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BULWER'S NEW PLAY.

The Duchess de la Valliere: A Play, in Five Acts. By the author of "Eugene Aram," "The Last Days of Pompeii," "Rienzi," &c. New York: Saunders & Olley.

"It seems among the caprices of literature, that one whose life has excited an interest so unfading and universal, and whose destinies invest—even more than the splendors of his reign, the solemn graces of his court, or the stately muses [muse] of Racine—with no unreal poetry the memory of Louis XIV—that one whose very fate was a poem, whose very struggles were a drama, should have furnished so little inspiration to a poet, and escaped altogether the resuscitation of the stage."

The above is not our own. It is the first sentence of a sort of *critique raisonnee*, under the name of a preface, prefixed by Mr. Bulwer himself to his play. We have given the thought in his own words, by way of furnishing the style-fanciers, who copy Mr. Bulwer's fashions, with a specimen of the latest cut, in the art of involution, convolution, and obscurity. Having said this, we beg leave to add, for ourselves, that we do not altogether dissent from the opinion here expressed. It would not have been strange, if the taste, which introduced Jane Shore upon the stage, as a heroine, had selected, for the like use, a person whose crimes did not so deeply dishonor her sex, and whose redeeming virtues are certainly far less apocryphal than those of the abandoned adulterous paramour of Edward IV. The age which tolerated the one, might perhaps have smiled favorably on the other, and the tragedy of Madame de la Valliere, might, in that day, have taken its turn upon the stage, with the obscene comedies of Congreve and Farquhar.

These have had their day; and a change in the manners and tastes of society has driven them from the stage. The same change has probably deterred dramatic writers from other adventures in that line. It is worthy of remark that, while the stage is said to hold the mirror up to nature, and to exhibit her to the audience, it has the farther property of exhibiting the audience themselves to the rest of the world. Plays which do not please, can never attract full houses; and no judgment that criticism can pronounce in their favor, will prevent them from being laid aside for such as *do* please. The success of these is the test of the only merit about which the managers of theatres feel any concern. They thus retain their place upon the stage; they find their way to the press; they become one of the amusements of the drawing-room; and go down to posterity, an unerring criterion of the taste and manners of the age which favored them.

We know enough of the private life and character of men who figured in the world in the days of Queen Ann and the first George, to be pretty sure that the manners and the drama of that day were, alike, different from the manners and the drama of this; and the connexion between the two is not only proved by the reason and nature of the thing, but established by history.

While we concur, then, with Mr. Bulwer, in wondering that the corrupt taste of a corrupt society did not seize upon the character of Madame de la Valliere, as a *bonne bouche* for an appetite at once dainty and voracious, at once refined and gross—an object in the contemplation of which, lewdness and sentiment might take their turn of enjoyment; we may again be allow-

ed to wonder, what he has seen in the character of his contemporaries, which leads him to suppose that such an exhibition can be acceptable to them. Are we to infer that the vice of incontinence has preferred its claim to Mr. Bulwer's good offices, and insists on being exhibited to the public in the same favorable light with theft and murder? Is it necessary to the completion of his exhibition gallery, that the pictures of the generous highwayman, the philosophic assassin, and the virtuous demagogue, should be accompanied by that of the sentimental and devout courtesan? Does he mean to content himself with thus painting all the cardinal sins of both sexes, *couleur de rose*, or does he propose to go on and complete the series, by showing up the amiable and attractive accompaniments of minor offences; the grace and address of the blackleg, the surly honesty of the drunkard, and the uproarious and infectious mirth of the heroes of the Corinthian school? Perhaps not. Mr. Bulwer may probably think these less hardy offenders unworthy of his offices good or ill, and may leave their fame to the care of Mr. Pierce Egan.

