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English Bards

AND

Scotch Reviewers'

Up-to-Date!"

BY THE AUTHOR

OF

"SCORPIO"



PALMETTO PRESS

Roseville, Raleigh

North Carolina

1915

SEQUENCE OF THIRTY-ONE SONNETS

ENTITLED

“English Bards

AND

Scotch Reviewers’
Up-to-Date”

BY

JOHN ARMSTRONG CHALONER

AUTHOR OF

“SCORPIO”

PALMETTO PRESS:

ROANOKE RAPIDS, NORTH CAROLINA

NINETEEN HUNDRED AND FIFTEEN

TWENTY-FIVE CENTS

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English Bards and Scotch Reviewers

“When knaves and fools combin’d o’er all prevail,
When justice halts, and right begins to fail;
E’en then the boldest start from public sneers,
Afraid of shame, unknown to other fears,
More darkly sin, by satire kept in awe,
And shrink from ridicule, though not from law.
The time has been when no harsh sound would fall,
From lips that now may seem imbued with gall;
Nor fools nor follies tempt me to despise
The meanest thing that crawl’d beneath my eyes;
But now so callous grown, so chang’d since youth,
I’ve learn’d to think, and sternly speak the truth;
Learn’d to deride the critic’s starch decree,
And break him on the wheel he meant for me;
To spurn the rod a scribbler bids me kiss,
Nor care if courts and crowds applaud or hiss;
Nay more, though all my rival rhymsters frown,
I too can hunt a poetaster down,
And, arm’d in proof, the gauntlet cast at once.”
At “Joey” Pulitzer and “Mo. Tel.” Dunce.

—Lord Byron.

I.

Lord Byron in thy footsteps must we tread
Foul old New York hath put her foot in it
And on our work a flood of lies hath shed
Full laughable tho' all devoid of wit.
So as you "trimmed" the critics of the day
And made them sweat and writhe and "hunt their hole"
The same shall we essay in pungent lay
As we of Gotham's papers take our toll.
The difference is this 'twixt us and thee
Thine enemies were men-of-letters *all!*
Whereas the scurvy crew who máalign me
Have for sole capital foul lies and gall.
Fair Metre's law to New York's a closed book
In which her Yahoos never once did look.

II.

When our first play in blank verse put we forth
We were at pains to show authority
Why we did dare East, West, and South and North
To spread our sails and show our quality.
Why we did dare the "Swan of Avon's" Main—
The Magic Sea that Shakspeare made his own—
To launch our barque thereon and plough amain
Since to her airs our sails we'd daring thrown.
We showed that we had captured Marlowe's line—
To all at least who what that line is know —
Chapter and verse thereon spread we, in fine,
A net which spelled for ignorance cold woe.
With one exception all did dodge the net
And by their silence strove the play t' forget.

III.

The one exception was "Mo. Telegraph"
That Pirate fired a shot that missed us quite
Tried to be funny but called up no laugh
Just showed its ignorance and petty spite.
The other papers dumb as oysters were
Upon our play "The Hazard Of The Die"—
Acted as tho' they were afraid of her
And in smooth silence gave her the "go-by."
Our other play "Robbery Under Law"
They wide review'd but nothing did they say!
Reviews more empty we never *never* saw
Each cracked its paltry joke but *dodged* the play!
The reason is not very far to seek
'Twas this. All vengeance on us aimed to wreak.

IV.

We'd torn the mask from off New York's foul face
In our most pungent sonnets "Scorpio Two"
Proving her prostitute—in foul disgrace—
Her Lunacy Laws cause th' Common Law to rue!
We showed her papers were a Pirate band—
Bloody banditti of the baser sort
Lewd fellows who, while porting smile most bland
The property of foreigners deep court.
They back up laws that lure the stranger there—
From other States—and there imprison him
And rob him of his money with suave air
And a foul Madhouse for life throw him in.
Although the victim's sane as sane can be
And all the charges based on perjury!

V.

