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**MAGAZINE**

FOR

TOWN AND COUNTRY.

VOL. V.

*FEBRUARY TO JULY, 1832.*

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# FRASER'S MAGAZINE

FOR

TOWN AND COUNTRY.

No. XXVII.

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VOL. V.

## GERMAN POETRY.\*

## No. III.

BURGER—GOTTER—VOSS—HÖLTY.

ENGLISHMEN may gather, in respect to the writer who stands at the head of this paper, peculiar matter of triumph. The lovers of the Teutonic muse have, perhaps, too exultingly vaunted, on the part of literary Germany, that they meet in her annals of authorship with no Chattertons, Boyces, or Otways; that industry, in this form of it, enjoys peculiar encouragement there, and a competency, if not a fortune, is secured to all her men of genius. Bürger is an exception to the general rule. Was it not, however, by his own fault, and from his own defect? This might possibly be the case; but to what extent we have not the means of deciding. The same was the case, likewise, with the unfortunate writers of England. Prudence, with regard to both, would doubtless have prevented much of the evil, and ensured more of the good. Add to which, the literary life of Germany has been shorter than that of England; and we might as well decide upon the pre-eminent eligibility of republicanism over monarchism from the fifty years' experience of America, as to conclude definitively upon the number of examples of the same kind which may take place in Germany in a similar period of

time with that of England's literary history. Granted, however, it must be, that she commences her career under better auspices than those which accompanied the commencement of Britain's. Science is at its zenith—philosophy has stricken its roots deep and wide—the utility of literature is felt and acknowledged in all classes—consumers of all kinds of literary wares are in plenty—intellectual appetites are all agape—new wants are excited—and the supply can scarcely be greater than the demand. All these things are in favour of Germany. Similar to this, also, is the state of British literature at this time; and it is to be hoped that such tales of shame will not be to be told again of either country—that the poets of both may be more prudent, and the patronage in both of poets more generous.

Until the present day, however, it could not be denied that in both countries poverty was the lot of the literary man. We are not of those who see nothing but good in this same poverty—much evil, we confess, there certainly is. To assume philosophical airs relative to this subject, is peculiarly pleasant to the philosopher himself, who is not pinched black and

\* Gottfried August Bürger's Gedichte. Herausgegeben von Carl Reinhard. 2 vols. Wien. Bey Ch. Kaulfuss und C. Armbruster.

Gedichte von Friederich Wilhelm Gotter. Wien, 1816. Bey Ch. Kaulfuss und C. Armbruster.

Idyllen von Johann Heinrich Voss. 2 vols. Neueste Auflage.

Luise, ein ländliches Gedicht, in drey Idyllen, von Johann Heinrich Voss. Neueste Auflage. Wien, bey B. Ph. Bauer.

Gedichte von L. H. C. Höltz. Neu besorgt und vermehrt von J. H. Voss. Upsala, bei Em. Bruzelius. 1816.

An Introductory Lecture delivered in King's College, London, November 2, 1831, by A. BERNAYS, professor of the German language and literature to the college. London, 1831.

blue with the hard gripe of adversity ; but to many, who are writhing under the torture, its consolations are mockery. It is well for poverty to prove what fortitude there is in a man to bear the evils of life—it is well if it make an exhibition of his virtue—and it is indeed a sight for gods to see a good man struggling with adversity ! Even so. But in how many instances is such an exhibition made ? and in how many more is the spirit trodden to the dust, and the glorious life of genius extinguished—nay, and the very mind itself prevented, in the first germ of being, from manifesting that it had a being at all. These things are the work of poverty, and let no man speak in her praise. Necessity, indeed, is the spur often to great enterprise ; and, in the beginning of life, it may therefore be wholesome—though not then, if it preclude a good education. But supposing it to be not unfavourable to such education, the enterprise to which it is a spur should be profitable, else that foul fiend, called “ Labour-in-vain,” will rise from Erebus, attended with myriads of blue devils, to dash in the excited energies back upon the heart which gave them animation, making them eat inward there into its core—a smouldering fire, consuming and consumed, yet still renewed—the eternal prey of its own unrewarded activity—

“ And thereof comes in the end despondency and madness.”

Godfred Augustus Bürger was born the 1st of January, 1748, at Wolmerswende, in the principality of Habersstadt, where his father was preacher. Slowly alike both in body and mind he grew, and indicated so little of his future excellence, that by his tenth year he had barely learned to read and write. Yet it is remarkable, that what he read in the Bible and Luther’s hymn-book he easily retained ; a good prognostic, indicative of a spirit naturally sympathising, through a kindred feeling, with those awakeners of the immortal part of man ; and so was his awakened. Another indication of a poetical temperament was his boyish desire for solitary musing ; he also loved the feeling of awe with which twilight, gloomy woods, and uninhabited places, “ o’er inform ” the meditative mind. Nor was he at this early period without a feeling for the mecha-

nical part of verse-making ; for, before he knew any thing of the elements of grammar, a natural instinct suggested to him the minute proprieties of metrical composition, so that his ear quickly detected a fault, and his lines were correctly scanned. But the acquisition of Latin was to him so difficult, that in two years he failed to decline *mensa* correctly. He received instruction partly from his father, and partly from a neighbouring minister. In 1760 he was put under the care of his grandfather, Jacob Philip Bauer, for the purpose of attending school at Aschersleben. Whether he improved himself in Latin here, his biographers say not ; but they record that his love for whatever was poetry so little cooled, that he ventured on metrical essays of more importance, and was, with his friend Gökings, particularly selected for the school exercises in poetry. Some biting epigrams were of ill consequence to him. One on the monstrous and offensive bag-wig of an usher stuck to the wearer so closely, and was so much repeated by the schoolboys, that it drew down punishment on the unfortunate epigrammatist, and occasioned his removal. Sent to study theology at the University of Halle, by the direction of his grandfather, on whom, after his father’s death in 1765, he was wholly dependent, he found that, notwithstanding his early religious impressions, he had no inclination for that study. Here he became acquainted with the celebrated Counsellor Klotz, who collected about him a number of quick spirits—an association which had no mean, though not the best, influence on Bürger’s character, who naturally loved the glad enjoyment of life. His grandfather remanded him, in anger, from Halle ; but in 1768 sent him to study jurisprudence at Göttingen, in which, being more suitable to his disposition, he made considerable progress. Bürger’s knowledge appears so extensive, that an ordinary observer would suppose him to have been always in attendance at public lectures, and assiduous in the practice of private reading ; yet he states that he learned little from books, and took small pains to acquire information. Knowledge flew to him, as it were, of itself from all quarters. But, whatever was his diligence, or his success in learning, it availed him little, as he incurred, by acts of imprudence, the displeasure