We do not profess to have much acquaintance with the character and tastes of the playgoing public, either of Great Britain, or the larger cities of the United States. In such vast assemblages of people, there may be enough of that class who delight to gloat over exhibitions of splendid villainy and alluring sensuality, to fill the pockets of the actors, although there may be another and more numerous class banished from the theatre by such scenes. If so, they may act wisely in their generation, in thus catering for the tastes of their best customers. Of thus much, thank God! we are sure. We are *absolutely sure*, that, in our unrefined, unenlightened, unpretending, uncanting community of white and black, no such dramas as this of Mr. Bulwer's would draw together such audiences as would pay the candle-snuffer. We have—and again we say thank God!—we have no titled libertines, no demi-reps of quality, no flaunting *divorcées*—none either rich, or great, or noble, who seek their wives from the stage or the stews. What we may come to with proper training; how we may be infected by the example of sin in high places, and the outrageous violation of all the decencies of life on our very borders, we are not prepared to predict. But, as yet, we can speak of the maidens and matrons of Virginia with a proud confidence, that the example of her degenerate sons has not yet inclined them to dishonor the memory of their chaste mothers, by frequenting and favoring exhibitions intended to gloss over that crime, which unfits a woman for all the duties of life.

Among the Romans the name of virtue was given, *excellencia gratia*, to that one quality, without which no man in that iron commonwealth was capable of performing the duties of a citizen. In like manner, among ourselves, and in reference to the softer sex, the word is applied to that, without which no woman is worthy to become a wife and a mother. There is nothing arbitrary in this nomenclature. Its universal acceptance is nature's testimony to important truths. What dependence on the principles of any man, however extensive and correct his code of morals, whose firmness is sure to fail him at the approach of danger? Then look at the condition of woman in a virtuous, enlightened, and refined society. Estimate the advantages of her position. Her every

comfort cared for; her slightest wishes attended to; the father, the brother, the friend, the lover, the husband, all on the alert to anticipate her desires, and prevent her caprices; her glances watched; her slightest words drunk in with eager ears; her person screened as a thing too tender for the breath of heaven, too sacred for the profane glare of gaudy day; and the mines of the South, and the luxuries of the East—the splendors of Barbaric pomp and cultivated elegance, and the labors of science, and literature, and wit, and genius, and wisdom, all ransacked and tasked for her pleasure, ornament, and cultivation; all these blessings held on no other condition than that she shall not dishonor her sex by staining the purity of her name. Observe, at the same time, that she is hedged around by the forms of society, and so guarded from the near approach of temptation, that to be exposed to it, she must seek, or at least invite or encourage it. Let us think of these things, and we shall be slow to decide that the judgment which utterly degrades her, who offends under such circumstances, is unjust, or unnecessarily harsh. Under what conditions can it be hoped that her inducements to persevere in any virtuous resolution, will prevail over the temptations to any crime? It is a solecism to predicate *virtue* at all, of one who has failed under such circumstances.

We are aware that the principles of this judgment do not apply to those who yield to the temptations of a corrupt court, where virtue is exposed to all the arts of the seducer, and where rewards and honors (such honors!) await her who offends, not through weakness, but from policy. But female delicacy is no nice casuist, and accepts no such apologies. We are persuaded that most women of refinement will be displeased with the importance which we attach to the circumstances which we have spoken of, as the *safeguards of female virtue*. They have never felt the need of such safeguards, and to them, the actual character of woman, as she is among us, appears to be of the very essence of her nature, while violations of Diana's law seem hardly less monstrous than cannibalism.

If we are right then, in our estimate of that being which we designate in Virginia as *A LADY*, it is hardly to be expected that the exhibition of Mr. Bulwer's drama would be tolerated among such. Sure we are, that Madame la Valliere could find no favor in their eyes; while there is no other class capable of appreciating the virtues, in behalf of which our sympathies are invoked. In short, we are at a loss to understand from what quarter such sympathies are to be expected, unless it be from those who, like Mrs. Parley, in listening to the history of the Lady Lurewell's fall, can say, "Ah! just the way I was served myself." In a country, whose prime minister, not long since, made a common prostitute his wife; whose dukes and marquises swap wives, and then interchange family visits; and where women of doubtful virtue, or no virtue at all, are leaders of fashionable *cliques* and literary *coteries*, and write novels to improve the morals of the community, suitable audiences may perhaps be collected. Here, the thing is impossible.

