

ment at evening parties. Where he is serious, he tells us things which neither he nor we can believe: for example, that God gives to every one at birth a star. He talks about Phœbus, and says that on a certain night brownies and fays were dancing about him in the moonlight, and stopped to observe how sadly he gazed, and so on. Such statements are of the kind which Mr. Carlyle tersely denominates the lies of modern poetry. But Mr. Johnes appends some college verses, among which is a Geological Romance, that is clever and witty; and in this and one or two album stanzas we detect a latent capacity for light and bright composition, with an epigrammatic turn, which might have yielded a very readable book, had the author understood his talent better.

If this necessity for understanding one's own talent were more generally appreciated, we should never be called upon to mention so dismally worthless a publication as a little book by one Mrs. Prindle,¹ which contains outpourings of this sort:—

“Don't forget *me*, O my Saviour:
Call me early from my clay.”

It need not be even mentioned here, except as a wholesome reminder of the

dreadful depths into which the graduated scale of human expression in verse can descend. Southey, in prefacing the collected edition of his poetical works, speaks of having, during the revision, passed in review “the feelings whereto I had given that free utterance which by the usages of this world is permitted to us in poetry, and in poetry alone.” One is tempted to say that it is a very injurious usage, — as injurious as it is illogical. To express sentiment and emotion with much fervor in social intercourse is held to make a person ridiculous; but no matter how vapid or inherently absurd the substance of miscellaneous versification, it is admitted to be quite right that it should take on the permanence of print.

From the Himalayan heights of Edwin Arnold's *Light of Asia* to the modest dingles or modern drawing-rooms occupied by the other writers whom we have noticed (excepting Bayard Taylor) is a huge distance; and there could hardly be a better discipline for each one of these writers than to go over the ground with a careful measure, reading the productions of the rest, and drawing conclusions as sincere and impartial as the critic must.

A TELEPHONIC CONVERSATION.

I CONSIDER that a conversation by telephone — when you are simply sitting by and not taking any part in that conversation — is one of the solemnest curiosities of this modern life. Yesterday I was writing a deep article on a sublime philosophical subject while such a conversation was going on in the room. I notice that one can always write best

¹ *Alpine Flowers, and other Poems.* By AUGUSTA CLEVELAND PRINDLE. Springfield, Mass.: The Clark W. Bryan Company. 1879.

when somebody is talking through a telephone close by. Well, the thing began in this way. A member of our household came in and asked me to have our house put into communication with Mr. Bagley's, down town. I have observed, in many cities, that the sex always shrink from calling up the central office themselves. I don't know why, but they do. So I touched the bell, and this talk ensued:—

Central Office. [Gruffly.] Hello!

I. Is it the Central Office?

C. O. Of course it is. What do you want?

I. Will you switch me on to the Bagleys, please?

C. O. All right. Just keep your ear to the telephone.

Then I heard, *k-look, k-look, k'look — klook-klook-klook-look-look!* then a horrible "gritting" of teeth, and finally a piping female voice: Y-e-s? [Rising inflection.] Did you wish to speak to me?"

Without answering, I handed the telephone to the applicant, and sat down. Then followed that queerest of all the queer things in this world, — a conversation with only one end to it. You hear questions asked; you don't hear the answer. You hear invitations given; you hear no thanks in return. You have listening pauses of dead silence, followed by apparently irrelevant and unjustifiable exclamations of glad surprise, or sorrow, or dismay. You can't make head or tail of the talk, because you never hear anything that the person at the other end of the wire says. Well, I heard the following remarkable series of observations, all from the one tongue, and all shouted, — for you can't ever persuade the sex to speak gently into a telephone: —

Yes? Why, how did *that* happen?

Pause.

What did you say?

Pause.

Oh, no, I don't think it was.

Pause.

No! Oh, no, I did n't mean *that*. I meant, put it in while it is still boiling, — or just before it *comes* to a boil.