of his grandfather, who withdrew from him his assistance, and left him without support, as a young man of whom there was no hope. Bürger fell desperately into debt. Yet, poor as he was, he was not without companionship, and formed, at this time, the literary society called "The Hainbund." Bürger was now spurred on to more industrious habits—studied the classics, and wrote verses. Some burlesque and humorous poems of this period indicated the character of his genius. The following is a free translation of "Herr Bacchus ist ein braver Mann:"

Lord Bacchus is a right brave man,  
That I can well assure you;  
He charms more than Apollo can,  
Whose note-books only bore you.

His gold-bepainted lyre is all  
The riches he possesses,  
Of which he boasts, in bower and hall,  
Its value, past all guesses.

Yet lend not on his instrument  
A farthing, gold-compeller;  
For music gladder far is sent  
From Father Evan's cellar.

And if his poetry he vaunts,  
As frequently he proeses,  
Then tell him, Bacchus better chants  
The verses he composes.

Though on Parnassus' woody hill  
Apollo's treble pleases,  
Here Bacchus' counter-bass us still  
With finer pleasure seizes.

Up! poet-god make we him yet,  
Instead of that Apollo;  
For he, in favour with the great,  
Does beat the lyrist hollow.

Apollo truckle must and bend,  
To catch the smile of princes;  
But Bacchus with them if he wend,  
Equality evinces.

Then to Parnassus we will bear,  
All other things before,  
The ample flask of Heidelberg,  
With Nierstein running o'er.

Instead of bay-tree plant we will  
The vine-stock in the place;  
And round full tuns dance wildly still,  
With Bacchanalian grace.

Humour—a quality so characteristic of Bürger's poetry—is frequently the accompaniment of genius, to which it is indeed near akin. Both are contradistinguished from mere talent, inasmuch as they presuppose originality—

by which we do not mean the production of what had never been produced before, but that which is originally excited from within a man, without reference to its novelty. Talent, on the other hand, consists in a facility of arranging what is already known—it is not an instrument of production, but of accumulation—it acquires, and applies; and in this process of administration lies all its *forte*. Those other two generate the *matériel* which it administers. Thus, genius and humour are both constitutional—talent and wit are derivable, the result of labour. Wit loves to bring together remote ideas which shall surprise, and so excite laughter by their unexpected juxtaposition. Humour needs no such elaborate catachresis to shake its jolly sides with mirth; a simple idea, a single thought, will suffice for its excitement—

"Pleased with a feather, tickled with a straw."

It describes the ludicrous as it is in itself, leaving to wit to expose it, by comparing it with something else. We, however, intend not to hunt these parallels to death, or to pursue a subject concerning things which are indeed (to use the expressive language of Barrow) "so versatile and multiform, appearing in so many shapes, so many postures, so many garbs, so variously apprehended by several eyes and judgments, that it seemeth no less hard to settle a clear and certain notion thereof, than to make a portrait of Proteus, or to define the figure of fleeting air."

In correspondence with the broad distinctions thus instituted, we find, in general, that true genius and genuine humour are well enough content with the old in nature and man—old times, old feelings, old thoughts, are with them for ever fresh and living; and, in short, as it is observed by Coleridge, "their moral accompaniment and actuating principle consists in the carrying on of the freshness and feelings of childhood into the powers of manhood." Genius and humour are for ever children—unsophisticated children, for whom Nature ever blows her bubbles. Talent and wit, on the other hand, affect a more manly gait—they claim to have arrived at maturity, and profess a knowledge of the world as it is. Whatever qualities are new and fleeting in the state and manners of

society, they are ambitious of catching, "living as they rise," and give up the eternal life within for the fugitive life without. Thus it is that novelty and originality stand in opposition and contrast, instead of being one and the same. Thus Shakespeare is more original than Pope, and will for ever remain so, though the material of his divine works is as old as the creation of God, and that of Pope's is as new as the state of society in the reign of Queen Anne.

Shakespeare was the darling idol of the members of the Hainbund, though they disdained not to study the best old and new models of French, English, Italian, and Spanish literature. Bürger, in particular, with a sympathy for the original in art and in nature, brooded on the times of yore; and an old song moved his heart more than a trumpet, "though sung," as Sir Philip Sydney in his *Defence of Poetry* expresses it, "by some blind crowder." The *Percy Relics of Ancient English Poetry* was the hand-book of Bürger. What we admire, we imitate; and Bürger began to translate from these celebrated ballads, and to imitate them — so successfully, indeed, that Klopstock gave, in the hearing of Wordsworth, a commendation which he denied to Göthe and Schiller, pronouncing him to be a genuine poet, and one of the few among the Germans whose works would last. It is, however, Wordsworth's opinion that Bürger had not the fine sensibility of Percy, and he accuses him of tricking out and dilating the simple passages which he imitated. Wordsworth, we know, is, in theory, an utter enemy to what is called poetic diction, and contends for the simplicity of ordinary speech, as the language equally proper for poetry as prose. This is his theory. In practice, however, he has realised it only

