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CERTATIO INDIGNORUM.

THOUGH, when the great man dies, his fame
Descends not to the greedy crew,
He leaves behind him all the same,
His shoe.

Soon as they learn 'tis his to die
They swarm around and eager sit
On couch or chair or stool to try
The fit.

And then in *Telegraph* or *Times*
The graceless diagram is printed
And each man's right in his own rimes
Is hinted.

So Cinderella's sister tried
The slipper dropt in midnight flight,
But nor left foot could make one bride
Nor right.

Oh Lewis, Edwin, Alfred, why
Here on his grave make such a pother?
The shoe is claim'd, bethink you, by
Another.

"NOCTE CALENTE."

(A Reminiscence.)

MY dreams that night were terrible! All the faces I had ever seen were gathered round my bed in the wildest confusion. The room was full of voices talking, laughing, and crying. Trampling of feet, clapping of hands, and cheering of crowds surged round me in a whirlwind of overwhelming sound, while the solemn music of an oratorio chanted by millions of voices rose and fell above the tumult. I seemed to have been lying for centuries helpless, voiceless, motionless. The noises grew louder and louder every moment;—louder and louder—till suddenly they culminated in one united scream, so shrill and tense and terrible that the spell was broken, and in my dream . . . I died.

* * * * *

Black night! I could hear the rain splashing against the glass, and the long sob of the breaking waves. The wind was blowing in short sharp gusts, and in the intervals I caught the sound of hoarse voices talking under my window.

Suddenly I became conscious that my eyes were still shut, but the impression left by my ghastly dream was so vivid that I shuddered and kept them closed. Next moment there came a rush of feet up the wooden stair and loud knocking at my door.

"Come out, sir! Quick! sir, quick!"

I sprang out of bed.

"Great heavens!" The air was thick with a dull red glow which throbbed in the polished oak on the walls and flickered into crimson sparks in the rain-drops on the panes. "What is it?" I shouted; but there was no answer. Only the voices below the window rose in louder and more agitated tones, and the light grew fiercer than before. I hurried on my clothes, dashed open the door, ran round to the back of the house which faced the sea and——stood spell-bound;

for, as I turned the corner, hell seemed to open at my feet.

Far out in the bay lay a burning ship. Earth and sky were alight with the splendour of her writhing fires, but to my excited imagination she seemed to quiver and shrink like a tortured soul. The jagged rocks on the shore stood out black against the glare—colossal coals to fall and feed the seas of flame.

Tiny demon-boats were lying still upon the water or darting with fiendish glee before the fast-rising wind. Every minute the gusts became fiercer and more frequent. Tufts of flame broke from the heaving mass and were whirled away into the night. The smoke rolled in dusky eddies, red-hot above the burning ship, but cooling into blackness as they swept before the gale. A glorious, fearful sight!

On the sands, three hundred feet below the place where I was standing, a crowd of dark figures were huddled together at the water's edge. A small knot of men stood near me, and as the wind lulled, I heard one of them say, "She can't hold much longer, . . . lucky . . . ." A fierce gust drowned the rest. Then again the same voice—"Thirty-five . . . ."

"All saved?" asked another.

The reply was half lost, but I caught the words, "One . . . . oouldn't . . . . left behind."

The sound of a distant cheer came up from the crowd below, as a small boat shot out from the shore. For a moment it seemed to stagger and disappear in the red breakers; then as it rose on the waves beyond, another faint cheer came up almost like a wail on the wind.

"She'll never do it," said a voice behind me, and as if in answer to his words, a still fiercer gust rushed past us with the howl of a living thing. The horror of an awful fascination made me turn again to look at the burning ship. . . .

A glare of blinding light! a mighty shaft of con-

quering flame! and with a long hissing, rending roar . . . . the Gates of Hell were shut.

* * * * *

Out of the night rises a wild cry, a shriek of unutterable despair.

"Dead! Dead! Dead!'

. . . . And the wind sank.

Z.

AN UNDERGRADUATE ON OXFORD DONS.

MANY people have at many times speculated about what is interesting, and all men take pleasure in what is interesting, either narrowly to themselves, or broadly to the world, or more broadly to themselves and the world. But few have cared to talk or think about the uninteresting, and yet the subject (though it sounds paradoxical to say it) teems with interest.