We knew that papers were not God's elect
We knew that papers very human are
But Gotham's papers did we ne'er suspect
Of being with plain justice at foul war!
We did not think that they would aim t' hush up
A scandal that struck at the root of things
A scandal that of Sin doth fill the cup
And in its train New York's damnation brings.
But as we live and look we live and learn
The depth of sin that New York doth stand for
And how she hotly, Hellishly, doth yearn
To of her reck'ning tot the foulest score!
A modern Sodom is she shown thereby,
Who solely draws the line at—sodomy.†

†We refer here solely to the newspapers of New York who one and all by their silence have become sharers in the crime perpetrated against "Who's Looney Now?" March 13, 1897.

VI.

'Tis not surprising then that Sodomites—
Inhabitant of Sodom's meant thereby—†
No wonder 'tis each Sodomite delights
About our plays to lie, and lie, and lie.
No wonder 'tis that they them foul malign
And lie about them till their ink runs dry
No wonder then that we on them condign
Punishment by our pen do swift apply!
We'll silence them forever with this lay
Their backs our Scorpion pen shall cause to bleed
Till in their inmost souls they'll yell: "Belay!
'Who's-Looney-Now?' hath scourged us all he need."
The New York papers thus have got the gaff—
There yet remain the "World" and "Telegraph."

†The newspapers solely are meant as above explained.

VII.

The "World" put forth a windy little screed
Full of "hot air" and most crass ignorance
A little study doth her "critic" need
Before he on our plays dare look askance.
He simply copied th'aforesaid review
Smirching the pages of "Mo. Telegraph"
Copied a little—added *much* thereto
Aimed in the author to insert the gaff.
But 'twas as tho' a little yellow cur
A marble statue foul doth desecrate
And vilely spurted sans the least demur
"Bum" jokes had found a lodgment in his pate.
A weaker effort have we never seen
Enough to make Joe Pulitzer turn green!

VIII.

For "Joe"—with all his faults was no fresh fool
The late Hungarian patriot we mean —
And never did "Joe" play with a dull tool
When "Joey" cut the blood was *ever* seen!
So we did sigh, and say: "Is that the best
The New York 'World' can turn out as a 'roast'!
Such things as that will hinder 'Joey's' rest
And cause to curse and rave his fiery ghost!"
We sigh once more as we it bid farewell—
For forty years the New York "World" we've ta'en—
Saying: "Your columns much too strong do smell
Of buncombe-lies for us to read again!"
We now shall turn to the "Mo. Telegraph"
And make that sheet its dose of med'cine quaff.

IX.

That racing "tout" hath for the nonce turned pimp—
Turned pimp and pander for our enemies—
The rich on t'other side who've played the imp
Played Hell with Truth and wound us with their lies.
Those lies—like Gulliver—we straight burst thro'
And their Liliputian carcasses did scourge
When—making our escape—we our pen drew
And "Scorpio" their many crimes, did urge.
The dunce who wields the critic's fertile pen—
Fertile of humbug, lies, and ignorance—
Him of the "Morning Telegraph"—we'll pen
And impound in's own lies—*and at a glance!*
'Tis easy when the mark's such "easy fruit"
To nothing say of's being such a brute!

X.

This clown starts out with a most rattling lie—
Says in plain words we cannot write blank verse
And aims to back his malice helplessly
Showing an ignorance that's even worse!
The greatest work on English Prosody—
A work that's monumental in its reach—
By the deep learn'd Professor Saintsbury—
For that epochal work, lo we now reach.
His "History Short of Lit'rature" also—
Of English Lit'rature, of course we mean—
For this same clown will spell a Hell-black woe
That we've writ by the card is therein seen.
Training New York's wild critics is our task
Savage Yahóos who in vile ignorance bask!

XI.

This ignoramus—if he'll dip therein—
Will find the magic word "Equivalence."
Which purgeth us of our *allegéd* sin—
Putting a Spondee for an Iamb! Hence
Thus we infer he never yet hath heard
That one may change his "feet" at one's sweet will
Provided that each wingéd measured word
Doth the requirements of strict Metre fill.
Thus Trochee, Dactyl, Anapaest, Spondée
The place o' th' ruling Iamb eke may take
By doing which *Variety* we see
Raising her dainty head and music make!
The Dunce's Cap we thereby on thee place
And label: "Left at th' post!" in Critic's Race.

XII.

