

LITERATURE.

ON COMING OF AGE.

BY THE LATE THOMAS HOOD.

To-day it is my natal day,
Three 'prenticeships have passed away,
A part in work, a part in play,
Since I was bound to life!
This first of May I come of age,
A man I enter on the stage
Where human passions fret and rage,
To mingle in the strife.

It ought to be a happy date,
My friends they all congratulate
That I am come to "Man's Estate,"
To some, a grand event;
But ah! to me descent allots
No acres, no paternal spots
In Beds, Bucks, Herts, Wilts, Essex, Notts,
Hants, Oxon, Berks, or Kent.

From John o'Groat's to Land's end search,
I have not one rod, pole, or perch
To pay me rent, or tithe to church,
That I can call my own.
Not common-right for goose or ass;
Then what is Man's Estate? Alas,
Six feet by two of mould and grass
When I am dust and bone.

Reserve the feast! The board forsake!
Ne'er tap the wine—don't cut the cake,
No toasts or foolish speeches make,
At which my reason spurns.
Before this happy term you praise,
And prate about returns and days,
Just o'er my vacant rent-roll gaze,
And sum up my returns.

I know where great estates descend
That here is Boyhood's legal end,
And easily can comprehend
How "Manors make the Man."
But as for me, I was not born
To quit-rent of a peppercorn,
And gain no ground this blessed morn
From Beersheba to Dan.

No barrels broach—no bonfires make
To roast a bullock for my sake,
Who in the country have no stake,
Would be too like a quiz;
No banners hoist—let off no gun—
Pitch no marquee—devise no fun—
But think when man is Twenty-One
What new delights are his!

What is the moral legal fact?
Of age to-day I'm free to act
For self—free, namely, to contract.
Engagements, bonds, and debts;
I'm free to give my I O U,
Sign, draw, accept, as majors do;
And free to lose my freedom too
For want of due assets.

I am of age, to ask Miss Ball,
Or that great heiress, Miss Duval,
To go to church, hump, squint, and all,
And be my own for life.
But put such reasons on their shelves,
To tell the truth between ourselves,
I'm one of those contented elves
Who do not want a wife.

What else belongs to manhood still?
I'm old enough to make my will,
With valid clause and codicil,
Before in turf I lie.
But I have nothing to bequeath
In earth or waters underneath,
And in all candor let me breathe,
I do not want to die.

Away! if this be Manhood's forte,
Put by the sherry and the port—
No ring of bells—no rustic sport—
No dance—no merry pipes!
No flowery garlands—no bouquet—
No Birthday Ode to sing or say—
To me it seems this is a day
For bread and cheese and swipes.

To justify the festive cup
What horrors here are conjured up!
What things of bitter bite and sup,
Poor wretched Twenty-One's!
No landed lumps, but frumps and humps
(Discretion's Days are far from trumps),
Domestic discord, dowdies, dumps,
Death, dockets, debts, and duns!

If you must drink, oh drink "the King"—
Reform—the Church—the Press, the Ring,
Drink Aldgate Pump—or any thing,
Before a toast like this!

Nay, tell me, coming thus of age,
In turning o'er this sorry page,
Is young Nineteen so far from sage?
Or young Eighteen from bliss?

No flummery then from flowery lips,
No three times three and hip-hip-nips,
Because I'm ripe and full of pips—
I like a little green.
To put me on my solemn oath,
If, sweep-like, I could stop my growth,
I would remain and nothing loth,
A Boy—about nineteen.

My friends, excuse me these rebukes!
Were I a monarch's son, or duke's,
Go to the Vatican of Meux
And broach his biggest barrels—
Impale whole elephants on spits—
Ring Tom of Lincoln till he splits,
And dance into St. Vitus' fits,
And break your winds with carols!

But ah! too well you know my lot,
Ancestral acres greet me not,
My freehold's in a garden-pot,
And barely worth a pin.
Away then with all festive stuff!
Let Robins advertise and puff,
My "Man's Estate," I'm sure enough,
I shall not buy it in.

The Yankee Pedler.

BY COLONEL JOHNSTON.

I said a long time ago that Ralph Brown had been a member of that association while a merchant's clerk. Let me here add that, being highly musical from childhood, he excelled in that charming art, and was distinguished on the piano forte even at the Handel and Hayden; and seven years' subsequent travel in all parts of the Union, and his being much in ladies' drawing rooms with his tempting goods, and his often touching the instrument when there, had qualified him to be a most accomplished performer at the time he listened to Laura.

