

'MISERIES OF HUMAN LIFE.'—Some twenty-five years ago, a work in two or three volumes, under this title, was republished in this city from an English edition. One of these volumes lies before us; and if it be a fair representative of its companions, an American publisher would not find it amiss to put forth a new issue of the book; for it abounds in keen satire, playful wit, and pleasant humor. We have segregated from its numerous divisions a few passages for the entertainment of our readers. A good deal of what is termed 'criticism' upon works of art has lately been expended in this meridian upon an undiscerning and unheeding public; yet we propose to add to the amount, by copying the remarks of one Mr. NED TESTY upon an exhibition of paintings and statuary, similar, we may suppose, to the annual collections of our 'National Academy of Design;' similar, certainly, in many of the points touched upon by the critic. After a consideration of the Landscapes, 'with their meagre subjects, lying perspective, and timid handling; their frittered lights, lumpy shadows, indigo skies, and saffron sands; their forward back-grounds, and backward fore-grounds; with trees and meadows carefully colored from an emerald, and water of such an hue and surface, that forgetting for a moment the season represented, one looks narrowly after the *skaters!*'—after a discussion of these, *en masse*, we are favored with the subjoined 'hits' at a particular '*Family Piece*.'

A YOUNG man who 'wants encouragement,' had immortalized family affection, by representing papa standing up at one end of the picture, ('his lips glued to each other, and his bullet eyes wide open, though evidently seeing nothing; and mamma at the other; the peace being kept between them without the loss of an inch of space, by their endless progeny, whose heights and ages the artist has most accurately registered, by stringing them strait out, closely linked together in a descending series, like the reeds of Pan's pipe, which they farther resemble in the lank uprightness of their figures, and the billious deadness of their complexions. The next of these Domestic Scenes reproaches the idleness so remarkable in the foregoing, by the great variety of employment which it exhibits, with the additional advantage of allowing more elbow-room to the fancy of the painter; who in the first place has contrived to record, in the mother of the family, a truly exemplary instance of notability, combined with maternal tenderness; for she is seen, at the same point of time, engaged in nursing one child in her lap, rocking with her foot the cradle of another, hearing the task of a third, and eyeing the frolics of a fourth; and all this without seeming at all distracted from her needle, which she has just drawn out at the utmost stretch of her arm. The remaining children are all liberally supplied with such occupations or amusements as, when followed at proper times and places, must be allowed to become their sexes and ages, but which we are not exactly prepared to see going on as here, all at once in the same parlor. The young ladies of this extraordinary family can study their maps and globes, pore over their books, and even practice their music-lessons, without appearing once to know that those boisterous and unruly little dogs, their brothers, are cracking their whips, beating their drums, scampering about the room with their wagons, etc.; the very baby in the cradle, instead of being frightened out of its wits, as might reasonably be expected, only appearing to be lulled into a still sounder sleep, by the riotous gambols going on.'

Outraging nature is as common in art now as it was in the era of NED TESTY. Here you may see the picture of 'a lady in full length, gayly and archly tripping out in a hurricane by herself, in thin fluttering muslin, without cap, hat, or bonnet, by the side of a raging sea; where, if one may judge by the disposition of her limbs, and the archness of her countenance, she is practising an *allemande* to the music of the thunder-claps which seem bursting over her in all directions; yet without the slightest mark of concern in her looks, or apparent apprehension of taking cold, after dancing under such discouraging circumstances of dress and weather; there stares a young miss strait out of the picture, with one hand grown to her side, and the other to the monstrous head of a Newfoundland dog, *sitting* up exactly as high as she *stands*; and near by, in another frame, a parcel of Months or Hours, in petticoats, are smiling and dancing jigs round an emblem, in the shape of a good-looking woman in green, who is supposed to be Spring.' The critic wonders 'why they have n't got to changing the Minutes, Seconds, and other inferior parts of clock-work into little fluttering urchins.' But pause for a moment, reader, with hushed respiration, while we set before you a specimen of *the Awful!* There is an appropriate 'power of words' in the description of the 'grouping,' and doubtless the coloring was 'in keeping;' as much so, perhaps, as in DICKENS'S picture of the Wise Men

of the East worshipping in a pink manger, or the Prodigal Son coming home in red rags to a purple father and a sea-green calf, waiting to be roasted :

