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THE
POETS AND POETRY
OF AMERICA

A SATIRE BY "LAVANTE," REPRINTED FROM THE
ORIGINAL, PUBLISHED IN PHILADELPHIA IN
1847. WITH AN INTRODUCTORY ARGU-
MENT BY GEOFFREY QUARLES, TO
SHOW THAT IT WAS WRITTEN

BY

EDGAR ALLAN POE



NEW YORK
BENJAMIN & BELL

1887

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INTRODUCTORY ARGUMENT.

POE (*poet*) + POE (*eccentric*) = "LAVANTE."

WHILE pursuing a course of reading in quite another direction than that of either satire or Poe, the very small publication which is the subject of this argument came before our notice. The title promised something of interest, a cursory perusal provoked the surmise that this was no ordinary production, and soon the irresistible impression forced itself—"surely this must be the work of Poe!"

Then followed the natural distrust of so rapid a judgment, and the improbabilities trooped up in formidable array,—can it be that the still living contemporaries of the poet know nothing of this; can it be that the biographers of Poe have never heard of it; can it be that this "Lavante" is unknown to the dictionary-makers and the writers of the time? These and many other difficulties suggested themselves, yet the careful re-perusal of the satire only deepened the original impression into something very like conviction, until the case, after investigation, stood, and stands, thus: Either Poe wrote this satire, or somebody else, still unknown, wrote it with Poe's experience, Poe's doctrines, Poe's animus, and in Poe's language.

As a matter of course we set about a systematic inquiry into whatever promised to yield practical re-

sults, and it has been as exhaustive as has been practicable. The list of publications searched in this quest may as well be given at once.

Griswold's edition of *Poe's Works, with Life*, 4 vols. Ingram's *Life, Letters, and Opinions of Poe*, 2 vols., 1880. Gill's *Life of Poe*. R. H. Stoddard's *New Memoir of Poe*, 1887. Woodberry's *Biography of Poe, American Men of Letters*, 1885. Stedman's *Essay on Poe, American Poets*, 1884. *The Broadway Journal*, 1845; *American Literary Magazine*, 1847-48; *Godey's Lady's Book*, 1847-48; *Southern Literary Messenger*, 1835-36-37, 1845-48; *Southern Literary Journal*, 1836; *Graham's Magazine*, 1841-48; *Littell's Living Age*, 1847-48; *Southern Quarterly Review*, 1847-48; *Literary American*, 1848; *Evening Mirror*, 1841-42; *Philadelphia Ledger* (daily), 1847; *Dictionary of Pseudonyms* (Cushing and Frey); *ditto* (Haynes); Hudson's *History of American Journalism*; Poole's *Index of Periodical Literature*; Allibone's *Dictionary of Authors*; L. A. Wilmer's *Our Press Gang*, 1859; Mrs. Whitman's *Poe and his Critics*, 1860, besides notable articles on Poe in the *North American Review*, 1856, and in later American and English magazines. Personal inquiries have also been made of eminent librarians and contemporary authors of note. The sum-total of all these investigations is that no one of these showed any knowledge whatever of "Lavante," nor, in fact, of the existence of the satire until informed of it. This negative evidence being confirmatory, so far as it counts, of the theory here discussed, it remains only to lay the facts before the reader, and commend them to his consideration.

The satire is written in heroic couplets in the manner of Dryden, Pope, and their imitators. It is fairly well printed, in mere pamphlet form, small octavo, or 12mo, and the poem of about 950 lines fills 33 pages. The title-page (which we reproduce almost in fac-simile) contains no name of author, but the foot of the poem has the signature "Lavante." It seems to have been a cheap production, five or ten cents at most. The appearance of the thing is altogether against its being a work of merit. We took it up as a purely local trifle, probably coarse, certainly ephemeral; it was its intrinsic merit that won closer attention.

It is of some importance to introduce the satire by observations of an *a priori* character. Poe was not an ordinary man, and any work of his is not to be correctly judged by ordinary standards. In this instance it is advisable and necessary to review the antecedent probabilities and the circumstantial evidence before examining the claims of the satire itself. It may be said by some, at the outset, that Poe never did write a poetical satire, *ergo* it is very unlikely that this should be his. We therefore proceed to combat any such prejudice by showing that the improbability is by no means so great as may be supposed. The subject may be considered thus: First, the arguments in favour of the Poe authorship; second, the arguments against it being the production of another pen; and, third, the characteristics and intrinsic quality of the satire.

First, then, it is undoubted that Poe had the gift of satire, and the animus to exercise it. The story of his career is the story of conscious genius imper-

fectly appreciated, of ambition foiled, thwarted, and soured into the bitterest scorn and spite. In his masterly and profoundly sympathetic essay Mr. E. C. Stedman speaks of the "obvious ferocity" of Poe's keen satire, which "raised a hubbub in its day and made him the bogey of his generation." This "Lavante" satire is the handiwork of a disappointed poet, who resolves to wind up long years of writhing under the consciousness of being unappreciated and misjudged, by putting on record his protest, his defence, his theory of true poetry, and his reasons for begrudging the laurels bestowed on his less worthy contemporaries, whom he satirizes by name. In the admirable "Life" by Ingram (vol. i., p. 92) it is stated that young Poe used to write lively squibs and satires at West Point, "upon which his reputation had been built up." A stronger testimony is that of the series of papers entitled the "Autography," on which the above-named work may again be quoted (vol. i., p. 130). In the *Southern Literary Messenger* (December, 1835) Poe "commenced that system of literary scarification—that crucial dissection of book-making mediocrities—which, while it created throughout the States terror of his powerful pen, at the same time raised up against him a host of implacable although unknown enemies, who henceforth never hesitated to accept and repeat any story to his discredit." This series of satires was elaborated, according to Mr. Woodberry in his well-weighed, just, and comprehensive *Life of Poe*, p. 153 (*American Men of Letters* series), into "a concise view of over a hundred native writers, in three papers, entitled 'Autography,' an

Expansion of similar articles in the *Messenger* for 1836." We shall recur to these "Autography" papers; for the present it suffices to state that they exhibit a powerful gift of satire and an abundant animus.

Evidence of both the power and the will to pulverize his rivals in poetry and journalism teems through all Poe's critical writings. He practically created the art of sound, scientific criticism in this country. He held clear views, and stated them with a force which, if not always gracious in itself, was gracefully put. This won him the applause of the general reader, but also the ill-will of the writers with whom he had to compete, and the editors on whose favour he had to rely for employment and fame.

N. P. Willis, for whom Poe sub-edited the *Evening Mirror* in 1844, tells how he had occasionally to request Poe "to erase a passage coloured too highly with his resentments against society and mankind" (Ingram, i., 262). About the same time Poe wrote a caustic satire on "The Mutual Admiration Society of Editors, entitled 'The Literary Life of Thingum Bob, Esq.'" The "Autography" satires extended from 1835 to 1841, and it is to be noted, as bearing upon the date of the "Lavante" poem (1847), that Poe waxed more bitter and furious as the years went by. In 1845 Poe's writings in the "*Broadway Journal*," then partly edited by him, plunged him into perpetual troubles, as illustrated in his self-defence against the champions of Longfellow, whom Poe so bitterly charged with "plagiarism," "stealing," etc. In the same *Journal* for May, 1845, Poe reproduced a complimentary parody of "The Raven," which he headed "A Gentle Puff." It shows he was

glad enough to avail himself of any friendly hand.
The lines, of course, refer to himself.

"Neither rank nor station heeding, with his foes around him
bleeding,
Sternly, singly, and alone his course he kept upon that
floor ;
While the countless foes attacking, neither strength nor val-
our lacking,
On his goodly armour hacking, wrought no change his vis-
age o'er,
As with high and honest aim he still his falchion proudly
bore,

Resisting error evermore."

In the same pages Poe gives this farther proof of his animosity by declaring "we ourselves have had the honour of being pirated without mercy ; . . . we have written paper after paper which attracted no notice at all until it appeared as original in *Bentley's Miscellany* or the *Paris Charivari*. The *Boston Notion* abused 'The House of Usher,' but when Bentley stole it and published it anonymously, the *Notion* not only lauded it, but copied it *in toto*" (Ingram, ii., 35). So high was the feeling of some literary circles against Poe's criticising pen, that in June, 1846, *Godcy's Lady's Book*—in which Poe had been writing a series of papers on "The Literati" of the day—announced its receipt of anonymous and other letters bidding it be careful what it allowed Poe to say. The editor added, "We are not to be intimidated," and it hints that false scandals were being circulated to Poe's detriment. Poe was plaintiff in a libel suit against the *Evening Mirror*, of which he had been sub-editor, and was awarded substantial damages, a

ect to which we shall again refer as having a peculiar significance.

The "Lavante" satire opens with a slash at Rufus Griswold. This notorious defamer of Poe had supplanted him in the editorial chair of *Graham's Journal*. In 1843 Griswold produced his book on the "Poets of America," which was a brazen attempt to place the poets upon the high and low pedestals which he decreed they were to occupy for all time. Griswold's pets have mostly dropped out of the roll of fame, and among those whom during their life he tried to amply reward with faint and reluctant praise was Edgar Allan Poe. The "Lavante" satire is not long in confessing that this Poet-making presumption of Griswold is the prime cause of its having been penned, and it heaps cruel ridicule on his attempt to play the god and dispense his favours and thunderbolts at his whim. While Griswold's name is thus prominent, *that of Poe is NOT found among the thirty poets dealt with.* Mr. George R. Graham says (1850) in his vindication of Poe (who had been editor of *Graham's Magazine*): "Mr. Griswold and Poe were for years totally uncongenial, if not enemies, and during that period Mr. Poe, in a scathing lecture upon the 'Poets of America,' 1843, gave Mr. G. some raps over the knuckles of force sufficient to be remembered. He had, too, in the exercise of his functions as critic, put to death summarily the literary reputation of some of Mr. Griswold's best friends." (In that critique Poe suggested that Griswold had accepted payment for placing certain worthless "poets" high.)

"What a cartoon," exclaims Mr. Stedman, "he (Poe) drew of the writers of his time—the corrective

of Griswold's optimistic delineations!" We hope Mr. Stedman's words may be allowed to stand good in regard to this satire, to which they so fitly apply.

The "Lavante" satire was published in 1847. That year stands out as the darkest and—judging by the known work—the least productive of Poe's life. His poor wife died in January. He had for some time been driven to drink by despair of her recovery and by despondency over his own ill-fate. After her death he kept out of sight, and told no one what he did. Says Ingram (ii., 119): "He led a secluded life with his mother-in-law, . . . rarely forsaking the precincts of his sorrow-hallowed cottage. . . . During this time he published little, and that little had been chiefly written previous to 1847." What was he so secretly pondering and concocting? For Poe was never idle in brain, though he had a strange love for secrecy and mystery. It is said he was planning "Eureka," but that was not all. (In the "New Memoir" prefixed to the 1887 Household edition of "Poe's Select Works," Mr. R. H. Stoddard—who claims that his "is the only life of Poe which can be said to be written with no intention but that of telling the truth"—informs us that "the first traceable poem after the death of Poe's wife was a piece of indifferent blank verse to 'M. L. S.')" It is true that these lines appeared in the *Home Journal* of March, 1847, but in the above edition, and in that of Griswold, they are given among the "Poems Written in Youth.")

We must go back for a moment in our quest of Poe's work in the spring of 1847.

In 1843 he lectured in Baltimore on "The Poets

and Poetry of America," in which he severely criticised the claims of the poets of the time, and gave Griswold the terrible drubbing for his book, then recently published. Two years later, in 1845, Poe repeated this lecture in New York, omitting all mention of Griswold (which omission will be cited hereafter as showing the variableness of Poe's judgments, according as he needed favours from his subjects or otherwise). The *American Review*, February, 1845, says that in this lecture Poe "made unmitigated war upon the prevalent Puffery, and dragged several popular idols from their pedestals." He was in turn made to feel the resentment of those he so unceremoniously degraded, but it only made him the more defiant. Writing a few weeks after this lecture Poe says :

"Could I have invented any terms more explicit wherewith to express my contempt of our editorial course of corruption and puffery, I should have employed them beyond the shadow of a doubt. *Should I think of anything more expressive hereafter, I will endeavour either to find or make an opportunity for its introduction to the public*" (Ingram, i., 291). We italicize these words as having a most important bearing on the following significant announcement (which we quote from Woodberry, p. 280) in the *Home Journal* of March 20, 1847, that there would shortly be published "The Authors of America, In Prose and Verse, by Edgar Allan Poe." This, says Mr. Woodberry, *never appeared*.

What more probable than that Poe was secretly versifying the essence of these lectures, partly as a novel distraction from his overwhelming trouble, partly in defiant revenge upon his censors, who kept

his pen from work that paid, and partly from another set of secret motives which will appear later.

But the "Lavante" satire was anonymous! Singularly enough, was the one poem Poe published in this same year, 1847, the "Ulalume," which appeared in the December *American Review*. And how could the note of defiance be more clear-sounded than in the words of Poe's letter, above quoted, unless it be in the last lines of the "Lavante" satire :

"Should public hate upon my pen react,
No matter this—I will not aught retract."