in the lyrical ballads — his *Excursion* and other pieces being distinguished by a march of versification and an Ionian nobility of phrase, not to be rivalled by any other modern compositions. The passage adduced from Bürger by Wordsworth may or may not be censurable on the score of verbosity or false ornament; the theory, however, upon which it is censured demands particular consideration. Sir Philip Sydney, we think, very rightly supposes that the old song, so evilly appalled in the dust and cobweb of an uncivil age, would be more efficient if trimmed in the gorgeous eloquence of Pindar. At the same time Wordsworth, in this very particular, has vindicated his high title to be considered a man of genius, inasmuch as he has dared to go back, as it were, to the state of human innocence, and present us with human nature in its primitive elements, divested of all artificial associations. Nay, in the very spirit of Shakespeare — in that spirit wherein the mighty master patronised with his genius the Silences and Shallows — Wordsworth has condescended to celebrate the mean in humanity and the minute in nature — a daisy — a pony — or an idiot boy. Bürger, however, entertained no idea of reproducing nature in such utter simplicity, in his imitation of the Percy ballads. His "Wild Hunter" and "Lenore" are, in fact, composed upon another principle; they are ornamented as much as the subject will admit — embellishment is rather sought than rejected. The difference between the genius of the two poets might be well discriminated by a comparison of Bürger's "Wild Hunter" and Wordsworth's "Hartleap Well." The moral of both is the same — they are both written for the sake of the same lesson. It is thus expressed by Bürger: —

" Das Ach und Weh der Kreatur,  
Und eine Missethat an ihr,  
Hat laut dich vor Gericht gefodert,  
Wo hoch der Bache Fackel lodert."

And thus by Wordsworth:

" One lesson, shepherd, let us two divide,  
Taught both by what she shews and what conceals;  
Never to blend our pleasure or our pride  
With sorrow of the meanest thing that feels."

We have selected these two poems to discriminate the different genius of the two poets, not to contrast their

styles — the language of Hartleap Well being, in fact, of an elevated cast, as the subject is also of a somewhat higher

interest. It, however, so happens that the diction in which this moral is conveyed is no less distinctive of the style of expression than of the genius of the two poets. That of Bürger's, being interpreted, runs thus:—"The groan and grief of the creature, and thy persecution of it, have loudly arraigned thee there, where flames on high the torch of vengeance." It is impossible not to prefer the simple manner in which the same moral is expressed by Wordsworth. The style of each, however, is in accordance with the general spirit of either poem. The aims of the poets were different. Wordsworth endeavours in his ballad to realise the ideal—Bürger to idealise the real. Wordsworth effects his end by telling simply an unadorned tale, with its accompanying superstition, but touching in its simplicity, while Bürger effects his by introducing imaginary adjuncts, which give a supernatural air to a common story. The latter startles the attention—the former sinks into the soul; the one rouses the sinner to a sense of his depravity—the other impresses the man with a feeling of his duty.

Man's life is full of troubles as the sparks fly upward, and Bürger had to strive with his share of them; he was, however, not without friends. Boie procured him, in 1772, the stewardship of the manor of Alten-Gleichen, under the noble family of Uslar. The office was not profitable, but the occupation was agreeable to the man; and his friends believed that it would raise him sufficiently above want, to leave him leisure to produce a master-work which should increase the influence of his genius. One good it did him—it reconciled him to his grandfather, who was pleased to see him take to employment, and became surety for his good behaviour in his office, at the same time providing for the payment of his debts. But the consequences arising from an imprudent mode of life are incalculable; one fault has many evils in its train. The money was intrusted to a companion of Bürger's, who was himself in bad circumstances, and misapplied the funds which were intended to relieve our author from embarrassment. This misfortune embittered the remainder of his life. His grandfather appears to have died soon after, as we meet with the following little ode in 1773.

*At the Grave of my good Grandfather,  
Jacob Philip Bauer.*

Rest, sweet rest, for ever hover  
Peaceful o'er thy grave e'en here;  
Scorn let none these mouldering ashes,  
That with tears my sorrow washes,  
And no curse profane this air!

For the just man who here slumbers  
Proved the worth of honesty:  
What, in former years and golden,  
German umpires once were holden,  
To his fellow-men was he.

Never calumny accused, e'en,  
Of a stain his honest soul.  
What is peccant moulders ever;  
Spark celestial fadeth never,  
But attains a glorious goal.

Ah! he was my faithful guardian,  
From my cradle to ripe age;  
What I am, and what I have,  
Gave the man within this grave—  
Thus I thank thee, worthy sage!

Rest, sweet rest, still love to hover  
Peaceful o'er this grave away!  
Till the heavenly Rewarder  
Its just tenant call, in order  
To receive his crown for aye!

Under these disadvantages, however, Bürger cultivated his talents—produced his celebrated ballad "Lenore"—and married. His wife was calculated to make him happy; but the man's genius was perverse. During her courtship he became enamoured of her younger sister, scarcely fourteen or fifteen years old—an amiable girl, who was not altogether indifferent to his attentions. Years strengthened their attachment, an attachment which served to set off the generosity of the married sister, who demonstrated a noble compassion for the weakness of the two lovers, according to the approved laws of German sentiment in such cases made and provided. It is said that this attachment caused much misery to the parties themselves: however this may be, it gave rise to many sweet love-songs, in which she is celebrated under the name of Molly. Here is one of them:—

MOLLY'S WORTH.

Ah! could I purchase Molly  
For gold and precious stone,  
I should not deem it folly  
If heaps made her my own.  
They bruit full much of gold,  
What I cannot deny;  
But wanting her, were sold  
What it ean never buy.



Yet if I were controller  
Of Europe's monarchy,  
For her, my heart's consoler,  
I'd give it joyfully;  
Save only, where our love  
Might revel and carouse,  
I th' smallest fruit-tree grove,  
The smallest garden-house.

Only the Lord of Heaven  
My precious life may end;  
Yet if to me 'twere given  
Like gear and gold to spend,  
Change it I would, I swear,  
For any day that she  
Were mine, in all the year,  
Mine wholly, perfectly!

To improve his circumstances, Bürger hired, in 1780, a farm at Appenrode. From want of inclination, skill, or experience, neither he nor his wife succeeded in turning their land to a profitable account. Bad debts, also, to the amount of some thousand dollars (part of the sum he had staked in the concern, and which sum was the inheritance that fell to him on the death of his father-in-law) made it ultimately necessary for him to surrender the occupation. Add to this, he had the mortification of being accused, by that same false friend who misappropriated his grandfather's money, to the Hanoverian government, of irregularity and inexactness in the administration of his stewardship. He defended himself successfully, but willingly resigned his office. About the same time, he lost his wife.

