1837

Book Review of The Pickwick Papers

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THE PICKWICK PAPERS.

Jules denoarner came vocens abeditter.

It may be remembered that some few months ago we presented to the public a critical notice of the Histories of Mr. Tullumblo and Oliver Twist, by Boz, together with certain other tales and sketches by the hands of imitators, to whom the aforementioned Boz is as a god.

Wherein their style delights to dress itself.

In performing that dissection, we could not disguise the loathing with which we approached the offensive subject, and thought ourselves fairly entitled to the thanks of the public for the performance of the unpleasant duty.

And here let us say a word to vindicate our craft from a common but unjust imputation. We are aware that many persons suppose that we have more pleasure in blaming than applauding, and that we indulge in a wayward spleen in seeking out subjects of critical censure. If this were so, it would indeed be a wayward taste, for it could only be indulged at our own expense. We must do violence to ourselves, either by repressing pathetically portrayed, the objects of our compassion; or by continuing ourselves to read those of an opposite character. That we do this last is certain; but reason as well as candor demands that we should be believed when we say that we do it from a sense of duty, and not because we can anticipate in the review of a designing work, any pleasure equivalent to the pain endured in the perusal. We can well believe, that when we have submitted to the toil and torture of wading through hundreds of pages without instruction and without amusement, we come to judgment in a humme that savors somewhat of harshness. The very disgust we feel at our task gives us an air of eagerness to its execution. Just as a man who kills a chinch goes to work with manifold zeal, and is obviously pleased at his success; but, all the while, he would almost as soon be bitten by the vermin as pointed out by its stings.

We never felt this analogy so strongly as in preparing to review the work, the title of which stands at the head of this article. The causes which have driven us to the performance of this unpleasant task, require a word of explanation.

We have said that we had thought ourselves fairly entitled to public thanks for the operation already performed on Tullumblo and Twist. The reader will therefore appreciate our astonishment on finding that this very act had aroused a host of enemies, by whom a shower of puny missiles have been launched against us. We ought indeed to have anticipated it, for we might have learned from our friend Pooreling, "that so soon as you catch a gander by the tail, the whole flock, geese, goslings and all, have a fellow feeling, and begin to cackle and hiss like so many devils bewitched." But we are now to the craft, and besides we had no idea that there were so many disposed to make common cause with the offender in this instance. Indeed we could not account for it, until in one of the notices of our critique, we find the writer spoken of thus: "Like all other professional writers, Boz must produce whether the fit be on them or not, he sometimes falls short of his accustomed excellence; but, in reading his sketches, our surprise is, that one whose pen is never idle, should so seldom fail in the effect at which he aims."

Now if our quarrel were with Mr. Boz himself, the irritation herein conveyed would at once have disarmed our resentment. We can never forget how strongly our pity was excited, when, nearly half a century ago, we read, in Robinson Raskins, Miss Williams's account of the untolerable wretchedness of another sort of professional purveyor to the depraved tastes of the public, "wherein business it is to soothe, suffer and obey, and to affect gaiety and good-humour, when her soul is stung with resentment and disdain, and her heart loaded with grief and affliction."

The recollection of this passage has had the effect of making the poor creatures, whose miseries are thus pathetically portrayed, the objects of our compassion; but we owe it to ourselves to add, that it has made us feel at our own expense, making the poor creatures, whose miseries are thus once more pleased with the increase of their wretchedness.

And here let us say a word to vindicate our craft from a common but unjust imputation. We are aware that many persons suppose that we have more pleasure in blaming than applauding, and that we indulge in a wayward spleen in seeking out subjects of critical censure. If this were so, it would indeed be a wayward taste, for it could only be indulged at our own expense. We must do violence to ourselves, either by repressing pathetically portrayed, the objects of our compassion; or by continuing ourselves to read those of an opposite character. That we do this last is certain; but reason as well as candor demands that we should be believed when we say that we do it from a sense of duty, and not because we can anticipate in the review of a designing work, any pleasure equivalent to the pain endured in the perusal. We can well believe, that when we have submitted to the toil and torture of wading through hundreds of pages without instruction and without amusement, we come to judgment in a humme that savors somewhat of harshness. The very disgust we feel at our task gives us an air of eagerness to its execution. Just as a man who kills a chinch goes to work with manifest zeal, and is obviately, by the accomplished excellence; but, in sending his sketches, the reader will therefore appreciate our astonishment on finding that this very act had aroused a host of enemies, by whom a shower of puny missiles have been launched against us. We ought indeed to have anticipated it, for we might have learned from our friend Pooreling, "that so soon as you catch a gander by the tail, the whole flock, geese, goslings and all, have a fellow feeling, and begin to cackle and hiss like so many devils bewitched." But
finite. But we forget that we had undertaken to explain how we came to give our attention to the Pickwick papers.

