

LITERARY AND COLONIAL JOURNAL

AND
Weekly Miscellany of Useful Information.

"NON TUA TE MOVEANT, SED PUBLICA VOTA."

COLONIAL SECRETARY'S OFFICE!

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DECISION OF CHARACTER.

II.

THE second distinguishing characteristic which we have noted of a decisive character, is *punctuality*. This virtue—for so it may be justly designated—is most important to the efficient working of society, and, by a commercial community, more especially, it must always be deemed a virtue of increasing necessity and importance. "Method is the very hinge of business, and there is no method without punctuality." To the man of business, therefore, time is the same as money; and if any one deprive him of a part of it, or cause him to misuse it, the same offence is committed towards him—as far as loss of property is concerned—as if his goods were abstracted, or a false cheque passed at his bankers. To him, the result is the same, whether a certain actual sum be taken from him, or the minutes in which he could earn that sum; for, to many, their time is equal to a capital of no ordinary amount, and the loss of it may prove irreparable. Appointments, indeed, become debts. 'I owe you punctuality, if I have made an appointment with you, and have no right to throw away your time, if I do my own.'

Punctuality is also highly important, because it subserves the peace and temper of a family; and the want of it not only infringes on necessary duty, but sometimes excludes that duty. The calmness of mind which it produces is another advantage of punctuality: a disorderly man is always in a hurry; he has no time to speak with you, because he is going elsewhere; and when he gets there, he is too late for his business, or he must hurry away to another before he can finish it. Punctuality, again, gives weight to character. 'Such a man has made an appointment—then I know he will keep it.' And this generates punctuality in others; for, like similar virtues, it propagates itself. A whole establishment must become punctual where the head of it is noted for that quality.

Though the want of punctuality may chiefly arise from mere thoughtlessness, we may assert that a man of sound moral principle will never be otherwise than a punctual man. It is, in reality, as easy to be punctual as the reverse, if we only desire to be so. There can be no absolute difficulty in reaching a place of appointment at the exact hour if we only truly desire to be present at the exact hour. Habits of reflection and attention to the progress of time are the only requisites for punctuality in appointments. We see the man who is not punctual to his business engagements invariably lose caste. His affairs fall into

disorder, and speedy ruin is the result; and when we consider the inconveniences attending a want of punctuality as regards appointments, the practice does not deserve to be less reprobated, for the one is generally the forerunner of the other.

Every man of correct mind and steady regular habits will take care that he performs the lesser but imperative duties of punctuality. He will act upon principle in this as in every other thing. On the contrary, when we see a man habitually neglect them, we may be certain that he is a person of little actual principle. The tradesman or mechanic who unhesitatingly promises the punctual performance of what he neither expects nor intends punctually to perform, (a practice, alas, but too universal, and, therefore, indulged) proves this, and proves also that he cares little for the feelings or interests of his fellow-creatures. The injustice and cruelty of this habit is apparent. No advantage accrues therefrom to the one, while the other is probably suffering under much inconvenience and real discomfort. This failing is of universal extent, and is practised among all classes of society. Employers and employees—masters and servants, are but too frequently mutually guilty. We have all occasionally to attend to duties in which the interests of others, perhaps poorer than ourselves, are concerned, and for the performance of which, at or within a certain time, we have passed our word. How often are such duties neglected, too often to the extreme mortification and injury of others, when in truth we might as easily have accomplished them as left them unaccomplished, if we had but exercised a slight degree of energy and attention. As long, however, as there are thoughtless and irrational men in the world, there will probably be a want of punctuality; and the wise and well-principled must remain content to place it among the many temporal losses which they sustain in connexion with their weaker brethren.

It is vain, perhaps, to hope by any means to advance mankind greatly in any single virtue. Every one, however, must be able to discern that which is right or wrong, convenient or inconvenient, advantageous or disadvantageous. To attend to such duties as the above, will surely appear very obviously as right and convenient and advantageous, while the neglect of them will appear in every respect as the opposite; and the reason of man will not allow him, if he fully consider the subject, to take any other than the former course. It is right (pursues a writer on this subject) to attend to such duties, because we have pledged ourselves to attend to them, and the happiness of a fellow-creature depends on our redeeming our

pledge. It is convenient even to ourselves, because there is positively less trouble in attending to the duties in time, than out of it. It is advantageous every way, as it must always be to do that which is right instead of that which is wrong. The conscientious reflector on these things can surely want no further inducement to a constant practice of the virtue of punctuality.

We conclude this portion of our subject with the following anecdote illustrative of the importance of punctuality in a moral point of view:—"Dr. Parr, the late great oracle in Greek erudition, was remarkable for punctuality. The habits of this eminently learned man were favourable both to long life and literary occupations. 'I am a six o'clock man,' he used to say when in the seventy-sixth year of his age. The time he thus gained in the morning was devoted to study, and the rest of the day to various duties which had claims upon his time. In his engagements he was strictly punctual, and exacted the same punctuality in return. By this means he was able to transact a prodigious quantity of business, and to give advice and still more important assistance to the numbers who applied to him. He considered a breach of the rules of punctuality as no small violation of morality. 'Sir,' said he to a friend of the writer, who was beyond his hour of appointment, and who was begging the doctor's pardon for his omission, 'beg pardon of a higher Power; for a breach of an appointment is a breach of promise, and a breach of promise is a great moral offence.'"

THE BRICKMAKER.

BRICKMAKING is the art of forming and manufacturing bricks.

The earliest mention of bricks is to be found in the historical books of the Old Testament, where we find that the descendants of Noah departed from the eastward and travelled into the land of Shinar.—"And they said to one another, go to, and let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly; and they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar."—Whether these bricks were really exposed to the action of fire, as the passage seems to imply, or merely dried in the sun, is a point by no means settled; but according to the testimony of Herodotus, who was upon the spot, the bricks which composed the tower of Babylon, were baked in furnaces. That unburnt bricks were also employed in the earliest buildings appear certain, from the testimony of some of the oldest historians, and from proofs still existing.

Unburnt bricks were used in Egypt; the making of them was one of the tasks imposed on the Israelites during their servitude in that country; but the oldest edifices which at present remain there are principally of stone. At what time burnt bricks were first introduced, or in what country, cannot be determined; the Greeks were certainly acquainted with the art of burning bricks, as appears from Vitruvius, who instances several buildings in which this material was used, and both sun-dried and burnt.

The business of a brick-maker is carried on the open fields, and its operation may be seen in the neighbourhood of most large towns. The art, in almost all its branches, is regulated by different acts of parliament; and bricks may be made of pure clay, or clay mixed in certain proportions with sand or ashes.

The clay is first moistened, and tempered with water, either by the feet, or by means of a machine or mill worked with one or more horses.

When it is fit for moulding into bricks, several persons are usually, in the neighbourhood of London, employed upon the

business of a single brick; these are called gangs; they consist of one or two men, a woman, and two children, to each of which is assigned a different department in the occupation. A gang in full work will make many thousand bricks in a day.

