

THE NOVICE.

A STORY FOUNDED ON FACT.

BY THE EDITOR.

Crouched on the sill of a wicket-gate
A Novice lay in a shivering state;
The gate was fast, and the vaulted way
Was dark with the mist of a rainy day,
And the eaves drop'd down upon the spot,
But the hapless maiden heeded not;
For though but a scanty robe she wore,
And the fever-throes her veins ran o'er,
Her mind within itself was thrown,
And dwelling on sorrows of its own;
And muttering prayers, while her brow she cross'd,
She faintly said "I'm lost! I'm lost!"

But why that look and cry of despair?
And how came the hapless maiden there?
Who is't would ask but has sometimes seen
A caged bird's bill its bars between,
As it flutter'd its wings and strove anew
To fly to the woods where th' wild-balm grew?
What bosom but has felt a thrill
At a captive's 'scape from his dungeon chill?
Where is the man but would rather die,
Than lead a life of captivity?
Urgo not that criminals sometimes,
When their lives are forfeit to their crimes,
Prefer to th' gallows, time to repent,
And a life of close imprisonment;
What though for this they raise their voice!
Two things influence their choice—
A dread of death in its terrible shape,
And the hope of ultimate escape.

But that love—inherent in each breast—
Of liberty, is a sweet bequest,
Brought by an angel's wing from heav'n—
To all the human family giv'n;
'Tis an heirloom left us by our sires,
And held as dear as our household fires;
Cofined to colour nor to race,
Supreme it reigns in every place.
Britons indeed may well look back
With pride upon their glorious track,
Defying despots power's oppress—
Shunning a mob's licentiousness.
But other lands have felt the thrill
Convey'd by a trumpet's piercing breath,

When it calls a nation to each hill,
To fight for Freedom or for death!
Though Freedom varies in the name,
Each land has felt and owned her flame.
We hail the Goddess as the cause
Of forms conventional—commerce—laws;
The Indian, as he roams wild,
Still nature's stern unpartner'd child,
Deems Freedom dwells but in the woods;
And as his bark skims o'er the floods,
Shunning the town for a covert dell,
Thinks slavery must in cities dwell.

The natives of the verdant isles,*
Where a southern sun sheds forth his smiles,
No knowledge have of liberty
But leave to climb each tall palm-tree—
By tomahawks yard by yard ascend,
Drawing the one when 'tother's gained,
Until they reach, by escalade,
The tuft of leaves which form a shade,
Where, seizing the sloth, 'spite of his cries
His bruised form on the ground soon lies;
Descending, they gorge on th' raw repast,
Then sleep until the effects are past—
Till hunger comes what men so free!
And then they hunt for another tree,
And of nothing else take th' slightest heed,—
So like the brutes on which they feed!

The Hottentots deem their joys begun
When they bask 'neath th' rays of a torrid sun;
Their loins wrapp'd round by th' skin of a beast,
Their swarthy bodies, withal, well-greased!
Thus to wallow and bask day after day,
And watch the lion's fierce spring for his prey,
Without a thought or care to annoy,
Is all of freedom they know to enjoy.

But there are nations spread over the earth,
Who, though not civilized, know her worth:
The Afghan leaves his flocks run wild
If a stranger's foot has his hills defiled,—
All offers of alliance spurns,
As his raging breast for vengeance burns;
Changes his shepherd crooks to spears,
Flings to the mountain-winds his fears,
Seizes a carbine and sword,
And hurries to guard each narrow choord,—
Perched on a peak o'er the coming foe,
He hurls both bullets and rocks below;
For what to him are luxury's pow'rs,
If a Frangistan flag floats o'er his towers!

The Arab, fleeting along on his steed,
Renowned for docility, fire, and speed,
In worshipping Liberty after his kind,
Deigns not to one spot of the globe be confined;
But pitches his tent where he chooses to stay,
And when he gets tired, strikes, mounts, and away!