But we detain the reader too long from Mr. Bulwer. Yet we must beg his indulgence for another moment, while we express our admiration of the versatility and variety of this gentleman's talents. When Walter

Scott, after having won a fame as a poet, which well might satisfy the aspirations of any man, suddenly threw aside the lyre, and betook himself to novel writing, we suspected, what he has since avowed, that he gave way before the overpowering march of Byron's genius. But for this, the *Waverley Novels* might never have been written. But Mr. Bulwer has not been forced to yield to any such necessity. Though not among his warmest admirers, and by no means thinking, as he obviously does, that he has thrown Sir Walter into the shade, we still admit his superiority over the stiff, inflated, and unnatural James, or the dull, prosaic Ritchie. In short, we freely award him the first place (as D'Israeli withdraws from the contest) among living novelists; and we must therefore ascribe his adventure, in a new line of composition, to the promptings of a generous ambition, the instinct of conscious genius. We see him, like Alexander, set forth in quest of new worlds to conquer, and offer him our regrets, that he has but invaded a barren province, in which he is not likely to reap many laurels. We cannot promise him success, and proceed to tell the reader why.

In the first place, then, we infer from Mr. Bulwer's preface, (which, by the way, we invite the reader to read and compare with Mr. Bays' commentary on the acting of his own play) that he thinks himself particularly fortunate in the selection of his subject and materials; and that he is conscious of having worked them up with his best skill. *Materiem superat opus*. So he thinks. Now let us examine both.

Mademoiselle de la Valliere is represented by Mr. Bulwer as the only and orphan child of a valiant noble, who had betrothed her in childhood to his friend and comrade in arms, the gallant Bragelone. Why it is that this bearded warrior, who is a very knight of romance, chooses for his *Lady Love* an infant in the nurse's arms, and perils all his hopes of domestic bliss on the chance of making himself acceptable to her, when he had grown out of fashion with every body else, is not explained. So it is; he wears her in his heart, and cultivates the romantic enthusiasm of a devoted knight, until it becomes passionate love. The lady does not return his passion, but requites it with the highest esteem and admiration. Under these circumstances they part, he to the wars, and she to change the solitude of her mother's chateau for the splendors of the court.

She goes to court, (apparently by invitation) and we find her there in the capacity of a maid of honor. Of course, although the very soul of purity and honor, she presently falls in love with the king. He is indeed another woman's husband, but what of that? The poor child, it seems, had been addicted to dreaming, and from childhood had a trick of dreaming of a royal lover.

A proud form,
Upon whose brow nature had written "empire;"
While, on the lip,—love, smiling, wrapt in sunshine
The charmed world that was its worshipper—
A form like that which clothed the gods of old,
Lured from Olympus by some mortal maid,—
Youthful it seemed—but with *AMBROSIAL* youth;
(ambrosial!?)

*And beautiful—but half as beauty were
A garb too earthly for a thing divine.*

This rhapsody, made up of common-place extrava-

gance and extravagant absurdity, (for which last, note the words *in italics*) the very conception of which bespeaks a mind combustible as tinder, is uttered in the old baronial castle, to her mother, on the eve of her departure for court. What wonder then, that when she sees the incarnation of this *beau idéal* of her dreams, in the person of the king, her passion bursts into flame. Unconscious of the nature of her feelings, she does not attempt to conceal them, but prattles to the ladies of the court of her high reaching passion, in a strain, which the writer would have us take as a proof of purity unsuspecting its own weakness.

By a most clumsy contrivance, the king is made to overhear this language of passionate admiration; and, "on this hint, he speaks." Suddenly the lady freezes, and assumes a coy and shrinking reserve, which only renders her more attractive.