Thy next gross lie is that our verses "creak."
In saying that you prove yourself an ass—
Very wild-ass whose ear for music's weak!
For how—thou Jackass—could that come to pass?
If so be that the Laws of Prosody
We always ever strictly do obey
Where findest thou the face for such a lie
That our verse' wingéd feet "creak" as they play!
A creaking line doth Prosody abhor
And *kills* the same and will not let it live
Saying: "If thou wilt sing but to my score
My rules to thee will sweet resilience give."
That have we done in each and every case
N'er may one find a foot that's out of place!

XIII.

A Golden Eagle shall we freely give
For any line of our's that will not scan—
Bearing in mind that "fragment verse" doth live
And form a part of Prosody's grand plan.
By "fragment verse" of course, mean we that one
That of the Decasyllabon is short—
Authority for that is amply shown
By Saintsbury in the sweet Muse's court.
And that from time to time Alexandrine
May show her stately head in pomp and state.
Also the "Trisyllabic foot" we ween
With "Equivalence" as variant doth mate.
The Laws of Prosody we've thus displayed
To be tried by them are we *not* afraid!

XIV.

But when a gang of savage foul Yahóos—
New York's crass critics—aim our work to weigh—
The far-famed "*Death-Watch*"—why, we calm refuse
Their raucous voice of ignorance t'obey.
Plays in blank verse are rather o'er the head
Of such half-baked unlearned barbarians
Prose play they *may* know—when that's said *all's* said—
Barring the *lies* of said vulgarians.
And after all it is full far from strange
That blank-verse play surpasseth their purview
How oft doth blank-verse play come in their range?
How often blank-verse play do they review!
They scarcely see one in an hundred years
Whence cometh food for thought *and* cause for tears.

XV.

“Mo. Tel.” is now “hoist by its own petard”
The duffer shows his ignorance full plain
A printer’s error plain as broken shard
This ignoramus doth make o’er again!
The word is “Hycran”—*no such word exists!*
“*Hyrcean*” we wrote—the printer got it wrong—
“Mo. Tel.” all ignorant o’ th’ printer’s twists
Swallows vile “Hycran” and then moves along!
He even doth expatiate thereon—
“Where ignorance is bliss”—the saying’s *old*—
Dwells on “t’Hycranian beast” and thereupon
His ignorance of “Hamlet” doth show bold!
Enough to make Shakspeare turn in his grave
To hear “critic” so-called so monstrous rave!

XVI.

"*T'Hyercanian* beast" also doth raise a "kick"
Because from time to time we cut down "the"
And the same use by way of enclitic—
Thus joined to the *preceding* word you see.
Well now, this wild ass loses sight of that—
His ear's so long and rank it can't him guide—
And thinks he's caught us in an error *pat*
And thinking so doth us e'en wild deride!
His last lie doeth with fierce "Scorpio"—
Calleth those sonnets hot, forsooth, "a play"
Their only play's where th' "Scarlet Women" show
To what foul pass New York hath come to-day.
Thus have we pricked the bubble of his screed
And shown "Mo. Tel." of learning hath sore need!

XVII.

“By shifting the incidence of accent a playwright not only animates his verse and produces agreeable changes in the rhythm; but he also marks the meaning of his words, and yields opportunities for subtly modulated declamation to the actor.” “Shakspeare’s Predecessors In The English Drama,” by John Addington Symonds, Author of “Studies Of Greek Poets,” “Renaissance In Italy,” “Sketches In Italy and Greece,” etc., pp. 585, *et seq.*

“Mo. Tel’s.” wild ass doth now e’en bray amain
Because we follow Marlowe’s mighty way—
Shift the accént as Symonds doth explain—
And English’ grand variety display.
One ’d think from ’s noise that we had stol’n his watch—
His worthy “Ingersoll”—and then made off—
Since “th’incidence of accent” he doth catch
Us following—he raiseth such a scoff!
We wonder where such ignorance was born
In what stray country hamlet he saw light
That he disports himself so all forlorn
When ’t comes to th’ point if we our plays write right.
It takes all sorts of fools to make a world
Hence “Mo. Tel’s.” fool is in Life’s maelstrom whirl’d.

XVIII.

