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WORDSWORTH.

The recent death of Wordsworth affords an irresistible invitation to say something about his poetry. So long has he been before the public, that for some years past men have sat in judgment on him with almost the coolness which we ascribe to posterity. It is hard to say whether he has suffered most from his enemies or his friends. His excesses, simplicities, and almost hoaxes, such as Peter Bell, the Idiot Boy, and those Lyrical Ballads in which he did a violence to nature, and brought the Muse not only into the highway but into the very mire, together with his drowsy, dreamy, long-winded homilies in measured prose, have been embalmed and worshipped by a certain class of his admirers. This has done him more harm than Jeffrey's insulting sneers and unrighteous garbling, or than all the laughter exploded against the Lake School.

That Wordsworth will assume his place among the classic poets of England cannot be doubted for a moment. That he will occupy the same level with Shakspeare and Milton, it would be ridiculous to predict. Great contemporaries and rivals, not excepting his bitter lordly satirist, have recorded later judgments, which ought to hush the petty snarlings of

O gentle voice, would God my soul  
Had heeded thy entreating,  
When yet no tyrant did control  
My heart's fresh infant beating!

O that I had ascended then  
The hill of my salvation,  
And left the ways of erring men  
At thy first invitation!

Y.

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### MERRY MEN.

Natural mirth is only the expression of an inward health, in which ease of body and mind prevail so abundantly as to overflow all others. Let the system be disused, and cheerfulness ends; at best we have only the dignified fortitude of a grave and patient philosophy. Or, supposing the *corpus sanum*, trouble of mind stops up the channels of genial humour; the powers turn inward, and come under the control of a sombre selfishness. Absolute seclusion may give peace, but the solitary is not mirthful. Bursts of gaiety in private are generally accompanied with some feigning of a witness or a companion, some remembrance of intercourse, some fancied friend or circle, in a word something social. Merry men are therefore men of society, and too often convivialists. The fatal cup draws its chief incantations from its power to dissolve separations between man and man, by lessening forms and fastidious shyness, and turning the stateliness of conventional reserve into childish communion and good fellowship. It is with this winning proposal that wine makes its first conquests, which it follows on to degradation and ruin.

Students and toiling professional men are generally

spoiled for unaffected merriment. At any rate, they must give the palm to those who never think but when they are talking. Men of the world soon discover that brilliancy in the drawing room is to be purchased at a cheaper rate than midnight oil. A sense of this drives the accomplished English gentleman into months of rural and forest diversion and years of travel to the remotest coverts or wildernesses. The revulsion from solitary musing and converse with the dead, leads to remarkable adventures. From the chambers of Oxford and Cambridge, men bred in luxurious letters and science, dash into expeditions to Caucasus, Siberia, or Timbuctoo.

Merry men, according to vulgar traditions, are always fat, ruddy and sleek; this is their type and normal condition. Yet in real life the case is found to be otherwise. There is the mirth of Prince Hal as well as that of Falstaff. Indeed the exuberance of merriment, the sudden bursts which electrify a table, not unfrequently proceed from gaunt, lanthorn-jawed, cadaverous, tallow-skinned fellows, whose livers are out of all proportion and who owe their spasmodic fun to the nervous jerks of their dyspepsia. There is a certain degree of plenitude and muscular power which seems even to deaden the inward glow, or hinder the expectoration of gaieties. Chronic good nature, placid contentment and unvarnished serenity are a different thing: these unquestionably depend on the due observance of the non-naturals, and the absence of all lesion in the organs. Such men have regular pulses, sound sleep, and infantine breath and complexion. But your merry men have their ups and downs; transgress organic laws; know both feasts and fasts; sit up late, lie long in the morning, and after a while pay heavily for their irregular and lavish sportiveness.