The affair now goes on with due despatch and due decorum, when Bragelone suddenly makes his appearance at court. First he meets with the Duc de Lauzun, of whom he asks the *on dits* of the day, in regard to this amour; and requites his intelligence by playing the braggart, in a style of ruffian magnanimity, which puts to shame all the artificial rules of those who quarrel by the book. They fight; the duke is disarmed, and spared; and the lover goes raging in quest of his mistress. Her he finds, loads her with billingsgate in blank verse, and scolds her into a consent to steal away from court under his protection.

He leaves her in a convent, from which, "nothing loath," she is taken by the king, returns to Fontainebleau, and, on due terms, becomes Madame la Duchesse de la Valliere.

In this elevation she is not happy. The idea of having dishonored her father's name, and broken the heart of her mother, is quite disagreeable; and she sins with so bad a grace, that her lover becomes excessively enuyé. This alternation of crime and repentance is, no doubt, consoling to ladies, who can thus persuade themselves that guilt has not yet reached the heart; and a gallant lover should not deny them the comfort of filling up the pauses of passion with luxurious tears. The king, however, is at a loss to understand, how any woman can reproach herself for yielding to the fascinations of his person, his crown, and his glory, and is quite vexed that the lady cannot be brought to see the matter in the same light; but, overlooking the two latter, and loving him only for himself, considers her case as that of

"Some poor village Phœbe,
Whom her false Lubin has betrayed."
"I would not have it so," he adds. "My fame, my glory,
The purple and the orb are part of me;
And thou shouldst love them for my sake, and feel
I were not Louis, were I less the king."

There is no disputing with tastes, and least of all with royal tastes. But nature is nature in kings as in other men; and such a taste as is here attributed to Louis, has never before been predicated by truth or fiction for human nature, under any circumstances. But we must take Mr. Bulwer's account of the matter, for on this strange taste is founded the plot of his drama.

But the capital error of Madame de la Valliere is,

that she is, in other things, quite too conscientious for her situation; and, instead of making herself the medium through which the favor of the king may be obtained, she provokes the malice as well as the envy of his courtiers, by making herself the judge of the reasonableness of the suits she is requested to prefer. This was carrying the matter too far. If she chose to compound for her indulgence in one darling sin, by a rigid observance of all the forms of devotion—and to dress herself in sackcloth, when her lover wished to see her fluttering in brocade, that was her affair and his. But that the partner of the monarch's lawless love should make herself the keeper of his conscience, to the prejudice of all vices but her own, was not to be endured. The aim therefore of the whole court was to supplant her, and accordingly the Duc de Lauzun, a profligate minion, contrives to introduce and to palm upon the king, his own mistress, the Marchioness de Montespan.

It so happens, that, about this time, news arrives of the death of Bragelone, and the king, in speaking of it to his mistress, discovers the secret of her friendship for him, and their early betrothal. The thought, that she perhaps had *once* loved another, and that he was not the first who ever had a place in her heart, strikes with horror the refined and fastidious voluptuary, and disposes him to seek consolation in the arms of one, who was already the wife of one man, and the mistress of another. With the philosophy of this we have nothing to do, and here again allow Mr. Bulwer to arrange his catenation of cause and consequence to his own mind. It results accordingly, that, within twelve hours after the conversation about Bragelone, the king falls in love with Madame de Montespan, whom he had never thought of before, and that she is instantly and openly installed before the whole court in the place of Madame de la Valliere, who is dismissed.

Bragelone all this time is not dead, but has retired from the world, and taken the habit of a Franciscan monk. In this character he visits Madame de la Valliere in her retirement, and passing himself upon her as the brother of her lover, they talk quite pathetically of his sorrows and death, and those of the lady's mother, until she, too, determines to take the veil. Within the hour, here comes the king upon some unimaginable fool's-errand, and, entering the chateau unattended, blunders through the ante-chamber, until he stumbles on Bragelone. Then ensues quite a scene between the holy father and the royal sinner, in which the latter is, of course, overwhelmed, and struck dumb by the eloquent reproaches of the other.