While moulding the clay into the shape of a brick; the workman stands under a sort of thatched cover to keep off the sun and the rain; on the board before him are all his implements, the mould into which the clay is put, the clay itself, which is brought to him by another person, a vessel with some water, and a little heap of sand, and the rule with which he takes off the superfluous clay from the mould.

The inside of the box or mould is exactly the shape and size of a brick; the workman throws the clay into this with some violence, having first scattered a little sand about the sides of it; and then scraping off the superfluous clay, he turns up the mould on one side, and placing a small board at the bottom of the mould, shakes out the brick and places it down in order to be placed by another person on the barrow, which, when loaded with about twenty bricks, is wheeled away, and the bricks are packed upon their edges by the assistance of the boards, which, when drawn from them, leave sufficient space for the air to circulate between them to dry them. When the pile is made of the proper height, generally three or four feet from the ground, they are covered with long straw or tiles, so that they may dry gradually without being exposed to the direct rays of the sun, which would crack them; or to heavy rains which would also be injurious to them. As soon as they are sufficiently dry for the purpose, they are to be burnt in a kiln. Here great art is required in piling the bricks, so that the fire may circulate through every course and in all directions. Brees, that is, small cinders from sea-coal, is the fuel commonly used in burning bricks, and when once well lighted, it will keep burning for several days, till the bricks are completely finished.

Bricks when finished are of different colours, according to the clay of which they are made, but they must be all of one size; namely, nine inches long, four inches and a half broad, and two inches and a half thick.

A gang of brick-makers will earn a handsome living; sometimes it happens that the whole gang consists of branches of the same family, as the father and mother, and four or five children of different ages; but they work many hours, and their labour is very hard.

In connection with the trade of brickmaking, we must notice the manufacture of tiles, which is a sort of thin brick, made use of in the roofing of houses, and also, when something thicker, for the purposes of paving. Those for covering the roofs of houses are of different shapes, according to the uses for which they are intended, there are plain tiles, ridge-tiles, gutter-tiles, pan-tiles, &c., they are all made according to certain gauges; and the makers are subject to heavy penalties if their tiles exceed the dimensions fixed on by the several acts of parliament. The kilns in which these tiles are burnt, are large conical buildings; in these the tiles are piled from the bottom to the top before the fire is lighted.

Dutch clinkers are imported into England for the purposes of paving; they are long narrow bricks of a brimstone colour, very hard and well burnt, so as nearly to be vitrified.

Flemish or Dutch tiles, which are glazed and painted, were formerly much used for chimney jambs. Some fifty years ago it was not uncommon to see a complete scripture history, and other curious devices, in a parlour fire-place.

There is also an article, made of clay and sea sand, and slightly baked, well known as scouring bricks.

THE FOUNDER OF ROME.—An auctioneer, putting up an antique Roman helmet for sale, told the company he was informed that it had belonged to Romulus, the founder; but whether he was an iron or a brass founder he could not tell!

COLONIAL LITERATURE.

[FOR THE COLONIAL LITERARY JOURNAL.]

"BUT we have no colonial literature, nor do I see any materials from which a literature purely colonial could be raised."

"I wish you would abolish the use of the word 'Colonial' at any rate with regard to literature, and call it either 'Australian' or 'National.' Depend upon it that Australia will never be more than a cipher among the nations, until her sons assume to themselves national characteristics, and proudly stamp them by the pen to be acknowledged and admired by the world!"

"All very good,—but no answer to my position, that both literature and the materials for forming it are wanting to Australia."

Such was the commencement of a conversation unintentionally heard, while sauntering on the Circular Wharf, at a time when no incentive beyond that offered by cool breezes, rippling waves, fleecy clouds, merry seamen, richly laden barques, lightly freighted yachts, dashing oars, distant woods, rocks, trees, and flowers had led me forth for the refreshment of both body and spirit.

What accident had begun, curiosity, aided by a desire to avail myself of any information regarding so interesting a subject, prompted me to continue, and without appearing to do so, I held the same course with the disputants, who, mounting the steps at the end of the quay, led me into the Domain, where, seated in a rocky nook, they continued their conversation.

I could not but regret the unsparing use that had been made of the tomahawk and pruning knife, for where it had been easy a year or two back to have sat down within a few feet of any person quite unsuspected, I was obliged to have recourse to *ruse* in order to seat myself within earshot, unobserved by my friends: after trying from several points to gain a favourable view of the Adrastus, at anchor in the stream, a seat slightly removed and in part hidden by a ledge of rock, offered me the opportunity of working very busily on the pages that serve me as a waste book for views, notes, incidents, and events, while I could catch some portions of what was said.

"You contend well for your country, and I applaud you for it, but until supported by better evidence than even *your* assertion, I still hold out."

"Little has yet appeared, I grant you, to warrant the high ground I have chosen to take in this argument; yet of what has been published, so great a proportion is really good, that I cannot help repeating, that, with the same amount of talent, to say nothing of any addition, a literature might be formed, distinctively and strikingly Australian! and as for material! whence the material of American literature? In the woods, and prairies, on the rivers, and lakes. Among the red Indians and snowy mountains, ay, and in the city too, in the drawing room, in the counting house, in the cottage, and in the hall! If anything be wanted here, it is the men and not the matter, nor do I believe that even *they* are absent, but that if the Australians as a nation, would cherish and be proud of literature as of national and not of European character and interest—a Fenimore Cooper, a Washington Irving, a Channing, a Franklin, and a Willis, would soon spring up in our midst to spread a halo over Australia, by seizing each in his own manner on the materials presented in the town, in the bush, among

sheep stations, homesteads, squatters, blackfellows, kangaroos or parrots; among seamen or landmen, native-born or emigrant, military, naval, or civilian!"

"Well, if I listen much longer, you will fairly run me down."

"If I am earnest, I am warranted in being so, and if you have patience, I will illustrate by passages from writers that have been, what I have ventured to assert concerning those that may be, I had almost said those that will be:—Thompson and Harper, the first of Australian poets, are the first I will refer to,—Hear Thompson's description of the village where he was educated:—

"Fair Castlereagh! I trace thy landscape round,
Each well-known spot to me is sacred ground;
In every mead—in every bower or tree,
Some dear companion—some old friend I see;
The myrtle grove that skirts thy sloping sides,
And the tall summit from the plain divides,
The rich acacias waving o'er the rill
That pours its scanty streams beneath the hill,
Thy spreading vale—but here let mem'ry tax
The rude invasions of the spoiling axe,
That chas'd the Dryads from th' affrighted glade,
And lopp'd each shrub that once composed the shade.
Thus art extends her civilizing reign,
Bows the tall wood and casts it on the plain—
Drives nature's beauties from their seats away,
And plants a train less lovely far than they;
The landscape shines beneath a borrowed hue,
But graceless more, and different from the true."

"His eulogy on Macquarie, if I can remember it, I will repeat:—

"Macquarie; candid, generous, noble, free,
All 'neath perfection, blended, shine in thee!
Thou, when the hapless widow pin'd for bread,
Shed bounty o'er, and raised her drooping head;
When affluence spurned the beggar from his door,
Cheer'd by thy smiles he felt no longer poor;
The orphan child, whose supplicating tongue
Crav'd scanty pittance of th' unbending throng,
His artless tale despised, or disbelieved,
Asked but of thee, was pitied and relieved.
Did mis'ry to thy door a victim send?
Thy willing influence proved a saving friend;
Large were thy means, yet far beneath thy will,
Here praise must cease, for language here stands still!"