'HERE is a piece equally stupendous in size and subject, bearing the semblance of having been furiously thrown upon the canvass in the dark, from the disordered pallets of all the painters in the Universe; a sort of maniac's vision, embodied into a rolling chaos, turbulently brewed up out of the warring rudiments of smoke! blood! fire! night! whirlwind! earth! and water; a ruinous huddle of every thing spiritual and material, real and conjectural, within and without the precincts of possible Nature; and of every mingling shape, shade, color, quality, and consistence; the whole congregated mass of discordances tumultuously wheeling, dashing, boiling, and thundering together, in one giddy storm of—*NOTHING!*' The figures of this landscape are entirely in keeping with it; 'ambiguous and reserved innuendos of beings, fluctuating somewhere among the shadowy and unsettled nomenclatures of incantation; demon, wizzard, griffin, goblin, demi-gorgon,' etc.

After a few more examples of 'single criticism' in this kind, we are favored with a 'running commentary' upon the ostracised paintings which adorn the upper tiers, and spaces over the doors: 'An upward glance of your eye introduces you to those poor creatures in reduced sizes, who are sent to Coventry at the top of the room, and strung along, by way of cornice, close under the ceiling; figures! but what language can adequately report them!—their wooden features, their mortified complexions; their sneaking, disconsolate, condemned looks; their quizzical head-dresses, and paste-board draperies; their brick-dust curtains, increasing by contrast the chalkiness of their cheeks; and that general and inveterate hardness of manner which instantly chases away all idea of the elasticity of the flesh, and the flexibility of cloth or linen. Hard!—adamant is *pap* to it!' The *Crayons* 'afforded striking examples of worse styles, by the help of worse materials; ' there were still-born efforts in black-lead pencil, from the hands of academical tyros; wan historical sketches in water-color, by young ladies; imaginary elevations of bridges that will never be built; naked fronts of huge white houses, that sicken all eyes but those of the architect and the owner; and chuckle-headed busts in plaster, of obscure, pudding-faced moderns; likenesses in India-ink, '*done in this manner*' for almost nothing; etc., etc. An exhibition of this sort is certainly proved to be one of the miseries of human life, 'by good witness.' But other miseries are enumerated; and chief among them, the *humbugeousness* of quack advertisers, and the gullibility of the public; and a medical sample is cited, which would do honor to any 'pill' or 'sarsaparilla' puff, of the present day:

'I SHOULD be the most ungrateful of mankind, were I to delay for a moment to return my heart-felt acknowledgments for the blessings I have derived from your inestimable pill. Before I was so happy as to hear of its miraculous effects, life had long been a burden to me. I was an object no less horrible than piteous to behold, being so entirely covered, or rather crusted, from head to foot, with the most virulent blotches and humors, that I ought rather to have been called an *Uteer* than a man. I was at the same time so miserably emaciated, that my bones rattled audibly as I moved, and my head itself seemed to hang to my shoulders by a thread. In short, to such a condition was I reduced, that, on being carried to my own door upon a litter, on my return home after a short absence in the vain search after ease, my wife, who chanced to meet me in the passage, insisted that they had brought me to the wrong house, for that she had never seen me before! The sound of my voice, however, but too cruelly undeceived her; and I was then conveyed to the bed on which I continued to lie, without stirring hand or foot, for more than thirty years. During this awful period matters were constantly and rapidly going on with me from bad to worse; scarcely an hour passed but some new and still more deplorable disease was added to the complicated list of maladies which were devouring me up piece-meal, in a manner; and it was a lucky day when I could say that one or more of my bones had not dropped clean out of the socket! Sleep at one time, I had none, for sixty-nine successive nights, unless I may call by that name a series of swoons, brought on by my agonies, and the weakness consequent upon my reduced condition. About this period, the flesh began to drop in large collops from my back and shoulders; and from one hollow which formed exactly beneath my left pap, my heart was absolutely naked and visible, by which my inquisitive surgeon was gratified, at my expense, with a living display of the whole process of *systole* and *diastole*, as I think he called it. In this state of things, my case having been pronounced absolutely hopeless by every physician in the land, my friends began to think it was high time to call your invaluable remedy to my aid: and invaluable indeed it proved to me! No sooner had I begun to use it, than the most surprising alteration came on: while I was swallowing the first pill, I could plainly feel, to my inexpressible astonishment and delight, that a new and perfect growth of healthy flesh was rapidly forming in every part of the skeleton to which I was now wasted down; and before I had taken the third, I had reason to suspect, from certain strange and indescribable sensations, as if of some hard substance pushing or shooting forth in different places, that the numerous cavities left by the bones I had lost, were about to be filled up by a new process of ossification; which, sure enough, was presently found to be vigorously and prosper-

