

CHAPTER IV.

THE GARRICK CLUB, 1853.

I BECAME a member of the Garrick Club at the close of the year 1848, on the introduction of my friend Mr. Gilbert Abbott à Beckett. During the five years of my membership, which I resigned a few years afterwards on being elected to the Reform Club, which answered all my requirements in a higher degree, I found the Garrick a pleasant resort. The qualification for membership was both particular and general, or, it may be said, definite and indefinite, narrow and unbounded. The first was, that the candidate should be a member of the theatrical profession, and the second that he should be a lover of the drama. The first requisite would have limited the Club to a small coterie, the second opened its doors to the whole intellectual world.

Among the theatrical celebrities who frequented the club at luncheon time and in the afternoon,

with whom I was more or less intimately acquainted, were Charles Kemble, T. P. Cooke, J. P. Harley, Charles Compton, and Charles Kean. Among artists, critics, and lovers of the theatre, who were frequently to be met, were Clarkson Stansfield, David Roberts, W. M. Thackeray, Charles Dickens, Albert Smith, Gilbert Abbott à Beckett, Andrew Arcedeckne, and Francis Fladgate, the respected chairman of the committee. Mr. Kemble was not a pleasant man to talk to, for he was extremely deaf; but he was pleasant enough to listen to, perhaps more especially when he addressed his remarks to a single person in a voice loud enough to be heard by every person in the room. About some of these, his remarks were not always complimentary; but he fancied they did not and could not hear him, inasmuch as he was under the impression that he spoke, if not in whispers, in the subdued tones of a private and confidential colloquy. I once heard him say to Mr. Fladgate, an intimate friend and great favourite with everybody at the Club, "Frank! come and dine with me to-morrow! Don't let any of the fellows here" (looking round him) "know that I have asked you. They would like me to ask them also! But I don't want any of them. They are such dreadful bores!" The persons present all laughed, but were too much accustomed to his loud asides, which were not intended for their ears, that

they did not take offence, or think any the worse of the old gentleman for his unfavourable opinion of them. They knew it to be only momentary, and assumed for the occasion.

The unconscious ignorance of his thunderous tones might often have been attended with disagreeable consequences, but I never heard that any ever resulted from it. A very flagrant instance of its awkwardness once happened at a small dinner-party, where John Braham, the famous vocalist, was placed exactly opposite to him. Seated next to Mr. Kemble was a tragic actress, in whose fortunes he took a strong interest, and to whose great alarm and confusion he addressed her, in what he thought a whisper, but which was really an almost stentorian voice, "My dear! do you see that silly old man with the beautiful wig opposite, with the bright eyes, the rosy red cheeks, and the splendid white teeth? That is John Braham, the celebrated singer. Look at him well! There's nothing genuine about him except his eyes. He's a make up altogether! His wig and teeth are not the only shams about him. Even his eyebrows are false. His cheeks are plugged out with ivory pads. If you could see his legs, you would see that his spindle shanks were well padded—that his calves were fictitious."

His fair companion was on thorns all the time, and kept nudging him in vain to cause him to

desist. Braham himself, who could not but hear, thought it high time to stop the flow of his personalities, and addressing the veteran in a voice as loud as his own, said, lifting his wine-glass, "Mr. Kemble! shall I have the pleasure of taking wine with you?" Mr. Kemble graciously consented, and the two pledged each other with great politeness and much apparent cordiality, to the sensible relief of the company.

Later in the evening, Braham was prevailed upon to sing one of the favourite ballads with which he had delighted the youth of two previous generations. Though close upon eighty, he sang with excellent voice, and perfect execution, to the delight of all present. Charles Kemble applauded as lustily as the rest, though quite unable to hear a note; thus endeavouring to conceal his deafness by a false pretence as palpable as that of which Mr. Braham had been guilty in endeavouring to conceal his age by his glossy black wig and his beautiful white teeth.