"Twenty years ago the anniversary was welcomed with an ode not unworthy the spring times of poetry—opening thus:—

"Strike, strike the bold convivial lyre!
Let lofty Pœans wake the soul!
Let ivied bands each heart entwine
In one harmonious whole!
Fill, fill the goblet high!
The full libation pour!
Why should decrepid care intrude,
When Bacchus rules the hour?
E'en age resigns his cynic rod,
And smiling, owns the potent god,
With dropping clusters crown'd;
The jovial hours their pinions hide,
And unregarded swiftly glide
When bumpers flow around!"

"Harper in his closing stanza of the song addressed to the Lyre of Australia, is almost prophetic—

"With her green forests around me, above—her blue sky,
I see in thy measures some national dream;
And I find that the notes, though unstudied, are high,
When the glory of future Australia's the theme!"

And ever this lay, to her sons and her daughters,
Should breathe of the land where the evergreen grows—
To men's souls like a strong wind which swelleth the waters,
To the heart, like a spring-breeze that opens the rose."

"Who can read his song for the spring without feeling joyous?"

"The mimosas are blooming,
For summer is coming,
I felt her warm breath in the forest to-day,
Where the river is streaming,
And nature lies dreaming
Of new love and beauty—come dearest away!

Like passion's first feeling,
Its joy half concealing,
In each green nook some rare flower is blooming for thee;
Where, as infancy clinging,
The woodbine is ringing
All wildly the boughs of the kerrigong tree."

"In prose I will only quote 'Martin' as the first who ventured upon a volume at all approaching to nationality—and will repeat as nearly as I may, a descriptive passage in his sketch of Botany Bay.

"The broad bosom of the deep, placid as a sleeping infant, without a ruffle on its surface, without a breath of wind to agitate it, reflecting the morning sun with scrupulous exactness, unbroken and undistorted; the balmy freshness of the atmosphere; the dewy fragrance of the shrubs around; the solemn stillness of the place; and the harmony of every surrounding object—were circumstances sufficient to captivate the attention of the least sensitive individual, and cause the most vitiated and artificial taste to acknowledge the genuine majesty of nature!"

"His apostrophe regarding the listlessness of Australian youth to objects of national interest, will just suit us now:—

"'Is it ever to be the case,' he writes, 'that the sordid desire of accumulating wealth, should occupy the whole attention of our youth, and blunt those finer feelings which set off and give an air of elegance and dignity to the most rigid particles of our nature? Perish the thought! a more refined and a more intelligent race of individuals are now rapidly rising up amongst us, and will shortly emerge from the vale of youth, and take their destined places, in full and vigorous maturity, among the ranks of their fellow citizens and their countrymen.' I could multiply quotations from these same writers, or from others not less noble as the pioneers to literature in Australia, but I think I have recited quite enough to prove that talent *has been* in Australia.—Talent is here yet, and it needs but the spur to rouse Australians to exertion, and my position will be fully upheld, that neither materials nor men are wanting to stamp Australian literature as among the national literature of the world!"

Having finished my sketch, I rose and departed, resolving to repeat my visit to the same spot, in the hope of learning something further concerning Australian national literature.

[We shall be glad to see this subject receive the further consideration of our correspondents. There are, we believe, some few native writers in the colony both willing and capable to command attention; but, is the Australian taste for literature as yet sufficiently general, and to be depended upon for support, by a writer of merit? In connexion with these remarks, see an extract in another portion of this day's Journal, entitled "Literary Toils."—Ed. C. L. J.

A SECRET is like silence—you cannot talk about it and keep it; it is like money—when once you know there is any concealed it is half discovered. "My dear Murphy," said an Irishman to his friend, "why did you betray the secret that I told you?"—"Is it betraying you call it? Sure, when I found I wasn't able to keep it myself, didn't I do well to tell it to somebody that could?"

THE ACORN.

AN APOLOGUE: BY J. MONTGOMERY.

"Thou wast a bauble once;—a cup and ball,
Which babes might play with;—

Time was, when, settling on thy leaf, a fly
Could shake thee to the root!—and time has been,
When tempests could not."

COWPER'S "Yardley Oak."

A HIGH wind shook the last acorn from an old Oak. In the following night, the tree itself was thrown down by the tempest. It had lived through five centuries; but though in that period it had produced millions of acorns, they had all been devoured by swine, or perished where they fell. Yet there was a prophecy, nearly coeval with the deluge, in the family, that from the fruit of *this* Oak there should spring a mighty forest. Age after age the venerable tree, declining in strength, and decaying from the core, till the shell of the trunk, and a stunted branch bearing six leaves and a single acorn, were all the insignia of its ancient honours; age after age the venerable tree looked anxiously for tokens of the fulfilment of this prediction, in the growth of some sapling from one of its acorns. "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick; but when the desire cometh, it is a *tree of life*." The old Oak knew this; and to the last moment of its existence believing that He who had promised could not fail to perform, it prayed, even as it lay prostrate on the ground, that its orphan offspring, the sole survivor of its stock, might in due time be quickened, shoot up, and become the parent of a great family. While it was praying, the sap ceased to circulate through its rigid veins, and the old Oak died, lamented by all the trees of the field. A hoary-headed man, who appeared as far stricken in years as the tree itself, though but an infant in comparison with it, removed the relics, and built an hermitage of them in a solitary corner of his grounds, whither he was wont to retire for devotion, and where he was at length found dead, in the attitude of prayer, with the expression of hope full of immortality on his countenance.

The solitary Acorn had fallen into the deserted nest of a field-mouse, and the gigantic trunk of its progenitor, descending close by, crushed the turf over its head, and buried it alive. In darkness, alone, and immoveably wedged, the poor Acorn gave itself over for lost: and yet it could not but remember how merrily it had lived on the little bough that nourished it, dancing in the breeze, drinking the dew, enjoying the light; it could not but remember the radiance of the sun, the beauty of the moon, the multitude of the stars, the verdure of the earth, the diversity of hill and dale, the river rolling at the root of its aged sire; it could not but remember the sounds of winds, and birds, and waters, the motions and colours of the clouds, the forms, voices, and actions of men and animals, which it had remarked during its nonage above; it could not but remember these, and remember them with regret,—regret, acuminated to despair, in the apprehension that soon it must cease to hear, and see, and feel for ever.

While the Acorn lay thus ruminating on its helplessness, insignificance, and misery, it heard, or thought it heard, a voice from heaven saying to it "*Produce an Oak!*"—"Produce an Oak!" repeated the Acorn to itself; "that's impossible; no, it is *not* impossible; with God nothing is impossible; and if he commands

me, I *can* do it, and I *will* do it." The Acorn had well learnt this lesson of faith from its parent, that the Ruler of the universe always gives power to his creatures to do what he requires of them.

