

And owls that flit continually between,
Shriek to the echo, and the low winds moan,
There the true Silence is, self-conscious and
alone.

Comparison of these lines with "Silence" as we know it in the collective editions of Poe makes obvious the difference between the two: they treat their subject differently, and they possess nothing in common in phrasing. It is in this difference, perhaps, that we are to seek an explanation of the neglect that has been visited upon the earlier version. For in all that has been written about Poe I can discover only one allusion to it—that of Professor Woodberry in the first edition of his life of Poe (p. 115), where he mentions a sonnet, in *Burton's* for 1839, "conjecturally [Poe's], although never afterwards acknowledged"; and even this bare mention Professor Woodberry omits in the revised edition of his work. But the poem is surely Poe's. It is true that it was signed merely by the initial "P."; but so, too, were Poe's "Fairyl-land" and the lines "To the River ——" in *Burton's* for the preceding month; and so also was the later and perfected "Silence" as republished in the *Broadway Journal* in 1845. Moreover, appearing as it did in *Burton's* while Poe was one of its editors and after he had published there other things signed in the same way, I cannot help feeling that Poe, if the lines were not his, would somehow have made it clear that they were not—as he did with more than one thing wrongly attributed to him. Finally, it is not difficult to discover in this early draft a parallelism in substance with several other things by Poe, notably his "Spirits of the Dead" and "The Valley of Unrest" and the prose essay "Silence—A Fable."

KILLIS CAMPBELL,

The University of Texas.

Correspondence.

THE PARTY SYSTEM.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NATION:

SIR: The misfortune that has befallen the Democratic party of late years in national elections, depriving it of control of the three departments of our government, has been attributed to various causes, but one cause which may be vital is in danger of being overlooked. That is the fact that the party has been making itself the mouth-piece of demands for particular acts of legislation, abandoning thereby its proper position as one of the two great political parties by means of which the government of this country is carried on.

In the countries of Continental Europe government by party has not developed along the same lines as it has in England and the United States. Political parties are numerous in those countries, and each represents demands for some particular legislation, or it may even be a demand for the establishment of a particular family or person in place of the established government. To secure a working majority for the ministry a *bloc* is necessary. This is formed by two or more parties, which are willing to sink individual differences for the purpose of achieving certain general results in which they are all interested.

The *bloc* takes in a manner, and for a time, the place of one of our two major parties, the one in power. And this sinking of individual differences is the only way to accomplish general results in politics. In England and the United States, however, for reasons which it is unnecessary to discuss here, the electorate has divided itself into two bodies, based upon a fundamental difference in human nature, one party being broadly the party of Personal Rights, the other that of Order.

From its organization the Democratic party has upheld principles which it has believed favor the liberty of the individual, even at the expense of governmental efficiency; the other party seeks to attain the object of government by strengthening the arm of the Administration, even at the sacrifice of some individual liberty. Each party appealed to those voters who favored one set of principles as compared with the other, and this divided the voters into two practically even parties. Of late years, however, the Democratic party has abandoned its position as the representative of principles with which the difference in human nature endows half the world, in its advocacy of particular acts of legislation, thereby taking a new position, which necessarily appeals to a smaller number of persons. It no longer represents the party of Personal Rights as opposed to the party of Order, but by limiting its support of individual liberty to certain specific tenets it has effected a displacement of the line separating the two parties. Had these demands and promises for particular legislation been presented merely as subordinate features of the party's platform; had they been so treated by the candidates, the orators and the newspapers of the party; had the main appeal of the party been made on the strength of its general principles, and had these special demands and promises been presented as incidental to those general principles, instead of making the acceptance of these particular tenets a shibboleth to good standing in the party, then the Democratic party would have continued to be a true political party. It would also have been in a position to accomplish more in furtherance of its principles than, with what superficially appears to be greater effort, it has accomplished.

The Republican party does not fall into this error of depending upon promises of particular legislation instead of general principles, and it has certainly accomplished more in the way of progressive legislation than its rival. That party means to the public a general tendency in favor of certain things, and it wins its victories by reason of the general appeal it thereby makes. Nor did it come into power because it advocated the abolition of slavery. It represented one of the broad tendencies of politics, of which demands for repression of slavery and polygamy in the Territories by the national government; national homestead laws, internal improvements to be made by the national government, a protective tariff, and opposition to disunion were typical manifestations. The Abolitionists and Freesoilers accomplished their purposes through the success of the Republican party, which by representing a general tendency was able to become a majority party, and accomplish what the

propagandist parties had not been able to obtain for themselves.

WM. P. MALBURN.

Denver, Col., December 20.

