

THE LESSER LYRIC IN ENGLAND, 1810-1860

by

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To

My Father and My Mother

The two persons who read and spoke poetry to me in those un-critical years when the magic of words and the music of cadenced lines were intrinsically beautiful.

## Preface

"Light verse" has been the broad term applied to all poetry which because of its brevity; because of its occasional, humorous, or purely complimentary purpose; or because of its avoidance of heights and depths in thought, cannot be classed with great poetry. To define and illustrate a particular type of what has been termed "light verse", to observe its rhythmic fashions, its themes, and its motivating spirit have been the purposes in this thesis.

The period observed is 1810-1860. In a few cases I have not adhered to these dates rigidly. For example, all the poems of Landor, who did by far the greater share of his work within these years, have been considered. Also, in the case of the essayists treated in Chapter IV, both Dreamthorp and The Roundabout Papers overstep the 1860 limit at times. The dates were set for convenience and I felt justified in departing from them slightly where the kinship of a body of material made arbitrary limits a hindrance. Only English poets

have been observed.

I wish to thank all those friends who have given me suggestions and kindly criticism in my work. I am especially indebted to Miss Josephine M. Burnham, who has sympathetically directed the writing of the paper; Prof. E. H. Hopkins, who offered help in Chapter II; Prof. J. E. Hankins, who secured for me the copy of Charles H. Jones's Vers De Societe, and the library staffs of this university and of the Library of Congress.

Table of Contents

<u>Chapter</u>	<u>Page</u>
I The Lesser Lyric as a Poetic Type . . . . .	1
II Verse Patterns Found in the Lesser Lyric .	19
III The Themes of the Lesser Lyric . . . . .	40
IV The Lesser Lyric and The Essay of the Center . . . . .	71
Bibliography . . . . .	86
List of Poems and Authors Considered . . .	91

## Chapter I

### The Lesser Lyric as a Poetic Type

Polonius: What do you read, my lord?

Hamlet: Words, words, words.

--Shakespeare.

You may bound a place geographically; you may analyze a person or thing chemically; you may solve a problem of numbers mathematically; but you may not hope, I think, to fix precise limits to a field which of necessity concerns aesthetics. The thing we do here, or try to do, is too much a matter of subjectivity to make agreement possible. We approach the field of literature, and especially that which concerns rhythmic or rimed writing, much like the blind men approaching the elephant--each with his peculiar blindness (or deafness). So my task of finding a definition has been a difficult one, not only because of my own prejudices, but because I am apparently trying to set within bounds something as elusive as a will-o-the-wisp.

I shall begin with a definition the use of which I hope to justify in this chapter. A lesser lyric, then, is that type of poetry in which the mood is not

intense enough to be called tragic nor hilarious enough to be called broadly humorous, in which the emotion of the writer is too genuine and undistorted by animosity or etiquette to be either satiric or to be complimentary in a merely social manner. I have hoped by this definition to exclude, if possible, most vers de société, familiar verse, as Brander Matthews<sup>1</sup> illustrated it, broadly humorous verse, and nonsense rhymes.

Perhaps no one has handled the problem of characterizing and illustrating society verse so well as Frederick Locker-Lampson<sup>2</sup> did in an introduction to his anthology made almost fifty years ago. Of this verse of sophistication he said--

It is poetry of men who belong to society, who have a keen sympathy with the lightsome tone and airy jesting of fashion; who are not disturbed by the flippancies of small talk, but, on the contrary, can see the gracefulness of which it is capable, and who, nevertheless, amid all this froth of society, feel that there are depths in our nature, which even in the gaiety of drawing rooms cannot be forgotten. Theirs is the poetry of bitter-sweet, of sentiment that breaks into humour, and of solemn thought, which, lest it should be too solemn plunges into laughter; it is in an especial sense the verse of

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<sup>1</sup>See Introduction to Brander Matthews' American Familiar Verse (Vers de Société)

<sup>2</sup>See Introduction to Lyra Elegantiarum

society. . . . It should be short, elegant, refined, and fanciful, not seldom distinguished by chastened sentiment, and often playful. The tone should not be pitched high; it should be idiomatic and rather in the conversational key; the rhythm should be crisp and sparkling, and the rhyme frequent and never forced, while the entire poem should be marked by tasteful moderation, high finish, and completeness . . . brevity and buoyancy are absolutely essential. The poem may be tinged with a well-bred philosophy, it may be gay and gallant, it may be playfully malicious or tenderly ironical, it may display lively banter, it may be satirically facetious---but it must never be ponderous or common-place.<sup>3</sup>

Illustrations for any or all these characteristics are abundant either in the Lyra Elegantiarum or any similar collection of society verse. The graceful handling of flippant small talk is seen almost more than any other feature of this type. A bit from Winthrop Mackworth Praed's The Bolle of the Ball Room will illustrate nicely--

Years--years ago, ere yet my dreams  
 Had been of being wise or witty,--  
 Ere I had done with writing themes  
 Or yawned o'er this infernal Chitty;--

Years--years ago,--while all my joy  
 Was in my fowling piece and filly,--  
 In short, while I was yet a boy,  
 I fell in love with Laura Lilly.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>See Introduction to Lyra Elegantiarum.

<sup>4</sup>Vers de Société, p. 168.

Locker-Lampson himself illustrates the last paragraph of his definition so well in one of his own short pieces that it is well worth quoting here.

I recollect a nurse called Ann,  
 Who carried me about the grass,  
 And one fine day a fine young man  
 Came up and kissed the pretty lass.  
 She did not make the least objection!  
 Thinks I, "Aha!  
 When I can talk I'll tell mamma."  
 --And that's my earliest recollection.<sup>5</sup>

To be sure such verse is neither broadly humorous nor tragic, but it is too witty, too sharply clever, to possess the genuine, personal feeling which I find essential to lesser lyrics.

There is also a type of verse I wish to exclude which lies half way between society verse and pure humor. This verse may become mere punning, as in Hood's Faithless Nellie Gray. Or it may be openly ironic, as Thackeray is with regard to Goethe in his Sorrows of Werther--

Werther had a love for Charlotte  
 Such as words could never utter;  
 Would you know how first he met her?  
 She was cutting bread and butter.

Charlotte was a married lady,  
 And a moral man was Werther,  
 And, for all the wealth of Indies,  
 Would do nothing for to hurt her.

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<sup>5</sup>Vers de Société, p. 3.

So he sighed and pined and ogled,  
 And his passion boiled and bubbled,  
 Till he blew his silly brains out,  
 And no more by it was troubled.

Charlotte, having seen his body  
 Borne before her on a shutter,  
 Like a well-conducted person  
 Went on cutting bread and butter.<sup>6</sup>

Closely akin to vers de société and equally at fault because of an ever-pervading spirit of polite, insincere compliment is vers d'occasion. One of the commonest forms which this made-to-order verse took during the years observed--1810-1860--was the autograph or album variety. Perhaps one of the gentlest--I intend no pun--user of this socially sanctioned form for expressing one's compliments was Charles Lamb. He seems to have been called upon often to write album verses.

I.

Such goodness in your face doth shine,  
 With modest look, without design,  
 That I despair, poor pen of mine  
     Can ne'er express it.  
 To give it words I feebly try;  
 My spirits fail me to supply  
 Befitting language for't and I  
     Can only bless it!

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<sup>6</sup>Thackeray's Ballads and Miscellanies, p. 78.

## II.

But stop, rash verse! and don't abuse  
 A bashful maiden's ear with news  
 Of her own virtues. She'll refuse  
     Praise sung so loudly.  
 Of that same goodness, you admire,  
 The best part is, she don't aspire  
 To praise--nor of herself desire  
     To think too proudly.<sup>7</sup>

These, I believe, are fair examples of vers de société in its various "light fantastic" movements--for it is like the dance in that it is as smoothly rhythmic as a waltz--and it may be as superficial in sentiment. With these verses in mind, I should like to use Arnold's touchstone method, if I may, to set in contrast a familiar lesser lyric. In perfection of rhythm and meter there is not one whit of difference, but notice here the handling of the theme.

Jenny kissed me when we met,  
     Jumping from the chair she sat in;  
 Time, you thief, who love to get  
     Sweets into your list, put that in;  
 Say I'm weary, say I'm sad,  
     Say that health and wealth have missed me,  
 Say I'm growing old, but add,  
     Jenny kissed me.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>"In the Album of Miss \_\_\_\_\_" from Lamb's Works, Poems and Plays, p. 150.

<sup>8</sup>"Rondeau" by Leigh Hunt in Poetical Works, p. 368.

Here is something more than facetious cleverness, light compliment. This is wistful philosophy touched by enough gaiety to leave us with a gentle smile. Who was Jerny? This we easily answer for ourselves, and for the rest the poet is so clear that the idea comes to us unclouded by any vagueness of expression.

Brander Matthews<sup>9</sup> in attempting to find a term to describe this form of verse used a word formerly used by Cowper--familiar. His essentials for this form were brevity, brilliance, and buoyancy; and he suggested that he wished a term which would suggest something more than the "glitter and emptiness of fashionable parade." But after saying this, Matthews quoted at length Locker-Lampson's earlier statement on this subject. He, like Locker-Lampson, gave nothing which would equal the delicate seriousness of Hunt's Rondeau. Hence this name, familiar verse, comes to have almost the same connotation as society verse.

If these two terms excluded a poem like my "touchstone", the term "light verse" includes far too much for my use in this paper. An Introduction to Poetry, which came out ten years ago, included under "light verse" society verse, toasts, parodies, limericks,

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<sup>9</sup>Introduction to American Familiar Verse (Vers de Société), p. 1-4.

epitaphs, and children's verses. The authors of this book<sup>10</sup> include two poems which would fit my term lesser lyric. Of Holmes's Last Leaf the authors say, "Indeed the only fault one can find with them (these lines) is that they are almost too full of feeling for vers de société." They point out, how with the thought lightened, Locker-Lampson took the same rhyme scheme and made good society verse.

I saw him once before,  
 As he passed by the door,  
                   And again  
 The pavement stones resound,  
 As he totters o'er the ground  
                   With his cane.  
                   --The Last Leaf.

They nearly strike me dumb,  
 And I tremble when they come  
                   Pit-a-Pat  
 This palpitation means  
 That these Boots are Geraldine's  
                   Think of that!  
                   --My Mistress' Boots.

These authors hint at the need for a name which will fit this polished type that they call "immortal ephemerae" when it takes on a pensive air and becomes genuinely sincere without either splenetic grimaces or boisterous fun. They also point out,

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<sup>10</sup>Hubbell and Beaty, Chapter IX.

amusingly enough, the peculiar difficulties of getting rules to fit this large class of light verse by quoting Austin Dobson's twelve rules for writing it. The last one was: "Never ask if the writer of these rules has observed them himself."

More recently a similar all-inclusive attitude has been taken by Clement Wood.<sup>11</sup> In narrowing the wide range of verse covered by Hubbell and Boaty and Wood, the parody is eliminated almost without exception because it becomes too humorous or bitingly ironical. However, the fact that nonsense rhymes do contain sufficient thought at times to make them approach the lesser lyric cannot be denied. Edward Lear is one of the best, if not the best, of these philosophers of the comic. There seems to be at times a "method in his madness". Take the famous Jumblics--

They went to sea in a Sieve, they did,  
 In a Sieve they went to sea:  
 In spite of all their friends could say  
 On a Winter's morn, on a stormy day  
 In a Sieve they went to sea!  
 And when the Sieve turned round and round  
 And everyone cried, "You'll all be drowned!"  
 They called aloud, "Our Sieve ain't big  
 But we don't care a button! we don't care a fig!  
 In a Sieve we'll go to Sea!"  
 Far and few, far and few,  
 Are the lands where the Jumblics live;

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<sup>11</sup>The Craft of Poetry, Book IV.

Their heads are green, and their hands are blue,  
And they went to sea in a Sieve."<sup>12</sup>

Now this humor, to me, is sincere and not sharp, but it is not immediate enough. The significance of the thing comes to us too much as a parable, if you please.

Perhaps an illustration of the direct, philosophical humor of the lesser lyric will more nearly explain what I mean. This from Landor--

The burden of an ancient rhyme  
Is, "By the forelock seize on Time."  
Time in some corner heard it said;  
Pricking his ears, away he fled:  
And seeing me upon the road,  
A hearty curse on me bestow'd.  
"What if I do the same by thee?  
How wouldst thou like it?" thunder'd he,  
And, without answer thereupon,  
Seizing my forelock--it was gone.<sup>13</sup>

Wood does make one point about all lighter poetry which I found applicable to the lesser lyrics of this period. This regards the use of borrowed fixed French forms.

No one of the fixed forms is adapted in English, to either the greatest poetry, or the most pleasing light verse. The light versifier is as prone as his serious cater-cousin the poet to compose his own patterns as he proceeds;

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<sup>12</sup>Poets and Poetry of the Century, Vol. IX, p. 347.

<sup>13</sup>Poems and Epigrams, p. 132.

and stanzas as intricate individually as the most elaborate Provençal or French model are trifles to the light versifier, if only he is not bound by the rigidity of sustained rhyme sounds throughout, which lays such a goss upon his soul to revamp his verses, at the dictates of a limited number of rhyming sounds.

My example from Hunt is only an apparent exception to this statement, for his is no true rondeau.