Her song was chaste, and all very well; and at its close, as a matter of course, both Major and Madam Carroll looked that the Yankee Pedler should be delighted, if not astonished at what he had heard. It was rather cold comfort to these partial judges to hear the silence succeeding the air, thus broken by the pedler—

"Thank ye, Miss—though your pianny is ducedly out of tune."

The major frowned, Madam Carroll kindled with indignation; but Laura more just to the criticism, while blushing deeply replied—

"You are right, sir. My tuner has not been here for two years; and I would give anything to have the instrument put in tune."

Ralph was at once upon his feet; and going towards the door, said "I rather guess I can do't for ye, Miss," and left the room for the large box in the hall. He returned in a trice, with his hands full of tuning instruments, reeds, wires and cat-guts, as if he had done nothing but tune pianofortes through life.

Without the least ceremony, or asking leave of any one, he threw off his coat, rolled up his sleeves to the elbow, and in five minutes had Laura's instrument scattered in fragments about the floor.

"In Heaven's name," exclaimed the major, "are you mad, Mr. Brown? No tuner we have ever had here has taken the instrument all to pieces in this fashion. I fear you will ruin it."

"Now do be quiet, major, and take it easy like," coolly replied the pedler; "the subject is very sick, and I must go to the bowels of the complaint. These tinkers you have down here south, major, only know the outside of things, you see. I'm a real penetrator, you'll find, when you come to know me better, major."

So saying, the pedler plied his fingers and thumbs, winding and screwing his key as he whistled Yankee-doodle in unison with his artistic notions. When he had thus regulated the bowels of the thing, the disrupted all came together like clock-work at his lightest touch; and as he drew his fingers from end to end across the keys, a connoisseur might perceive that a master had touched the instrument that just before was all in pieces.

"Now, Miss," said the pedler, "you'll

make the thing talk, I reckon, since I've put a little human natur' into 't."

Laura apologised; she begged to be excused; asked the favour of an overture or other piece from the tuner. The major and lady joined in the request.

"Well, Miss," said Ralph, "tis tarnation strange—somehow rather, but so it is—I can't deny you anything you ask me; so, if you've some notes I'll touch a bar or two."

Laura brought in her notes: the quick eye of Ralph scanned them as readily as he would detect damaged goods or counterfeit bank notes, throwing them down one after another till they were through, and then adding, "How these tramping rogues put the leek into you dons when they come down here south with their paltry trash! These here notes, major, are not worth a wooden nutmeg."

This was felt to the quick by parents and child; for Laura had been practising with these notes for years.

Ralph again went to his big box in the hall; and, placing back his tools, and returning with his hands full of choicest music from the great masters of Germany and Italy, he spread out one of the sheets before him as he took his seat at the instrument. It was a piece of great power and almost magic conception. Even the fingers of the performer seemed to catch inspiration from the mighty genius of the composer. The whole nervous system of Ralph Brown was in unison with the melody; and his thrilling voice thrown in and mingling with the fine tones of the instrument while essaying the most impassioned sentences of the piece, made such music in Major Carroll's drawing room as had never been heard in Virginia until that hour.

Laura was overwhelmed in tears; while the fixed gaze of the major and his lady testified their delight.

The quick eye of the performer perceived at once that the desired effect had been produced on the auditors. Rising to his feet, he shut up the piano, saying—

"I guess she can be made to talk now by help of an interpreter."

Falling again into the chit-chat, he told over some of the amusing incidents of his travels, to the delight of the family, till approaching bed-time, when the major drew out his watch to note the hour. The watch had stopped.

"I wonder what ails my watch?" cried the major; "it has stopped every evening these three weeks!"

"Shall I look at its insides?" quoth the pedler, reaching out his hand to take the watch. On opening it he touched a wheel setting it in motion, as he held it to his ear. "Major!" he exclaimed, "you are forcin' this here critter to work with a heavy load on its back! Here, Miss, you will accept the gift of this here music? There are fifty pieces in all, and the poorest of 'em will make yourn blush beside 'em." Thus saying, he left the room, with a candle in one hand and the watch in the other. He soon returned with a handful of watchmaker's tools; and without ceremony he scattered the major's watch in fragments as he had done the piano.

