

The Examiner.

AND SEMI-WEEKLY INTELLIGENCER.

"THIS IS TRUE LIBERTY WHEN FREE-BORN MEN—HAVING TO ADVISE THE PUBLIC—MAY SPEAK FREE."—MILTON'S EURIPIDES.

NEW SERIES.

CHARLOTTETOWN, MARCH 2, 1850.

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(From the New York Literary World.)

Powell's Authors of America.

The Living Authors of America. First Series. By Thomas Powell, author of the "Living Authors of England," &c. Stringer & Townsend.

An odd agglomeration of small talk, "beetle" anecdotes, criticism, elegant extracts, occasional acuteness, and sheer balderdash—literary cockneyism and Joe Miller combined. On the presumption that it is a book of sober criticism, as the title imports, it would be liable to severe animadversion for its looseness of style, and absurd, insolent manner; but taken on the other side, as a money-making squib, it is amusing to witness the shifts and resources with which the writer ekes out his treatment of a dull topic, on his hands, of which he knows little and cares less. Powell's Authors of England professed to be derived from personal knowledge of the writers, and was at least entertaining as a collection of amusing stories drawn from a certain level of English society. The sting was taken from its wanton spirit of mischief by its utter recklessness. The book on the living authors of America has no story to tell, and what little mischief is intended is so puerile in style and idea, that it is simply ridiculous. We can give no better idea of the volume than by calling to mind an inflated fourth rate English provincial actor on a fourth rate American theatre gagger furiously, interpolating Cooper and Bryant, serious with a verse of Thucydides, comical with a twist of buffoonery; straining his perceptions into the Buccannier one moment, and his relaxed head through a horse-collar the next.

Running rapidly over the book, we have hit upon a hundred such comicalities as these, with now and then a bit of good sense tersely expressed. They are curiosities of literature, Mr. Powell's book being perfectly unique.

QUEEN VICTORIA.

(A reliable anecdote, tending to show that that lady's education had been slightly neglected:—)

"We have the authority of one of the poet's own family for saying that Queen Victoria, the head of the Anglo-Saxon race, had never heard of Wordsworth till he was proposed to her for Poet Laureate, on the death of Southey."

ENGLAND IN A BAD WAY.

(Appropos to a verse of Mr. Bryant's "Lapse of Time":—)

"It may be safely predicted, by any one accustomed to look philosophically at the movements of time, that it is reserved for the American republic to shield her great parent, England herself, from the assaults of the old despotisms."

EMERSON AND BACON.

(With a soothing reflection for the latter.)

"Our study of Emerson has not been exclusive; we have had time to taste of most of the poetry and philosophy written in the English language from Chaucer downwards: and we again declare that we know of no author that is so full of suggestion, speaks so directly to the heart, and is so free from the prejudices of the time, and the fashions in which we live. Bacon, the great Lord Bacon, sinks to a mere politician alongside Emerson. But we do not nevertheless undervalue Bacon; he was a great man in his time, and exercised a wide influence upon his age, and ages after."

"It is but a simple act of justice to Mr. Dickens to state, that in a letter printed extensively in the American Newspapers, he has denounced in the most express terms, as utterly false, the anecdotes, &c., published of him in the 'Living Authors of England.'"

CRITICISM OF BRYANT.

(Which we can hardly consider a lucky guess, but probably the writer has not been long enough in the country to witness the winter phenomenon the Poet describes.)

"We merely point out, as a single trait in the compositions of so classical a writer as Mr. Bryant, the numerous expletive epithets he indulges in; he very often weakens the whole force of a thought by one needless or uncharacteristic adjective. We think this line an illustration of our remark:—

"Soon as the glazed and gleaming snow."

ENEMIES TO THE NATIONAL MIND.