Pause.

WHAT?

Pause.

I turned it over with a back stitch on the selvage edge.

Pause.

Yes, I like that way, too; but I think it's better to baste it on with Valen-

ciennes or bombazine, or something of that sort. It gives it such an air, — and attracts so much notice.

Pause.

It's forty-ninth Deuteronomy, sixty-fourth to ninety-seventh inclusive. I think we ought all to read it often.

Pause.

Perhaps so; I generally use a hair-pin.

Pause.

What did you say? [*Aside*] Children, do be quiet!

Pause.

Oh! B *flat!* Dear me, I thought you said it was the cat!

Pause.

Since *when?*

Pause.

Why, *I* never heard of it.

Pause.

You astound me! It seems utterly impossible!

Pause.

Who did?

Pause.

Good-ness gracious!

Pause.

Well, what *is* this world coming to? Was it right in *church?*

Pause.

And was her *mother* there?

Pause.

Why, Mrs. Bagley, I should have died of humiliation! What did they *do?*

Long pause.

I can't be perfectly sure, because I have n't the notes by me; but I think it goes something like this: te-rolly-loll-loll, loll lolly-loll-loll, O tolly-loll-loll-lee-ly-li-i-do! And then *repeat*, you know.

Pause.

Yes, I think it *is* very sweet, — and very solemn and impressive, if you get the andantino and the pianissimo right.

Pause.

Oh, gum-drops, gum-drops! But I never allow them to eat striped candy. And of course they *can't*, till they get their teeth, any way.

Pause.

What?

Pause.

Oh, not in the least, — go right on. He's here writing, — it does n't bother *him*.

Pause.

Very well, I'll come if I can. [*Aside.*] Dear me, how it does tire a person's arm to hold this thing up so long! I wish she'd —

Pause.

Oh, no, not at all; I *like* to talk, — but I'm afraid I'm keeping you from your affairs.

Pause.

Visitors?

Pause.

No, we never use butter on them.

Pause.

Yes, that is a very good way; but all the cook-books say they are very unhealthy when they are out of season. And *he* does n't like them, any way, — especially canned.

Pause.

Oh, I think that is too high for them; we have never paid over fifty cents a bunch.

Pause.

Must you go? Well, *good-by*.

Pause.

Yes, I think so. *Good-by*.

Pause.

Four o'clock, then — I'll be ready. *Good-by*.

Pause.

Thank you ever so much. *Good-by*.

Pause.

Oh, not at all! — just as fresh — *Which?* Oh, I'm glad to hear you say that. *Good-by*.

[Hangs up the telephone and says, "Oh, it *does* tire a person's arm so!"]

A man delivers a single brutal "Good-by," and that is the end of it. Not so with the gentle sex, — I say it in their praise; they cannot abide abruptness.

Mark Twain.

ELIHU VEDDER'S PICTURES.

THERE is as much difference between painting for painting's sake and the use of brush and colors to express some idea as there is between constructing verses for the perfection of the rhythm and writing poetry in order to convey in the noblest manner some sentiment worth the utterance. It is from the marked absence of any expression of ideas in most modern works of art that our picture exhibitions are such barren and desolate wastes of colored canvases. With all the monotony of subject found in a collection of old masters, with the endless succession of holy families and saints and martyrs, there is enough earnestness of purpose and sincerity of expression to give to these worn-out stories a kind of

human interest which rarely flags, even though the eye be wearied by the repetition of compositions on the same theme. In the present stage of art there is a reaction against the idealism of the past, and the demand is for execution; for a degree of technical skill which few of the old masters attained, and which for the last two centuries has never been equaled. The natural result of this reaction is a poverty of ideas in painting; not that there are fewer subjects at the command of the artist than in the days when the Bible was his sole inspiration, but because he is preoccupied with the use of his material, and finds that after he has gained satisfactory skill both the demands of the public and his own ac-

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