About this time it occurs to Lauzun, that the rich provision on which Madame de la Valliere had retired, may mend his shattered fortune; and as he had handed over his mistress to the king, he probably thought a fair exchange the fairest of all possible things. He prefers his suit to the lady, and is, of course, rejected. The story gets to the ears of Madame de Montespan, whose resentment is aroused against Lauzun (whom alone she had ever loved), and she announces to him her determination to ruin him. He gets the start of her, and ruins her. *How*, is not told, but she is dismissed, and the king is left without a mistress.

Now, as the king is capable of living without a mistress about as long as a courtier can live out of favor, a

patriot in a minority, or a fish out of water, and as he is at the moment unprovided with this necessary of life, he bethinks himself of Madame de la Valliere—goes in quest of her, and finds her in the act of taking the veil. This time she perseveres, goes through with the ceremony, assures the king of her constancy, comforts him with the hope that her prayers in his behalf may now be heard, and *exennt omnes*.

Such is the outline of our drama. In its execution, whether we consider the mere composition, the picture of manners, or the conception or development of character, we see little adequate to Mr. Bulwer's pretensions, his previous reputation, or even our own former estimate of his merits. Madame de la Valliere is a character with which, we suspect, few young men of libertine habits have failed to form an acquaintance. An amiable, benevolent courtesan is nothing new under the sun. Nor is there any thing strange in her alternate penitence and indulgence, nor in the final triumph of the former. The very weakness which yields to temptation in youth, is most apt to crouch before the threatenings of God's displeasure, and to accept the invitations of his love. We have no fastidious doubts of the genuineness and sufficiency of such repentance. We profess and we cherish the tenderest sympathy for it; nor have we any wish to see an expurgated edition of the Bible, in which the history of Mary Magdalene shall be omitted. But the poetry of that character is all exhausted. The picture which represents her sitting at her Saviour's feet, washing them with her tears, and wiping them with the hairs of her head, admits of no coloring or varnish which will not impair its distinctness and its pathos. We can hardly conceive a higher reach of presumption than to attempt any improvement upon it. Traced, like the rainbow in the hues of heaven, any imitation in mere earthly colors must fail entirely.

The character of Bragelone, on which apparently Mr. Bulwer prides himself, is of the very common-place of romance; and we venture the belief, that there is no work of romance, from *Amadis de Gaul* to *Miss Baillie's* plays, in which there is not some such character. Of the other characters we will but remark, that the unmixed profligacy of Lauzun and his Marchioness, can excite no interest of any sort, and that we never found our old and witty friend Grammont so dull as he appears here. As to the Marquis de Montespan, he is made the fool of the piece, and is formally set up to be laughed at. But he is so insufferably dull that we cannot laugh at him, nor can we even laugh at the author. This part of his exhibition is so offensively absurd, that we cannot laugh for very anger. What must the reader think of a character introduced neither to say nor to do any thing, but merely to be dressed in red stockings, and to be made the subject of clumsy tricks and jests, at once lewd and stale, played off in full court, and in the majestic presence of a king, with whose dignity no man ever trifled?

The style of this work is ambitious in the last degree; and so intent is the writer on seizing every opportunity of throwing off a striking sentence, that he puts them in mouths entirely unfit for them.

"They tell me that to serve the king for nothing,
To deem one's country worthier than one's self,

To hold one's honor not a phrase to swear by,
They tell me now all this is out of fashion."

From whom does this string of apothegms proceed? From an old follower of the family of Bragelone, who in the next breath asks his master in sober earnestness the meaning of the word *Satirist*, and receives the following answer, which, to the asker of such a question, must be highly edifying:

"Satire on vice is wit's revenge on fools
That slander virtue."

To our own poor judgment, this definition is not more remarkable for being misplaced, than for its insufficiency and inaccuracy. If we understand it aright, slander is the only vice which can be properly the subject of satire. It may be truly said, that "Satire on vice is wit's revenge on vice," but why restrict it to one particular vice we see not.