A person or a thing comes before our notice and fails to excite our interest. We put it away from us. We say, "I don't want to know anything about it; it doesn't interest me." *Then* the thing becomes intensely interesting. Then it becomes a pleasure to examine it, and to find why it is uninteresting. Take an example, say you are walking in the street, a voice behind you calls out, "hi!" you look round and see a dull, middle-aged man with whiskers; he is excited, he is calling to somebody; in another moment you observe that the person he is calling to is another middle-aged man, equally dull, but without whiskers; then you hear what he is saying, and you find he is telling the other man that he has left his goloshes in the hall. How uninteresting, you think, how tedious. You have been disappointed three times over: first, when you heard a voice behind you shouting in the street, and your heart leapt, and you looked round and found the shouter was dull; secondly, when you found that the man he was shouting at was not you but somebody else who was as dull as the shouter; thirdly, when the dull man said a dull thing to his dull friend.

So the whole episode is flat and uninteresting, and you think no more about it, after the vague feeling of resentment against the two men has worn out. But if you do think about it again you will find it has become interesting through its very dulness; it makes you think of what might have happened, how you might have heard a voice in the street behind you, and have looked round and seen a wonderful thing, a terrible tragedy, or

a beautiful face, and yet you only saw these two creatures talking about their goloshes; the most uninteresting thing that could have happened has happened; but even as you think that, you exalt it to the dignity of a superlative. De Quincey, in his *Murder considered as one of the fine arts*, while claiming for murder degrees of perfection or imperfection, quotes the instance of an eminent physician who spoke of an ulcer as a "beautiful ulcer"; meaning, of course, not that the ulcer was really a thing of beauty in itself, but that it was a perfect example of its kind, a perfection of corruption. In the same way, an uninteresting thing may become supremely interesting on account of its perfection of dullness.

Whether or not I have established a case or made my meaning clear, I have at least brought forward an excuse for my subject.

To begin a paper about Oxford Dons by saying that they were supremely uninteresting would be suicidal. But now that I have explained my views on the subject of uninteresting things, there can no longer be any reason for witholding the opinion that Oxford Dons as a class are utterly and perfectly uninteresting. It is hardly necessary to say that by Oxford Dons are meant Oxford Dons *quâ* Dons and considered only as Dons; to say that all Oxford Dons were uninteresting men would be as impertinent as it would be ridiculous. No, it is only as Dons that I am considering them, and I maintain that, considered as Dons, they are ridiculous, dull, uninteresting and unnecessary. Many of them know it and feel it very much, but there are some who don't realize it, who think they are important and striking, and some even think they are an essential part of the University; indeed at one time it was a common saying among Dons that Oxford would be a very nice place if it were not for the Undergraduates; whereas the true state of the case is this:—that Oxford is a very nice place if one ignores the Dons, and if one could only get oneself to believe that they don't exist at all one

would be perfectly happy. The truth is, that Dons occupy in the University the same position as moral laws occupy in the Universe; this is why they are so tedious. However, my main object is to show that Dons are uninteresting, and to do this properly I must show that they are dull. Now the first step must be to classify them; for anything that is classified has a tendency to become dull. Dons then may be roughly divided into Deans, Lecturers, Heads of Colleges and Proctors. The Deans represent discipline within the College gates. The Lecturers are self-evidently and by their very name confessed to be intolerable. The Heads of Colleges are merely exaggerated Deans, and the Proctors are a curious mixture of Deans, Duns, Duty and Detectives.

The Dean of course is not necessarily a clergyman or even a Christian; the name has absolutely no meaning; it is only one among many of the ridiculous pretensions of Oxford Dons. A Dean passes his life in saying things he doesn't mean, and which neither he nor anyone else believes. Men in his College look upon him much as people in the world look upon a rainy day or a dissenting minister; something which is always disagreeable and uninteresting, but which occasionally forces itself upon one's notice. It is a tragic thing in connexion with Deans to think that whatever they do, they are certain to be disliked and abused for it, and that whatever they want in the College, they fail to get. Under the head of Deans also come vice-presidents, who are, however, quite unimportant.

Lecturers are those who prevent men from getting good classes in the Schools; some of them take a a great amount of trouble in doing this.

Heads of Colleges do nothing if they can help it; many of them are gentlemen by birth.

Proctors are like Deans on a larger scale, only they are hardly ever to be met with; they have to go out in the streets on rainy nights, and their lives are generally very miserable.

