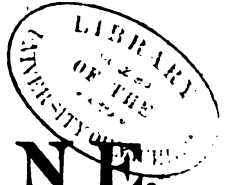


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WILLIAM BLACKWOOD, EDINBURGH ;

AND

T. CADELL, STRAND, LONDON.

1825.

Noctes Ambrosianæ.

No. XXI.

XPH Δ'ΕΝ ΣΥΜΠΟΣΙΩ ΚΥΑΙΚΩΝ ΠΕΡΙΝΙΣΣΟΜΕΝΑΩΝ
 ΗΔΕΑ ΚΩΤΙΛΑΟΝΤΑ ΚΑΘΗΜΕΝΟΝ ΟΙΝΟΠΟΤΑΖΕΙΝ.

PHOC. *ap. Ath.*

[*This is a distich by wise old Phocylides,
 An ancient who wrote crabbed Greek in no silly days ;
 Meaning, " 'TIS RIGHT FOR GOOD WINEBIBBING PEOPLE,
 " NOT TO LET THE JUG PACE ROUND THE BOARD LIKE A CRIPPLE ;
 " BUT GAILY TO CHAT WHILE DISCUSSING THEIR TIPPLE."*
*An excellent rule of the hearty old cock 'tis—
 And a very fit motto to put to our Noctes.]*

C. N. *ap. Ambr.**Blue Parlour.*—NORTH and TICKLER.

NORTH.

With what admirable ingenuity hath our Ambrose contrived to procure a perpetual play of Zephyr, even during the summer noon, in this Sanctum Sanctorum !

TICKLER.

What a scientific thorough-draught ! How profound these shadows ! Not a leaf is withered on that beautiful geranium ! Never was that flowering myrtle more " brightly, deeply, beautifully green." Week after week that carnation tree displays new orbs of crimson glory. Saw ye ever, North, such a tiger-lily, so wildly, fiercely beautiful, like its forest brother, the animal that terrifies the desert with his glittering and gorgeous motion, as he bounds over brake and jingle in famine or in play.

NORTH.

Timothy, Timothy, Timothy ! First Timothy ?

TICKLER.

Too poetical ? Why, that red champagne has stirred up all the ethereal particles that mysteriously constitute the soul ; and, as Jeffrey said to Coleridge, " Why, sir, my whole talk is poetry."

NORTH.

Whoever wishes to know what poetry is, to know it clearly, distinctly, and permanently, let him read Barry Cornwall's article thereon in the last Number of the Edinburgh Review.

TICKLER.

That young gentleman deserves a dressing at your hands or mine, North, for he often runs a-muck now ; not in the Malay, however, but Cockney fashion, and the pen must be wrested out of his lily hand.

NORTH.

The image is not unamusing ; a slight, slim poetaster mincing a-muck among the great English bards ! I love Barry ; for he writes pretty—very pretty verses—and has an eye for the beautiful—but in the character of critic

TICKLER.

He courts the world's applause, by endeavouring to imitate Leigh Hunt, Hazlitt, Jeffrey, the London Magazine, himself, Johnny Keates, and the morning papers ; and in such slang he jargons the characters of Shakspeare and Milton. It is, indeed, despicable to see the old Blue and Yellow reduced to such drivelling as this ;—but what are you reading, North ?

NORTH.

The account of the Lion-fight at Warwick ; a most brutal business—hideous and loathsome. But why confuse such infamous cruelty with such a cheerful pastime as pugilism ? Would you believe it, that the editor of the New Times has discontinued those admirable accounts of all the great fights that made

his paper as much prized in the sporting as it has long been in the political and fashionable world? I do not find that he has shut his columns to those grossly indecent quack advertisements, that render newspapers unfit to lie on the breakfast-table of an honest family. Is this consistent?

TICKLER.

Very silly. By so doing, he disappoints a vast number of his subscribers. What right has he to disappoint five hundred country gentlemen, all anxious to know the character and result of any battle?

NORTH.

None. They take his paper, to be sure, for other and higher reasons; but they are entitled to find in its columns full and particular accounts of all such contests, for, right or wrong, they form part of our national pastimes, create a prodigious interest among all classes, and a man looks and feels like a ninny on going into company in utter ignorance of that event which furnishes the sole conversation of that one day. I trust this hint will be taken.

TICKLER.

Confound all cruelty to animals!—but I much question the efficacy of law to protect the inferior creation against the human. Let that protection be found in the moral indignation of the people. That Irish jackass, Martin, throws an air of ridicule over the whole matter by his insufferable idiotism. I hope to see his skull, thick as it is, cracked one of these days; for that vulgar and angry gabble with which he weekly infests the Police-Offices of the metropolis, is a greater outrage to humanity than any fifty blows ever inflicted on the snout of pig, or the buttocks of beeve; blows which, in one and the same breath, the blustering and blundering blockhead would fain prosecute, punish, and pardon.

NORTH.