Immediately through every nerve of its frame it felt a spirit in motion; and the germ between its double kernel, though small enough to pass through the eye of a needle, received a consciousness, that a whole tree—roots, bark, bole, branches, leaves, and future fruit—lay folded, with exquisite minuteness, in the fairy casket of its bulb. There was no self-delusion in the Acorn; it had humbled itself, and it was about to be exalted. From that crisis, though the shell and the kernels began to waste away, the germ fed upon them; presently it swelled and put forth fibres which insinuated themselves through the soil to secure a permanent foot-hold. In spring there appeared above-ground a tiny shoot; which opened and presented

———"two lobes protruding, pair'd exact."

The new-sprung plant was lower than the blades of grass that rose in myriads around, and looked down contemptuously upon it as a stranger, whose shape was uncouth, and whose language they did not understand.

Hours, days, weeks, months, passed swiftly away, and so did the grasses, but the offspring of the Acorn survived them all, and continued to grow till it became a sprig, with two full-formed leaves, and a bud between them, which tempted the bee and the butterfly to alight on their way, while the grasshopper chirped at its foot, or skipped over its head; nay, so vigorously did it push forth on the right and on the left, as well as upward, that the cowslip was compelled to hang its blossoms awry to make room for the sylvan intruder. Now year followed year, till the sprig became a sapling, and one generation of men died after another, while the sapling expanded into an oak, and the oak advanced through two centuries towards maturity. All this time the tree from the Acorn had preserved its innocence and its humility; though rooted in the earth, it aspired towards heaven; the nourishment which it drew from the soil, and the river, and the atmosphere, it received as the bounty of Providence, and it was thankful.

Meanwhile, the occasional lightnings played harmlessly around its head, and the tempest that agitated it above, caused its roots to strike deeper below. Thus flourished the Oak, the pride and the admiration of the whole country. The birds roosted and sang among its branches. The cattle chewed the cud, and reposed under its shelter. The lambkins in April ran races round the mount which its roots had upheaved from the plain. Man approached it with veneration, and as he lifted up his eye at so magnificent a spectacle, he glanced beyond it to the sky, and thought, "How much glory can the Creator confer on one of his inferior works! How much of himself may be seen even in a tree!"

But one thing was wanting to consummate its felicity;—the Oak was barren; not an acorn had ever glistened in a rough cup on the most luxuriant of its boughs, though their foliage spread thick and beautiful to the sun, and rustled musically in the breeze; and though autumn in its turn brought a second spring of leaves, so delicately tinged, that they seemed to be the blossoms of the first. Now it came to pass, during a hard winter, that an old raven, driven by

stress of weather from the sea-coast, and travelling far inland, alighted one clear cold morning on the topmost twig of the Oak. Though stripped of its summer-attire, the grace and majesty of its form were the more striking in the fair proportions of its tall stem and naked branches, here and there tufted with brown clusters of dry leaves, of which now one, then another, fell,

———"slowly circling through the waving air,"

to the ground, where thousands of their brethren lay strewn at the feet of their parent, in all stages of decay; some brilliantly bespangled with pearls of ice, and many so curiously pencilled with hoar-frost, that every vein was distinguishable. The raven, who was thin of plumage, and iron-grey with years, looked as if he had seen better days, but would never see such again. Age and adversity had soured his disposition, if ever it had been good, so that he could no longer behold happiness without envy, nor contemplate innocence without hankering to betray it; for happiness he knew was inseparable from innocence, and rarely, if ever, associated with guilt. While he sat shivering in the wind, that lifted up his ragged feathers with every breath, his lank sides exposed to the chaffinches and red-breasts that were hopped on the lower boughs, peeping askance at the stranger, wondering whence he came, and thinking not a whit the less handsomely of themselves and their gay plumage in comparison with him.

Now Ralph was a soothsayer, and many an evil omen had he exhibited to the poor fishermen on the coast where his haunt was; soaring delighted in anticipation of the storm, and preying when it was over on the carcasses of shipwrecked mariners. As he understood all languages that were spoken in the day of fable, he quickly entered into conversation with the Oak, wormed out its whole history, and was sagacious enough to discover, what the tree itself scarcely suspected, that innocent and happy as it was, secret anxiety had begun to corrode its heart, lest, notwithstanding its health, strength, and virtue, and notwithstanding the ancient prophecy, it might at length die without issue, there being little hope, after such an age of sterility, that it would yet become fruitful.

The subtle raven caught his cue, and by a train of sophistry, of which history has not furnished the particulars, he succeeded in persuading the Oak, that it was such a favourite of Providence, that the course of nature was suspended with respect to its destination, and it was either governed by such a mysterious heavenly influence, or had within itself such an original power, that it could *do* or *be* whatever it pleased: thus, instead of propagating its species by acorns, it might continue to increase in bulk, in height, in breadth, in depth, in strength, in every thing, through an illimitable period to come, till the heavens were filled with its branches, and the earth overcanopied with its verdure.

The Oak listened unsuspectingly to the tempter, whose plausible insinuations soon perverted its simplicity, and it began indeed to think, that all it was it had made itself, and it had only to go on growing for ever, by its own volition, to become as great and as glorious as the raven had prognosticated. "If," said the poor dupe within itself, "when I was an acorn I wrought myself out of the ground, and have since risen by my own choice to be the noblest tree in the universe, why should I rest here, and not go on

to magnify my form, till my trunk towers above the clouds, and sustains in mid-heaven a burthen of boughs more numerous and ample than the forests on a thousand hills; thus in my own person accomplishing the ancient prophecy, instead of dying, as my predecessors have done, in the vain hope of leaving innumerable posterity?"

Off flew the raven to the left hand, the moment his blandishment had prevailed, and the innocence of his victim had departed from it; leaving it to the indulgence of proud imaginations, and to the sad consequences of its apostasy. Early in the succeeding spring, at the first motion of the sap from the root, when the noon-sun was warmly shining, the Oak heard the same voice from heaven, which once called it out of the kernel, saying *now* to it, "Produce Acorns!"—"Produce Acorns!" indignantly it repeated "No, I will produce Oaks! my slenderest twig shall be a tree as mighty and as ramified as I am myself at this hour."—Forthwith, as it fondly imagined, the vain boaster began to exert its native energies, and to strain through every fibre to enlarge its dimensions; but its bulk remained the same as before; it had reached a standard which it never could exceed. Spring vanished, summer followed, and autumn found the Oak laden with—Acorns! They were shaken to the ground; the swine devoured them; none took root. The Oak was mortified, and enraged, but not humbled. "I will do better," it exclaimed, "next year;" and yet it scarcely believed itself, for there was a strange misgiving in its mind, which it durst not acknowledge, and feared to investigate.