Mr. T. P. Cooke familiarly called "Tippy" Cooke by the vulgar parrots of society, was a popular favourite, a good actor, a thorough gentleman, and a most agreeable companion. The character by the performance of which he was best known to play-goers, was that of William, in Douglas Jerrold's very effective comedy of *Black-Eyed Susan*. He so thoroughly identified himself with the part,

and took so firm a hold in it, of the sympathies of the public, as to have made himself the virtual monopolist of it, and to distance all competitors, both on the metropolitan and provincial stage, and to command his own terms from the managers. He was in independent circumstances, having married a lady of considerable property, the daughter of Jonas Hanway, once famous as a philanthropist, and from whom Hanway Street, near Rathbone Place, took its name. There was at one time a rumour of his intended retirement from the stage. I asked him if the report were true. He replied vivaciously: "Not in the least degree. People think I am too old, but I feel that I am not, and that I am as young in heart as ever I was, and almost as young in bodily vigour. I can dance the sailor's hornpipe as well as ever I did; and as long as I can do that, and keep my senses, I shall continue on the stage; that is to say, as long as any solvent lessee and manager will engage me, and pay me." And he kept his word.

John Pritt Harley was equally a favourite of the public. He had a much larger range of characters. He was declared by his many admirers to belong to what was called the "good old school" of acting, whatever that phrase may mean. It was said by the critics, with rare unanimity, that his quaint, original, and highly effective performance of the part of the First Grave Digger in *Hamlet*, had

never been equalled on the stage, and would alone have sufficed to establish a great reputation. He was a regular frequenter of the Garrick in the early afternoons of every day. He had the happy incapacity of exciting either jealousy or professional envy, and every member of the Club was his friend and was proud to be so.

Andrew Arcedeckne (he pronounced his name Archdeacon) was a character, good-natured—*tant soit peu vulgaire*—in his manners and conversation. The vulgarity, however, was not wholly natural, but more or less assumed for his own amusement and that of his intimates. He was a country gentleman of good estate, and had filled the office of high sheriff of his native county (Suffolk I think it was) with much more *éclat* than dignity, and would sometimes sing a comic speech in lieu of making a dignified speech when a dignified speech was expected of him. Thackeray first met him at the Garrick, cultivated his acquaintance, made note of all his little eccentricities, and studied them with a view of turning them to literary account, either in his next novel or in a magazine article. He in due time introduced him as "Fowker" in one of his most popular novels, in such a manner that all Arcedeckne's friends recognised the portrait, though the name was not mentioned. Arcedeckne expressed much displeasure to his intimates at the caricature which the novelist had drawn of him, but took no

public or personal notice of it to Thackeray, though he might have done so, if he had been as thin-skinned as Thackeray himself was when similar liberties were taken with him. Thackeray, with all his good-nature, varied as it was by occasional bursts of the opposite quality, thought it fair to caricature other people, but very unfair for other people to caricature him. When Mr. Edmund Yates wrote and published a not particularly flattering, but not ill-natured description of him, derived solely from the knowledge he had acquired of him in the Garrick Club, of which they were both members, he forgot the similar case of Fowker, in which he was the offending party, and vowed such social vengeance against Mr. Yates as it was possible for him to take. The result was a literary *fiasco*, which led to the withdrawal of Mr. Yates from the Club, and threatened to lead to the withdrawal of Charles Dickens also. Happily for the Club, and perhaps for Thackeray also, this consummation of a dispute, which Mr. Thackeray ought never to have instigated, was averted.

Mr. Beazley, the architect, was a well-known and popular member of the Garrick, apropos of whom a story was often told. Another member—a very cross-grained and disagreeable person, whose real name I will not seek to disinter from oblivion, but whom I shall designate as Mr. Prodgers—accosting Mr. Beazley as he sat comfortably at

lunch one day, said, "Do you know, Mr. Beazley, that some people in the Club are exceedingly ill-mannered, and take unwarrantable and impertinent liberties with your name? You would not guess what they call you?"

"Not I," replied Beazley; "and I shall not try to discover."