The same writer from whom we have already quoted, says: "It is rather late in the day to speak of the author of the Pickwick papers as 'a Merry Andrew and a Jack Pudding to a drunken club,' and the reviewer should have read more than one or two detached tales, before pronouncing a condemnation so sweeping against a writer who, in his peculiar walk, has never been approached."

Another writer (or the same writer in another paper of the same city) writes thus: "The sweeping condemnation of the author of the Pickwick papers, shows, either that the editor had not read those delightful drolleries, or that he is lamentably insensible to the charms of humor. No man, we venture to pronounce, with a proper perception of the ludicrous, can read the volume published under the title of the Pickwick papers, without appreciating the comic talent of the writer. Almost every page presents some ugly stroke of satire—some genuine touch of fun, at which the gratest may smile; and though there is necessarily a strain of exaggeration, for the purpose of brightening effect, the development of character, and the pictures of manners, show that the author is a close and careful observer. What, for example, can be better than the trial of Bumstead or Pickwick—what truer picture, slightly enlarged on the peculiar walk of the Boston—what more accurate description of the whims worthiness of the Bar?"

When we add to this, that by this same writer we are reproached as having given undue praise to a work which we condemned, the reader will not be surprised when we assure him that the above extracts show that our censor (or censors) had not read the article of which they speak. Such as may have favored it with a perusal, will recollect that we avowed that we had read nothing of the author's works but the two tales under review, and that we did not descry him as a Merry Andrew, &c. We did but excuse our want of familiarity with his writings, by saying that we had been discouraged by the mountebank designation that he had chosen; that the appliances which we had been to stowed on his writings had led us to suspect our judgment; that we had been desirous of an opportunity to correct it, and had seized on that afforded by the publication of two tales, put forward in such a way as to show that they were regaded by the publisher as exquisitely specimens of the writer's powers. What else could we infer? They are both very short, yet the name of each is made to give title to the volume which contains it, and is paraded on the back as a sort of fancy article, to be taken as a specimen of the wares within. We added that we had read these, and found in them all the characteristics which the name of the author led us to expect, and none of an opposite character.

Now we beg leave to assure the reader, that among our numerous censures, we have found no one who has hinted his dissent from our judgment of the works we reviewed, or attempted to vitiate the wretched taste indicated by the assumed name of Boz. At the same time we are rounded and rudely censured, because of the alleged merit of a work which we, professedly, had never seen. It seems, too, that we are to look for the highest proof of excellence even in that work, to a volume which, we believe, had not issued from the press, when our article was penned. It certainly had not then made its appearance in the South, and it was not until some weeks afterwards that we saw it announced in the papers. Then it came with a flourishing of trumpets, with the cahalistic name "Boz! Boz!! Boz!!" prefixed to the announcement. Under these circumstances we procured and read it; and, that we might do it all justice, we read the two preceding volumes. We now proceed to examine it, and when we have got through our work, we hope not to be told that it is in the "Tugs of Naugatuck," or "Watkins Tottle," or some other piece of low buffoonery that we are to look for evidences of the writer's merit.

For the purpose of illustrating the disingenuousness of our assailants, we have said that we did not publish a sweeping denunciation of our author. But we do not hesitate to affirm that we might have done so, and we freely admit that we meant to do it. That we did not, was not for want of our own good will, but because of a blunder of our compositor. To correct this error, and to show what we did do, we republish two paragraphs of our former article, and with them two others which were omitted, as we have said, by oversight of the compositor. The reader will see that the two latter are necessary to the sense and effect of the former; and, that he can hardly doubt that, if the reviewers had really read the article, they would have dealt us a deadly blow through this gap in our armor.