The next year came, and the next year went.—What did the Oak? In spite of itself it produced Acorns as before,—but only to feed swine; not a single one was quickened. Still it would have hardened itself in rebellion against its Maker, but during the first frosty night of the winter ensuing, it was awakened by a pang at the core, as if an arrow had glanced through it, and the wound had been instantly healed. An arrow *had* passed through it, but the wound was *not* healed; it was the arrow of death, and though the anguish at that moment was only momentary, disease, decay, and dissolution had seized upon its vitals, never to relinquish their prey till they had consumed it atom by atom. The offender was roused to reflection; it was convinced at once of its mortality and its guilt. Shame, remorse, and self-abbhorrence followed; the whole winter was a season of humiliation; till the Oak was contented to be whatever its Creator had made it, and resigned to suffer whatever his justice might hereafter inflict. The next spring had far advanced, but long storms and late frosts had retarded vegetation, when, with the appearance of the first swallow, hope revisited the heart of the penitent; and a few weeks afterwards, while the nightingale was singing from a lowly bush at its foot, a third time the Oak heard the voice from heaven, more welcome than before, and sweeter than all the sounds in creation beside, saying, "Produce a Forest!"—"Thy will be done!" replied the humbled tree; and immediately it felt as if a curse had been taken away, and a blessing poured down upon its head.

Ere long its buds unfolded into leaves, and in autumn its branches were bowed with the weight of fruit. Frequent and violent winds scattered the acorns abroad as they ripened, and heavy rains upon the adjacent hills, bringing down the soil upon

them, or washing them into temporary channels, many remained buried during the winter; and ere the harvest of another autumn was ready to be shaken from the boughs of the parent tree, a nursery of its descendants was springing up in the neighbouring fields. Year after year the fruits of the oak were carried further, multiplied thicker, and rose higher, over the face of the country, till, at the close of its third century, it stood in the heart of the most flourishing forest in the world, itself to the eye still in fulness of vigour and beauty, and unrivalled by the stateliest of its progeny, though the death-wound received a hundred years before was invisibly undermining its strength, and hollowing its trunk.

About this time, the old raven, who still survived, (and like the wandering Jew, it was said of him, that he could neither die nor rest,) returned to that place; but his eye was so dim, and the scenery so changed, that he knew it not again, till the Oak, amidst the forest of its sons, saluted him as he flew languidly over their heads. Ralph alighted on one of the arms of his old acquaintance, and silently hearkened to the sequel of its story; at the close of which he fluttered for a moment on his perch, then uttering an ominous croak, fell headlong, and lay dead in the hollow of one of the protuberant roots of the tree, which he supposed had long ago been blasted by lightnings or mildew, for exercising the presumption he had taught it.

The Oak yet lived two hundred years; its offspring and their descendants to the fiftieth generation still increasing and multiplying, to the east and the west, to the north and the south, till the river, on whose banks it stood, and which for thousands of years had rolled in broad sunshine through a campaign of meadows, became half-overshadowed with the kindred branches that on either side stretched to intermingle their arms, but succeeded not entirely; a line of light, and a current of cool air passing uninterruptedly down the middle of the stream, amidst the depth of the surrounding woodlands. At length came the last hour of the patriarch of trees. It fell not by the fury of the wind like its father, nor by the assaults of the axe, as thousands of its juniors had fallen before it; but on a calm and golden summer-even, just as the sun went down, the Oak sunk to the earth, under the silent weight of years, and at the gentle touch of nature, loosening at once its whole burthen of infirmities; it lay down so quietly to repose, that the squirrel and her young, whose nest was in the hollow of the fork, where the lowest branches diverged from the bole, were undisturbed by the motion, and wondered next morning to find themselves so near the ground. But the remains of the Oak were not left to rot into dust and oblivion; man knew their worth; he removed them, and wrought the knotted fragment of the trunk, and the knee-timbers of the undecayed boughs, into the flanks and the keel of a vessel, which afterwards circumnavigated the globe.

Here is a long fable; where is the moral? Take it in the words of the Scripture; they are so brief that they might be written within the cup of the acorn, and so important that they ought to be engraven on the tablet of every heart:—"God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble."

CAUTION.—Never trust with a secret a married man who loves his wife, for he will tell her—and she will tell her sister, and her sister will tell everybody.

THE RISE AND PROGRESS OF THE DRAMA IN AUSTRALIA.

THERE are few episodes in the memoirs of nations more interesting than the tracing of the progress of theatrical representations. The existence of the drama itself is cœval with the civilization of the most polished nation of antiquity—the Greeks; and it is deeply to be regretted that, wide and diversified as has been the character of modern literature, there have been as yet no really successful translations of the histrionic compositions of Sophocles or Euripides; and this is the more to be regretted, as every scholar will readily acknowledge the Greek drama to possess claims of no common brilliance and importance, at the same time that it affords as perfect pictures of the manners and customs, the vices and follies, of the ages they were designed to represent, as do the palmiest productions of the Sheridans or the Molières of later days. The comedy or the tragedy which two thousand years since delighted the citizens of Athens, and afforded relaxation to the cynics and peripatetics and academics of antiquity, and even formed so important a feature in the creed of earthly enjoyments held by the epicurean, would indeed be a rich treat for the sated appetites of modern play-goers;—and albeit it is to be hoped that so desirable an intellectual banquet would not be relished the less, though it were served up on the boards of our own Victoria! But we are digressing from the tenor of regular proceeding which we had marked out for ourselves, and with us wanderings from the main path of our narrative are inexcusable, as ancient Pistol remarks, "it beseemeth wisdom well to speak pithily;" for, gentle reader, we had taken it into our sapient head to chronicle for your benefit, as well as for that of those who may hereafter supplant your "position 't the ever-changing earth," the rise and progress of dramatic entertainments in Australia, or at least in its capital, which, as far as matters of public nature extend, go for much the same thing. We will now, therefore, with your permission, as honest John Dory hath it, in the immortal play of *Wild Oats*, "let you straightway into the marrow of the thing." In 1826, the first theatrical *débat* possessing any claims to regularity, took place in the Sydney gaol—(we refer to the old building which for so many years stood at the bottom of George-street). The stage and its appurtenances were erected in the debtors' room, and the audience, consisting of a few of the towns-people, made shift to view the performance through the grating. Twenty-five years since, however, theatricals were practised in an old loft on the Brickfield-hill, long since crumbled into dust. Notwithstanding these attempts, be it understood, no really licensed performances were enacted until December, 1832, when a dispensation for such purposes, under the hand of his Excellency Governor Darling, was accorded to Mr. B. Levey, who immediately opened a small theatre in the saloon of the old Royal Hotel, remarkable in those days of infant decoration for its elegance and taste; the performances on the occasion being *Black-eyed Susan* and *Monsieur Tonson*. Mr. Levey's speculation succeeded, and considerable profits were realised, the building being nightly crowded to excess for two seasons: he then removed to a new and larger house, dignified with the appellation of the "Theatre Royal, Sydney," and which, according to an authority of undoubted veracity on such matters, was "handsomely fitted up with a neat circle of dress and private boxes, an upper tier, a gallery, and a spacious pit, being altogether capable of drawing £130 a night." With time the infant and hastily organised *corps dramatique* began to acquire experience, and that nameless art which Sheridan used so aptly to call the "knack of leading the spectators by the nose, while his eye and his ear are at the same time entranced;" and in the meanwhile their ranks were strengthened by the accession of new members. Among those veteran individuals who have strutted and fretted their hour upon this stage, the *ultimi Romanorum*, are undoubtedly Messrs. Meredith, Simmons, and Knowles, each of whom has in turn wielded the managerial sceptre. But the two former of these gentlemen have for some time retired from the profession, and the latter has but very lately journeyed to "that bourne from whence no traveller returns." He expired at Melbourne, in April, 1844, and it is but just in this short summary, while noticing one of the earliest and most distinguished members of the theatrical body, to pay a passing tribute to the memory of an amiable and accomplished man. There are few who have been acquainted with Mr. Conrad Knowles, in his private life, who will not readily join with me in expressing regret for what may, to a certain extent, be called his premature fate; while the great bulk of his fellow-citizens—they to whom he was known through the

medium of his exertions on the stage—will not easily forget one whose name and standing is inseparable from the early history of the Australian theatre.