It is not possible to define cruelty to animals, so as to bring it within the salutary operation of law. That being the case, there should be no law on the subject. I am an old, weak man now, but I was once young and strong; and this fist, Timothy, now with difficulty folded into a bunch of fives,—for these chalk-stones forbid,—has levelled many a brute in the act of unmercifully beating his horse, his ass, or his wife. Every man ought to take the law into his own hands on such occasions. Thus only can the inferior animals walk the streets of London in any degree of security.

TICKLER.

Pray, Mr Richard Martin, did you ever try to drive a pig? or to keep a flock of sheep, or a drove of cattle together, in the midst of the riot, tumult, and confusion of Smithfield? It is no such easy job, I can tell you; and nothing short of a most impertinent and provoking puppy must that person be, who stops short a drover in all his agonies of exasperation, for merely banging the hide of an over-fed ox, about to join the colours of another regiment.

NORTH.

Why don't they murder him at once?

TICKLER.

Oh! he cannot expect to sit in another Parliament. I presume you know that he is to be Chancellor of the University of London?

NORTH.

I do. University of London! With what an air of pride will a young man look about him, in a company of poor Oxonians and Cantabs, who may have just finished his education in the University of London!

TICKLER.

Tims, I am told, is to be a Professor. Yet, joking apart, I am sorry there is to be no theological chair. I had intended occupying it, and had even sketched out a course of lectures; but understanding that O'Doherty was a candidate, I retired before the claims of the Adjutant.

NORTH.

The Adjutant! Do you mean to tell me that the Standard-Bearer is an Unitarian? Impossible! O'Doherty could never have intended to accept the chair.

TICKLER.

On the whole it is better, perhaps, that he is to be appointed Professor of Gymnastics? Chas does not mean to oppose him, and therefore, for the Adjutant's sake, let us drink success to this institution:—"Sir Morgan O'Doherty"

ty, and the University of London;” with all the honours. *Hip, hip, hip—Oye, Oye &c.*

NORTH.

Young persons, my good friend, will, no doubt, get information of various kinds at the said London University; but it will always be a vulgar, coarsish sort of an academe. True it is, that the expense of a complete and gentlemanly education at Oxford or Cambridge is a serious thing, and must deter many parents from sending their sons thither; but such education as this metropolitan school will supply, never will be considered as a satisfactory substitute for the other, either by the heads of families, or the young gentlemen themselves; and it is plain that the students must be of a low grade in society. Be it so; it is well. Let its real character be understood, and many of the objections to the scheme will fall to the ground; just as many of the expectations of its utility will do, now absurdly exaggerated and misrepresented.

TICKLER.

No Divinity—no Polite Literature—no Classics!—What a Menagerie it will be of Bears and Monkeys! a nursery for contributors to the Westminster Review.

NORTH.

Pray, Tickler, have you read Milton’s Treatise on Christianity?

TICKLER.

I have; and feel disposed to agree with him in his doctrine of polygamy. For many years I lived very comfortably without a wife; and since the 1820, I have been a monogamist. But I confess that there is a sameness in that system. I should like much to try polygamy for a few years. I wish Milton had explained the duties of a polygamist; for it is possible that they may be of a very intricate, complicated, and unbounded nature, and that such an accumulation of private business might be thrown on one’s hands, that it could not be in the power of an elderly gentleman to overtake it; occupied, too, as he might be, as in my own case, in contributing to the Periodical Literature of the age.

NORTH.

Sir, the system would not be found to work well in this climate. Milton was a great poet; but a bad divine, and a miserable politician.

TICKLER.

How can that be?—Wordsworth says that a great poet must be great in all things.

NORTH.

Wordsworth often writes like an idiot; and never more so than when he said of Milton, “his soul was like a star, and dwelt apart!” For it dwelt in tumult, and mischief, and rebellion. Wordsworth is, in all things, the reverse of Milton—a good man, and a bad poet.

TICKLER.

What!—That Wordsworth whom Maga cries up as the Prince of Poets?

NORTH.

Be it so; I must humour the fancies of some of my friends. But had that man been a great poet, he would have produced a deep and lasting impression on the mind of England; whereas his verses are becoming less and less known every day, and he is, in good truth, already one of the illustrious obscure.

TICKLER.

I never thought him more than a very ordinary man—with some imagination, certainly, but with no grasp of understanding, and apparently little acquainted with the history of his kind. My God! to compare such a writer with Scott and Byron!

NORTH.

And yet, with his creed, what might not a great poet have done?—That the language of poetry is but the language of strong human passion!—That in the great elementary principles of thought and feeling, common to all the race, the subject-matter of poetry is to be sought and found!—That enjoyment and suffering, as they wring and crush, or expand and elevate, men’s hearts, are the sources of song!—And what, pray, has he made out of this true and philosophical creed?—A few ballads, (pretty at the best,) two or three moral fables, some natural description of scenery, and half a dozen narratives of con-

mon distress or happiness. Not one single character has he created—not one incident—not one tragical catastrophe. He has thrown no light on man's estate here below ; and Crabbe, with all his defects, stands immeasurably above Wordsworth as the Poet of the Poor.

