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THE PHYSIOGNOMY OF HOUSES.

To a lively imagination every object of inanimate nature in turn may seem endowed with life. It is the source of much poetical figure, as in the child who sees the stars winking at him, and the child-like Homer who makes the trickling cliff weep from under its shaggy brow. In passing down the Potomac a gay friend exclaimed, "See how that house *squints* at us!" It was the very word; the resemblance was perfect. The doors and windows of the gable simulated a human countenance, and an obliquity in the upper row produced the very effect described. Every reader of Dickens must have observed the frequency with which he personifies streets, houses, trees, and even furniture; thus aiding his general description in a high degree.

But there is an expression much more significant, than the elementary one which has just been noted. To a certain extent this is caught even by casual observers; but we desire to develope the idea more fully by means of several instances, which may be multiplied at pleasure by any reader.

What figure is more natural than to say of a castle on the Rhine, that it frowns? The dark walls of a fortress are made to scowl. A row of cottages on a sunny hill-side smile on us. In the course of a journey on horseback in one of

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COUNSELLOR PHILLIPS.

One of the happiest effects of the New Philosophy, or, as it is falsely and maliciously designated by its ignorant deriders, Transcendentalism, is that it resuscitates, and holds up to enthusiastic admiration, many fruits of genius, which have been buried in thankless oblivion, or blasted by calumnious criticism under the opprobrious but convenient name of Nonsense. It is indeed one of the most glorious revelations of the New Philosophy, that there is no such thing as Nonsense, and that what has hitherto been so regarded is in many cases the perfection of reason or the ultimate attainment of the highest genius, thrown aside as folly by the sensuous multitude, incapable not merely of understanding but of feeling them. The change already wrought by the Philosophical Esthetics of the modern school of rhetoric and criticism is prodigious. It was first perceptible in the emancipation of contemporary writers from the petrified or iron-bound restrictions of the Old Philosophy or Common Sense. Many a teeming mind which, under such a censorship, could never have become productive, has developed a fertility, or rather a creative power, that is really astonishing. No longer under the necessity of asking whether what he says is true or comprehensible, the youthful genius is content to know that it is pleasing to the ear and the imagination. Borne on the wings of a sublime originality above the clouds of common sense and logic, he soars with eagle flight towards the central sun of absolute knowledge and serene self-consciousness. To this emancipation of the mind and heart the age owes some of its most startling and imperishable products.

But such a revolution could not have been expected to confine its influence to the present or the future. With a mighty retroaction it has opened the sepulchres of martyred genius ignominiously entombed, for years or ages, in the

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vaults of an empirical and artificial taste, and brings them forth to the sympathetic plaudits of a penitent and eye-opened public. In this glorious resurrection may be seen pouring forth into tho upper air the innumerable company of those whom their contemporaries and successors have delighted to dishonour, as learned madmen or ingenious fools. The factitious barrier between Sense and Nonsense is forever broken down, and even the heroes of the Dunciad may aspire to the throne so long usurped by their persecuting critic and the Popes who have succeeded him.

In this new and interesting state of things, it is the duty, and it ought to be the pleasure, of every man who has experienced this renovating influence, to rescue at least some one great and glorious genius from the undeserved oblivion or reproach to which he has been long consigned, not through his own fault but the fault of others. Under this constraining sense of obligation, but at the same time in obedience to the spontaneous impulse of my heart, I have resolved to pay my tribute of late, but, as I trust, not too late reparation, to the idol of my school-boy heart of hearts, COUNSELLOR PHILLIPS, a name long familiar to the hissings of ignorant and impotent malignity, but one which can no longer be deprived of its just honours by the spite or cunning of (to use his own sublime alliteration) "the venal and the vulgar and the vile." Nor am I in the least deterred from this humiliating act of duty by the fact that it involves an indirect confession of my own injustice and ingratitude. In humble emulation of the Counsellor's own candour, as well as in the use of his inimitable language, "I am not ashamed to confess that there was a day when I was bigotted as the blackest." Not the day of ingenuous and unsophisticated boyhood. No, my impulses were then in accordance with the reason and the heart. The speeches of the Counsellor were my delight, the manna which sustained me in the wilderness of grammar-school and college, and preserved me from the poison of Geometry, Geography and Greek. As page after page of his inspired

ravings were repeated either by myself or others, I was lost in a felicitous oblivion both of languages and mathematics. Through the whole course of study I may boast of having passed unscathed, and left my Alma Mater with no other knowledge there acquired than that of my inimitable model, and no other accomplishment than an humble capacity of imitation.