He now addressed himself to his favourite studies, returned to Göttingen, and superintended personally the publication of his *Musen-Almanach*, which had annually proceeded since 1778. He subsisted as a private teacher, and read lectures on taste and German composition. In the following year, 1785, he married the younger sister of his deceased wife — that sister whom he had so long adored. Scarcely had he, however, time to feel his happiness, before the object of his affection was rent away from him by inexorable death, in her first and only childbed of a daughter. Bürger now lost all courage, all strength of mind and body. After some months he recovered; — affliction had made him stern — he became an iron man; — he set about his severe duties with alacrity, resumed his academic labours, and studied the philosophy of Kant, whereon he began

to read lectures, which were greatly frequented.

All this was, so far, well — so far sweet were the uses of adversity — these were the precious jewels which she bore in her head; but still — still she had been the ugly and venomous toad, and her venom began soon to work. Bürger had to contend with sickness; his health had been shaken, terribly shaken, by his misfortunes; he recovered, however, and his hours were more serene. Honours, also, were showered upon him. In 1787 the Göttingen University, upon occasion of its jubilee, which he celebrated in two poems, conferred on him a doctor's degree, and named him, in 1789, extraordinary professor, but without a salary. The possession of a public office, and hope of future provision, requickenened him for a while, and he wished to take home his three children, who had been distributed among different kinsfolk, to attend to their education himself. For this purpose, he entertained the idea of marrying a third time — when, lo! a poem was sent to him from Stuttgart, wherein an apparently noble-minded lady professed to have been so intensely impressed by his poetry as to offer him her heart and hand. Bürger treated the affair, at first, as a jest; but, accounts favourable arriving of his *naïve* poetess, he began to believe, with many of his friends, that the matter merited some consideration. He returned her a poetical answer, and she became his wife.

He was only a few weeks happy with her: in 1792, she was, by legal process, separated from him, and the grief of which she was the cause contributed to his early death.

Shattered in soul and body, exhausted almost in power and ability, he secluded himself in his little study, locking himself up for the whole day, or only opening it to a few chosen friends. What his occupation? Translating for the booksellers, his only means of subsistence. Under such extreme destitution suffered the darling poet of the nation!

Thrown by sickness on his bed, he could labour no more. The government took pity on his distress, and sent him an unsolicited gift. This gladdened and cheered him, more from the hope which it presented of future support than the present assistance which it afforded. He, however, need

ed no such future support. The peril of death hovered over him, but terrified him not. He died very gently and quietly, in his forty-sixth year, of a pulmonary complaint, the 8th of January, 1794.

Notwithstanding what we have said above, of the difference between the style of Bürger and Wordsworth, yet the principle of composition, at bottom, is the same in both. Bürger carefully weeded his poems of all conventional forms of expression, whether in the shape of poetic diction or of ordinary life; and this, we conceive, is the right mode of proceeding. Wordsworth thought that to avoid the one was sufficient, and professed, in theory, to adopt the other—in theory, we say, because in practice he does not carry it to this extent. Such language as he adopts, simple as it is, was never spoken by such persons as he ascribes it to. Would, however, he had but seen the thing more clearly in theory, and his poems would have been perfect! Let the young poet know that all conventional forms of expression are forbidden, whether poetical or of real life.

The defects of Bürger's moral character were the results of his genial excellencies. It is said, he was indolent; say rather, he was a man of genius. He was slow to outward impressions, and was not easily excited, because he loved to converse with his own mind *ab origine*. He had no idea of understanding what he was in himself by the representation of others; but his imagination brooded over its own stores within him, and in due time his spirit became pregnant,—the chaos of his soul was agitated, and light and order broke in upon a new creation. This habit of mind continued in his later life. What the world calls industry, is an assiduous solicitude for external acquisitions. These Bürger wanted not; his indolence was that of the brood-

hen on her nest: she sits calmly and quietly her appointed time, seeming to do nothing, yet she does her work. So it is with men of genius: your men of talent may bustle about in the places of public resort,—men of genius must sit still, at home.

He judged of the world at large by himself; he believed, being himself noble, in the nobility of human nature, and judged no ill of any,—hence he was cheated and betrayed. Good and generous transactions excited him to lively joy and loud expressions of astonishment; low and ignoble deeds roused his indignation, and he could often express it in strong language. His heart was full of affection; and, whatever his own circumstances, he was liberal, even to those who injured him. Like our Wordsworth, he was conscious of his poetical merit; and had little of the gallantry and fine manner of the man of the world. Though disliking business, for his friends he was always busy. He loved to make labour and inclination go together. He spared no pains on his poems; he himself attributes the whole of their merit to the file. He toiled to give them the utmost polish of which they were capable; for with poetry his very being was identified,—in it he found satisfaction, from it he expected honour; and to attain a high grade of excellence as a poet was his constant aim and his only earnest endeavour. A monument is erected to his memory in the garden of Ulrich, at Göttingen, where he was accustomed to meditate in the early hours of morning. He asked for bread, and they gave him a stone!

We have made no translations of his great ballads, because they have been so frequently translated, and we wished to present the public with what was unknown. The following is a beautiful poem, written at a very early period (1772).

#### SONG OF GRATITUDE.

Father all good! my lofty song  
Shall magnify thee my life long;  
Thy holy name all blessed be  
From henceforth to eternity!

O God! let me on Myra's breast,  
Be thrill'd with virtuous love, carest:  
Thou who suppliest the grape with juice,  
Rapture into my song infuse!

Great Giver! in delight intense  
I speak of thy beneficence!

Nor kiss, nor festive meal, profanes,  
Nor social glass, the pious strains.

This tender maid, who kisses me  
To heavenly raptures, thanketh thee ;  
Thee thanks my song in ardent mood—  
How love inflames my gratitude !

For me hath gifts the threshing-floor,  
The garden, forest, mead, have more ;  
And from each generous press escapes  
The fiery spirit of the grapes.