[We would not willingly have our veracity suspectcd, and we cannot venture to vindicate it by giving extracts at once extravagant and dull, preposterous yet not ludicrous. We feel therefore that it becomes us to account for that sort of popularity which encourages such writers to pour forth their trash upon the public, and secures them such a sale as makes their works more profitable to the bookseller than others of greater merit.]

We take it that there is nothing that tradesmen like so well as quick returns. This is true of booksellers as well as others, and therefore nothing suits the bookseller better than a work for which a ready market is afforded by the city where he publishes. On such sales he saves all discounts and commissions, and this secures to himself not only a quick return, but a larger profit than on books which must be sent abroad in quest of purchasers.

Hence it is, that if the city where he has established himself affords enough of a particular class of readers, he may take up at once an edition of 3,000 or 3,000 copies of any work, that class is his public. Nothing therefore will suit him better than a light work, exactly adapted to the low and vulgar taste of counter-jumpers and milliner's apprentices in a city where there are enough of such characters for his purpose. As these are good customers, we do not mean to deny his right to minister to their taste, deprived as it is; but we have a right to complain, when they to whom it belongs to deal out the praise which is the great reward of a writer's labors, assigns to the scribblers who write for this privileged agency, the high honors that belong of right to genius. Is it not enough, that writers of whom their country has reason to be proud; whose works will be sure to find a place among the standard literature of the language,
and will be read and admired when they are no more; in it not enough that the profits of such writers are
limited by the want of a sufficient number of readers in the immediate vicinity of public halls, to understand and appreciate their works? Have those, who preside over the press, and thus occupy the avenues to the pub-
lic, a right to add insult to this injustice, and to tell the
sensitive child of genius, that the offspring of his brain
is valueless, in comparison with the ribald stuff of
Pickwick clubs, and the broad vulgarians of a fellow
who calls himself Boz?
When we read that former Wilkinson's daughter
Gerry, chooses to change her name for that of Chur-
bina de Willoughby, we infer that her brain was turn-
ed.
We afterwards knew that it must have been so,
or she would have understood at once the true charac-
ter of the adventurer who introduced himself to her
notice as Alphonse Mortimer Montmorency. What
then shall we say to a writer, who having a name de-
ducted from his ancestors, and another conferred by his
spoons in baptism, renounces both, and takes by pre-
ference the vulgar designation of Boz. We feel that
the assumption of such a name was an insult to his
countrymen. The repudiation of his vulgar abusivi-
ties, was an insult to the people of Philadelphia, and
the dissemination of them is an insult to the whole con-
tinent. We trust that Virginia will resent such purt
or her share, and that the failure of this attempt
to publish on her the disgusting trash contained in
these volumes, may discourage the like attempts in
future. It shall not be our fault if a copy of this pub-
lication is sold on this side of the Potomac. 

"That will be the view, just mentioned, this Association has
performed. It is therefore hereby constituted, and that
Samuel Pickwick, Esq., G. C. M. P. C., Tracy Tupman, Esq., M. C. C., Augustus Snod-
glass, Esq., M. P. C., and Nathaniel Winkle, Esq., M. C. C.,
are hereby summoned and enjoined henceforth to
that they be requested to forward, from time to time, authenti-
cated accounts of their journeys and investigations; of their ob-
servations of knowledge, and the diffusion of learning.

That with the view, just mentioned, this Association has
been referred to, would consider it a proposal, canvassing
from the address of Samuel Pickwick, Esq., M. C. M. P. C. and three
other Pickwickians, hereunder named, for forming a new
branch of United Pickwickians, under the title of The Corre-
responding Society of the Pickwick Club.

That the said proposal has received the sanction and ap-
proval of this Association.

That the Corresponding Society of the Pickwick Club, is
therefore hereby constituted; and that Samuel Pickwick, Esq.,
G. C. M. P. C., Tracy Tupman, Esq., M. C. C., Augustus Snod-
glass, Esq., M. P. C., and Nathaniel Winkle, Esq., M. C. C.,
are hereby summoned and enjoined henceforth to
that they be requested to forward, from time to time, authenti-
cated accounts of their journeys and investigations; of their ob-
servation of knowledge, and the diffusion of learning.