At a later period, and under other influences, I became, but only for a time, unfaithful to my first love, that of Irish eloquence. When I ventured to utter a Philippic at the bar or in the bar-room, I was laughed at, and I blush to own that this unworthy, nay disgraceful *mauvaise honte* was more than a match for my genuine convictions and my unsophisticated feelings. I ceased to praise or quote the Counsellor. Alas—must I acknowledge it?—I basely joined in the derision of a heartless and a thankless world. Afraid of sharing in the ridicule so lavishly bestowed upon my idol, I studiously avoided all alliteration and abjured bulls and bombast for the rest of life. In this unnatural and hypocritical condition I continued till the New Philosophy began to make a change in the prevailing modes of criticism and composition. Then, as I saw one exploded absurdity after another reinstated in its rights as something too profound or too exalted to be understood, my heart began to warm towards my once loved but long injured and repudiated Counsellor, and I resolved that his calumniated genius should share the benefit of these sublime discoveries in the vast untrodden fields of Nonsense.

In execution of this pious vow, I purpose to prepare a philosophical analysis of "Phillips's Speeches," in which the new esthetical philosophy shall be employed to prove, not merely that they do contain intelligible matter, but that the highest flights of this stupendous genius are precisely those in which the Herod and Pilate of the now exploded Common Sense—I mean the Edinburgh and Quarterly Reviews—pretended to discover the most pitiable fustian and

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unmeaning rant. It was my purpose to conclade this paper with a few striking specimens of what may be called the Rationalizing mode of criticism, or that which has for its object to infuse a meaning into what appears to be unmitigated nonsense. But the length to which I have already gone forbids my doing more on this occasion than invite attention to the fact that one of the old-fashioned critics just referred to, was impudent or blind enough to single out, as the most glaring instance of absurdity contained in the collection, that sublime description of another Irish lawyer, "who, when thrones were crumbled and dynasties forgotten, might stand the landmark of his country's genius, rearing himself amid regal ruins and national dissolution, a mental pyramid in the solitude of time, beneath whose shade things might moulder, and round whose summit eternity must play." How my heart used to pound and my young blood simmer, as I heard this painfully grand passage spouted from the stage at school or college! For a time, as I have said, I was a base backslider from this state of feeling and opinion; but in my present state of second childhood, I regard the eloquence of this description as not merely transcendant but transcendental—the one term being only an ell longer than the other—and as far beyond any burst of genius in the dialect of mortals as John Philpots Curran is confessedly beyond all other men, past, present, or to come, in every attribute of physical or moral grandeur.

Notwithstanding my promise and determination to be short, I can scarcely refrain from pointing out some of the exquisite though modestly veiled beauties of this great *chef-d'œuvre*, and thereby exposing the empirical moroseness of the criticism which denounces it as fustian. By a violent effort I compel myself to be contented with requesting the unbiassed reader to apply an easy and unerring test of sense and nonsense, by imagining a picture to be painted in accordance with the orator's description. What do we see in such a landscape? First, a wide-spread solitude, "the solitude of