In this connection may be noted the following from Ingram (ii., 102) : "It was Poe's intention to republish 'THE LITERATI; some Honest Opinions about Authorial Merits and Demerits, with occasional Words of Personality, together with Marginalia, Suggestions and Essays, by Edgar A. Poe.' In December, 1846, Poe writes : 'I am now at this—body and soul.' " This somewhat ponderous prospectus may or may not have been the forerunner of the neater title-page promise in March, 1847 ; probably Poe had changed his intention meantime, as the later one promised "verse." Ingram, who loses no opportunity to have a pardonable fling at Griswold, remarks on this that the MS. of this work passed into Griswold's hands at Poe's death, and has never been seen since. It is true that Griswold had such papers from Mrs. Clemm as were thought necessary for the memoir, but there does not seem sufficient evidence to warrant this imputation. If Poe altered his intention between December, 1846, and March, 1847 (as he may well have

one, for the death of his wife had a tremendous effect upon his mind and his plans) there is nothing improbable in the supposition that the *Home Journal* announcement indicated his later determination to turn the prose, "honest opinions . . . occasional words, . . . marginalia, suggestions, and essays" into a crisp satire in verse. And supposing that he published this poem anonymously, the rough prose MS. would probably have been destroyed by himself, to prevent identification by comparisons.

Thus far, we have ascertained that Poe had ample grounds for feeling aggrieved at his contemporary poets and journalists; that he gratified his desire for revenge by satirizing them persistently and vigorously in his prose writings; that he satirized them in lectures; that he burned to lash them in some enduring composition, and pledged himself to do so in verse; that he had a long leisure time and were need for some light task that would mitigate his gloom after his wife's death in 1847; that he issued one of his best poems anonymously in that year; and that the defiant tone in which he lectured and wrote is precisely the dominant note of the "Lavante" satire. It appears possible that a new objection, or difficulty, may lurk in the following remark by Mr. Stoddard, the objection that the publishers were no great friends of Poe, and that the poet himself was too poor to publish on his own account. Mr. Stoddard says, of this period following the death of Mrs. Poe in January, 1847, "how Poe contrived to live we have to conjecture, for he is not known to have done any literary work, from which he could have derived money as he needed it." It

is unfortunate that Mr. Stoddard omits a fact which we submit has a very significant bearing on our argument, *viz.* : the fact that Poe received \$225 a. damages in his action against the *Evening Mirror* for libel. With the legal expenses this cost the *Mirror* \$492. According to Poe himself, this was on the 17th February, and the announcement of the new publication, "in prose and verse, by E. A. Poe," appeared on the 20th March. Considering his intention, his leisure, his disgust at the publishers, and his sudden acquisition of (to him) so large sum, it seems highly probable that Poe would spend \$50 or so on the secret gratification of his cherished whim.

Passing now, and as briefly as possible, to the second set of considerations, we found there were two writers of satire who might possibly have written this of "Lavante," and of these the conditions seemed to suit one. His name has already been given in the list of works consulted, Lambert A. Wilmer. Curiously enough, the only clue to Wilmer as a satirist we have found is in Poe's well-known review of "The Quacks of Helicon," by this author. This remarkable critique at first seemed to dispose of the notion that Poe was "Lavante." Further acquaintance with it, however, strongly confirmed the original impression, as will be gathered from what follows. We have not been able to discover "The Quacks of Helicon," nor converse with anyone who has read it. Nor have we succeeded in finding any reviews or notices of it except that by Poe. It seems to have been published in 1841. The only references to it that we have seen are the

title, as given in Allibone's Dictionary, and the description of Wilmer as "author of 'The Quacks of Helicon,'" on the title-page of his book, "Our Press Gang." So far as our inspection of the serials of the period warrants the judgment, it would seem as if the existence of that work is only known through Poe's review of it. It was singular that Wilmer's initials, "L. A.," should be the same as the first two letters of "Lavante," and the style, the bias, the pungency of the satire certainly resembled the characteristics of "The Quacks of Helicon," so far as the review enables us to judge. Another discouraging point was the fact that Poe speaks in the review of Wilmer as his personal friend, and warmly applauds the intention and the power of his performance. Very unlikely that a reviewer who thus praises and endorses a friend's poem should set about an identical thing, as though to rival and eclipse his friend. So the inquiry grew more interesting for the new elements of mystery and contradiction, and from here the discussion necessarily acquires, in part, a psychological character. If we find the Wilmer hypothesis eliminates itself, or tends to, then comes the problem how to make a cap out of the materials—secrecy, spite, self-gratification, and inconsistency—that shall fit the head of Poe better than that of anyone else.

Lambert A. Wilmer was a friend of Poe for a few years. He started the *Saturday Visiter* in Baltimore in 1833, and Poe won two of the prizes offered by it, which began their acquaintance. Like Poe, Wilmer was penniless, and found the way rough enough without making it worse for himself, which,

however, he invariably used to do. He contrived to set everybody by the ears, and turn his friends into foes. So far as we know him from occasional mention, and from his own autobiographical statements in "Our Press Gang," Wilmer must have been one of the most cantankerous, self-opinionated men ever known. He bears out, and actually glories in, the less formidable facts included in the letter of Poe which we are about to cite, that he (Wilmer) had to leave Philadelphia "on tramp," penniless and friendless, and from that time until about 1853 he was always in poverty, and being scouted because of his unfortunate habit of saying the wrong thing at the wrong time to the wrong person. The "Press Gang" book is his Parthian shaft at the journalistic profession, which he had exchanged for some commercial interest, and he revels in malicious glee, as he "exposes" the thousand and one rascalities that degrade every member, great and small, of "Our Press Gang"—with the solitary exception (of course) of the virtuous Wilmer.

Now to recur to Poe's review of Wilmer's 184 satire. He reviews it, not because of, but in spite of its qualities. He says candidly the author of "The Quacks of Helicon" is his friend, and he wishes the poem success, yet in the very outset Poe proceeds to damn it for its "gross obscenity," and the "filth which disgraces it."

What is the meaning of this? It discloses itself in the avowal by Poe that he goes out of his way to do a disagreeable act, solely because "it is the truth, and for that reason we wish it God-speed." Here is to be noted Poe's overpowering desire to chastise his

rivals and censors by any sort of rod, however dirty, if only it leaves a mark. This is worth emphasizing for the present purpose, and we therefore make the following extracts from his review :

" We repeat, *it is* the truth which he (Wilmer) has spoken. . . . He has asserted that we are clique-ridden ; and who does not smile at the truism of that assertion ? He maintains that chicanery is, with us, a far surer road than talent to distinction in letters. Who gainsays this ? . . . The intercourse between critic and publisher, as it now almost universally stands, is comprised either in the paying and pocketing of blackmail, as the price of a simple forbearance, or in a direct system of petty and contemptible bribery. . . . Is there any man of good feeling and of ordinary understanding . . . who does not feel a thrill of bitter indignation . . . as he calls to mind instance after instance of the purest, the most unadulterated quackery in letters, which has risen to a high post in the apparent popular estimation. . . . We should have no trouble in pointing out, to-day, some twenty or thirty so-called literary personages, who, if not idiots, as we half think them, or if not hardened to all sense of shame by a long course of disingenuousness, will now blush . . . and tremble. . . . With the help of a hearty goodwill, even *we* may yet tumble them down."

It is beyond dispute that Poe did "tumble down" a good many worthless idols, as all his competent biographers testify. Mr. Stoddard, however, ventures to think—or rather, to say—"Poe destroyed no reputation ; he was a powerless iconoclast." Yet in the *Mail and Express* of April 23, 1887, the writer of the "Literary Notes" speaks of "nonentities like Percival and Sprague."

The case now stands thus, Poe has stretched a point, against his better judgment and good taste, to drag the "filthy" satire of a friend into unmerited

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Within two years from Poe's review of "Quacks" we find Poe fiercely attacking Wilmer's dam friend. This is sufficiently attested by the following extract from a letter written by Poe to Woodberry in Philadelphia, August 28, 1843, which we find in Woodberry (p. 191). Poe demands that Woodberry shall give up a letter which Wilmer is supposed to have written against Poe.

Here is the extract: "I believe I know the gentleman's name. It is Wilmer. In Philadelphia he speaks to him. He is considered by a large portion of the lowest class. Feeling a great deal for him I endeavoured to befriend him, and I remember that I rendered myself liable to some of the most unbecoming attacks by writing a review of his filthy pamphlet 'Quacks of Helicon.' He has returned the compliment by slandering behind my back. I am anxious to have him convicted—for the sake of the gentleman in Philadelphia whom he has injured through the gross malignity of his

prominence, solely because it attacked the persons against whom Poe harboured the keenest animosity.

What we have now to explain is how it could happen that Poe should turn round and try to undo his friendliness to Wilmer by writing a rival satire on the same theme and in the same style, though without the glaring offences. The explanatory facts that are here given supply a twofold answer; first, Poe soon fell out with his "friend;" second, he thus had a double motive for wiping out the satire he had praised, and also his own friendly review of it, which remained on record, perhaps, as we have said, the only record of its existence.

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Here is the extract: "I believe I know the villain's name. It is Wilmer. In Philadelphia no one speaks to him. He is considered by all as a reprobate of the lowest class. Feeling a deep pity for him I endeavoured to befriend him, and you remember that I rendered myself liable to some censure by writing a review of his filthy pamphlet called 'The Quacks of Helicon.' He has returned my good offices by slander behind my back. All here are anxious to have him convicted—for there is scarcely a gentleman in Philadelphia whom he has not libelled, through the gross malignity of his nature."

To this it is only necessary to add a brief summary of the results of our efforts to exhaust the Wilmer clew. Lambert A. Wilmer and Poe were never friends again. Wilmer issued no more poetical compositions. He appears not to have sought special repute as a writer of verse. His "Quacks" was apparently a tabooed book, and no trace of it is found in a general perusal of the serials of the time. Wilmer was a journalist and a prose writer. He published his book, "Our Press Gang," in 1859, describing himself on the title-page as "Author of the *Quacks of Helicon*," also of a grammar and a biography, but makes no claim to be the author of the "Lavante" satire. This is a striking consideration, for Wilmer was a very proud man, and having written a satire that was unanimously condemned for its dirtiness, he would assuredly have gloried to own the "Lavante" satire, if he had written it, because it is pure in tone and style, and meritorious throughout. He was a man of very pronounced character. In his "Press Gang" he gives his portrait and writes fully and freely about himself, concealing nothing. As the burden of that book is the bitter complaint that all his penwork had been condemned, would he not have flourished this clever and unobjectionable "Lavante" satire in the face of the world as a triumphant vindication of his ability and his purity?

By his silence as to this, and by his claim of the objectionable "Quacks" he clearly negatives the supposition that Wilmer might have been "Lavante." It is not necessary to enlarge upon such minor points as the omission of Poe's name from the "Lavante" satire. Had Wilmer written it he would have scari-

fied the writer of the letter quoted above, even if he had wrapped it in praises of Poe's technical skill. According to Woodberry, Wilmer sent a letter to the *Baltimore Commercial* of May 23, 1866, containing some favourable recollections of Poe. According to Dr. Allibone's *Dictionary of Authors*, Wilmer died in 1863, but authorities delight to differ. From what we have seen of Wilmer as a writer, and know of him as a man, he is scarcely likely to have had either the reposeful leisure, the cast of thought, or the graceful pen that produced this "Lavante" satire. The pseudonym "Lavante" is not in any of the dictionaries, nor is it likely that Wilmer ever wrote anonymously. He was not that kind of man. As regards others, it is of course quite possible there may have been a score of versifiers capable of producing poetical satire in 1847. All we say is, that among them we have failed to find a satisfactory "Lavante." If a claimant shall come forward he must fulfil these conditions: He must first of all be a *poet* himself of high merit; he must be animated by a contemptuous jealousy of other poets whom he conscientiously feels are his inferiors, but who are set above him; he must be a firm holder of the Poe theory of poetry; and yet he must have dominating reasons for avoiding a mention of Poe's name or works. These conditions limit the field of choice, and, short of proof positive, it will be difficult to be convinced that there exists a stronger claimant than Poe.

The third division of the inquiry is now reached. What are the intrinsic quality and characteristics of the "Lavante" satire, and how far do they tally with those of Poe, the poet and the man?

The first difficulties (as they may appear) are these: if Poe was "Lavante," he must have acted cunningly, and, to a certain extent, deceitfully; he must have been an extreme egotist; he must have been inconsistent, because several passages and a few omissions in the "Lavante" satire do not quite square with other judgments in his prose writings; he must have condescended to imitation; and he must have furbished up into new shape much of his old work. Undoubtedly the "Lavante" satire suggests these points at the outset. We deal with them, again as briefly as possible, before proceeding to the poem.

First, as to the deceit, or cunning. This would seem to lurk in the invention of a pseudonym not unlikely to suggest "L. A. Wilmer" or "Laughton Osborn," author of the satirical "Vision of Rubeta," because it begins with "La." There is not much in this, but the author of "The Purloined Letter" was not lacking in subtlety of resource, and when he had the whim to preserve his own anonymity by trailing the scent in another quarter, he was not likely to fail of success.

Yet there is a euphony in the word "Lavante" curiously suggestive of Poe. One of his characters a "Politian" is named "Lalage." Elsewhere we find "Ianthe," "Levante," "Lalande," "enwriten," "silentness," and "red-litten." Mr. Stedman remarks on Poe's love of smooth-flowing words, "he selected or coined, for use and re-use, a number of what have been called 'beautiful words,' . . . alcyon, scintillant, Ligeia, . . . D'Elormie, and the like; everything was subordinate to sound."

In the "Lavante" satire we find the words "aidance," "idlesse," "Pallas," "distain," and "re-veer," and the remarkable use of the cæsura, which forms the subject of a note in the Appendix. The above words are by no means the common property of common rhymesters.

