

NEW POETRY.

THE tendencies of the times are so democratical, that we shall soon have not so much as a pulpit or raised platform in any church or townhouse, but each person, who is moved to address any public assembly, will speak from the floor. The like revolution in literature is now giving importance to the portfolio over the book. Only one man in the thousand may print a book, but one in ten or one in five may inscribe his thoughts, or at least with short commentary his favorite readings in a private journal. The philosophy of the day has long since broached a more liberal doctrine of the poetic faculty than our fathers held, and reckons poetry the right and power of every man to whose culture justice is done. We own that, though we were trained in a stricter school of literary faith, and were in all our youth inclined to the enforcement of the strictest restrictions on the admission of candidates to the Parnassian fraternity, and denied the name of poetry to every composition in which the workmanship and the material were not equally excellent, in our middle age we have grown lax, and have learned to find pleasure in verses of a ruder strain,—to enjoy *verses of society*, or those effusions which in persons of a happy nature are the easy and unpremeditated translation of their thoughts and feelings into rhyme. This new taste for a certain private and household poetry for somewhat less pretending than the festal and solemn verses which are written for the nations really indicates, we suppose, that a new style of poetry exists. The number of writers has increased. Every child has been taught the tongues. The universal communication of the arts of reading and writing has brought the works of the great poets into every house, and made all ears familiar with the poetic forms. The progress of popular institutions has favored self-respect, and broken down that terror of the great, which once imposed awe and hesitation on the talent of the masses of society. A wider epistolary intercourse ministers to the ends of sentiment and reflection than ever existed before; the practice of writing diaries is becoming almost general; and every day witnesses new attempts to throw into verse the experiences of private life.

What better omen of true progress can we ask than an increasing intellectual and moral interest of men in each other? What can be better for the republic than that the Capitol, the White House, and the Court House are becoming of less importance than the farm-house and the book-closet? If we are losing our interest in public men, and finding that their spell lay in number and size only, and acquiring instead a taste for the depths of thought and emotion as they may be sounded in the soul of the citizen or the countryman, does it not replace man for the state, and character for official power? Men should be treated with solemnity; and when they come to chant their private griefs and doubts and joys, they have a new scale by which to compute magnitude and relation. Art is the noblest consolation of calamity. The poet is compensated for his defects in the street and in society, if in his chamber he has turned his mischance into noble numbers.

Is there not room then for a new department in poetry, namely, *Verses of the Portfolio*? We have fancied that we drew greater pleasure from some manuscript verses than from printed ones of equal talent. For there was herein the charm of character; they were confessions; and the faults, the imperfect parts, the fragmentary verses, the halting rhymes, had a worth beyond that of a high finish; for they testified that the writer was more man than artist, more earnest than vain; that the thought was too sweet and sacred to him, than that he should suffer his ears to hear or his eyes to see a superficial defect in the expression.

The characteristic of such verses is, that being not written for publication, they lack that finish which the conventions of literature require of authors. But if poetry of this kind has merit, we conceive that the prescription which demands a rhythmical polish may be easily set aside; and when a writer has outgrown the state of thought which produced the poem, the interest of letters is served by publishing it imperfect, as we preserve studies, torsos, and blocked statues of the great masters. For though we should be loath to see the wholesome conventions, to which we have alluded, broken down by a general incontinence of publication, and every man's and woman's diary flying into the bookstores, yet it is to be considered, on the other

hand, that men of genius are often more incapable than others of that elaborate execution which criticism exacts. Men of genius in general are, more than others, incapable of any perfect exhibition, because however agreeable it may be to them to act on the public, it is always a secondary aim. They are humble, self-accusing, moody men, whose worship is toward the Ideal Beauty, which chooses to be courted not so often in perfect hymns, as in wild ear-piercing ejaculations, or in silent musings. Their face is forward, and their heart is in this heaven. By so much are they disqualified for a perfect success in any particular performance to which they can give only a divided affection. But the man of talents has every advantage in the competition. He can give that cool and commanding attention to the thing to be done, that shall secure its just performance. Yet are the failures of genius better than the victories of talent; and we are sure that some crude manuscript poems have yielded us a more sustaining and a more stimulating diet, than many elaborated and classic productions.