"But," continued Prodgers, "it is most unjustifiable, and in shockingly bad taste. They positively call you 'Beastly.'"

"Is that all?" coolly answered the architect. "They call you something ten times worse than 'Beastly,' and by a name infinitely more odious. They actually call you 'Prodgers'!"

Prodgers did not see the point. Everybody else did, and enjoyed it.

Mr. John—now Sir John—Gilbert, the President of the Royal Society of Painters in Water Colours, was elected to the Club on my nomination, seconded by that of forty or fifty, perhaps a hundred, other members. A few weeks after his admission, Mr. David Roberts told me that he had been speaking to Mr. Clarkson Stansfield on the subject, and that they both agreed that an artist of such eminence and genius should be welcomed to the Garrick by a complimentary dinner. I was of the same opinion; and the best and most *recherché* dinner that the resources of the cook and butler of the Club could furnish was the result, attended by as many leading

artists and literary men as could be comfortably accommodated in the not very spacious dining-room of the establishment.

David Roberts was particularly enthusiastic in the endeavour to render homage to the genius of his brother artist, and in selecting the most congenial and sympathetic guests to do honour to the occasion. Their walks of art were different, and jealousy seldom or never finds a seat in the minds of men of real genius, whatever their speciality may be, and every true worshipper of nature loves his fellow-worshipper. This rule does not always hold good in other intellectual pursuits, especially in those of literature, music, and the drama, but seldom fails in pictorial art, as great painters do not wait until their contemporaries and competitors are in their graves before they discover and confess their genius, as is much too often the case with rival poets, romancers, and composers.

BLACKBALLING AT CLUBS.

It is seldom that anyone is elected to a London club without having more than one black ball entered against him. It, however, fell to my lot to be admitted to the Reform Club, more than a quarter of a century ago, by the unanimous vote of the members. The gratifying fact was duly notified to me in complimentary terms by Lord Marcus Hill, who proposed, and Mr. Joseph Parkes, who seconded my nomination, and in curt official terms by the Secretary. I was naturally delighted—delight is, perhaps, too strong a word, but, at all events, very highly gratified—at this totally unexpected result of my candidature, but did not boast of it anywhere except in the private sanctuary of my home.

My wife—a very sensible, most affectionate, and beautiful woman, the joy, the charm, the guardian angel of my heart and household—remarked on this occasion, with a frankness of which love alone is capable, and which no one but a fool or a very bad-tempered man would resent, and of which I felt and expressed my admiration ere the words were well out of her mouth: “You need not be so proud of it. It only shows that you are a nobody. If you had been anybody whatever, you

would have made enemies, and they would have blackballed you ! ”

I have often thought, since that time, of the wisdom of the amiable satirist, and learned to estimate blackballing—when it is not so decided as to amount to rejection—at its true value. My experience of club-life, in the various clubs of which I have been a member, has often led me to reflect upon the adequate or inadequate causes, the whims and caprices, the freaks and the fancies, the reasons or the prejudices, the ill-founded or well-founded objections, that men take to others who claim the privilege of social intercourse with them. Physical, moral, and intellectual objections never fail when they are wanted, neither do objections which would puzzle him who holds them to account for or to justify, and place him on a par with the man to whom the very name of Dr. Fell was disagreeable. I quote the well-known epigram unwillingly, for the sake of the few to whom it may be unfamiliar :

I do not like thee, Dr. Fell ;
The reason why I cannot tell ;
But this I know, and know full well,
I do not like thee, Dr. Fell.

A very deaf man, a deformed man, a quarrelsome and cantankerous man, a loud-talking and dictatorial man, a bandy-legged man, a profane

man, a dirty or slovenly man, have all been objected to for these more or less satisfactory reasons. The wearing of green or smoke-coloured spectacles; the possession of the name of Smith or Thomson, when there have been already a dozen Smiths or Thomsons in the club; a too aggressive red beard or head of hair; a club foot; a wooden leg: have often been the means of excluding estimable and amiable people from the privileges of membership. This prejudice against red hair—which popular tradition or superstition attributes to Judas Iscariot—has often been found insuperable in the minds of people who would be very sorry to avow it.