But let that pass. There are some good thoughts, original and well expressed; and as we like to garnish our pages with such things, we shall faithfully copy some, if not all, of the best of them. Take the following. Old Madame La Valliere says to her daughter:

"Some natures take from innocence the love
Experience teaches; and their delicate leaves,
Like the soft plant, shut out all wrong, and shrink
From vice, by instinct, as the wise by knowledge."

Grammont says of the budding love of the young lady:

"She bears the smiling malice of her comrades
With an unconscious and an easy sweetness;
As if alike *her* virtue and *his* greatness
Made love impossible; so down the stream
Of purest thought her heart glides on to danger."

In the spirit here indicated, the lady herself says to her jeering companions:

"Who spoke of love?
The sun-flower, gazing on the Lord of Heaven,
Asks but its sun to shine. Who spoke of love?
And who would wish the bright and lofty Louis
To stoop from glory."

This is very sweet and pretty, though we are not sure that we have not met with that image of the sun-flower before. This is more original:

"The people, like the air,
Is rarely heard, save when it speaks in thunder."

Madame de Montespan, when new to the court, asks Lauzun:

"Does this round
Of gaudy pomps—this glare of glit'ring nothings;
Does it ne'er pall upon you? To my eyes
'Tis as the earth would be if turfed with scarlet,
Without one spot of green."

In the same scene he thus compliments her talents for rising at court:

"Your head most ably counterfeits the heart,
But never, like the heart, betrays itself."

Of Madame de la Valliere, she says:

"Her meek nature shrinks

Even from our homage, and she wears her state,
As if she pray'd the world to pardon greatness."

Again, Lauzun says of her :

"She has too much conscience for the king !
He likes not to look up, and feel how low,
Ev'n on the throne that overlooks the world,
His royal greatness dwarfs beside that heart
That never stooped to sin, save when it loved it."

O! most lame and impotent conclusion to a noble passage! What *it*? *Sin*?

The conversations between Louis and his mistress, afford some hints of which even virtuous love might profit. He says to her :

"Nay, smile, Louise!—love thinks himself aggrieved
If care cast shadows o'er the heart it seeks
To fill with cloudless sunshine!"

Bragelone, after conversing with the penitent Duchess, says :

"The angel hath not left her!—if the plumes
Have lost the whiteness of their younger glory,
The wings have still the instinct of the skies,
And yet shall bear her up!"

The scene between him and the king is good on the whole ; but there are some ugly blemishes, and nothing worthy to be transcribed here. The scene, too, between the king and the duchess at the foot of the altar is good, and with fewer faults, but with nothing original and striking, and the whole too long for insertion.

We believe the above extracts contain nearly every original and brilliant thought in the whole play. The rest is made up of common-place, and hacknied thoughts of other writers, and extravagancies which betoken at once a poverty of conception and a want of taste. Of the first sort we shall give no specimens. Of the use made of other men's thoughts, take the following examples. Bragelone says to his mistress :

"Yes, if thou hearest men speak of Bragelone,
If proudest chiefs confess he bore him bravely,
Come life, come death, his glory shall be thine,
And all the light it borrowed from thine eyes,
Shall gild thy name."

How much expanded and weakened is this thought when compared with the original.

"I'll make thee famous with my pen,
"And glorious with my sword."

The comparison of the blush of morning light with that of nascent love, is so hacknied, that, though beautiful, we thought it had lost its place in poetry ; but here we have it :

"The rose grows richer on her cheek, like hues,
That, in the silence of the virgin dawn,
Predict, in blushes, light that glads the earth."

"Blight with a gesture—wither with a sneer."
Bulwer.

"Damn with faint praise,—assent with civil leer,
And, without sneering, teach the rest to sneer."
Pope.

"Alas! each slanderer bears a weapon
No honest arm can baffle."

On the principle "*suum cuique*," we do not venture to name any one of the hundred who might claim this thought. It is common property. Mr. B's right to use it is unquestionable, but he has no more right to claim credit for it as his own, than to pay a sterling debt in cowries.

"The hope that was the *garner* for affection."

That *garner* is Shakspeare's, though the use of it is somewhat changed.