AVIATION IN 1783.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NATION:

SIR: Though it has perhaps occurred to many of us that the present is only the second of two periods of intense interest in the problem of aerial navigation, we do not all remember, perhaps, that the earlier period was for several reasons one of much greater excitement. When Etienne and Joseph Montgolfier, on June 5, 1783, filled a linen bag with hot air from a straw fire, and sent it into the air to a height of a mile and a half, and when, in November of the same year, M. François Pilâtre de Rozier and the Marquis d'Arlandes made an ascension from the Bois de Boulogne, remained in the air half an hour, and came down uninjured, a new path was opened for human travel; and as the difficulties which caused invention in that direction to languish for a century were not at first evident, at least to the lay mind, speculation as to the possibilities of aerial travel had in 1783 all the scope of ours and more of novelty.

The recent International Exposition of Aerial Locomotion, held at the Grand Palais, in Paris, had a section devoted to reminders of the earlier period, and their number and variety attest an enthusiastic interest in the wonderful new discovery that must have thrown all other preoccupations into the background, even at that troubled time.

There was, first, a model of the Montgolfier balloon. Then, in a corner by itself, the remarkable Tissandier collection. I translate from M. J. Saint-Alban, who writes of the exposition in a recent number of *Les Annales Politiques et Littéraires*:

After the first experiments of the Montgolfiers, of the Robert brothers (December, 1783), and Pilâtre de Rozier (see above), the *globe volant* became the most fashionable of all emblems. Everything was *au globe*; gloves, handkerchiefs, clothing. Artists and artisans taxed their ingenuity and their imaginations. Seamstresses embroidered nothing but balloons, manufacturers of woven stuffs and print goods demanded aerostatic patterns and nothing else. Dealers in bibelots exposed to the public gaze only creations *au globe volant*, and the cabinet-makers were not slow in joining the procession. This movement of industrial art lasted for several years. Interrupted by the Revolution, it appears again with the Directory, in the ascensions of Mme. Blanchard (her last attempt resulted in her death, June, 1819), of Mlle. Gamenin and of her brothers.

It, of course, gives pleasure to a young dandy who is interested in aviation, to wear a balloon as an ornament, to cover his head with a round hat—*chapeau au ballon*; of course, a lady of fashion appreciates a handkerchief and a pair of gloves embroidered with balloons; of course, she enjoys reading on her fan quatrains composed in honor of the heroes of the air, or seeing on it a representation of Pilâtre de Rozier in the act of falling on the French coast.

But it is still greater pleasure to lie down in a bed sculptured in the form of a balloon-basket and adorned with attributes of aerial navigation; to read the hour from a watch in the shape of a globe, whose balance-wheel carries little aeronauts in their baskets.

And even this does not satisfy our snobs. They insist on sitting in an arm-chair of which the wood as well as the upholstery speaks of aviation; on eating from plates which repeat the triumphs of the first conquerors of the air; on dipping their goose-quills into an ink-well in the form of a balloon. . . .

It is true that the aviators are influencing the modern art of the bibelot—are we not told that one of our prominent journalists wears shirts with a figure representing aeroplanes? But this craze is mild, compared with that revealed to us by the curious collection I am discussing.

It may be added that M. Gaston Tissandier, whose collection is thus furnishing the most eloquent commentary possible on the hopes which France conceived from the success of Etienne Montgolfier, is a brilliant French scientist who has himself invented a dirigible, and who is an authority on the subject of aeronautics.

ROY TEMPLE HOUSE.

Weatherford, Okla., December 16.

PHILOLOGY AND CRITICISM.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NATION:

SIR: It has been borne home to us pretty often of late that philology is no better than she ought to be. It was becoming clear that philologists were a sorry lot. But now it appears (see the *Nation* of December 16) that all this is a mistake. Philology is really a gay science, so gay as to be hardly more than the playground of romancers. With this settled, there is nothing for the strictly practical-minded but to turn to the workshops of the critics. Here the bright tools of epigram, paradox, and trope are in ceaseless play: obviously things are being done. The very fertility of criticism can bring but shame upon the poor philologist with his occasional article and his unprofitable dalliance with Paul's "Grundriss" and Professor Sievers. Without question he has wasted his time—a sad certitude which is only emphasized when he passes from the critic's shop to the gay bazaars where the critic's wares are displayed. Here is the meed for cultivating that turn of style which cuts so clean and so often to the very heart of the matter. Why, then, bury one's talents in the proceedings of learned societies?

But one must not suppose that the scholar's romantic life is a life of unproved pleasures free. On the contrary, it is encompassed by innumerable fears. To-day's victory may be to-morrow's disaster. A new manuscript may quickly upset the most carefully managed argument and turn joy to grieving. Clearly the game has its hazards. Worst of all, the scholar can never forget that facts are relentless; sooner or later they will out. Do what he will to escape, he is always within their danger, and too often discomfited by them. How, then, can he ever know the sweet securities of criticism? How can he ever attain to that serene intelligence and bland confidence which led a distinguished living critic to give chapter and verse for the high-water mark of English prose? You may say, if you dare, "Tide is not quite high there, Professor Saintsbury." But you should see that the professor's position is unassailable. If you threaten him, he will only ridicule you from behind the shining ramparts of his style. Was it not Swinburne who said with impunity that Musset's poems were but "decoctions of watered Byronism"? Not that criticism has not its passages at arms. Mr. James, for instance, did not in the least approve that phrase of Swinburne's. And how often have we heard that Dickens's characters both are and are not caricatures. But

there is no danger here; these are gentlemanly differences, which work no harm.