Aside from the fact that the term "light verse" has been used by at least two authors to cover such a variety of forms, I should like to escape the word "verse". There have been three views<sup>14</sup> relating to the use of the word poetry: poetry has been considered as being everything written in verse, poetry has been considered "as comprising all compositions with a certain characteristic content, irrespective of whether they are written in verse or prose"; and finally poetry has meant "only those compositions with this characteristic content which are written in verse." The first of these views I wish to avoid suggesting even by the name I apply to the poetry discussed; the second I shall consider in discussing the similarity in spirit between lesser lyrics and a certain type of essay; and the third I hope to be justified in

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<sup>14</sup>See Hartog's Relation of Poetry to Verse, p. 4-7.

considering the subject matter of this paper.

Poetry was defined by Sanskrit writers "as something which touches the heart and produces that sensation of delight which they call rasa.<sup>15</sup>

"The rasa of the Sanskrit authors, the mysterious 'something' of John Stuart Mill, which I interpret as the power to excite tender emotion in the mind of the reader or listener, will suffice for my purpose (i.e. in finding the characteristic essential to all poetry). It is the power which may belong to the lightest verse of a Herrick to the profoundest tragedy of a Shakespeare. That this power does not belong exclusively to poetry is granted; but I would ask you only to admit that poetry fails of its purpose if it does not produce this kind of emotion."<sup>16</sup>

Now I conceive of a lesser lyric as a poem, not a verse. It must be, then, a poem with enough thought to excite a tender emotion. Verse, which is broadly humorous, or brilliantly clever, or facetiously sharp, has little to do with any tender emotion. What

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<sup>15</sup> See Hartog's Relation of Poetry to Verse, p. 4-7. Here Hartog was quoting Dr. De.

<sup>16</sup> Relation of Poetry to Verse, p. 11.

tender emotion, for example, does Hood excite in

Faithless Nelly Gray?

Ben Bottle was a soldier bold,  
 And used to war's alarms;  
 But a cannon-ball took off his legs,  
 So he laid down his arms!<sup>17</sup>

This emotional state, I also conceive of as resulting from sincerity on the part of the author whether his mood be gay or bordering on the serious. I feel that much vers de société, especially where it considers the love theme, is a donning of that amatory garment which does not concern the poet personally but is only a fad or passing fancy. Who catches any real feeling in Calverley when he says--

What her eyes were like I know not:  
 Perhaps they were blurred with tears;  
 And perhaps in yon skies there glow not  
 (On the contrary) clearer spheres.  
 No! as to her eyes I am just as wise  
 As you or the cat my dears.<sup>18</sup>

Or this from Hunt which is more musical but not a whit less the following of a pretty verse fashion--

I  
 If you become a nun, dear  
 A friar I will be;  
 In any cell you run, dear,  
 Pray look behind for me.  
 The roses all turn pale, too;  
 The doves all take the veil, too;  
 The blind will see the show.  
 What! you become a nun, my dear!  
 I'll not believe it, no.<sup>19</sup>

The very lack of any personally sincere note

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<sup>18</sup>Vers de Société, p. 186.

<sup>19</sup>Poetical Works, p. 337.

in such verses as these leads me to the choice of the name. It is lyric because the poet either is giving his actual feeling or one in which his vicarious experience is so complete that it appears actual. I appreciate the fact that an absolutely true illustration is hard to find, because we, the readers, are judging subjectivity subjectively. Bliss Perry has put the problem this way:

The lyric is the commonest, and yet, in its perfection, the rarest type of poetry; the earliest and yet the most modern; the simplest, and yet in its laws of emotional association, perhaps the most complex, and it is all these because it expresses, more intimately than other types of verse, the personality of the poet.<sup>20</sup>

This type of poetry is further lyric from my point of view because it is, in the older sense of that term, musical. Recall the lilting rhythm of Hunt's Rondeau. Examples of this quality are abundant, and I shall come back to it later in the paper.

These are poems; they are lyrics. Why are they lesser lyrics? My reasons for the use of this adjective are two: lack of intensity, and brevity. I have mentioned previously the need for emotional appeal in poetry. Phosphor Mallam puts this need clearly--

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<sup>20</sup> A Study of Poetry, p. 258.

We may admire poetry for many reasons;-- but we love it for its emotional appeal, its recall of those sensations and feelings which alone have made life worth living.---And it is this remembrance that poetry revives. Country sights and sounds, romance, travel, and the sea are bells which when struck never fail to vibrate in us.<sup>21</sup>

But though all lyric poetry, to carry out the figure of Mallam, causes us to vibrate in response, these vibrations vary as to degree. Now intensity "is found in the vivid realization of any mood, pathetic or humorous, emergetic or placid, as well as harrowing."<sup>22</sup> And the difference in poetry as to greatness is a difference in intensity. Neilson gives the force of this intensity in the creation of poetry such a high place that he suggests its possibilities in lifting certain forms of light verse into the realms of poetry. This illustration is quite worth observation, I believe. Austin Dobson, a modern Augustan stylist, speaks of that perfecter of precision in verse--

Suppose you say your worst of Pope, declare  
His Jewels Paste; his Nature a Parterre,  
His Art but Artifice--I ask once more  
Where have you seen such Artifice before?  
Where have you seen a Parterre better grac'd,  
Or gems that glitter like his Gems of Paste?  
Where can you show, among your Names of Note,

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<sup>21</sup>An Approach to Poetry, p. 51.

<sup>22</sup>Neilson in Essentials of Poetry, p. 176.

So much to copy and so much to quote?  
 And where, in fine, in all our English Verse,  
 A Style more trenchant and a Sense more terse?<sup>23</sup>

"Here," says Neilson, "the modern imitator rises from parody to poetry--because his theme mattered to him so much." It is intensity which lifts mere polished verse, then, into the class of poetry. Just so it is the avoidance of gravely intense emotional extremes which separates the lesser lyric from those lyrics which touch the heights of joy or depths of pain.

Mountain top experiences, deeply intense situations, are not what we know most about. These may be left for the masters of poetry, and we may appreciate the subtleties of these heights and depths of emotion in part most of the time and wholly only on those rare occasions when we, too, are lifted to those emotional peaks. We live with the little, every-day experiences which touch us tenderly, and which we look back upon as we view them in that composite picture which time gives us of the day-by-day, wistfully. The poet who writes of these must make them as understandable as the commonplace. But this clearness must wear the veil of delicate fancy just as a memory has a clarity which is more like

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<sup>23</sup>Neilson in Essentials of Poetry, p. 183.

the clearness of dawn or the late afternoon than the harsh truth of the noon-day. These poems represent neither realism nor idealism; for the former may be too grimly serious, and the latter may be too loftily serious. One may no more than play Bo-Peep with depths. Clough has shown how a lesser lyric touches the question of nostalgia--

Ye flags of Piccadilly,  
 Where I posted up and down,  
 And wished myself so often,  
 Well away from you and town,---

Are the people walking quietly  
 And steady on their feet,  
 Cabs and omnibuses plying  
 Just as usual in the street?

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Ye flags of Piccadilly,  
 Which I hated so, I vow  
 I could wish with all my heart  
 You were underneath me now!<sup>24</sup>

This, to be sure, does not possess even the home-hunger of Home Thoughts from Abroad; but it is that common experience we have all known, handled sincerely but playfully enough to avoid the deeply serious.

Or, if one of these writers does approach what might become pathos, he touches it lightly and

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<sup>24</sup>Poems of Arthur Hugh Clough, p. 402.

stops. He stops when the lump comes in his throat, and before the tears have a chance to well up and over-flow. Restraint is the key-note of these lines from William Allingham. They so perfectly illustrate this feature of the lesser lyric and contain so much delicate emotional appeal that we could wish there were more poems like them--

Four ducks on a pond  
 A grass-bank beyond,  
 A blue sky of spring,  
 White clouds on the wing;  
 What a little thing  
 To remember for years--  
 To remember with tears!<sup>25</sup>

This is neither tragic nor humorous; yet it is sincere. The author does not pause to moralize. Such a charge would be too heavy for a craft so light and fragile. Here, as in "Jenny kissed me", there is neither satire nor hollow compliment. This is our pleasure--

To know that another has observed a detail in inanimate or human nature which we had noted for ourselves, to have brought into the foreground of our consciousness a phenomenon which we had been only half aware of before.<sup>26</sup>

And this pleasure lies within the province of the lesser lyric to give.

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<sup>25</sup>Poets and Poetry of the Century, Vol. 5, p. 211.

<sup>26</sup>Neilson, p. 188.

## Chapter II

## Verse Patterns Used in the Lesser Lyric

Seeds in a dry pod, tick, tick, tick,  
 Tick, tick, tick, like mites in a quarrel--  
 Faint iambs that the full breeze wakes--  
 But the pine tree makes a symphony thereof.

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Life all around me here in the village:  
 Tragedy, comedy, valor and truth,  
 Courage, constancy, heroism, failure--  
 All in the loom, and oh what patterns!  
 --Masters.

Verse is one requirement for poetry as defined in my first chapter. It is granted, for the most part, I believe, that English verse is primarily accentual, and that the rhythm is that of a wave-like sequence of stresses or accents. This stress sequence may be emphasized by the use of verse patterns composed of the measure, or foot, the line or verse, and the stanza. I choose to consider these three elements together in "verse pattern" because that term suggests a totality of effect, resulting not so much from any one of these devices as from their use together. The problem involved in trying to observe each of these points separately

is hinted in a statement in A. William Ellis's

An Anatomy of Poetry--

An incompetent executant, who, unable to deal with a chord in a piece of music, plays it note by note, is not playing the chord at all, but something different. The superimposing of one sound upon another gives us a whole that is different from and has an existence independent of the parts from which it is made up. Now a use of words in a state as it were of compression, so that this choral or superimposed effect is produced, is one of the devices by which very special effects are made in poetry.<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps one word more would make this statement clearer for use in this paper: not only "very special effects", but all musical effects in poetry are dependent on such a verse pattern the parts of which are interdependent. The failure of any one of these elements to assist in a lucid suggesting of the poetic idea spoils the beauty of the whole and distracts the reader. This distraction may come in various ways. One possible disturbance is illustrated by some of the rimes used by eighteenth century poets who were familiar with rimes that now, because of changes in pronunciation seem archaic and disturbing through no fault of the author. Offense to the reader may come through bizarre rimes

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<sup>1</sup>p. 43.

involving eccentric spelling, punning, or the use of foreign phrases. Take this stanza from The Angora Cat<sup>2</sup>--

Good pastry is vended  
 In Cité Fadette;  
 Madame Pons can make splendid  
 Brioche and galette!<sup>2</sup>

Or this from Thackeray--

Says gorging Jack to guzzling Jimmy,  
 "I am extremely hungaree."  
 To gorging Jack says guzzling Jimmy,  
 "We've nothing left, us must eat we."<sup>3</sup>

Such disturbingly clever rimes may become things to be desired in pure society verse, humorous verse, or parody, because there brilliancy is an asset. But where the thought content is a chief value, as it is in the lesser lyric, such too obviously wit-provoked rime impresses the reader as not inspired by sincerity. Merely clever rimes may spoil rhythmic unity, and are not found in the lesser lyric at its best.

Aside from such distractions which are avoided within the verse pattern itself, certain verse forms are little used by the authors of the period under consideration--the French forms. It is just after the half century observed--1870<sup>4</sup>--that fixed French forms, such

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<sup>2</sup>Locker-Lampson in Vers de Société, p. 151.

<sup>3</sup>"Little Billee", from Ballads and Miscellanies, p. 103.

<sup>4</sup>Helen Louise Cohen, Lyric Forms from France, pp. 85-86.

as the rondeau, rondel, ballade, villanelle, triolet, are re-introduced into serious English verse. The limits which the two-and three-rime stanzaic arrangements of these forms fix seem not to have interested English poets of this period. Leigh Hunt, it is true, called his poem, Jenny Kissed Me, a rondeau, but he had not written in this a true rondeau; and his approach is as near as any of these authors come to fixed French forms.

The most frequently used verse pattern in the poems which I consider in this paper is extremely simple, depending on the idea expressed in well chosen words for artistic effect. A pattern, which might be considered as one norm, is the four measured, iambic tetrameter, or four stressed couplet, sometimes varied by being grouped into four stressed quatrain. A second stanzaic norm is the ballad or common meter quatrain, appearing either as a, b, c, b, or as a, b, a, b. Tail rime, as a variation of the couplet, the five-measured line in unrimed verse, lines having fewer than four stresses, and the sonnet appear. But these stanza patterns were used infrequently as compared to the four stressed couplet and the common meter. The iambic measure which gives the effect of rising rhythm is the

basic rhythmic unit for both of these forms, and so far exceeds in use either the triple rhythm or falling rhythm that I shall not consider the latter except as they appear to a noticeable degree in the illustrations given.

Neither of these norms is new or original with the authors of this period. This couplet is of long standing in English versification. About the middle of the twelfth century the Old English unrimed, four-stressed lines of irregular measures felt the influence of Latin hymns which employed rimed verse, and of the French verse of eight syllables, both of which were used in couplet arrangement.<sup>5</sup> From the first the English couplet became more elastic than the French, and the lines or verses might contain from seven to twelve syllables. Such variation allowed for considerable variety in feet used. It is during the twelfth century also that the ballad quatrain evolved from the seven measure or septenary couplet. This quatrain, by the introduction of caesural rime after the fourth stress, was separated from the parent stanza by more than merely the arrangement on the page.<sup>6</sup> Both of these forms have

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<sup>5</sup>Max Kaluza in A Short History of English Versification, pp. 144-152.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 167.

been popular during the Middle English and Modern English periods, and have been second in use only to the heroic or five-foot couplet, which was unknown in English literature before Chaucer.