The first instance that we have of the good sense and
amiable qualities of this modest gentleman, is found
in a vain-glory speech which he makes on the adop-
tion of the foregoing resolutions, and a bullying scene
that follows, in which he offers wanton insult to a fel-
ower member, provokes a retert, demands an apology,
and accepts of one which is but a repetition of the
offence. Now we presume we shall be told, that in
this there is a design to show up certain disgraceful
scenes which sometimes occur in graver deliberative
bodies. To this we have no objection; but we cannot
award any high praise to a writer, who, when he wishes
to expose any particular folly, fails to provide himself
with a proper character for the purpose. He certainly
cannot be said to draw from nature, who charges all
sorts of follies on all sorts of persons, and in giving
credit to any idea that comes into his head, casts not
through what mouth he utters it. We took notice that
one of the applicants of Boz and censors of ourselv-
has taken occasion to say that Boz could have written
Tristram Shandy, but that Sterne could not have writ-
ted this work. We firmly believe this last. We do
not think that Sterne could have made uncle Toby play
the bully and braggart.

To illustrate what we mean by this, take the follow-
in, in addition to the Parliamentary scene, which is
too long for insertion. We refer to Boz, and the company are just assembled.

You mean to dance!" said Winkle.

"Of course I do," replied Mr. Pickwick. "Don't you see I am dressed for the purpose!" and Mr. Pickwick called attention
to his spangled silk stockings, and neatly tied pumps.

"You in silk stockings!" exclaimed Mr. Tupman anxiously.

"And why not, sir—why not?" said Mr. Pickwick, turning
warmly upon him.

"Oh, of course there is no reason why you shouldn't wear
them," responded Mr. Tupman.

"I imagine not, sir—I imagine not," said Mr. Pickwick, in a
very perspicuous tone.
Mr. Tupman had contemplated a laugh, but he found it was a serious matter: so he looked grave, and said they were a very pretty pattern.

"I hope they are," said Mr. Pickwick, raising his eyes upon his friend. "You see nothing extraordinary in these stockings, or stockings, I trust, sir?"

"Certainly not," said Mr. Tupman. "I walked away; and Mr. Pickwick's countenance resumed its customary benign expression.

Now Mr. Tupman is the most inoffensive of beings, and Mr. Pickwick's particular friend and colleague. Again, see his conduct to his other particular friend and colleague, the harmless, unassuming Winkle, who has presumed to say he could shoot, and had got a full in the attempt.

"Are you hurt?" inquired Mr. Benjamin Allen, with great anxiety. "I wish you'd let me budge you," said Mr. Benjamin with great expectation.

"No, thank you," replied Mr. Winkle heartily. "I really think you had better," said Allen. "Thank you," replied Mr. Winkle; "I'd rather not."

"What do you think, Mr. Pickwick?" inquired Bob Sawyer. Mr. Pickwick was excited and indignant. He beckoned to Mr. Weller, and said in a stern voice, "Take his boots off." "No; but really I had scarcely begun," remonstrated Mr. Winkle.

"Take his boots off," repeated Mr. Pickwick firmly. "The command was not to be resisted. Mr. Winkle allowed Sam to stay in silence.

"Lift him up," said Mr. Winkle. Sam assisted him to rise. Mr. Pickwick retired a few paces apart from the bystanders, and, beckoning his friend to approach, fixed a searching look upon him, and smiled in a low, distinct, and emphatic tone, these remarkable words:

"You're a humbug, sir."

"A what!" said Mr. Winkle, starting.

"A humbug, sir. I will speak plainer, if you wish it. An impostor, sir." With these words, Mr. Pickwick turned slowly on his heel, and rejoined his friends.

Now these boatmen are stuck on upon a character of great benevolence, and of much active benevolence. Why this is done, the reader must conjecture. Not, surely, because it is in nature.

So much for the amiable part of Mr. Pickwick's character. As to his intelligence, the reader is prepared, by the introductory passage which we have inserted, to understand all that is said about that as ironical. Yet the writer is perfectly earnest. Mr. Pickwick is not only represented as making himself universally acceptable to men of sense, but he is frequently made to say things that none but a man of sense—of good and right sense,—could say. Yet he often utters them under circumstances in which a man of sense would have been silent, and they are accompanied with all sorts of absurdities of action, and diversified by all sorts of absurdities in speech and writing. Take the following peep into his note book on the subject of the Towns of Sierra, Rochester, Brompton, and Chatham.