We note our little friend hath nought to say
Against our play *per se*—*not one sole word!*
He dare not say we cannot write a play
For on its face said lie would be absurd.
Nought 'gainst th' construction of our play says he
Her "carpentry" is sound—he *knows* that's so—
Knows that she moves as tho' dread Destiny
Stood at the helm and made her "action" go!
No whisper do we hear 'gainst th' characters—
That they're not true to History or Life—
As true as History—th'author avers
And true as Life in Psychologic strife.
Her action is so swift it "grips" the heart—
So tragic that it makes the tears to start.

XIX.

That is to say in those who love brave deeds—
Who love heroic action on the stage—
Where Life's fair flowers *tower* o'er base weeds!
And where heroic passion free doth rage.
Fair Cleopatra's shown as ne'er before—
She holds for aye the centre of the boards—
Whilst in her dark heart we delve and bold explore
The secrets 'neath her mask she covert hoards!
From Avon's Bard a glimpse we solely get
Simply because he *chose* but that to give.
When her we drew we did not e'er forget
The Psychologic age in which we live.
Let no foul critic now begin to lie
And say that we with Shakspeare dare to vie!

XX.

That mighty Monarch of all Tragedy
Lived when Psychology was scarcely known
We mean Psychology succinct—*per se*
Standing apart, erect, and *all alone*.
Science and Art do thus go hand-in-hand
All like two lovers thro' the world they fare
Art with her fairy touch—her woman's hand—
Making stern dark-browed Science almost fair!
Of Caesar too show we the inmost soul—
That tempest-tossed, care-worn, ambitious man—
Straining for fifty years towards the goal
That from his youth he did unerring scan!
In Shakspeare's steps do we all humbly tread
And from his divine font are our springs fed.

XXI.

For sev'nteen years have we in fair and foul
Studied his line in humble reverence.
Working at dead of night like any owl
Leaning on Shakspeare—drawing strength from thence.
A thousand sonnets—more or less—we've done—
A thousand columns for our Muse's Halls—
Since Shakspeare—bear in mind—are we the one
The *only* one *his* Form-of-Sonnet calls!
His Muse is ours—She called us o'er the waste
That spreads her terrors o'er three hundred years
And bid us Her Pierian waters taste
I' th' shadow of black Hell and Death her fears—
All in a Mad-House foul our Muse was born
A sullen keeper her midwife forlorn!

XXII.

The mighty Sonneteers of History—
The great Italians—and Milton, Wordsworth, Keats—
Did choose th'Italian form's sweet witchery
In which the dying-fall its glory meets.
In which the murmur o' th' receding wave
Follows the crashing of its onward rush
And soft as lip of woman doth th' marge lave
Whilst dying murmurs do its egress hush.
In Shakspeare's only—*in the world alone!*
Is *furious* on-rush o' th'ocean heard
In his form do the billows deep intone
The power and grandeur o' th'English word!
Hence do we say his Muse and ours are one
Our sonnets port the same diápson.

XXIII.

For fourteen years our work at *times was rough*—
At others smooth as wave cresting to boom—
Thereafter, “Presto!” did we roughness slough
So now smooth ’s columns do our sonnets loom!
Each foot’s Iambic save when we *for cause*
Do hold in preference another foot
In doing which we stand upon the clause
“Equivalence”—Prosody’s fair off-shróot.
Thus are we now Past-Master of our Craft—
We think we’ve worked full long enough—*don’t you?*
Master of Sonnet-Sword from point to haft
And with the sonnet *what—we—will* can do
“The sword of the Lord and of Gideon” ’tis
Thro’ enemy thews doth its fierce edge whizz!

XXIV.

A secret *dire* we now to th' world convey
Which is the cause why we do now aspire
To write the blank verse drama—three-act play—
It showeth how that Art we did acquire.
Beloved brethren—and sisters sweet alsó—
Shakspearian sonnet is dread Drama's womb!
Not the Italian form—that's Action's woe
Of Drama that sweet form is Juliet's tomb!
The secret's this—give ear my worthy friends—
Shakspeare's consecutives are pure—blank—verse!
The lines consecutive have all blank ends
The closing couplet *sole* doth th' rule reverse.
A thousand sonnets—fourteen thousand lines
Make th'author Blank-Verse-Writer he opines!

XXV.