A very remarkable case of blackballing occurred at the Garrick Club, when I was a member of it, when a highly-popular and eminent man was rejected, though nine-tenths, if not nineteen-twentieths, of the members were in favour of his election. The candidate was Mr. Alfred Bunn, the dramatist and lessee of Drury Lane Theatre, whom *Punch* had ridiculed as the "poet Bunn," getting, however, the worst of the conflict in the retaliation which it provoked. Mr. Bunn's company was highly enjoyed by everyone who knew him, and his probable entrance into the Club was hailed with pleasure by all the *habitues*. When his name was inscribed in the Candidate's Book, and required two seconders, there was a

perfect rush of members who volunteered, unasked, to act as sponsors for the popular manager. Whole pages of the Candidate's Book were covered with their names, and any member not in the secret would have been justified in believing that he would be elected with acclamation. Nevertheless, he failed to be admitted.

The election was not by universal suffrage of the Club, but by the Committee, and the Chairman, the most influential member of that body, whose judgment swayed that of all the rest, had made up his mind that Mr. Bunn should not be admitted, even if every other member of the Club should be in his favour; and Mr. Bunn was rejected accordingly. The reason given by the Chairman, one of the most courteous, affable, and kind-hearted of men, was that a certain "noble" Lord had seduced Mr. Bunn's wife; that the "noble" Lord was already a member of the Club, and could not be expelled for that offence; that Mr. Bunn had compromised the action which he had instituted against the seducer, and had consented to keep the case out of the newspapers, in consideration of a large sum of money; and that the meeting of two such persons as the plaintiff and the defendant in the Garrick Club dining-room or smoking-room would be very disagreeable for any member of the Club to witness. This reason, and this only, inspired him to blackball Mr. Bunn, who was in every other respect but

this one a most fitting member of a Theatrical, Literary, and Social Club. Against the decision there was no appeal; and, if there had been, Mr. Bunn was too much a man of the world to appeal to it.

Another very amusing, but not so important a case of blackballing, came under my cognizance at a far more pretentious club than the Garrick. Mr. W——, who had been, I believe, a linendraper in Oxford street, was a Liberal Member of Parliament, and, as far as his not infrequent speeches were concerned, almost invariably opposed the measures brought forward by the Liberal administration. But he never voted against the party, but generally abstained from voting at all when, perhaps, his vote might have been useful. The Liberal Whip of the day endeavoured to conciliate him, and asked him in confidence whether the administration could do anything for him, by conferring a knighthood, a baronetcy, or some other title upon him. The unruly member had the misfortune at a public meeting, the proceedings at which were duly reported in the newspapers, to take his constituents into his confidence. The irreverent *Mr. Punch*, who had often previously girded at the rickety M.P. for his cockney mispronunciation of *letter v*, and for his calling veal *weal*, and a very villainous *lla*, thereupon dubbed him a *wiscount* he remained to the end

of his days, in the pages of *Punch*, and among that portion of society who take their wit and humour at second-hand, when well worn, and repeat it, parrot-fashion, *ad nauseam*.

It so happened that Mr. W——, who would not consent to be a baronet or a viscount if either of these titles had been within his reach, was ambitious of becoming a member of the committee of the highly influential club to which he belonged, and had his name inscribed as a candidate for the honour. For some days prior to the election he canvassed such members as he was personally acquainted with to support him by their votes, and received, as he imagined, many promises from the good-natured or indifferent among them, as well as a few from the more friendly, or apparently friendly, on whom he principally relied for success. When the result of the election was finally declared, it appeared that he had only received *one* vote! The story goes, which may or may not be true, that one of his so-called friends, who had languidly promised him his vote, went up to him when the result was declared, and said, "I am very sorry, Mr. W——, but at all events I kept my word and threw in my ball in your favour." The "Viscount" looked at him indignantly, and replied, "No, Sir, you did not! I threw in that ball myself!"