Poe loved the mysterious, and revelled in mystifying others. His famous hoaxes are sufficiently familiar. He was great at cryptography, of which we have more to say hereafter. There are many other instances of Poe's fancy for misleading his readers. In the *Southern Literary Messenger*, vol. for 1836, is an anonymous article on Poetry. An editorial foot-note says, "These detached passages form part of the preface of a small volume printed some years ago for private circulation. They have vigour and much originality, but of course we shall not be called upon to endorse all the writer's opinions." The "writer" was no other than Poe himself; the book in which this article appeared was his own 1831 volume of poems, and the editor who penned this foot-note was also Poe. Later he did not shrink from anonymously attacking and ridiculing Griswold by name, and drawing a contrast between Griswold and Poe, to the disparagement of the former. This was in the *Saturday Museum*, at the end of 1843 (Woodberry, p. 195). In Lowell's short-lived "*Pioneer*," Poe (who had asked for employment on it) wrote favorably of Lowell, and adversely criticised Longfellow. By and by Poe fell foul of Lowell, and yet later still we find him asking Lowell to write a biographical notice of him (Poe). According to his needs and prospects Poe's printed judg-

ments on his more powerful contemporaries varied, now rose-coloured and now black as a gibbet. We have already mentioned that "Ulalume" was published *anonymously* in the same year as the "Lavante" satire, but there was this peculiarity about it—Poe wrote to Willis, requesting him to copy the poem from the *American Review* into his "*Home Journal*," and to *preface it with an editorial note asking who the author could be*. "The Raven" was also published *anonymously*, in the *American Review*, as by "Quarles," with a prefatory note calculated to throw the reader entirely off the scent. The unreliableness of his mood (and this covers the difficulty as to "inconsistency") is further shown in the fact that although from 1843 to 1845 Poe's hostility to Griswold knew no bounds, he absolutely avoided all criticism of Griswold when he repeated his lecture in New York in 1845. Why? Because Griswold was then in a position to do him harm or good, and Poe was more and more in need of any sort of lift. Says Woodberry (p. 224): "Poe was now endeavouring to renew his acquaintance (with Griswold), plainly from selfish motives." Stoddard states that Poe reprinted some of his old stories in the *Broadway Journal* with the new signature "Littleton Barry."

The next point is the egotism of "Lavante." The reference already made to Poe's defiant attitude toward his censors, rivals, and the Press bears on this. It needs no elaboration. The critic, conscious of his own mastery, cannot but be egotistical, and his egotism is but the mintmark of his quality. In a moment of unrestrained outrightness Poe re-

plied to a friend who had referred to public opinion, "What care I for the judgment of a multitude, every individual of which I despise?" (Ingram, ii., 94) Next day he felt he must tone this sentiment down somewhat, but it was there, and it came right out like a blow from the shoulder. Another expression, made in the course of a discussion upon his "Eureka," Poe neither retracted nor modified. Said he, solemnly, "My whole nature utterly revolts at the idea that there is any Being in the universe superior to myself" (Ingram, ii., 144). Stedman acutely observes that "the central figure in all Poe's writings, however disguised, is himself."

It will be noticed that there are no female poets named among the thirty in this satire. Stoddard quotes Poe as stating, "I cannot point an arrow against any woman" (p. 145).

Now as to the suspicion of imitation. Poe was— if ever there was—an original genius. But the greatest original genius is obliged to use spoons, knives, and forks to eat with. He has to be content with the existing roads and streets if he goes to walk. All poets use the common laws of language, with more or less variation from the common use, and Poe—if he wanted to write a satire in heroic couplets, in the manner of Dryden and Pope, had to write in heroic couplets, of course. This is no deduction from any man's merit. It is not plagiarism. It need not be imitation. But there must necessarily be resemblance, and, assuming that "Lavante" had reasons for preserving his secrecy, it would follow that he would not take pains to make any striking distinction between his verses and those of an

ordinarily facile writer. Stedman remarks that "Poe could do nothing with a measure like blank verse." Those accustomed to verse-composition know it is impossible to gain effects such as those in "The Raven" or "The Bells" in the heroic couplet measure. More than once we find Poe regretting that certain pieces under review were written in this familiar measure, which, in his amusingly pedantic manner when writing of rhythm he dignifies with the strict name of "iambic pentameters." At first this may seem an argument against the Poe authorship of this satire, but the following admission entirely removes the difficulty.

"We cannot deny, it is true, that the *satiric model* of the days in question (Pope and Dryden, and the heroic couplet) *is insusceptible of improvement*, and that the modern author who deviates therefrom must necessarily sacrifice something of merit at the shrine of originality" (Poe's review of "*The Quacks of Helicon*"). The italics are ours. At the risk of repetition we put it that this deliberate opinion, coupled with his equally emphatic and significant declaration that "a satire is, of course, no *poem*," clearly shows that when, or if, Poe contemplated a satire in verse, he would write it in heroic couplets, though he felt in advance it would be impossible to impress it with the stamp of the original genius of which he was so justly proud.

But, if need be, it is not very difficult to show that even Poe could imitate, or at least borrow an idea or a pattern, when he chose. Even "The Raven"—that most unique of all strange poems—was *anonymously* put out only fourteen months after the *New*

Mirror of October 14, 1843, had published Albert Pike's "Isadore," which strikingly foreshadows the "Raven," with its "nevermore" refrain. Here is a verse :

"Thou art lost to me forever, I have lost thee, Isadore,
 Thy head will never rest upon my loyal bosom more,
 Thy tender eyes will nevermore gaze fondly into mine,
 Nor thy arms around me lovingly and trustingly entwine,
 Thou art lost to me forever, Isadore !"

Stoddard does not mention this striking coincidence in his Memoir. "Lavante" has a gentle lash at this same "Sir Pike :

"So glide thy music, so expire thy song,
 So melt thy melody into the soul
 That not thy foe may say—it all was stole."

The "Autography" satires are imitation letters by the persons whose autograph signatures are given, and—after each humorous forgery Poe solemnly pens a stinging estimate of the character of each victim, founded upon the style of composition and the calligraphy! The force of cunning satire could no farther go. If evidence were demanded of further versatility we might point to Poe's serious disquisition on the science of "Street Paving," and the "Philosophy of Furniture," and to his really remarkable facility as an utterer of slangy abuse on demand, of which his "Reply" to an attack is a rich specimen. It appeared in the *Saturday Gazette* in 1846, and filled several columns in the same strain as this in which Poe speaks of his former employer and friend Briggs's "brandy-nose, who is only one-third described when this nose is omitted." Some other

friends figure as "blatherumskites." All this goes to show that Poe was a many-sided man. "Only this, and nothing more." That he continually re-served most of his writings in new style after intervals is too well-known a fact to need more than bare mention. Hence the probability that Poe occupied himself during those secluded months of 1847 with turning into verse the satirical lectures he had delivered—and could not get published—but which he vowed he would intensify and make permanent.

The last point that arises is this: Does Poe's characteristic theory of the poetic principle find an echo in the "Lavante" satire? Not only does it find an echo but the satire is simply one sustained, eloquent paraphrase of Poe's essays and utterances on that subject. It is scarcely necessary to quote Poe on so familiar a theme. Perusal of the satire itself will be the most convincing testimony to those acquainted with his critiques, but we give an appendix of parallel passages in the form of notes. It may, however, be pointed out here that "Lavante" introduces his poem by a quotation from Crabbe. What Poe thought of Crabbe may be gathered from this sentence in his review of Longfellow. He is arguing that if Truth rather than Beauty is the criterion of Art, "then Jan Steen is a greater artist than Angelo, and Crabbe a greater poet than Milton." There is a delicious touch of irony in "Lavante" selecting these inane lines from Crabbe as his motto for the satire:

"And with his moral and religious views
Woos the wild fancies of an infant muse,
Inspiring thoughts that he could not express,
Obscure sublime! his secret happiness."

To use this, from the tamest of all tame "poets" as his heraldic tin-whistle, with which to usher in his victims, is a left-handed compliment which the bards no doubt thoroughly appreciated. (Note that both in the Poe article and the "Lavante" satire reference is made to "Angelo," without the "Michael.")

One or two further considerations may be indicated here. It has been frequently remarked that the poetry of Poe lacks the religious element, as conventionally understood, and that he was not what Griswold most valued in poets, a "moral" instructor. The writer of this "Lavante" satire not only comes under this censure, but throughout the whole of it contends that the didactic and the moral are *not* the purpose of Poetry. So did Poe, and, as will be seen, in almost identical terms. It may, again, be asked, Why should Poe not have owned this satire if he wrote it? The main answer to this is found in the thread of the argument here adduced, but there are others; *e.g.*, he was extremely sensitive, and with his strict views of poetic excellence, he was chary of acknowledging what might not seem to bear his individuality. Further, he was not in a position, in 1847, to stand the brunt of additional ill-will. Again, finding the anonymous publication (if it really was circulated) had fallen flat, his pride was too keen to own a failure. Again; he may well have found it advisable to withdraw or suppress it for his own reasons. We have only traced the existence of three copies, and they are in public libraries. And a perusal of the satire goes far to explain why the persons named in it were more likely to forget and ignore it than talk it into the fame it well deserves and is now

certain to enjoy. Those familiar with the minor mannerisms of Poe will recognize most of them in the satire. Among these are the rather pedantic preference for "which" instead of "that;" an occasional faulty rhyme, despite his acute ear; a redundant syllable here and there, and the plentiful use of alliteration. Noteworthy, too, is the grim persistence that makes him go out of his way to dub his contemporaries by the intended contemptuous term "bards," which word occurs forty-seven times, while the word "poet" is used less than half a dozen times and always with profound respect. There are various signs that this satire was written while Poe was deeply engaged in the studies that resulted in the "Eureka," which all the authorities agree absorbed him during the early part of 1847. The allusions to astronomy and to birds, and the simile of the cat as a metaphysician, are to be considered not only in the light of the "Eureka," but also of the fact that Poe used to wander at nights star-gazing; that he always had a liking for birds, and used to tame them; and that his pet cat was often on his table when writing. This couplet strikingly recalls the "Eureka:"

"Seek out, admire, and love the constant laws
Which guide the world by one Eternal Cause."

There now remains but to summarize the argument based upon the evidence thus briefly adduced.

1. Poe owes grudges to Griswold and his pet "poets."
2. He lectures on "The Poets and Poetry of America," weaving in much of what he had written in his reviews.

3. His lectures cause a stir, and he creates enemies.

4. He vows he will publish a still sharper critique upon them.

5. In January, 1847, his wife dies, and he is moodily occupied for some weeks or months, publishing nothing. In February he gains \$225 by an action for libel. In March he announces as soon to appear "The Authors of America, in Prose and Verse, by Edgar A. Poe."

6. This is said never to have appeared, but he had issued many pieces besides "The Raven" anonymously, and "Ulalume" appeared anonymously that year.

7. An anonymous satire in verse did appear in 1847, of which no history is ascertainable, but which, intrinsically and by other considerations, exactly fits the conditions of the theory that this is Poe's versified lecture, the persons Poe had adversely criticised being named in it, but not Poe himself.

8. The absence of any other "Lavante" of equal claims to the authorship, and the fact that the satire itself and the pseudonym are unknown to the authorities in American Literature.

SUPPLEMENTARY.

SINCE the foregoing was written it occurred to us that Poe, who was so given to mystification in his literary work and in his conversation about himself, might possibly have indulged his whim occasionally for a purpose. It seemed not improbable that the constructor of the ingenious acrostic enigmas "A

Valentine" and "An Enigma," containing the names of "Sarah Anna Lewis" and "Frances Sargent Osgood," might sign his own name in some cryptographic fashion in, at any rate, his anonymous poems. It might serve for identification in case of doubt. We made the experiment, and here are the results. Let it be admitted at the outset that the letters forming "Edgar Allan Poe" are such as can be comparatively easily buried in ordinary words. Still, there are points in what we now proceed to record which are curious, and far from valueless, though we only submit this as a curiosity.

Assuming that such cryptogram-signature would probably be found in the last couplet, we examined it, and found these peculiarities. The lines are :

"SHOULD PUBLIC HATE UPON MY PEN REACT,
NO MATTER THIS—I WILL NOT AUGHT RETRACT."

We find that the above couplet contains all the letters in the name

"EDGAR ALLAN POE."

They also contain the following words :

"AMERICAN POETS AND POETRY: A SATIRE."

Or these :

"A SATIRE, EVERY WORD TRUE; EDGAR ALLAN
POE."

Or these :

"A TRUE AND HONEST SATIRE, BY EDGAR AL-
LAN POE."

Neither of the titles of the satires referred to by Poe—"The Quacks of Helicon" and "The Vision of Rubeta"—can be got out of this couplet. It must

be borne in mind that we are dealing with a strange and whimsical order of mind, that enjoyed, rather than scorned, such trivial exercises as these.

If it is remarked that a good many other names and titles can be made-up out of this couplet, so be it. Yet it is none the less striking that the names of Griswold, Lowell, Holmes, Pike, Benjamin, Longfellow, Dawes, Pinckney, Willis, Whittier, Clarke, Halleck, Tucker, Hoffman, Parker, possibly able if not likely to have written such a satire, cannot be found in the cryptogram-couplet!

Poe's gifted friend, Mrs. Whitman, carries the anagram whim to an extreme pitch in her charming vindication of the poet, when she finds in "Edgar Poe" "a god-peer." Yet there is something to be said for the anagram, if only as an amusing pastime.

