

VARIOUS

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Various

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GERMAN CRITICISM ON ENGLISH FEMALE ROMANCE WRITERS

We translate the following for the *International* from a letter dated London, June 15, to the *Cologne Gazette*.

"Among the most remarkable writers of romances in England, three women are entitled to be reckoned in the first rank, namely, Miss Jewsbury, Miss Bronte, and Mrs. Gaskell. Miss Jewsbury issued her first work about four years since, a novel, in three volumes, under the title of 'Zoe,' and since then she has published the 'Half Sisters.' Both these works are excellent in manner as well as ideas, and show that their author is a woman of profound thought and deep feeling. Both are drawn from country life and the middle class, a sphere in which Miss Jewsbury is at home. The tendency of the first is speculative, and is based on religion; that of the second is social, relating to the position of woman.

"Miss Jewsbury is still young, for an authoress. She counts only some thirty years, and many productions may be confidently expected from her hand, though perhaps none will excel those already published, for, after gaining a certain climax, no one excels himself. Her usual residence is Manchester; it is but seldom that she visits the metropolis; she is now here. She has lively and pleasing manners, a slight person, fine features, a beautiful, dreamy, light brown eye. She is attractive without being beautiful, retiring, altogether without pretensions, and in conversation is neither brilliant nor very intellectual,—a still, thoughtful, modest character.

"Miss Bronte was long involved in a mysterious obscurity, from which she first emerged into the light as an actually existing being, at her present visit to London. Two years ago there appeared a romance, 'Jane Eyre,' by 'Currer Bell,' which threw all England into astonishment. Everybody was tormenting himself to discover the real author, for there was no such person as Currer Bell, and no one could tell whether the book was written by a man or woman, because the hues of the romance now indicated a male and now female hand, without any possibility of supposing that the whole originated with a single pencil. The public attributed it now to one, now to another, and the book passed to a second edition without the solution of the riddle. At last there came out a second romance, 'Shirley,' by the same author, which was devoured with equal avidity, although it could not be compared to the former in value; and still the incognito was preserved. Finally, late in the autumn of last year the report was spread about that the image of Jane Eyre had been discovered in London in the person of a pale young lady, with gray eyes, who had been recognized as the long-sought authoress. Still she remained invisible. And again, in June 1850, it is said that Currer Bell, Jane Eyre, Miss Bronte, —for all three names mean the same person,—is in London, though to all inquiries concerning the where and how a satisfactory answer is still wanting. She is now indeed here, but not for the curious public; she will not serve society as a lioness, will not be gazed and gaped at. She is a simple child of the country, brought up in the little parsonage of her father, in the North of England, and must first accustom her eye to the gleaming diadem with which fame seeks to deck her brow, before she can feel herself at home in her own sunshine.

"Our third lady, Mrs. Gaskell, belongs also to the country, and is the wife of a Unitarian clergyman. In this capacity she has probably had occasion to know a great deal of the poorer classes, to her honor be it said. Her book, 'Mary Barton,' conducts us into the factory workman's narrow dwelling, and depicts his joys and sorrows, his aims and efforts, his wants and his misery, with a power of truth that irresistibly lays hold upon the heart. The scene of the story alternates from there to the city mansion of the factory owner, where, along with luxury and splendor we find little love and little happiness, and where sympathy with the condition of the workman is wanting only because it is not known, and because no one understands why or how the workman suffers. The book, is at once very beautiful, very instructive, and written, in a spirit of conciliation."

MARGARET FULLER, MARCHESA D'OSSOLI

Sarah Margaret Fuller, by marriage Marchioness of Ossoli, was born in Cambridge, Massachusetts, about the year 1807. Her father, Mr. Timothy Fuller, was a lawyer, and from 1817 to 1825 he represented the Middlesex district in Congress. At the close of his last term as a legislator he purchased a farm near Cambridge, and determined to abandon his profession for the more congenial one of agriculture; but he died soon after, leaving a widow and six children, of whom Margaret was the eldest.

At a very early age she exhibited unusual abilities, and was particularly distinguished for an extraordinary facility in acquiring languages. Her father, proud of the displays of her intelligence, prematurely stimulated it to a degree that was ultimately injurious to her physical constitution. At eight years of age he was accustomed to require of her the composition of a number of Latin verses every day, while her studies in philosophy, history, general science and current literature were pressed to the limit of her capacities. When he first went to Washington he was accustomed to speak of her as one "better skilled in Greek and Latin than half of the professors;" and alluding in one of her essays, to her attachment to foreign literature, she herself observes that in childhood she had well-nigh forgotten her English while constantly reading in other tongues.