A New York critic's stock-in-trade is lies
Arm him with them and he will face the world!
For he well knows no reader ever tries
To pierce the clouds of dust by their lies curled.
A well placed lie is very strong indeed—
Can lay the Truth low almost *any* time
Provided a newspaper doth the deed
For who can then 'fend Truth from foul rapine?
The lie goes forth and is by thousands read
The lies goes forth—by thousands is believed
Who of its readers cares who's heart is bled
Who cares how many others are deep grieved?
So long as they lie well within the law
A lie is strong as Truth—as full sans flaw!

XXVI.

But *one* exception to said rule is found
'Tis when him lied about's a Satirist
Whose veins spurt vitriol upon a wound
Nor tears e'er dim his icy eye we wist.
'Tis then the biter is most sorely bit
'Tis then the catcher doth a Tartar catch
The Satirist him calmly then doth spit
Upon his pen and *outside* hangs the latch!
Inviting other liars to come on
And lie about him to their heart's desire
Sticking their carcasses his sword upon
He slowly turns and "roasts" them by his fire.
So push thy foul pens fast as they can fly
We'll spit ye all and by our hot fire fry!

XXVII.

We "roasted" you so brown in "Scorpio Two"
No single Gothamite had word to say
When we with "roasting" you had eke got through
Silence of Death did shroud that roundelay!
Not a New York newspaper had a line
In answer to our vitriolic verse
Tho' doubtless ye in privacy didst whine
Tho' doubtless us ye *sulphurous* didst curse.
Flat as a field of turnips laid we you
Flat as a turnip field—*flat as a plate*—
'Tis "easy" for us Gotham's press to "do"
So easy we need not expatiate.
Ye rogues ye know when master ye have found
So of your lies swift halted the foul round!

XXVIII.

But we've no time to waste on such as ye—
'Tis throwing pearls before "razor-back" hog—
So we shall now our ledger henceforth free
From "writing up" ye swine in our rhymed log.
These lambent sonnets sure will lay ye low—
Flat on thy backs and gasping *strong* for breath
As flat as ye were laid by "Scorpio"—
That name which spells for newspapers *black death*.
So by our pen shall we achieve sweet peace—
That peace so sweet which country grave-yard lulls.
Our pen doth give to thy foul yells surcease
It lays ye out—ye bell'wing Bashan bulls!
Our pen for ye creates a Slaughter-House
'Tis on thine head—for ye did "Scorpio" rouse!

XXIX.

No more shall raucous yells affront our Muse
No more Hell ope and vomit her foul breath
For to send ye our work shall we refuse
From now until the day that brings thy death.
A Prophet sans honour ever is at home—
That's old as Christianity—*pardie!*
So o'er this country broad shall our Muse roam
Thus giving Gotham the "go-by" ye see.
Our Muse is honouréd in other States—
New York's not the sole pebble on the beach—
His gratitude the author hereby states
To friendly papers whom these words may reach.
To New York surely send we work *no more*
Her wild-men critics do us sorely bore.

XXX.

No quarrel have we with the rank and file—
The millions who make Gotham's populace—
For we were born on fair Manhattan's Isle—
That fairy Isle her newspapers disgrace!
No. With her people we're in sympathy—
We love their breadth and generosity—
None give with swifter spontaneity
And *none* view life with a more broader eye!
The people do we love—nay *fight for them*
For eighteen years we've fought to purge their laws
Which now are stench in nostrils of all men
Because of their Hell-foul felonious flaws.
'Tis with the rich the *owners* of her papers
"Scorpio" swishes tail and cuts hot capers!

XXXI.

So now farewell ye filthy lousy curs—
Ye yellow dogs that bark along our trail—
Dealings with ye the author now abjures
And smiling sees ye yelping turn thy tail.
The working-man ye cannot e'er keep down—
We *are* a working-man—our works prove that—
Our vitriol shall e'en thy yelps deep drown
And cause ye stop thy "talking thro' thine hat."
In time we'll win our case and get our "pile"
When we get that ye'll hear the welkin ring
Our plays we'll stage upon Manhattan's Isle
And hit the bull's-eye—make the same go "*Ping!*"
They bridge the chasm of three hundred years
And from the way they're writ might be Shakspeare's!