If it be objected that Poe was too fine an artist in word-jugglery to perpetrate such poor jokes as these, we must call Mr. Stedman to testify that "in genuine humour Poe seemed utterly wanting," and as to its quality we again cite from Ingram, who says (ii., p. 286), "His love of hidden hoaxing is well exemplified by the names of the personages in this little romance ('The Thousand and Second Tale of Scheherazade'); for instance, the incidents are assumably derived from the oriental work 'Tellmenow Isitsoörnot' (Tell me now is it so or not), which is compared, for its rarity, with the 'Zohar' (So ah) of 'Jochaides' (Joke aids)." Again, the hero of his would-be humorous account of "Some Words with a Mummy" is "Count Allamistakeo" (All a mistake, o). Elsewhere we find the name "Vondervotteimittis" (Wonder what time it is). By way of testing

the frequency of the occurrence of the letters in the three names of Poe we examined the final couplets of a hundred sonnets, and they occur in only thirty-three. The first couplet of "The Raven" contains not only "Edgar Allan Poe," but also "Quarles," the pseudonym under which it appeared in the *American Review*. In "Ulalume," which was published anonymously, it is curious that all the letters of Poe's name come in the first couplet, except the g, but the second line is made to do duty as a third—it might almost seem—for the sole purpose of supplying that missing letter :

" The skies they were ashen and sober ;
 The leaves they were crisped and sere—
 The leaves they were *withering* and sere."

Why not "withered," except for some fanciful reason? Out of the 42 poems in Griswold's edition of Poe, 36 have Poe's name in some form, in the first or last lines. The names

Edgar Poe (Lavante),

yield this anagram :

A Real Poet Aveng'd.

And the words

Poe, Lavante,

give

No Valet. E. A. P.,

a sentiment quite in accord with that of the satire and all Poe's critical writings. As Poe was unique and eccentric, he must be dealt with on other than ordinary lines. In his very able sketch, Mr. J. R. Lowell says : "Poe combines in a very remarkable manner two faculties which are seldom found united, a power of influencing the mind of the reader by the

impalpable shadows of mystery, and a minuteness of detail which does not leave a pin or a button unnoticed. . . . Having resolved to bring about certain emotions in the reader, he makes all subordinate parts tend strictly to the common centre. Even his mystery is mathematical to his own mind. To him x is a known quantity all along." We venture one step further, and submit that no circumstance, however apparently trivial, singular, or inconsistent, can safely be left out of the estimate, when the subject of discussion is the wholly unique, sphinx-like Edgar Poe.

HOW POE WOULD HAVE WRITTEN A SATIRE.

(The following extract may serve as a preface and a criterion, before reading the satire :)

"It (the 'Vision of Rubeta') fails in the principal element of all satire—*sarcasm*—because the *intention* to be sarcastic . . . is permitted to render itself manifest. The malevolence *appears*. The author has not many superiors in downright invective; but this is the awkward left arm of the satiric Muse. *That* satire alone is worth talking about which at least *appears* to be the genial, good-humored, out-pouring of irrepressible merriment."—Poe on Lowell, in *The Literati*.

NOTE.—Several irregularities in the use or non-use of capitals, in punctuation, and possibly of spelling will be noticed in the satire; they are in the original, which seems to have been either carelessly revised or purposely confused.

THE

POETS AND POETRY OF AMERICA

A SATHUR

PHILADELPHIA

WILLIAM S. YOUNG—No. 173 RACE STREET

1847

THE POETS AND POETRY OF AMERICA.

A SATIRE.

"And with his moral and religious views
Woos the wild fancies of an infant muse,
Inspiring thoughts that he could not express,
Obscure sublime! his secret happiness."

—CRABBE.

CLIME of the brave! entire from sea to sea!
Vain is thy boast that thou art blest and free!
Oh servile slave to eastern rules and rhyme,
Almost from Milton's blank to Chaucer's chime!
Thy own proud bards behold! a motley band
To lead the music of their native land.

• Immortal GRISWOLD! thine the deathless name
Shall bear the palm of more than mortal fame!
For thine the lofty boast at once to save
The humble bard perchance from hapless grave,
Weave with his crown thy fadeless laurel bays,
And with thy nursling gain undying praise.
Yea thine alone to search o'er Delphian height
That which shall give to gods and men delight;
At once to snatch from each lone wandering muse
All which on earth could profit or amuse,
Then rise and soar o'er loftier peaks away,
And bask in Phœbus' pure effulgent ray!
'Blest be thy name! nor grief thy pleasure mar,
Nor fade thy life but with the morning star!

• It is in the invaluable collection of Griswold that I have
found the plot and groundwork of the Tale.

(Note in the original.)

Awake, satiric muse ! awake in might ²
 To strike, for Poesy's insulted right !
 Awake in spite of SAUNDERS and the fools
 Who think of thee, as I of PARKER'S rules,
 That thou art weak—and not that deathless fame
 Awaits thy course to crown the empty claim !
 The chase is up, arise and onward press,
 If mean the game, yet not the sport is less !
 Keen be the jest, yet just the pointed stroke
 To silence folly in her shameless cloak ;
 Let impulse lead, not prudence guide the song,
 Nor laughter fail to cheer the muse along.

What age can boast improvements like our own,
³ When men to gods, and idiots bards have grown ?
 No want of rhyme, though oft as light as chaff,
 Vain as a bustle or a cenotaph ;
⁴ Dreams, clouds, or gas-light, all are made
 At cheapest rate by *Espy* or a blade !
 Oh wondrous age ! whose glories far excel
 All which romancers dream or fictions tell !
 When monster banks can raise a monstrous panic,
 And infants gain their growth by means galvanic !
 Thus population, like the mania, speeds
 O'er Western wilds and noxious prairie meads,
 New States are born, new stars our banner bless,
 And struggling realms are caught like men at chess !
⁵ Our green-house bard and critic-puff behold
 With native lead to make them brave and bold,
 " Whose tow'ring brow and eagle eye " might tell
 With them undoubted genius, talent dwell !
 Not in the past such lovely quacks were caught,
 When Horace sung and elder Cato taught !

Oh! had they lived that censor's scowl to claim
Soon had they found the downward path to fame.
No trace were left to tell their sunken race
In life as worthless as in dying base.
Not theirs the crime to wield the pointless pen,
Nor mine the task to lift the scourge again.

In modern times, who may not hope for praise
When all we ask is but unmeaning lays?
*And thoughtless bards can suit the servile throng
With heartless verse and worse than worthless song?
No theme Byronic, not the critic strain
Of reckless Pope, in thought and meaning plain;
Nor joyous Hope, by Campbell taught to please
Alike when life is sad or wrapt in ease;
Not these the subjects which our times demand,
To please the public and to curse the land!
But all enough if but the poet paint
Some fleeting shadow by a touch as faint,
Recount those hues which in the autumn streak
The woodland grove or distant mountain peak;
Some sickly dream relate to close the rhyme,
The task is done—complete without a crime.
No more we ask, no more the bard can give—
In times like these can mind or merit live?
Can genius flourish, or but scorn the crew—
Such slaves to art and superficial view?
No! but for this the poet yields his name,
That public taste may canvass on his claim,
Condemn the false, approve the true to life,
Or sink the whole to end at once the strife;
No genius he who not demands in pride
That final word to be his future guide.

' Such is my crime before this righteous age !
 Too proud to stoop, or heed the critic's rage ;
 I printed but to suit the present whim,
 Without a preface or a suppliant hymn !
 Some others too have sought the luckless play ;
 To all I pledge the boon of health to-day,
 But ere I close let none repine to see
 That public trash is held most wondrous free.
 Oh ! for an arm less feeble than my own
 To sweep from dust Apollo's sacred throne !
 Too much the chaff infests the precious grain ;
 When shall a Pope or Byron live again ?⁸

* The poet's heart, the poet's sense sublime,
 Was born for torture and his soul for rhyme ;
 Intense his feeling and severe his pain,
 That sullen frown no more from love would gain ;
 So nice his texture, and so fine the mould
 None e'er can guess what ne'er to sight is told,
 Nor search the secrets of a soul like his
 Or from the common mind imagine this,
 The hope, the fear, the rapture and delight
 Are all his own—and impulse all his light.
 Earth, air, and sea, the planet and the sun
 Are but the elements of art begun ;
 The inner world, the sphere of thought and mind,
 The mysteries that make and move mankind,
 To him are servile, and for him were made,
 Yea, but for him, would still from beauty fade.
 Thus noble wit, as by a skill divine,
 Ennobles nature and prevents decline ;
 Thus beauty sways and anguish rends the heart,
 By passion wrought into the height of art.

When meanest scribblers dare to woo the muse,
And print for praise in GRAHAM'S Post-Reviews ;
When soulless bards can seek in art to find
The hopeful substitute for wit or mind ;
Each moonstruck boy his tuneful harp prepare
And all may flood the land with rhymes of air ;
Then wake, my muse ! can'st thou not scribble too,
Strike for the prize—the self-same path pursue.

But who the first shall feel thy rising ire,
Of all the throng that curse the sacred lyre ?
Or wilt thou fall, as downward falls the plague,
On lofty BRYANT, DANA, HALLECK, SPRAGUE ?
¹⁰ Are these—alas ! the noblest and the best,
Must satire's self forever sink to rest ?
Too much in vain—in vain such war to wage
With unoffending bard and vacant page !

The night was up, when all serene and glad
Each tuneful bard was for the banquet clad,
¹¹ While GRISWOLD'S self, like Jeffrey on his throne,
Was raised sublime, and to a god was blown.
No mortal sign to mar that awful face,
Where still appear the hues of wrath or grace ;
All care, in calm composure sunk to rest,
A gracious smile betrays him greatly blest,
While trembling bards in eager strife appear
That nod to gain, the end of hope and fear.
Close by is set an altar's shining frame
For vows and incense to our god of Fame.
There bend the suppliant throng intent to seek
Propitious smiles in mercy to the weak,
As oft of old the weary pilgrim bent
When Pytho swelled till madness gave her vent.

First comes great WILLIS, trembling to his heels,
 Invokes the god, and for his country feels.
 But few indeed could boast such matchless head,
 So well proportioned and so rich in lead;
 Each fearful bump, phrenologists would say
 Was thunder proof till thunder's self decay;
 So thick the skull where few ideas meet,
 For dulness and delay a calm retreat.

Next comes our noble Doctor, HOLMES we call,
 Still bent to jest in spite of wit and gall,
 Still prone to rhyme with or without a soul,
 Style, ornament, and rhyme the poet's whole.
 Those tin-pan toys which catch the listless ear,
 Awhile delight, then worse than vile appear.
 One hand presents, in picture of his pain,
 Some slender sheets from travail of the brain,
 Light as the air, or that which gave them birth,
 Some slight reflection from a land of dearth.
 Humble his prayer, and meek his subjects' mien,
 In hopes few frowns to gain—a smile between.

Approaching next with incense each in hand,
 Proud DOANE and DANA take their reverent stand;
 One famed for moral, one for ghostly song,
 While one might pray to help the tune along.
 Poor DOANE! for one thou sure wilt grace obtain,
 By practice taught that heartless prayer is vain!
 Fear not, be free in speech, and yet be true,
 Nor mention once, e'en by mistake, the Jew,
 Lest might such freedom prove some breach of law,
 That priest and bard must stand in equal awe.

Grave as the gravest and more comical
 In solemn suit appears great PERCIVAL,

A moonshine wit with something of the calf,
 A mooncalf clown, the hero of a laugh!
 Who Cobb and Webster tortures into rhyme
 Without one thought to fill the vacant time;
 To him all art, all argument, supremely flat
 Appear, like metaphysics to a cat;
 So like the mole, so fitted for the dark,
 The mental eye ne'er saw a mental spark!

There bend meek BURLEIGH, CLIO, and SIR PIKE,
 All goosequill armed, all friends to goose alike;
 Great masters of the pen, who ne'er may flag
 Till Pegasus his tail shall cease to wag!
 Sons of a day, who justly measure time!
 One virtue sure, a duty, not a crime.
 With these attend SPRAGUE, SIMMS and BENJAMIN,
 All heroes of the lyre without a sin;
 Then HOFFMAN, SARGENT and the rest,
 Approach the altar and adore the best;
 While last of all appears the humble HILL,
 Weak in reflection, weak in mind and will.
 With look of torture, visage of distress,
 And all but perfect mania, fast they press
 Their suit, with many a groan and tear in eye,
 Fame, fame, undying fame, their ceaseless cry.
 Thus cries the leech in holy Scripture phrase,
 Still sucks tenacious, still persistent prays (?preys).

Thus each, his suppliant prayer preferred, regains
 His seat, and sits in emptiness of brains.
 All are content; assurance sways the breast,
 That each at last shall be supremely blest;
 No doubt remains that each shall hence obtain
 Immortal fame and death without a pain.

Pleased with the incense and the vow sincere, -
The god assents and calms each needless fear.

Then passed the ready bowl from hand to hand,
Whilst feast and verse now animate the band ;
The cry for fame propitious heard at last,
Thanks to the throne in murmurs fill the blast,
On tiptoe some, as all with heels more light
Than head, express ineffable delight ;
Some heels reversed, as truly held in trance
Attempt the mystic mazes of the dance
Some sprawling shout sincere the awful name
Of Folly's son, the Arbiter of fame ;
The rest, in fitful inspiration mad,
By monkey feats proclaim their spirits glad.

Then spoke the god. "Some farther test I name,
The loftier fame to win, and life to claim ;
Who highest soars where Phœbus shines afar,
By light unhurt, himself a living star,
Ascends Parnassus and o'ertops its head,
Shall gain the prize—a life beyond the dead.
Though all immortal, his the highest name,
Who highest soars in spite of sun and flame."

Scarce closed, when all prepared for instant flight,
Icarus-like, ascend on pinions light,
Their recent wings in open sunlight glare,
While croaking voices fill the rending air.
Thus startled oft arise the cawing crows,
By instinct taught the dread of secret foes,
Right merry yet, in spite of human wrong,
Mount in confusion croaking still for song,
Tumultuous they, as mingling gales contend
That sport the while, then sterner tempest end ;

Thus like the eagle borne upon the gale
Above the clouds our airy harpies sail ;
At last approach where wind and tempest rage—
Well thought that wit and wind should combat wage!