On vine-hills, far and nigh, alway,  
From the high Cape to Malaga,  
To Hochheim, Cyprus, Burgundy,  
Drops nectar—drops—for me—for me !

For me—for me—from India come  
Rich-laden ships o'er ocean's foam,  
With generous spices, drugs, and beans  
From Saba, to these distant scenes.

Who may tell all thy gifts ? What man  
The sands of ocean number can ?  
Who, in the firmament, may name  
The sum of those bright orbs of flame ?

Turn from the numberless array,  
My spirit ! and thyself survey ;  
Within this narrow dwelling, lo,  
Of bounty what a wondrous shew !

God ! thou instillest spirit through  
The nerves, and strength the bones into ;  
Thou pourest into the veins pure blood,  
The heart with courage heat endued !

Thy beauteous, lovely May feel I,  
And Philomela's melody,  
Summer's voluptuous airs, the hues  
Of flowers, and the gentle dews.

Thy bounty gave the harper's skill,  
The song to solace thousands still,  
Unto my larynx and my hand—  
Nor shall they shame my native land !

My fancy, hence, annihilates  
Worlds by her might, and worlds creates ;  
And down to hell, and up to heaven,  
Ascends, descends—not unforgiven.

My airy spirit hence discerns,  
And of all things the nature learns ;  
And, unlike some, can well divide  
The truth from error, and decide.

Hence, formed of free and upright mind,  
I never was a fool design'd ;  
Nor flattery nor compulsion can,  
All my life long, make me less man.

For this my soul exults, and she  
Instructs my lip in praising thee ;  
Thy holy name all blessed be  
From henceforth to eternity !

One word more upon Bürger. It is said somewhere in his Biography, that, whatever were his faults, they only injured himself, while his merits have been to the general benefit of the family of man. Out, we say, on such apologies for the eccentricities of a man of genius! All such are dictated by the selfishness of the world alone, and not by the principles of Christian feeling. The aim of religion is not to make a man useful to others in the first place, but useful to himself, and then to derive to the world the consequent advantage—first to better the individual, and then the species. This sort of defence is set up because Bürger was imprudent; and we have attributed, in some measure, his very poetical success to this imprudence. Even so! What then? Why, here we meet again with the curse of poverty—poverty which, in this instance (and in how many others?) rendered it impossible to reconcile private duty and public advantage in the same individual. Let no one dispute this position,—is it not proved by the fact? “The rich man’s wealth,” says Solomon, “is his stronghold; the destruction of the poor is their poverty.”

Pass we on to the next great genius of German poetry. Voss, too, had reason of complaint against this same Poverty; for though her wound might have been healed during his lifetime, yet has she left a cicatrice upon his memory which has disfigured it. The son of a farmer,\* impoverished by the seven years’ war, he raised, by rigid economy as a private tutor, slender pecuniary means to study, at the age of 21, at the Göttingen University. A poor scholar, Heyne, the celebrated editor of Virgil and Homer, permitted Voss to attend his lectures gratis. So far, so good. But then it appears that a great difference exists between a hearer of lectures who pays and one who

pays not; and the difference is, that the one may have and express an opinion; and the other, if so unfortunate as not to help having an opinion, may not give utterance to it, in opposition to that of the gratis lecturer. Now Voss happened to have an opinion, and whatever was its value then, we know that afterwards, on such subjects, it was of the highest value; and Voss expressed this opinion in type, in opposition to the lecturer’s. Now this was an act of great ingratitude, inasmuch as the interests of truth itself, it seems, are well sacrificed at the shrine of duty. Strange inconsistency! but upon thy head, thou, who hast therein a precious jewel! lies “the cause of this effect defective!”

“Thus it remains, and the remainder thus.”

It is said, that the controversy was marked, on the part of Voss, by vulgarity and low breeding—sins, indeed, of the rankest dye, but clearly attributable to his circumstances in life. Then, again, it is said, that he employed the very same arguments that the lecturer himself was wont to produce and refute. What then? Heyne, doubtless, thought that he had settled the objections completely; but was that any reason why Voss should think so? And if he *did not* think so, what was there but this same hateful thing, called poverty, to prevent him from giving his worst of thoughts his worst of words? He, however, borrowed four gold Fredericks, the admission fee to the course, and sent them to Heyne, who presented the money to a charitable institution for lying-in women. Thus ended the affair; but was not the poor myrtle scathed by what would have been well resisted by the unwedgeable and gnarled oak? Heaven’s ways are not so:—rather with its sharp and sulphurous bolt it splits the strong and lofty, than the lowly and the weak!

“O but man, proud man!

Dress’d in a little brief authority;  
Most ignorant of what he’s most assured,  
His glassy essence,—like an angry ape,  
Plays such fantastic tricks before high Heaven,  
As make the angels weep; who, with our spleens,  
Would else themselves laugh mortal!”

\* He was born on the 20th of February, 1751, at Sommerdorf, in Mecklenburg: he died of apoplexy in March 1826.

We, however, are not willing to subscribe so readily to the dogma, that "great men may jest with saints, —'tis wit in them, but in the less, foul profanation." We do not defend Voss, but we will find an excuse for him. "That in the captain's but a choleric word, which in the soldier is flat blasphemy." Who knows but to this very circumstance is owing the successful attention which he paid to that branch of study, in which he became so eminent? In this exercise of his intellect upon this very subject, who so dull as not to see the future unparalleled translator of Homer, of Virgil, of Hesiod, of Ovid, and of Shakspeare? He also translated Aristophanes, but with less success.

But it was not always thus with Voss; by his exertions he was enabled at last to defy the *iniquity* of fortune. In 1778 he was chosen rector, or master, of the school at Otterndorf; and, in 1782, he held the same situation in the school at Eutin. The prince

of Holtern Goltorp conferred on Voss the dignity of an aulic counsellor; and when, in consequence of ill health, he resigned his rectorship, in 1802, his illustrious patron settled on him an annual pension of six hundred dollars, with full permission to spend it wherever he chose to reside.

