were ever in authorized use should form a part of the vocabulary of every dictionary which aspires to completeness as a guide to the literature of our tongue. It must be recollected, also, that recent English writers of the very highest rank have revived, or attempted to revive, many of the half-forgotten words of our elder poets. You cannot read Mrs. Browning or Tennyson without meeting old words which, till waked by them, have slumbered for centuries. The rapidly increasing interest in early English literature will bring back still more of the ancient veterans that have lagged behind the swift march of modern speech, and our current vocabulary will grow almost as fast by revival as by new coinage. This text of words applies also to obsolete meanings of words still employed in other significations. I am no advocate for multiplying definitions, especially where a given unusual sense is readily suggested by etymology; but a lexicographer professing fulness in this respect departs from principle if he omits the meaning innovation applied by Lord Clarendon to infusion, or if he fails to point out that the beauty of Milton's is heightened by his rare, if not unique, employment of the adjective visible in an active instead of the usual passive signification.

The case of words awkwardly newly coined or introduced raises a more difficult question. I do not refer to more slang terms which carry the gleam of gold-mark on their foreheads, and are obviously as ephemeral as they are vulgar, but to words which seem to merit a want, and therefore to have a raison d'être, a right to live. When the metaphysical Puritan first condemned the selfish man as his own tempter, and selfishness as the source of most of our sins, every Englishman gifted with linguistic sense and with conscience must have felt at once that an imperishable word, a new and precise formulation of what had been before but a vaguely expressed notion, was born into the family of his moral and his household speech; and, though both Trench and the editors of Webster have wrongly, or, at least, imperfectly, defined nativity, by describing it as a union, a consociation of interests, responsibilities, honors, and the like, omitting the precise legal conception involved in it which is obviously expressed by the technical phrase joint and several—yet, when Kosuth imported the word for us he was universally allowed to have supplied to our vocabulary a term which it really needed.

With regard to the admission of such words into a dictionary, no formal rules can be laid down. The lexicographer must trust to his philological instincts, and when a new recruit is brought forward to fill a real vacancy, he should look to the qualifications rather than to the credentials of the candidate, and not priggishly reject him simply as an old deserter or as a raw volunteer.

The facility of swelling the word-list by borrowing whole armies of technical terms from scientific treatises and special glossaries, tempts lexicographers to introduce names of words which not only have not passed into the common speech in an untechnical or figurative sense: as, for example, the astronomical terms apogee, perihelion; 2. Where it is an important word of art in the special vocabulary of those branches of knowledge which have not lost us into the education of all cultivated persons, as cecilia, cæliostoma, cæliostomy curve, homedogous.

3. Where the object named has a commercial or industrial importance, as kohlethoria, korpole; or where it has existed attention from rare and curious structure or properties, as orbicularis hydrorhiza.

4. Where classic and popular writers have employed scientific terms in poetical or rhetorical illustration, as eumenea in Milton's "L'Allegro" and "Comus," or helioscopic rising in the preface to T. Mee's "Epicurean," and elsewhere.

Other cases may, no doubt, be supposed in which words belonging to the special vocabulary of science ought to find a place in general dictionaries; but I believe those are both the most important and the most comprehensive in application.

MORE POETRY OF THE WAR.*

It is only the greatest poet who is fully inspired by great events. It is he alone who can express them worthily. But the same storm that piles up the waves of the sea sets all the duck-ponds in ineffectual commotion. The literary productivity and facility of America display themselves just now in what is called poetry of the war; but most of what is thus designated is as ephemeral as the newspaper in which it usually appears. Our war has produced, at the outside, not more than half-a-dozen lyrics that deserve a place in the literature of the United States, and but one truly great and lasting poem. Lowell's "Commemoration Ode" takes its place securely, not only among the finest works of our generation, but among the noblest poems of all time. It is happy for us that the spirit of the war found a poet capable of receiving and expressing its full inspiration. No one who has felt the power of the master in this poem but must sometimes feel a little impatience and weariness with the common handiwork of the journeymen and apprentices, though much he may approve their industry or sympathize with the earnestness which, in their degree, they have each found to be the measure of the poetry of the war. It is only the highest art that can illustrate the highest deeds. The severest literary criticism on this poetry is not so hard as the criticism of the facts themselves. Unless the poet is as intense in his work as the historian is in his, unless the power of the one is as the power of the other, he cannot be a fit instrument to illustrate the highest deeds. But the grandeur of the war—alike in its principles and its events—must be the measure of the poetry of the war. It is only the highest art that can illustrate the highest deeds. The severest literary criticism on this poetry is not so hard as the criticism of the facts themselves. Unless the poet is as intense in his work as the historian is in his, unless the power of the one is as the power of the other, he cannot be a fit instrument to illustrate the highest deeds.

Mr. Melville’s literary experience and cultivation should have mistaken some of these compositions for poetry, or even for verse. There are some of them in which it is difficult to discover rhythm, measure, or consonance of rhyme. The thought is often involved and obscure. The continent is weakened by incongruous imagery. We quote the first piece in the volume lest our criticism be thought too severe:

**THE PORTENT.**

(1859.)

**Hyming from the town,**

Slowly warping (each the law)

Count the shadow on your green,

Shenandoah:

The cut is on the crown

(Lo, John Brown),

And the state shall heal no more.

Hidden in the cap

Is the anguish none can draw:

So your future tells its face,

Shenandoah.