In 1836, that commodious and elegant edifice, the Victoria Theatre, was erected by Mr. Joseph Wyatt, and opened with all the splendour usual on such solemn and interesting occasions—every soul in the establishment, from his eminence the manager himself down to the junior candle-snuffer, giving vent to the exhilaration of their feelings after the time-honoured modes of the dramatic world. The piece represented was *Othello*, the part of the jealous blackamoor being, to the best of our recollection, performed by Mr. Arabin, another well-known "son of Thespis." In 1842, a foreign mountebank, of the name of Dalle Case, opened a second theatre, in the shape of a pavilion, in Hunter-street, and which, in addition to minor representations composed principally of farces and other small fry of the same genera, presented the novelties of rope-dancing, tumbling, and equestrian exhibitions. This soon died of a natural disorder common to literary and dramatic undertakings, but was rapidly succeeded by the City Theatre, Market-street—a speculation which, despite of the taste and pecuniary outlay expended on its establishment, and the talent brought forward in its ultimate support, is generally known to have been a total failure. A visit to this elegant little place, which is still used for the purposes of public meetings, will be amply sufficient to satisfy the stranger as to the ability of our southern metropolis in "bringing out" works connected with art and public amusement.

Our Sydney theatres have not been altogether barren in the production of the original drama: from time to time various *morceaux* of Australian manufacture have been enacted, and very lately a tragedy—yes, a real tragedy, and one of considerable merit into the bargain—has been submitted to the judgment of an Australian audience. In addition to which, two comic musical operas, from the lively and clever pen of Mr. Charles Nagel, have also lent their aid to the quota of our dramatic possessions. We are sorry to state that for a very long period the taste of our play-goers has verged into the melo-dramatic, or stronger still, the domestic-dramatic vein, and the names of "The Robber's Wife," "Grace Clairville," "Victorine," "Henrietta," and a score other titles emanating from the school of John Baldwin Buckstone, Edward Fitzball, Benjamin Webster, and the *hoc genus omnia* of the playwrights of Cockaigne, may be daily seen emblazoned forth in all the splendour of red and blue inks on the playbills of this city. Gentlest of readers, imagine not that we are one of those rusty, grumbling, sexagenarian mortals who call themselves sticklers for the legitimate drama; we can enjoy a farce or a *petite-comedy* as well as any man in existence; but "we like not your fooleries, gentle sirs, when they sin against reason and common sense."

And now, having thus endeavoured to sketch an outline of our progress in histrionic matters, and hoping that it has, in the excellent words of the good Vicar of Wakefield, "answered the end it was made for," we beg most respectfully and deferentially to make *our bow*, with many and grateful thanks for your kind attention, and at the same time (with your permission) our exit from the scene.

D. D.

Varieties.

A SEA-BULL.—An Irishman who served on board a man-of-war in the capacity of a waister, was selected by one of the officers to haul in a tow-line of considerable length, which was towing over the taffrail. After drawing in forty or fifty fathoms, which had put his patience, as well as every muscle of his arms, severely to the proof, he muttered to himself, "Sure, it's as long as to-day and to-morrow; it's a good week's work for any five in the ship. Bad luck to the arm or leg it'll lave me at last. What! more of it yet! Och, murder! the sea's mighty deep, to be sure." After continuing in a similar strain, and conceiving there was little probability of the completion of his labour, he suddenly stopped short, and addressing the officer of the watch, exclaimed, "Bad manners to me, sir, if I don't think somebody's cut off the other end of it."

A JONATHAN.—A nigger, afflicted with stammering, being advised to take *starch* in order that he might be *clearly* understood, took it in such large quantities that he became so stiff he could neither get his hands into his pockets nor walk round a corner, and was obliged to have his backbone taken out to get his boots off.

CRADLES are now called "marriage fruit-baskets."

The Moralist.

VANITY.

INCONSTANCY is powerful in the heart of man; Intemperance wayeth it whither it will; despair engrosseth much of it; and fear proclaimeth, Behold, I sit unrivalled therein! but vanity is beyond them all.

Weep not, therefore, at the calamities of the human state; rather laugh at its follies. In the hands of the man addicted to vanity, life is but the shadow of a dream.

The hero, the most renowned of human characters, what is he but the bubble of this weakness! the public is unstable and ungrateful; why should the man of wisdom endanger himself for fools?

The man who neglecteth his present concerns, to revolve how he will behave when greater, feedeth himself with wind, while his bread is eaten by another.

Act as becometh thee in thy present station; and in more exalted ones thy face shall not be ashamed.

What blindeth the eye, or what hideth the heart of a man from himself like vanity? lo! when thou seest not thyself, then others discover thee most plainly.

As the tulip that is gaudy without smell, conspicuous without use; so is the man who setteth himself on high, and hath not merit.

The heart of the vain is troubled while it seemeth content; his cares are greater than his pleasures.

His solicitude cannot rest with his bones; the grave is not deep enough to hide it; he extendeth his thoughts beyond his being; he bespeaketh praise to be paid when he is gone: but whoso promiseth it, deceiveth him.

As the man that engageth his wife to remain in widowhood, that she disturb not his soul; so is he who expecteth that praise shall reach his ears beneath the earth, or cherish his heart in its shroud.

Do well while thou livest; but regard not what is said of it. Content thyself with deserving praise, and thy posterity shall rejoice in hearing it.

As the butterfly, who seeth not her own colours; as the jessamine which feeleth not the scent it casteth around: so is the man that appeareth gay, and biddeth others to take note of it.

To what purpose, said he, is my vesture of gold? to what end are my tables filled with dainties, if no eye gaze upon them? if the world know it not? give thy raiment to the naked, and thy food unto the hungry: so shalt thou be praised, and feel that thou deservest it.

Why bestowest thou on every man the flattery of unmeaning words? thou knowest when returned thee, thou regardest it not. He knoweth he lieth unto thee; yet he knoweth thou wilt thank him for it. Speak in sincerity, and thou shalt hear with instruction.

The vain delighteth to speak of himself; but he seeth not that others like not to hear him.

If he hath done any thing worth praise, if he possess that which is worthy of admiration, his joy is to proclaim it, his pride is to hear it reported. The desire of such a man defeateth itself. Men say not, Behold, he hath done it: or, See, he possesseth it: but, Mark how proud he is of it!

