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VARIOUS

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THE
YALE LITERARY MAGAZINE.

VOL. XXI.

DECEMBER, 1855.

No. III.

EDITORS FOR THE CLASS OF '56.

G. F. BAILLY,
J. M. BROWN,

W. H. W. CAMPBELL,
H. DU BOIS,

L. O. FISCHER.

Cantica Yalensia.

SOME years since, a praiseworthy intention of preserving from oblivion our best songs, suggested the publication of the small pamphlet of which we have before us the second edition.*

In its very conception the project was essentially Yalensian. No College in the country has such a variety of songs as we. Nowhere are better songs written on subjects trite and apparently exhausted. Many of these are of a high order of merit, many are good, and yet by far the greater number are forgotten with the occasion that gave them birth.

To remedy this waste of poetic genius, the present little collection was devised; its prime object being to glean from the overwhelming number of catches and glees such as might be peculiarly Collegian in their character, and especially such as might exhibit most truthfully Yale Student Life.

The Editors have succeeded as well perhaps as was possible, under the circumstances. We must make due allowance for the difficulty of procuring copies of all the best songs, and for the large amount of mat-

* Songs of Yale. New Haven: Published by Thos. H. Pease, 1855.

ter from which the selection was to be made. Without attempting to criticize the publication, we apprehend that much might be said, both *pro* and *con*, in regard to our Songs and Song-writing, and more especially of the latter.

Our songs are, for the most part, as we have observed, mere ephemeral productions. This is in perfect keeping with the circumstances of their composition, and in it we may remark a grand point of truth in our songs. No production of the *mind* can distinctly portray the state of heart which dictated it, unless it be natural and true in its reflection of the individual's character. Now the very ideal of College life, is a rapid succession of joy to trouble, of amusement to labor, of relaxation to toil. Transitoriness is the element of bliss in our present existence as Students. *Abandon* is the distinguishing feature of our songs, the true stamp that Student carelessness should impress upon them. In short, our songs, in their peculiar mode of *composition*, evince their natural rise from the Student's heart.

Sufficient explanation can be found in this for the inaccuracy of *thought*, or rather want of thought, manifest in almost every one of our most popular songs. This is a characteristic everywhere, and should not be applied to our College. Other Institutions have not that exuberance of good feeling that prompts the Yalensian to vent in quaint, and sometimes uncouth rhymes, the glea of the heart. Yet, however much College feeling may vary in intensity, the popularity of the far famed "Gaudemus," is abundant proof of its universal existence. In this song, we discern no great poetic thoughts, no brilliant ideas, nothing indeed to mark the labored piece. But it does contain true Student spirit, and this one characteristic has made it, though of foreign origin, as familiar and expressive to the American as to the German Student, and will preserve it sung and felt as long as there is a Burschen-craft. Its

"Vivat Academia"

will tinge the cheek with the glow of enthusiasm and patriotism. The swelling cry of

"Vivant omnes virgines
Faciles, formosæ,"

is a proof, clearer than argument could demonstrate, of the natural chivalry that animates the scholar.

But we would confine ourselves to such songs as have originated in our own College, excluding for this reason the notorious "Shool" and "Cocachelunk" brought hither from West Point. The numberless par-

odies upon these two songs are due more to the suitability of the air to College purposes, than to any intrinsic merit of their own.

One peculiar disadvantage which the writer of College songs has to encounter is the *narrowness* of his theme; and, lest some may be disposed to take issue on this point, we hasten to qualify the remark. By narrowness we mean the barrenness of material when wine and drinking are discarded, and the caution which must be used in introducing these elements into a College song. In national songs, patriotism and devotion to liberty afford an ample theme without a necessity of resorting to ideas not immediately connected with them. With this one reservation, (and in this are manifestly many exceptions,) the old rule that "Wit, wine and women" are the proper materials for Song, will hold good almost universally. The great difficulty is not to exceed the natural limit of either of these in the composition of a Student song, not to make wine or love the ruling passion in the collegian, and still to preserve for them an existence. The prevalent and quite true idea that Student life concentrates all the choicest pleasures of life, culled from every source, is carried too far when it imagines the expression of these to be easy in proportion to the number and truth of enjoyments.