(A dead lift for the Copyright question.) "It is a curious fact that the worst enemies of the national mind have been a few of her own sons.—These are authors, who, till lately, have entirely enjoyed the monopoly of the English market; now they will be obliged to join the body of native authors, and hurry to the rescue. So long as they could trespass on the mistaken courtesy of the British publishers, and get four thousand guineas for this Life of Columbus, and two hundred guineas for that Typee, there was no occasion for any interference; in fact, they were materially benefitted by this crying injustice to the great body of authors. Now their own rights are in jeopardy, and they must join the ranks of international Copyright."

BARABBAS A PUBLISHER.

(A joke played of by Byron upon that Prince of publishers, John Murray, Leigh Hunt our informant.)

"The 'moody Childe' had given to Murray as a birthday present, a Bible, magnificently bound, and which he enriched by a very flattering inscription. This was laid by the grateful publisher on his drawing room table, and somewhat ostentatiously displayed to all comers. One evening as a large company were gathered around the table, one of the guests happened to open the testament, and saw some writing in the margin. Calling to Murray, he said: 'Why, Byron has written something here?' Narrower inspection proved that the profane wit had erased the word 'robber' in the text, and substituted that of 'publisher' so that the passage read thus: 'Now, Barabbas was a publisher!' The legend goes on to state that the book disappeared that very night from the drawing room table."

DICKENS VISITING TALFOURD.

(Lugged in to illustrate Willis's "driving his Pegasus to its dramatic Parnassus.")

"This reminds us of an accident a lively novelist related one evening, as having happened to himself. Having occasion to dine with a friend, he jumped into a cab, and told the man to drive as fast as he could to Russell Square. He had not been long in the conveyance before he felt assured the man was drunk; now he drove against a cart—then he went into an oyster stall. He extricated himself from this dilemma by rushing upon a heavy wagon; unable to overcome this obstacle, he violated the proprieties of driving by disorganizing a funeral procession; his efforts reached a climax by mistaking the footpath for the road, and immediately after, a sharp shock, and then a dead stand-still, convinced the rider inside that the cab was inextricably fixed. Springing out, our friend observed that the man was in the middle of the footpath, and that the wheel was locked in a lamp-post. Indignantly demanding what the fellow meant, he received the following reply:—'Who the devil would have thought of finding a post in the middle of the road?' We fear this will be

our author's apology for writing plays—he had no idea he should find any obstacles in his way!"

BULWER LYTTON'S "FRIED KIDS."

(Not bad after-dinner small talk.)

"Having been invited, at some three weeks' notice, by the author of Pelham to a grand dejeuner, or Fete Champetre, at his Villa near Fulham, Mr. — upon the afternoon in question, found himself driving towards the scene of action. On his arrival there, about two in the afternoon, he joined a large and fashionable company there assembled. Various groups were scattered about, occupied in different ways, a party here were engaged in archery—a party there were listening to some manuscript verses by some unpublished genius, who had basely taken advantage of that courteous forbearance so nearly allied to martyrdom to inflict his undeveloped poems. At a little distance, pacing up and down, were a brace of political economists, busily engaged in paying off the national debt, and very properly inattentive to their own tailor's claims. On the bank of the river was the celebrated novelist himself, chatting to a small party of ladies, one of whom was occupied in fishing with so elegant a rod that Sappho herself need not have despised to use it. Of a sudden there was a faint and highly lady-like scream. 'A bite, a bite, Sir Edward,' was the fascinating ejaculation of the fair angler. With that presence of mind so eminently characteristic of the beautiful part of creation, she pulled the rod from the water, and there, sure enough, was a monstrous fish, almost as large as a perch. While the poor little thing kicked violently about, the ladies cried with one accord for Sir Edward to secure the struggling prisoner by unhooking it. The baronet looked imploringly first at the ladies, then at the fish, and still more pathetically at his flesh-coloured kid gloves, innocent of a stain. Sir Edward's alarm was apparent; he would have shrunk from brushing the down from off a butterfly's wing, lest he should soil the virgin purity of his kids, but a fish—it was too horrible. The ladies, who seemed to take a fiendish delight in torturing their fastidious host, insisted upon his releasing the poor captive, and appealed loudly to his romantic sympathies. At length one of them, more lively and mischievous than the rest, seized the rod and actually waved it close to Sir Edward's face; throwing his hand out to protect himself, his fingers came in contact with the scaly phenomenon;—then nerving himself for the deed, he resolutely seized the dangerous animal, and extricating it from the hook, threw it into its native element. Lamb has in one of his essays observed, how would men like if some superior being were to go out *man-ning*, and letting down a hook through the air towards the earth, baited with a beef-steak, draw a man up to heaven, roaring like a bull, with a hook in his gills."