Thus swiftly sweep by distance dim and vague,
Almost unseen poor DANA, DOANE and SPRAGUE,
Lost to the sight and just beneath the moon,
Our day-stars CLIO, HOFF, are at their noon.
Some lost to hope the clouds in terror clasp,
As hopeless hope incites the senseless grasp ;
As floats the hawk sublime for want of care,
Gyre after gyre repeated cuts the air ;
Thus they distressed and tempest-tost appear,
Whirl with the wind and at its whim re-veer.
Sad thought that flight so well begun should fall
To wild confusion, terrible to all !
As meteors darting from the upper sky,
All headlong plunge, a harpy host from high,
'Twere sad to tell, and long the tale to say
How each was swept again to native clay.
Some hung on trees as from the flood of old
Were seen the fish by antique Ovid told ;
Some from the rocks dependent swing in air ;
With feeble grasp to save the last despair ;
There WILLIS lies, full blasted to a cave,
As that were meant his last and living grave ;
Great BURLEIGH there is cast in lonely grot
Apparent still in travail for a thought.
As birds dislodged, or by the hawk pursued
So lie the pack in that confusion rude.
Who would not laugh that laughing scene to see,
That mount by wits possess'd from cave to tree ?

" All hail, great DANA ! in thy shrouds of fear,
 With goblin shapes and mystic Buccaneer !
 Proud hero of the isle ! that Corsair's home
 Whose deeds of blood distain the ocean's foam !
 Proud in thy simple verse, so light and free,
 Proud in thy wild creation, Captain Lee !
 That son of Cain, whose brow the breezes fan,
 A cursing sprite, whose mortal hate is man ;
 Long trained in crime, he with his ghostly crew,
 Till waking vengeance tells that fate is due,
 When lo ! the dawn-time revel broke perforce
 That vengeance comes in shape of spectre horse.
 Poor Mat ! condemned to ride that fearful steed
 In dark atonement for a demon's deed !
 Poor Mat ! whose mystic steed might almost pass
 By chance a ' spectre horse ' for Balaam's ass !
 Poor Mat ! that steed of thine ! whose words but
 strain

To aid the torture of thy burning brain !
 Immortal Dana ! in thy tale of crime
 No lack of sense but Lee can close the rhyme !
 Too much compress'd thy tale, hence might it burst,
 Scare all thy sprites and make us fear the worst !
 All hail, the bard ! with skill supremely graced,
 By themes like these to guide the public taste !
 When this shall be, may genius cease to fling
 Her genial inspiration from its spring,
 Great Jeffrey once again resume his seat
 As bold in judgment as in folly great ;
 Each simple bard befriend the witch of Saul,
 And soar aloft with soaring PERCIVAL !
 Oh, matchless DANA ! great in all but fame !
 When others fail do thou essay the game ;

16 Let not our faith in human might decay,
 Nor earth despair while DANA hails the day.
 Some daring stroke do thou attempt, for sure
 Our bards some physic need, or caustic cure ;
 Out with thy drugs ! thy sinking patient see
 By frightful mania and the syncope !
 Great bard, awake ! some model just and great
 Do thou errect, then yield thee to thy fate !
 Thus shall the latest age thy name revere
 And critics quail for once in hopeless fear.

17 Immortal SPRAGUE ! son of the newborn day,
 While odes on odes arise in long array,
 And freshness breathes around each airy theme
 The fitting subject for a summer dream !
 If lays like thine in sterling wit excel—
 Then bid we all to wit a last farewell,
 Consult no more the matchless tales of Crabbe,
 Seek truth in ghosts, or sense in senseless Mab !
 Not thine the skill to long experience due
 The heart to melt, to hold the constant view,
 To drag reflection from its calm abode
 One thought to start or guide upon its road ;
 Enough—unmeaning rhyme without an aim,
 In sense as weak as in expression tame.
 So true thy fancy to the forms of life
 It ne'er with wit conceived a mortal strife.
 So much thy subject and thy verse alike
 As rough and reckless each its aim may strike,
 Claim equal praise and equal praise procure
 That each hath charms so fitted to allure !
 Blest be thy verse ! when odes uncounted claim
 To vie with Pope and Dryden in their fame !

Write on—thou yet mayst reap unfading bays,
 Some angel add to earth, some spirit raise !
 Write on—the grandest souls at times are weak,
 Let age, experience and thy dulness speak,
 No matter what the erring rules of fate
 With time thy name shall be supremely great.

19 Shall HALLECK not one passing moment claim ?
 Blest bard ! immortal in Bozzaris' name !
 No dream of Hope, so sacred and divine,
 No theme didactic, toilsome, weary, thine ;
 Too much thy native fire that thought to bear,
 As that might sink thee hopeless in despair ;
 But those who bled and fell in freedom's cause
 Thy worthier theme—attest it our applause !
 Nay—though the hero bravely fought and fell,
 Though thy own music fall like magic spell,
 Grant that thy palm and praise is fairly won,
 Is all achieved that mortal might have done ?
 Call not beneath thee song so just and great,
 Which mightier bards in loftier verse relate !
 Scorn the vile throng as if in vengeance set
 To write for each vile monthly and gazette ;
 Extend thy sphere, thy native powers expand,
 And as confess'd immortal poet stand.

When vicious taste and critics both combine
 To nourish bards unfit in prose to shine,
 When senseless fools in eager haste declare,
 For want of true, that worse than false is fair,
 Create, forsooth, some idol haply dumb,
 No matter what, from Nimrod to Tom Thumb,
 Call pigmy bards, for want of better, great,
 The very giants of our modern date.

Shall shameful durance bend in silent awe,
 Or greet as right and just such lawless law?
 No—sooner see the orbs of night explode,
 The land in arms, and torture on its road,
 Than trust decision taught by fear (*see note 14*)
 To hireling slaves enlisted by the year!

Hail, SAUNDERS! prince of typographic men,
 How pure thy heart, how faultless is thy pen!
 Calm as the breath of Ceylon's spicy gale
 Thy genius, talent, eloquence, unveil.
 Not such a flame could antique annals know,
 Close shamed Demosthenes or Cicero!
 Oh, hadst thou lived when awful Jeffrey reigned,
 Thy fame at least had with the world remained.
 Immortal SAUNDERS! o'er thy lofty name
 Slow flits the shadow of thy deathless fame!
 Not for thy idle sneer shall cease my verse,
 Not for the dread of editorial curse;
 Yet o'er the bard the muse may wave her wing,
 And critics praise when infant poets sing.
 Health to prejudging SAUNDERS! o'er his brow
 May future years in joy unheeded flow!
 Yea, o'er his lofty brow, in "pride of place,"
 May friend and foe the palm of honour trace.

O mighty goddess of celestial light,
 Immortal Liberty! thy presence plight!
 Flow on the beam of Luna's dying ray,
 And wake around thy son a genial day;
 May Pleiad, Hyad, Dryad nymph await
 Nor envy breathe one thought to silent Hate.

Attend, ye stars, and form the radiant crown,
 Thou, Liberty, invest thy awful son !
 Ye nymphs ! entwine the deathless laurel wreath
 Nor Lethe doom our joy to secret death !
 Thus shall the laurels that thy brow entwine
 Excel the bays of the immortal Nine ;
 Thus shall the crown invest thy awful brow
 While trembling bards beneath thy sceptre bow.
 Ye politicians ! haste ere yet on high
 Your mighty chief ascends his native sky,
 Ere on his Pegasus he floats the air
 Borne through the blaze of Berenice's hair !
 Ye statesmen, heroes, bards ! with trembling mien,
 Salute the glorious chief of mortal men !
 Ye sons of freedom ! swell the sighing breeze
 With plaudits to this awful Pericles !

A starry god within the vaulted sky,
 Behold his blaze of immortality !
 Albeit his radiant presence we must weep,
 Perchance his beam may light us when we sleep,
 Cast its bright ray o'er Dian's cloudless skies,
 And greet with milder light our tearful eyes !
 No more we ask ; perchance too high request
 Might grieve thy soul and break thy wonted rest.
 Fine aspirant to wild Draconic power,
 How much we dread thy beam may deign to lower,
 Shed one dull ray to Clay's chaotic night,
 And dim our eyes with thy celestial light !

The chase is on—who next comes coursing in ?
 " Who but the great and graceless BENJAMIN ?
 Taught but for love and sport to snatch the lyre
 And waste in air his genial fun and fire.

Such is the force of genius in its might,
To force the muse in scorn of rule and right !
Such is the charm of fame to lead the throng,
To seek uncalled the sacred mount of song.
How free thy pen, how swift thy volumes sweep
Their perfect flood to break our thoughtless sleep !
How like the deluge of the olden time
Come bursting forth the fountains of thy rhyme !
As reckless too, nor spare their instant wrath
In chance for life to seek some mountain path,
Nor leave the wretch one fleeting hour to save
His time of slumber from untimely grave !
Pray, not to weary mortal be unkind ;
Spare for the sake of sense and all mankind,
Spare for the mercy due to brother fools,
And learn in time to rhyme by juster rules.

²⁰ Hail soft Humanity ! whose genial ray
Delights the soul along thy simple lay !
Friend of the slave ! whose rough and rugged verse
Might burst his chains, his hopeless fate reverse !
Vain is thy claim to blest Apollo's sacred lyre
Since not his beams thy lifeless notes inspire,
But well attest each vacant page and line.
Not thine the care, the zeal and strength divine
To prove thy muse the offspring of his care,
Unsought his grace, or not received thy prayer.

Nor empty rhyme can claim the proper place
 Of native fire and nature's modest grace,
 But feelings deep with genius must combine
 To make the bard by nature meant to shine.
 No matter this—let blame be light to thee,
 Thine be the boast of soft humanity ;
 Thus gentle maidens ne'er shall blush to see
 One stain of earth to mar virginity,
 And hoary sires shall greatly joy to find
 No base seduction to the youthful mind.
 No matter now for genius, mind or sense,
 A puff is grandeur, fool is no offence ;
 With morals pure, and fancy mild and trim,
 Our bard is perfect—all complaint is whim.

Delightful BURLEIGH! hold thy matchless strain
 Lest secret envy swear thy labour vain ;
 Some future cause may need thy servile pen,
 Abate thy heat, let patience live again !

Not weary yet? Then turn we each and all
 To greet with peace the soaring PERCIVAL,²²
 As upward borne in flight but just begun,
 He with his eagle soars to greet the sun.
 What muse so high as Clio dare ascend
 That scarce her voice the ear may comprehend?
 What if her airy flight she cease not soon,
 Some reckless power should drive her to the moon?
 Farewell to hope! farewell to Clio's name,
 May weeping earth in phrenzy now exclaim,
 Such is our fate, our fondest hopes expand,
 One moment bloom, then seek the better land!
 Celestial bard! who then in rhyme shall fail
 If thou for careless verse art not in jail?

Whose awful strokes in equal rhyme and blank
Might sink another world, explode another bank ;
Whose pencil ne'er one fault will cancel o'er,
Lest in its course it chance to meet with more ;
Such strange enchantment binds, or right or wrong,
The first fond thought which dulness aids along !
Blest age ! when thoughtless dabblers into rhyme
Are like the sands upon the shore of time.
No want of themes ; how fair this gentle earth,
To give to bards and song an equal birth !

All hail ! great searcher of the human heart,
As great in prose as in poetic art,
Immortal WILLIS, hail ! in whom combine,
The base and great with wit to make thee shine !
An exile from thy native land and home,
Well pleased in other lands to rhyme and roam,
Lest villain hands should strive to make thee just
To hungry creditors, ill-fed on trust ;
As light in heart as fickle in thy mind,
Canst thou describe the motives of mankind ?
Hast thou acquired the rarer skill to sing
The flood of feeling from its fountain spring ?
As well might Etna's fiery summit bloom,
Or light surround the cypress-shaded tomb,
As thou relate in numbers fresh and true
Whence actions spring, or life its essence drew !
Yet canst thou write, from eastern shore, the change
Of faithless custom, ever wild and strange,
Of rhyme from thence some tale of hopeless love
To please fair Venus or her silly dove ;
Address the Spring or April in a lay,
With Wordsworth for thy tune in mellow May,

Enough—to gain the Western critic's praise
 And crown thy brow with fadeless laurel bays;
 Enough to gain, where more should own the name,
 A poet's prize, a poet's envied fame!
 Such is the toil, and such the slightest care
 To swell to-day this bubble of the air!

* In meads of green and woodland shades at rest,
 Next view the younger BRYANT greatly blest,
 Who with his brother-bards alone can sing
 That streamlets gild and flowers deck the spring,
 Nor little thinks how slight the profit hence
 When beauty charms, not aids our common sense;
 How slight the gain to gaze till time is old
 On Moskvan domes with cross and spires of gold,
 (Which Baird might tell in lectures by the way
 In needful aid of science in his day.)
 Nor graceful art deserves our graver care,
 Save as the traits of mind are written there!
 Vain thought! that Nature rules in human life
 Or art can aid us in the spirit's strife
 With cold existence, or can backward turn
 The fearful flame where pride and passion burn!*

When sunset softly gilds the western sky
 And all but paints enchantment to the eye,
 Nor wakes a sense, but wakes to love the hue
 From farewell beam on skies of azure blue;

* Such are the views which open on him who would inquire
 into the essence by which man is distinguished as a rational
 and moral being. Compared with it what are all the phe-
 nomena of nature,—what is all the history of the world,—the
 rise and fall of empires,—or the fate of those who rule them?
 —ABERCROMBIE.