The word now in favour, instead of to blackball

a man—for neither black balls nor white balls are used, but small globular pieces of cork, which are thrown into one of the two compartments of the ballot-box severally marked "yes" or "no"—is "pill." Such a one has been pilled, signifies that he has been blackballed. It has often been asked, "*unde derivatur*" pill? The only answer that has found acceptance is that the round pieces of cork are called pills from their shape; but this explanation, though it satisfies people (and they are the very large majority) who know nothing of, and care nothing for, etymology, is quite erroneous. If it were the proper derivation, as has been observed in *The Gaelic Etymology of the English Language*, the ball or pill would signify "yes" as well as "no," and, whether successful or unsuccessful, the candidate might be said to be *pilled*. In Gaelic, *pill* signifies "to turn back, to reject," which is beyond doubt the true origin of the word, which has cropped up unexpectedly from the unliterary speech of the lower people—as so many hundreds of other words have done—and found adoption among the upper classes.

A story was once current of a very gallant general officer who had lost his leg in battle, who was blackballed at a great military club for no apparent reason. His manners were agreeable, his reputation unsullied, his connections were aristocratic, as of which the world was cog-

nizant. In short, he was an eminently "clubable" man. The reason of his rejection was long a mystery. At last it oozed out. He had a wooden leg! A brother officer, to whom the opposition was traced, objected to him for "*stomp, stomping*" about the room. "If he would but buy himself a cork-leg, as he ought to do, and as he can well afford to do, I would vote for him with pleasure; but the *stomp, stomp* of his common wooden-leg, such as is worn by the crossing-sweeper round the corner, is more than I can bear. No man with a common wooden-leg, even if he were the Commander-in-Chief of the British army, shall ever enter this club, if my vote can exclude him!"

PIERRE DUPONT, THE CHANSONNIER.

At the close of 1853, when on a visit to Paris, I made the acquaintance of the then celebrated Pierre Dupont, the song-writer. He was at the time considered the legitimate successor of the more popular and more widely known Pierre Jean de Beranger, who had been for upwards of forty years the literary darling of the French multitude—as far as the multitude had any literary taste at all. I had from my earliest manhood been well acquainted with the songs of Beranger, and had “tried my prentice hand” in translating some of them into English. In the year 1847—a few months before the outbreak of the sudden revolution of February 1848—I had the pleasure of becoming personally known to him, on the introduction of the equally celebrated Abbé De la Mennais. Greatly admiring his peculiar poetical genius as a song-writer, whose tender, witty, satirical, and trenchant political songs had done more to influence the public opinion of his time—during the last years of Napoleon I. and the restoration of the Bourbons—than any of the speeches ever made in the Chambers of the Deputies, or the Peers, or any number of leading articles inserted in the newspapers, I was curious to know what kind of a wit,

a philosopher, a poet, and a man, was he who was designated by the popular voice to succeed to the lyric throne which Beranger was so soon to leave vacant. Dupont called upon me at the Bains de Tivoli, and the proprietor, to whom Sir John Easthope, then a lodger in the establishment, had spoken of me in terms of eulogy, took a friendly interest in me, warned me in strict confidence not to lend him any money, as the rising literary men of Paris, unless they were members of the Chamber of Deputies, or were in public employ, found it difficult in the actual political *régime* to gain a subsistence, and lived from day to day in a state of chronic indigence. The worthy man might have saved himself the trouble of his possibly well-meant, but somewhat cynical, if not libellous warning, which was utterly uncalled for in the case of poor Dupont. The *chansonnier* was a good-looking young man of thirty-two, with a highly expressive and handsome face, bright, intelligent eyes, and a manly bearing. He was, like Beranger, a man of the people, and owed all the education which he had acquired, except the rudiments, to his own natural aptitude and his love of knowledge, aided by his struggles to raise himself by intellectual exertion, from the lowly sphere in which he was born. He was a native of Lyons, where his father was employed in a silk factory; and, losing both his parents in his infancy, he