This is all that is worth knowing in the life of Voss,—that is, all that can afford any moral instruction. The works which we have placed at the commencement of this article are well known. His idyls are improvements on those of Gesner,—they are more elaborate, more varied, upon subjects more recondite, adorned with wilder and bolder graces, such as distinguish that singularly wild and originally beautiful one entitled "The Devil Bewitched;" and others, in which some inspiration appears to have been caught from Bürger's "Wild Hunter" and "Lenore." We have translated the ninth idyl, and present our readers with it merely on account of its brevity.

## THE BEGGAR.

JÜRGEN.

Why! my heart's child! Thy dog salutes thee—see—  
Glad-whining, and thy sheep too bleats, by thee  
With bread made gentle. Why in the dew so early?  
The morning air blows cold; scarce reddens yet  
The sun above the fir-hill. In my fold  
At night I'm almost frozen. Come, and kiss  
Me warm again.

MARIE.

Thou frozen? In the rose-moon?  
O lambkin, weak and tender, that e'en lies  
I' th' mid-day sun, and trembles! Take the kiss—  
Thy lip is warm enough, thou false one! So  
Is thy hand too.

JÜRGEN.

Why in such haste? Thine eyes  
Are not so clear as wont, and smile compell'd.

MARIE.

Beloved, hear, and vex me not. Yestre'en  
I knitted in the bower, pleased to behold  
The field of rye-grass wave in the golden gleam,  
And hear the yellow-hammer, cuckoo, and quail,  
In emulation sing, and thought the while  
The same delighted Jürgen. Then there came  
The old lame Tiess, and begged. Father, said I,  
Is all the bread consumed I let you hake  
Last holyday? Sure you grow shameless! Tiess  
Would speak, but I was angry and o'erruled him.  
God may again assist you, Tiess! The host  
Supply you brandy gratis! Go! But then  
I saw his bald bead tremble in the gleam  
Of th' evening sun, and a big tear flow down  
From his grey twinkling eyes. Speak yet, said I,  
Father, how is it? 'Maiden,' answered he,  
'I beg not for myself, but for the old curate—  
Good God! whom they to us degraded! He

lies in the wood, with the poor forester  
 Who has his house of children full, and wants !'  
 O father !—I sprang up, and had almost  
 Embraced him. You are a good man ! Come here.  
 Then took I what my hand might seize, and stuffed  
 His wallet full of sausages, and groats,  
 Bacon, and cheese, and bread. Now, father, yet  
 A glass of cümmelschnap ! 'No, maiden, no ;  
 My head's too weak. God recompense you !' Forth  
 He hobbled on his crutch unto the wood  
 In moonlight, that he might not be observed.

JÜRGEN.

Well know I father Tiess. His comrade told me,  
 That when a soldier, in the foeman's hand,  
 He rather gave than took. O great reproach !  
 Our curate is so poor the beggar taunts him,  
 And we wist not of it !

MARIE.

I dreamt of him—

How good he was, in preaching, catechising,  
 To counsel and to comfort in all chances,  
 And at the sick bed. Young and old, all loved him.  
 And when some sneak accused him of false doctrine,  
 So that he ultimately lost at once  
 His office and his bread—all pray'd and wept,  
 Till he himself commanded their obedience.  
 Wild from my dream I roused, and found with tears  
 My cushion moisten'd. Scarce the cock had crow'd,  
 I rose, and peep out of the garden took,  
 And yellow wurzel, with this pair of pigeons—  
 And hasten now to the old man therewith.  
 The huntsman's wife, besides, brings in a basket  
 His breakfast to his bed : he may be glad once.

JÜRGEN.

Glad is he ever, though he suffer wrong.  
 He who acts honestly, trusts God in sunshine  
 And storm—so taught he. Yet he was disgraced !  
 Take also, Mary, my good-hearted maid !  
 This piece of Dutch cheese in the basket ; yes,  
 And say, I'll bring a lamb to him at evening.  
 Fie ! shall a man of hunger die, because  
 He teacheth what God saith, not men's traditions !  
 Wolves in sheep's clothing ! hang your heads for shame !  
 Nathless, God be your judge ! Old Tiess, and thou,  
 Have so subdued my heart, that it resolves,  
 Sunday, please God, to share their evening meal.

The *Luise* is a rural poem, of epical pretensions, and characterised by Grecian simplicity. It is divided into three idyls, entitled respectively, "The Feast in the Wood," "The Visit," "The Bridal-eve;" and is written in hexameters, which some readers, perhaps, with Madame de Staël, may consider too pompous for the *naïveté* of the subject. We must, however, recollect the great simplicity of Homer's diction, and how capable Voss was of expressing his diction in all its simplicity. Its subject is no more than the marriage of Luise, the daughter of the venerable pastor of Grünau, which same pastor, by the by, Voss evermore styles *der ehrwürdige Pfarrer von Grünau*; in the same manner as Homer

writes, "the blue-eyed daughter of Jupiter." Luise's lover is a young Lutheran minister, who had acted in the capacity of preceptor to a younger son of a dowager countess, who inhabits the hall during the summer months, whose daughter Amelia is Luise's friend, and, by means of the connexion between the parties thus established, has applied to the pastor and his wife for permission to wed their daughter. Invited to the parsonage-house, the morning is proposed to be spent in the open air, on the banks of the neighbouring lake, and in rowing on the water. The old people embark in a boat, while the lovers are permitted to go by land, to the place of rendezvous, where they intend to

breakfast altogether. Homer introduces the common customs of life into heroic song; and so Voss, in imitation of his exemplar, treats us with descriptions of the manner of making

coffee, and the important article of lighting and smoking a pipe; nay, such minutiae as the following are condescended to:—

“ Quickly Louisa uplifted the lid of the basket, and took out  
Cups of an earthen ware, and a pewter basin of sugar;  
But when all had been emptied, the butter, the rolls, and the cold ham,  
Strawberries, radishes, milk, and the cowslip wine for the pastor,  
Archly Louisa observed, ‘ Mamma has forgotten the teaspoons!’  
They laughed; also the father; the good old lady she laughed too;  
Echo laughed; and the mountains repeated the wandering laughter.  
Walter presently ran to the birch-tree beside them, and cut off  
Short smooth sticks with his clasp-knife, offering skewers for stirrers.”\*