Having now classified Dons, it is my duty to show that they are quite uninteresting. To do this, it is first necessary to arrive at some conclusion about what is interesting. I shall therefore give it as my opinion that an interesting person is one who interests people who have no direct reason for being interested in him. I mean, that because a man interests his parents who brought him into the world, or his washerwoman to whom he owes money, he is not on that account an interesting person; no, he must compel interest in those outside his own immediate circle. Now in Oxford, who is there outside the immediate circle of the Dons who might take an interest in them? obviously, no one, except the undergraduates and the visitors to the University. The undergraduates take no interest in them, because it is impossible for them to take interest in those who are perpetually in their way, whether they wish to cultivate their intellects by reading in their own way, or express their joy in life by making a noise or doing some other equally irrational and delightful thing.

Is it possible for a young man to be interested in an older man who insists that he must attend a lecture on Mill, when he wants to read Marlowe? Or is it possible for a boy to be interested in a man who says it is a scandalous thing that he should make a noise, or light a bonfire in the "quad.?" The undergraduates, then, take no interest in the Dons. There remain the visitors, who naturally, coming to a place full of beautiful things and charming young men, can take no interest in such a thing as a Don, who represents to them the gloomy and dull part of Oxford life. What do visitors look at when they come into a college? The beautiful buildings first, of course; the grass that has been mown and cut for four hundred years; the chapel tower with its fantastic gargoyles, its carved stones, and happy accident of a perfect background; they look inside the chapel at the window with its crimson, blue and purple, the eternal witnesses of a lost art, and they go out again

into the summer air and look—for what? not for an ugly bearded Don with a black gown and an important air, no, but for a merry boy with a fresh face under his straw hat and a flower in his coat.

Perhaps, after all, the real reason why Dons are so uninteresting, is that they stand out against a background of such intense interest and beauty that they appear darker and duller than they really are. However that may be, they remain the one dull thing in Oxford, the one commonplace in the romance of an exquisite life, the one harsh discord in the harmony of a perfect music. Let us forgive them, but forget that they exist.

ALFRED DOUGLAS.

TEA.

A POINTLESS DIALOGUE.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

LORD FALTER *(a silly person).*

Mr. BROWN *(a silly person).*

Mr. COLCERT *(a silly person).*

Scene—The rooms of an undergraduate, barbarically furnished.

FALTER. Sugar? Well, yes, sugar. Do you take sugar?

Brown. Yes; I take sugar.

Falter. Milk? Well, yes, milk. Do you take milk?

Brown. Yes; I take milk. *(A pause.)* Sometimes.

Enter Colcert.

Brown. 'Afternoon. . . . *(offering tea.)* Tea?

Colcert. No; no tea, thanks. Did you see *Maude*?

Brown. You don't mean to say the O.U.D.S. are doing something of Tennyson's?

Falter. Ha! ha!

Colcert. No. *La Millette.*

Brown. Oh! Unspeakable, overpowering!

Falter. *Surtout point de jupe.*

Brown. Ha! ha! *(Another pause. They drink tea.)*

Colcert. Are you speaking at the Union, Falter?

Falter. Yes; third.

Brown. I hope you'll have a good house.

Falter. Behind me?

Brown. Dear me, no! what I mean is, I hope you will be listened to.

FALTER. I know nothing about the subject — "The future of woman," but I have been reading back numbers of "*The Petticoat.*"

COLCERT. What's that?

FALTER. Oh! a new magazine, run by women chiefly. The first number hasn't come out yet.

BROWN. Then what do you mean by saying you have read back numbers?

FALTER. I don't know.

(A pause.)

BROWN. Well Falter I hope you'll be a success. Your paper on Wycherley the other day at the "*Simond*" was a treat.

COLCERT. A *great* treat.

BROWN. A Greats school-treat?

COLCERT. I couldn't agree with you, but it wasn't bad.

FALTER. Ah! I find it difficult to contradict *everybody*. Paradox is played out now, and the only really striking thing is to be a match-girl or a medium. But about cigarettes — are they really made of camels . . . . ?

BROWN. Oh no, Falter. They are made by *the million* in Birmingham, and there are no camels there.

COLCERT. What *do* you mean Brown? There's a needle manufactory there.

FALTER. *I* never heard of it.

BROWN. Ha! Ha! Haw! Haw! (Offers cake.)

FALTER. Cherry? Ah! I thought it would be cherry. (Sighs.) Cherry is as vulgar as champagne. I think you're a bit vulgar, Brown. What do you think, Colcert?

COLCERT (seriously). I . . . I'm afraid I'm no judge.

(Falter giggles consumedly; Brown tries to turn the conversation by dropping his cup.)

FALTER. You seem an awful jackass, Brown. Did you hear Gladstone?

BROWN. No I can't say I did.

FALTER. Nobody wants you to say what you didn't. I'm going to Moody's to-night.

BROWN. I'm not—I hate cant.

