

all night in snow-drifts, and sat behind females that would have the window open when one could not wink without his eyelids freezing together. Perhaps I shall give you some of my experiences one of these days; — I will not now, for I have something else for you.

Private theatricals, as I have figured in them in country lyceum-halls, are one thing, — and private theatricals, as they may be seen in certain gilded and frescoed saloons of our metropolis, are another. Yes, it is pleasant to see real gentlemen and ladies, who do not think it necessary to mouth, and rant, and stride, like most of our stage heroes and heroines, in the characters which show off their graces and talents; most of all to see a fresh, unrouged, unspoiled, high-bred young maiden, with a lithe figure, and a pleasant voice, acting in those love-dramas which make us young again to look upon, when real youth and beauty will play them for us.

— Of course I wrote the prologue I was asked to write. I did not see the play, though. I knew there was a young lady in it, and that somebody was in love with her, and she was in love with him, and somebody (an old tutor, I believe) wanted to interfere, and, very naturally, the young lady was too sharp for him. The play of course ends charmingly; there is a general reconciliation, and all concerned form a line and take each other's hands, as people always do after they have made up their quarrels, — and then the curtain falls, — if it does not stick, as it commonly does at private theatrical exhibitions, in which case a boy is detailed to pull it down, which he does, blushing violently.

Now, then, for my prologue. I am not going to

change my cæsuras and cadences for anybody; so if you do not like the heroic, or iambic trimeter brachycatalectic, you had better not wait to hear it.

## THIS IS IT.

A Prologue? Well, of course the ladies know; — I have my doubts. No matter, — here we go!  
What is a prologue? Let our Tutor teach:  
*Pro* means beforehand; *logus* stands for speech.  
'T is like the harper's prelude on the strings,  
The prima donna's courtesy ere she sings.

“The world's a stage,” — as Shakspeare said, one day;  
The stage a world — was what he meant to say.  
The outside world's a blunder, that is clear;  
The real world that Nature meant is here.  
Here every foundling finds its lost mamma;  
Each rogue, repentant, melts his stern papa;  
Misers relent, the spendthrift's debts are paid,  
The cheats are taken in the traps they laid;  
One after one the troubles all are past  
Till the fifth act comes right side up at last,  
When the young couple, old folks, rogues, and all,  
Join hands, so happy at the curtain's fall.  
— Here suffering virtue ever finds relief,  
And black-browed ruffians always come to grief,  
— When the lorn damsel, with a frantic speech,  
And cheeks as hueless as a brandy-peach,  
Cries, “Help, kyind Heaven!” and drops upon her knees  
On the green — baize, — beneath the (canvas) trees, —  
See to her side avenging Valor fly: —  
“Ha! Villain! Draw! Now, Terraitorr, yield or die!”  
— When the poor hero flounders in despair,  
Some dear lost uncle turns up millionaire, —  
Clasps the young scapegrace with paternal joy,  
Sobs on his neck, “*My boy! MY BOY!! MY BOY!!!*”

Ours, then, sweet friends, the real world to-night  
Of love that conquers in disaster's spite.

Ladies, attend! While woful cares and doubt  
 Wrong the soft passion in the world without,  
 Though fortune scowl, though prudence interfere,  
 One thing is certain: Love will triumph here!

Lords of creation, whom your ladies rule, —  
 The world's great masters, when you're out of school, —  
 Learn the brief moral of our evening's play:  
 Man has his will, — but woman has her way!  
 While man's dull spirit toils in smoke and fire,  
 Woman's swift instinct threads the electric wire, —  
 The magic bracelet stretched beneath the waves  
 Beats the black giant with his score of slaves.  
 All earthly powers confess your sovereign art  
 But that one rebel, — woman's wilful heart,  
 All foes you master; but a woman's wit  
 Lets daylight through you ere you know you're hit.  
 So, just to picture what her art can do,  
 Hear an old story made as good as new.

Rudolph, professor of the headsman's trade,  
 Alike was famous for his arm and blade.  
 One day a prisoner Justice had to kill  
 Knelt at the block to test the artist's skill.  
 Bare-armed, swart-visaged, gaunt, and shaggy-browed,  
 Rudolph the headsman rose above the crowd.  
 His falchion lightened with a sudden gleam,  
 As the pike's armor flashes in the stream.  
 He sheathed his blade; he turned as if to go;  
 The victim knelt, still waiting for the blow.  
 "Why strikest not? Perform thy murderous act,"  
 The prisoner said. (His voice was slightly cracked.)  
 "Friend I have struck," the artist straight replied;  
 "Wait but one moment, and yourself decide."