TICKLER.

Good. And yet the youngsters, in that absurd Magazine of yours, set him up to the stars as their idol, and kiss his very feet, as if the toes were of gold.

NORTH.

Well, well ; let them have their own way awhile. I confess that the "Excursion" is the worst poem, of any character, in the English language. It contains about two hundred sonorous lines, some of which appear to be fine, even in the sense, as well as the sound. The remaining 7300 are quite ineffectual. Then what labour the builder of that lofty rhyme must have undergone ! It is, in its own way, a small Tower of Babel, and all built by a single man !

TICKLER.

Wipe your forehead, North ; for it is indeed a most perspiring thought. I do not know whether my gallantry blinds me, but I prefer much of the female to the male poetry of the day.

NORTH.

O thou Polygamist !

TICKLER.

There is Joanna Baillie. Is there not more genius, passion, poetry, in the tragedy of Count Basil, than in any book of Wordsworth ?

NORTH.

Ten times.

TICKLER.

There is Mrs Hemans. Too fond, certes, is she of prattling about Greece and Rome, and of being classical, which no lady can hope to be who has never been at one of the English public schools, and sat upon the fifth form. But is there not often a rich glow of imagery in her compositions, fine feelings and fancies, and an unconstrained and even triumphant flow of versification which murmurs poetry ?

NORTH.

There is.

TICKLER.

Is not L. E. L. a child of genius, as well as of the Literary Gazette ; and does she not throw over her most impassioned strains of love and rapture a delicate and gentle spirit, from the recesses of her own pure and holy woman's heart ?

NORTH.

She does.

TICKLER.

And was not Tighe an angel, if ever there was one on earth, beautiful, airy, and evanescent, as her own immortal Psyche ?

NORTH.

She was.

TICKLER.

And what the devil then would you be at with your great bawling He-Poets from the Lakes, who go round and round about, strutting upon nothing, like so many turkey-cocks gobbling with a long red pendant at their noses, and frightening away the fair and lovely swans as they glide down the waters of immortality ?

NORTH.

With Fahrenheit at 80 in the shade, I praise the poetry of no man. You have carte blanche to abuse everybody, Tickler, till the thermometer is less ambitious.

TICKLER.

Wordsworth is a poet—but unluckily is a weak man. His imagination shows him fine sights, but his intellect knows not how to deal with them, so that they vanish in glittering and gorgeous evaporation.

NORTH.

Just so, Tickler—and then how ludicrously he over-rates his own powers. This we all do, but Wordsworth's pride is like that of a straw-crowned king in Bedlam. For example, he indited some silly lines to a hedge-sparrow's nest with five eggs, and, years afterwards, in a fit of exultation, told the world, in another poem equally childish, that the Address to the Sparrow was "one strain that will not die!" Ha! ha! ha! Can that be a great man?

TICKLER.

Had that man in youth become the member of any profession, (which all poor men are bound to do,) he would soon have learned in the tussle to rate his powers more truly. How such a man as Jeffrey, with his endless volubility of ingenious argumentation, would have squabashed him before a jury! Suppose him Attorney-general in the Queen's trial, stammering before Brougham, who kept lowering upon him with that cadaverous and cruel countenance, on a sudden instinct with a hellish scorn! Or opposed in Parliament to the rapier of Canning, that even while glancing brightly before the eye, has already inflicted twenty disabling wounds! Or editor of a Poetical, Philosophical, and Political Journal, and under the influence of a malignant star, opposed, *vi et armis*, to Christopher North, the Victor in a Thousand Fields!

NORTH.

Ay, ay, Tickler—my dear Tickler—He would have found his level then—but his excessive vanity

TICKLER.

Contrasted with the unassuming, and indeed retiring modesty—I might say bashfulness—of your mind and manners, sir, the arrogance of the stamp-master

NORTH.

Hush—no illiberal illusion to a man's trade.

TICKLER.

I ask pardon. No person more illiberal on this very point than our lyrical ballad-monger. His whole writings, in verse and prose, are full of sneers at almost every profession but his own—and that being the case

NORTH.

Scott's poetry puzzles me—it is often very bad.

TICKLER.

Very.

NORTH.

Except when his martial soul is up, he is but a tame and feeble writer. His versification in general flows on easily—smoothly—almost sonorously—but seldom or never with impetuosity or grandeur. There is no strength, no felicity in his diction—and the substance of his poetry is neither rich nor rare. The atmosphere is becoming every moment more oppressive. How stands the Therm.?

TICKLER.

Ninety. But then when his martial soul is up, and up it is at sight of a spear-point or a pennon, then indeed you hear the true poet of chivalry. What care I, Kit, for all his previous drivelling—if drivelling it be—and God forbid I should deny drivelling to any poet, ancient or modern—for now he makes my very soul to burn within me,—and, coward and civilian though I be,—yes, a most intense and insuperable coward, prizing life and limb beyond all other earthly possessions, and loath to shed one single drop of blood either for my King or country,—yet such is the trumpet-power of the song of that son of genius, that I start from my old elbow-chair, up with the poker, tongs, or shovel, no matter which, and flourishing it round my head, cry,

"Charge, Chester, charge! On, Stanley, on!"

and then, dropping my voice, and returning to my padded bottom, whisper,

"Were the last words of Marmion!"—

NORTH.