Matters proceed prosperously in the second canto. The venerable pastor of Grünau is well pleased with Walter; and the countess and Amelia, upon paying a visit to the parsonage-house, it appears for no other purpose than to hint that the wedding may be fixed previous to their departure for town, are invited to the bridal. The important day arrives; and the third canto is occupied with details upon details of all the mighty note of preparation. Amelia presents the bridegroom with a new cassock, and the countess contributes to the dress of Luise. The dinner is a joint-stock contribution,— venison from the gamekeeper, fish from the villagers, ham, poultry, and fruit, from the parsonage-house itself, with pheasants and hare killed by the bridegroom

and a college fellow-student, whom he has brought with him, as a friend, on the happy occasion. Then comes the dessert; and a posset milked under the cow is mentioned with peculiar honour, which, after being tasted by the “ party in the parlour,” is sent down for the solace of the servants in the kitchen. Subsequently to the ceremony, which is performed by the pastor himself, after dinner, in the presence of his guests, he addresses himself, in a faltering voice, to the bride. This nuptial benediction is characterised by such a purity of manner and fervour of sentiment, that we have ventured a translation.

May the blessing of God, my dearest and loveliest daughter,  
Be with thee! yea, the blessing of God on this earth and in heaven!  
Young have I been, and now am old, and of joy and of sorrow,  
In this uncertain life, sent by God, much—much have I tasted:  
God be thanked for both! O! soon shall I now with my fathers  
Lay my grey head in the grave; how fain, for my daughter is happy!  
Happy, because she knows this, that our God, like a father who watches  
Carefully over his children, us blesses in joy and in sorrow.  
Wondrously throbs my heart at the sight of a bride young and beauteous,  
Dress'd and adorn'd, while she leans, in affectionate, childlike demeanour,  
On the arm of the bridegroom, who through life's path shall conduct her:  
Ready to bear with him boldly let whatever may happen,  
And feeling with him, to exalt his delight and lighten his sorrow;  
And, if it please God, to wipe from his dying forehead the last sweat!  
Even such my presentiments were, when after the bridal  
I my young wife led home. Happy and serious, I shewed her, at distance,  
All the extent of our fields, the church tower, and the dwellings, and this one,  
Where we together have known so much both of good and of evil.  
Thou, my only child! then in sorrow I think of the others,  
When my path to the church by their blooming graves doth conduct me.  
Soon, thou only one! wilt thou track that way whereon I came hither—  
Soon, soon my daughter's chamber, soon 't will be desolate to me,  
And my daughter's place at the table! In vain shall I listen  
For her voice afar off, and her footsteps at distance approaching.  
When with thy husband on that way thou from me art departed,  
Sobs will escape me, and thee my eyes bathed in tears long will follow;  
For I am a man and a father, and my daughter who heartily loves me,

\* The above version is Mr. Taylor's.

Heartily love! But I will in faith raise my head up to heaven,  
 Wipe my eyes from their tears, and with folded hands myself humble  
 E'en in prayer before God, who, as a father watches his children,  
 Both in joy and in sorrow us blesses, for we are his children.  
 Yea, for this is the law of the Eternal, that father and mother  
 Ever they shall forsake, who as husband and wife are united.  
 Go, then, in peace, my child! forsake thy family and thy  
 Father's dwelling—go, by the youth guided, who to thee must hence be  
 Father and mother! Be to him like a vine that is fruitful  
 In his house; round his table thy children like branches of olive  
 Flourish! So will the man be blessed in the Lord who confideth.  
 Lovely and fair to be is nothing; but a God-fearing wife brings  
 Honour and blessing both! for and if the Lord build the house not,  
 Surely the builders but labour in vain.

After this, perhaps the reader will scarcely care to be told that sandwiches and music are celebrated, and that the clerk of the parish assembled a band without-doors in honour of the occasion; that the countess and her daughter depart in her carriage; that the party disperses; and that the bridegroom leads Luise to her chamber; and that thus concludes a poem which must remain the only one of its class. Surely, such a poem, on such a subject, can only be written once. This, however, may be added, that if Bürger be the Wordsworth of Germany, Voss may be perhaps esteemed as the Crabbe, but with more of poetical feeling, though certainly not of genius.

Voss collected the poems of Hölty, another of the Göttingen friends, a young man, who died at the age of 28, a martyr to excessive study. To this excess he was excited by his necessities; for his father, who was a preacher at Mariensee, in the Hanoverian territory, was too poor to allow him the proper means of subsistence at the uni-

versity, and he was compelled to make up the deficiency by giving private lessons, and translating for the booksellers. In his love of solitude, and attachment to the wilder scenes of nature, he resembled Bürger; but in temper he was widely different; for from earliest infancy he was characterised by more than ordinary vivacity of disposition; and so eager was his ardour for study, that he scarcely allowed himself leisure for his meals, and snatched many an hour from the time destined for repose. Hölty considered his most finished productions—and all are highly finished—only as boyish effusions, preparatory to maturer efforts. In delineations of rural beauty and melancholy sentiment lay his strength. His lyric poems are so generally recited in Germany as to rival Bürger's in popularity. His information was universal. Kostner was wont to remark, that "Hölty knew by far too much for a poet." We have attempted a translation of one of his effusions.

#### COUNTRY LIFE.

Happy the man who has the town escaped!  
 To him the whistling trees, the murmuring brooks,  
 The shining pebbles, preach  
 Virtue's and wisdom's lore.

The whispering grove a holy temple is  
 To him, where God draws nigher to his soul;  
 Each verdant sod a shrine,  
 Whereby he kneels to Heaven.

The nightingale on him sings slumber down—  
 The nightingale reawakes him, fluting sweet,  
 When shines the lovely red  
 Of morning through the trees.

Then he admires thee in the plain, O God!  
 In the ascending pomp of dawning day,  
 Thee in thy glorious sun,  
 The worm—the budding branch—

Where coolness gushes, in the waving grass,  
 Or o'er the flowers streams the fountain, rests;



Inhales the breath of prime,  
The gentle airs of eve.