"The principal productions of these towns," says Mr. Pickwick, "appear to be soldiers, sailors, Jews, chalk, shrimps, officers, and dock-yard men. The commodities chiefly exposed for sale in the public streets, are, marine stores, hard-boys, apples, fin-fish and oysters. The streets present a lively and animated appearance, occasioned chiefly by the curiosity of the military. It is truly delightful to a philosophic mind, to see these gallant men, staggering along under the influence of an overflow, both of animal and ardent spirits; more especially when we remember that the following them about, and jesting with them, affords a cheap and innocent amusement for the key popularities.

Nothing (adds Mr. Pickwick) can exceed their good humor. It was but the day before my arrival, that one of them had been most grossly insulted in the house of a publican. The bar-attendant had positively refused to draw him any more liquor; in return for which, he had (nearly to playfulness) drawn his bayonet, and wounded the girl in the shoulders. And yet this ill-fated fellow was the very first to go down to the house next morning, and express his readiness to overlook the matter, and forget what had occurred!

Now such enormities as are here spoken of, ought to be held up to abhorrence, and they who pallitate them should be treated with scorn and derision. But had the writer no better way of doing these things, than to make his sensible and benevolent hero an absurd and brutal fool? We may perhaps be told, in vindication of these absurdities, of the good sense and madness of Don Quixotte. But Mr. P. is no madman. He does not even act his absurdities under the influence of any fixed idea. He is merely a man of plain good sense, and a gentleman, who is made to play the fool and the blackguard whenever it suits the coarse humor of the author to use him in these characters.

We cannot go on at length into the analysis of this very natural character, the preposterous incongruities of which are exhibited in every page. To such a creature of the imagination, we find ourselves incapable of assigning any identity. Could we individualize him as a sensible gentleman, we should be continually disgusted with the instances of his egotism, insolence and folly. Could we see him before us distinctly as a brute and blockhead, we should find ourselves often asking how he comes by the sentiments of a gentleman and man of the world. As it is, he is a "merry, merry queer hotchpotch of inconsistent qualities, the cropetted with all sorts of absurdities of action and folly, illustrated by impossible incidents."

Mr. Snodgrass is a romantic gentleman and a poet; but why we are told this or anything else of his character, we are at a loss to conjecture, as Mr. S. comes up exactly to Farquhar's idea of a man who "says little, thinks less, and does—nothing at all." As we see no particular reason why this should be predicated of a poet, rather than of any body else, we cannot discover that Mr. Snodgrass's function in this work is any other, than to be the recipient of one of those enphatic names, in which so much of Pickwickian wit consists.

We say "so much," because this is not the only source. There is nothing from which Mr. Dickens draws so largely as the ludicrous of situation. This is one of the same nature with that practical wit commonly called horse-play, which consists in the dexterous removal
of a gentleman's chair as he is in the act of sitting down; and such like feats. If Mr. Dickens can exhibit a character with his heels in the air, he laughs and chuckles, and rubs his hands, and thinks he has achieved a great character. Now Mr. Winkle, the third of Mr. Pickwick's colleagues, is the chosen subject for this sort of exertment. He is a poor fool, and of all imaginable fools the most silly. He is put upon a tall horse, and made to dismount that he may not be able to get up again. He is provided with a gun to shoot his friend Tupman by accident; (a capital joke!) He is set on skates to be held sprawling on the ice. He is represented as the greatest coward in the world, and is made to go through the motions of a duel, and is on the point of being shot, because, having shut his eyes in very fear, he cannot perceive that the challenger in a man he had never seen. His adversary however, discovers, discovers, and so poor Mr. Winkle escapes with his life.

So much for the Pickwickians proper; the principal subjects of the work, through which these three personages are kept on the stage without uttering one word of wit or sense, or even of absurdity. The only trait of character in any one of them (except Mr. Winkle's cowardice,) is the following, which, for the sake of merriment. He is a mere fool, a mere of nil illu.

Dr. Snodgrass and made to dissuade that subjects of the work, through which these three personages get up again. He is provided with a gun to shoot his friend Tupman, and set on skates to be laid sprawling on the ice. He is provided with a gun to shoot his friend Tupman by accident; (a capital joke!) He is set on skates to be held sprawling on the ice. He is represented as the greatest coward in the world, and is made to go through the motions of a duel, and is on the point of being shot, because, having shut his eyes in very fear, he cannot perceive that the challenger in a man he had never seen. His adversary however, discovers, discovers, and so poor Mr. Winkle escapes with his life.