"Our friend was cordially welcomed by the fish releaser, and finding several of his old friends, rambled about the grounds, chatting first with one and then another, until he felt all the vulgar sensations of hunger. It was now five o'clock, and no symptoms of the dejeuner; he had unfortunately breakfasted early, and had purposely abstained from lunching, his knowledge of fashionable French being so limited as to translate erroneously the word 'dejeuner' to mean a meal of that kind. At eight o'clock in the evening the lunch bell rung, and a nonchalant rush was made towards the house. The blaze of light ushered them to the room, where all was laid out in the perfection of Gunter's best manner; but judge our famished friend's dismay, when a rapid survey, like a Napoleon's glance, discovered only the

elegance of eating, the ornaments of the appetite, and not its substantialities. Jellies in the shape of chrysal mounds; cakes battlemented like the baronial dwellings of feudal tyrants. Trifles light as air, swelling over Chinese dwellings, crimson flushed with vermilion sweets; piles of bon-bons and scented crackers, gorgeously gilded and rainbow coloured. At each side were flesh coloured masses of ice-creams, flanked by a regiment of infinite small mince-pies, raspberry tarts, and triangular cheese cakes. At solemn intervals were Maraschino, Curacao, Noyau, and other liqueurs, confined in small decanters about the size of Eau de Cologne phials, while scattered around were goblets to drink out of, about the size of overgrown thimbles. It was a diabolical improvement (so far as starvation went,) on the feast of Tantalus. A glass of water would have had a gigantic look in our friend's eyes perfectly titanic. A narrower scrutiny discovered to his long-lingering sight two dishes, one a tureen of palish, green-looking water, where there were a few diminutive new potatoes swimming for their lives, and trying to escape, which they did with ease, from the abortive efforts of our friend, who, with a ladle, was doing his best to capture one, to satisfy the cravings of his appetite.

"The other dish was one of fritters, and presented the appearance of having been made out of Sir Edward's kid gloves dipped in batter, and then elaborately fried. We must draw a veil over our friends sufferings. After securing a spoonful of jelly—one of the afore-named small forced meat balls—a portion of truffle, evanescent and shadowy as mist—(not half so substantial as a good wholesome London November fog, which at times is so thick that it may be easily cut clinging to the knife)—and a glass thimbleful of maraschino—our friend drove home in his gig through the chill evening air, with his teeth chattering to themselves, and trying to console his importunate gastric juice and empty stomach.

"He astonished his wife and household on his return home by eating seriatim everything in the house in the way of flesh, from a haunch of mutton down to a ham bone, and from the new bread down to the stale crust."

We should not spoil so good a story by introducing after it any of Mr. Powell's serious fun in his rhapsodies, reflections and critiques, so we cut short our extracts while the reader is in a good humour with this, all things considered, most extraordinary piece of literary composition.

We direct the attention of those Benedicts who have very loquacious wives to the following notice, posted at a hamshop in Sloane-street:—"Tongues cured here."

Experimental Philosophy—asking a young lady to marry you. Natural philosophy—looking indifferent, and saying you were only in fun, when she refuses you.

A witty rogue, brought before a Parisian tribunal for a drunken riot, assured the Bench that he was not a drunkard, but in his childhood he was bitten by a mad dog, and he had ever since had a horror of water.

The editor of the *Louisville Journal*, retorting a charge of personal ugliness against a contemporary, says:—"We are credibly informed, that after the birth of Harvey, none but handsome babies were born for several years; all the ugly material in the universe was used up in his creation."