The first of these typical verse patterns, the four stressed couplet, can be illustrated in two lines from *Lancelot*--

No, Daisy! lift not up thy ear  
It is not she whose steps draw near.<sup>7</sup>

The effect is iambic, but one monosyllabic stressed foot at the beginning of the first line produces falling rhythm and makes for pleasing variety. The other two couplets of this same poem avoid the monotony of continued iambs in a similar manner.

Leigh Hunt is able to secure rhythmic variety in the handling of couplets--

Hello!--What?--Where?--what can it be  
That strikes up so deliciously?  
I never in my life--what? No!  
That little tin-box playing so?<sup>8</sup>

Here the "fatal facility" of iambs is broken by pause, monosyllabic measures, and double stress measures.

Although the resulting rhythm is rising, the iambic smoothness is broken as if to suggest the staccato effect of the playing of the music box. A movement

<sup>7</sup>Poems and Epigrams, p. 146.

<sup>8</sup>Poetical Works, p. 315.

quite as fitting to his subject is produced by predominantly trochaic measures in Christmas--

Christmas comes! He comes, he comes,  
 Ushered in with a rain of plums;  
 Hollies in the windows greet him,  
 Gifts precede him, bells proclaim him,  
 Every month delights to name him:<sup>9</sup>

The song quality in this poem makes the falling rhythm an appropriate verse medium, but the four-stress line seems equally satisfactory in the two poems.

While the four-stressed couplet is the rule, one with six measures may be observed in Thackeray's Fairy Days. Even here, though, the poet shuns any approach to a long "mouth-filling" or breath-taking line and breaks the verse by a superimposed pause--

Beside the old hall fire--upon my nurse's knee,  
 Of happy fairy days--what tales were told to me!<sup>10</sup>

One could almost as easily write this as a three measured quatrain riming a,b,c,b. The generalization about the use of short lines is not disturbed by such apparently long lines since the effect is that of a line of three feet. Thackeray secures this effect of a long line by using triple rhythm in The Cane-Bottom'd Chair--

<sup>9</sup>Poetical Works, p. 315.

<sup>10</sup>Ballads and Miscellanies, p. 27.

In tattered old slippers that toast at the bars  
 And a ragged old jacket perfumed with cigars  
 Away from the world and its toils and its cares,  
 I've a snug little kingdom up four pair of stairs.<sup>11</sup>

The four stressed line may appear in a quatrain, riming a,b,a,b.<sup>12</sup> Leigh Hunt used a double quatrain rimed in this manner in his Rondeau. Here the rhythm is trochaic and falling--one of the few exceptions to the generalization regarding iambs. In this particular quatrain arrangement the effect of falling rhythm obtained almost as frequently as iambic, rising rhythm. Hunt finds variety in dropping the final unstressed syllable in half his lines. The smoothness here would become monotonous if long continued, however, because of its almost unbroken falling movement. Its brevity saves it.

Jenny kissed me when we met  
 Jumping from the chair she sat in:<sup>13</sup>

Hunt gains melodic beauty by the use of double rimes twice--"sat in," "that in," "missed me," "kissed me"--

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<sup>11</sup>Ballads and Miscellanies, pp. 52-53.

<sup>12</sup>In appearance this quatrain would seem to be an outgrowth of the ballad quatrain. However, Kaluza is of the opinion (pp. 215-216) that the isometrical quatrain with alternate rime "results from rimed couplets of alexandrines, with rime at the caesural." Their origin is thus similar to the anisometrical ballad quatrain.

<sup>13</sup>Poetical Works, p. 268.

an echo, of course, of its French parent form.

The introduction of trisyllabic feet in this four measured line, like those in The Cane-Bottom'd Chair, makes for a musical variation. Mortimer Collins's Summer Song shows such movement--

Summer is sweet, ay, summer is sweet--  
 Minna mine with the brown brown eyes:  
 Red are the roses under his feet.<sup>14</sup>

These two poems present the problem of the trisyllabic measure. Such measure presupposes a two to one ratio of unstressed to stressed syllables. This proportion, sometimes called triple rhythm, is not consistent with the stresses of normal English speech.<sup>15</sup> But a quickened rhythmic effect, pleasingly musical, can be produced by the use of a small proportion of such measures. Moore's Believe Me if all Those Endearing Young Charms is a good illustration of the allegro movement which results from a frequent use of trisyllabic measures.

The common meter, ballad quatrain, or divided septenary couplet--our second norm--was used as often as the isometrical four stressed couplet or quatrain. This common meter appeared in both single and double quatrains.

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<sup>14</sup>Poets and Poetry of the Century, Vol. 5, p. 289.

<sup>15</sup>Stewart, The Technique of English Verse, p. 14.

Thomas Campbell's Thoughts Suggested by the New Year will serve to show how this single ballad quatrain may be adequate for the expression of philosophy of a lighter sort--

Heaven gives our years of fading strength  
Indemnifying fleetness;  
And those of youth, a seeming length  
Proportioned to their sweetness.<sup>16</sup>

In its double form common meter appears to be almost as popular as the single quatrain. Hunt's lines To T.L.H. will serve to show the adaptability of this verse pattern to lightness of touch--

Sleep breathes at last from out thee;  
My little, patient Boy;  
And balmy rest about thee  
Smooths off the day's annoy.  
I sit me down and think and think  
Of all thy winning ways;  
Yet almost wish with sudden shrink  
That I had less to praise.<sup>17</sup>

The flexibility of this verse pattern is worth noticing here. Such rising rhythm or iambic measure-- and common meter is, by and large, rising rhythm--is used by Praed to convey his wistfully playful idea in My Little Cousins. Yet it is elastic enough to be quite

<sup>16</sup>Complete Poetical Works, p. 310.

<sup>17</sup>Poetical Works, p. 316.

as fitting for Landor in his approach to the tragic, Rose Aylmer. If one were to let "-" stand for unstressed and "'" for stressed syllables the verse patterns of these two poems would appear as--

My Little Cousins

```

'  '  '  '
-  -  -  -
'  '  '  '
-  -  -  -
'  '  '  '
-  -  -  -
'  '  '  '
-  -  -  -
'  '  '  '
-  -  -  -
'  '  '  '
-  -  -  -