Can scene like this, the fairest of our earth,
 Awake the thoughts of more than mortal birth,
 Or rouse the nobler feelings of the soul?
 Or is delight the poet's noblest goal?
 Has not the heart its passions, as the brain
 The power to light the fancy in its train?
 Yes! there are springs of thought and feeling chaste,
 No vulgar eye hath to their fountain traced;
 Nor knows the bard but half his proper art
 Who aims to please the eye, not rend the heart.

²⁵ Thus bent the awful bard of modern time
 To worship Nature in her native clime!
 Contracted in thy sphere as in thy sense,
²⁶ I surely mean not, WHITTIER, an offence.
 Ne'er hast thou strayed in thought, or roam'd afar
 Beyond the Hudson or the polar star,
 Nor made thy genius or thy wit expand
 To burst in air, like rockets o'er the land!
 Nay, hadst thou watched Aurora in her dance,
 It sure had rapt thy muse in solemn trance,
 Or some magnetic power had caught thy hair,
 And dragged thee on to perish in despair!
 What hap if thence had fled thy burning soul,
 Condemned to ride the rough revolving pole!
 Could earth rejoice, thy goddess nature sing,
 Or birds return to cheer the birth of spring?
 Could tender hearts but at thy mischief bleed,
 Astride the pole to guide thy fitful steed?
 Or lovely maidens at thy fate distress
 But pray that jade at times an hour of rest?
 No—WHITTIER—no! thou must not stray (*see note*

14)

Where hap like this might snatch thy wits away!

Nor seek the south, where spring for ever reigns
 To deck the sunny mount and sloping plains,
 Lest too much heat should melt thy feeble brain,
 And turn thy wat'ry muse to mist again !
 No—WHITTIER—no ! far better than to roam,
 To cherish pride in love of sacred home,
 And worship Nature in her solitude
 Beneath thy native sky and mountains rude ;
 Thus safe to sing thy tale of childhood o'er,
 Till infants shout and humbly ask for more.

It is not goddess Nature in her pride
 With whom the charms of earth and air reside,
 But mental essence traced unto its spring,
 Can teach the native bard his art to sing.

Or for success, must passion be the theme
 For magic art to picture in a dream ?
 But wherefore laugh if youth should dare to tell
 What all confess, and some may know too well.
 " Such is thy boast, proud HOLMES, to touch the heart,
 If not by genius, by thy native art !
 For grant thy lofty strain but once begun,
 How rich and how exhaustless is thy fun !
 As true thy song, no doubt, as holy writ,
 One merit more—it has some idle wit.
 No doubt enough thy talent by its birth
 To cure at once our nature from its dearth,
 Make idiots gods, at least in form and shape,
 From noble SAUNDERS to his puny ape,
 And purge the public taste from sickly bile
 By perfect metamorphosis of style !
 So light thy verse, a plaything of the air,
 Must mortal live on unsubstantial fare,

Or he who takes it for an ague chill,
 Must own at least it was a pleasant pill,
 Content to try whate'er our Doctor give,
 Nor cherish life when he shall cease to live.
 Strange time to trifle in poetic art,
 When most esteem it an unmeaning chart,
 And all confess, when truth asserts her throne,
 That western bards are worse than feeble grown !
 28 Hail, gentle HILL ! whose varied beauties shine
 Like native beams of the immortal Nine !
 Far is thy flight o'er classic mount and isle,
 To where Athena's ruins strive to smile,
 And Greece, undying Greece, is left to weep.
 That hero, bard and sage in silence sleep.
 Oh blest ! though late indeed, that sunken land,
 One touch to gain from thy redeeming hand !
 29 Oh blest ! in aidance of her hopeless night
 To gain from thee one beam of future light !
 Such is thy magic skill from death to save
 The last dim shadows from a living grave !
 Such is thy art to gild the glory past,
 How man must mourn if thou hast sung thy last !
 Bæotian HILL ! whose merits all repose
 In rhyming nouns, unfit for proper prose !
 Nor sense thy care ; enough unmeaning rhyme
 To make thy fustian strain accomplish time.

30 In sable cowl, beside his awful throne,
 Behold the sacred scribbler, Bishop DOANE !
 Who, lowly bending in his calm retreat
 Can strike for fame and for Apollo's seat ;
 Assume alike, as if for change the while
 The parson's fearful scowl or poet's smile,

Invoke the silent moon or Him who made,
 As each at times may suit his double trade,
 Explore the mystic depths of thought divine,
 Then soar aloft and with the planets shine!
 Thanks to the Muse who sheds on all her light
 Till blacklegs sing and bishops stoop to write!
 Thanks to great Griswold and the fertile age
 That make and save the bard and priceless page!
 Blest time! when all from priest to clown may sing,
 A sickly love or mania touch the string!
 No dearth of rhyme; or might our Bishop pray
 Till rhyme and sense alike had passed away.

▪ Unhappy CLARKE! whose fate to pity lends
 All which with tender thought and feeling blends!
 Thine was the heart whose passions deep and strong,
 Not pride, impell'd to seek the mount of song;
 Nor thine the lays which fit the tuneless lyre,
 That sleeping Muse to dulness might inspire,
 But that which melts and moulds the manly heart,
 By genius taught the force of grace and art.
 Peace to thy shade! in joy supremely blest,
 May bliss thy soul compose to needful rest.

Not such the master of the classic lay,
 Blest child of god and goddess passed away!
 Or who that sings the gods, albeit unlike,

▪ More seems their proper son than ALBERT PIKE?
 Or whose the envied skill such theme to try
 Nor make in lifeless song the deathless die?
 Gods of the antique world! once more return
 Let fanes arise and gifted altars burn,
 That he, your son, Apollo's latest priest,
 May sing your praise, and on your victims feast.

Oh Albert Pike ! stick to thy godlike lay,
 Thy gods and goddesses in long array !
 No matter if in wit and judgment weak,
 Thy faults confess, their grace and pardon seek.
 Out with thy notes ! thy voice shall far rebound,
 Till deeper tones than Orphic swell the sound,
 Each brawling cat shall own the matchless tune,
 And oaks shall bow the leafy pride of June.
 As some soft stream which glides unheard along,
 So glide thy music, so expire thy song,
 So melt thy melody into the soul

* That not thy foe may say—it all was stole !
 Oh ALBERT PIKE ! how much the gods should own
 To thee the clearer title to their throne !
 How much approve their offspring as divine
 Who sings their might and vindicates their line !
 Long may they joy to grace thy rising name,
 And gild thy later age with godlike fame,
 Then call thee hence to join their banquet hall
 Nor ease thy pride with more than Vulcan's fall !

* Now clear the way—prepare our next to meet,
 The forest child in shape of ALFRED STREET !
 Whose god, the rural Pan, in secret shade,
 Where nymphs repose and more than love is made,
 Grant but thy horn and hounds—then wake the muse,
 Crack at the chase till day her light refuse !
 Oh ALFRED STREET ! when shall we meet again
 Thy mind of might, thy own prolific pen ?
 Thy modest muse in sylvan shades at rest,
 So sweeps her fire along thy heaving breast,
 Thy moving strain so falls upon the ear,
 So helpless falls the tribute of a tear !

Some hunter lost where none could go astray,—
 Or but in dream, as thou in many a lay,
 Some forest scene where dogs might hunt the game,
 Thy worthy theme, thy ground of fadeless fame!
 No matter—if thy verse is sometimes weak,
 A slighter cause would scarce for vengeance speak—
 None—if thy crime should be to rhyme in vain—
 The self same path thy brother bards have ta'en.
 Alone we fear, lest by her nature mild
 Thy muse be lost amid her woodland-wild,
 Nor by her feeble voice alarm the chase
 Till hope is lost, and past her hour of grace.

But such, in sooth, our modern bards appear,
 The fittest subjects for our fitful jeer.
 So free the muse to wanton in embrace
 With every fool who dares to give her chase,
 That boys may write and infants snatch the pen
 To praise her charms in woodland cave and glen.
 For grant but needful impudence and pride,
 With less of wit than vanity allied;
 Some soft amour, perchance by scorn repaid,
 Three grains of sense—our bard is ready made!
 As noble, too, the critics of our land
 To cherish all who dare to lift the hand;
 Spontaneous as mushrooms to grace the spring,
 As soft to all the tribe who dare to sing!

Precocious ^{as} SARGENT! to the drama dear,
 As wild in verse as Pallas in her sphere,
 Less soft in tone than owlets of the night,
 By shame compell'd to shun the common light!
 Yet proud in thy *Velasco's* name of dread
 As that might raise to life the lifeless dead,

Make angels weep, the sternest quail in fear,
Till final anguish shed the helpless tear !
Who then shall fail if verse like thine shall gain
The palm of praise, or not the curse of Cain ?
If such the child of genius and of taste,
What carl may not in language be as chaste ?
Not thine the loftier wit or nicer sense
To guard thy verse and save from harsh offence ;
Thyself a living proof that senseless pride
Most richly thrives where sense is most denied.
Great thanks to thee and thy dramatic Muse,
That palm to claim was thine alone to lose,
Nor leave to Hillhouse all the praise or blame,
But link to his thy worse than worthless name !

In dreamy mask behold, with brow of pride
The southern SIMMS in grandeur glide !¹⁴
Hold Pegasus, thy fearful pace, nor bear
That lord of thine beyond the realms of air !
Oh ! spare the fatal truth of all our fears,
Spare for the priceless meed of sighs and tears !
Not Irving's self could more romance impart,
To grace the tale and hide the lure of art ;
So fresh in thought, so rich in thoughtless mind,
Spare, for the sake of verse and all mankind !
Thus shall our bard delay his lifeless rhyme,
To sing the requiem to the death of time.

But where the tragic muse—the drama—where ?
No voice replies, save echo through the air,
Oh double shame to genius and the age !
No bard to trace the spirit in its rage,
To paint despair—revenge—the wild and free—
Invent a plot or touch catastrophe.

Not quite so high our poet dares to aim,
 Nor heeds the drama in his thirst for fame.
 Why sleeps the mind? can *daring* teach no more
 The grand conception rich from mental lore?
 Is passion fled, the curbless and the strong,
 That idlesse reigns the master of the song? ²⁹
 Why trembling view the trophies of the past
 While mind survives and music fills the blast?
 What mind has done can mind again achieve,
 Shame on the faithless—doubts can ne'er relieve.
 Let inspiration light her guiding fire,
 Breathe through the soul a holy, calm desire,
 Compel to action, and inflame the breast,
 Long taught by ease to hold inglorious rest;
 The self-same elements as yet remain—
 Let thought awake—the drama live again!
 Blest art invention! for to thee is due
 The proudest boast, the praise of something new!
 Not feeble fancy in her airy flight,
 At her own shadow sure to take affright,
 But that which dares in aidance of our strife ³⁰
 To add some fresher charm to vary life.
 Colossal thought! gigantic vastitude!
 Ideal grandeur built in structure rude!
 What pride to trace the bold inventive art
 That elevates and swells the mind and heart;
 What joy to soar as high as mind can go
³¹ To catch the thought which led an Angelo,
 Expand the sense with bold conception's flight
 And almost tremble at our dizzy height!
 All daring images and forms which dwell
 With fearless fancy in her awful cell;

All dancing fairies of the silver night,
And ghosts more terrible than men in fight ;
The muse who guides, and god who moves the song,
Invention, airy art ! to thee belong,
Perfection, true, shall mortal ne'er attain
While all confess our nature's hopeless chain.

Still what we may, should daring still achieve,
Conception furnish and the fancy weave.
Oh could we grasp the infinite of grand,
And catch sublime from angels where they stand,
Like these ideal, and as light and free,
Embrace immortal and as clearly see ;
Leave earth and false conception far behind,
Then might some praise await the human mind.

But wherefore longer hunt such worthless game,
The toil so well repaid by all but fame ?
Perchance unfelt, my shaft may idly fall,
No matter this—my best regards to all !
Or if unhurt I from the strife withdraw,
One cause alone—our bards revere the law !
But if my spirit some may wish to try,
Crack at the muse—I pledge a prompt reply.
The task unsought ; I would not seek to be
Corrector of this age of poesy ;

²⁸ But when our bards disdain poetic laws,
Slight sense indeed to ask a better cause !
When none hath dared the loftier paths of song,
Who but must own that senseless praise is wrong ?

²⁹ If hence their mortal hate my path oppose,
My heart is strong—I with the challenge close.

I would no more—let each his style correct,
Exalt his aim and stand as man, erect.

For still, in spite of reason and the laws
 Shall ceaseless rhyme the senseless RUFUS DAWES? "
 Neglect the rules of order and the muse,
 Nor share the fate of Jonah or the Jews?
 " Shall LOWELL still by dreams inflate his pride,
 And ramble most where most the mists reside?
 " Shall GOODRICH leave his Parley by the end,
 And seek by rhyme to raise an outcast friend?
 Or fools maintain without some slight offence
 That rhyme can spring from ev'ry hue of sense?
 Correct, correct your folly and your style,
 I ask no more, unless at times to smile,
 This done, I lay for ever down the pen
 That ne'er shall strive to make you blush again.

Sons of the brave, awake! but let the mind
 Assert her sway, and thought be unconfined,
 The lusts of sense no longer rule retain,
 And mind, not matter, be the rage again!
 Let this, no more by toys or trifles bound
 Resume its might, and by its might confound;
 Despise each idol of the heart and eye,
 All save that fame which is not born to die;
 Approve the deathless flame to mortals given,
 Ascend the sky and claim its kindred heaven!
 Land of the fair, awake! let genius rise
 Explore the goal and press the bold emprise!
 Let nicer taste each faulty phrase detect,
 Commend the true, the false and light reject;
 Seek out, admire and love the constant laws
 Which guide the world by one Eternal Cause;
 Thus let the bard his awful tale relate,
 As grand in subject, as in meaning great.