Brave—bravo—bravo!

TICKLER.

I care not one single curse for all the criticism that ever was canted, or decanted, or recanted. Neither does the world. The world takes a poet as it finds him, and seats him accordingly above or below the salt. The world is as obstinate as a million mules, and will not turn its head on one side or another for all the shouting of the critical population that ever was shouted. It is very possible that the world is a bad judge. Well then—appeal to posterity, and be hanged to you—and posterity will affirm the judgment, with costs.

NORTH.

How you can jabber away so, in such a temperature as this, confounds me. You are indeed a singular old man.

TICKLER.

Therefore I say that Scott is a Homer of a poet, and so let him doze when he has a mind to it; for no man I know is better entitled to an occasional half-canto of slumber.

NORTH.

Did you ever meet any of the Lake-Poets in private society?

TICKLER.

Five or six times. Wordsworth has a grave, solemn, pedantic, awkward, out-of-the-worldish look about him, that rather puzzles you as to his probable profession, till he begins to speak—and then, to be sure, you set him down at once for a methodist preacher.

NORTH.

I have seen Chantry's bust.

TICKLER.

The bust flatters his head, which is not intellectual. The forehead is narrow, and the skull altogether too scanty. Yet the baldness, the gravity, and the composure, are impressive, and, on the whole, not unpoetical. The eyes are dim and thoughtful, and a certain sweetness of smile occasionally lightens up the strong lines of his countenance with an expression of courteousness and philanthropy.

NORTH.

Is he not extremely eloquent?

TICKLER.

Far from it. He labours like a whale spouting—his voice is wearisomely monotonous—he does not know when to have done with a subject—oracularly announces perpetual truisms—never hits the nail on the head—and leaves you amazed with all that needless pother, which the simple bard opines to be eloquence, and which passes for such with his Cockney idolators, and his catechumens at Ambleside and Keswick.

NORTH.

Not during dinner, surely?

TICKLER.

Yes—during breakfast, lunch, dinner, tea, and supper,—every intermediate moment,—nor have I any doubt that he prosés all night long in his sleep.

NORTH.

Shocking indeed. In conversation, the exchange should be at par. That is the grand secret. Nor should any Christian ever exceed the maximum of three consecutive sentences—except in an anecdote.

TICKLER.

O merciful heavens! my dear North—What eternal talkers most men are now-a-days—all at it in a party at once—each farthing candle anxious to shine forth with its own vile wavering wick—tremulously apprehensive of snuffers—and stinking away after expiration in the socket!

NORTH.

Bad enough in town, but worse, far worse, in country places.

TICKLER.

The surgeon! The dominie! The old minister's assistant and successor! The president of the Speculative Society! Two landscape painters! The rejected contributor to Blackwood! The agricultural reporter of the county!

The surveyor ! Captain Campbell ! The Laird, his son ! The stranger gentleman on a tour ! The lecturer on an orrery ! The poet about to publish by subscription ! The person from Pitkeathly ! The man of the house himself—My God ! his wife and daughters ! and the widow, the widow ! I can no more, the widow, the widow, the widow ! (sinks back in his chair.)

NORTH.

I have heard Coleridge. That man is entitled to speak on till Doomsday—or rather the genius within him—for he is inspired. Wind him up, and away he goes, discoursing most excellent music—without a discord—full, ample, inexhaustible, serious, and divine !

TICKLER.

Add him to my list—and the band of instrumental music is complete.

NORTH.

What stuff is spoken about the oratory of pulpit and parliament !

TICKLER.

Brougham is a volcano—an eruption—a devouring flame—a storm—a whirlwind—a cataract—a torrent—a sea—thunder and earthquake. You might apply the same terms, with the same truth, to a Billingsgate fishwife.

NORTH.

Brougham's invective is formidable chiefly for its vulgarity. One hates, loaths, fears to be pelted with the mud and missiles of an infuriated demagogue—just as a gentleman declines the proffered combat with a carman, although conscious that in three rounds he would leave the ruffian senseless in the ring.

TICKLER.

That sometimes occurs—as in the case of Canning.

NORTH.

The straight hitting of the Foreign Secretary soon dorses your round-about hand-over-head millers, like Harry Brougham.

TICKLER.

Yet how that outrageous violence and fury, arms aloft, eyes agog, cheeks convulsed, and lips quivering, passes with the multitude for demonstration of strength and science !

NORTH.

Brougham never fights at points—he throws away his blows—and beyond all the other men, lays himself open to fatal punishment, although he has weight, length, and reach, and generally enters the ring in good condition, and after long and severe training, yet has he lost every battle. His backers are never confident—yet in a casual turn-up, it must be allowed that he is an ugly customer.