Soon after the death of her father, she applied herself to teaching as a vocation, first in Boston, then in Providence, and afterward in Boston again, while her "Conversations" were for several seasons attended by classes of women, some of them married, and many of them of the most eminent positions in society. These conversations are described by Dr. Orestes A. Brownson, as "in the highest degree brilliant, instructive, and inspiring," and our own recollections of them confirm to us the justice of the applause with which they are now referred to. She made her first appearance as an author, in a translation of Eckermann's *Conversations with Goethe*, published in Boston in 1839. When Mr. Emerson, in the following year, established *The Dial*, she became one of the principal contributors to that remarkable periodical, in which she wrote many of the most striking papers on literature, art, and society. In the summer of 1843 she made a journey to the Sault St. Marie, and in the next spring published in Boston reminiscences of her tour, under the title of *Summer on the Lakes*. *The Dial* having been discontinued, she came to reside in New York, where she had charge of the literary department of the *New York Tribune*, which acquired a great accession of reputation from her critical essays. Here in 1845 she published *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*; and in 1846, *Papers on Literature and Art*, in two volumes, consisting of essays and reviews, reprinted, with one exception, from periodicals.

In the summer of 1845, she accompanied the family of a friend to Europe, visiting England, Scotland, and France, and passing through Italy to Rome, where they spent the ensuing winter. The next spring she proceeded with her friends to the north of Italy, and there stopped, spending most of the summer at Florence, and returning at the approach of winter to Rome, where she was soon after married to Giovanni, Marquis d'Ossoli, who made her acquaintance during her first winter in that city. They resided in the Roman States until the last summer, after the surrender of Rome to the French army, when they deemed it expedient to go to Florence, both having taken an active part in the Republican movement. They left Florence in June, and at Leghorn embarked in the ship *Elizabeth* for New York. The passage commenced auspiciously, but at Gibraltar the master of the ship died of smallpox, and they were detained at the quarantine there some time in consequence of this misfortune, but finally set sail again on the 8th of June, and arrived on our coast during the terrible storm of the 18th and 19th ult., when, in the midst of darkness, rain, and a terrific gale, the ship was hurled on the breakers of Fire Island, near Long Island, and in a few hours was broken in pieces. Margaret Fuller d'Ossoli, the Marquis d'Ossoli, and their son, two years of age, with an Italian girl, and Mr. Horace

Sumner of Boston, besides several of the crew, lost their lives. We reprint a sketch of the works and genius of Margaret Fuller, written several years ago by the late Edgar A. Poe.

"Miss Fuller was at one time editor, or one of the editors of the 'The Dial,' to which she contributed many of the most forcible and certainly some of the most peculiar papers. She is known, too, by 'Summer on the Lakes,' a remarkable assemblage of sketches, issued in 1844, by Little & Brown, of Boston. More lately she published 'Woman in the Nineteenth Century,' a work which has occasioned much discussion, having had the good fortune to be warmly abused and chivalrously defended. For 'The New York Tribune,' she has furnished a great variety of matter, chiefly notices of new books, etc., etc., her articles being designated by an asterisk. Two of the best of them were a review of Professor Longfellow's late magnificent edition of his own works, (with a portrait,) and an appeal to the public in behalf of her friend Harro Harring. The review did her infinite credit; it was frank, candid, independent—in even ludicrous contrast to the usual mere glorifications of the day, giving honor *only* where honor was due, yet evincing the most thorough capacity to appreciate and the most sincere intention to place in the fairest light the real and idiosyncratic merits of the poet. In my opinion it is one of the very few reviews of Longfellow's poems, ever published in America, of which the critics have not had abundant reason to be ashamed. Mr. Longfellow is entitled to a certain and very distinguished rank among the poets of his country, but that country is disgraced by the evident toadyism which would award to his social position and influence, to his fine paper and large type, to his morocco binding and gilt edges, to his flattering portrait of himself, and to the illustrations of his poems by Huntingdon, that amount of indiscriminate approbation which neither could nor would have been given to the poems themselves. The defense of Harro Harring, or rather the philippic against those who were doing him wrong, was one of the most eloquent and well-*put* articles I have ever yet seen in a newspaper.