Clime of the free ! might but thy bards reclaim
Their by-gone censure from enduring shame !
Ask but the bard, the Ascrean sage, to say,
Did genius guide him, or his muse betray ?
Hath Homer sung but by his native might,
By genius led to Fame's eternal height ?
Let genius wake and touch the magic string
Nor list thy sons but when the gifted sing ;
Let inspiration gain the just applause,
Nor bards be blest but for a proper cause.

Arise, ye bards ! assume the nobler lay !
Let common sense and genius lead the way ;
New worlds create of deathless thought and mind,
And prove yourselves an honour to mankind ;
Ne'er let the muse those meaner themes regard,
Or not complain the poet's fate is hard !
Let ⁴³ Cambridge rouse her proud adopted son
The bard to dare, nor themes sublime to shun ;
Let BRYANT, HALLECK, SPRAGUE, once more
awake,

Till newer beams shall on their vision break,
More fearless muse ascend on loftier wing,
And distant realms shall with their plaudits ring.
Awake, ye bards ! and hammer out a style,
⁴⁴ If not from Pope, from grandeur and Carlyle !
Abyss of thought and mass of mind profound !
If not a model, let it not confound.
Be genius fearless, yet as chaste and true
As Maro sung or old Apelles drew ;
The fancy bold, yet cautious in her flight
To scan the world and search the realms of light,
Thus shall our land some future honour claim
From her own bards, to crown her rising name.

* With you, ye minor bards, I hold not war ;
 Much as yourselves would I that strife abhor,
 Too dull your muse offence to give or take,
 My hate to rouse, or at my thrust awake ;
 So cold your strain, so dead your accents fall,
 Great thanks to Griswold that ye live at all !
 Oh ! better far that each would but appear
 As nature meant, a native muleteer,
 Would hold the plough, prepare or guide the plane,
 Nor curse the land with senseless trash again.
 Still must we hear some infant poet born,
 * Some noble CRANCH or CROSWELL most forlorn ?
 Shall perfect swarms, like insects dim the air,
 Like weeds arise and bloom without a care ?
 Great bards ! without a title or a name,
 Persist in verse—an airy thing is fame !
 No Pope shall raise his blasting voice to curse
 Your dream of dulness, or your idle verse,
 No Byron breathe sarcastic death to quell
 The harmless muse, or sink to native hell ;
 No fear—be bold, in freedom's land ye live,
 Whose critics kiss and loving hearts forgive.

Thus have I sought some proper ire to show
 Where priest could puff and editor could blow
 A mooncalf swell to match a gazetteer,
 Yet each insist a bard he must appear !
 I too can rhyme, and in my time have sung
 When hope was high, and infant muse was young,
 Too proud in sense, too much of manly tone,
 I gave but challenge to be heard and known,
 No crouching prayer to gain the critic round,
 No favour sought, nor common mercy found.

Yet thanks to western fools ! in haste to kill
 * They could not gall me with satiric quill !
 Once more I wait a better chance to meet
 That noble pack the hounds of Goslin Street !
 Alike I scorn great GRISWOLD'S brow of rage,
 Young BRYANT'S scowl or BURLEIGH'S wrathful page ;
 Let southern puff and northern giant rise
 I lisp to all—take physic and be wise !
 Once could I bear all which the best can bear,
 Could scorn at pain, and hate at times the fair,
 But now, by slight experience taught to strike,
 * I but repel where others make dislike ;
 * Too well my gentle spirit some may know :
 Cry up the chase—I can repay a blow ;
 Once I could bend or feign to bend the knee,
 When conscience told 'twas order's just decree,
 I could dissemble scorn, and strive to seem
 As calm as love embracing in a dream ;
 No change * could drag resentment from its rest,
 My brow was smooth, my heart was well possest,
 What now is done, not prudence would recall,
 If pain ensue, what sooner might befall ?
 Should public hate upon my pen react,
 * No matter this—I will not aught retract.

LAVANTE.

* *gy.* "charge."—ED.

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NOTES.

¹ "Is Mr.—we ask his pardon—the Reverend Mr.—Griswold, the man of varied talents, of genius, of known skill, of overweening intellect, he was somehow pictured, or is he the arrant literary quack he is now entitled by the American press? . . . One of the most clumsy literary thieves, who, in his wildest aspirations, never even dreamed of an original thought."—Poe's review of Griswold's book on the Poets.

² "A satire is, of course, no *poem*," says Poe in his review of Bryant (vol. iii., p. 182, Griswold's ed.). The italics are his. This bears out the hypothesis that Poe's sensitiveness to criticism, and his passion for originality were additional reasons for publishing "a satire" anonymously. The uniqueness of "The Raven" and "The Bells" is not possible in this metre.

³ If we are to believe the critics and the press at large, says Poe, "we shall find ourselves the most enviable people on the face of the earth. Our fine writers are legion. . . . All our poets are Miltons, neither mute nor inglorious, . . . and everybody who writes . . . is the admirable Crichton, or, at least, the admirable Crichton's ghost."—Poe in the review of "*Quacks of Helicon*."

⁴ Poe has a "Marginalia" note on Dr. Espy, a scientist who, he says, borrowed from Bacon.

⁵ In his critique of Griswold's book Poe charges G. with being a puff in the mask of a critic.

⁶ "I allude to the heresy of *The Didactic*, a heresy too palpably false to be long tolerated, but one which, in the brief period it has already endured, may be said to have accomplished more in the corruption of our poetical literature than all its other enemies combined. . . . Every poem, it is said, should inculcate a moral, and by this moral is the poetical merit of the work to be adjudged. We Americans especially have patronized this happy idea; and we Bostonians, very especially, have developed it in full."—Poe in "*The Poetic Principle*."

7 "The fact is some persons should write at once a Magazine Paper exposing—*ruthlessly* exposing, the *dessous de cartes* of our literary affairs. He should show how and why it is that the ubiquitous quack in letters can always 'succeed,' while *genius*, (which implies self-respect, with a scorn of creeping and crawling) must inevitably succumb."—Poe on Bayard Taylor, in *The Literati*.

"That the opinion of the Press is not an honest opinion . . . is never denied by the members of the Press themselves. . . . Let in America a book be published by an unknown, careless, or unimportant author; if he publishes it 'on his own account' he will be confounded at finding that no notice is taken of it at all." (Does not this remark of Poe to some extent explain why this "Lavante" satire seems to have been ignored by the Press? Poe proceeds to describe at some length how certain authors contrive by underhand means to get their books puffed, and he adds), "the effect of this system is obvious. In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, men of genius, too indolent and careless about worldly concerns to bestir themselves after this fashion have also that pride of intellect which will prevent them, under any circumstances, from even insinuating, by the presentation of a book to a member of the Press, the desire to have that book reviewed. They, consequently and their works, are utterly overwhelmed and extinguished in the flood of the *apparent* public adulation upon which in gilded barges are borne triumphant the ingenious toady and the diligent quack."—Poe on W. Cullen Bryant, in *The Literati*.

8 Poe invokes the "spirits of Pope, Byron, *et al.*, forgive our desecration of the name" poetry for Griswold's rhymes.—*Ibid.*

9 "We shall reach more immediately a more distinct conception of what true poetry is by mere reference to a few of the simple elements which induce in the poet himself the true poetical effect. He recognizes the ambrosia which nourishes his soul, in the bright orbs that shine in Heaven, in the volutes of the flower, . . . in the blue distance of mountains, in the grouping of clouds, . . . in the star-mirroring depths of lonely wells. . . . He owns it in all noble thoughts, in all unworldly motives, in all holy impulses, in all chivalrous, generous and self-sacrificing deeds. He feels it in the beauty of woman, . . . in her burning enthusiasms, but above all, ah! far above all, he kneels to it, he worships it in the faith, in the purity, in the strength, in the altogether divine majesty of her *love*."—Poe, in "*The Poetic Principle*."

10 (Referring to Griswold's book.) "If ever such a thing as literary ruin exists, nine-tenths of the *Poets* (!) of America are ruined for ever by the praise of Mr. Griswold! This is our unvarnished opinion; and as we

have established the fact of our knowing something of Poetry and its concomitants, and that Mr. Griswold is as ignorant of it and them as a Kickapoo Indian, we fancy it will pass for current coin."—Poe's critique of Griswold's book.

¹¹ "Griswold "rose from comparative insignificance to be the idol of all the poetical editors and would-be great men in America."—*Ibid.*

¹² "Mr. Willis is yet young. . . . Without being handsome . . . his face is somewhat too full, or rather heavy in its lower portions. Neither his nose nor his forehead can be defended; the latter would puzzle phrenology."—Poe, in *The Literati*.

"However highly we respect Mr. Willis' talents we feel nothing but contempt for his affectations."—Poe, in the *Broadway Journal*, October 11, 1845.

"The very best, in my opinion, poem which Willis has ever written ("The shadows lay along Broadway") . . . breathes an earnestness, an evident sincerity of sentiment, for which we look in vain through all the other works of this author."—Poe's "*The Poetic Principle*." (See also note 23.)

¹³ "Griswold says, 'as a versifier Holmes is equal to Tennyson, and with the same patient effort would every way surpass him.' We advise Dr. Holmes, who does possess some merit as a versifier, to beg Mr. Griswold not to puff him, or he may depend upon his poems being incontinently d—d."—Poe's critique on Griswold. (See note 27.)

¹⁴ "The cæsura (a pause introduced for the purpose of producing harmony) has been used by all our poets, but with a perfect ignorance of its present character. This discovery, as well as this mode of scansion, was left to Edgar A. Poe, who has spent more time in analysing the construction of our language than any living grammarian, critic, or essayist."—*Ibid.*

Poe illustrates this by his own use of it in the fourth of the following lines from his "Haunted Palace." It gives a striking emphasis, and is so used three times in this satire.

Once a fair and stately palace—
 Radiant palace—reared its head.
 In the monarch Thought's dominion—
 It stood there!
 Never seraph spread a pinion
 Over fabric half so fair!—*Ibid.*

"Hoffman's only merit is his wealth."—*Ibid.*
 Griswold pronounces Hoffman a brilliant poet, speaks of his graphic

descriptive powers, richness and purity of style, and places him also in the front rank as a novelist. No American equal to him as a song writer. (We note that in the chorus to each verse of a long song, Hoffman makes "room" rhyme to "moon.") Griswold devotes five pages more to specimens of this writer than he allows to any other American poet. Poe elsewhere hints that Griswold accepted payment from certain writers for extra space devoted to their rhymes.

16 "As regards Dana, it is more than possible that I may be doing him wrong. I have not read him since I was a boy, and must read him carefully again. The Frogpondians have hadgered me so much that I fear I am apt to fall into prejudices about them."—Poe's *Letter*, December 15, 1846 (Ingram, ii., 103).

Griswold pronounces Dana a true poet. Dana had written "The Dying Raven" in 1825, and had lectured on "Poets and Poetry" in 1839.

16 "It is to be hoped that common-sense, in the time to come, will prefer deciding upon a work of art rather by the impression it makes, by the effect it produces, than by the time it took to impress the effect, or by the 'sustained effort' which had been found necessary in effecting the impression. The fact is that perseverance is one thing and genius quite another."—Poe, in "*The Poetic Principle*."

17 Griswold praises Sprague for his good sense, vivid descriptions, and faultless style.

"I hold that the phrase 'a long poem' is simply a flat contradiction in terms. A poem deserves its title only inasmuch as it excites by elevating the soul."—*Ibid.*

18 "In versification Mr. Halleck is much as usual. . . . 'Marco Bozzaris' has certainly some rhythm, but its author, in short, writes carelessly, loosely, and as a matter of course seldom effectively so far as the outworks of literature are concerned. . . . Mr. Halleck in the apparent public estimate maintains a somewhat better position than that to which, on absolute grounds he is entitled."—Poe, in *The Literati*.

19 "It" ("Infatuation," a poem spoken before the Mercantile Library Association, October, 1844) "is not sufficiently pronounced in its object to warrant us in classing it with 'legitimate' satire, but there is enough in it, we think, to show conclusively that the author *might* succeed if he pleased in this class of writing, at least as well, if not very much better than any of his countrymen who have preceded him. The poem is full of nerve, point and terseness—the thrusts are dexterous and well aimed

—and the versification peculiarly good of its kind.”—Poe, in the *Broadway Journal*, March 15, 1845.

²⁰ “Man is, in fact, only incidentally a poetic theme :—we mean the heart and intellect of Man—matters which the pseudo-transcendentalists of Frogpondium are perpetually attempting to force into poetry—with no other object than to impart to their doggel an air of profundity.”—Poe, in *Broadway Journal*, December 27, 1845.

²¹ Griswold describes Burleigh as at one time a printer, afterwards an editor and lecturer. He gives fourteen specimens of Burleigh’s rhymes, and only three of Poe’s poems.

²² Griswold pronounces Percival the most prolific and fanciful of American poets. Few are more learned than he. The poem “Clio” was published in three sections, at intervals. He adds, “Percival lacks the artistic skill, or declines the labour, without which few authors gain immortality.”

²³ “As a poet Mr. Willis is not entitled, I think, to so high a rank as he may justly claim for his prose. . . . His style proper may be called extravagant, *bizarre*, pointed.”—Poe, in *The Literati*.

Griswold praises Willis for his “exquisite finish and melody, his language pure, varied and rich, his imagination brilliant, and his wit of the finest quality.” (See note 12.)