His straw-deck'd thatch, where doves bask in the sun,  
And play and hop, invites to sweeter rest,  
Than golden halls of state,  
Or beds of down afford.

To him the plummy people sporting chirp,  
Chatter, and whistle, on his basket perch,  
And from his quiet hand  
Pick crumbs, or peas, or grains.

Oft wanders he alone, and thinks on death ;  
And in the village churchyard by the graves  
Sits, and beholds the cross,  
Death's waving garland there,

The stone beneath the elders, where a text  
Of Scripture teaches joyfully to die ;  
And with his scythe stands Death,  
An angel, too, with palms.

Happy the man who thus hath 'scaped the town !  
Him did an angel bless when he was born —  
The cradle of the boy  
With flowers celestial strewed.

Hitherto we have set forth the disadvantages of poverty ; our last instance testifies to the relative advantage of affluence. But for the care and means of his parents, Gotter,\* perhaps, would not only have not written at all, but not lived to write. With a feeble constitution, and prematurely, at the age of sixteen, accomplished with all that the best masters could teach, he was obliged to travel for the sake of his health. He had been early attracted by French literature, and remained at Paris for some time, where he acquired Italian. In the year 1763, he was sent to the University of Göttingen to study the law. But he was not to be drawn aside from poetic exercises ; and, in particular, he indulged in some dramatic essays. In the year 1766 he returned to Gotha, his native place, and became archivist in the duke's service. In 1767 he accompanied the Baron of Gemmingen as secretary of legation to Wetzlar ; but engaged the following year in the education of two young noblemen in the University of Göttingen ; and also undertook with Bire the publication of the Göttingen *Musen-Almanach*, which owed its origin to his introduction into the Hainbund of a French *Almanach des Muses*, on the model of which it was framed. In the

year 1769 he returned to Gotha ; and in 1770 he went in his aforesaid office to Wetzlar, where he remained two years, after which he was made private secretary in Gotha. Wetzlar was a very advantageous place for the development of his mind. He met there with better company than that of rude agriculturists,—a circle of young men who emulated him in taste and talent. Göthe and the young Jerusalem were amongst them.

Gotter himself aimed at the polishing of his native language. His flesh, however, was weak, though his spirit was willing ; and in 1774, to recruit his health, he travelled to Lyons. Here he studied the French theatre, in favour of which he had already been prepossessed. The works of Lessing, Weisse, and other of his predecessors, first animated his love for the dramatic art. He indulged in private theatricals ; and sometimes improvised a play with a skill and facility not common. To conclude, Gotter was acquainted with the fine literature of France, England, and Italy, and formed his taste by the study of their models. Elegance was what he aimed at, and the mechanism of poetry was his chief object. He derived much of his matter from foreign sources—using it, how-

\* Friederich Wilhelm Gotter was born September 3, 1746, at Gotha, and died March 18, 1797.

ever, in a spirit of freedom. All his works shew him to be a master of versification. He was a man of talent, not of genius;—what he was, he became by the force of favourable circumstances. While he lived, fortune was kind to him, and he had his reward during that little space. She cannot, however, preserve his name for after-times—it will not live through all ages. Nature is more true, though more severe, to the children whom she inspires. She keeps them poor, indeed, too often; but where she breathes a spirit which poverty cannot extinguish, she provides a guerdon which time shall not diminish, but increase. To Gotter, Bürger was accustomed to submit his verses for correction, and usually paid implicit deference to his taste. The critic, however, will “fade away into the intense inane;” but the poet will endure in remembrance “while memory holds a seat in this distracted globe.”

The following poem is a favourable specimen of Gotter's talents.

THE MAIDEN.

I am a maiden, young and fine,  
And, thanked be Heaven! yet free;  
Romantic passion I decline—  
No sentiment for me!

Light flows my blood, I love a jest,  
The song and dance beside;  
My treasure is a happy breast,  
A flowery wreath my pride.

Eve's nature I do not forswear,  
O'er credulous, weak, and vain;  
And curiosity so dear  
Inherit I again.

But if not from the men I fly,  
Mamma then warns me still,  
That we poor maids were made—oh, fie!  
But to obey their will.

Then pride invades my sense, though slight,  
And happy 'tis for me,  
That I remain a maiden white;  
Let others angels be!

THE PRESENT BALANCE OF PARTIES IN THE STATE, AND  
THE RESULTS OF THE REFORM BILL.\*

THE principles of all political parties should rest on the broad basis of honour, and should in themselves be distinct, well defined, and thoroughly understood. It is very natural that men, impelled by the operation of such principles, and holding dear certain measures, by the avowal of which they gained, perchance, their introduction into parliament, or their individual importance, should classify themselves into parties, should act in concert for all purposes of legislation, and endeavour, by every fair and open expedient, to gain and retain the proposal and regulation of all public affairs. “Factions,” says Mr. Hume, “subvert government, render laws impotent, and beget the fiercest animosities among men of the same nation, who ought to give mutual assistance and protection to each other.” On the other hand, favouritism is the growth of tyranny, and impregnated with all the baleful and poisonous qualities proper to its parent. Whenever the one or the other prevails, then good government is in reality

destroyed, and dangers innumerable, and of the most pernicious kind, are darkening into gloom over the national prosperity. But pure parties are assistants to good government, inasmuch as by the clash of wits truth is elicited, and by the application of a severe scrutiny into the actions of ministers, they are compelled, spite of every weakness of nature, to act openly and manfully, and according to the strictest dictates of honour.

Mr. Burke has depicted parties in colours of too ideal a cast, in his *Thoughts on the Causes of the Present Discontents*; but he was either on one side or the other a zealous partisan, and he was naturally induced to become the apologist of party. The *beau idéal*, however, can never be realised, until human infirmities have been conquered, human passions neutralised, senses rendered more clear, error eradicated from the heart, selfishness ejected from the breast, avarice become innocuous in its operations, and rigid honour made the grand and triumphant characteristic of mankind.

\* *The Present Balance of Parties in the State.* By Sir John Walsh, Bart., M.P. Murray, 1832.