The heart of man cannot attend at once to many things. He who fixeth his soul on show, loseth reality. He pursueth bubbles which soon break, while he treads to earth what would do him honour.

MORAL MAXIMS.

ALPHABETICALLY ARRANGED.

No. 36.

COMPLY cheerfully where necessity enjoins.

Comply with no vicious desire, however secret its performance.

Comprehend not few things in many words, but many things in few words.

Concealing faults is but adding to them.

Conceal not thy faults, nor gloss them over, but obliterate them by repentance.

Concession is no humiliation, nor admission of error any disgrace.

Conciliatory manners command esteem.

Condemn vice; but while you condemn, forget not to avoid it.

Condescend to compliance, rather than continue an angry dispute.

Conduct and courage lead to honour.

Confession of a fault makes half amends for it.

Confidence is the companion of success.

Select Poetry.

THE EMIGRANT.

A PRIZE POEM,

BY MRS. SIGOURNEY, OF HARTFORD, AMERICA.

AMID those forest shades that proudly rear'd
Their unshorn beauty toward the favouring skies,
An axe rang sharply. There with vigorous arm
Wrought a bold emigrant, while by his side
His little son, with question and response,
Beguiled the toil.

"Boy, thou hast never seen
Such glorious trees; and when their giant trunks
Fall, how the firm earth groans! Rememberest thou
The mighty river on whose breast we sailed
So many days on toward the setting sun?
Compared to that, our own Connecticut
Is but a creeping stream."

"Father, the brook
That by our door went singing, when I launched
My tiny boat, with all the sportive boys,
When school was o'er, is dearer far to me
Than all those deep broad waters. To my eye
They are as strangers. And those little trees
My mother planted in the garden-bound
Of our first home, from whence the fragrant peach
Fell in the ripening gold, was fairer, sure,
Than this dark forest, shutting out the day."

"What, ho! my little girl,"—and with light step
A fairy creature hasted toward her sire,
And setting down the basket that contained
The noon's repast, looked upward to his face
With sweet, confiding smile.

"See, dearest, see
Yon bright-wing'd parroquet, and hear the song
Of the gay red-bird echoing through the trees,
Making rich music. Didst thou ever hear
In far New-England such a mellow tone?"

"I had a robin that did take the crumbs
Each night and morning; and his chirping voice
Did make me joyful as I went to tend
My snow-drops. I was always laughing there,
In that first home. I should be happier now,
Methinks, if I could find among these dells
The same fresh violets."

Slow Night drew on,
And round the rude hut of the emigrant
The wrathful spirit of the autumn storm
Spake bitter things. His wearied children slept,
And he, with head declin'd, sat listening long
To the swoln waters of the Illinois,
Dashing against their shores. Starting, he spake—
"Wife!—did I see thee brush away a tear?
Say, was it so? Thy heart was with the halls
Of thy nativity. Their sparkling lights
Carpets and sofas, and admiring guests
Befit thee better than these rugged walls
Of shapeless logs, and this lone hermit-home."
—"No—no!—All was so still around, methought
Upon my ear that echoed hymn did steal
Which 'mid the church where erst we paid our vows
So tuneful pealed. But tenderly thy voice
Dissolved the illusion."—And the gentle smile
Lighting her brow,—the fond caress that sooth'd
Her waking infant, reasur'd his soul
That wheresoc'er the pure affections dwell,
And strike a healthful root, is happiness.

—Placid and grateful to his rest he sank,
But dreams, those wild magicians, which do play
Such pranks when Reason slumbers, tireless wrought
Their will with him. Up rose the busy mart
Of his own native city,—roof and spire
All glittering bright in Fancy's frost-work ray.
Forth came remember'd forms—with curving neck
The steed his boyhood nurtur'd, proudly neigh'd—
The favoured dog, exulting round his feet
Frisk'd with shrill, joyous bark—familiar doors
Flew open—greeting hands with his were link'd
In Friendship's grasp—he heard the keen debate
From congregated haunts, where mind with mind
Doth blend and brighten—and till morning roav'd
'Mid the lov'd scenery of his father-land.

Notice to Correspondents.

"Australian Fables, No. 4," is received.

"H.'s" letter afforded us much gratification; the accompanying contributions will be inserted. The former two letters are lying at the office, for the writer's consideration.

CATALLACTICS.

[CONTINUED.]

To resume, Liebig says:

If we knew with certainty that there existed a substance capable alone of nourishing a plant and of bringing it to maturity, we might be led to a knowledge of the conditions necessary to the life of all plants, by studying its characters and composition. If humus were such a substance it would have precisely the same value as the only single food which nature has produced for animal organization, namely, milk. The constituents of milk are cheese or caseine, a compound containing nitrogen in large proportion; butter, in which hydrogen abounds; and sugar of milk, a substance with a large quantity of oxygen and hydrogen in the same proportion as in water. It also contains in solution lactate of soda, phosphate of lime, and common salt; and a peculiar aromatic product exists in the butter, called butyric acid.

It is quite impossible to mature a plant of the Gramineæ, or of the Equisetaceæ, the solid framework of which contains silicate of potash, without silicic acid and potash, or a plant of the genus *Oxalis* without potash, or saline plants, such as the *Salt-worts* (*Salsola* and *Salicornia*) without chloride of sodium, or at least some salt of similar properties. All seeds of the Gramineæ contain phosphate of magnesia; the solid parts of the roots of the *Althæa* contain more phosphate of lime than woody fibre. Are these substances merely accidentally present?

Woody fibre in a state of decay is the substance called humus.

Humus acts in the same manner in a soil permeable to air as in the air itself: it is a continued source of carbonic acid which it emits very slowly. An atmosphere of carbonic acid, formed at the expense of the oxygen of the air, surrounds every particle of decaying humus. The cultivation of land, by tilling and loosening the soil, causes a free and unobstructed access of air. An atmosphere of carbonic acid is therefore contained in every fertile soil, and is the first and most important food for the young plants which grow in it.

In spring, when those organs of plants are absent which nature has appointed for the assumption of nourishment from the atmosphere, the component substance of the seeds is exclusively employed in the formation of roots. Each new radical fibril which a plant acquires may be regarded as constituting at the same time a mouth, a lung, and a stomach. The roots perform the functions of the leaves from the first moment of their formation: they extract from the soil their proper nutriment, namely, the carbonic acid generated by the humus.

The carbonic acid, which protects the undecayed humus from further change, is absorbed and taken away by the fine fibres of the roots, and by the roots themselves; this is replaced by atmospheric air, by which process the decay is renewed, and a fresh portion of carbonic acid formed. A plant at this time receives its food both by the roots and by the organs above ground, and advances rapidly to maturity.

When a plant is quite matured, and when the organs by which it obtains food from the atmosphere are formed, the carbonic acid of the soil is no further required.

Deficiency of moisture in the soil, or its complete dryness, does not now check the growth of a plant, provided it receives from the dew and the atmosphere as much as is requisite for the process of assimilation. During the heat of summer it derives its carbon exclusively from the atmosphere. The power which roots possess of taking up nourishment does not cease as long as nutriment is present. When the food of a plant is in greater quantity than its organs require for their own perfect development, the superfluous nutriment is not returned to the soil, but is employed in the formation of new organs.