²⁴ “Is Bryant a better poet than Longfellow? Certainly not, for in Longfellow’s pages the spirit of poetry—*ideality*—walks abroad, while Bryant’s sole merit is tolerable versification and fine marches of description. Longfellow is unquestionably the best poet in America.”—Poe’s critique of Griswold’s *Poets*.

“It will never do to claim for Bryant a genius of the loftiest order, but there has been latterly, since the days of Mr. Longfellow and Mr. Lowell, a growing disposition to deny him *genius* in any respect. . . . ‘Thanatopsis’ is the poem by which Bryant is best known, but it is by no means his best poem. . . . The concluding thought is exceedingly noble, and has done wonders for the success of the whole composition. . . . He is, in the ‘minor morals,’ the most generally correct of our poets”—Poe, in “*The Literati*.” (See note 43.)

²⁵ “I need scarcely observe that a poem deserves its title only inasmuch as it excites, by elevating the soul. . . . He who shall simply sing, with however glowing enthusiasm, or with however vivid a truth of description, of the sights, and sounds, and odors, and colours, and sentiments, which greet *him* in common with all mankind—he, I say, has yet failed to prove his divine title.”—Poe, in *The Poetic Principle*.

²⁶ "A fine versifier . . . but in taste, and especially in imagination—which Coleridge has justly styled the *soul* of all poetry—he is ever remarkably deficient. His themes are never to our liking."—Poe, in the "*Autography*."

Griswold describes Whittier as one of the secretaries of the Anti-Slavery Society. Many of his best poems relate to slavery, they have a manly vigour of thought and language, and breathe the spirit of true liberty.

²⁷ Griswold predicts for Holmes an enduring reputation; says he possesses a rich vein of humour, with learning and originality, and great skill as an artist. (See note 13.)

²⁸ Griswold describes Hill as a recluse, with a style severe, sometimes embarrassing.

²⁹ See reference to this word "aidance," and others, in Introduction.

³⁰ "More extensively known in his clerical than in a literary capacity."—Poe, in the "*Autography*."

In his *Broadway Journal* Poe printed an amusing caricature representing Bishop Doane astride of the devil, holding on by the gigantic horns while soaring over Trinity Church steeple. The point of this seems to have referred to the temporary suspension of the Bishop, pending a legal inquiry into some charge of which we believe he was acquitted.

Griswold included Bishop Doane in his "Poets," and gave several specimens, adding that the reverend writer's contributions to the religious literature of the day were "more numerous and valuable."

³¹ "Mr. Clark (Lewis Gaylord) once did me the honour to review my poems, and—I forgive him. Mr. C. as a literary man is as smooth as oil, or a sermon from Doctor Hawks; he is noticeable for nothing in the world except for the markedness by which he is noticeable for nothing."—Poe, in *The Literati*.

The passage in the satire evidently refers to the then deceased brother of the above. In *The Literati* Poe says that L. G. Clark "is known principally as the twin brother of the late Willis Gaylord Clark, the poet, of Philadelphia."

³² "His 'Hymns to the Gods,' and 'Ode to the Mocking Bird,' are the chief basis of his reputation. . . . A keen sense of the beautiful and graceful, . . . picturesque . . . verging on effeminacy. In force he is deficient."—Poe, in the "*Autography*."

Griswold introduces Pike as the son of a journeyman shoemaker. He was of a gloomy temperament. His principal poems were on "The Gods." In a brief notice of *The Knickerbocker* magazine, Poe says:

"It presents its customary table of contents, besides a grand *pièce de résistance* composed of *A. Pike*"

²² Poe had probably heard that he had been suspected of plagiarizing the refrain idea of "The Raven," from Pike's poem on the loss of "Isadore." The allusion to stealing is a bold one.

²³ "As a descriptive poet Mr. Street is to be highly commended. . . . He appears, however, not at any time to have been aware that *mere* description is not poetry at all. We demand creation. About Mr. Street there seems to be no spirit. He is all matter—substance—what the chemists would call 'simple substance'—and exceedingly simple it is."—*Marginalia*.

²⁴ "Velasco." . . . "Its merits are very inconsiderable; . . . to those who meddle little with books, some of his satiric papers must appear brilliant."—Poe, in *The Literati*.

In the *Southern Literary Messenger*, vol. xiii., p. 305, Poe sums up Sargent's work as "flatter than stale beer."

²⁵ "The best novelist which this country has, upon the whole, produced. . . . His earlier works . . . were disfigured by many inaccuracies of style, and especially by the prevalence of the merely repulsive, where the horrible was the object; but in invention, in vigour, in movement, in the power of exciting interest and in the artistical management of his themes, he has surpassed, we think, any of his countrymen."—Poe, in *Broadway Journal*, October 4, 1845.

(Simms was a Southerner, and it was a point of honour with Poe always to praise the South, to vex the hated "Frogpondians" of the North.)

²⁶ See *Introduction* for reference to Poe's peculiarity in naming "Angelo" without the "Michael."

[Compare the twenty verses, beginning with "Blest art, invention," with Poe's "Philosophy of Composition." In both there is a unique exaltation of inventiveness and new forms of verse.]

²⁷ "We shall premise with a short notice on the art of versification; an art which our best poets are ignorant of or wilfully misunderstand."—Poe's critique of Griswold's book.

"Poetry, in its most confined sense, is the result of versification, but may be more properly defined as *the rhythmical personification of existing or ideal beauty*."—*Ibid.*

²⁸ "We knew very well that among (the Bostonians) there existed a predetermination to abuse us under *any* circumstances. . . . The Frogpondians may as well spare us their abuse. If we cared a fig for

their wrath we should not first have insulted them to their teeth, and then subjected to their tender mercies a volume of our Poems :—*that*, we think, is sufficiently clear. The fact is, we despise them and defy them (the transcendental vagabonds !) and they may all go to the devil together.”—Poe, in *Broadway Journal*, November 22, 1845.

“ No man in America has been more shamefully overestimated (than Rufus Dawes). . . . These stupidities. . . . His works . . . mere verbiage. . . . There is not a page of anything he has written which will bear for an instant the scrutiny of a critical eye. . . . This abominable rigmarole.”—Poe, in *The Literati*.

“ Griswold says, “ Mr. Lowell is still a dreamer, and he strives in vain to make his readers partners in his dreamy spiritual fancies.”

“ But for some slight foreknowledge of the literary opinions, likes, dislikes, whims, prejudices and crotchets of Mr. James Russell Lowell, we should have had much difficulty in attributing so very *loose* a brochure (“ Fable for the Critics”) to *him*. . . . Some good hints (? hits) and some sparkling witticisms do not serve to compensate us for its rambling plot . . . and for the want of artistic finish so particularly noticeable throughout the work—especially in its versification. . . . Is there *no* originality on the face of the earth? Mr. Lowell’s total want of it is shown at all points. . . . It is a fashion among Mr. Lowell’s set to affect a belief that there is *no such thing* as Southern Literature. . . . All whom he praises are Bostonians. Other writers are barbarians, and satirized accordingly—if mentioned at all. To show the *general manner* of the fable, we quote a portion of what he says about Mr. Poe :

Here comes Poe with his Raven, like Barnaby Rudge—
Three-fifths of him genius, and two-fifths sheer fudge ;
Who talks like a book of iambs and pentameters,
In a way to make all men of common sense d—n metres ;
Who has written some things far the best of their kind ;
But somehow the heart seems squeezed out by the mind.

. . . Mr. Lowell should not have meddled with the anapæstic rhythm ; it is exceedingly awkward in the bands of one who knows nothing about it and who *will* persist in fancying he can write it by ear. . . . As it is, no failure was ever more complete or more pitiable. . . . (He should) leave prose, with satiric verse, to those who are able to manage them, while he contents himself with that class of poetry for which, and for which alone, he seems to have an especial vocation—the poetry of *sentiment*. This, to be sure, is *not* the very loftiest order of

verse ; for it is far inferior to either that of the imagination or that of the passions—but it is the loftiest region in which Mr. Lowell can get his breath without difficulty.”—Poe, in *The Literati*.

⁴² Goodrich was the maker-up of the once popular “Peter Parley’s Annual,” and occasionally dabbled in mild verse.

⁴³ Poe constantly girded at the Boston School of Poets. In his “Poetic Principle” he says :

“It was the misfortune of Mr. Pinckney to have been born too far south. Had he been a New Englander, it is probable that he would have been ranked as the first of American lyrists by that magnanimous cabal which has so long controlled the destinies of American letters in conducting the thing called ‘*The North American Review*.’” More than once in his other writings Poe ridicules the pundits of Frog-pondium. Towards 1847, for various reasons, he considerably modified his harsh criticisms of Longfellow, Lowell, and the rest.

“Much as we admire the genius of Mr. Longfellow we are fully sensible of his many errors of affectation and imitation. His artistical skill is great and his ideality high. But his conception of the aims of poesy is all wrong.”—Poe on *Longfellow*.

“Mr. Longfellow, decidedly the most audacious imitator in America, is markedly original, or, in other words, imaginative, upon the whole.”—*Marginalia*. (See note 24.)

“The poetic sentiment (even without reference to the poetic power) implies a peculiarly, perhaps an abnormally keen appreciation of the beautiful, with a longing for its assimilation, or absorption, into the poetic identity. What the poet intensely admires becomes thus, in very fact, although only partially, a portion of his own intellect.”—Poe on “*Longfellow and other Plagiarists*.”

⁴⁴ Poe here indulges his sarcasm at the Carlylean style. In one of his references to it he speaks of the “jarring, inappropriate, mean, and in every way monstrous assemblages of false imagery in the farces of Carlyle.”—Poe on Brainard, in *The Literati*.

⁴⁵ Griswold includes about 150 writers in his “Poets of America.” Of these about 20 are generally familiar names, though perhaps few average readers could name particular poems by each of them. Among those whom Griswold treats with the very scantiest notice is Poe, who is almost the only one upon whose poetic qualities Griswold says absolutely nothing. Out of Griswold’s 150 immortals the following are undoubtedly the first seven ; we give them in alphabetical order : Bryant, Halleck, Holmes, Longfellow, Lowell, Poe, Whittier.

⁴⁶ The conceits of Mr. Cranch, . . . he is full of conceits . . . but the conceits of Mr. Cranch are, for the most part, conceits intentionally manufactured, for conceit's sake. . . . We see every moment that he has been at uncommon pains to make a fool of himself."—Poe, in *The Literati*.

Griswold quotes Bishop Doane as saying that "Crosswell has more unwritten poetry in him than any man he knows." Crosswell was a clergyman.

⁴⁷ "Whenever a book is abused, people take it for granted that it is I who have been abusing it."—Poe, in "*Marginalia*."

⁴⁸ *The Harbinger* (1845) said that Poe's fame was "degenerating into notoriety, through a certain blackguard warfare which he had been waging against the poets and newspaper critics of New England, and which it would be most charitable to impute to insanity."

⁴⁹ In his article on "Mr. Longfellow and other Plagiarists," Poe thus resents "the insufferable cant and shameless misrepresentation, practised habitually by just such anonymous enemies as 'Outis,' with the view of decrying by sheer strength of lungs—of trampling down—of rioting down—of mobbing down any man with a soul that bids him come out from among the general corruption of our public press, and take his stand upon the open ground of rectitude and honour. . . . In regard to my own course . . . I will now unscrupulously call the attention of the 'Outises' to the fact that it was during what they would insinuate to be the unpopularity of my 'wholesale mangling of the victims without rhyme or reason,' that, in one year, the circulation of the *Southern Messenger* extended itself from seven hundred to nearly five thousand, and that in little more than twice the same time, *Graham's Magazine* swelled its list from five thousand to fifty-two thousand subscribers. I make no apology for these egotisms, . . . for in myself I am but defending a set of principles which no honest man need be ashamed of defending, and for whose defence no honest man will consider an apology required. . . . I have to refute only the accusation of mangling by wholesale—and I refute it by the simplest reference to *fact*. What I have written remains, and is readily accessible in any of our public libraries."

"The manner in which we are maltreated, of late days is really awful to behold. Everybody is at us—little dogs and all."—Poe, in *Broadway Journal*, December 6, 1845.

⁵⁰ "In the late lecture on the 'Poets and Poetry of America,' delivered before an audience made up chiefly of editors and their connections, I took occasion to speak what I know to be the truth, and I endeav-

oured so to speak it that there should be no chance of misunderstanding what it was I intended to say. I told these gentlemen to their teeth, that, with a *very* few noble exceptions, they had been engaged for many years in a system of indiscriminate laudation of American books—a system which, more than any other one thing in the world, had tended to the depression of that ‘American Literature’ whose elevation it was designed to effect. I said this, and very much more of a similar tendency, with as thorough a distinctness as I could command. Could I, at the moment, have invented any terms *more* explicit, wherewith to express my contempt of our general editorial course of corruption and puffery, I should have employed them beyond the shadow of a doubt;—and should I think of anything more expressive *hereafter*, I will endeavour either to find or to make an opportunity for its introduction to the public.

“And what, for all this, had I to anticipate? In a very few cases the open, and, in several, the silent approval of the more chivalrous portion of the press;—but in a majority of instances, I should have been weak indeed to look for anything but abuse. . . . To my vilifiers I return also such thanks as they deserve, inasmuch as without what they have done me the honour to say, there would have been much of point wanting in the compliments of my friends. Had I, indeed, from the former received any less equivocal tokens of disapprobation, I should, at this moment, have been looking about me to discover what sad blunder I had committed. I am most sincere in what I say.”—Poe, in *Broadway Journal*, March 8, 1845.

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