The sight of a decayed joker is often appalling. "Where be your gibes now? your gambols and your songs? your flashes of merriment, that were wont to set the table on a roar?" Such a case was that of Fred Raikes. Small in

person, wiry, agile, hurried, red in the face, always traveling, loud and shrill of voice, ubiquitary in cars and steam-boats, courts and lobbies, never missing at dinners and levees, Fred was almost indispensable where there were gatherings and champagne. A good pipe and a score of songs, with a delectus from the best anecdotes and bon-mots of almanacs and afterpieces, made him incomparably welcome in every new company. More fatty matter among his muscles would have spoiled the play of his face, and this was the accompaniment which gave zest to the song or story. Strangers gathered around him, the moment his voice was heard, as naturally as bees about a sweet-locust in full blossom. Learned he certainly was not, and learning would have injured his small wares. He remembered several good things out of Ruddiman and Mair, and all the sophisms in logic; but his notions were obscure on many points in mathematics and theology. From the genial company of lawyers, relaxing over oysters and additamenta at their lodgings, he had picked up a goodly number of forensic phrases and jests, and could sport a law-maxim in Latin. But whatever he spake of was enlivened by the play of his restless nature, which worked perpetually like the soda-fountain under a druggist's counter. At a funeral, no amount of weeds availed to hide the muscles of his countenance, even though an additional cravat or shawl disguised his chin and mouth. The very crow's feet under his hat were hieroglyphics of fun. At church he was seldom and late, and manifested his satisfaction by a bowing of the head and a closing of the eye, which were unlike his waking self. He outlived more than one generation, and re-issued all his good things with perhaps increased value to the grandsons of his earliest comrades. But at length he outlived his pleasantries, and poor fellow, his occupation was gone!

I had the melancholy satisfaction of falling in with Fred Raikes about five years before his death, at Schooley's Mountain. In the days of his prime he usually looked in

upon the company there for about three days during the season; his budget of excitements did not last longer than this, and was emptied with extraordinary quickness in the piazzas and under the trees on August afternoons. Now he had come to that scanty but bracing fount to tighten up the flaccid nerves. As he was helped out of the carriage I recognised his dapper form, but was shocked at the face which glared from under a straw hat. A blush was still on his cheek, but it was that of a withered red-streak apple. The blue eye was deep in a cavernous socket. The unnatural whiteness of baked teeth did not comport with the thin purple lips. The visage was a cobweb of wrinkles, and the hands drawn up like the claws of certain birds, seemed to be restlessly feeling about for some support. In dress every thing was scrupulous and elegant, but too young by twenty years. Alas, alas! the tale of effete merriment is soon told. Fred was poor, for merry men are seldom rich. Worse than this, he was friendless: boon companions do not help one another, and friendship is a grave and tender relation.

- He was unfurnished in mind; books he had never courted; science had been always repulsively solemn: the literature of the sporting papers and gay novels had long since foamed and frothed away to nothing; philosophy was as alien to him as to a court-fool; and religion, the true solace of infirmity and age, he was instinctively afraid of. The gun, dog and angle which were pompously carried in were like the sword and cloak on a military coffin; and the brass-mounted hat-box rattled with phials and pill-boxes. A flask of effervescent liquor left uncorked becomes just what Fred Raikes had now become.

The lesson is graver than my opening promised. Sound and innocent mirth is a wholesome thing; but it is the condiment of life and not its support. We feel no respect for classes of men whose profession it is to make sport; for comic songsters, comedians, and merry-andrews. Timely merriment clears away the atmosphere of society, but it should never be the stock and staple of character. For

genuine enjoyment in the decline of life there must be provision laid in during many years. There must be health, ensured by regularity and temperance; knowledge, accumulated by reading and discourse; wisdom, the fruit of self-scrutiny and meditation; friends, secured and maintained by candour, beneficence and sacrifice; respect, always yielded to solid worth; a good conscience, habits of religious thought and will; and a hope that looks serenely towards the world beyond the grave.

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### ECONOMY OF THOUGHT.

Next to Freedom of Speech, the most essential requisite to universal authorship is a wise economy of thought. No wonder men do not write much, when they waste all their ideas on a single composition. Boys should be taught at school to husband their resources. They should even be flogged for using more than one thought to a sheet of foolscap. This would accustom them to spin or hammer out their few ideas in a serviceable manner, and instead of throwing them out at once in a crude and shapeless lump, to twist and turn and mould them into infinite variety of forms, without the slightest change of substance or increase of bulk. Without weighing a grain more, they would fill many inches more of space. The saving will of course be greater still when the elementary idea is itself begged or borrowed, not to say stolen.

Let me illustrate this by taking a proverbial theme; familiar to all readers, and endeavoring to show how far a judicious economy of thought will make it go in the instruction of mankind, especially if aided by an imposing show of logical arrangement and precise distinctions.

### HONESTY IS THE BEST POLICY.

It seems to be commonly admitted, as a dictate both of