...
"My father, sir, was a coachman. A visowor he was, and fat enough for any thing—uncommon fat, to be said. His misfortune, and leaves him four hundred pounds. Down goes he to the Commons, to see the lawyer, and draw the-blame—worry—smart—top boots on—nosey boy in his button-holes—breath arris—green air—quite the gent. Goes through the archway, thinking how he should make the money; comes to the porter, touches his hat. License, sir, license?" "What's that?" says my father. "License, sir, says he. "What license?" says my father. "Mr. Savage, sir," says the porter. "Dash my vest, sir," says my father, "I never thought of that. I think you want one, sir," says the porter. "I must pull up, and think a bit. "No," says he, "I'll do. No more talk, sir." "I can't put on it, sir," says my father.

--Sam Wellers, p. 42

The legalities in Dickens is admirable. We should be unjut to Mr. Dickens, if we failed to notice the character of old Wardle, an honest, hearty, hospitable country gentleman of small extent. It is admirably drawn, with the Christmas gambols at his house are delightful. We have seen nothing like it from the pen of any writer of this century. We hope it is drawn from the life, for if so, then something yet remains of that England which was the country of our ancestors, and from which we derived manners and customs, and we care to conjecture. The reader will be yet more puzzled, when, after reading what follows, he is told that this chattering biped not only passes with Messrs. Pickwick & Co. for a gentleman, but that a great part of the story is made up of his successful attempts to introduce himself, rag, and dirt, and all, into good society, in that character. The only characters of any pith in the whole book, are Sam Wellers and his father. The former is Mr. Pickwick's servant, the latter a mail-coach man. Sam is a slow-witted knowing coxcomb, whose dialect sets off his queer sayings. He is really amusing in his way, and has more sense and more humor than all the rest put together. He figures chiefly in the second volume, and we cheerfully admit that that volume, as containing the record of his sayings and doings, is worth the money that it sells for. His father too is amusing in his way, and quite sanguine. But a queer story is to be told, and it happens to be convenient to lay it on him, and so he is made to go quite out of his character, and act the part of a fool. The story is told by Sam in his best way, and we give it as illustrating his peculiar manner, and displaying the monstrous absurdities of the author.
scribed, and of these, in some instances, the sketches are most felicitous. Take the following example.

"Delightful situation, this," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Delightful!" echoed Mrs. Snelgrove, Tupman, and Winkle.

"Well, I think it be," said Mr. Wardle.

"There a better spot o' ground in all Kreel, sir," said the hard-headed man with the pippin face; "there ain't, imlecc, who wield it for their purpose. We are old enough to keep a distance from the saloons of fashion, all those who were less endowd by the goods of fortune. None but the wealthy could afford to make themselves fit to be seen in those scenes which rank had determined to appropriate to its own.

When the day of Liberty and Equality arrived, a reaction in fashion took place exactly suited to the occasion. In its first revolution it went to the extreme of sentiment and nothing but the invincible delicacy of nature preserved a single feature of its former splendour. As it was, they came so near it, that our mistresses would blush to tell their daughters of the fashions of their youth. But the genius of that age of revolution had seized the sceptre of fashion, and would suffer no expense. In dress in which the daughters of the meek might vie with the daughter of the nabob. In short, in that day a lady might dress, for ten dollars, as well as fashion permitted any lady to dress. Progressively a change of an opposite character has taken place. Dress is now hardly less expensive than before the French Revolution. But the change is not in the material, but in the fabric and the quantity consumed. The manufacturing interest is now lord of the manufactory, and nothing but the wealthy could afford to make themselves fit to be seen in those scenes which rank had determined to appropriate to its own.

The inque...
the triumphs of grinning, obscenity, and buffoonery, over taste, and wit, and sense and decency.

