woods, waving in the cold air—the ceaseless “melody ride of the merry sleigh bells,” as the grotesque vehicles that bear them skim rapidly and smoothly by, and the uncouth appearance of the bipeds themselves, masked and muffled in endless rolls and wrappers of fur, all tend to convince the new comer that he is, indeed, in a strange land, where nature and her productions alike assume a form unrecognised by his native impressions.

But the wintry sun is climbing higher and higher in the unclouded heaven; the mercury is starting from its lethargy, and is ascending its tube with speedy promise of reaching, if not passing, 34; drops of water, actual water, are positively glistening at the end of those huge icicles pendent from the roof, as the sunshine of the advancing morning gradually pervades the clear atmosphere. Let us venture out in the open air, and well fenced with protecting coverings, take a speculative ramble over the frozen ground with the exhilarating clearness and freshness of the bracing wind to stimulate us to healthful exertion, and shake off the drowsy vapours of the long, long wintry night.

Look up to the sun, it is pouring down a flood of light, more dazzlingly, wondrously brilliant than his fairest July splendour, from the refraction of his rays on the snowy mantle of the frost-bound world—not a cloud, not the phantom of a fleecy vapour is to be seen in the bright expanse of heaven, floating over its intense blue. There is little or no breeze to break the calm of the sunlit air. No bird is winging its way through the ungenial atmosphere. And the floods of glorious light seem to fall unheeded on the silent earth, spell-bound and voiceless in her yearly trance.

We may, now that our eyes have recovered from the first dazzle of the light of morning, glance at the scene around, and, to obtain the best prospect, will advance a short distance on the vast field of ice spread before us. We are now on the frozen bosom of the Bay of Toronto. A few weeks, nay days since, the waves were curling playfully beneath our feet—a firm, compact mass of ten or twelve square miles in extent now usurps the place of the glad waters; and horses, sleighs, iceboats, and pedestrians are now travelling cheerily over the congealed surface. Landward lies the metropolis of Upper Canada, presenting the ordinary features of an American town of 12 or 13,000 inhabitants. There is but little architectural display to greet the eye, and hardly an object to rise above the level of the roofs, or break the monotony of the whole, save the lofty steeple of the cathedral of St. James, with its tin spire literally blazing in the sunlight, and the golden cross overall in strong relief against the deep blue heaven. The gray smoke is curling from the numerous hearths, and losing itself gradually in the clear cold air. The constant ringing of a thousand sleigh-bells comes soft and pleasant on the ear, and the hum of busy life sounds cheerful from the distant streets. Beyond the town, and as far as the eye can reach, the pine forest spreads its long array of dark evergreen foliage, and closes in the landscape in its gloomy circle.

Southward, beyond the frozen bay, and the trees of the long narrow strip of land that forms the harbour, we see the vast expanse of Ontario, and his blue waves sparkling in the sunshine in utter contempt of winter and his ice-chains; and further on still, a long white outline on the verge of the horizon—that is the Niagara coast, some forty miles from our present position, and only visible in very clear weather. Do you catch far away, due south, a thin gray vapour curled upward to the sky, half cloud, half imagination? Well, that is the spray column hanging over the thunders of the great cataract, the “everlasting incense of the waters.” The varied glories of the iris-arch are glittering through its misty folds—but to us, worshipping at a distance, there is nought, save that lonely wreath of vapour to tell that Niagara is beneath.

Beautiful, most beautiful certainly is the genuine Canadian winter day. Bright sun, blue heaven, dry bracing air, and hard frozen ground are all required as necessary ingredients of this most pleasant specimen of transatlantic “winter and rough weather.”

The natives complain that of late years their much-prized climate has assimilated to that of England—that there is less snow and more rain in winter, and the continued hot weather of summer has been partly superseded by the variable and humid changes of our island skies.

They are passionately fond of sleighing, which is certainly the only smooth method of land travelling here, and persons, in the interior especially, look forward to a good fall of snow to enable them to come down to the front, as they term the towns and settlements on the great lakes and main roads. Any thing approaching the mud and moisture of an English winter is, consequently, equally inconvenient and unpopular.

The temperature is generally quite high enough to admit of healthful and pleasant exercise, well protected of course from the rough chances of the atmosphere. Frost generally rules at night with more or less severity, but slight thawing commences when the sun is high in the heavens. Occasionally will come one or two days and nights of unimaginable cold, bursting every thing, freezing every thing—toes, nose, ears, finger-tips—every thing, in short, exposed for a few minutes to its operations—10, 15, 20 degrees below zero, and in short, no knowing how cold it might be, as the Yankee remarked, *were the thermometers long enough.* These remorseless visitants, however, are fortunately of rare and uncertain occurrence; and this winter, with snow enough to satisfy the veriest Canadian grumbler, has presented but few instances of such severe frost.

No mere English tourist can form any idea of the appearance of our forests in the deep winter—animal and vegetable life alike seem to have vanished in those wild recesses. The birds have all winged their way southward to a more genial home. The squirrels have laid up their winter store, and are quietly reposing in their comfortable quarters. Bruin is sucking his paws in his fortress, in the hollow of some ancestral oak; the wolf is lurking in the damp retreats of the inaccessible cedar swamp; and those harmless reptiles, “the spotted snakes, of varied hue,” are curled up like twisted icicles in some chosen hiding-place. There is silence, deep silence in the heart of the old forest. If the frost be intense, at intervals you have a report like a pistol-shot, as the branches of the trees split and shiver like living things. Sometimes a lonely deer will flit past, roused from his lair by the intrusion of the hunter. If the day happen to be unusually mild, you may see the black squirrel cautiously descending his tree to take a survey of the world, and look inquiring round to see what symptoms are visible of approaching spring. Perhaps, the worthy gentleman's stock of Indian corn, plundered from the field of the neighbouring farmer last summer, is waxing low, and the wants of a young family have driven him forth to seek some fresh supply.

The pine, hemlock, and cedar, those sturdy despisers of the frost, alone greet the eye with any thing resembling a green leaf, but gloomy and funereal is the faded hue of their dull verdure—save when the morning or evening sun is gilding their huge crests, and wrapping them in a splendour equally beautiful and evanescent.

You descend the pine ridge, over the snowy ground, to the glen where you watched the bubbling of the forest rivulet a few weeks since. What has become of that playful wanderer? Has it shrunk into the earth in terror at the advance of the frost king and his manacles? No. See you not a narrow surface of smooth ice meandering like a frozen serpent through the recesses of the valley? There is the tiny river that lately danced and flashed in the chequered sunlight, that struggled through the wilderness of foliage to sparkle on the happy breast of the merry waters. Listen!—it is not all silent—there is a faint murmur of waves, far down under the frozen surface—a half-heard sound of life, like the complaining dirge of an imprisoned minstrel, singing mournfully of hope and freedom in the dark shadow of his dungeon. The wild vine is drooping lifeless over the frost-bound stream. The wandering stag comes to its margin for the accustomed draught, and away bounds in disappointment to seek for some unfrozen salt spring or “lick” to quench his thirst.

Out on the icy surface of our numberless lakes and rivers the scene presented to our view, in the early part of winter especially, is frequently of no easily imagined beauty. Generally a fall of snow will cover the ground before the waters are frozen, and the ice will remain sometimes for weeks perfectly pure and glassy as

\* See Blair's Lectures, 1 vol. 452.

† Some of these men lived in the dawn which separated the dark ages from the brighter days which succeeded them.