was taken care of by a priest, a relative of his father, who destined him for the Church. The design was not accomplished, but abandoned after a short trial. Before throwing himself upon the chances of the literary profession, and plunging into the deep and treacherous waters of Parisian Bohemianism, he had held a subordinate position in a bank, which, with his tastes and talents, he had found irksome and unendurable. It was the old, old story of genius asserting itself amid difficulties, under which mere talent is apt to succumb, but which true genius manages to surmount in the long run, after manifold struggles, temptations, disappointments, and battles for life or death with despair. Pierre Dupont, while yet in early manhood, had made himself an honourable name, and, if fortune had not in the meantime smiled upon him in a pecuniary sense, he earned sufficient for the supply of his humble wants. Cheered by the abundance of hope that the future would make amends for the deficiencies of the present, he had patience enough to wait the full noon-tide of the day that had dawned upon him, and "to bide his time."

He presented me with the two volumes of songs which he had already published, with music of his own composition, and with illustrations by Tony Johannot and other artists. I invited him to dine with me on the following day at the *Trois Frères Provençaux*, then the most celebrated res-

restaurant in Paris, noted for its excellent cookery and for the superior quality of its wines, especially for its Romanée Conti and its White Hermitage. The hour fixed for the dinner was six o'clock. I was true to the appointment to the very minute. But there were no signs of Pierre Dupont. I waited till half-past six, without ordering dinner, until seven with growing impatience, and until half-past seven, when I renounced all hope of his appearance, and came to the not unnatural conclusion that he had either forgotten all about the appointment, or that some accident had prevented him, against his will, from keeping it. At that hour I ordered dinner for myself, and had just dispatched the *potage*, when the laggard guest made his appearance, fagged, forlorn, and apparently disconsolate. Sinking into a chair beside me, he apologised for the lateness of his arrival, explaining that for nearly two hours he had been on the tramp in every quarter of Paris, in the vain attempt to find the Trois Frères. Though a resident of Paris for several years, he had never heard of that celebrated establishment, and had been misdirected by several persons of whom he had made inquiry as to its whereabouts, to the Cité, to the Porte St. Denis, to the Faubourg St. Germain, to the Rue St. Honorè, and even to Montmartre, and the Faubourg St. Antoine; and all in vain. He was about to give up the attempt, when on inquiring of

a *facteur*, or postman, he was advised to try the Palais Royal, where he had at last found the Trois Frères, and his expected entertainer.

A *recherché* dinner was duly ordered, during the progress of which I had a pleasant conversation, and exchanged ideas with the rising poet of the French democracy, *vice* P. J. De Beranger, superannuated and reposing on his laurels. He told me that he only knew the modest restaurants of the Quartier Latin, where he could procure such dinners as satisfied his wants and tastes for the moderate sum of a franc or a franc and a half, and at which he could procure credit if need were, if his finances were more than usually scanty. He had never heard of the Trois Frères, or of the equally celebrated establishments of Vefour, Vachette, or the Cafés Tortoni, Hardi, Riche, or Anglais, though he said he had once dined with a celebrated Englishman named *Edward*, at a fashionable restaurant, of which he had forgotten the name. M. Edward, he said, was a writer for the *Morning Chronicle* and for the *Quarterly Review*. He had, he said, the card of that gentleman in his pocket, and asked me if I was acquainted with him. On his showing me the card, I found he had made a mistake in the name, and that the card was that of Mr. Abraham Hayward, whose reputation was, of course, familiar to me, but whom I had never met, and whose connection with the

Morning Chronicle was long subsequent to mine, and only commenced after that journal had been purchased from Sir John Easthope by the party at that time called "Peelite," and of which the leading members were the Earl of Aberdeen, Mr. Sidney Herbert, and Mr. Beresford Hope. Mr. Hayward, he said, had written, or promised to write, an article about his songs in the *Chronicle*, but he had not seen it, and did not even know whether it had appeared; he deplored that his utter ignorance of English would have prevented him from understanding what had been said of him, except in a translation. "I think my countrymen are to blame," he said, "for not studying the English language more than they do. Very few of us can read, still fewer can speak English, whereas it is rare to find any ordinarily well-educated Englishman who is wholly ignorant of French."