FALTER. How's that? I'm tired of people who only pretend to be sinners. I like saints. They make *Chartreuse.*

(Turns to Colcert.)

Colcert, old man, I'm going now. I want to be amused.

(Turns to Brown.)

Where do you get your tea, Brown? You might tell them to send me some. Good night.

BROWN. Good night! (*Exeunt* Falter and Colcert.)

COLCERT (going downstairs). What a bore the man is?

FALTER. You've no idea of economy, Colcert; what's the good of being rude when he can't hear you?

J. RICHARD STREATHAM.

THE SOUL'S YEARNING.

(From the Greek.)

THERE is a place where the love that was dead
Gets out of bed
And stands on its head;
Where no one is fed
Upon restaurant-bread;
Where the sea-breeze is blue and the Bible is read.
Only to find it! Only to change my socks!
Only to wander away where the wild hippotatus roams!
Only to worship!—It is only a penny a box
In the everlasting homes.

CIGARETTE PAPERS. No. I.—Mr. Newritch.

IN early life his aristocratic friends used to say of him, "Ah! *you* know Newritch? A good sort. He parts his hair in the middle and wears white socks"; and there you felt the matter ended.

But since he has given up addressing an earl he once knew as "my lord," his best friends, his "*smart*" friends, have ceased to cut him and come again—and again to his dinners and his dances.

Newritch has to a certain extent become the fashion, and is to be seen watching polo with the world at Hurlingham, with the world and the half-world at the Private View, with the world again in the Royal Enclosure at Ascot, and at all the court balls. But the Park and Paris, where he will tell you modestly he got his cook (though you may be pretty certain the latter never got an *entrêe* there), are his favourite haunts.

Any day in the season you may meet him frock-coated, gardenia'd and chaired—an air of "*leisure*" in his tie, which nobody but a first-rate tailor's assistant could hope to emulate and no amount of money could command. In a word from cylinder to spat, from boot to button-hole, he is irreproachable, irresistible.

And, mind you, his clothes have none of the obtruding glory of his grandfather's; his coat, it is true, is not old, but it just avoids the vice of being bran-new, and if he does perhaps look rather as if he had just come out of a bandbox, he does not convey the appearance of having been dusted after it.

Je m'efface (a device which he has placed upon his silver) admirably expresses the man.

The gaudy days of the open hospitalities, and still more open h's of his predecessors, have given way to two days' visits and perfect English.

Mr. Newritch's house is as orderly and as restful as his person: glitter is avoided, comfort studied; a dressing-room everywhere, and electric light turned on by a button as you enter your bedroom.

Newritch himself sees after his guests, and falls into a pretty temper (nothing violent of course) if he finds the servant has omitted to put out two soaps (one unscented, one scented) to your soap dish.

There is a neat card (with *Je m'efface*) over your mantel-shelf, containing at the top the hours of meals and family prayers.

In fact when you are on your first visit to Newritch's and before you begin to know him properly, you feel in clover in your very bedroom; there is a bright fire blazing in the grate, a sofa that is really comfortable, and above all a decent writing table (with plenty of envelopes and blotting paper), at which it is possible to write without being frozen. . . . . .

Alas! Dinner disillusionizes you.

Not that Newritch's dinners are indifferent—far from it. He himself is of course the last to draw your attention to its *general* perfection, but then he has cultivated self-depreciation with such diligence, and conceals it so successfully, that until you are educated to his ways you will never discover, for example, that the best peaches to be had at Heep House (the name of Newritch's castle) are those which your host skins roughly, almost cruelly, and that the best entrées are those of which he helps himself to a tea-spoonful and leaves half.

But I have said that dinner would disillusionize you, and have produced nothing to prove it.

Perhaps indeed it will not be dinner, but I *think* so. Amid its quiet perfection you will notice a flaw: the champagne is execrable, or your cigar is a torture to you. Some trifling detail has been scamped, and, what makes it unpardonable, scamped purposely.

Yes, it is odd that the varnish of the class to which Newritch belongs should be so brittle. Where "money is no object," why quarrel with one's wine merchant over an extra sovereign a dozen, or make one's friends ill with inferior tobacco? For Newritch and his class are no misers, and indeed despise money *en bloc*, or affect to despise it.

Their display is aimed at an effect: they forget or they never knew that display to be effectual must be *consistent* as well as continuous. They forget, or they never knew, that no one nowadays will toady a rich tailor for his turtle if he makes them sit down to whist with soiled cards, or ventures to give them a yesterday's napkin. . . . .