"'Woman in the Nineteenth Century' is a book which few women in the country could have written, and no woman in the country would have published, with the exception of Miss Fuller. In the way of independence, of unmitigated radicalism, it is one of the 'Curiosities of American Literature,' and Doctor Griswold should include it in his book. I need scarcely say that the essay is nervous, forcible, suggestive, brilliant, and to a certain extent scholar-like—for all that Miss Fuller produces is entitled to these epithets—but I must say that the conclusions reached are only in part my own. Not that they are bold, by any means—too novel, too startling or too dangerous in their consequences, but that in their attainment too many premises have been distorted, and too many analogical inferences left altogether out of sight. I mean to say that the intention of the Deity as regards sexual differences—an intention which can be distinctly comprehended only by throwing the exterior (more sensitive) portions of the mental retina *casually* over the wide field of universal *analogy*—I mean to say that this *intention* has not been sufficiently considered. Miss Fuller has erred, too, through her own excessive objectiveness. She judges *woman* by the heart and intellect of Miss Fuller, but there are not more than one or two dozen Miss Fullers on the whole face of the earth. Holding these opinions in regard to 'Woman in the Nineteenth Century,' I still feel myself called upon to disavow the silly, condemnatory criticism of the work which appeared in one of the earlier numbers of "*The Broadway Journal*." That article was *not* written by myself, and *was* written by my associate, Mr. Briggs.

"The most favorable estimate of Miss Fuller's genius (for high genius she unquestionably possesses) is to be obtained, perhaps, from her contributions to 'The Dial,' and from her 'Summer on the Lakes.' Many of the *descriptions* in this volume are unrivaled for *graphicality*, (why is there not such a word?) for the force with which they convey the true by the novel or unexpected, by the introduction of touches which other artists would be sure to omit as irrelevant to the subject. This faculty, too, springs from her subjectiveness, which leads her to paint a scene less by its features than by its effects.

"Here, for example, is a portion of her account of Niagara:—

"Daily these proportions widened and towered more and more upon my sight, and I got at last a proper foreground for these sublime distances. Before coming away, I think I really saw the full wonder of the scene. After a while it *so drew me into itself as to inspire an undefined dread, such as I never knew before, such as may be felt when death is about to usher us into a new existence.* The perpetual trampling of the waters seized my senses. *I felt that no other sound, however near, could be heard, and would start and look behind me for a foe.* I realised the identity of that mood of nature in which these waters were poured down with such absorbing force, with that in which the Indian was shaped on the same soil. For continually upon my mind came, unsought and unwelcome, *images such as had never haunted it before, of naked savages stealing behind me with uplifted tomahawks.* Again and again this illusion recurred, and even *after I had thought it over, and tried to shake it off, I could not help starting and looking behind me.* What I liked best was to sit on Table Rock close to the great fall; *there all power of observing details, all separate consciousness was quite lost.'*

"The truthfulness of the passages italicized will be felt by all; the feelings described are, perhaps, experienced by every (imaginative) person who visits the fall; but most persons, through predominant subjectiveness, would scarcely be conscious of the feelings, or, at best, would never think of employing them in an attempt to convey to others an impression of the scene. Hence so many desperate failures to convey it on the part of ordinary tourists. Mr. William W. Lord, to be sure, in his poem 'Niagara,' is sufficiently objective; he describes not the fall, but very properly, the effect of the fall upon *him*. He says that it made him think of his *own* greatness, of his *own* superiority, and so forth, and so forth; and it is only when we come to think that the thought of Mr. Lord's greatness is quite idiosyncratic confined exclusively to Mr. Lord, that we are in condition to understand how, in spite of his objectiveness he has failed to convey an idea of anything beyond one Mr. William W. Lord.

"From the essay entitled 'Philip Van Artevelde, I copy a paragraph which will serve at once to exemplify Miss Fuller's more earnest (declamatory) style, and to show the tenor of her prospective speculations:—

"At Chicago I read again 'Philip Van Artevelde,' and certain passages in it will always be in my mind associated with the deep sound of the lake, as heard in the night. I used to read a short time at night, and then open the blind to look out. The moon would be full upon the lake, and the calm breath, pure light, and the deep voice, harmonized well with the thought of the Flemish hero. When will this country have such a man? It is what she needs—no thin Idealist, no coarse Realist, but a man whose eye reads the heavens while his feet step firmly on the ground, and his hands are strong and dexterous in the use of human instruments. A man, religious, virtuous, and—sagacious; a man of universal sympathies, but self-possessed; a man who knows the region of emotion, though he is not its slave; a man to whom this world is no mere spectacle or fleeting shadow, but a great, solemn game, to be played with good heed, for its stakes are of eternal value, yet who, if his own play be true, heeds not what he loses by the falsehood of others. A man who lives from the past, yet knows that its honey can but moderately avail him; whose comprehensive eye scans the present, neither infatuated by its golden lures nor chilled by its many ventures; who possesses prescience, as the wise man must, but not so far as to be driven mad to-day by the gift which discerns to-morrow. When there is such a man for America, the thought which urges her on will be expressed."