But what people are they who've struggled so long,
Unaided, unhelped, 'gainst an empire so strong!—
An empire where seventy millions do bend
Their necks to the earth that one man may ascend!
Where one man is free (the millions all slaves!)
Whose nod thousands feel the knouts lash may invoke,
Whose frown sendeth crowds to Siberian graves,
And yet they lack courage to shake of his yoke!
Can it be that a pow'r, which "Old Nick," did ne'er hold,
For good or for evil, wot his namesake appease!
Or insatiate, like Alexander of old,
Does he pine for new worlds to receive his decrees!
Is his genius so soaring, so spotless his mind,
That he alone's fit to rule over mankind!

* Australia is here meant.

That he thus turns his arms 'gainst each neighbouring race,
Whom he'd crush, like the Poles, by his bloody ukase!—
Ah, Poland! accused be the day when the Bear,
In dividing thy spoils took the Lion's full share!
Accursed, too, the policy that could dictate
Acquiescence so calm in thy fallen estate,
When the three-fold partition thy neighbour's decreed,
And the nations of Europe but wink'd at the deed!—
When thy brave sons for freedom once more raised the lance,
Accused be the cowards of Britain and France
Who respectively wielded the powers of war,
Yet left thee to bleed 'neath the arms of the Czar!
Pray, pray for Circassia, ye wives of Warsaw!
For the Autocrat's fingers in ire shall he gnaw
As he finds year by year that he cannot prevail,
'Gainst the brave mountaineers and theirrepid Schmail!
Pray, pray for Circassia, ye widows of Poles!
As you fancy your kindred's blood down each street rolls,
(A torrent to gorge the Imperial Leech!)
As it did on the night that they died on the breach!
For behold are the valleys of Caucasus red!
And her hills are be-whiten'd with bones of the dead!
And each mountain sabbre that death a blow
Is fleshed to the hilt in thy merciless foe!
And as Russia's proud hosts are driv'n back to the sea,
In the tyrant's ear shout "Thy sweet vengeance for me!"

And Greece, too, her centuries of slavery's past,
And the Mussulman's scimitar's broken at last!
That spirit of freedom her ancestors shared,
When Leonidas' arm at the Pass was upreared,
Though slum'ring for ages 'neath th' Turks' galling yoke,
Astonished the world when it once more awoke!
And where is the sympathy show'd on Greece,—
And the arms that were bared to effect her release?
And the money the lovers of liberty gave her,—
And the men, arms, and fleets, that were sent out to save
[her] Can because she is saved are our sympathies ended!
Can generous aid be no further extended?
If the rank of a nation 'tis good to restore
To the land, long ago by the prophet run o'er,
Then is it less holy, less virtuous, less brave,
To use our best means and endeavours to save
A heroic race, by true chivalry blest,
From falling beneath a stern tyrant's behest!

And Britain—dear Britain,—looks calmly on,—
Though well aware that, this barrier gone,
It is part and parcel of the Autocrat's plan
To penetrate to Afghanistan—
Bribe conquered tribes to disobey,
And dispute with us for an eastern way,—
Calm with her Indian trade at stake!
Nor the slightest interest seems to take!
Smiles when the Russians are defeated;
Smiles when their plans are half completed!
The Caspian sea, too, and the Black,
There the Russ is seen on every tack
His ships of war and trade exhibiting,
And every other flag prohibiting!
Does England—"Mistress of the sea"
Submit to this absurd decree!
Yes! England passively obeys,
Content to cruise o'er other bays—
While her red flag so proudly swells
In sound of th' Sultan's Harem bells,
It dare not cross the Dardanelles!!!

And the Cossacks, hand to hand
(Defenders of their native land)
Must struggle in th' unequal fight,
'Gainst Russian rage and Russian might;
While all the world abhors their wrongs,
And the despot who'd impose their wrongs;—
Astonished at their power and skill,
And how they live in freedom still! —
Wond'ring if late attacks they've stood,
And what their fate when once subdued,
Or if they'll fight from rock to rock,
Till shrinking from some dreadful shock,
The last sad remnant shall disband
To seek a home in another land! —
Upon all this we speculate,
And on th' oppressor vent our hate,
And yet we risk nor gold nor life,
To aid them in the glorious strife!