The power of absorbing nutriment from the atmosphere, with which the leaves of plants are endowed, being proportionate to the extent of their surface, every increase in the size and number of these plants is necessarily attended with an increase of nutritive power, and a constant further development of new leaves and branches.

We know that the functions of the leaves and green parts of plants are to absorb carbonic acid, and with the aid of light and moisture to appropriate its carbon. These processes are continually in operation; they commence with the first formation of the leaves, and do not cease with their perfect development; but the new products arising from this continued assimilation are no longer employed by the perfect leaves in their own increase: they serve for the formation of woody fibre, and all the solid matters of similar composition. The leaves now produce sugar, amylin or starch, and acids, which were previously formed by the roots when they were necessary for the development of the stem, buds, leaves, and branches of the plant.

And when the formation of the woody substance has advanced to a certain extent, the expenditure of the nutriment, the supply of which still remains the same, takes a new direction, and blossoms are produced.

A peculiar "transformation" of the matters contained in all plants takes place in the period between blossoming and the ripening of the fruit; new compounds are produced, which furnish constituents of the blossoms, fruit and seed.

Of two compounds formed in consequence of such a change, one remains as a component part of the blossom or fruit, while the other is separated by the roots in the form of excrementitious matter. No process of nutrition can be conceived to subsist in animals or vegetables, without a separation of effete matters.

Whatever we regard as the cause of these transformations; whether the vital principle, increase of temperature, light, galvanism, or any other influence, the act of transformation is a purely chemical process. Combination and decomposition can take place only when the elements are disposed to these changes. That which chemists name *affinity* indicates only the degree in which they possess this disposition.

Each organ extracts from the food presented to it what it requires for its own sustenance; while the remaining elements which are not assimilated, combine together and are separated as excrement. The excrementitious matters of one organ come in contact with another during their passage through the organ-

ism and in consequence suffer new transformations; the useless matters rejected by one organ containing the elements for the nutrition of a second and a third organ: but at last, being capable of no further transformations, they are separated from the system by the organs destined for that purpose.

Respiration must be regarded as a slow process of combustion or constant decomposition. If it be subject to the laws which regulate the processes of decomposition generally, the oxygen of the inspired air cannot combine directly with the carbon of compounds of that element contained in the blood; the hydrogen can only combine with the oxygen of the air, or undergo a higher degree of oxidation. Oxygen is absorbed without uniting with carbon; and carbonic acid is disengaged, the carbon and oxygen of which must be derived from matters previously existing in the blood.

Each transformation is owing to a disturbance in the attraction of the elements of a compound, and is consequently a purely chemical process.

Transformations of existing compounds are constantly taking place during the whole life of a plant, in consequence of which, and as the results of these transformations, there are produced gaseous matters which are excreted by the leaves and blossoms, solid excrements deposited in the bark, and fluid soluble substances which are eliminated by the roots. Such secretions are most abundant immediately before the formation and during the continuance of the blossoms; they diminish after the development of the fruit. Substances containing a large proportion of carbon are excreted by the roots and absorbed by the soil. Through the expulsion of these matters unfitted for nutrition, the soil receives again with usury the carbon which it had at first yielded to the young plants as food, in the form of carbonic acid.

The soluble matter thus acquired by the soil is still capable of decay and putrefaction, and by undergoing these processes furnishes renewed sources of nutrition to another generation of plants; it becomes humus. The cultivated soil is thus placed in a situation exactly analogous to that of forests and meadows; for the leaves of trees which fall in the forest in autumn, and the old roots of grass in the meadow, are likewise converted into humus by the same influence: a soil receives more carbon in this form than its decaying humus had lost as carbonic acid.

GAFFER GRAY.

CHEMICAL PHILOSOPHY.

PUTREFACTION.

ALL animal and vegetable substances undergo a putrefactive process. The principles inducing this are oxygen and hydrogen in proportion to form water, and more rapidly when nitrogen is also present. When dead animal matter is exposed to air and moisture, it speedily decomposes, so much so, that all appearance of its original texture disappears, and the products are of a very offensive matter. This process varies in respect to the heat present in the atmosphere, it is most at 80° or 90° of Fahrenheit; below 50 it goes on slowly, and at 32° or freezing point, it will not take place at all. This is demonstrable by the well known fact, that the bodies of animals which have been buried in snow or ice, are found unchanged after a long series of years. That putrefaction is owing to the presence of moisture, is also proved by its being arrested when the substances can be

preserved quite dry. Meat well smoked is thus secured, and animals have been found in the dry sand of Egypt and Arabia perfectly unchanged, though they must have been there for many years. Many vegetable substances may also be preserved from putrefaction for an indefinite period if carefully dried and protected from humidity.

The *humus* spoken of by the indefatigable Liebig (as quoted by the respected contributor to the *Colonial Literary Journal* subscribing himself "Gaffer Gray,") to whom every native of Europe is indebted, is the soluble matter of vegetation, received into the soil as excrement from the full grown plants; it there undergoes a new process of decay and putrefaction, by which means the earth again is in a state to give nourishment to a new generation of plants.

But the putrefactive remains of animal substances are likewise necessary for the growth of plants. This is provided for in nature by the evolution of gas called ammonia, which is a compound of hydrogen and nitrogen. This gas rises in the atmosphere, but as it has a strong attraction for water, it speedily unites with the falling rains, and is conveyed by them to the soil. The beneficial employment of the excrements of animals, and the refuse of the slaughter house, is derived from the large portions of ammonia therein contained. The *guano*, lately became an extensive article of commerce, consists of the putrid excrements of sea birds.

There is, however, an important difference in the animal and vegetable life, for in the one case the life is transmitted during life and health, in the other case the transmitter dies before the new life commences. The death of a plant often takes place immediately after yielding its fruit and seeds, as is seen in all kinds of corn and beans, and these seeds, used by man as the basis of his daily substance, must be sown again, thereby giving rise to future productions.

Liebig puts forth these questions; (but who shall answer them!) "Was there a time when the individual elements floated together in chaos, without possessing any kind of affinity? Whether did the hen exist before the egg, or the egg before the hen? Whether did water first exist as water, or as hydrogen and oxygen? In what condition was then the chlorine of common salt, or the carbon of carbonic acid?" He adds "we must rest satisfied that these questions will either never be solved, or that they will not be so until a future period."

Let us, however, be content to know that the Creator's works were *perfected* when made, and believe that the embryo of the future lay in its depths. Is this more difficult to imagine, than it is now wondrous to behold? Who is there amongst us that has not read the 40th chapter of the Prophecies of Isaiah?
B.

LITERARY TOILS.

[From "Ward's Miscellany."]

As we frequently see statements in the public prints respecting American literature, the press, and the number of publications proceeding from it, intended, probably, to show the progress of improvement in the United States, I beg you and the public to pardon the egotism of my short story, showing what difficulties an author may have to encounter.

When I first proposed, in 1783, to publish a small elementary book for teaching children to read, I found two persons only who gave the least encouragement of success. These