"From what I have quoted, a *general* conception of the prose style of the authoress may be gathered. Her manner, however, is infinitely varied. It is always forcible—but I am not sure that it is

always anything else, unless I say picturesque. It rather indicates than evinces scholarship. Perhaps only the scholastic, or, more properly, those accustomed to look narrowly at the structure of phrases, would be willing to acquit her of ignorance of grammar—would be willing to attribute her slovenliness to disregard of the shell in anxiety for the kernel; or to waywardness, or to affectation, or to blind reverence to Carlyle—would be able to detect, in her strange and continual inaccuracies, a capacity for the accurate.

"I cannot sympathize with such an apprehension; the spectacle is *capable to swallow up* all such objects."

"It is fearful, too, to know, as you look, that whatever has been swallowed by the cataract, is *like* to rise suddenly to light."

"I took our *mutual* friends to see her."

"It was always obvious that they had nothing in common *between them*."

"The Indian cannot be looked at truly *except* by a poetic eye."

"McKenny's Tour to the Lakes gives some facts not to be met *with* elsewhere."

"There is that mixture of culture and rudeness in the aspect of things *as* gives a feeling of freedom," etc., etc.

"These are merely a few, a very few instances, taken at random from among a multitude of *willful* murders committed by Miss Fuller on the American of President Polk. She uses, too, the word 'ignore,' a vulgarity adopted only of late days (and to no good purpose, since there is no necessity for it) from the barbarisms of the law, and makes no scruple of giving the Yankee interpretation to the verbs 'witness' and 'realize,' to say nothing of 'use,' as in the sentence, 'I used to read a short time at night.' It will not do to say in defense of such words, that in such senses they may be found in certain dictionaries—in that of Bolles', for instance;—*some* kind of 'authority' may be found for *any* kind of vulgarity under the sun.

"In spite of these things, however and of her frequent unjustifiable Carlyleisms, (such as that of writing sentences which are no sentences, since, to be parsed, reference must be had to sentences preceding,) the style of Miss Fuller is one of the very best with which I am acquainted. In general effect, I know no style which surpasses it. It is singularly piquant, vivid, terse, bold, luminous—leaving details out of sight, it is everything that a style need be.

"I believe that Miss Fuller has written much poetry, although she has published little. That little is tainted with the affectation of the *transcendentalists*, (I used this term, of course, in the sense which the public of late days seem resolved to give it,) but is brimful of the poetic *sentiment*. Here, for example, is something in Coleridge's manner, of which the author of 'Genevieve' might have had no reason to be ashamed:—

A maiden sat beneath a tree;
Tear-bedewed her pale cheeks be,
And she sighed heavily.

From forth the wood into the *light*
A hunter strides with carol *light*
And a glance so bold and bright.

He careless stopped and eyed the maid;
'Why weepest thou?' he gently said;
'I love thee well, be not afraid.'

He takes her hand and leads her on—
She should have waited there alone,
For he was not her chosen one.

He *leans* her head upon his breast—
She knew 'twas not her home of rest,
But, ah! she had been sore distressed.

The sacred stars looked sadly down;
The parting moon appeared to frown,
To see thus dimmed the diamond crown.

Then from the thicket starts a deer—
The huntsman seizing *on* his spear
Cries, 'Maiden, wait thou for me here.'

She sees him vanish into night—
She starts from sleep in deep affright,
For it was not her own true knight.

Though but in dream Gunhilda failed—
Though but a fancied ill assailed—
Though she but fancied fault bewailed—

Yet thought of day makes dream of night;
She is not worthy of the knight;
The inmost altar burns not bright.

If loneliness thou canst not bear—
Cannot the dragon's venom dare—
Of the pure meed thou shouldst despair.

Now sadder that lone maiden sighs;
Far bitterer tears profane her eyes;
Crushed in the dust her heart's flower lies.'