Pardon, dear friends, this long digression,—
In fact we do so hate oppression,
That when the theme we do but touch on
We're always apt to pile too much on;
But it was our intent to show,
That Freedom's planted, and will glow,
In individuals and in nations;
And that all men, whatever their stations,
Ne'er knew what 'twas to be content
When suffering the least constraint;
'Tis true that those who once have known
The joys of freedom, may be prone
To mourn the thralldom of their fate,
If they're again unfortunate,
More than the wretch who, born a slave,
No sense of liberty can have
But such as instinct has defined,
Or accident has taught his mind;
But still we witness every day,
Born slaves get 'tired and run away;
And a child imprisoned from his birth,
Though rear'd in luxury, prone to mirth,
Would sometimes check his harmless glee,
Look to the wall and long to flee,
Imagining, in his visions fond,
That pass the gate and pass the pond
He'd find some fairer world beyond.

A studious youth thirsting for fame,
Resolved to carve himself a name,
At famed St. Sulpice Seminary
Worked late and early, nor grew weary,
For well he knew fame he'd ne'er find
But by superior powers of mind.
The eldest son of a nobleman,
Yet had he fallen beneath the ban
Which curses youth. His grand mamma,
The leading belle of town and spa,

Deigned not his infancy to bless
By giving him one fond caress,
But, like men marry "for better or worse!"
Had sent him off to a country nurse!
'Twas there his first seven years he spent,
In ruddy health and rude content,
But alas! when at length his uncle came,
To take him home and give him a name,
He found the boy was grievous lame!
The careless nurse, amid some strife,
Had lamed her foster son for life!
Then hated by his lady-mother,
For her own crime, she caused his brother
(The sire meantime being dead)
To be promoted o'er his head,—
The elder disinherited—
In family council; and 'twas there,
The younger was proclaimed the heir!*

And then to make the insult worse,
And render doubly hard the curse,
A priest was sent the news to broach,
And he no sooner did approach
Than he shouted coarsely and severe
"Young man, your leaf is in the sere!
You must unto St. Sulpice go,—
Aye, must, whether you will or no—
And then in time learn to prepare
Yourself for holy orders there!"
"Orders! a Monk! a hideous Cowl!
Surely my fate is not thus foul!
(Thus spoke th' astonished, ardent boy,)
Father, you jest but to annoy!—
My titles then, and my estate?"
"Your brother's are—a cowl your fate!
The family councils thus decide;
So calm your temper, check your pride."

Awake the boy could scarcely quell
His rising sobs, while tears down fell;
Then exercising self-control,
While bitterness o'erflowed his soul,
Concealing from the priest his ire,
Once more he ventured to enquire,
"But why, dear sir, is this my lot?"
"Because you're lame and he is not!"

Oh! 'tis a dread and terrible thing,
When a youthful heart is taking wing,
Gay as the autumn humming bird,
Where flow'rs rets, by the soft breeze stirred,
Expand their buds to its tiny tongue,
Which gathers the honey drops among,
Sweet as Elysium ever grew,
And hanging round like spangled dew,
While it beats time with its fluttering wings
To the thrush, whose notes from the hawthorn springs,—
When thus a young heart goes astray,
In ecstasies from day to day,
Op'ning with frank and joyous glee,
Beaming with generous sympathy,
Hope—confidence, commingled there,
While gratitude ascends in prayer,—
Oh! 'tis a dread and awful thing,
When thus enraptured it takes wing,
If, starting from its hiding place,
And clasping it in a cold embrace,
Some hideous reptile slimes it o'er,
And stings it to the very core!
Oh! what a blight falls on the mind,
When it finds a traitor 'mong its kind!
That gushing love once glad and free
As nature's self, no more you'll see;
Each sympathy, erst burning forth
Like Borealis from the North,
Is humbled, crushed, and rudely torn;
Each bud becomes a prickly thorn,
And love which languished to embrace
Each being of the human race,
Is turned to envy and distrust,
And hate which grinds the very dust.
And if the nerves or mind be weak,
In a few years you may go seek,
Where Bedlam howls your ears will greet,
Or where some drivelling misers meet,
In sordidness and misery,
The youths whose hopes once beat so high:
But if the mind be strong—elate;
And struggles with its dismal fate,
Ambition dark usurps the place
Of virtue, joy, and grace.