TICKLER.

Notwithstanding the truth of all this, I am a great admirer of Brougham. He is unquestionably a man of great and versatile talents.

NORTH.

Yes—and to hear his lickspittles speak, you would think that a man of great and versatile talents was a miracle ; whereas there are some thousands of them publicly acknowledged in England at this day. We hear of his wonderful literary talents—wherein exhibited ?

TICKLER.

The Edinburgh Review.

NORTH.

Very well—many able papers in the Edinburgh Review no doubt—which are his ? Let us suppose all of them, and that the trash is Jeffrey's, Smith's Mackintosh's, &c. ; are the best of those papers astounding, prodigious, miraculous, prophetic of the Millenium ? I read them without awe—my hair does not rise—my knees do not tremble—No cold sweat overspreads my aged frame—I read on—on—on—am pleased to see intuitively the fallacy of all he writes—and fall asleep with a calm conscience.

TICKLER.

He is a great mathematician.

NORTH.

So is his brother Billy, who was to have beaten Joshua King at Cambridge,

and come forth from the Senate-house senior Wrangler, with "Incomparabibb" at his name. But on the day of trial he was found wanting—and showed himself no mathematician at all, although he too, it is said, writes his scientific articles in the Edinburgh Review. Yes! he is the Euclid of the Edinburgh.

TICKLER.

His Colonial Policy?

NORTH.

Speeches in the Speculative Society, and trial-essays for the Edinburgh Review—a foolish farrago—although on some subjects I prefer the ignorant sincerity of the boy there exhibited, to the instructed hypocrisy of the man in his late bellowings on Slavery and the Blacks.

TICKLER.

Then what say you to his Glasgow affair?

NORTH.

Why, as to his Inaugural Discourse, it is far from being a bad performance, but stiff, pedantic, and cumbrous. It was written, he tells the world, on the Northern Circuit; and his childish sycophant in the Edinburgh Review opens his mouth to a dangerous extent at this wonder of wonders, braying, that "it sounds like monstrous and shocking exaggeration, or fabulous invention."

TICKLER.

The short and the long of it is, then, that, when inquired into, Henry Brougham's literary and scientific pretensions sink into absolute nothingness, and that there are at this moment at least fifty thousand men in England equal to this prodigy in all the attainments of scholarship, and certainly not fewer than ten thousand his superior, incomparably, both in argument and capacity?

NORTH.

Doubtless, Tickler,—add his Bar practice and Parliamentary howling, and still he can be accounted for without the aid of "fabulous invention."

TICKLER.

He is a first-rate fellow in his way, and that I can say, without "monstrous or shocking exaggeration." But his stature does not reach the sky, although his head is frequently in the clouds. Copley is his master.

NORTH.

That is a capital article on the Drama in the last number of *Maga*. It cuts up your dogmata, in your sprightly review of Doubleday's Babington, with civility and discretion.

TICKLER.

Indeed! What I asserted in my sprightly review of Doubleday's Babington was simply this, that it was easier for a man of great poetical genius to write dramatic poetry, than any other kind. In the course of my very sprightly review I remarked, that "with a powerful intellect, a vivid imagination, and a keen insight into human nature, particularly into its passions, where is the prodigious difficulty of writing a good tragedy?"

NORTH.

Why, I confess I see none.

TICKLER.

But hear our friend.—"To this I answer, None whatever; and when we shall find first-rate intellect, imagination, and knowledge of human passion combined, we shall have found the true writer of tragedy, and the true Phoenix besides."

NORTH.

And what say you in reply?

TICKLER.

I say, that I cannot but wonder at such a sentence from so clever a correspondent. Why, are not all great poets that ever existed such men as I have described? There was no description of a Phoenix, but of any one of some hundreds, or perhaps thousands, or tens of thousands of men and Christians. I did not argue the question at any great length; but I made out my point unanswerably, that epic poetry (for example) was more difficult than dramatic,—and that—

NORTH.

Come, come—nobody remembers one single word that either of you have said upon that, or any other subject. It is pleasant to know how immediately everything said or done in this world is forgotten. Murder a novel, or a man, or a poem, or a child—forge powers of attorney without cessation during the prime of life, till old maids beyond all computation have been sold unsuspectingly out of the stocks in every country village in England—for a lustre furnish Balaam to a London magazine, at thirty shillings per bray—in short, let any man commit any enormity, and it is forgotten before the first of the month! Who remembers anything but the bare names—and these indistinctly—of Thurtell, and Hunt, and Fauntleroy, and Hazlitt, and Tims, and Soames, and Southeran. Soap-bubbles all—blown, burst, vanished, and forgotten!

TICKLER.