"To show the evident carelessness with which this poem was constructed, I have italicized an identical rhyme (of about the same force in versification as an identical proposition in logic) and two grammatical improprieties. *To lean* is a neuter verb, and 'seizing *on*' is not properly to be called

a pleonasm, merely because it is—nothing at all. The concluding line is difficult of pronunciation through excess of consonants. I should have preferred, indeed, the ante-penultimate tristich as the *finale* of the poem.

"The supposition that the book of an author is a thing apart from the author's self, is, I think, ill-founded. The soul is a cipher, in the sense of a cryptograph; and the shorter a cryptograph is, the more difficulty there is in its comprehension—at a certain point of brevity it would bid defiance to an army of Champollions. And thus he who has written very little, may in that little either conceal his spirit or convey quite an erroneous idea of it—of his acquirements, talents, temper, manner, tenor and depth (or shallowness) of thought—in a word of his character, of himself. But this is impossible with him who has written much. Of such a person we get, from his books, not merely a just, but the most just representation. Bulwer, the individual, personal man, in a green velvet waistcoat and amber gloves, is not by any means the veritable Sir Edward Lytton, who is discoverable only in 'Ernest Maltravers,' where his soul is deliberately and nakedly set forth. And who would ever know Dickens by looking at him or talking with him, or doing anything with him except reading his 'Curiosity Shop?' What poet, in especial, but must feel at least the better portion of himself more fairly represented in even his commonest sonnet, (earnestly written,) than in his most elaborate or most intimate personalities?

"I put all this as a general proposition, to which Miss Fuller affords a marked exception—to this extent, that her personal character and her printed book are merely one and the same thing. We get access to her soul *as* directly from the one as from the other—no *more* readily from this than from that—easily from either. Her acts are bookish, and her books are less thoughts than acts. Her literary and her conversational manner are identical. Here is a passage from her 'Summer on the Lakes:'—

"The rapids enchanted me far beyond what I expected; they are so swift that they cease to *seem* so—you can think only of their *beauty*. The fountain beyond the Moss Islands I discovered for myself, and thought it for some time an *accidental* beauty which it would not do to *leave*, lest I might never see it again. After I found it *permanent*, I returned many times to watch the play of its crest. In the little waterfall, beyond, Nature seems, as she often does, to have made a *study* for some larger design. She delights in this—a sketch within a sketch—a dream within a *dream*. Wherever we see it, the lines of the great buttress in the fragment of stone, the hues of the waterfall, copied in the flowers that *star* its bordering mosses, we are *delighted*; for all the lineaments become *fluent*, and we mould the scene in congenial thought with its *genius*.'

"Now all this is precisely as Miss Fuller would *speak* it. She is perpetually saying just such things in just such words. To get the *conversational* woman in the mind's eye, all that is needed is to imagine her reciting the paragraph just quoted: but first let us have the *personal* woman. She is of the medium height; nothing remarkable about the figure; a profusion of lustrous light hair; eyes a bluish gray, full of fire; capacious forehead; the mouth when in repose indicates profound sensibility, capacity for affection, for love—when moved by a slight smile, it becomes even beautiful in the intensity of this expression; but the upper lip, as if impelled by the action of involuntary muscles, habitually uplifts itself, conveying the impression of a sneer. Imagine, now, a person of this description looking at you one moment earnestly in the face, at the next seeming to look only within her own spirit or at the wall; moving nervously every now and then in her chair; speaking in a high key, but musically, deliberately, (not hurriedly or loudly,) with a delicious distinctness of enunciation—speaking, I say, the paragraph in question, and emphasizing the words which I have italicized, not by impulsion of the breath, (as is usual) but by drawing them out as long as possible, nearly closing her eyes, the while—imagine all this, and we have both the woman and the authoress before us."

ON THE DEATH OF S. MARGARET FULLER. BY G.F.R. JAMES

High hopes and bright thine early path bedecked,
And aspirations beautiful, though wild,
A heart too strong, a powerful will unchecked,

A dream that earth-things could be undefiled.
But soon, around thee, grew a golden chain,
That bound the woman to more human things,

And taught with joy—and, it may be, with pain—
That there are limits e'en to Spirits' wings.
Husband and child—the loving and beloved—

Won, from the vast of thought, a mortal part,
The empassioned wife and mother, yielding, proved
Mind has, itself, a master—in the heart.