"No doubt," I replied, "that the political commotions which have endured so long and so unhappily between the two nations are to some extent the cause of this; but why the cause should operate more strongly in the case of Frenchmen than in that of Englishmen, I cannot understand."

"I think I can understand," said he. "It is our pride, our conceit in fact. We think that we are the first nation in the world, that our language is the richest, our literature the most copious, and

that we are so self-sufficing as not to require any knowledge of the language or literature of other countries, and that all Europe should come to us if they want to learn."

My opinion to a great extent coincided with that of M. Dupont, but I did not like either to agree with him too cordially, or to controvert the fact as he had stated it; I was pleased, however, to think that the real truth had entered his mind, and that possibly he was not alone among the writers of his generation in confessing it.

Learning from a notice prefixed to the second volume of his songs, by a musical critic, that Pierre Dupont was the author of the melodies as well as of the poetry, but that he was as totally unacquainted with music as the birds, and did not know how to transcribe a note, I asked him how he managed to get his melodies correctly written down. "*Je les dicte!*" he replied. "I dictate them, either by whistling them or singing them to a professional composer, who afterwards plays them over to me, that I may judge whether he has rendered my thoughts correctly, and, if not, that he may make such alterations as I think necessary." "And does your musical friend always agree with you?" I ventured to inquire. "Not always," he replied. "He thinks he knows more about music than I do; and so no doubt he does, mechanically, and as a matter of technique. But he has

no inspiration. He understands harmony, but cannot invent a melody. Melody, I imagine, is the soul of music, and harmony is the body. I don't know what counterpoint means, or a fugue, and have but a faint idea of a symphony, or the chromatic scale; but I know a good tune when I hear it, and know that I can invent one to fit my own songs in a manner that pleases me, and that also pleases those to whom I sing them. *Que voulez vous ?* Thoughts arose in the human mind before men learned to write, and long before letters were invented. My melodies exist in my soul long before they are written down, and would exist even if they were never written at all. Nine out of ten of the professional musicians disapprove of my music; some deny it even to be music at all. But I know better. No doubt it would be agreeable to my own self-love if I could educate myself in the technicalities of the musical art, but I am too old, perhaps too stupid to learn, and I content myself with singing as the larks and nightingales do, because I cannot help it."

This was the substance of the *chansonnier's* confessions, though not perhaps the very words, but they are given as nearly as I can remember them.

M. Reyner, who wrote an introduction to the second volume of the songs, which he entitled "Pierre Dupont, Musician," and who transcribed

many of the melodies from the poet's dictation, and afterwards arranged them for publication, says of them: "The compositions of Pierre Dupont are not of easy interpretation. No one but himself can accentuate them with the same fire and sentiment which he puts into them, and that spring from the love which he feels in his work. The singing voice of Pierre Dupont is of extensive range, sonorous and clear, and full of sympathy. Sometimes it vibrates with enthusiasm, sometimes it softens into inflexions of extreme sweetness and tenderness. While he declaims his songs, half chants, half-recitations, his face reflects all the emotions of his mind, the sensations which he causes the listeners to experience develop themselves gradually, as if they were communicated by a magnetic influence, and the feeling which they excite exhibits itself in bursts of spontaneous and irresistible admiration."