Why, you might almost venture to republish Maga herself in numbers, under the smirk of a New Series. I know a worthy and able minister of our church, who has been preaching (and long may he preach it) the self-same sermon for upwards of forty years. About the 1802 I began to suspect him; but having then sat below him only for some dozen years, or so, I could not, of course, in a matter of so much delicacy, dare trust to my very imperfect memory. During the Whig ministry of 1806, my attention was strongly rivetted to the "practical illustrations," and I could have sworn to the last twenty minutes of his discourse, as to the voice of a friend familiar in early youth. About the time your Magazine first dawned on the world, my belief of its identity extended to the whole discourse; and the good old man himself, in the delight of his heart, confessed to me the truth a few Sabbaths after the Chaldee.

NORTH.

Come, now, tell me the truth, have you ever palmed off any part of it upon me in the shape of an article?

TICKLER.

Never, 'pon honour; but you shall get the whole of it some day, as a Number One; for, now that he has got an assistant and successor, the sermon is seldom employed, and he has bequeathed it me in a codicil to his will.

NORTH.

Tickler, you think yourself a good reader—there is Southey's new poem, "The Tale of Paraguay:" Spout.

TICKLER.

I read well—although hardly a John Kemble or a James Ballantyne. I do not read according to rules, but I follow my feelings, and they never mislead me. Accordingly, I never read the same composition in the same way, yet each way is the right one. But judge for yourself Give me Southey, (*Rises and reads.*)

"He was a man of rarest qualities,
Who to this barbarous region had confined
A spirit with the learned and the wise
Worthy to take its place, and from mankind
Receive their homage, to the immortal mind
Paid in its just inheritance of fame.
But he to humbler thoughts his heart inclined;
From Gratz amid the Styrian hills he came,
And Dobrizhoffer was the good man's honour'd name.

"It was his evil fortune to behold
The labours of his painful life destroy'd;
His flock which he had brought within the fold
Dispersed; the work of ages render'd void,
And all of good that Paraguay enjoy'd
By blind and suicidal power o'erthrown.
So he the years of his old age employ'd,
A faithful chronicler, in handing down
Names which he loved, and things well worthy to be known.

“ And, thus when exiled from the dear-loved scene,
 In proud Vienna he beguiled the pain
 Of sad remembrance : and the Empress Queen,
 That great Teresa, she did not disdain
 In gracious mood sometimes to entertain
 Discourse with him both pleasurable and sage ;
 And sure a willing ear she well might deign
 To one whose tales may equally engage
 The wondering mind of youth, the thoughtful heart of age.”

“ But of his native speech because well nigh
 Disuse in him forgetfulness had wrought,
 In Latin he composed his history ;
 A garrulous, but a lively tale, and fraught
 With matter of delight and food for thought.
 And if he could in Merlin’s glass have seen
 By whom his tomes to speak our tongue were taught,
 The old man would have felt as pleased, I ween,
 As when he won the ear of that great Empress Queen.

“ Little he deem’d when with his Indian band
 He through the wilds set forth upon his way,
 A Poet then unborn, and in a land
 Which had proscribed his order, should one day
 Take up from thence his moralizing lay,
 And shape a song that, with no fiction drest,
 Should to his worth its grateful tribute pay,
 And sinking deep in many an English breast,
 Foster that faith divine that keeps the heart at rest.”

NORTH.

Very bad—very bad.

TICKLE.

I offer to read you for a rump and dozen. Sir, which of us call you bad—the poet or the spouter ?

NORTH.

Both, both—bad, bald, mean, and miserable !

TICKLE.

Bald !—Can’t help that. Would you have me wear a wig ?—But here’s at it again.—(Reads.)

“ The Moon had gather’d off her monthly store
 Of light, and oft in darkness left the sky,
 Since Monnema a growing burthen bore
 Of life and hope. The appointed weeks go by ;
 And now her hour is come, and none is nigh
 To help : but human help she needed none.
 A few short throes endured with scarce a cry,
 Upon the bank she laid her new-horn son,
 Then slid into the stream, and bathed, and all was done.”

“ Might old observances have there been kept,
 Then should the husband to that pensile bed,
 Like one exhausted with the birth have crept,
 And laying down in feeble guise his head,
 For many a day been nursed and dieted
 With tender care, to chiding mothers due.
 Certes a custom strange, and yet far spread
 Through many a savage tribe, howe’er it grew,
 And once in the old world known as widely as the new.

“ This could not then be done ; he might not lay
 The bow and those unerring shafts aside :
 Not through the appointed weeks forego the prey,

Still to be sought amid those regions wide,
None being there who should the while provide
That lonely household with their needful food ;
So still Quiara through the forest plied
His daily task, and in the thickest wood
Still laid his snares for birds, and still the chace pursued."

NORTH.

Conceived and brought forth in the true spirit of a howdie !—
" Then slid into the stream, and bathed, and all was done !"

TICKLER.

Look at the passage, North, with your own eyes. You see it—so do I.
Shall I ring the bell for Ambrose and other witnesses ?

NORTH.

" What is writ is writ." But oh ! how unlike the spirit of Byron ! It is indeed pitiable.

TICKLER.

What the devil are you whimpering at ?—Not a poet living who has not indulged in his drivel.