ously going on. My appetite, too, very shortly became so dangerously keen, that it was reckoned prudent to refuse me a third fowl at my dinner. But not to trouble you with too many particulars, (which to you, indeed, must be mere shadows of a thousand still more extraordinary cases,) I will simply say, that by persevering in the course for one week more, I felt not only that every symptom of disease had absolutely vanished as if by magic, but that I was suddenly able, (which I had never been in the best days of my youth and strength,) to perform the most athletic feats in leaping, wrestling, boxing, etc., without the slightest sensation of fatigue. To express the full extent of my gratitude to you, my dear Sir, for this almost incredible restoration, is a task which I must give up in despair; suffice it to say, that to Providence (under your pill) I shall ever acknowledge myself indebted for the felicity I now enjoy.' P. S. Please send me without delay, by the next coach, six dozen of the largest boxes of your Scorbutic Pills; though, indeed, I have not the smallest apprehension of ever having occasion to use them again.'

It would puzzle few of our readers, in town or country, to make a familiar application of this satire upon the prevailing style of quack advertisements.

GOSSIP WITH READERS AND CORRESPONDENTS.—In an admirable paper upon '*The Poetry of the Bible*,' written for the KNICKERBOCKER some years since by REV. WILLIAM T. BRANTLEY, President of the 'College of South Carolina,' there was an incidental allusion to the proofs of the authenticity of the Sacred Word, as contained in the fulfilment of the 'prophecies concerning the nations.' A dilapidated book-stall volume before us, with the title-page gone, and the author's name nowhere to be met with, (facts in themselves noteworthy in this connection,) thus illustrates the position of our valued correspondent: 'The primitive Christians regarded the Scriptures as their chief and dearest treasure; and often laid down their lives rather than deliver the sacred records to their enemies, who used every art of terror to seize and destroy them. Then, as now, different parties and sects existed, who all appealed to the Scriptures for proof of their several opinions; and these must have been so many checks upon each other, to the general exclusion of mistake and fraud. But aside from this, look at their predictions, in the case of the 'chosen and peculiar people.' The separation of the Israelites from the rest of mankind, not for their own sakes but for the sake of all, and their preservation amidst their enemies, what a display is it of the divine power! This great scheme of wisdom and goodness was carried on by its omnipotent Author 'with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm.' 'He sent a man before his people, even JOSEPH, who was sold to be a bond-servant. He increased his people exceedingly, and made them stronger than their enemies. He sent MOSES his servant, and AARON; and these showed his tokens among them, and wonders in the land of Ham. He sent darkness, and it was dark, and turned their waters into blood. Their land brought forth frogs, yea, even in their king's chambers. He gave them hail-stones for rain, and flames of fire in their land. He spake the word, and locusts came innumerable, and devoured the fruit of their ground. He smote all the first-born in their land, even the chief of all their strength. He brought forth his people from among them. He spread out a cloud to be a covering, and fire to give them light in the night season. He rebuked the Red Sea also, and it was dried up: so he led them through the deep as through a wilderness. At their desire he brought quails, and filled them with the bread of heaven. He opened the rock of stone, so that rivers ran in dry places. Yet within a while they forgot his works, and tempted GOD in the desert. Then the earth opened and swallowed up DATHAN, and covered the congregation of ABRAHAM. The plague also was great among them. Then, being chastised, they turned to their GOD. He led them over Jordan: the waters divided to let them pass. He discomfited their enemies. At His word the sun abode in the midst of Heaven; and the moon stood still, and hastened not to go down for a whole day; so He gave the kingdoms of Canaan to be an heritage unto his people; that all the nations of the world might know that the hand of the LORD is mighty, and that they might fear the LORD continually.' Such was the result of a scheme determined by divine goodness, planned by divine wisdom, foretold by divine knowledge, accomplished by divine power. 'The things of the earth were changed into things of the water, and the thing that did swim went upon the ground. The fire had power in the water contrary to his own virtue, and the water forgat his own kind to quench. Thus the elements were changed among themselves by a kind of harmony, as when one tune is changed upon an instrument of music, and the melody still remaineth.' How graphic also is the description of the 'gift of tongues,' conferred upon the Apostles! 'And they were all amazed, and marvelled, saying one to another: 'Behold, are not all these which speak, Galileans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, the dwellers