But the streaming board is shown

(Woe! John Brown),

The mether of the war,

It would seem that only a writing medium could mistake such stuff as this for poetry. And, alas! there is more of it, and our regret is the keener when we find such simple and feeling verses as the following:

**BALL’S BLUFF.**

A VERSE.

(October, 1861.)

One morning, by my window in the town,

I saw a sight—absurd that eyes can see—

Young soldiers marching lustily

Into the wars

With files, and flags, and mottoed pennants;

While all the porches, walks, and doors

Were throng’d with ladies glittering royally.

They moved like lazy morning on the wars,

Their hearts were fresh, as living in their prime;

It was the busy summer time,

Life thrilled so strong;

How should they dream that death in a rose-crimson

Tinted the falling throb of their sighing throes?

Youth (coal immortal, like the gods sublime)

Weeks passed; and at my window, leaving bed,

By night I missed, of sweetly breathing love,

Of those brave boys (on war, thy sib),

Some marching feet

Found pause at last by cliff Potomac cleft;

Waked I raised, while in the street

The donkeys shaw all whose were left.

There are very few pieces in the volume so direct in expression and so natural in thought as this; but there are single lines, complete, or quadrains in which genuine power is shown as well as genuine feeling. Take, for instance, the two following lines at the end of “Misgivings,” the second piece in the volume:

“ ‘And storms are formed behind the storm we feel;’

The hemlock shakes in the rafter, the oak in the driving feet.’”

Here is another good couplet from a later poem:

“All were no boys, and are fought by boys,

The champions and enthusiasts of the state;”

and the following line from “A Utilitarian View of the Monitor’s Fight,”

“The clangor of that fray,”

is not without a touch of imagination.

But these brief citations only serve to show how much better a very small part of the book is than the whole.

It is a misfortune that the special events which have marred Mr. Melville to write are the same, in several instances, which have already been put into verse by other writers, and that those earlier poems, already more or less familiar to the public, are necessarily brought into comparison with his. Thus his brief verses entitled “Shiloh: a Requiem,” almost inevitably suggest, by contrast, the very striking poem of Mr. Forcey the Wilson’s, of which a great part of the scene is laid on the battle-field of Shiloh, called “The Old Sergeant.” The author of this poem has not; as yet won the position in literature which may be predicted for him if he be really master of the qualities of which this poem gives evidence. We doubt if the war has inspired a narrative poem more imaginatively conceived, or more vigorously told. It is the work of an imaginative realist, and its power and pathos lie in the straightforward truthfulness of the poet as dealing alike with the spiritual and the material elements of the story. The narrative is conducted with great simplicity; it is entirely free from “padding” or “rhetoric,” and it is of so much interest that the defects which exist in it as a work of art may readily be overlooked. It first appeared, in 1863 (5), in the Louisville Journal, and has since been widely copied; and we are glad now to read it again in a form better suited to its merits.

**RELIGION AND POLITICS.**

No thoughtful man can now read Burke’s writings—the works of certainly the most brilliant and imaginative political genius of the last century—without remarking the change that has come over the treatment of political topics since his time. The change is not so much one of method as of point of view. With Burke politics is not a science with laws derived from the nature of man in society, and its constitution as an individual being, so much as a compilation of rules drawn from experience, and a study of institutions handed down from the past and invested with the authority of antiquity and long existence. His reasonings are mainly of the a posteriori sort. He rarely trusts himself to the guidance of original principles. He treats society and government as matters of pure convention; he has little regard for abstract rights, and no words are too bitter for him to use in regard to what he calls the delusive plausible of moral politicians.” He has nothing but scorn for the assertions of the doctrine of the rights of man as against established prerogatives. It is the rule of safety with him, stans virtut quaestis etam. This manner of considering political questions is in part to his native temperament, in part to the reaction caused in his reverence, pure, and tender nature by the excesses and atrocities of the French Revolution, against those principles and dogmas which were subemployed by the revolutionists as the motive and excuse of their crimes.

But the character of his political opinions, when compared with that of the theories now held by the most thoughtful men, marks distinctly the greatness of the change which has been wrought in political speculations during the present century. This change is in part one of the results of the operation of ideas generated by the French Revolution; but is due in greater measure to the continued existence and prosperity of our American system, a system more novel and unexampled in history than is yet fully recognized, and which has given proof of the possibility of bringing into effective operation, for the advantage of a community, truths which have been previously relegated to the domain of theory and fancy, the very truths which Burke-classed with the delusive plausible of moral politicians.

Until the establishment and development of our American system the dependence of politics upon ethics had been treated as mainly speculative. The empirical science of practical politics was divorced in fact from the moral law. The relation between one and the other was acknowledged only in vague terms, as in the assertion, to cite the words of Washington in his Farewell Address, that, “of all the dispositions and habits that lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports.” But the development and progress of our commonwealth have shown that religion and morality are something more than indispensable supports; they are the only source of those principles which, applied to politics, give to our system its distinguishing features and essential character.

Our political system, being one of rights, rests necessarily on a moral foundation. All abstract political propositions in America are equally and primarily moral propositions. The theory on which our government is made is a moral theory brought into practical relation with the needs of society by a number of ingenious devices. The mere political forms—the political machinery of our system—contain little with which past ages have not been acquainted, but its novelty lies in the motive power of its machinery, in the ideas which vivify its forms. The whole authority of our political governmental institutions is derived from their being directed to a moral end; and it is to their fitness for this end that they appeal for validity. They are in this respect absolutely original. All other existing governments derive from force, prerogative, or convention. Ours alone is based upon the theories now held by the revolutionists as the motive and excuse of their crimes.

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