JOHN ARMSTRONG CHALONER,
Richmond, Virginia,
October Fifth, 1915.

Done on the night of October fourth; upon receiving the reviews
on "The Serpent Of Old Nile" in the New York *Morning Telegraph*, of
September 28th, 1915, and the New York *World* of October 3d, 1915.—
J. A. C.

New York *World*, October 3, 1915.

**AUTHOR OF "WHO'S LOONEY NOW?" WRITES BLANK
VERSE DRAMA.**

In "The Serpent Of Old Nile" Hephaestion and Caesar Engage in a
Sword Duel for the Possession of Cleopatra, and as Hep.
is About to Deliver a Knockout She Treacher-
ously Stabs Him From Behind.

But Caesar, So Far From Being Grateful, is Horrified and Berates
Her as "Serpent to the Core"—Then Delivers This
Ultimatum: "My Toy Thou'lt Be, or From Thy
Throne Step Down"—Sappho Com-
mits Suicide.

John Armstrong Chaloner, who by court decree is insane in New
York and sane in Virginia, where he makes his home, has bobbed up
again as an author.

The most famous thing J. Armstrong ever penned, of course, is
that telegraph message which he sent to his brother, "Sheriff Bob"
Chanler of this city when Bob married Cavalieri, the singer, and soon
thereafter was "left flat" by that beautiful person. The message was:
"Who's looney now?"

Then last year J. Armstrong (who has adopted the old-fashioned
spelling of the family name) perpetrated upon the public a book of
verses called "Scorpio," in which he stung the German Kaiser and
William Randolph Hearst, though these two were not allied at the time,
and other contemporary figures of interest.

And now, still true to the snake theme, Mr. Chaloner presents a
blank verse drama entitled "The Serpent Of Old Nile." The purport
of the play, whose verse is very blank indeed, in spots, is set forth in
a prologue called "The Sorceress," which runs thus:

We now essay to paint a sorceress—
The "Serpent Of Old Nile" of Anthony—
That man-devouring-Sphinx—Egypt's—none less
Whom Shakspeare limned in divine alchemy!
The task is dread—the task doth chill the heart—
All in the steps of Shakspeare thus to tread—
Especially as herein plays the part
Of lover Caesar, whom th' world held in dread,
Especially since Cleopatra's tossed
Upon the bosom of two passions dire—
Love—whose fulfillment world-empire would cost
Ambition—which holds forth the world's empire!
'Twixt Caesar and the bold Hephaestion
The sands of Fate's dark glass portentous run.

"Listening to the divine alchemy" sounds like a task at once
quaint and difficult, but Mr. Chaloner starts blithely forth by portray-
ing a purple silk tent at Cleopatra's army headquarters on the outskirts
of Alexandria, with Cleo asleep therein and the "bold Hephaestion,"
her Commander-in-Chief, pacing moodily without—that is, outside the

tent. After a brief space Cleopatra calls "Ho!" and then appears at the flap. It appears that the General is enamoured of her. After some persiflage of the sort which usually takes place between a Queen and a General, Mr. Chaloner makes this situation develop:

Heph.: "My Queen, vouchsafe one word—who's in thy tent?

Who doth the royal pavilion share with thee?

Cleo.: "Granted, my general. None but Sappho's here;
My faithful friend and thine, too, I may say."

Hesphaestion is indeed bold. He asks a moment later:

"Pardon a soldier's bluntness, sweet my Queen;
But if we win wilt thou deign marry me?"

The Queen tells him—as Sheriff Bob Chanler might phrase it—"where he gets off at," and then:

Cleo. (coldly): "As I have said, this interview is closed.
Never dare broach that subject, sir, again!"

It being necessary now for some "action" in the play, a runner appears and tips off the General that Caesar and his army are but six miles away.

Heph. (aside): "Caesar is a proved voluptuary
That with his ambition e'er goes hand in hand—
What if he fall to Cleopatra's charm?
(Starting violently)—That doubt bites keener than a serpent's
tooth!"

Caesar, it appears, wants a conference with the Queen. Cleopatra doesn't know whether to grant it or not. She asks Hephaestion, and, in asking, reveals the curious fact that, though she's an Egyptian and the time of the action is 48 B. C., she is quite accomplished in the language of France.