We have been led to these thoughts by reading some verses, which were lately put into our hands by a friend with the remark, that they were the production of a youth, who had long passed out of the mood in which he wrote them, so that they had become quite dead to him. Our first feeling on reading them was a lively joy. So then the Muse is neither dead nor dumb, but has found a voice in these cold Cisatlantic States. Here is poetry which asks no aid of magnitude or number, of blood or crime, but finds theatre enough in the first field or brookside, breadth and depth enough in the flow of its own thought. Here is self-repose, which to our mind is stabler than the Pyramids; here is self-respect which leads a man to date from his heart more proudly than from Rome. Here is love which sees through surface, and adores the gentle nature and not the costume. Here is religion, which is not of the Church of England, nor of the Church of Boston. Here is the good wise heart, which sees that the end of culture is strength and cheerfulness. In an age too which tends with so strong an inclination to the philosophical muse, here is poetry more purely intellectual than any American verses we have yet seen, distinguished from all competi-

tion by two merits; the fineness of perception; and the poet's trust in his own genius to that degree, that there is an absence of all conventional imagery, and a bold use of that which the moment's mood had made sacred to him, quite careless that it might be sacred to no other, and might even be slightly ludicrous to the first reader.

We proceed to give our readers some selections, taken without much order from this rich pile of manuscript. We first find the poet in his boat.

BOAT SONG.

THE RIVER calmly flows,
Through shining banks, through lonely glen,
Where the owl shrieks, though ne'er the cheer of men
Has stirred its mute repose,
Still if you should walk there, you would go there again.

The stream is well alive;
Another passive world you see,
Where downward grows the form of every tree;
Like soft light clouds they thrive:
Like them let us in our pure loves reflected be.

A yellow gleam is thrown
Into the secrets of that maze
Of tangled trees, which late shut out our gaze,
Refusing to be known;
It must its privacy unclose,— its glories blaze.

Sweet falls the summer air
Over her frame who sails with me:
Her way like that is beautifully free,
Her nature far more rare,
And is her constant heart of virgin purity.

A quivering star is seen
Keeping his watch above the hill,
Though from the sun's retreat small light is still
Poured on earth's saddening mien:—
We all are tranquilly obeying Evening's will.

Thus ever love the POWER;
To simplest thoughts dispose the mind;
In each obscure event a worship find
Like that of this dim hour,—
In lights, and airs, and trees, and in all human kind.

We smoothly glide below
The faintly glimmering worlds of light:
Day has a charm, and this deceptive night
Brings a mysterious show;—
He shadows our dear earth,— but his cool stars are white.

Is there any boat-song like this? any in which the harmony proceeds so manifestly from the poet's mind, giving to nature more than it receives? In the following stanzas the writer betrays a certain habitual worship of genius, which characterizes many pieces in the collection, breaking out sometimes into very abrupt expression.

O C T O B E R .

DRY leaves with yellow ferns,—they are
Fit wreath of Autumn, while a star
Still, bright, and pure, our frosty air
Shivers in twinkling points
Of thin celestial hair,
And thus one side of heaven anoints.

I am beneath the moon's calm look
Most quiet in this sheltered nook
From trouble of the frosty wind
Which curls the yellow blade;
Though in my covered mind
A grateful sense of change is made.

To wandering men how dear this sight
Of a cold tranquil autumn night,
In its majestic deep repose;
Thus will their genius be
Not buried in high snows,
Though of as mute tranquility.

An anxious life they will not pass,,
Nor, as the shadow on the grass,
Leave no impression there to stay;
To them all things are thought;
The blushing morn's decay,—
Our death, our life, by this is taught.

O find in every haze that shines,
A brief appearance without lines,
A single word,—no finite joy;
For present is a Power
Which we may not annoy,
Yet love him stronger every hour.

I would not put this sense from me,
If I could some great sovereign be;
Yet will not task a fellow man
To feel the same glad sense.
For no one living can
Feel — save his given influence.

W I L L I N G N E S S .

An unendeavoring flower,—how still
Its growth from morn to eventime;
Nor signs of hasty anger fill
Its tender form from birth to prime
Of happy will.

And some, who think these simple things
Can bear no goodness to their minds,
May learn to feel how nature brings,
Around a quiet being winds,
And through us sings.

A stream to some is no delight,
Its element diffused around;
Yet in its unobtrusive flight
There trembles from its heart a sound
Like that of night.

So give thy true allotment,—fair;
To children turn a social heart;
And if thy days pass clear as air,
Or friends from thy beseeching part,
O humbly bear.

S O N N E T S .

I.

The brook is eddying in the forest dell,
All full of untaught merriment,—the joy
Of breathing life is this green wood's employ.
The wind is feeling through his gentle bell;—
I and my flowers receive this music well.
Why will not man his natural life enjoy?
Can he then with his ample spirit toy?
Are human thoughts as wares now baked to sell?
All up, all round, all down, a thrilling deep,
A holy infinite salutes the sense,
And incomunicable praises leap,
Shooting the entire soul with love intense,
Throughout the All,—and can a man live on to weep?

II.