Dupont's volumes had the advantage, on their first appearance, of the preliminary public approval of the great critics, Sainte Beuve, author of the *Causeries de Lundi*, and of the contemporary and still living poet, Charles Baudelaire, who both of them rendered justice alike to his promise and to his performance. Their well-merited praises of his best songs, however, fell dead upon the public ear. The populace had their own vulgar notions of poetry—his best poems were "*caviare*" to them,

and they held him in esteem for his worst, for the reason that they understood his worst and could not appreciate his best. The two songs which they most highly appreciated, and which for that reason occupy the place of honour, and stand in the forefront of his first volume, were "*Les Bœufs*"—"The Oxen"—and "*Le chant des Ouvriers*," or the "Song of the Workmen," which were held to be worthy of Beranger himself, though falling far below the not very high level of that author. In the first, a coarse rustic, a cultivator of his own small patrimony, sings not of his "three acres and a cow," but of his possibly ten acres, and his two great white oxen, "*deux grands bœufs blancs, marqués de roux*," which he loves beyond everything else in the world, for the satisfactory reason that their labour produces in a single week more than the sum which they originally cost him to purchase in the market. So precious are they to him, that every stanza in which their virtues are enumerated ends with a triumphant chorus, in which their proud proprietor asserts that, rather than sell them, he would hang himself; and that although he dearly loves his wife Jeanne, he would rather see her die, than lose his darling cattle.

S'il me fallait les vendre,

J'aimerais mieux me pendre,

J'aime Jeanne ma femme : eh bien j'aimerais mieux

La voir mourir que voir mourir mes boeufs.

In a note to this much admired song, which better-educated critics than the multitude had found reason to condemn, the author explained that in this chorus he merely gave expression to the rustic feeling, of which he was "but the painter and the translator."

The "*Chant des Ouvriers*" is of a higher order, but attributes far more amiable and ennobling sentiments to the working classes of Paris, Lyons, and other great cities, than they exhibited in 1848 and 1870, when the Commune was temporary master of the destinies of France. Read by the lurid light of these subsequent events, the benevolent chorus of Pierre Dupont's song reads far more like a mockery than a prophecy:—

Aimons nous ! et quand nous pouvons
 Nous unis pour boire à la ronde
 Que le canor se taise ou gronde
 Buvons
 A L'indépendance du monde !

Pierre Dupont aspired to be the minstrel of the rustic population of France, rather than that of the cockneys or *badauds* of Paris, as Beranger had been. He endeavoured to paint the manners and express the thoughts and feelings of the honest, frugal, hard-working, sordid, narrow-minded, pious and uncultivated peasantry. And he succeeded better than he thought, or than his contemporaries knew or acknowledged, except a few choice spirits

among his Bohemian comrades of the press. He was an ultra-democrat in politics, of opinions far more radical than his more polished predecessor, Beranger. But less fortunate than Beranger, he found but a small audience. Times, manners, and political circumstances had changed since the three first decades of the century. During those decades the press and the tribune, though nominally, were only partially free, and the opinions that could not find legitimate vent, or publicity, under the restraining hand of a quasi-constitutional despotism, or breathe comfortably under the strait-waistcoat of an oppressive legality, took refuge in songs and epigrams that the law, however greedy of victims and intolerant of freely expressed opinion, was powerless to touch without burning its fingers, or suffering humiliation in the encounter. Pierre Dupont flourished in a time of greater freedom, when the song and the epigram, though still influential, ceased to confer the popularity of bygone days upon the unprinted wit and satire that floated in the cabarets and the *cafés chantants* of the metropolis. And his printed effusions, though many of them were excellent specimens of the popular muse, were too good for the *bas peuple*, and not good enough for the cultivated classes, as those of Beranger had been and still continued to be. So Pierre Dupont's renown was

but of short duration, and had no effect while it lasted upon the lyric supremacy of Beranger. Beranger himself is now all but forgotten by the French people, who have discovered a new literary idol in Victor Hugo, to remain on the pedestal of popular favour until some new fetish shall displace him, and consign him to the place which he bids fair to occupy as long as French literature shall be cultivated or remembered, side by side with the greatest authors that have ever adorned it.

Pierre Dupont will take a place in the literary history of his native country, and rank with the Clement Marots and the Desaugiers who preceded him in the same walk; a star of song, but not of the first magnitude or brilliancy.