"What are you at, man?" cried the major, "you'll ruin my watch. The best repairers in Richmond say the mechanism of this watch is so intricate and delicate they dare not tamper with it."

"Footer, major, I kalkilate I can navigate the entrails of a watch, as well as I can shoe a horse, put a new spring in my watch, or doctor sick piannies. Travellers have to turn our hands to the ailments of creation, else we should get into many an awkward scrape and stick fast in the mud. This here father spring is confoundedly out of gear, I reckon; and this verge don't navigate the best, anyhow."

Thus dividing his time between talking to himself and whistling Yankee-doodle, as before he put the watch into perfect repair, touched it with a little new oil, and brought the parts together with the dexterity of a perfect machinist.

"There, major, keep her shet, and regular wound, and I'll warrant her travels for five years to come, without overhauling. It's my bed time, major, and if the black will show me up, I'll bid you all good night."

It was now 1834. Two years previously the Asiatic Cholera had raged over the country, filling many graves, and making many homes desolate. Major Carroll's family and slaves had then escaped the scourge. But now, in August, 1834, the fatal malady had re-appeared, and just as the pedler was going to his bed, a loud rap came to the outer door. It was caused by a negro in great terror with teeth chattering, and his eyes and ears distended, he notified massa-major that Sambo, the old fiddling overseer, was rolling, and writhing, and crying in great agony.

"It is the cholera," said Madam Carroll, "I heard it had appeared on the neighbouring estate, where Sambo went yester-eve to fiddle for a dance."

The pedler was arrested in his course to bed, and he and the major were soon at the hut of the sufferer. Madam and Laura soon after followed.

"Oh, golly, golly, I die! neber feel 'em so, Oh, sabe, massa, dear me, oh, sabe 'im!" cried Sambo, as the visitants entered the shop.

Brown saw the case was cholera. He had been in the midst of 1832, and knew as much about the needed remedy as did the London Board of Health—perhaps more. He left the shed, and repaired once more to his well filled-box in the major's hall. On his return he carefully measured out a table-spoonful of pulverised rock salt, a tea-spoonful of Cayenne paper, and twenty drops of laudanum. These he placed in a large tumbler, pouring half a pint of warm water over the compound. Giving it a good stir with his pencil-case, he said to the patient:—

"Here, nigger, shut your eyes, open your swallow wide, and keep a stiff upper lip, while ye pour this here down ye."

The negro obeyed, draining the harsh liquid to the dregs.

"Now, don't let a drop of it up, blackee," cried the leech, as the sufferer was reaching; "it will soon make ye'r inwards as hot as a tinker's ladle; then I defy ye to get rid of it till it does the job for ye."

The pedler was right. The perspiration soon began to pour in showers from the sable brow of Sambo, forced out by the raging fire kindled within. The patient soon fell into a quiet doze; and by the next day, though severely shaken by the draught, he was free from pain and out of danger. The pedler gave him some soothing febrifuges, and proposed to be off to another estate. This the major resolutely opposed, entreating Brown for the sake of humanity to stay a day or two longer, to watch the disease among the stock of the farm. Little did the major reflect that the fatal shaft might be aimed at an object lying nearer his heart than the slaves of his homely sheds.

The next day the rich southern planter and the Yankee pedler were seen riding out together, side by side, over the forest domains, equipped for game; and as Ralph was a first rate shot, and the major not slow, they returned with lots of game. But what was the revulsion that came over the spirits of the buoyant sportsmen on learning that Madam Carroll had been seized with cholera during their absence.

The blacks might be turned over when seized with the malady; but it would not do to try his nostrums on the family.—So reasoned the major, and forthwith despatched two faithful domestics on horse-back to the nearest physicians. The doctors came, but the disease mocked their skill; and despite calomel, opium, camphor, &c., Madam Carroll was in the collapsed state ere the light of another morning.

After the doctors had given her over in despair, and retired from the bed of the dying, the pedler was called in as a forlorn hope. He looked at the sufferer, and the agonised daughter sobbing at her feet, and hastily withdrew from the room. The major followed.

"No use, major," said the pedler, in solemn accents, to "disturb the ashes of the dead. Death has fixed its seal on the partner of your joys and sorrows. Eight hours ago I might have warded off his stroke; but eight hours in Asiatic cholera, major, is a fearful gap."

The major was called back into the room. His lady felt that the last tide of life was fast ebbing out. She desired prayers to be read in her trying hour. No clergyman was within seven miles,