This stress on the minor economies we hardly notice in the poor or in those of our own class, but we do not forgive them in the self-made millionaire.

If we are to eat his dinners or drink his wines *at all* they must be *perfect*, or we prefer to dine by ourselves or with our friends, where we neither demand nor expect perfection.

And he does not realize, poor Newritch! that this perfection is comparative, and that when we dine with him we demand a perfection in the superlative degree.

THE LITTLE FLEAS.

IT was night: and the long windows barely showed against the gloom of that silent room: high, vague, mysterious, dark—like the place where a man finds himself alone in dreams. The dying fire, when now and again a brand fell into its dull remaining red, lit above two faces—of a man and of a woman. He was stretched on a rug at her feet with his eyes fixed on hers, but she looked into the fire, and he saw that she saw further than the fire. Until at last she said, whispering as a woman whispers at midnight, "Tell me what you see in my eyes," but he answered, "It was night: and the long windows barely showed against the gloom of that silent room: high, vague, mysterious, dark—like the place where a man finds himself unfriended, alone in dreams. The dying fire when now and again a brand fell into its dull remaining red, lit above two faces—of a man and of a woman. He was stretched on a rug at her feet with his eyes fixed on her eyes, but she looked with her eyes at the fire, and he saw that her eyes saw further than the fire. Until at last she said, whispering as a woman whispers at midnight, 'Tell me what you see in my eyes,' but he answered, 'It was night——'"

But the very shadow had learnt its lesson, and a murmur passed in the vast corners of the hall, "It was night, and the long windows barely showed against the gloom of that silent room: high, vague, mysterious, dark—like the place where a man sobs to himself, all alone in an unfriended dream. . . . ."

CAUSERIES DU VENDREDI.

No. VIII.—Walt Whitman (II.).

I HAVE hitherto assumed that Whitman's claim to be the poet of this new world is allowed. To maintain that he is not a poet at all, that Leaves of Green is a prose work rather fantastically got up seems to me a mere piece of fighting about words. If any one after reading the book could be convinced by some critic that because Whitman did not write in certain conventional metres he must be denied the name of poet, one would feel sorry for him. If we are to argue about poetry in this way, then let a catalogue of metres be made out beyond which no poet shall be allowed to stray. I do not mean to claim as some of his admirers do that he is the originator of a new poetic form. In fact one must admit that there is about the man and his poems alike a certain lack of restraint and compression—indeed of what we mean by artistic form. But there is a kind of metre in his verse, the lines do not break off arbitrarily but always with a certain fitness, the sense of which grows on you as you read him. And then there is in nearly all his poetry an infinitely varied music and rhythm; in his greatest poems he is in this respect unapproachable. It never palls on you as the music of Tennyson is apt to do; it is always fresh and full of energy. He is a poet who has much to say and who is determined to say it; and after all you cannot force such a man to write in one way rather than another, and as for his being a poet there are two or three short poems of his that would overthrow all the counter arguments that ever grammarian could produce. If the piece beginning "When lilacs last in the dooryard bloomed" is not poetry there is no poetry in the world.

We must remember that he is not an artist in the strict sense. He takes no pains whatever to make a picture. He walks carelessly and yet with an observant eye along the crowded street or among the beauties of

nature, and pours out his feelings as they rise within him. The poems are filled and inspired by that passionate emotion which lay behind the careless exterior of the man, and consequently though his descriptions of natural scenery lack that closeness and exquisite detail which a more artistic poet would have given to them, yet they have an intensity and penetration which never misses its mark. With one or two powerful touches he puts the whole scene before us not as a picture but as a living thing. Take for example the poem "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry," or the descriptions of Autumn scenery in many of the war pieces—indeed one could quote numberless examples. His epithets are always powerful and suggest rather than express. His ideal is not to write a book that shall delight men's eyes with beautiful pictures or lull them asleep with beautiful music, but to awaken their powers so that they shall see and hear for themselves.

Most attractive of all is the absolute genuineness and sincerity of it. The man himself shines through every page of it until you get almost to know him as a familiar friend with all his follies and mannerising and his humanity and deep sympathy. "This is no book," he says in the last poem, "Who touches it touches a man." Of poetic diction and artificial phrase he knows nothing, nor is he affected at all by that conventional poetical form which has got such a strong hold on our modern poets and which crushes out the life of all who are not strong enough to rise above it. He has discarded all the traditional poetic machinery, genii, daemons, Greek gods and such like, which the "*Cantores Euphorionis*" have worked to death. He looks the facts of Science boldly in the face and finds that it does not rob nature of her beauty or sublimity. He can describe the beauty of an autumn wood without imagining a weeping nymph in every tree, or the grandeur of the sun without a thought of the fiery chariot of Apollo. All these trappings which have lost all life and meaning long ago, and which are kept up only

as so much tinsel to disguise the poverty of the thought within, Walt Whitman sweeps quite away. He writes with the object itself before his mind, not with the thing as it appeared to poets in the past or as it appears to them now. By his upbringing and course of life he escaped the deadening influence which the constant reading of books produces on the sensibility. He was always more in contact with men than with books.