There never lived a man who with a heart
Resolved, bound up, concentrated in the good,
However low or high in rank he stood,
But when from him yourself had chanced to start,
You felt how goodness alway maketh art;
And that an ever venerable mood

Of sanctity, like the deep worship of a wood,
Of its unconsciousness turns you a part.
Let us live amply in the joyous All ;
We surely were not meant to ride the sea,
Skimming the wave in that so prisoned Small,
Reposing our infinite faculties utterly.
Boom like a roaring sunlit waterfall,
Humming to infinite abysses ; — speak loud, speak free.

III.

Hearts of eternity, — hearts of the deep !
Proclaim from land to sky your mighty fate ;
How that for you no living comes too late ;
How ye cannot in Theban labyrinth creep ;
How ye great harvests from small surface reap ;
Shout, excellent band, in grand primeval strain,
Like midnight winds that foam along the main,
And do all things rather than pause to weep.
A human heart knows naught of littleness,
Suspects no man, compares with no man's ways,
Hath in one hour most glorious length of days,
A recompense, a joy, a loveliness,
Like eaglet keen, shoots into azure far,
And always dwelling nigh is the remotest star.

LINES

WRITTEN IN THE EVENING OF A NOVEMBER DAY.

THEE, mild autumnal day,
I felt not for myself; the winds may steal
From any point, and seem to me alike
Reviving, soothing powers.

Like thee the contrast is
Of a new mood in a decaying man,
Whose idle mind is suddenly revived
With many pleasant thoughts.

Our earth was gratified ;
Fresh grass, a stranger in this frosty time,
Peeped from the crumbling mould as welcome as
An unexpected friend.

How glowed the evening star,
As it delights to glow in summer's midst,
When out of ruddy boughs the twilight birds
Sing flowing harmony.

Peace was the will to-day,
Love in bewildering growth our joyous minds
Swelled to their widest bounds ; the worldly left
All hearts to sympathize.

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I felt for thee,— for thee,
Whose inward, outward life completely moves,
Surrendered to the beauty of the soul
Of this creative day.

OUR BIRTH DAYS.

I.

THESE are the solemnest days of our bright lives,
When memory and hope within exert
Delightful reign ; when sympathy revives,
And that, which late was in the soul inert,
Grows warm and living, and to us alone
Are these a knowledge ; nowise may they hurt,
Or cry aloud, or frighten out the tone,
Which we will strive to wear and as calm nature own.

II.

Whatever scenes our eyes once gratified,—
Those landscapes couched around our early homes,
To which our tender, peaceful hearts replied,
To those our present happy feeling roams,
And takes a mightier joy than from the tomes
Of the pure scholar ; those ten thousand sights
Of constant nature flow in us, as foams
The bubbling spring ; these are the true delights
Wherewith this solemn world the sorrowful requites.

These are proper Manuscript inspirations, honest, great, but crude. They have never been filed or decorated for the eye that studies surface. The writer was not afraid to write ill ; he had a great meaning too much at heart to stand for trifles, and wrote lordly for his peers alone. This is the poetry of hope. Here is no French correctness, but Hans Sachs and Chaucer rather. But the minstrel can be sweet and tender also. We select from the sheaf one leaf, for which we predict a more general popularity.

A POET'S LOVE.

I CAN remember well
My very early youth,
My sumptuous Isabel,
Who was a girl of truth,
Of golden truth ; — we do not often see
Those whose whole lives have only known to be.

So sunlight, very warm,
On harvest fields and trees,
Could not more sweetly form
Rejoicing melodies
For these deep things, than Isabel for me;
I lay beneath her soul as a lit tree.

That cottage where she dwelt
Was all o'er mosses green;
I still forever felt
How nothing stands between
The soul and truth; why, starving poverty
Was nothing — nothing, Isabel, to thee.

Grass beneath her faint tread
Bent pleasantly away;
From her ne'er small birds fled,
But kept at their bright play,
Not fearing her; it was her endless motion,
Just a true swell upon a summer ocean.

Those who conveyed her home,—
I mean who led her where
The spirit does not roam,—
Had such small weight to bear,
They scarcely felt; how softly was thy knell
Rung for thee that soft day, girl Isabel.

I am no more below,
My life is raised on high;
My phantasy was slow
Ere Isabel could die;
It pressed me down; but now I sail away
Into the regions of exceeding day.

And Isabel and I
Float on the red brown clouds, .
That amply multiply
The very constant crowds
Of serene shapes. Play on Mortality!
Thy happiest hour is that when thou may'st die.

The second of the two following verses is of such extreme beauty, that we do not remember anything more perfect in its kind. Had the poet been looking over a book of Raffaelle's drawings, or perchance the villas and temples of Palladio, with the maiden to whom it was addressed?

TO ****.