NORTH.

Oh ! not surely to that degree !

TICKLER.

Yes ; beyond the superlative. Then hear the people in Parliament. What ludicrous pomposity in the enunciation of old, decrepid, emaciated truths, walking arm-in-arm with skeleton falsehoods ! Are there, I ask you, six men in the House of Commons who could support a part in our Noctes Ambrosianæ ?

NORTH.

I intend shortly to try. We shall then see of what metal they are made.

TICKLER.

Who are the first men in England ?—The spirits of the age ?

NORTH.

I know none superior to our two selves. The world tires speedily of everything set before it, except The Magazine. All the other periodicals seem to sicken their subscribers. To conduct the state is, I verily believe, much easier than to conduct Ebony. The state goes on of itself. All that the ministry is expected to do, is not to stop the state. But we carry the Magazine on. A national bankruptcy would be nothing in comparison to our stopping payment.

TICKLER.

I know not whether your death, or that of the Great Unknown, would most fatally eclipse the gaiety of nations.

NORTH.

Mine.

TICKLER.

List !—I hear Mullion, Hogg, and Odoherty.

(Door burst open, and they enter.)

NORTH.

Glad to see you, gentlemen. Here, Tickler, and I have been discussing Dick Martin and Wordsworth, Southey and Brougham, till we are fairly tired of the whole set.

TICKLER.

To change the subject, Mullion, will you give us a song.

MULLION.

With all my heart.

[Sings.

I.

When Panurge and his fellows, as Rab'lais will tell us,*
Set out on a sail to the ends of the earth,

* See Rabelais Pantagruel, Livre V. Chap. xlv. After arriving at the oracle of the holy bottle, and asking its advice, " de la sacree bouteille y a un lait tel que

And jollily cruising, carousing, and boozing,
 To the oracle came in a full tide of mirth.
 Pray what was its answer? come tell if you can, sir;
 'Twas an answer most splendid and sage, as I think;
 For sans any delaying, it summ'd up by saying,
 The whole duty of man is one syllable—"DRINK."

2.

O bottle mirific! advice beatific!
 A response more celestial sure never was known;
 I speak for myself, I prefer it to Delphi,
 Though Apollo himself on that rock fix'd his throne;
 The foplings of fashion may still talk their trash on,
 And declare that the custom of toping should sink;
 A fig for such asses, I stick to my glasses,
 And swear that no fashion shall stint me in drink.

3.

And now in full measure I toast you with pleasure,
 The warrior—

[To SIR MORGAN ODOHERTY, who bows.]

—the poet—

[To MR HOGG, who bows.]

—the statesman—

[to MR TICKLER, who bows.]

—and sage;

[To MR NORTH, who bows,]

Whose benign constellation illumines the nation,
 And sheds lively lustre all over the age;
 Long, long may its brightness, in glory and lightness,
 Shine clear as the day-star on morning's sweet brink!
 May their sway ne'er diminish! and therefore I finish,
 By proposing the health of the four whom I drink.

NORTH, HOGG, ODOHERTY, TICKLER.

Thank ye—thank ye—Bravo!—Bravo!—A capital first-rate song.

NORTH, (*aside to HOGG.*)

A poor effusion that of Mullion's; I think he grows worse every day.

HOGG, (*aside to NORTH.*)

Awfu' havers. It maist gart me gie up my stomach.

ODOHERTY, (*aside to TICKLER.*)

Stuff, by all that's bad.

TICKLER, (*aside to ODOHERTY.*)

Stupid trash.

MULLION.

I am glad it has pleased you all so much. Mr North, I believe it is your turn.

NORTH.

Faith, Doctor, you know I seldom sing. However, I shall give you one which I used to hear a long time ago in Paris, when I was at the dear *petits soupers* of the divine Duchesse de—. Pshaw!—no matter. It was written by Coulanges, when he was about eighty. And I heard it first sung by a man of the same age, who had heard Coulanges himself singing it a very short time before he died.

HOGG.

When was it that that Cool-onj ye speak o' dee'd?

font les abeilles naissantes de la chair dung jeune taureau occiz et accoustre selon l'art et invention d'Aristeus; ou tel que fait une guarot desbandant l'arbaleste, ou, en est, une forte pluye soubdainement tumbant. Lors feut ouy ce mot, TRING." which the priestess' son interprets to be a panomphean, signifying Drink.

VIII.

3 D

NORTH.

Somewhere about the fifteen—I mean 1715, or perhaps 16. I heard it perhaps sixty years after, if not more.

Je voudrais à mon à - ge, (Il en se - roit temps,) E - tre moins vo -
 la - ge Que les jeu - nes gens, Et mettre en u - sa - ge D'un veillard bien
 sa - ge Tous les sen - ti - mens. Je voudrais du vieil homme E - tre se - pa -
 ré: Le morceau de pomme N'est pas di - gé - ré Gens de bien, gens d'hon -
 neur, A vo - tre sçavoir fai - re Je li - vre mon cœur ; Mais laissez en -
 ti - ere Et li - bre car - ri - ere A ma belle humeur.

