

As even the mightiest engines that human hands have ever built must sometimes be taken from the track and thoroughly renovated, so the world's children weary and harassed must stop to rest and recuperate their wasted energies, and with the old forms worn away, which will serve no longer, we must fuse again the rusted metal of humanity, in crucibles lined with experience, learning and patience, and mould it afresh. And ever and anon as languor from over-exertion creeps over us, must we stop and rest, until we can all learn wisdom from the picturesque Scotch, and "bide a wee" in peace and quiet, before frail, human nature is compelled to give way to the destroyer.

HISTORY OF THE SONNET.

IN the year 872 a little province, lying between France and Spain, singularly favored in soil and climate, and as singularly favored in the circumstances of its political history, gained its independence, and for 123 years, under one family of princes, enjoyed, among troublesome times in Europe, a degree of quiet and prosperity that placed it in advance of the rest of the world in civilization and refinement. It had escaped, by a series of happily conspiring circumstances, the devastations of the wars of Charlemagne, the incursions of the Moors, and all the unquiet movements of Europe during the Middle Ages. Here in this little province was wrought out the problem of culture that is ever being set anew to the races. A new life had sprung up in the nation; a new language followed, with a new literature, which, under these favorable circumstances, came to possess a grace and refinement unknown since the brightest days of Roman literature. It is not, however, to be compared with that literature in any other way. The spirit of the language and literature that were fitted to embody the world's greatest system of jurisprudence was, in everything but the

traditions of form, different from the one whose very essence was mirth and song. The Provençal troubadours derived the theme and treatment of their poetry, not from the Latin, but the Arabian poets.

The immunity of Provence from the troubles of the neighboring states could not last always and the terrors of the Inquisition reached even here. The night of the Sicilian Vespers closed down upon Sicily and Provence, equally disastrous to both, and alike destructive of their material prosperity and of their languages but in this sunny season and this Hesperian garden had sprung up a little flower of poesy that has been transplanted and taken kindly to the soil of every literature which the world has since produced, even taking root in the somewhat chilly atmosphere of German mysticism; a short poem, containing always just fourteen lines, and having almost thrice as many arbitrary and hampering rules of rhyme and versification, exercising a poetical jurisprudence, tyrannous over every form of sentiment, and surviving the fall of the culture whence it grew. It is true that the causes of natural decay were at work in the Provençal, even before the wars of the Albigenses drove her merry troubadours over into Spain. The differentiation of form necessitated by the restrictions of their versification, exemplified chiefly in the sonnet, as well as the eruditionary pedantry and rhetoric of the Latins, had already brought Provençal literature to that state of over-refinement which always precedes total extinction. But no language or theme ever gets beyond what Lowell calls the great poet cure, and there appeared a savior to the Sicilian tongue and the Provençal sonnet in the poets with whom, in the close of the thirteenth century, began the widespread influence of Italy over the literature of Europe. In Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio, with all of whom the sonnet was a favorite, and to whom chiefly it owes its long continuance in favor.

The sonnet consists of fourteen lines,