```

Rose Aylmer

```

'  '  '  '
-  -  -  -
'  '  '  '
-  -  -  -
'  '  '  '
-  -  -  -
'  '  '  '
-  -  -  -
'  '  '  '
-  -  -  -
'  '  '  '
-  -  -  -

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But these widely different ideas are given expression by this very adaptable rising rhythm--

My Little Cousins

I used to have as glad a face  
 As shadowless a brow;  
 I once could run as blithe a race  
 As you are running now;  
 But never mind how I behave!  
 Don't interrupt your play;  
 And though I feel so very gray<sup>18</sup>  
 Laugh on, laugh on to-day.

Rose Aylmer

Ay what avails the sceptered race,  
 Ah what the form divine!  
 What every virtue, every grace!

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<sup>18</sup>Last stanza of poem given. Poets and Poetry of the Century, Vol. 3, p. 452.

Rose Aylmer, all were thine.  
 Rose Aylmer, whom these wakeful eyes  
 May weep, but never see,  
 A night of memories and of sighs  
 I consecrate to thee.<sup>19</sup>

These then are the most common verse patterns used by the poets in the half century considered. Variations or infrequently used forms such as tail rime, short lines, unrimed five-stress stanzas, and the sonnet can now be considered.

A pleasing departure<sup>20</sup> from the quatrain is the six-line stanza composed of a quatrain and a couplet as seen in Love's Calendar--

And now that snow o'erlays the thatch,  
 Each starlit eve within  
 The door she waits; I raise the latch,  
 And kiss her lifted chin;  
 Nor do I think we've blushed again,  
 For love hath made but one of twain.<sup>21</sup>

This particular stanza is useful to the poet in that his first four lines, the quatrain, seem to serve as the expression of a picture, while the last two lines, the couplet, give the conclusion.

This combination of the quatrain and couplet

<sup>19</sup>Poems and Epigrams, p. 123.

<sup>20</sup>Observe what Kaluza says in the note on p. 214. A similar arrangement is used by Dickens in The Ivy Green by the use of a double quatrain of common meter and a couplet.

<sup>21</sup>William Bell Scott, Poets and Poetry of the Century, Vol. 4, p. 366.

in a stanza resembling some of the refrain effects in French forms, especially the ballade, is seen in Beddoes's

Dream Pedlary--

If there were dreams to sell  
 What would you buy?  
 Some cost a passing bell;  
 Some a light sigh,  
 That shakes from life's fresh crown  
 Only a rose-leaf down.  
 If there were dreams to sell,  
 Merry and sad to tell  
 And the crier rang the bell,  
 What would you buy?<sup>22</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Tail rime which is suggested in Dream Pedlary, was used comparatively often. It is in connection with this that we find the only use of tercets. Hood uses this tercet form with the tail rime in To My Daughter--

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<sup>22</sup>Ward's English Poets, Vol. 4, p. 561. This stanza almost suggests a variation of the tail rime, i.e. two riming lines or verses broken by intervening couplets or tercets. Both a couplet and a tercet separate the rimes "sigh" and "buy." These tail rimes were used early in the Middle English period (see Kaluza, p. 183) and involve no new rime scheme. Kaluza gives an interesting illustration of the early page arrangement which gave this stanza form its name. For example six lines would appear as--

Men speken of romauns of prys,) Of Beves and sir Gy,  
 Of Horn Childe, and of Ypotys,)

Of sir Lybeux and Pleyndamour, ) Of roial  
 But sir Topas he bereth the flour.) chivalry.

<sup>23</sup>Kaluza, p. 183.

Dear Fanny! nine long years ago,  
 While yet the morning sun was low,  
 And rosy with the eastern glow  
     The landscape smiled;  
 Whilst loved the newly-wakoned herds--  
 Sweet as the early song of birds,  
 I heard those first, delightful words,  
     "Thou hast a child!"<sup>24</sup>

This tercet rime is used again by Ashby Sterry in The Little Rebel--

Princess of pretty pots,  
 Tomboy in trouserettes  
 Eyes are like violets,--  
     Gleefully glancing!  
 Skin like an otter sleek,  
 Nose like a baby Greek,  
 Sweet little dimple-cheek--  
     Merrily dancing.<sup>25</sup>

In Dream Pedlary the short line is introduced-- here three measured. This is frequently used by these poets. A satisfying ballad-like smoothness is obtained. Hood makes use of a three-measured line in the isometric quatrain of Ballad and makes of the last line a refrain. This refrain line gives his two quatrains something of the effect of one of Beddoes' stanzas--

It was not in the winter  
 Our loving lot was cast;  
 It was the time of roses,--  
     We plucked them as we passed!<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Poetical Works, p. 207.

<sup>25</sup>Poets and Poetry of the Century, Vol. 9, p. 527.

<sup>26</sup>Poetical Works, p. 239.

Such stanzaic movement could never approach the sonorous, but it seems eminently suited to the light, sometimes tripping, movement of the thought which motivates this type of poem.

James Smith uses a three stressed double quatrain of trochaic measures in Wee Joukydaidles. A half of one stanza will show the quickening of the rhythm by these trochees suitable to Smith's subject, a bit of a lassie--

Wee Joukydaidles  
 Toddlin' oot an' in:  
 Oh but she's a cuttie,  
 Makin' sic a din!<sup>27</sup>

The two stressed line is used rarely. The most pleasing effect is that in George Darley's, Robin's Cross--

A little cross  
 To tell my loss;  
 A little bed  
 To rest my head;  
 A little tear is all I crave  
 Upon my very little grave.

I strew thy bed  
 Who loved thy lays;  
 The tear I shed,  
 The cross I raise,  
 With nothing more upon it than,  
 "Here lies the little friend of man,"<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>Poets and Poetry of the Century, Vol. 9, p. 112.

<sup>28</sup>poets and Poetry of the Century, Vol. 3, p. 158. Lines of two or three measures are perhaps the most

In this poem a predominantly iambic pattern lends the proper rhythmic support for the idea of "grass of the field" brevity which gives to many of the small pleasures of life a touch of pathos. The rhythm seems to follow the thought very closely--avoiding both allegro and andante. But such rhythm is highly adaptable. Thackeray gains through the use of short, two stress lines quite as excellent a framework for the expression of an epicurean delight in the very ephemeral nature of pleasure. The rime scheme of Thackeray is interesting. The couplet is the basis of four of the lines in each stanza, but the other lines have an unusual linking effect--the first rimes with the fifth, while the fourth and eighth lines of each stanza have rimes similar to that of the fourth and eighth lines of every other stanza.

Christmas is here  
 Winds whistle shrill  
 Icy and chill,  
     Little care we:  
 Little we fear  
 Weather without  
 Sheltered about  
     The Mahogany Tree.

---

recently introduced verse arrangements used by these poets (see Kaluza, p. 301) and occur in combination with longer lines. The early sixteenth century marks the introduction of these short verses into English poetry except for their earlier uses in tail rimes.

Evenings we knew  
 Happy as this;  
 Faces we miss,  
 Pleasant to see  
 Kind hearts and true,  
 Gentle and just  
 Peace to your dust.  
 We sing round the tree.<sup>29</sup>

But, on the whole, the two-measured line, either in a couplet or in a more complicated stanza form, is not commonly used by these poets. The poems given and the seven lines quoted from William Allingham at the close of the first chapter are among the exceptions so far as rhythmic or verse patterns for the lesser lyric go.

Unrimed verse is used so seldom that few good illustrations are available. Landor, in some of his shorter pieces, and Hunt in at least one poem, A Thought on Music, use it. Landor's lines illustrate how this absence of the pronounced beat resulting from the use of rime, and frequent unstressed syllables make for a smoothly flowing, if less definitely cadenced, line.

There is a time when the romance of life  
 Should be shut up, and closed with a double clasp:  
 Better that this be done before the dust  
 That none can blow away falls into it.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Poets and Poetry of the Century, Vol. 9, p. 323. The tail rime is here introduced and helps the rime in its "carry over" effect.

<sup>30</sup> Poems and Epigrams, p. 227. Unrimed stanzas appear as early as the fourteenth and fifteenth century in English alliterative poems. See Kaluza, p. 210.

Unrimed lines seem altogether proper for the thought in such poems as this one. Nevertheless, if the idea, which hints at the somber, were long continued, the verse medium would have a tendency to add to its weight. That is, unrimed lines do not appear to be the most adaptable to this type of lyric. It is in such stanzas and in sonnets that pentameter measure appears most frequently, so far as the poems considered are concerned.

Only a little more frequently employed than the unrimed stanza is the sonnet form. Whether this form is too much a "monument of a moment" to be used well in poetry in the spirit of the lesser lyric, I hesitate to say. When this form is employed, the poetic effect is attractive enough to warrant the use of the sonnet more often. Hunt occasionally writes sonnets. His To the Grasshopper and the Cricket is a propos of the lesser lyric in a sonnet--

Green little vaulter in the sunny grass,  
 Catching your heart up at the feel of June,  
 Sole voice that's heard amidst the lazy noon,  
 When even the bees lag at the summoning brass;-  
 And you, warm little housekeeper, who class  
 With those who think the candles come too soon,  
 Loving the fire, and with your tricksome tune  
 Nick the glad silent moments as they pass;-

Oh sweet and tiny cousins, that belong,  
 One to the fields, the other to the hearth,  
 Both have your sunshine; both, though small, are strong  
 At your clear hearts; and both were sent to earth  
 To sing in thoughtful ears this natural song--  
 In doors and out,--summer and winter,--mirth.<sup>31</sup>

Here we may make a comparison between the handling of the same subject matter by one of our more formal lyric poets, Keats, in this same sonnet form--

The poetry of earth is never dead:  
 When all the birds are faint with the hot sun,  
 And hide in cooling trees, a voice will run  
 From hedge to hedge about the new-mown mead;  
 That is the grasshopper's--he takes the lead  
 In summer luxury--he has never done  
 With his delights, for, when tired out with fun,  
 He rests at ease beneath some pleasant wood.  
 The poetry of earth is ceasing never:  
 On a lone winter evening, when the frost  
 Has wrought a silence, from the stove there shrills  
 The cricket's song, in warmth increasing ever,  
 And seems to one in drowsiness half lost,  
 The grasshopper's among some grassy hills.<sup>32</sup>

Hunt's direct addressing of the "green little vaulter" and "warm little housekeeper" adds charm to these playful titles which he gives to his small inspirers.

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<sup>31</sup>Ward's English Poets, Vol. 4, p. 346. Hunt here uses the Italian sonnet rime arrangement, as does Keats in handling this same subject. Each introduces the theme in the octave and draws a conclusion in the sestet. This is an interesting point because the Italian sonnet, introduced in the first half of the sixteenth century, has been used loosely many times, to suit the taste of the poets using it. (See Kaluza, p. 209). Charles Tennyson Turner in Letty's Globe (See Chapter III, p. 53) has an unusual rime scheme for his sestet, which is joined to the double quatrain octave by a run-on line and so has no individual thought value--e, f, f, g, e, g.

<sup>32</sup>Ward's English Poets, Vol. 4, p. 461.

Keats is impersonal and gains dignity by being so.

Hunt hears in the song "mirth" which may not be so near the heights of lyric ecstasy, but which is nearer the level of the homely little subjects.

It seems to be true, then, that the poets of the period observed who write in the vein of the lesser lyric do not, as a rule, employ long, formal, or difficultly intricate verse patterns. No noticeably or insistently clever or eccentric stanzaic arrangements, such as some of the French forms, seem to present the ideas so well as the long used and highly adaptable dissyllabic, four-measured couplet or the seven measured quatrain, or common meter.<sup>34</sup> Lines with fewer measures than four

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<sup>34</sup>The reason for the ease with which a poet writes in octasyllabic lines and for the reader's pleasure in reading such lines has been suggested by Oliver Wendall Holmes (The Physiology of Versification). This line "follows," he says, "more exactly than any other the natural rhythm of respiration." It appears to be true that for every four beats of the heart the average person inspires once. That is, there is a ratio of 1:4 between respiration and pulse. The reading of a single line with ease or discomfort will depend, then, on the length of that line in relation to the normal breathing requirements. The four stressed line can be read by the average person at the rate of twenty per minute, and this same average person's pulse is 80. It would appear to follow that this 1:4 ratio of accents in the four-stress line corresponds most naturally to functional rhythm.

are well, if seldom, used. The sonnet is the only fixed form employed a noticeable number of times, but it has been so long a part of English prosody that it has become fairly elastic, and entailed no radical departure from the simple, English verse patterns.



cumbered by poetical mechanisms. I have had to draw upon my own taste, and in so far as it has been good my illustrations, I hope, will be apt. (De gustibus non disputandum est). Those poems which are not entirely à propos of the subject I can only defend, but perhaps never justify, because, perforce, your taste differs from mine.

Love lyrics dealing with youthful, romantic love are hard to find in the best spirit of the lesser lyric. Romantic love has a tendency to become ball room compliment--or maybe flower garden compliment--or to become too much weighted with passion. It would appear that there are few ideas so hard "to recollect in tranquillity" and read about when one is himself not en rapport and still give and receive the note of sincere tenderness.

Landor, I feel, shows best how the rhythmic lightness of the verse may be all that it should be while the thought becomes concoited and self-consciously clever--

One morning in the spring I sate  
 Kicking my heels upon a gate,  
 And birds were singing all around,  
 And cowslips sunn'd the sheeny ground,  
 And next to me above the post  
 A certain shrub its bunches tost,  
 Seeming to whisper in my ear,  
 "Have you no song for her so dear?"  
 Now never in my life could I  
 Write at command; I know not why.  
 I tried to write; I tried in vain;  
 The little birds, to mock my pain,  
 Song cheerily; and every note  
 Seem'd rushing from a clearer throat.  
 I was half mad to think that they  
 So easily should win the day.  
 The slender shrub I thought held down  
 Its head to whisper, "What a clown!"  
 Stung by its touch and its reproof,  
 And saying, "Keep your thorns aloof,"  
 Unconsciously I spoke the name  
 And verses in full chorus came.<sup>1</sup>

From this poem which approaches vers de société--if it  
 doesn't actually become that type--I wish to pass to  
 what I think are the two best poems on this theme in the  
 lesser lyric of my period. The first is Thomas Hood's  
Ballad--

It was not in the winter  
 Our loving lot was cast;  
 It was the time of roses,--  
 We plucked them as we passed!

That churlish season never frowned  
 On early lovers yet!  
 O, no--the world was newly crowned  
 With flowers when first we met.

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<sup>1</sup>Poems and Epigrams, p. 140.

'Twas twilight, and I bade you go,  
 But still you held me fast;  
 It was in the time of roses,--  
 We plucked them as we passed!<sup>2</sup>