Early one morn the youth had gone,
From old St. Sulpice to Sorbonne;
For his shrewd mind—no longer rude—
Resolved to soar, and sought for food;
(For books are food to a studious man
As much as meat to a highland clan.)
Then homeward hastily returning,
To read them o'er his bosom burning,
Carefully bearing them under his arm,
To guard them from all outward harm,
When lo! it thundered o'er his head,
The light'nings flashed, and th' rain down sped;
How shall he save his darling books?
First this way and then that he looks,
Until a vaulted-way he spies,
And quickly there for shelter flies.
'Twas a narrow place, he knew it well,
And loathsome enough for a gloomy cell;
A door at th' further end, 'twas said,
To a Benedictine Convent led,
A building dreary as a tomb,
O'ershadowing Paris with its gloom.
This passage first seemed dark as night,
But when accustomed to the light
He something saw at th' other end,
But whether it was foe or friend
He could not tell, so quick approached,
And there upon the door-sill crouched,
Lay a slender girl whose arms were tossed,
As she shuddering cried "I'm lost! I'm lost!"

* This was a fact. Before the French Revolution the members of any noble family were empowered to hold a "Council en Famille" and, disposing the heir, bestow the estates on some other member, of the family, as well as disposing of the heir's person!!!

Pitying the poor thing's woful plight,
He drew her forth unto the light,
Condoled with her upon her grief,
Proffered his aid for her relief,
And then such sympathy express'd
That half her sobs were set at rest;
Then moved the hood from off its place,
And gazed upon her lovely face.
A snow-white forehead there arose,
With finely chiselled mouth and nose;
Her red lips parted, and between
Her teeth of pearly white were seen;
On her fair cheeks a bloom arose
Like th' petals of the damask rose;
Her lustrous eyes at first were hid
'Neath an arched brow and a silky lid,
But when they oped 'twas a meteor's light,
So dazzling, flashing, wildly bright!
In dripping masses hung her hair
O'er neck and shoulders round and fair;
Her lovely features were but small,
But yet so exquisite withal!
He gazed upon her with amaze,
And drank in loze with every gaze.—
And though he saw his eightieth year,
And dwelt in Courts where oft appear
The fairest of a realm they say,
Yet to the student's dying day,
He ever would and did maintain
"Her like he never saw again."

(From Fraser's Magazine.)

CONTEMPORARY ORATORS.

No. I. SIR ROBERT PEELE.

When Sir Robert Peel made his emphatic declaration, on resigning the government in April, 1835, that his future life would be spent in the House of Commons, he was, perhaps unconsciously, establishing one of the landmarks by which the present age will be distinguished from its predecessors. His prophetic promise embodied the conviction of a statesman pre-eminent in the wisdom which studies the signs of the times, that hereafter the popular or representative branch of the legislature, regulated no doubt, to a great degree, by the will of the monarch and the theoretical right of veto of the peers, will be the really influential power in the state.