Perhaps the greatest of his poems are those inspired by the Civil War, through which he went as a nurse in the hospitals. America, the land with which all his hopes and affections were bound up, on which seemed to depend all the prospects of humanity, was suddenly split into two hostile camps. It seemed as if the Union was broken up and the future of America hopelessly ruined.

"Year that trembled and reeled beneath me
Your summer wind was warm enough, yet the air I breathed
froze me,
A thick gloom fell through the sunshine and darkened me.
Must I change my triumphant songs? said I to myself;
Must I indeed learn to chant the cold dirges of the baffled
And sullen hymns of defeat?"

He threw himself into the quarrel with all the passionate ardour of his nature, in fact he gave the best of his life to the cause he had so much at heart. The ultimate triumph of the Union brought back his peace of mind. America, whose future he had often regarded with anxiety and dread, had now proved herself worthy of his hopes. His countrymen had proved by the most terrible of tests that they could leave their trade and money-making to fight and die for a great principle. It is no party triumph that he celebrates—it is the triumph of the South as well as of the North, since it knitted them together more closely than before. The Union was no longer a mere form on paper, but a thing for which men had fought and died. His war poems are great because in them as everywhere else he writes out of his own actual feelings;

and they give, taken together, a most vivid and powerful impression of it. Not only were his patriotic feelings stirred, his whole life with all his interests and hopes hung in the balance; and yet it is not of these great issues that we hear so much in his poems as of the individual men engaged in it. The hard, tiring march, the weary suspense and the horror of the bloodshed appeal to him in the person of every soldier in the ranks. Each life involved in the war is in his eyes a desperate stake, and each life lost a sacrifice of inestimable value. When we read a few of them such as "Vigil strange I kept in the field one night," which is perhaps the greatest of all his war poems, or "The Return of the Heroes," or "The Wound Dresser," or "The Dirge for two Veterans," we cannot but be impressed by the wonderful wealth and depth of Whitman's nature and by his power as a poet.

If we try and discover what it is in these poems that attracts us in spite of all that literary connoisseurs have to say against them we find it in the truth and directness and depth of the man himself, and in his wonderfully poetic imagination. He never writes merely for writing's sake but always as the expression of his intense emotions. It is this that raises him above the mere political philosopher, and that stamps him as a great poet. He has a very varied style which can be at one time rough and uncouth, at another delicate and refined, at another swift and vivid as lightning; but through all his poetry there runs an undercurrent of passion and feeling that betrays the man and tends to give an aspect of sameness to it. He is altogether lacking in that self-restraint which marks the artistic poet. He had no thought of controlling the stream of his emotion or even of consciously directing it, but allows it to carry him on regardless of anything except its own strength. It is useless to stop and question him, for he will not be argued with. "When they argue about God and eternity," he says, "I am silent." You must give yourself up to his

guidance, and when you have got to the end you may look back and consider what it all comes to—whether it is a mere *tour de force* or a real and true poem.

It is this same lack of form and restraint that has made him depart so widely from the conventional and recognised forms of verse. He cannot submit to the long and difficult process of pruning and carving, the *labor limae* of artistic form. His language, too, has often a harshness and stiffness which the slightest care for conformity to the requirements of art would have removed.

After all there seems to be something about metre and rhyme that we cannot get over. They appeal to what we are apt to call an ultimate fact of human nature, and men are moved by them on whom the rhythm and music of Walt Whitman's verse would be utterly lost. His poetry, great as it is, will never take real hold of the mass of men, while a few stanzas of some ephemeral song will cling to them for life. For all his intense ardour in the war and with all the great poems which it drew from him, the mass of his countrymen were more inspired by the song on the obscure John Brown than by any poem of his. But for all this want—and we cannot deny that it is a want—you cannot open this book without feeling at once that you are in the hands of a great poet. There is a force and vigour that is unmistakeable and that lifts you at once into the purer atmosphere of genius. He has widened and deepened the range of human sympathies, and has set the relations of man to his fellow men in a new light altogether, and in this respect he has opened up a fresh field for the poetry of the future. Our poetry lives too much in the past because it has become the custom of the poets to live in retirement, knowing life only through books, and because they can look at the figures of past history or of mythology clearly and steadily, and so depict them with all minuteness of detail while when they look at the actual life of the present they find only a confused and jarring mass of individuals. A great