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time," its surface covered with "regal ruins and national dissolution," i. e., ruined kings and dissolving nations. Then amidst all this is reared, or rather "rears itself," a landmark—for what purpose none but a Lockite or a Baconian would imagine—a landmark of genius, of a country's genius, yea of Irish genius: a landmark too consisting of a pyramid, not a material but "a mental pyramid," a pyramid composed of or existing in the mind, and casting a shadow on the solitude of time, a shadow so peculiar that beneath it "things might moulder," though it seems to be implied that they do not. This to be sure is not at all peculiar to a "mental pyramid," there being many other objects in the shade of which things not only might moulder, but have been actually known to do so. This trait, however, must be taken in connection with another, namely, that around the summit of this mental pyramid or landmark, eternity is under the necessity of playing. Whether in the musical sense of the term, or in that of sporting, making merry, is a captious and uncandid question which deserves no answer. Let us look at the sublime antithesis between the auxiliary verbs employed—"beneath whose shade things MIGHT moulder, and round whose summit eternity MUST play." "Things" are allowed an option whether they will moulder beneath Curran's shade or not; but as to playing (pranks or tunes) about his summit, Eternity has no choice. The various reading, "kings" for "things," which is said to be found in some editions, has very much the look of a supposititious gloss or emendation, especially as "kings" had already been provided for in "Regal Ruins," and although when reduced to that condition they would certainly be all the more prepared to "moulder," they could hardly be admitted to the honour of so doing in this shady spot without exciting the jealousy of "National Dissolution." Republics especially must be reluctant to admit that kings have any more right than nations to moulder beneath the shade of J. P. Curran, while eternity is playing by compulsion round his summit. The reader will no doubt

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be glad to learn that I propose to give pictorial illustrations of this Pyramid, as well as of the following Ornithological effusion, which I undertake to prove, is as truly the wittiest as the other is the grandest passage in the English language.

"Originally engendered by our friends, the Opposition, with a cuckoo insidiousness, they swindled it into the nest of the treasury ravens, and when it had been fairly hatched, with the beak of the one and the nakedness of the other, they sent it for its feathers to Monseigneur Quarantotti, who has obligingly transmitted it, with the hunger of its parent, the rapacity of its nurses, and the coxcombry of its plumassier, to be baptized by the bishops, and received, *aequo gratoque animo*, by the people of Ireland!" Well might the orator, or his editor, add a note of admiration to this life-like picture. Nothing but ignorant malignity could say or think that it conveys no definite image to the mind. Or even if it be so now, the time is coming when the minds of the youngest children will be so philosophically and esthetically trained that as soon as the words fall upon the eye or ear, if asked what the images are meant to represent they will instantly reply, "a bill in parliament." But even in the mean time, and without waiting for this happy educational reform, I hope to vindicate the passage from the charge of incongruity by exhibiting an actual delineation of the *rara avis* here described with all its marked peculiarities, the hunger of its parent, the rapacity of its nurse, the coxcombry of its plumassier, the feathers of the same, the beak of the one, and the nakedness of the other. A glance at the plate now engraving (or to speak more correctly, about to have been being engraved) for my work, will convince the most incredulous, that there is nothing in the Birds of Aristophanes approaching it. I almost tremble as I add, that these two passages which might afford the matter of whole volumes in the hands of any ordinary writer, are both contained in one address, the "Speech at Sligo." This will

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show that in exemplifying my design, I have not ransacked the whole treasure-house for gems of an extraordinary lustre, but have merely picked up two of the first over which I stumbled at the very threshold. To have rescued even one such burst of genius from oblivion or unjust contempt, is an honour which the new style of criticism may well afford to pay for, by consenting to be vilified as Transcendentalism or even Nonsense.

ORLANDO FURIOSO.

LETTERS ON THE EARLY LATIN WRITERS.

No. I.

MY DEAR BOY,

It is natural for those who are engaged in the study of Roman authors to feel some curiosity as to the Latin literature in general. The inquisitive mind of an enterprising scholar will not rest satisfied to be bound down to the few works he may have perused at school, or the volumes which engage his laborious hours at college. Even in these works there is a constant allusion to preceding or contemporary writers, which only serve to whet the curiosity of the student. He becomes discontented with his ignorance, and begins to inquire into the literature of the Romans; what was its origin, who were its great advancers, during what period it flourished, at what time and for how long it was most brilliant, and what were the causes of its decline. It is to answer these questions, that I propose to offer you a few colloquial letters, not going deeply into the subject, as might be necessary in formal discourses on literature, but giving such hints as may aid you in your pursuits, and stimulate you to prosecute the inquiry, in your private reading. And all that I shall require is your patient attention, which I feel

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