In distant lands enhaloed by old fame
Thou found'st the only chain the spirit knew,
But, captive, led'st thy captors from the shame

Of ancient freedom, to the pride of new.
And loved hearts clung around thee on the deck,
Welling with sunny hopes 'neath sunny skies;

The wide horizon round thee had no speck;
E'en Doubt herself could see no cloud arise.
The loved ones clung around thee, when the sail,

O'er wide Atlantic billows, onward bore
Thy freight of joys, and the expanding gale
Pressed the glad bark toward thy native shore.

The loved ones clung around thee still, when all
Was darkness, tempest, terror, and dismay—
More closely clung around thee, when the pall

Of fate was falling o'er the mortal clay.
With them to live—with them, with them to die—
Sublime of human love intense and fine!

Was thy last prayer unto the Deity,
And it was granted thee by love divine.
In the same billow—in the same dark grave—

Mother, and child, and husband find their rest.
The dream is ended; and the solemn wave
Gives back the gifted to her country's breast.

An Illustration of the high prices paid to fortunate artists in these times may be found in the fact that Alboni, the famous contralto singer, has been engaged to sing at Madrid, at the enormous rate of \$400 dollars per day, while Roger, the tenor, who used to sing at the Comic Opera at Paris, and who was transplanted to the Grand Opera to assist in the production of Meyerbeer's "Prophet," has been engaged to sing with her at the more moderate salary of \$8000 a month. This is almost equal to the extravagant sum guaranteed to Jenny Lind for performing in this country. It would be a curious inquiry why singers and dancers are always paid so much more exorbitantly than painters, sculptors or musical composers, especially as the pleasure they confer is of a merely evanescent character, while the works of the latter remain a perpetual source of delight and refinement to all generations.

[From the New York Tribune.]

FRASER'S MAGAZINE UPON THE POETS AND POETRY OF AMERICA

The last number of *Fraser's Magazine* has a long article upon THE POETS AND POETRY OF AMERICA, in which the subject is treated with more than the customary civility of English criticism upon this subject. We are half inclined, indeed, to believe the article was written "above Bleecker," or by an inhabitant of that quarter now in London. Omitting the illustrative extracts, we copy the greater portion of the review, in which most of those who are admitted to be poets are characterized.

"When Halleck said of New York—

Our fourteen wards
Contain some seven-and-thirty-bards,

he rather understated than exaggerated the fact. Mr. Griswold, besides the ninety regular poets in his collection, gives an appendix of about seventy fugitive pieces by as many authors; and bitter complaints have been made against him in various quarters for not including some seventy, or a hundred and seventy more, 'who,' it is said, and probably with truth, 'have as good a right to be there as many of those admitted.' Still it is possible to pick out a few of general reputation, whom literati from all parts of the Union would agree in sustaining as specimens of distinguished American poets, though they would differ in assigning their relative position. Thus, if the Republic had to choose a laureate, Boston would probably deposit a nearly unanimous vote for Longfellow; the suffrages of New York might be divided between Bryant and Halleck; and the southern cities would doubtless give a large majority for Poe. But these gentlemen, and some three or four more, would be acknowledged by all as occupying the first rank. Perhaps, on the whole, the preponderance of native authority justifies us in heading the list with Bryant, who, at any rate, has the additional title of seniority in authorship, if not in actual years.

"William Cullen Bryant is, as we learn from Mr. Griswold, about fifty-five years old, and was born in Massachusetts, though his literary career is chiefly associated with New York, of which he is a resident. With a precocity extraordinary, even in a country where precocity is the rule instead of the exception, he began to write *and publish* at the age of thirteen, and has, therefore, been full forty years before the American public, and that not in the capacity of poet alone—having for more than half that period edited the *Evening Post*, one of the ablest and most respectable papers in the United States, and the oldest organ, we believe, of the Democratic party in New York. He has been called, and with justice, a poet of nature. The prairie solitude, the summer evening landscape, the night wind of autumn, the water-bird flitting homeward through the twilight—such are the favorite subjects of inspiration. *Thanatopsis*, one of his most admired pieces, was written at the age of *eighteen*, and exhibits a finish of style, no less than a maturity of thought, very remarkable for so youthful a production. Mr. Bryant's poems have been for some years pretty well known on this side the water, —better known, at any rate, than any other transatlantic verses; on which account, being somewhat limited for space, we forbear to make any extracts from them.