dramatic poet while he takes his characters from past history or myth puts into them life and meaning for his contemporaries; the ordinary modern poet who writes of Niobes or Persephones simply elaborates a conventional figure—"What's Hecuba to him or he to Hecuba?" He does so just because it has become a convention of poetry, and not, as did Keats, from a profound insight into the beauty of the conception. Whitman throws off these masks altogether and writes of the present as the present, without disguise or hypocrisy.

The English poet whom he most resembles is Wordsworth, though he does not write with the same consciousness of literary form as Wordsworth did. They both find the inspiration of their poetry in the life of their time, and both have a passionate enjoyment of the scenery of nature; both are filled with the same moral enthusiasm, though in Whitman it is less fettered by the traditions and conventions of the time, less fixed to institutions and creeds, than in Wordsworth. Moreover, Wordsworth has not the keen delight in all human life and activity just as such that Whitman has. Wordsworth was so entirely self-centred that he became quite isolated from the world, and regarded everyone outside his own circle of appreciation with feelings of suspicion and even aversion. He was conscious of himself, not as one of the crowd, but as one set apart and something above his fellows.

Whitman is as self-conscious as anyone, but it is the open and generous self-assertion of a free man among his equals. There is nothing exclusive about him. He makes no pretence to any special revelation. Consequently his interest in men is not restricted by any false notions of dignity or any theories of morality. The fact that a man really does certain things—whether the world call them good or bad—is enough to interest him in them, and in the bad no less than in the good. In imagination he is more quick and subtle than Wordsworth, and in thought equally profound.

But such comparisons are for the most part useless. Instead of setting off the one against the other we should thankfully acknowledge our debt to both. And this we do owe to Whitman that he has not only left to us new ideas of great depth and suggestiveness for the progress of humanity in the future, throwing a new light upon the relations of men to one another and to nature, but he has also written, and that in a time when such things are scarce, a book of true poetry.

D.

BILLY-GO-BLINK.

BILLY-GO-BLINK sat on the sea-brink,
And he wept and he tore his hair;
And he turned him again to the plain of the main,
But never a sail was there.

But a little while after he bellowed with laughter,
And exceedingly glad was he
To observe that a brig and a thingamy-jig
Came sailing across the sea.

EPIGRAM.

WHEN *Isis* swells above her banks
And folks with rubbish weekly cram it,
It surely can't expect our thanks:
I rather think we ought to *dam* it.

β.

NOTES.

WE notice a marked improvement in the quality of the Christ Church Chronicle, the first number of which has just appeared. The lines on Tennyson are distinctly readable, and the football and athletic notes seem to have been written by one who knows something of these matters.

THE same cannot be said of *Akeraios*, a book of wholly execrable verses, emanating, it is loudly whispered, from Worcester College. Even the *fears* of the author, put rather neatly into the mouth of one of his heroines (a tame rabbit named Winnie), are not likely to be soon realized—

> "They'll cut me up
> Before I've cut my teeth."

He seems to have plenty of time before him.

AHMED.

AHMED, my servant and companion, deserves to be commemorated in a few lines. He has so great a respect for a book that it were unpardonable to keep his name out of the pages of this one. Moreover, he is a pleasant person to look upon, slim and active with limbs like those of the Dioscuri in the Naples museum; his eyes are large and brown, generally frank looking and commendably honest, but there is an ugly gleam in them at times; his nose and mouth are delicately moulded and his olive skin is set off by bars of blue tattooed against his ears; his voice is soft and winning and his manner graceful and courteous, yet he can shout in no pleasing fashion when angry, and gesticulate like a madman. He will always remain a mystery, transparent as glass, yet deep as the unfathomable seas; childish and easily pleased, yet cunning as the serpent and easily enraged; humble, yet proud; the contrasts are as forcible as that between sunshine and storm, though I have only hinted at the conflicting elements that combine to form the character of an Arab boy. To explain, even partially to understand, it are beyond the power of a Western intelligence.

Faithful he undoubtedly is and proud of his service. No one is allowed to help me if he is by, for he never tires. Quite honest he is not, for though no offer of great rewards were strong enough temptation to make him injure me, he cannot carry the smallest parcel without appropriating some of its contents; but if another cheated me of so much as a pin's value he would rouse the whole Mousky with the noise of his indignation and threats of vengeance.