My mind obeys the power
That through all persons breathes;
And woods are murmuring,
And fields begin to sing,
And in me nature wreathes.

Thou too art with me here,—
The best of all design;—
Of that strong purity,
Which makes it joy to be
A distant thought of thine.

But here are verses in another vein — plain, ethical, human, such as in ancient lands legislators carved on stone tablets and monuments at the roadside, or in the precincts of temples. They remind us of the austere strain in which Milton celebrates the Hebrew prophets.

"In them is plainest taught and easiest learned
What makes a nation happy and keeps so."

I.

THE Bible is a book worthy to read;
The life of those great Prophets was the life we need,
From all delusive seeming ever freed.

Be not afraid to utter what thou art;
'T is no disgrace to keep an open heart;
A soul free, frank, and loving friends to aid,
Not even does this harm a gentle maid.

Strive as thou canst, thou wilt not value o'er
Thy life. Thou standest on a lighted shore,
And from the waves of an unfathomed sea,
The noblest impulses flow tenderly to thee;
Feel them as they arise, and take them free.

Better live unknown,
No heart but thy own
Beating ever near,
To no mortal dear
In thy hemisphere,

Poor and wanting bread,
Steeped in poverty,
Than to be a dread,
Than to be afraid,
From thyself to flee ;
For it is not living
To a soul believing,
To change each noble joy
Which our strength employs,
For a state half rotten
And a life of toys.
Better be forgotten
Than lose equipoise.

How shall I live ? In earnestness.
What shall I do ? Work earnestly.
What shall I give ? A willingness.
What shall I gain ? Tranquillity.
But do you mean a quietness
In which I act and no man bless ?
Flash out in action infinite and free,
Action conjoined with deep tranquillity,
Resting upon the soul's true utterance,
And life shall flow as merry as a dance.

II.

Life is too good to waste, enough to prize;
Keep looking round with clear unhooded eyes ;
Love all thy brothers, and for them endure
Many privations; the reward is sure.

A little thing ! There is no little thing;
Through all a joyful song is murmuring;
Each leaf, each stem, each sound in winter drear
Has deepest meanings for an anxious ear.

Thou seest life is sad; the father mourns his wife and child;
Keep in the midst of heavy sorrows a fair aspect mild.

A howling fox, a shrieking owl,
A violent distracting Ghoul,
Forms of the most infuriate madness,—
These may not move thy heart to gladness,
But look within the dark outside,
Nought shalt thou hate and nought deride.

Thou meet'st a common man
With a delusive show of *can*.
His acts are petty forgeries of natural greatness,
That show a dreadful lateness
Of this life's mighty impulses; a want of truthful earnestness;

He seems, not does, and in that shows
No true nobility,—
A poor ductility,
That no proper office knows,
Not even estimation small of human woes.

Be not afraid,
His understanding aid
With thy own pure content,
On highest purpose bent.

Leave him not lonely,
For that his admiration
Fastens on self and seeming only ;
Make a right dedication
Of all thy strength to keep
From swelling that so ample heap
Of lives abused, of virtue given for nought,
And thus it shall appear for all in nature hast thou wrought.
If thou unconsciously perform what's good,
Like nature's self thy proper mood.

A life well spent is like a flower,
That had bright sunshine its brief hour;
It flourished in pure willingness;
Discovered strongest earnestness :
Was fragrant for each lightest wind;
Was of its own particular kind ;—
Nor knew a tone of discord sharp;
Breathed alway like a silver harp;
And went to immortality
A very proper thing to die.

We will close our extracts from this rare file of blotted paper with a lighter strain, which, whilst it shows how gaily a poet can chide, gives us a new insight into his character and habits.

T O R M E N T S .

Yes! they torment me
Most exceedingly :—
I would I could flee.
A breeze on a river—
I listen forever;
The yellowish heather
Under cool weather,—
These are pleasures to me.

What do torment me?
 Those living vacantly,
 Who live but to see;
 Indefinite action,
 Nothing but motion,
 Round stones a rolling,
 No inward controlling;—
 Yes! they torment me.

Some cry all the time,
 Even in their prime
 Of youth's flushing clime.
 O! out on this sorrow!
 Fear'st thou to-morrow?
 Set thy legs going,
 Be stamping, be rowing,—
 This of life is the lime.

Hail, thou mother Earth!
 Who gave me thy worth
 For my portion at birth:
 I walk in thy azure,
 Unfond of erasure,
 But they who torment me
 So most exceedingly
 Sit with feet on the hearth.

We have more pages from the same hand lying before us, marked by the same purity and tenderness and early wisdom as these we have quoted, but we shall close our extracts here. May the right hand that has so written never lose its cunning! may this voice of love and harmony teach its songs to the too long silent echoes of the Western Forest.