Let us look at an example. An ordinary drinking song cannot be a truly College song. Its grossness is incompatible with the refinement of an educated mind. To call a purely sentimental love ditty an expression of true Student thought, would be an absurdity, never, we venture to say, perpetrated by a sane man. A broad vein of conviviality, and an interspersion of a few tender sentiments, will nevertheless contribute much to the zest and popularity of songs intended for masses either of men or Students. The art of proportion in the use of these two materials is of last importance in making the song a picture. In the following how well the wine serves to smooth down the pedantic beginning into jovial hilarity, and render the whole verse a representation of a true scholarly spree:

"Then away with your circles, sines, tangents and squares,
 For Day and for Euclid not one of us cares.
 Dame Nature has taught us to form a curved line
 With a circle of friends, round a bottle of wine!
 Oh! a bottle of wine! a bottle of wine!
 For our song is in praise of a bottle of wine!"

Or in the hackneyed strain of—

"We think it perfectly right, Sir,
 On every Saturday night, Sir,

To get a little tight, Sir,
To drive dull care away."

How insipid the commonplace, were it not for the Yalensian chorus of—

"It's a way we have at old Yale, boys,
To drive dull care away,"

to lend the Collegian feature.

Another difficulty besetting our Song writer lies in an established preference, as it were, in College, for the careless and off-hand kind of songs over the more labored and solid. It is useless to deny that an element of buffoonery, incautiously introduced at some such premeditated burlesque as the Wooden Spoon or the Burial of Euclid, has acquired an undue influence in all poetical efforts in College. One half, or more, of the poems delivered before the literary societies are of a nature half humorous, half ridiculous. It is this perversion of taste that chiefly hinders the writing of songs as remarkable for intrinsic merit as they would be valuable for their bearing on Student character.

We had intended examining one or more of the classes of songs into which the collection is divided, but space will not permit. The pamphlet to which we have referred is well deserving of our support, and is in itself a condensed picture, to a certain extent, of the routine of habit and opinion in a Yale Student.

Mr. McCreed Patronizes Literature.

The library, Madame! "Isn't it charming?" Certainly it is. You don't see any ostentation here. Mr. McCreed, although he has spared no expense to gratify an accurate taste, has carefully avoided all display in his new mansion. No carved oak—no polished frozen floor! This is not a *public* library! Mr. McCreed spends a great many quiet hours here, and has consulted his own taste without reference to yours and mine. We belong to the outer world, and the library is not ours, but Mr. McCreed's. If we wish, we can find the shining oak in the art gallery, where we, with other connexions of Mr. Public, are invited to recline on black, gloomy lounges, and look through ugly black tubes at staring nymphs and Madonnas—real copies of real old pictures. But

what a contrast is here! What comfort! Mr. McCreed's eyes delight themselves in orange and blue, and you see orange and blue in the velvet carpet, with a litter of purple flowers and white ditto scattered about. Could you, Madame, have selected better? Then the shelves—how much more tasteful, as well as substantial, are those airy iron frames, painted a light blue color! Frescoes, too, on the ceiling, in blue and gold; and an elegant stained window with representations of the muses, all in yellow, on a blue ground! Did you ever see a more tasteful choice or disposition of colors! One visitor, a thin man, with stooping shoulders, was heard to mutter "horrid" as he went away; but his opinion was nothing to that of the public. "And what does the people say?" You, Madame, say "very nice!" and you are a part of the public. Everybody says "very nice" and dislikes to handle anything in the room.

But the books, of course, are the principal attraction in Mr. McCreed's library. Books in green, books in red, books in black, and books in gilt! There are more gilt backs though than anything else; for every man of taste experiences more enjoyment in reading a gilded book than a black one. So Mr. McCreed says, and the rows of poetic, scientific and historic gilt show how generously he has carried out his principle. Romance you don't find. Miss Juliet McCreed attends to that department in her own room, after her worthy father has retired. But science and history are what Mr. McCreed delights in. You can often find him in one of the large easy-chairs reading his newspaper, with an abstruse work open upon the table at his side. (He would avoid display, and always snatches up his paper when he hears visitors coming.) You can judge from a little incident—it is only one of many—how Mr. McCreed fills his library. The other day the following letter was placed in his hands:

Mr. McCreed—

DEAR SIR:

We take pleasure in recommending to your notice, as a patron of science, a work in three volumes, which we have just published, on the culiciform insects of America. It is illustrated with one hundred elegant engravings, and will be an ornament to the library of any scientific man. The price is two hundred dollars.

Yours, very truly,

GOUGE & GOBBLE.

