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# The Star

VOLUME II. CHATHAM, N. B., JANUARY 1, 1881. NO. 218.

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**The North Star.** CHATHAM, N. B., JANUARY 1, 1881. J. E. COLLINS, Editor. ILL NATURED SATIRE. *Sæviti atrox Volscens, nec teli conspiciat usquam. Auctorem, nec quo seardens immittere possit.* —Virg. En. ix. 420. Fierce Volscens foams with rage, and gazing round, Descried not him who gave the fatal wound, Nor knew to fix revenge. —Dryden. There is nothing that more betrays a base ungenerous spirit than the giving of secret stabs to a man's reputation; lampoons and satires, that are written with wit and spirit, are like poisoned darts, which not only inflict a wound but make it incurable. For this reason I am very much troubled when I see the talents of humour and ridicule in the possession of an ill-natured man. There cannot be a greater gratification to a barbarous and inhuman wit than to stir up sorrow in the heart of a private person, to raise uneasiness among near relations, and to expose whole families to derision, at the same time that he remains unseen and undiscovered. If, besides the accomplishments of being witty and ill-natured, a man is vicious into the bargain, he is one of the most mischievous creatures that can enter into civil society. His satire will then chiefly fall upon those who ought to be most exempt from it. Virtue, merit, and every thing that is praiseworthy, will be made the subject of ridicule and buffoonery. It is impossible to enumerate the evils which arise from these arrows that fly in the dark, and I know no other excuse that is or can be made for them, than that the wounds they give are only imaginary, and produce nothing more than a secret shame or sorrow in the mind of the suffering person. It must indeed be confessed, that a lampoon or a satire do not carry in their robbery or murder; but at the same time how many are there that would not rather lose a considerable sum of money, or even life itself, than be set up as a mark of infamy and derision? and in this case a man should consider that an injury is not to be measured by the notions of him that gives, but of him who receives it. Those who can put the best countenances upon the outrages of this nature which are offered them, are not without their secret anguish. I have often observed a passage in Socrates' behaviour at his death, in a light wherein none of the critics have observed it. That excellent man entertaining his friends, a little before he drank the bowl of poison, with a discourse on the immortality of the soul, at his entering upon it, says, that he does not believe any of the most comic genius can censure him for talking upon such a subject at such a time. This passage, I think evidently glances upon Aristophanes, who writ a comedy on purpose to ridicule the discourses of that divine philosopher. It has been observed by many writers, that Socrates was so little moved at this piece of buffoonery that he was several times present at its being acted upon the stage, and never expressed the least resentment of it. But with submission, I think the remark I have here made shows us, that this unworthy treatment made an impression upon his mind, though he had been too wise to discover it. \* It has been said this was intended as a photograph of Dean Swift.

When Julius Caesar was lam-pooned by Catullus, he invited him to a supper and treated him with such a generous civility that he made the poet his friend ever after. Cardinal Mazarine gave the same kind of treatment to the learned Quillet, who had reflected upon his eminence in a famous Latin poem. The Cardinal sent for him, and after some kind expostulations upon what he had written assured him of his esteem; and dismissed him with the promise of the next good Abbey that should fall which he accordingly conferred upon him a few months after. This had so good an effect upon the author, that he dedicated the second edition of his book to the Cardinal, after having expunged the passages which had given him offence. Sextus Quintus was not of so generous and forgiving a temper. Upon his being made Pope, the statue of Pasquin was one night dressed in a very dirty shirt, with an excense written under it that he was forced to wear foul linen because his laundress was made a princess. This was a reflection upon the Pope's sister who, before the promotion of her brother, was in these mean circumstances that Pasquin represented her. As this pasquinade made a great noise in Rome, the Pope offered a considerable sum of money to any person that should discover the author of it. The author, relying upon his Holiness' generosity, as also on some private overtures which he had received from him, made the discovery himself, upon which the Pope gave him the reward he had promised, but at the same time, to disable the satirist for the future, ordered his tongue to be cut out, and both his hands to be chopped off. Aretine is too trite an instance. Everyone knows that all the kings of Europe were his tributaries. Nay there is a letter of his extant in which he makes his boast that he had laid the Sophi of Persia under contribution. Though in the various examples which I have here drawn together, these several great men behaved themselves very differently towards the wits of the age who had reproached them, they all of them showed plainly that they were very sensible of their reproaches, and consequently that they received them as very great injuries. For my own part I would never trust a man that I thought was capable of giving such secret wounds, and cannot but think that he would hurt the person whose reputation he thus assails, in his body or in his fortune, could he do it with the same security. There is indeed something very barbarous and inhuman in these ordinary scribbles of lampoons. An innocent young lady shall be exposed for an unhappy feature. A father of a family turned into ridicule for some domestic calamity. A wife be made uneasy all her life for some misinterpreted word or action. Nay a good, temperate and a just man shall be put out of countenance by the representation of those qualities that should do him honor. So pernicious a thing is wit when it is not tempered with virtue and humanity.

I have indeed heard of heedless, inconsiderate writers, that without any malice have sacrificed the reputation of their friends and acquaintances to a certain levity of temper, and a silly ambition of distinguishing themselves by a spirit of railery and satire: as if it were not infinitely more honorable to be a good-natured man than a wit. Where there is this little petulant humor in an author, he is often very mischievous without designing it to be so. For which reason I always lay it down as a rule that an indiscreet man is more hateful than an ill-natured one; or as the latter will only attack his enemies and those he wishes ill to, the other injures, indifferently, both friends and foes. I cannot forbear on this occasion transcribing a fable out of Sir Roger P'Estrange which accidentally lies before me. A company of waggish boys were watching frogs at the side of a pond, and still as any of them put up their heads, they would be pelting them down again with stones. "Children," says one of the frogs, "you never consider that though this may be play to you, it is death to us." As this week is in a manner set apart and dedicated to serious thoughts I shall indulge myself in such speculations as may not be altogether unsuitable to the season; and in the meantime as the setting in ourselves a charitable frame of mind is a work very proper to the time, I have in this paper endeavored to expose that particular breach of charity which has been generally overlooked by divines because they are but few who can be guilty of it.

† Peter Aretine commonly called "the scourge of princes," infamous for his writings, died in 1556.