Another poem, Love's Calendar, from a little known poet illustrates what I found quite often to be true--a poet may do only one poem in the lesser lyric manner, but that one will be rather better than the average.

That gusty spring, each afternoon  
 By the ivied cot I passed,  
 And noted on that lattice soon  
 Her fair face downward cast;  
 Still in the same place seated there,  
 So diligent, so very fair.

Oft times I said I knew her not,  
 Yet that way round would go,  
 Until, when evenings lengthened out,  
 And bloomed the May-hedge row,  
 I met her by the wayside well,  
 Whose waters, maybe, broke the spell.

-----  
 And now that show o'er lays the thatch,  
 Each starlit eve within  
 The door she waits; I raise the latch,  
 And kiss her lifted chin;  
 Nor do I think we've blushed again,  
 For Love hath made but one of twain.<sup>3</sup>

Although the first of these suggests romance that passed and the second romance which came to happy fruition, there is something in common about them which does not belong to the Landor verse--sincerity expressed in

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<sup>2</sup>Poetical Works, p. 237.

<sup>3</sup>William Bell Scott, in Poets and Poetry of the Century, Vol. 4, p. 366.

simplicity and restraint. These two poems reach that emotional "golden mean" which is so necessary to the lesser lyric. The first poem is the better for charm of diction, but the second stanza of the second one is such a perfect example of

a little thing  
To remember for years--

that I can forgive any lack of felicity on the part of the author in the rest of the poem. Then there is this from Clough, who is usually far too pensive to write in the vein of the lesser lyric. It might be called a "peripheral" illustration--

London Idyll

On grass, on gravel, in the sun  
Or now beneath the shade,  
They went, in pleasant Kensington,  
A prentice and a maid.

That Sunday morning's April glow,  
How should it not impart  
A stir about the veins that flow  
To feed the youthful heart.

Oh! years may come and years may bring  
The truth that is not bliss,  
But will they bring another thing  
That can compare with this?<sup>4</sup>

The poet's smile of sympathy may appear a bit too wistful, but the appeal to me is of a lesser lyric.

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<sup>4</sup>Poems of Arthur Hugh Clough, pp. 260-65.

I found only one poet who could handle the romantic love theme in a symbolic way and maintain what I felt to be a note of genuine tenderness. Leigh Hunt does this in a little thing to which he gives the sub-title "a paraphrase" from Meleager's Greek Anthology--

T'other day as I was twining  
 Roses, for a crown to dine in,  
 What of all things, 'midst the heap  
 Should I light on, fast asleep,  
 But the little desperate elf,  
 The tiny traitor, Love himself!  
 By the wings I pinched him up  
 Like a bee, and in a cup  
 Of my wine, I plunged and sank him,  
 And what d'ye think I did?--I drank him.  
 'Faith, I thought him dead. Not he!  
 There he lives with ten-fold glee;  
 And now this moment with his wings  
 I feel him tickling my heart-strings.<sup>5</sup>

Even this, to some, may be vers de société, but I felt that the delicate handling of the idea, the absence of any hollow compliment, and the clarity of this brief bit of playful allegory saved it from becoming mere society verse.

I found few poets handling the theme of married love in the vein of the lesser lyric. Good poetry on such a subject is too pathetic or gravely serious. This poem to his wife from Hunt approaches that balance of

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<sup>5</sup>"Cupid Swallowed" in Poetical Works, p. 413.

emotion which I was seeking--

Ah, Marian Mine, the face you look on now  
 Is not exactly like my wedding-days:  
 Sunk is its cheek, deeper-retired its gaze,  
 Less white and smooth its temple-flattened brow.  
 Sorrow has been there with his silent plough,  
 And strait, stern hand. No matter, if it raise  
 Aught that affection fancies it may praise,  
 Or make me worthier of Apollo's bough.

Loss, after all,--such loss especially,--  
 Is transfer, change, but not extinction,--no;  
 Part in our children's apple cheeks I see;  
 And, for the rest, while you look at me so,  
 Take care you do not smile it back to me,  
 And miss the copied furrows as you go.<sup>6</sup>

Landon handles well, I think, a thought kindred to the  
 above--companionship's compensation for marks of age--

When Helen first saw wrinkles in her face  
 ('Twas when some fifty long had settled there  
 And intermarried and brancht off awide)  
 She threw herself upon her couch and wept:

-----  
 But when you  
 Found them, or fancied them, and would not hear  
 That they were only vestiges of smiles,  
 Or the impression of some amorous hair  
 Astray from cloistered curls and roseate band,  
 Which had been lying there all night perhaps  
 Upon a skin so soft, "No, no," you said,  
 "Sure, they are coming, yes, are come, are here:  
 Well, and what matters it, while thou art too!"<sup>7</sup>

The spirit of the thing is good in this Landon poem,  
 but it could have been better if the verse form had been

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<sup>6</sup>Poetical Works, p. 241. Here we have one of the few  
 sonnets in this type of poetry.

<sup>7</sup>Poems and Epigrams, p. 126. In this Landon makes a  
 classical allusion successfully.

less slow. Of the two, I believe, Hunt strikes the truer lesser lyric note. Another poet takes Lander's idea and gives it a more musical rendition--

Summer is fleet, oh, summer is fleet--  
 Minna mine with the brown brown eyes:  
 Onward travel his flying feet,  
 And the mystical colours of autumn rise.  
 Clouds will gather round evening's star--  
 Sorrow may silence our first gay rhyme--  
 The river's swift ripples flow tardier far  
 Than the golden minutes of love's sweet time:  
 But to me, whom omnipotent love makes wise  
 There's endless summer in brown brown eyes.<sup>8</sup>

And as fine in sentiment as any of these is a little dialect poem. Here is playful tenderness sent by the muse who is "hamely in attire"--

They speak o' wyles in woman's smiles,  
 An ruin in her e'e--  
 I ken they bring a pang at whiles  
 That's unco sair to dree;  
 But mind ye this, the half ta'en kiss,  
 The first fond fa'in' tear,  
 Is, Heaven kens, fu' sweet amends  
 An' tints o' heaven here.

When twa leal hearts in fondness meet,  
 Life's tempests howl in vain--  
 The very tears o' love are sweet  
 When paid with tears again.  
 Shall sapless prudence shake paw  
 Shall cauldrie caution fear?  
 Oh, dinna, dinna drawn the lowe  
 That lights a heaven here!

What tho' we're ca'd a wee before  
 The stale "three score an' ten;"  
 When Joy knocks kindly at your door,  
 Aye bid her welcome ben.  
 About yon blissfu' bowers above

---

<sup>8</sup>Mortimer Collins, "Summer Song" in Poets and Poetry of the Century, Vol. 5, p. 289.

Let doubtfu' mortals speir,  
 See weel ken we that "Heaven is love"  
 Since love makes heaven here.<sup>9</sup>

On the whole, the spirit of this class of the lesser lyric is finer than the choice of words or rhythm. But, if it loses in this respect, neither does it appear to suffer so much from the possibility of shallow treatment as does the romantic love theme.

Although the lesser lyricist may not handle rollicking nonsense rimes for children, he may, none the less, treat child-life in his poetry. He may watch children wistfully; he may laugh merrily with them and then close with a sigh; or the poet may try to gain the child's level and suggest the child's wide-eyed speechless or naively phrased wonder. One of the best observers of children is Landor. His best poems on children are addressed to his own young sons and daughters--

My serious son! I see thee look  
 First on the picture, then the book.  
 I catch the wish that thou couldst paint  
 The yearnings of the ecstatic saint.  
 Give it not up, my serious son!  
 Wish it again and it is done.  
 Seldom will any fail who tries  
 With patient hand and steadfast eyes,  
 And woos the true with such pure sighs.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> William Thom, "They Speak o' Wyles" in Poets and Poetry of the Century, Vol. 3, p. 266.

<sup>10</sup> Poems and Epigrams, p. 150.

Ye little household gods, that make  
 My heart leap lighter with your play,  
 And never let it sink or ache,  
 Unless you are too far away;

-----  
 How can I call to you from Rome?  
 Will mamma teach what babbo said?  
 Have ye not heard him talk at home  
 About the city of the dead?

-----  
 What shall I bring you? Would you like  
 Urn, image, glass, red, yellow, blue,  
 Stricken by Time, who soon must strike  
 As deep the heart that beats for you.<sup>11</sup>

Thomas Hood is another poet who records his observations of his own children. I believe he is at his best in this mood of wistful adviser--

Love thy mother, little one!  
 Kiss and clasp her neck again,--  
 Hereafter she may have a son  
 Will kiss and clasp her neck in vain.  
 Love thy mother, little one!<sup>12</sup>

For some reason I enjoy Hood's Parental Ode best, although I doubt its proper proportion of humor in relation to thought--

Thou happy, happy elf!  
 (But stop--first let me kiss away that tear)--  
 Thou tiny image of myself!  
 (My love, he's poking peas into his ear!)  
 Thou merry, laughing sprite!  
 With spirits feather-light,  
 Untouched by sorrow and unspoiled by sin--  
 (Good heav'ns the child is swallowing a pin!)<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Poems and Epigrams, p. 158.

<sup>12</sup>Poetical Works, p. 208.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., pp. 254-55.

There is in that poem (or is it merely a verse?) a touch of sympathetic appreciation for the baby's artless mischief which, I think, saves it for my classification.

Illustrative of the merry laugh which closes with a sigh is Wee Joukydaidles--

Wee Joukydaidles,  
 Toddlin' oot an' in:  
 Oh, but she's a cuttie,  
 Makin' sic a din!  
 Aye sae fu' o' mischief,  
 An' minds na' what I say:  
 My very heart gangs loup, loup,  
 Fifty times a day

-----  
 Wee Joukydaidles--  
 For a' ye gie me pain  
 Ye're aye my darlin' tottie yet--  
 My ain, we wean!  
 An' gin I'm spared to ither days--  
 Oh, may they come to pass!--  
 I'll see my bonnie bairnie  
 A braw, braw lass!<sup>14</sup>

Dialect helps to conceal in this the sentiment which might become obtrusive. The tender yearning of a parent for the life which it may guard for only a brief period of years, the hope of that parent that he may see that life develop--these are hidden somewhere in the unadorned Scotch dialect.

Joanna Baillie is much less successful in her praise of a bonnie wee lassie. I feel that she means to strike a colloquial level, but she fails and becomes mediocre.

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<sup>14</sup>James Smith in Poets and Poetry of the Century, Vol. 9, pp. 112-114.

Whose imp art thou, with dimpled cheek,  
 And curly pate, and merry eye,  
 And arm and shoulder round and sleek,  
 And soft and fair?--thou urchin sly!

Thy downcast glances, grave, but cunning,  
 As fringed eye-lids rise and fall;  
 Thy shyness, swiftly from me running,  
 Is infantine coquetry all.<sup>15</sup>

There is a false note here. The necessary apparent artlessness is lacking. This same je ne sais quoi is missing in the verses to children by Charles Lamb, who is so winning in his prose pieces on children. To be sure, this is a bit more finished than the Baillie poem, but it is not the Lamb of Christ's Hospital--

Margaret,--in happy hour  
 Christen'd from that humble flower  
 Which we a daisy call,--  
 May thy pretty namesake be  
 In all things a type of thee,  
 And image thee in all!

Like it you show a modest face,  
 An unpretending native grace.  
 The tulip, and the pink,  
 The china and the damask rose,  
 And every flaunting flower that blows  
 In the comparing shrink.

Of lowly fields you think no scorn,  
 Yet gayest gardens would adorn,  
 And grace wherever set.  
 Home-seated in your lovely bower,  
 Or wedded--a transplanted flower--  
 I bless you, Margaret!<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Poems and Plays of Joanna Baillie, p. 795.

<sup>16</sup>Works, Poems and Plays, p. 146. Here Lamb is far from being so good a poet as he is in Old Familiar Faces or even Hester.

Nearer the lesser lyric's freedom from the merely politely complimentary is My Little Cousins which comes from the pen of an author more used to the writing of society verse, Fraed--

Laugh on, Fair Cousins, for to you  
 All life is joyous yet:  
 Your hearts have all things to pursue,  
 And nothing to regret;  
 And every flower to you is fair,  
 And every month is May:  
 You've not been introduced to care,--  
 Laugh on, laugh on to-day!

-----  
 Perhaps your eyes may grow more bright  
 As Childhood's hues depart;  
 You may be lovelier to the sight  
 And dearer to the heart;  
 You may be sinless still, and see  
 This earth still green and gay;  
 But what you are you will not be;  
 Laugh on, laugh on to-day!  
 But never mind how I behave!  
 Don't interrupt your play;  
 And though I feel so very gray  
 Laugh on, laugh on to-day.<sup>17</sup>

But perhaps, aside from James Smith's dialect poem, this idyllic sonnet from Charles Tennyson Turner is the most charming of the lyrics in this class with children as their subjects.

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<sup>17</sup>Poets and Poetry of the Century, Vol. 3, p. 452.

When Letty had scarce pass'd her third glad year,  
 And her young artless words began to flow,  
 One day we gave the child a colour'd sphere  
 Of the wide earth, that she might mark and know,  
 By tint and outline, all its sea and land.  
 She patted all the world; old empires peep'd  
 Between her baby fingers; her soft hand  
 Was welcome at all frontiers. How she leap'd,  
 And laugh'd, and prattled in her world-wide bliss;  
 And when we turned her sweet unlearned eye  
 On our own isle, she raised a joyous cry,  
 "Oh! yes, I see it, Letty's home is there!"  
 And while she hid all England with a kiss,  
 Bright over Europe fell her golden hair.<sup>18</sup>

Turner has very wisely left the child in one of those unplanned poses which need no comment to add to their appeal. Any remark beyond the word picture would have broken the spell of this moment of childhood's gravity which is like a will-o-the-wisp and will not bear the intrusion of adult sophistication.

Now and then these poets have tried to express a child's thoughts for him. Elizabeth Barrett Browning has tried the role of childhood's spokesman in a fairly successful poem. The last two stanzas are too sophisticated, but otherwise A Child's Thought of God has the necessary naïveté--

I

They say that God lives very high;  
 But if you look above the pines  
 You cannot see our God; and why?

---

<sup>18</sup>Poets and Poetry of the Century, Vol. 3, p. 60.

## IV

But still I feel that His embrace  
 Slides down by thrills, through all things made,  
 Through sight and sound of every place.

## V

As if my tender mother laid  
 On my shut lips her kisses' pressure,  
 Half-waking me at night, and said,  
 "Who kissed you through the dark, dear guessor?"<sup>19</sup>

Joanna Baillie tried writing Devotions for Children,  
 but her poetry does not touch the simplicity of vocabulary  
 or phrasing which Herrick had earlier found and which  
 Stevenson caught later in voicing a child's prayer.

Then let our praises be express'd  
 In light and lively measure,  
 He loves the grateful homage best  
 That is bestow'd with pleasure!

The idea may be ever so good, but it parades under false  
 colors when it purports to be a child's devotional. In  
 that its sincerity of expression is thus marred, it is  
 not in the best lesser lyric spirit.

The conclusion may be safely drawn, I believe,  
 that while childhood is decidedly one of the best  
 themes for a writer of the lesser lyric, the voicing of  
 children's ideas for children is a task which few can  