"FITZ-GREENE HALLECK is also a New-Englander by birth and a New Yorker by adoption. He is Bryant's contemporary and friend, but the spirit and style of his versification are very different; and so, it is said, are his political affinities. While Bryant is a bulwark of the Democracy, Halleck is reported to be not only an admirer of the obsolete Federalists, but an avowed Monarchist. To be sure, this is only his private reputation: no trace of such a feeling is observable in his writings, which show throughout a sturdy vein of republicanism, social and political. In truth, the party classification of American literary men is apt to puzzle the uninitiated. Thus Washington Irving is said to belong

to the Democrats; but it would be hard to find in his writings anything countenancing their claim upon him. His sketches of English society are a panegyric of old institutions; and the fourth book of his *Knickerbocker* is throughout a palpable satire on the administration of Thomas Jefferson, the great apostle of Democracy. Perhaps, however, he may since have changed his views. Willis, too, the 'Free Penciler,' who has been half his life prating about lords and ladies, and great people, and has become a sort of Jenkins to the fashionable life of New York; he also is one of the Democratic party. Peradventure he may vote the 'Locofoco ticket' in the hope of propitiating *the boys* (as the *canaille* of American cities are properly called), and saving his printing-office from the fate of the Italian Opera House in Astor Place. But what shall we say of Cooper, who, by his anti-democratic opinions, has made himself one of the most unpopular men in his country, and whose recent political novels rival the writings of Judge Haliburton in the virulence as well as the cleverness of their satire upon Republican institutions? He, too, is a Democrat. To us, who are not behind the curtain, these things are a mystery incapable of explanation. To return to our present subject. Halleck made his *début* in the poetical world by some satirical pieces called *The Croakers*, which created as much sensation at their appearance as the anonymous *Salmagundi* which commenced Irving's literary career. These were succeeded by *Fanny*, a poem in the *Don Juan* metre. *Fanny* has no particular plot or story, but is a satirical review of all the celebrities, literary, fashionable, and political, of New York at that day (1821). And the satire was probably very good at the time and in the place; but, unfortunately for the extent and permanence of its reputation, most of these celebrities are utterly unknown, not merely beyond the limits of the Union, but beyond those of New York. Among all the personages enumerated we can find but two names that an European reader would be likely to know anything about,—Clinton and Van Buren. Nay, more, in the rapid growth and change of things American, the present generation of New Yorkers are likely to lose sight of the lions of their immediate progenitors; and unless some Manhattanese scholiast should write a commentary on the poem in time, its allusions, and with them most of its wit, will be in danger of perishing entirely. What we *can* judge of in *Fanny* are one or two graceful lyrics interspersed in it, though even these are marred by untimely comicality and local allusions. The nominal hero, while wandering about at night after the wreck of his fortunes, hears a band playing outside a public place of entertainment. It must have been a better band than that which now, from the Museum opposite the Astor House, drives to frenzy the hapless stranger.... In Halleck's subsequent productions the influence of Campbell is more perceptible than that of Byron, and with manifest advantage. It may be said of his compositions, as it can be affirmed of few American verses, that they have a real innate harmony, something not dependent on the number of syllables in each line, or capable of being dissected out into feet, but growing in them, as it were, and created by the fine ear of the writer. Their sentiments, too, are exalted and ennobling; eminently genial and honest, they stamp the author for a good man and true,—Nature's aristocracy.... For some unexplained reason Halleck has not written, or at least not published, anything new for several years, though continually solicited to do so; for he is a great favorite with his countrymen, especially with the New Yorkers. His time, however, has been by no means passed in idleness. Fashionable as writing is in America, it is not considered desirable or, indeed, altogether reputable, that the poet should be *only* a poet. Halleck has been in business most of his life; and was lately head-clerk of the wealthy merchant, John Jacob Astor, who left him a handsome annuity. This was increased by Mr. Astor's son and heir, a man of well-known liberality; so that between the two there is a chance of the poet's being enabled to 'meditate the tuneful Muse' for the remainder of his days free from all distractions of business.