But Sir Robert, at the same time, exhibited no slight amount of self-knowledge. Looked at impartially, that declaration showed that he had formed a correct estimate of his own position and powers. Sir Robert is an ambitious man, but his ambition is of a high and honorable character. He covets fame, and a niche in the history of his country, more than personal rank or dignities. His ambition is not that which would be satisfied, though it has been flattered, by having two queens as his voluntary guests, with an earl's coronet glittering in the distance. Yet to one who with a manly independence points continually to the origin of his family, such distinctions might count as something. Sir Robert Peel's ambition grasps at what is emphatically the power of modern times, influence over the opinions of his fellow-men. He wishes to leave the impress of his own mind upon the character of his countrymen. He hopes to be regarded, if not as the pilot who weathered the storm, at least as having held the helm amidst the eddies and whirlpools of exasperated rival interests. Represented as they are in the House of Commons, which is the scene of their action, he who would influence them must learn the art of commanding the ear and swaying the passions or prejudices of that assembly. Of that art Sir Robert Peel has obtained the mastery. Therefore he acts wisely, in not quitting a sphere where his triumphs are certain, and where the amount he may store up of good for his country, and fame for himself, is incalculable.

Sir Robert Peel is indeed the master-spirit of the House of Commons. Shiel or Macaulay may be more brilliant, may approach more nearly to the ideal standard of oratory; Lord John Russell may equal in delicate tact, in the skilful pointing of party allusions, or the unpedantic infusion among them of philosophical deductions; Lord Stanley may have the purpose of political passion; Mr. Roebuck may have used the weapons of sarcasm and invective with more reckless-ness and effect; each of these may, in some separate quality excel Sir Robert Peel; but no public speaker, by his eloquence, his tact, his logical power, or his moral energy and political earnestness, be it what it may, surpass him in the one great art, the constant object of his efforts, of exercising influence over the House of Commons.

To gain this power he sacrifices much. Glimpses of an enthusiastic temperament, of a poetical relish, of ambitious aspirations, of enlarged views of the destiny of man, have been given at intervals long distant, in his speeches, enough to show that, had he chosen to preserve in the more ornamental and flowery paths of oratory, his ascendancy might have been of a different nature. But as it is, looking to his reported speeches only, while you admit their comprehensiveness, their verbal copiousness and accuracy, their information, their fertility of illustration, and the sustained self-possession which they indicate, you are still at a loss to account for his high reputation as an orator. That concentrated thought and vigorous expression, those passages of rhetoric prepared, and inlaid, those sudden turns of humour, those quick flashes of imagination, upon which the fame of great orators, past and present, has been so mainly founded, you look for in vain in the speeches of Sir Robert Peel. In their place you have a steady, persevering pursuit of the object in view, a constant reproduction of the opinions it is desired to inculcate on the auditory, an adroitness in pressing their known prejudices into the service, and a general plasticity of sentiment and tone, which render it less surprising that one so indifferent to the charms of oratory should have at least secured its solid advantages.

His object is not so much to be deemed a great orator as to preserve his character as a practical statesman. If the two are incompatible in the opinion of the great mass of common-place minds, he gives up the attempt to attain the one reputation, in order to secure the other. He never, or at least very seldom, leaves the level of the average understanding of the House.—He chooses his subjects from those which most occupy the minds of the mercantile and agricultural members. His illustrations are for the most part utilitarian. They point to positive certain advantages, or warn of equally certain mischiefs. He will sometimes remind you of the constitutional fiction that each member is representative of the whole people, but he well knows the truth is otherwise—that, in fact, all the rival interests in the country are arrayed against each other in the House of Commons, and that they are now so nearly equal in power that preponderance of concession would be fatal to some, while it would unduly exalt others and make them too powerful. Hence the vagueness of Sir Robert's announcements of policy, the empty pomposity of his declarations of principle, the verbose inconclusiveness of his whole speeches. How can a man ever strive at high eloquence, whose political fate depends on a general change of opinion, who cannot get rid of the difficulty of a term of comparison, disparagement. But where there is no aim at anything higher—on the contrary, a studious avoidance—the term appears misapplied if it means an inherent mediocrity. To be equal to your position, in whatever sphere, is a sign of greatness of mind. To shape out your own means and accomplish your end with them, is