 do well. I found no poet in the half century I con-  
 sidered who could achieve the vicarious metamorphosis

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<sup>19</sup> Poetical Works of Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Vol. 3,  
 p. 96.

necessary to the voicing of childhood's glad moods in the person of a child. Few subjects demand so much in the way of playful restraint to keep them proper to their inspirers and at the same time to avoid gushing sentimentality.

Few of these poets try to use animals as subjects, and of those who try not many keep that middle course of a Daedalus which is my necessary criterion for a lesser lyric. There must not be the attitude of Sterne's Uncle Toby concerning the fly; neither must the author be handling a toeless Pobble. Among the best illustrations are Darley's Robin's Cross, Hogg's The Skylark, and this one, The Kitten, from Joanna Baillie.

Wanton droll, whose harmless play  
 Beguiles the rustics closing day,  
 When, drawn the evening fire about,  
 Sit aged crone and thoughtless lout,  
 And child upon his three-foot stool,  
 Waiting until his supper cool,  
 And maid whose cheek outblooms the rose,  
 As bright the blazing fagot glows,  
 Who, bending to the friendly light,  
 Plies her task with busy sleight;

-----  
 Come, show thy tricks and sportive graces,  
 Thus circled round with merry faces!

-----  
 Now whoeling round with bootless skill,  
 Thy bo-peep tail provokes thee still,  
 The featest tumbler, stage bedight,  
 To thee is but a clumsy wight,  
 Who every limb and sinew strains  
 To do what costs thee little pains;

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<sup>20</sup>Quoted in Chapter II, p. 33.

For which, I trow, the gaping crowd,<sup>21</sup>  
Requite him oft with plaudets loud.

From this poem it would seem that what the poet needs is the ability to produce brief word etchings to give the proper effect. Here, as with children, the subjects speak for themselves if the poet gives a true picture of them, even though what we receive is not a full-length portrait. Once Miss Baillie has her stage arranged, in a few words she gives a sketch of the kitten which leaves us smiling. There is less amusement, but a kindred sympathy for a "bit beastie" in Lardor's To a Spaniel--

No, Daisy! lift not up thy ear,  
It is not she whose steps draw near.  
Tuck under thee that leg, for she  
Continues yet beyond the sea,  
And thou may'st whimper in thy sleep,<sup>22</sup>  
These many days, and start and weep.

The possibility of making the bird or beast subject the means of personal expression is shown here. Charlotte Brontë, whose poetry usually reveals a state of black melancholy, writes one bird description which suggests to me that she is here giving vent to some of the sense of repression which her own life held. Her habitual gloom is hidden in her momentary effort to notice the bird.

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<sup>21</sup>Works of Joanna Baillie, p. 805.

<sup>22</sup>Poems and Epigrams, p. 146.

The house was still, the room was still,  
 'Twas eventide in June;  
 A caged canary to the sun  
 Then setting, trilled a tune.

A free bird on that lilac bush  
 Outside the lattice heard.  
 He listened long--there came a hush,  
 He dropped an answering tune.<sup>23</sup>

Jane Welsh Carlyle has used this device of the description of a bird to convey her feeling of isolation in those early years of her married life.

To a Swallow Building Under Our Eves

Thou too hast travelled, little fluttering thing--  
 Hast seen the world, and now thy weary wing  
 Thou too must rest.  
 But much, my little bird, couldst thou but tell,  
 I'd give to know why here thou lik'st so well  
 To build thy nest.

For thou hast passed fair places in thy flight;  
 A world lay all beneath thee where to light;  
 And, strange thy taste,  
 Of all the vari'd scenes that met thine eye--  
 Of all the spots for building 'neath the sky--  
 To choose this waste

-----  
 God speed thee, pretty bird; may thy small nest  
 With little ones all in good time be blest.  
 I love thee much

For well thou managest that life of thine,  
 While I? Oh, ask not what I do with mine!  
 Would I were such!<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Brontë Poems, p. 58.

<sup>24</sup>Poets and Poetry of the Century, Vol. 7, p. 233. Written 1832.

Jane Carlyle's projection of her own feelings into the description shows the difficulty of attempting to classify these poems. Which predominates here, the philosophy of the author or the activities of the nest-building swallow?

Next to people and animate nature, the lesser lyricist adapts himself best to his natural surroundings. The seasons, and especially spring, attract him. And when he does not allow himself to become the philosopher in nature, or when he does not overlay his natural setting with mythological allusions, he finds himself in his proper milieu. An interesting poem by one of our greater poets which almost becomes a lesser lyric, but fails a bit, I think, in the figurative language at the close, is this sonnet of Coleridge.

O! it is pleasant, with a heart at ease,  
 Just after sunset, or by moonlight skies,  
 To make the shifting clouds be what you please,  
 Or let the easily persuaded eyes  
 Own each quaint likeness issuing from the mould  
 Of a friend's fancy; or with head bent low  
 And cheek aslant see rivers flow of gold  
 'Twixt crimson banks; and then, a traveller, go  
 From mount to mount through cloudland, gorgeous  
 Or list'ning to the tide, with closed sight,  
 Be that blind bard, who on the Chian strand,  
 By those deep sounds possess'd with inward light  
 Beheld the Iliad and Odyssee  
 Rise to the swelling of the voiceful sea.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Poets and Poetry of the Century, Vol. 1, p. 504.

Decidedly this is not Coleridge at his best; nor is it a good illustration of a lesser lyric. The thought is obscured by fancy of too elevated a variety. There is pleasing whimsicality in Landor's description of himself, whiling away a spring day. We all experience those times, when, without any immediate task before us, we simply vegetate. Perhaps in its very touching of a pleasant commonplace feeling lies its appeal.

Pursuits! alas, I now have none,  
 But idling where were once pursuits,  
 Often, all morning quite alone,  
 I sit upon those twisted roots  
 Which rise above the grass, and shield  
 Our harebell, when the churlish year  
 Catches her coming first afield,  
 And she looks pale tho' spring is near.  
 I chase the violets that would hide  
 Their little prudish heads away,  
 And argue with the rills that chide  
 When we discover them at play.<sup>26</sup>

Lamb pays tribute also to the spring, and in particular that fragile precursor of showers, sunshine, and indolence, The First Leaf of Spring. Lamb does not attain the rhythmic smoothness which Landor's poem has, but Lamb is never so fine verbally in his poems as he is in his prose.

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<sup>26</sup>Poems and Epigrams, p. 104.

Thou fragile, filmy, gossamery thing,  
 First Leaf of Spring!  
 At every lightest breath thou quakest,  
 And with a zephyr shakest,  
 Scarce stout enough to hold thy slender form together,  
 In calmest halcyon weather,  
 Next sister to the web that spiders weave,  
 Poor Flutterers to deceive  
 Into their treacherous silken bed:  
 O how art thou sustain'd, how nourish'd!  
 All trivial as thou art,  
 Without dispute,  
 Thou play'st a mighty part,  
 And art the Herald to a throng  
 Of buds, blooms, fruit,  
 That shall thy cracking branches sway,  
 While buds on every spray  
 Shall pay the copious fruitage with a sylvan song.<sup>27</sup>

The difficulty here, as in many of these poems on nature, is that the idea tends to become trite--that is, the authors repeat the old, old ideas about spring and flowers without clothing these ideas in new garments of expression to please the "inward eye" of the reader. Or, perhaps because nature is teeming with parallels for our own most serious meditations, the poet becomes pensive and loses himself in "the joy of elevated thoughts." One poem, In a London Square, will illustrate this tendency of the poet to become introspective in the presence of nature.

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<sup>27</sup>Poems and Plays, p. 141.

Put forth thy loaf, thou lofty plane,  
 East wind and frost are safely gone;  
 With Zephyr mild and balmy rain  
 The summer comes serenely on;  
 Earth, air, and sun and skies combine  
 To promise all that's kind and fair:-  
 But thou, O human heart of mine  
 Be still, contain thyself, and bear.

December days were brief and chill,  
 The winds of March were wild and drear,  
 And nearing and receding still,  
 Spring never would, we thought, be here.  
 The leaves that burst, the suns that shine,  
 Had, not the less, their certain date:-  
 And thou, O human heart of mine,  
 Be still, refrain thyself, and wait. 28

There is a type of introspection, however, which does not lead so directly to somber depths--at least when handled by a writer of lesser lyrics. This is reminiscence. Perhaps because we forget the unpleasant and tend to enlarge upon the delightful such a theme leads rather to wistfulness than to positive regret. This subject seems to lead inevitably to a comparison of the present with the past--the far removed past. The contrast which results does not excite an emotion of definite sorrow, so much as a blending of joy and sadness. For a moment we would pause, stop the on-rush of life, and live again in memory the days now gone. And these fleeting glimpses of the past hold for us a satisfaction

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<sup>28</sup> Complete Poems of Arthur Hugh Clough, p. 197.

something akin to crushed rose leaves.

Thackeray can take the past and recreate it for his reader in smooth, colloquial stanzas. There is The Cane Bottom'd Chair--

In tattered old slippers that toast at the bars  
And a ragged old jacket perfumed with cigars,  
Away from the world and its toils and its cares,  
I've a snug little kingdom up four pair of stairs.

This snug little chamber is cram'd in all nooks  
With worthless old nicknacks and silly old books,  
And foolish old odds and foolish old ends,  
Crack'd bargains from brokers, cheap keepsakes  
from friends.

But of all the cheap treasures that garnish my nest,  
There's one that I love and I cherish the best:  
For the finest of couches that's padded with hair  
I never would change thee, my cane-bottom'd chair.

It was but a moment she sat in this place,  
She'd a scarf on her neck, and a smile on her face!  
A smile on her face, and a rose in her hair,  
And she sat there and bloom'd in my cane-bottom'd  
chair.

When the candles burn low, and the company's gone,  
In the silence of night as I sit here alone--  
I sit here alone, but we yet are a pair--  
My Fanny I see in my cane-bottom'd chair.<sup>29</sup>

This poem could very easily be classed among the poems of romance, but because it is, after all, remembered romance, I feel it more properly belongs here. Thackeray is fond of remembering. His mood remains the same, but

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<sup>29</sup>Ballads and Miscellanies, p. 52-53.

the phrasing takes on more grace and felicity in Fairy Days--

Beside the old hall-fire--upon my nurse's knee,  
Of happy fairy days--what tales were told to me!  
I thought the world was once--all peopled with  
princesses,

And my heart would beat to hear--their loves and  
their distresses;

And many a quiet night,--in slumber sweet and deep,  
The pretty fairy people--would visit me in sleep.

I saw them in my dreams--come flying east and west,  
With wondrous fairy gifts--the new-born babe they  
bless'd;

One has brought a jewel--and one a crown of gold,  
And one has brought a curse--but she is wrinkled  
and old.

The gentle Queen turns pale--to hear those words of sin,  
But the King he only laughs--and bids the dance begin.

-----  
Oh! happy childish tales--of knight and faerie!  
I waken from my dreams--but there's ne'er a knight  
for me!

I waken from my dreams--and wish that I could be  
A child by the old hall-fire--upon my nurse's knee!<sup>30</sup>

Leigh Hunt illustrates this reminiscent mood when it takes  
on an idyllic touch and recreates familiar scenes, in  
his Description of Hampstead--

A steeple issuing from a leafy rise,  
With farmy fields in front, and sloping green,  
Dear Hampstead, is thy southern-face serene,  
Silently smiling on approaching eyes.  
Within, thine ever-shifting looks surprise,--  
Streets, hills, and dells, trees overhead are seen,  
Now down below, with smoking roofs between,--  
A village, revelling in varieties,  
Then northward what a range, with heath and pond,  
Nature's own ground; woods let mansions through,

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<sup>30</sup>Ballads and Miscellanies, p. 27.

And cottaged vales with pillowy fields beyond,  
 And clump of darkening pines and prospects blue,  
 And that clear path through all, where daily meet  
 Cool cheeks, and brilliant eyes, and morn elastic feet.<sup>31</sup>

There is more animation in another of Hunt's descriptions, based, I believe, on an accumulation of similar experiences. It is a description resulting from a composite of memories, an incremental observation--

Yes, I behold the old accustomed sight,  
 Pit, boxes, galleries; I was at 'the play';  
 I saw uprise the stage's strange floor-day,  
 And music tuning as in tune's despite;  
 Childhood I saw, glad-faced, that squeezeth tight  
 One's hand, while rapt curtain soars away,--  
 And beauty and age, and all that piled array--  
 Thousands of souls drawn to one wise delight.

A noble spectacle!--noble in mirth--  
 Nobler in sacred fellowship of tears!  
 I've often asked myself what sight on earth  
 Is worth the fancying of our fellow spheres;  
 And this is one--whole hosts in love with worth  
 Judging the shapes of their own hopes and fears.<sup>32</sup>

Thomas Hood, somberly reminiscent in I Rember, I Remember, can be equally playful if the memory happens to be less poignant in its associations. He may even border on the humorous, as in The Flower--

Alone, across a foreign plain,  
 The exile slowly wanders,  
 And on his isle beyond the main  
 With saddened spirit ponders;

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<sup>31</sup>Poetical Works, pp. 235-238. One of six sonnets on this subject.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 252.

When lo! he starts, with glad surprise,  
 Home-joys come rushing o'er him,  
 For "modest, wee, and crimson-tipped,"  
 He spies the flower before him!

With eager haste he stoops him down,  
 His eyes with moisture hazy,  
 And as he plucks the simple bloom  
 He murmurs, "Lawk-a-daisy!"

Landon seems able to paint in a few words a memory picture which is pleasant because we've all tried painting just such a picture--that of a familiar face--

Yes, let me bring before my sight  
 The silken tresses chain'd up tight,  
 The tiny fingers tipt with red  
 By tossing up the strawberry-bed;  
 Half-open lips, long violet eyes,  
 A little rounder in surprise.  
 And then (her chin against her knee)  
 "Mamma! who can that stranger be?  
 How grave the smile he smiles at me!"<sup>33</sup>

But perhaps the best illustration of the tenderly reminiscent mood is the little stanza by William Allingham used in Chapter I to show the restraint which silences "thoughts that do lie too deep for tears".

These poems are nowhere harder to value than at those times when the author becomes philosophically inclined. Of course, it is granted that there may always be inherent in their themes a bit of gentle philosophy; but, when the poet takes for his whole theme the presentation or solution of a problem of life, then this

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<sup>33</sup>poems and Epigrams, p. 111.