H. S. V. JONES.

Urbana, Ill., December 18.

COLLEGE ENGLISH AND A PROPOSED REMEDY.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NATION:

SIR: We have lately heard much of the difficulties of teaching English in our colleges. In my opinion the chief difficulty is that the student of composition has nothing to say, no meaning to express. His exercises in composition are purely for the sake of expression. His problem is then, not to find an expression for his meaning, but a meaning for his expression; and meanings, of course, are born, and not made. There is thus an absence of the fundamental condition of good writing—which is to have something you wish to say—and also of a basis for the most stimulating and effective criticism; for it is rather useless to accuse a student of failing to express his meaning when his meaning is of no consequence.

Now there are many occasions within the range of the college curriculum when the student's meaning is genuine and unforced—when, for example, he answers a question in examination or writes an essay to test his knowledge of some special subject. Here he has a spontaneous motive for expression, and for making his meaning clear. And just here are his deficiencies in language most obvious and exasperating. Instructors are apt to encourage these deficiencies by telling the student that in examinations matter is everything and style nothing. It is, however, out of the question for an instructor in history or physics or philosophy to give more than a passing attention to expression. Why should not the department of composition utilize these examination papers and essays as a basis for its work? Why should the student be called upon to invent meanings when he already has meanings badly expressed? to write fiction when he is unable to state a fact? Examination papers in particular are necessarily written in more or less hurry and confusion. Just for that reason they should furnish an excellent basis for practice in careful writing; for there is no more profitable exercise for the practical or for the artistic ends of composition, than to take something you have already tried to say, and said badly, and say it again so as perfectly to express what you mean.

W. F.

Bloomington, Ind., December 21.

EARLY REFERENCES TO ROBIN HOOD AND LITTLE JOHN.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NATION:

SIR: The recent publication of an elaborate and valuable study of "The Gest of Robin Hood" (by Dr. W. H. Clawson, University of Toronto Studies, Philological Series, October, 1909) makes pertinent this note, in which I present the earliest reference to the name Little John, and the second earliest reference in poetry to the Robin Hood ballads. Neither was known. I believe, to Professor Child, or has ever been called to the attention of scholars.

In the tallage made towards the fine

to the Lord Abbot, for the Feasts of Easter and St. Michael in the first year of the reign of King Edward "after the Conquest the Third," on Friday after the said Feast of St. Michael, and for other business of the village of Faversham in the time of Robert le Hert, Mayor of the same, there occur these names, among others, under the heading *Portatrices* (the gender being accounted for by the fact that the first two mentioned are women).

Petyt Johan (paying 6 pence).

Lytyl Johan (paying 4 pence).

Portatrices is to be rendered carriers or carters, and we may, therefore, presume that here, as in Little John's case, the name was given ironically. The document is described in the Hist. MSS. Commission, appendix to VI Report, p. 505.

The Robin Hood passage, which is only antedated by the famous passage in "Piers the Plowman," occurs in a MS. of the first half of the fifteenth century, of Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales." The MS. belongs to the Royal College of Physicians, in London. On folio 258A the copyist (or an earlier one) altered Chaucer's lines in "The Tale of Sir Thopas" so as to read:

Men spoken Romaunces of pricke,
Of hornchield and Ipotece,
Of Robynhoode and goode ser Guy.

This substitution of Robin for Bevis of Hampton indicates little as to the scribe's respect for the Gest, or the ballads; but it is impossible not to believe that he appreciated Chaucer's satire keenly; for in many places in the MS. opposite Chaucer's best jokes, he notes on the margin: *Nota, nota optime!*

HENRY NOBLE MACCRACKEN.

Yale University, December 22.

Literature.

MR. BROWNELL ON AMERICAN PROSE.

American Prose Masters. By W. C. Brownell. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. \$1.50 net.

Those who have had the pleasure of reading Mr. Brownell's stimulating studies of the "Victorian Prose Masters" need only be assured that this volume is in no way inferior to its predecessor. The praise is high, for its author is one of the few American writers to whom literary criticism is a matter of profession, of conscience, and of art. He sets to work adroitly; he exacts of himself a rigorous candor; his report is definite, perspicuous, symmetrical. In an unusual degree—we shall use the ancient phrase reluctantly but necessarily—he has the defects of admirable qualities.

His method is almost inflexibly systematic—for example, he subjects Cooper, Hawthorne, Emerson, Poe, Lowell, and Henry James to substantially identical tests for substance, philosophy, culture, and style. He does not, as has been said of Sainte-Beuve, draw all men six feet tall; he thinks, however, that all