But in this sort of literary anarchy, to have the effect of reversing the laws of taste, and repealing the canons of criticism? Are we in this, as in everything else, to bow to the decision of the uno ure pluris? And will it not be true in the end as it was in the beginning, (whatever revolutions may take place in the Republic of Letters) that the candidate for literary immortality should take as his maxim, "sete rei nulli equum planta- dere?" We trust so. We know that the appeal to posterity is always deified. From the nature of the case it must be so, and most especially when the taste of the age is deprived by any cause, and when he who writes to please it, is like to outrage his own reputation. But the hope to be remembered by posterity, to "blend our voices with the future visions" of those in whose veins our blood shall flow, and to embalm our memory in the language of our country, is too dear to be relinquished for the sake of an hour. Necessity may constrain the choice, but the generous spirit of true genius will submit with reluctance, will curse its patrons in bitterness of heart, and sighing, say "my poverty, but not my will consents." It is our confidence in the correctness of these ideas that emboldens us to defy the authority of that which calls itself the public. We know that the periodical press relieves for the most part on the support of the very class of ruffians of which we have been speaking, and must be expected to take the part of a writer who is a favorite with its patrons. We are, therefore, not surprised to find laudatory notices of the writings of Bosp prefixed to this publication, from the Examiner, the Morning Chronicle, the John Bull, the Tyre Mercury, &c., &c. But we must be allowed to say, that such notices from the Edinburgh or Quarterly Review would have surprised us. With these most gently critics we do not presume to rank ourselves; but we hope our ambition may be allowed to seek its honor from the same hands that delight to crown their labors with approbation; and we are surprised to find our censure raised by their silence. We would that we too could excuse by silence. We should have escaped an unpleasant task.

Among those who avow their opposition to our views in regard to this kind of writing, we are sorry and surprised to find Mr. Noah. We were sorry because we hold his taste in high respect, and surprised because we had expected his approbation of our attempt to repel a lawless invasion of his peculiar province. Were we insensible to the polished wit and easy humor of this gentleman, we might be less indignant at the attempt to palm on the public the coarse counterfeits which we condemn. If he thinks that we have no taste for fun, we can hardly expect to find favor in his eyes. We beg leave to assure him that we enjoy a laugh as much as any one we know. But we cannot laugh at the word of command, and we cannot keep our visible faculties on the stretch through six or seven hundred pages of grinning buffoonery. It is the same thing with the public, and with all the modes and forms of eloquence. Let the wit or the orator blow a trumpet before him, and proclaim his purpose to make us laugh or cry, and straightway our muscles assume an inexorable rigidity, and the fountain of our tears dries up.

But a ray of wit that lights on a serious subject; a flash of mirth that smiles through tears; or a tear, that flows unbidden from eyes that seem summed to shed them, command all our sympathy. The charm is in the suddenness and the contrast. We can even dispense with the former, and bear to see a solemn coxcomb shown up at some length. But tales et pérdris ; tales et pérdris: will never do.

We doubt not that these ideas are not new to Mr. Noah. We are sure he approves them, and are willing to abide his judgment of our censures, not of Mr. Dickens, but of Bos — not of the author, but the school. We have no great cities on this side of the Potomac, and therefore no mobs, civil or literary. Our slaves are not tolerated Chronicls, tho John Bull, tho Tyne Mercury, no doubt that in that answer we should find our full answer to the decision of the Republic of Letters. We stand on our defence against imported innovations. We fight with aris et fas, and if Mr. Noah does not approve our endeavor to repel all foreign invasions of our rights of property or taste, we are willing to stand condemned.

If Mr. Paulding could be expected to speak, we would propose another test. We have the highest respect for that gentleman. His liberality, candor and manly sense are worthy of all praise, and his is that inoffensive mind which

\[\text{Gates the widow's heart to sing:} \]
\[\text{That the tear were in her eye.}\]

Now if he would answer ex animo, whether he is not conscious that the dismalmest appetite of his public has driven him into extravagancies which did violence to his own taste and judgment; and whether, in thinking of his reputation as the inheritance of his children, he does not look on these things with regret, we have no doubt that in that answer we should find our full vindication.

We are aware that we have no right to ask this question, and no reason to expect an answer. We are aware that the question itself implies a censure. But we beg leave to assure him it is very slight. We have no thought of placing his works in the same category with those of Mr. Dickens. The gentlemanly non de gue re of Launcellof Langstiffe, Esq. and the vulgar designation of Bos, will express the difference between them.

But we expect that we expect no answer from him, and again refer ourselves to the arbitrament of Mr. Noah. If he condemns we will stand condemned, and we will consent to abdicate our throne of criticism, and burn our sceptre. His be the fiat. \[\text{Neces absintur:} \]
\[\text{Judex dum auter!}\]

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