question naturally comes: how deep may his thought be, before he departs from the lesser lyric spirit? This cannot be answered precisely; however, it can be illustrated. There was more than mere provocation to laughter in Aristophanes's having the vocabulary of two Greek dramatists weighed to judge which was heavier. His method suggests the literary problem which this selection of illustrative material presents to me. There is a group of poems which are not gay, seldom even suggestive of a smile, which, nevertheless, merely skim the deeper emotions. These see solemnity, as it were, from the corner of the eye. They glimpse the serious, and having made themselves conscious of it, they dart away lest it force them into greater depths. Such bits of philosophy are saved by brevity and lightness of touch for the class of the lesser lyric.

Occasionally these poems take the form of a rhymed exposition or definition. Home attempts to bring together the intangible essentials which help make a dwelling place something for which the human heart yearns. And wisely, I think, this author makes her criteria speak for themselves. Comment would lead into mere sentimentalizing.

Two birds within one nest;  
 Two hearts within one breast;  
 Two spirits in one fair  
 Firm league of love and prayer,  
 Together bound for aye, together blest.

An ear that waits to catch  
 A hand upon the latch;  
 A step that hastens its sweet rest to win,

A world of care without,  
 A world of strife shut out  
 A world of love shut in.<sup>34</sup>

What's the Best Thing in the World? asks

Elizabeth Barrett Browning in one of her lighter philosophical moods. She does not find an exact answer, but she suggests several in a graceful, happy spirit. She leaves you thinking, but not dark brown thoughts.

What's the best thing in the world?  
 June-rose, by May-dew impearled;  
 Sweet south-wind, that means no rain;  
 Truth, not cruel to a friend;  
 Pleasure, not in haste to end;  
 Beauty, not self-decked and curled  
 Till its pride is over-plain;  
 Light, that never makes you wink;  
 Memory, that gives no pain;  
 Love, when, so, you're loved again.  
 What's the best thing in the world?  
 --Something out of it, I think.<sup>35</sup>

Even a prayer, I believe, may be given in the spirit of a lesser lyric if the supplicant comes with

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<sup>34</sup> Dora Greenwell in Poets and Poetry of the Century, Vol. 7, p. 345.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., Vol. 4, p. 100.

a glad-eyed reverence. In such a mood Leigh Hunt comes when, with whole hearted gratitude, he makes this thanksgiving--

To the Sprit great and good,  
 Felt, although not understood,--  
 By whose breath, and in whose eyes,  
 The green earth rolls in the blue skies,--  
 Who we know, from things that bless,  
 Must delight in loveliness;  
 And who, therefore, we believe  
 Means us well in things that grieve,--  
                                   Gratitude! Gratitude!  
 Heav'n be praised as heavenly should  
 Not with slavery, or with fears,  
 But with a face as towards a friend, and  
                                   with thin sparkling tears.<sup>36</sup>

Here is no Job-like resignation, rather a buoyancy and hope based on simple faith which does not savor of fatalism. Such a poem even though thought-filled strikes the golden mean of a lesser lyric.

Landon handles best those thoughts which border on the deeply philosophic or tragic. The restraint and compression of ideas into well-turned phrases which his poems possess makes them stop short of the lofty or the sublime. Here I would place that fragilly poignant stanza, Rose Aylmer. But he is just as good and has less of the sweetly pathetic in those thought-packed lines in which he becomes a philosopher in miniature.

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<sup>36</sup>Poetical Works, p. 381.

## cxcvii

Alas, how soon the hours are over  
 Counted us out to play the lover!  
 And how much narrower is the stage  
 Allotted us to play the sage!  
 But when we play the fool, how wide  
 The theatre expands! beside,  
 How long the audience sits before us!  
 How many prompters! what a chorus!<sup>37</sup>

## xv

There is a time when the romance of life  
 Should be shut up, and closed with a double clasp:  
 Better that this be done before the dust  
 That none can blow away falls into it.<sup>38</sup>

If either of the ideas dealt with so compactly in these poems were to be enlarged upon, Landor might appear as a bitter cynic, a melancholy introvert, or a regretful idealist; but he pauses before anything profoundly serious can develop. So they stand—thoughts, crystalized and translucent, upon which the reader might dwell thoughtfully, but over which he will not be encouraged to ponder as the result of Landor's manner. The brevity, smoothness, and rhythm lead the reader away from depths that may be inherent in the underlying ideas of the poems.

The writers of the lesser lyric, then, take for their themes chiefly love, children, nature,

<sup>37</sup>Poems and Epigrams, p. 173.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 227.

reminiscence, and philosophy of a lighter variety. The mood may change from one of lilted laughter to one in which the eye only gleams with thought and not even a smile remains on the lips; but it must maintain its emotional poise and be sincere. If it fails in these two points, it will appear as an Icarus-like failure in a higher form of the lyric, or it will become mere facetious, brilliant verse.

## Chapter IV

## The Lesser Lyric and the Essay of the Center

Many people suppose that poetry is something to be found only in books, contained in lines of ten syllables, with like endings; but wherever there is a sense of beauty, or power, or harmony, as in the motion of a wave of the sea, in the growth of a flower that "spreads its sweet leaves to the air, and dedicates its beauty to the sun,"-- there is poetry in its birth.

--Hazlitt.

Poetry has been considered "as comprising all compositions with certain characteristic content, irrespective of whether they are written in verse or prose."<sup>1</sup> This suggests a kinship between prose and verse which appears in a marked degree in certain types--those types in which a "characteristic content" appears. Such a relation exists as far as the lesser lyric and the essay of the center are concerned.

A short prose piece with its theme "classes, kinds, varieties, not individuals", with "a style that departs somewhat from the level plain of assertion"--

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<sup>1</sup>See Chapter I, p.

that is the essay of the center as defined--as nearly as one may define it--by Professor O'Leary.<sup>2</sup> It "must seem sincere and fresh" in addition to any specific characteristics which it may have.<sup>3</sup> Now in this sincerity, freshness, shunning of the didactic, and the use of general characteristics, hobbies, moods, and whimsicalities the lesser lyric appears to be motivated similarly. For when the lesser lyric becomes too much the medium for the expression of individuals' moods, hobbies, and whimsies, it too often becomes strictly occasional verse or society verse. Alexander Smith, who knew so well how to catch the gently genial mood of the essayist, has voiced the spirit of artful artlessness which underlies the essay of the center--and may I also say underlies the lesser lyric? Here is an essayist of the center defining his own craft in what Mr. O'Leary would, I believe, call a definite style.

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<sup>2</sup>The Essay, Chapter I, p. 32 ff. This term has been used by Hugh Walker in The English Essay and Essayists, p. 4. He says that the term was suggested to him by Alexander Smith in "Essays and Essay Writing" which appears in Dreamthorp.

<sup>3</sup>The Essay, p. 104.

It is not the essayist's duty to inform, to build pathways through metaphysical morasses, to cancel abuses, any more than it is the duty of the poet to do these things. Incidentally he may do something in that way, just as the poet may, but it is not his duty, and should not be expected of him. Skylarks are primarily created to sing, although a whole choir of them may be baked in pies and brought to table; they were born to make music, although they may incidentally stay the pangs of vulgar hunger. The essayist is a kind of poet in prose, and if questioned harshly as to his uses, he might be unable to render a better apology for his existence than a flower might.

He has no pride, and is deficient in a sense of the congruity and fitness of things. He lifts a pebble from the ground, and puts it aside more carefully than any gem; and on a nail in a cottage-door he will hang the mantle of his thought, heavily brocaded with the gold of rhetoric. He finds his way into the Elysian fields through portals the most shabby and commonplace.<sup>4</sup>

The delicate balance of thought with humor which I have suggested as a sine qua non for the lesser lyric is no less a part of this form of essay. "The great essayist must be something of a sage, though his humour have all the agility of Puck and Ariel."<sup>5</sup>

As an armless man is handicapped in his explanation of an accordion, so I am handicapped unless I use

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<sup>4</sup>"Essays and Essay Writing" from Dreamthorp, p. 23. It is interesting here to compare what Arlo Williams has to say in The Essay, p. 18, on this same point.

<sup>5</sup>Arlo Williams, The Essay, p. 54.

illustrations as a basis of comparison for these two literary forms. Fortunately in this period--1810-1860--there are a number of essayists whose work is rich in examples which show a community of spirit with the lesser lyric. William Hazlitt, Charles Lamb, Leigh Hunt, Alexander Smith, William Makepeace Thackeray, all wrote during these years; they all caught in a measure that spirit suggested by Smith himself in his own essay on essayists--that careful maintenance of emotional equilibrium suggested by Williams; they all show those qualities of the essay named by Mr. O'Leary. From these, then, I shall select a few parallel ideas prompted by a similar spirit and resulting in comparable expression. These will be inadequate because, of necessity, mere bits of essays cannot give the unity of mood which makes the essay what it is, and, in a large measure, links it with the more compressed lesser lyric.

Perhaps the closest similarity between the two literary types is felt in the handling of the reminiscence theme. Here the essayist brings in his tender understanding of personality which the poet applies more particularly because he must concentrate his expression. Is it not the spirit of reminiscence--vicarious--or actual--which lies back of those lesser lyrics written

about romance, particular romance, and children, actual children? The difference is this: The essayist brings in these particular people incidentally because, having more space, he does not need to concentrate on the particular and suggest the general, but rather to concentrate on the general and suggest the particular. Take Lamb and Thackeray: in two of these suggested particulars--their child selves--

----but for the child Elia--that 'other me', there, in the background--I must take leave to cherish remembrance of that young master--with as little reverence, I protest, to his stupid changeling of five-and-forty, as if it had been a child of some other house, and not of my parents. I can cry over its patient small-pox at five, and rougher medicaments. I can lay its poor feverish head upon the sick pillow at Christ's, and wake with it in surprise at the gentle posture of maternal tenderness hanging over it, that unknown had watched its sleep. I know how it shrank from any, the least colour of falsehood.--God help thee, Elia, how art thou changed!<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>"New Year's Eve," p. 140 from Essays of Elia. It is interesting to notice how far superior Lamb, the essayist, is to Lamb, the poet. The inimitable style of the Elia papers seems scarcely to have come from the same hand as the Album verses. Once in a little sonnet, Leisure, he touches the idea of The Superannuated Man, but the laurels go to the essayist.

#### Leisure

They talk of time, and of time's galling yoke,  
That like a mill-stone on man's mind doth press,

May, the very pages over which my head bends--disappear before my very eyes. They are looking backwards, back into forty years off, into a dark room, in a little house hard by on the Common here, in the Bartlemy-tide holidays. The parents have gone to town for two days: the house is all his own, his own and a grim old maid servant's, and a little boy is seated at night in the lonely drawing-room poring over "Manfroni, or the One-handed Monk", so frightened that he scarcely dares to turn round.

Hazlitt, too, gives us a glad memory, untouched by the bitterness which marks many of his personal essays.

"When I was quite a boy my father used to take me to Montpelier Tea-Gardens at Walworth. Do I go there now? No: the place is deserted, and its beds o'ertumed. Is there, then, nothing that can

Bring back the hour  
Of glory in the grass, of splendour in  
the flower?"

Oh! yes. I unlock the casket of memory, and draw back the warders of the brain; and there this scene of my infant wanderings still lives unfaded, or with fresher dyes.

Which only work and business can redress:  
Of divine Leisure such foul lies are spoke,  
Wounding her fair gifts with calumnious stroke.  
But might I, fed with silent meditation,  
Assailed live from that fiend Occupation--  
Improbis Labor, which my spirits hath broke--  
I'd drink of Time's rich cup, and never surfeit:  
Fling in more days than went to make the gem,  
That crown'd the white top of Methusalem:  
Yea on my weak neck take, and never forfeit,  
Like Atlas bearing up the dainty sky,  
The heaven-sweet burthen of eternity.

<sup>7</sup>"Tunbridge Toys", p. 60 from Roundabout Papers by W. M. Thackeray.

A new sense comes upon me as in a dream; a richer perfume, brighter colours start out; my eye dazzles; my heart heaves with its new load of bliss, and I am a child again.<sup>8</sup>

These, and the sweet, unaffected wisdom of Hazlitt's Advice to a School Boy are, so it seems to me, closely akin to such lesser lyrics as Hunt's and Landor's poems on children or remembered childhood. Fraed has combined well this wistful reminiscence and a sympathy for childhood in his Fairy Song. Is there not here an appreciation of childhood shown through adult whimsicality, resulting from a consciousness of what Lamb so well calls "that other me"?

He has conn'd the lesson now  
 He has read the book of pain  
 There are furrows on his brow;  
 I must make it smooth again.

Lo! I knock the spurs away;  
 Lo! I loosen belt and brand;  
 Hark! I hear the courser neigh  
 For his stall in Fairy-land.

Bring the cap, and bring the vest;  
 Buckle on his sandal shoon;  
 Fetch his memory from the chest  
 In the treasury of the moon.

I have taught him to be wise  
 For a little maiden's sake;--  
 Lo! he opens his glad eyes,  
 Softly, slowly; Minstrel, wake!<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>From Hazlitt's Why Distant Objects Please, p. 130.

<sup>9</sup>Cambridge Book of Lesser Poets, p. 382.

Quite as closely related is the poets' and essayists' remembering of those days after childhood. Here fall the themes of romance--youthful or middle-aged, actual or fanciful--and family life, which are inspired by the authors' sympathetic observance of life about him. Steeped in this spirit are Smith's Dreamthorp, Lamb's Dream Children and Old China, Thackeray's quizzical bits of description in On a Pear-Tree, and On Ogres, and Hunt's The Deaths of Little Children. These are by no means all of the essays dealing with romance and family life, but they are, perhaps, the best. And family life belongs here, I think, because to those poets who do not express bitterness at their best the home may be but the flowering or mellowing of romance. This love theme finds, as I suggested in the last chapter, many expressions in the lesser lyric. For the sake of present comparison recall Lamb's Dream Children and weigh the intangible spirit of yearning which permeates that, and is an essential part of this definition of home by Leigh Hunt.