He held his snuff-box, — "Now then, if you please!"  
 The prisoner sniffed, and, with a crashing sneeze,  
 Off his head tumbled, — bowled along the floor, —  
 Bounced down the steps; — the prisoner said no more!

Woman! thy falchion is a glittering eye;  
 If death lurks in it, oh, how sweet to die!

Thou takest hearts as Rudolph took the head;  
 We die with love, and never dream we're dead!

The prologue went off very well, as I hear. No alterations were suggested by the lady to whom it was sent, so far as I know. Sometimes people criticise the poems one sends them, and suggest all sorts of improvements.\* Who was that silly body that wanted Burns to alter "Scots wha hae," so as to lengthen the last line, thus? —

"Edward!" Chains and slavery.

Here is a little poem I sent a short time since to a committee for a certain celebration. I understood that it was to be a festive and convivial occasion, and ordered myself accordingly. It seems the president of the day was what is called a "teetotaller." I received a note from him in the following words, containing the copy subjoined, with the emendations annexed to it.

"Dear Sir, — your poem gives good satisfaction to the committee. The sentiments expressed with reference to liquor are not, however, those generally entertained by this community. I have therefore consulted the clergyman of this place, who has made some slight changes, which he thinks will remove all objections, and keep the valuable portions of the poem. Please to inform me of your charge for said poem. Our means are limited, etc., etc., etc.

"Yours with respect."

\* I remember being asked by a celebrated man of letters to let him look over an early, but somewhat elaborate poem of mine. He read the manuscript and suggested the change of one word, which I adopted in deference to his opinion. The emendation was anything but an improvement, and in later editions the passage reads as when first written.

Here it is, — with the slight alterations.<sup>a</sup>

Come! fill a fresh bumper,—for why should we go

logwood

While the ~~nectar~~ still reddens our cups as they flow!

decoction

Pour out the ~~rich juices~~ still bright with the sun,

dye-stuff

Till o'er the brimmed crystal the ~~rabies~~ shall run.

half-ripened apples

The ~~purple-globed clusters~~ their life-dews have bled;

taste

sugar of lead

How sweet is the ~~breath of the fragrance they shed!~~

rank poisons

wines!!!

For summer's ~~last roses~~ lie hid in the wines

stable-boys smoking long-pines.

That were garnered by ~~maidens who laughed through the vines~~

scowl

howl

scoff

sneer

Then a ~~smile~~, and a glass, and a toast, and a cheer,

strychnine and whiskey, and ratsbane and beer

For all the ~~good wine, and we've some of it here~~

In cellar, in pantry, in attic, in hall,

Down, down, with the tyrant that masters us all!

Long live the gay servant that laughs for us all!

The company said I had been shabbily treated, and advised me to charge the committee double,—which I did. But as I never got my pay, I don't know that it made much difference. I am a very particular

<sup>a</sup> I recollect a British criticism of the poem “with the slight alterations,” in which the writer was quite indignant at the treatment my convivial song had received. No committee, he thought, would dare to treat a Scotch author in that way. I could not help being reminded of Sydney Smith, and the surgical operation he proposed, in order to get a pleasantry into the head of a North Briton.

person about having all I write printed as I write it. I require to see a proof, a revise, a re-revise, and a double re-revise, or fourth-proof rectified impression of all my productions, especially verse. A misprint kills a sensitive author. An intentional change of his text murders him. No wonder so many poets die young!

I have nothing more to report at this time, except two pieces of advice I gave to the young women at table. One relates to a vulgarism of language, which I grieve to say is sometimes heard even from female lips. The other is of more serious purport, and applies to such as contemplate a change of condition,—matrimony, in fact.

—The woman who “calc'lates” is lost.

—Put not your trust in money, but put your money in trust.

### III.

[THE “Atlantic” obeys the moon, and its LUNIVERSARY has come round again. I have gathered up some hasty notes of my remarks made since the last high tides, which I respectfully submit. Please to remember this is *talk*; just as easy and just as formal as I choose to make it.]

—I never saw an author in my life — saving, perhaps, one — that did not purr as audibly as a full-grown domestic cat (*Felis Catus*, LINN.) on having his fur smoothed in the right way by a skilful hand.

But let me give you a caution. Be very careful how you tell an author he is *droll*. Ten to one he will hate you; and if he does, be sure he can do you a