"I must buy this work," said Mr. McCreed. "It will make a fine appearance on the shelves, and will match well with my 'Gerrae Ger-

man?" So, a favorable answer was returned; and in a few days the book came. The "patron of science" viewed it with evident pleasure. Not so Mrs. McCreed. "I declare," exclaimed she, "it's a book about fess! It's too bad, Mr. McCreed; yes, indeed, it is. It's a regular swindle!" The worthy man answered with a smile, "What do women know about science!" and he placed the new treasure in a conspicuous position.

"How beautiful they do look!" Yes, Madame! the laborious binder has spent many an hour over those precious tomes. He has devised a thousand ingenious ornaments for their covers. Every shelf says as plainly, "Mr. McCreed patronizes a good workman," as does young Mr. Polhamius' coat, for instance. Of course, some are found to sneer. Mr. Plumgudgeon, after looking at the books, said, "H'm! h'm!" What could he mean by "H'm, h'm?" He could not have wished to be critical. *His* library is not half as large, and it is quite worn and dingy. Perhaps he was envious. You, Madame, had "H'm, h'm," in your throat, and very nearly uttered it when you saw the work on culiciform insects. You have nothing so fine in your library.

Mr. McCreed is not proud of his library.

He does not throw it open to the public and point out the glittering rows and say, "Have n't I a magnificent library?" Not at all! He only admits visitors into the literary retreat once a week, and then he always absents himself, leaving them to listen to the remarks of a servant whose praises are, of course, unheeded. Neither does he grudge time to less solid reading. He takes two or three papers and enjoys the perusal of them. He introduces Harper to the family and laughs as heartily as anybody at the comic pictures. He encourages reading among his children, and buys them a great many useful biographies and other like works.

And don't imagine, Madame, that Mr. McCreed's interest is confined to his own home. Oh no! He gives a great deal of money to public societies, sending it to them with the most modest of notes requesting them not to publish it. "But they always do!" Certainly they do, Madame, do you suppose that they are going to discourage such a benevolent man by a frigid silence? Then he sustains public lectures. Did you ever see them make sausages? "Oh!" Of course you have not! Well, it's a very interesting stuffing process, and that Plumgudgeon says, that they lecture the people now a days as they stuff sausages. A perfect higgledy-piggledy—so he expresses it—a little science for meat with savory herbs and seasoning of poems and funny things! He says the

rocess does nobody good. The public has "heard Mr. This and That," and its knowledge is before you. But Mr. McCreed, in spite of Mr. Plumgudgeon's opposition, sustains a diversified course of lectures and uses all his influence to bring the people to hear them. He takes a more enlightened view of the case. "Do away with our lectures," remarks he, "and we shall have a theater established forthwith! Something must be sustained of an interesting character to keep people out of mischief." So he pays liberally for lectures, and I assure you, Madame, they are a delightful institution. All the youth and beauty of the city are there enjoying each other's society and beholding the most distinguished men of the day—all for twenty-five cents. You attend, of course, Madame! No! You ought to—you should have heard Mr. Twaddle, the other evening! Oh, it was the funniest lecture! Mr. Plumgudgeon looked very grave as he saw the people pouring out. You know that his plan is to sustain courses of lectures on useful subjects. He says it is impossible to do justice to any topic of value, in one evening. Which is the best, Madame, courses of useful lectures drawn out to thin houses, or entertainments of wit, sprinkled with desirable information and houses full of youth and enthusiasm?

Do you know how much Mr. McCreed gives to literary institutions? You may be sure it is a very large sum. "But he is n't always so liberal. There was young Tacnillie who tried to borrow money of him to go to College. Mr. McCreed told him he could avail himself of the 'McCreed fund for indigent students,' and refused to loan him a cent. Do you call that generosity? Of course Tacnillie was too proud to accept such terms and was obliged to seek aid in another quarter." Well, my dear Madame, that was right. Mr. McCreed's *public* benefactions would be materially curtailed, were he to notice all such private applications. And, besides, many unworthy persons would undoubtedly take advantage of his liberality. How much better is it for him to establish the 'McCreed premiums for Sanskrit composition,' and thereby render a lasting service to the cause of public education! How could he have established the 'McCreed School,' had his pockets been drained by repeated loans? We do not appreciate the goodness of this patron of literature, Madame, and we must not constitute ourselves his judges.

"Well, it will be some time before we shall visit another so beautiful room." Yes, Madame. We may call this a half-hour spent with the best-looking authors! And now for the 'art gallery!' w. c.