I think it fits my age, and, Heaven forgive me! I am afraid, with such companions as you are, it but too well suits the character I, no matter how unjustly, have got in the world.

HOGG.

Weel, weel, I was born a true Scot, and dinna care a bodle about sic clishmaclavers o' ayont-the-water jauberin.

TICKLER.

Why, Hogg, ODoherty here says that he can translate extempore: ask him.

NORTH.

What say you, Sir Morgan; are you an Improvisatore?

ODOHERTY.

No, sir; I am a thick-and-thin Tory; but I shall try. What are we to call it—Mr North's apology for presiding at Ambrose's in his seventieth year?

TICKLER, (*aside*.)

Eightieth, I believe; but no matter.

ODOHERTY.

At my time o' day
 It were proper, in truth,
 If I could be less
 Than your friends in the youth;
 -And now old and gray,
 To plod on my way
 Like a senior, in sooth.
 I wish my old tricks
 I could wholly forget;
 But the apple here sticks,
 Undigested as yet.
 Let the good folks who will
 With my plan disagree,

They may scold me their fill,
If I only am free
To retain in full glee
All my good humour still.

HOGG.

I canna say I like the harmony o' yer ditty, captain.

ODOHERTY.

More ungrateful that of you, Shepherd, after all the civil things I have said of the harmonious rhythm of your Queen Hynde, for which, I hope, I shall not have to account another day.

HOGG.

I wush, my lad, ye wad write a vollum yersell, and no be jockin' at the warks o' ithers. Ye wad find an unco difference between jeerin' at authors and bein' ane yersell.

NORTH.

Yes, Hogg, I confess there is a degree of unfairness in the critics of the present age. Who are the great reviewers—the persons whose literary opinions guide the British public?—Jeffrey, John Coleridge, O'Doherty—yet not one of these gentlemen ever wrote a book.

HOGG.

Nae mair than yersell, Mr North.

NORTH.

James, James, that is a sore subject. It is no matter what I wrote—time will tell all that—wait till my autobiography is published, and then it will be seen what effect my works have had upon the age. But I am anticipating. Your health, James, and song.

HOGG, (*aside*.)

Auld baudron's back's up, I see. (*To Mr NORTH.*) O, as for a sang, here goes—Wauken up Mr Tickler.

TICKLER, (*wakes*.)

It's no use, Jamie, till your song is over, for that will inevitably put me to sleep; so let me nap till then, and then I'll stay awake for the remainder of the evening. [*Relapses into slumber.*]

HOGG.

Some people's intellects are sairly malshackered by age.—(*Sings.*)

Air—*Auld Langsyne.*

There's nought sae sweet in this poor life
As knittin' soul to soul;
And what maist close may bind that knot?
The glass and bowl!
The glass and bowl, my boys,
The glass and bowl;
So let us call, for this is out,
Anither bowl.

Chorus—ye neerdoweels, chorus.

Chorus.

The glass and bowl, &c.

We never paddled in the b—
Nor pull'd the gowan droll—

ODOHERTY.

The gowan droll! What is there droll about a gowan? The gowan fine, you mean.

HOGG.

Sir Morgan O'Doherty, if ye be Sir Morgan, ye'll hae the goodness to mak sangs for yersell, and no for me. It was, nae doubt, "gowans fine," in Burns, for he wanted it for a rhyme to "Auld langsyne." Now I want it to rhyme to "bowl," a word far different. And besides, the gowan is a droll-like sort of crater as ye wad see in a field.

ODOHERTY.

I beg your pardon—Proceed, Shepherd.

HOGG.

We never dabbled in the burn,
Nor pull'd the gowan droll,
But often has the sun's return
Surprised our bowl.

Chorus.—Our glass and bowl, my boys,
Our glass and bowl ;
So let us call, as this is out—
Another bowl.

And aft did we the merry catch
And cheering ditty troll,
And hooted mony a whiggish wretch
About the bowl.

Chorus.—Our glass and bowl, &c.

And, therefore, hills betwixt may rise,
And though ocean water roll,
Yet we'll ne'er forget the lads who met
About the bowl.

Chorus.—Our glass and bowl, &c.

And whan yer poet's dead and gane,
And laid beneath the moul',
Let those who sung his memory, drink
About the bowl.

Chorus.—The glass and bowl, my boys,
The glass and bowl ;
So let us call, for this is out—
Another bowl.

NORTH, (*much affected*.)

Thank ye—thank ye, James. Long distant be that day! It will, in the course of nature, be your duty to lay me in the grave, and then I hope, as Southey says to Savage Landor, you will remember your friendship for me, when the paltry heats and animosities of the day are forgotten.

ODOHERTY.

In the 99th, they fined anybody who spoke of the death of a comrade, a dozen of wine. I propose the same law for our club.

NORTH.

Tickler, let us leave these youths to settle the fine and the bill.

[*Exeunt* NORTH and TICKLER.]