#### Our Cottage

Some few of us, children, and grown, possess  
 A cottage, far removed. 'Tis in a glade,  
 Where the sun harbours: and one side of it  
 Listens to bees, another to the brook.  
 Lovers, that have just parted for the night  
 Dream of such spots, when they have said their  
 pray'rs--

Or some tired parent, holding by the hand  
 A child, and walking tow'rds the setting sun.

No news comes here; no scandal; no routine  
 Of morning visit; not a postman's knock,--  
 That double thrust of the long staff of care  
 We are as distant from the world in spirit  
 If not in place, as though in Crusoe's isle,  
 And please ourselves with being ignorant  
 Ev'n of the country some five miles beyond.  
 Our wood's our world.<sup>10</sup>

The spirit of by-gone days, reminiscence, moves the essayist when he comes closest to the author of the lesser lyric in the latter's interpretation of personality, romance, or nature. The poet, moved by a similar mood is, nevertheless, forced to crystallize in a small space those digressions into the particular which are so important a part of the essayist's discursive generalities about "classes, kinds, varieties". Thus the poet is dealing with actual scenes, actual lovers, actual children entirely; but, if he is at his best, this theme of the particular is enriched by a suggestion of the universal. Perhaps this very suggestion of something

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<sup>10</sup>Poetical Works, p. 263. In connection with Hunt it is worth while to observe the inferiority of his essays to his poetry. He rises to his best work in the essay only at a few points, in The Deaths of Little Children and his discussions of books. His work as a poet is of uniform excellence. Here, it would appear, the necessary compression prevents what becomes verbosity in some of his essays.

back of the immediate separates most sharply pure occasional verse from the lesser lyric--but this is beside the point here. Back to Allingham, then, who might be said to give as a "touchstone" for reminiscence--

Four ducks on a pond  
 A grass-bank beyond,  
 A blue sky of spring,  
 White clouds on the wing;  
 What a little thing  
 To remember for years--  
 To remember with tears!

Now place beside this the remembered Lark's Flight of Alexander Smith--

Just then, out of the grassy space at the foot of the scaffold, in the dead silence audible to all, a lark rose from the side of its nest, and went surging upward in its happy flight. O heaven! how did that song translate itself into dying ears? Did it bring in one wild burning moment father, and mother, and poor Irish cabin, and prayers said at bed-time, and the smell of turf fires, and innocent sweethearting and rising and setting suns? Did it--but--the men whom I saw so near but a moment ago are at immeasurable distance, and have solved the great enigma--and the lark has not yet finished his flight: you can see and hear him yonder in the fringe of white May cloud.<sup>11</sup>

Here is an idea--simple natural settings may become inevitably bound up with the emotional experiences of human life. Smith, the essayist, presents his general

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<sup>11</sup>Dreamthorp, p. 97.

idea in so many words. Then to make his broad statement clear he gives this particular recollection--a veritable etching from his gallery of memory. Allingham, with never an open suggestion of that general truth, gives us in a few strokes the etching itself.

Close to this theme of the re-living of real or fancied experiences in which these types of prose and poetry touch is the mood of gentle philosophy. The authors in treating such themes are grave with a touch of whimsy. One of these verba sapientiae is this-- pleasure, lasting pleasure--or as lasting as changeable human beings desire--may be found in books. Hunt tells us, "I entrench myself in my books equally against sorrow and the weather."<sup>12</sup> Lamb is steeped in this idea.

Alexander Smith puts it this way--

In my garden I spend my days; in my library  
I spend my nights. My interests are divided  
between my geraniums and my books. With the  
flower I am in the present; with the book I am  
in the past.<sup>13</sup>

Thackeray in his essay On a Lazy Boy, On a Peal of Bells and especially in one fine passage in De Juventute<sup>14</sup> suggests this bit of advice to those who are tired of the

<sup>12</sup>My Books, p. 78.

<sup>13</sup>Books and Garden, p. 220.

<sup>14</sup>Roundabout Papers, pp. 73-74.

actual--enjoy books.

Now Hunt expresses a similar idea in To May--

There is May in books forever;  
 May will part from Spencer never;  
 May's in Milton, May's in Prior;  
 May's in Chaucer, Thomson, Dyer;  
 May's in all Italian books;  
 She has old and modern nooks,  
 Where she sleeps with nymphs and elves  
 In happy places they call shelves  
 And will rise and dress your rooms  
 With a drapery thick with blooms.<sup>15</sup>

These authors are interested in life and time and the relation of the two. They do not find that relation, but they make suggestions, ask eager questions or give figuratively expressed solutions. The essayist, as usual, drops these suggestions, solutions, or questions as asides. Thackeray is a master in the use of philosophical asides--

And what has this to do with half-crowns,  
 good or bad? Oh, friend! may our coin, battered,  
 and clipped, and defaced though it be, prove to  
 be Sterling Silver on the day of the Great Assay!<sup>16</sup>

In the past year's diary is there any dismal  
 day noted in which you have lost a friend? In

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<sup>15</sup>Poetical Works, p. 253. In this poem Hunt, the poet, and Hunt, the essayist, in The World of Books seem to be of equal excellence--if there is a difference of quality, I would say it was in favor of the essayist.

<sup>16</sup>"On a Medal of George the Fourth", Roundabout Papers, p. 290.

mine there is. I do not mean by death. Those who are gone, you have. Those who departed loving you, love you still; and you love them always. They are not really gone, those dear hearts and true; they are only gone into the next room; and you will presently get up and follow them, and yonder door will close upon you, and you will be no more seen.<sup>17</sup>

Shelly, who is nearly always too full of passion or somber seriousness for the lesser lyricist, gives us two bits which are Landor-like in their brief gravity.

Fragment: Reminiscence and Desire.

Is it that in some brighter sphere  
We part from friends we meet when here?  
Or do we see the Future pass  
Over the Present's dusky glass?  
Or what is that that makes us seem  
To patch up fragments of a dream,  
Part of which comes true, and part  
Beats and trembles in the heart?

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<sup>17</sup>"On Lett's Diary", p. 159. Thackeray, quite different from Hunt, is decidedly a better essayist than a poet. The poet in The Mahogany Tree-

Evenings we knew,  
Happy as this;  
Faces we miss,  
Pleasant to see,  
Kind hearts and true,  
Gentle and just,  
Peace to your dust.

We sing round the tree.

Or in The Cane-Bottom'd Chair is not so delightful, I feel, as the essayist. However, there is a more uniform excellence in the two types in Thackeray than there is in Hunt. Thackeray seldom appears to be verbose in his essays; even when he is writing against time his discursiveness is delightful.

## To-morrow

Where art thou, beloved To-morrow?  
 When young and old and strong and weak,  
 Rich and poor through joy and sorrow,  
 Thy sweet smiles we ever seek,--  
 In the place--ah! well-a-day!  
 We find the thing we fled--To-day!

The lesser lyric seldom actually touches the theme of death as Thackeray does in the excerpts given here. Eternity and death--these finalities are beyond the scope of this type of lyric; and, when the essayists discuss subjects in a manner other than a figurative one, they depart from any similarity to the lesser lyric. This is just the thing Hazlitt and Alexander Smith do at times.<sup>18</sup> They are charming in their deeply serious moods, but in them they show no similarity to the smiling, pensive mood of the lesser lyric. Lamb as Elia, Hunt, and Thackeray in many of his Roundabout Papers, are the essayists of this period who write best in that mood which hesitates between the pathetic and the thoughtlessly merry.

The spirit of a poet or an essayist is a thing which we can always sense; but who can place exactly

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<sup>18</sup>e.g. Smith Death and Dying; Hazlitt, On the Love of Life and On the Fear of Death.

within the confines of language that intangible thing we call spirit? So I find myself with only apparent parallels between this essayist's mood and that poet's mood. All I can say, finally, is that in the expression of wistful, personal memories and in the voicing of gentle philosophy these two classes create similar impressions on the reader. And this "characteristic content" makes of the essayist's expressions, at their best, prose poems, and of the poet's concentrated ideas, poems which cannot be mistaken for mere verse "in lines of ten syllables, with like endings."

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## List of Poems and Authors Considered

- Allingham, William. (1828-1889)  
 Half-Waking  
 A Memory (Four ducks on a pond)  
 The Fairies  
 Lovely Mary Donnelly
- Baillie, Joanna. (1764-1851)  
 The Kitten  
 To a Child  
 Verses to Our Own Flowery Kirtled Spring  
 Devotions for Children
- Beddoes, Thomas Lovell. (1803-1849)  
 Dream-Pedlary
- Brontë, Charlotte. (1824-1855)  
 At Eventide
- Brontë, Emily. (1818-1848)  
 The Old Stoic
- Browning, Elizabeth Barrett. (1809-1861)  
 What's the Best Thing in the World  
 A Musical Instrument  
 A Child's Thought of God
- Browning, Robert. (1812-1889)  
 Meeting at Night  
 Parting at Morning  
 My Star  
 One Way of Love
- Burbidge, Thomas. (1816-?)  
 Eventide
- Byron, Lord. (1788-1824)  
 So We'll go no More a Roving  
 When We Two Parted  
 My Boat is on the Shore

- Campbell, Thomas. (1777-1844)  
 Lines to a Lady (on being presented with a  
 sprig of Alexanderan Laurel)  
 Song (I gave my love a chain of gold)  
 Lines (on revisiting Cathcart)  
 To My Niece, Mary Campbell  
 Thought Suggested by the New Year  
 Field-Flowers
- Carlyle, Jane Welsh. (1795-1861)  
 To a Swallow Building Under Our Eyes
- Clough, Arthur Hugh. (1819-1861)  
 Youth and Age  
 Where Lies the Land  
 In a London Square  
 London Idyll  
 Songs in Absence (Ye flags of Piccadilly)
- Collins, Mortimer. (1827-1876)  
 Summer Song
- Cook, Eliza. (1817-1889)  
 They All Belong to Me
- Darley, George. (1795-1846)  
 Robins' Cross  
 I've Been Roaming  
 Summer Winds
- Dickens, Charles. (1812-1870)  
 Ivy Green  
 Christmas Carol
- Domett, Alfred. (1811-1887)  
 A Glee for Winter
- Gray, David. (1838-1861)  
 The Yellow Hammer
- Greenwell, Dora. (1821-1882)  
 Home
- Griffin, Gerald. (1803-1840)  
 A Place in Thy Memory
- Hogg, James. (1770-1835)  
 The Skylark  
 The Auld Man's Farewell to His Wee House

The Minstrel Bay  
 When the Kye Comes Home  
 There's Gowd in the Breast

Hood, Thomas. (1798-1845)

A Parental Ode  
 To--(Still glides the gentle streamlet on,)  
 To--(Let us make a leap, my dear,)  
 To--( I love thee--I love thee!)  
 To--(Welcome, dear heart, and a most kind  
       good-morrow;)  
 Ballad (It was not in the winter)  
 To An Absentee  
 To My Daughter  
 To a Child  
 The Flower  
 I Remember, I Remember  
 Serenade  
 A Retrospective Review  
 To Hope  
 To a Sleeping Child  
 Fair Ines

Horne, Richard Hengest. (1803-1884)

Genius  
 Solitude and the Lily

Houghton, Lord. (1809-1885)

The Brook-side

Howitt, William. (1792-1879)

The Departure of the Swallow

Hunt, Leigh. (1784-1859)

To T. L. H. (during a sickness)  
 To J. H. Four Years Old  
 Rondeau (Jenny kissed me when we met)  
 Cupid Swallowed  
 Christmas (A Song for the Young and the Wise)  
 On Hearing a Little Musical Box  
 To the Spirit Great and Good  
 A Thought on Music  
 The Grasshopper and the Cricket  
 Three Pleasantries  
 Description of Hampstead

To the Author of Ion II  
 To Mrs. L. H.  
 Lines on the Sudden Arrival of Fair Weather in May  
 To June  
 Night Rain in Summer  
 The Summer of 1818  
 To Thomas Moore (from certain epistles)  
 Our Cottage  
 To the Larcs

Jones, Ernest Charles. (1819-1868)  
 The Poet's Parallel

Kemble, Frances Anne. (1811-1893)  
 The Year's Progress  
 Faith

Keats, John. (1796-1821)  
 Faery Songs, I  
 Lines on the Mermaid Tavern

Kingsley, Charles. (1819-1875)  
 A Farewell  
 Child Ballad  
 The Starlings  
 Dartside  
 Young and Old

Lamb, Charles. (1775-1834)  
 The First Leaf of Spring  
 In the Album of Miss \_\_\_\_\_  
 Going into Breeches  
 To Thornton Leigh Hunt (a child)  
 To Margaret W. \_\_\_\_\_  
 Leisure

Landon, Walter Savage. (1775-1864)  
 Poems and Epigrams XXVIII To a Child  
 Poems and Epigrams XXXV (You tell me I must come again)  
 Poems and Epigrams XLVI (Pursuits! alas, I now have  
 none.)  
 Poems and Epigrams XLVIII (Where alders rise up dark  
 and dense)  
 Poems and Epigrams LII (Here, ever since you went abroad)  
 Poems and Epigrams LXV (There are some wishes that  
 may start)  
 Poems and Epigrams LXXX (Rose Aylmer)  
 Poems and Epigrams LXXXVII (When Helen first saw  
 wrinkles in her face)

- Poems and Epigrams CIII (The burden of an ancient rhyme)
- Poems and Epigrams CXLVI (My serious son! I see thee look)
- Poems and Epigrams CXXXVIII To a Spaniel
- Poems and Epigrams CLX (Ye little household gods, that make)
- Poems and Epigrams CLXXVIII Suggested by Horace
- Poems and Epigrams CLXXXVII ("Fear God!" says Percival:)
- Poems and Epigrams CXCVI (I would give something, O Apollo)
- Poems and Epigrams CXCVII (Alas, how soon the hours are over)
- To Perilla (from Pericles and Asposia)
- Dirce
- To Age
- Last Fruit Off an Old Tree III (I entreat you, Alfred Tennyson)
- Last Fruit Off an Old Tree IV (Fair Love! and fairer Hope! we play'd together,)
- Last Fruit Off an Old Tree V (Love flies with bow unstrung when Time appears,
- Last Fruit Off an Old Tree VI (Thou needst not pitch upon my hat,)
- Last Fruit Off an Old Tree XV (There is a time when the romance of life)
- Last Fruit Off an Old Tree XXXVI Loss of Memory
- Last Fruit Off an Old Tree LI To Youth
- On Music
- Little Aglae

Locker-Lampson, Frederick. (1821-1895)  
The Widow's Mite

Lytton, Edward, Lord. (1803-1873)  
When Stars are in the Quiet Skies

Moore, Thomas. (1779-1852)  
Believe Me, if all Those Endearing Young Charms  
Oh Come to Me When Daylight Sets  
How Dear to Me the Hour  
The Time I've Spent in Wooing  
Youth and Age  
Nights of Music  
Our First Young Love

Nairne, Lady. (1766-1845)

The Auld House  
 Kind Robin Lo'es Me  
 My Ain Kind Dearie, O  
 Saw Ye Ne'er a Lovely Lassie

Peacock, Thomas Love. (1785-1866)

Love and Opportunity (from Headlong Hall)  
 There Is a Fever of the Spirit (from Nightmare Abbey)

Praed, Winthrop M. (1802-1859)

My Little Cousins  
 Every-day Characters ('The Vicar' and 'Quince')  
 Fairy Song  
 Time's Song  
 On an Infant Nephew

Proctor, Bryan Waller. (1787-1874)

A Petition to Time  
 Life  
 Golden-Tressed Adelaide

Scott, William Bell. (1811-1890)

Love's Calendar  
 To the Dead

Shelley, Percy Bysshe. (1792-1822)

Love's Philosophy  
 Fragment: Reminiscence and Desire  
 The Aziola  
 To-morrow

Smith, Horace. (1779-1849)

The Night

Smith, James. (1775-1839)

We Joukydaidles

Spencer, William Robert. (1769-1834)

To Lady Anne Hamilton

Tennyson, Alfred. (1809-1892)

Lilian  
 Circumstance  
 Nothing Will Die

The Flower  
 The Shell  
 The Merman  
 The Mermaid

Tennyson-Turner, Charles. (1808-1879)  
 Letty's Globe  
 An April Day  
 The Forest Glade  
 On Shooting a Swallow in Early Youth

Tennyson, Frederick. (1807-1898)  
 The Blackbird

Thackeray, William Makepeace. (1811-1863)  
 The Mahogany Tree  
 When the Gloom is on the Glen  
 To Mary  
 Lucy's Birthday  
 Fairy Days  
 The Cane-Bottom'd Chair

Thom, William. (1798?--1848)  
 They Speak o'Wyles