He is a queer mixture, is my friend Ahmed, of ignorance and knowledge. This conversation often takes place during my afternoon ride.

"London, has she streets like Cairo?"

"No, the streets of London are quite different."

"Cairo, yes, she has very good streets, and gardens better than London?"

"Much better, but London is much larger."

"London, no she is not bigger than Cairo."

This is said indignantly, with a furtive glance at me to see if I am laughing at him; but if the Egyptian city we are visiting be even Benhur or Zagazig he will still declare it to be larger than London. Paris, which he visited during the exhibition, he persistently regards as a mere village. After a minute or two of silence during which he runs beside my donkey, his eyes obstinately cast on the ground, Ahmed will look up with renewed good temper and say, "I come to London with you. Excusey me, sir, no, she is not very expensive to go to London."

"What would your father say?"

"My father say, Ahmed why not go to London? and I say, my master he say to me why not come to London,? and my father say 'Very well.'"

Ahmed is a scholar in his way, learned in many strange things, and can talk half-a-dozen languages with considerable and inaccurate fluency. He writes Arabic, a not very usual accomplishment, and one he is proud of possessing. He will often note down an English phrase, or my explanations of a phrase that has puzzled him, in Arabic characters for his English master to elucidate further for him in the evening. For, when we are in Cairo, Ahmed and I pursue our studies during the evening, and I confess that his knowledge of English is gained more rapidly than mine of Arabic. Ahmed is not slow to notice this and often exclaims: "I, Ahmed, very poor man, but I very good head. I speak Arab, English, French, Italian, Greek, little German. My master he very rich man, he governor; he not very good head my master, he only speak English, French, and little Arab."

There is a look of pardonable pride on his face as he says these words; but after he has smoked one of my cigarettes he will generously add, "But my master, he speak very well Arab after two months." Yet, in spite of his scorn at my linguistic capacities,

I have seen him knock a man down in the bazaar because he had dared to smile at my pronunciation of an "Arab" sentence.

Ahmed is a temperate person, as are most of his race, but he breaks out at times. Once, after a friend's wedding, he lay, as he expressed it, "like a dead man" for two days. For this freak I fined him ten piastres, but he bore his punishment good-humouredly and borrowed them from me next day to purchase sugar-cane; he has not repaid me, and I have not the heart to deduct it from his wages. Ten tumblers of mastic had caused him to lie as dead, his excuse being that the wedding was a very big affair and his friend had kept saying "Ahmed, you drink more mastic,—and he filled my glass so high and I drink, and then he filled it again ten times till I fall down like dead man." Nevertheless he has no little contempt for Tommy Atkins, who he, declares, drinks too much.

I am inclined to admire Ahmed's hospitable instincts, though I have felt compelled to refuse all further invitations to his weddings. I have already accepted three within four months, and now he is asking me to attend a fourth. I do not dare to appear too inquisitive about his harem, but I should like to know why he gets rid of his wives so quickly. He is barely twenty, and two years ago when I first knew him, was unmarried, and to have divorced since then four wives is scarcely respectable. He has only complained to me of number three, who had "a tongue so long." I fancy she protested against Ahmed's extravagance in dress, for he spends a small fortune in buying silk waistcoats.

But it were ungenerous to dwell long on Ahmed's faults, for his virtues on the whole more than overbalance his failings. It is impossible not to be affectionately disposed towards a man who guards me ceaselessly and carefully, who works for me willingly and cheerfully, who is a lively companion, who sleeps contentedly at the door of my room or outside my tent, who is proud of his master even when my Arabic is

shaky, and who guards my interests eagerly. Surely these are noble qualities, and occasional defects and peccadilloes merely serve to remind me that this admirable Crichton of an Arab is, after all, as mortal as his master.

Cairo. PERCY ADDLESHAW.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

"SELF OR ANOTHER."—A good idea, to which you have hardly done justice.

NICOTIANA, &c.—There seems to be no reason why these should have been written.

W. J. F.—For the purposes of the *Spirit Lamp*, the merit of your verses cannot excuse their length.

Φ.—Fie!

J. W. S.—Your ballad would be better set to music: the *literary* merit of it is not strong enough.

B. (PEMBROKE).—You would certainly write good prose. Why not send us some?

The colums of the *Spirit Lamp* are open to all the talents. Contributions (*prose* preferred) should be sent in by the Tuesday before the day of publication.

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