"LONGFELLOW, the pet poet of Boston, is a much younger man than either Bryant or Halleck, and has made his reputation only within the last twelve years, during which time he has been one of the most noted lions of American Athens. The city of Boston, as every one knows who has been there, or who has met with any book or man emanating from it, claims to be the literary metropolis of the United States, and assumes the slightly-pretending *soubriquet* just quoted. The American Athenians have their thinking and writing done for them by a coterie whose distinctive

characteristics are Socinianism in theology, a præter-Puritan prudery in ethics, a German tendency in metaphysics, and throughout all a firm persuasion that Boston is the fountain-head of art, scholarship, and literature for the western world, and particularly that New York is a Nazareth in such things, out of which can come nothing good. For the Bostonians, who certainly cultivate literature with more general devotion, if not always with more individual success than the New Yorkers, can never forgive their commercial neighbors for possessing by birth the two most eminent prose-writers of the country—Irving and Cooper; and by adoption, two of the leading poets—Bryant and Halleck. Nor are the good people of the 'Empire State' slow to resent these exhibitions of small jealousy; but, on the contrary, as the way of the world is, they are apt to retort by greater absurdities. So shy are they of appearing to be guided by the dicta of their eastern friends, that to this day there is scarcely man or woman on Manhattan Island who will confess a liking for Tennyson, Mrs. Barrett Browning, or Robert Browning, simply because these poets were taken up and patronized (metaphorically speaking, of course,) by the 'Mutual Admiration Society' of Boston.

"The immediate influences of this *camaraderie* are highly flattering and apparently beneficial to the subject of them, but its ultimate effects are most injurious to the proper development of his powers. When the merest trifles that a man throws off are inordinately praised, he soon becomes content with producing the merest trifles. Longfellow has grown unaccustomed to do himself justice. Half his volumes are filled up with translations; graceful and accurate, indeed; but translations, and often from originals of very moderate merit. His last original poem, *Evangeline*, is a sort of pastoral in hexameters. The resuscitation of this classical metre had a queer effect upon the American quidnuncs. Some of the *critics* evidently believed it to be a bran-new metre invented for the nonce by the author, a delusion which they of the 'Mutual Admiration' rather winked at; and the parodists who endeavored to ridicule the new measure were evidently not quite sure whether seven feet or nine made a hexameter. It is really to be regretted that Longfellow has been cajoled into playing these tricks with himself, for his earlier pieces were works of much promise, and, had they been worthily followed out, might have entitled him to a high place among the poets of the language.... Longfellow's poetry, whenever he really lays himself out to write poetry, has a definite idea and purpose in it—no small merit now-a-days. His versification is generally harmonious, and he displays a fair command of metre. Sometimes he takes a fancy to an obsolete or out-of-the-way stanza; one of his longest and best poems, *The Skeleton in Armor*, is exactly in the measure of Drayton's fine ballad on Agincourt. His chief fault is an over-fondness for simile and metaphor. He seems to think indispensable the introduction into everything he writes of a certain (or sometimes a very uncertain) number of these figures. Accordingly his poems are crowded with comparisons, sometimes very pretty and pleasing, at others so far-fetched that the string of tortured images which lead off Alfred de Musset's bizarre *Ode to the Moon* can hardly equal them. This *making figures* (whether from any connection with the calculating habits of the people or not) is a terrible propensity of American writers, whether of prose or verse. Their orators are especial sinners in this respect. We have seen speeches stuck as full of metaphors (more or less mixed) as Burton's *Anatomy* is of quotations.

"Such persons as know from experience that literary people are not always in private life what their writings would betoken, that Miss Bunions do not precisely resemble March violets, and mourners upon paper may be laughers over mahogany—such persons will not be surprised to hear that the Longfellow is a very jolly fellow, a lover of fun and good dinners, and of an amiability and personal popularity that have aided not a little the popularity of his writings in verse and prose—for he writes prose too, prettier, quainter, more figurative, and more poetic if anything, than his poetry. He is also a professor at Harvard College, near Boston.

"EDGAR A. POE, like Longfellow and most of the other American poets, wrote prose as well as poetry, having produced a number of wild, grotesque, and powerfully-imagined tales; unlike most of them he was a literary man *pur sang*. He depended for support entirely on his writings, and his career was more like the precarious existence of an author in the time of Johnson and Savage

than the decent life of an author in our own day. He was a Southerner by birth, acquired a liberal education, and what the French call 'expansive' tastes, was adopted by a rich relative, quarreled with him, married 'for love,' and lived by editing magazines in Richmond, Philadelphia, and New York; by delivering lectures (the never-failing last resort of the American literary adventurer); by the occasional subscriptions of compassionate acquaintances or admiring friends—any way he could—for eighteen or nineteen years: lost his wife, involved himself in endless difficulties, and finally died in what should have been the prime of his life, about six months ago. His enemies attributed his untimely death to intemperance; his writings would rather lead to the belief that he was an habitual taker of opium. If it make a man a poet to be

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