"Unhallowed fire is raging in my veins—
Heaven on my lips, but earth within my heart."

Does Mr. Bulwer expect to find admirers, except among those who can repeat the beautiful passage in Pope's *Eloisa*, where this thought is displayed in all its power? Let the reader remark, too, that it is *Made-moiselle de la Valliere* before her fall, who utters these delicate lines :

"She gives refusal
A voice, that puts e'en passion to the blush
To own one wish so soft a heart denies it."

Act 2. Scene 3.

"Those eyes proclaimed so pure a mind,
E'en passion blushed to plead for more."—*Byron*.

But enough of these things. A single larceny denominates a man a thief—and plagiarism is the *crimen falsi* of poets. Yet we can hardly think, that, in giving the scenes between the lady and Bragelone, Mr. Bulwer thought of that in Cumberland's *Carmelite*, between St. Valori and his wife. He could not otherwise have rested in such manifest inferiority. For the same reason, we must suppose that he wrote the following without thinking of Miss Baillie, though she cannot fail to recognize her property. But she is rich, and can spare it. Bragelone is made to say to the duchess :

"On the day
That gives thee to the veil, we'll meet once more ;
Let mine be man's last blessing in this world.
O! tell me then, thou'rt happier than thou hast been ;
And when we part, I'll seek some hermit cell
Beside the walls that compass thee, and prayer,
Morning and night, shall join our souls in heaven."

Who can read these lines, and remember the rich scene that Miss Baillie has drawn from this thought, without a smile at the vanity of Mr. Bulwer's high pretensions?

It is to these pretensions that we must attribute this extended notice, so disproportioned to the size of the work. We have hardly allowed ourselves room for specimens to justify our other charges of extravagance and bad taste. But we cannot make good our case without presenting a few :

"The purple light
Bathing the cold earth from a Hebe's urn."

"The golden words in which
The honest heart still coins its massive ore."

"These shadows, minioned to the royal sun."

Here is an elaborate image. We have the shadow and the sun. Where is the substance? An unimaginative man might read this without missing any thing. Not so with him before whose mental vision the images of the poet's dream "flit palpably."

"And thou, grey convent, whose inspiring chime
Measures the hours with prayer, that morn and eve,
Life may ascend the ladder of the angels
And climb to heaven."

We give this as a specimen of common-place rhapsody, *stolen*, apparently, from the Methodist pulpit. It is such a thought as might be supposed to have a place in one of Mr. Irving's sermons in an unknown tongue, the proper vehicle for incomprehensible ideas.

"At court,
Vice, to win followers, takes the front of virtue,
And looks the dull plebeian things called *moral*
To scorn, until they blush to be unlike her."

What means this? Vice pays to virtue the tribute of hypocrisy, and takes its semblance, and at the same time treats it with scorn!!! Can this be so?—

"If love's sun, once set, bequeaths a twilight,
'Twould only hover o'er some form, whom chance
Had linked with Louis."

Bragelone, foreboding the fate of the Bourbon race, says to Louis:

"When the sage, who saddens o'er the end,
Tracks back the causes, tremble lest he find
The seeds—thy wars, thy pomp, and thy profusion
Sowed in a heartless court and breadless people,
Grew to the tree from which men shaped the scaffold."

"When, on the music on the leaves of life,
Chill silence falls."

Unriddle this who can.

We will but add some notice of Mr. Bulwer's wit. This shows itself chiefly in puns, and puns in a *French court* on English idioms.

Grammont. "The women say she's plain,"

(the modern English for homely).

Lauzun. "The women. Oh!
The case it is that's *plain*. She must be beautiful."

They stick a pair of long white feathers on the fool Montespan's head, and Lauzun tells him:

"Would you be safe, show always the *white feather*."

Then the feathers are likened to horns, and he is told

"You are not the first courtier who has *plumed*
Himself upon his horns."

Lauzun, when disgraced, is told

"You've *played the knave*, and *thrown away the king*."

And this (the last is borrowed from George Selwyn) is the wit of the Augustan court of Louis XIV.