Cleo.: "Speak, my brave General; nought's done sans thee in war."

Hephaestion reluctantly permits the approach of Caesar after this talk:

Heph.: "They say the Roman likes the gentler sex;
That 's amours e'en are counted by the score."

Cleo. (smiling): "So have I heard and so do full believe."

Heph.: "Woulds't thou be one and twenty on the list?"

Cleo. (frowning): "Sirrah, beware! You broadly trespass there!"

Well, anyhow, Caesar meets the Queen, and the long and short of the whole matter is that he, as Sheriff Bob would say, "cops her out."

At the end of the third act—and the play—there comes a time when Hephaestion and Caesar fight a duel with swords for the possession of Cleo., and, just as the bold Heph. is about to administer a knock-out stab, the fair mistress steps behind him and sticks him in the neck with her own spear, exclaiming:

"So perish all who stand twixt me and fame!"

But Caesar, who's not a bad sort after all, is horrified by this. He cuts loose:

Caes.: "This self-same act wouldst thou enact 'gainst me
At any time it did thy purpose suit.
I know thee now—a serpent to the core!
Now, hark, my Queen, unto thy pending doom:
My toy thou'lt be—or—from thy throne—step down!"

Now, Sappho, of whom little has been said in this review, has been secretly in love with the bold Hep. all this time. Upon his death she stabs herself with these brave lines:

"I loved him but he did know it not.
He loved thee, Cleopatra, loved thee, Queen,
And knowing that, I would not stand between."

The curtain descends with Caesar forcing the haughty and naughty Cleo. to bow before him and kiss his hand in homage—a toy, as Mr. Chaloner puts it, instead of a Queen.

Caes. (solemnly): "Thus is avenged the bold Hephaestion,
And that sweet girl—who lov-ed him so well!"

It may candidly be said that J. Armstrong has written a play which is entirely different from anything Shakespeare ever did.

New York City *Morning Telegraph*, September 28, 1915.

**J. A. CHALONER NOW SHAKESPEARE'S RIVAL AS A
PLAYWRIGHT.**

By Algernon St. John-Brenon.

Mr. John Armstrong Chaloner, of Virginia, has turned poet. He has not concerned himself with the lower and more ignoble slopes of Parnassus. He has flown far and majestically above them, wishing to listen to the stately diction and the heaven-searching wisdom of the muse Melpomene.

He is not content with the achievement of being the author or the ascribed author of an immortal epigram, so he has put on for a while the mantle of the Tragic Three; crowning his lofty brow with bays, he somewhat loudly sweeps the strings of his ecstatic lyre. He publishes two tragedies. One is called "The Serpent Of Old Nile" and the other, like a modern problem-melodrama, "The Hazard of the Die." Both deal with the character of imperious Caesar. Now there is an epilogue to "The Hazard of the Die" containing a tremendous threat. Chorus tells us:

"Fair reader, this grim play scarce but begins
A chain of plays that equals Shakspeare's length.
In saying this think not the Chorus sins
We know our productivity and strength.

Plays in blank verse wherein all History
 From most remotest times to Shakspeare's day—
 Before which date History's mystery
 After which date there's scarcely ought to say—
 Plays in blank verse wherein the action dread
 Of mighty men that held the world in awe
 Shall by the Muse in varied hues be spread
 With loves of women of beauty past all flaw!
 Prove now the tests we in the rear accord
 See spear of Shakspeare and fierce Marlowe's sword."

MANY MORE PLAYS.

Mr. Chaloner then will write more than thirty-six plays. He is certain of this. He knows his productivity and strength. This appalling series of dramas will deal with the "most remotest" history up to the age of Shakespeare. He maintains, as you see, though I cannot quite understand why, that history is a mystery before Shakespeare, and that after him "there's scarcely ought to say." So nothing much has happened in 300 years. Notice also that Mr. Chaloner undertakes to write blank verse. Well, he will have to learn much before he can make good his vaunt. At present his conception of the blank verse meter of tragedy is a huddled line of ten or eleven syllables compounded jauntily without regard to rhythm, melody or euphony.

Here are some examples of his versification:

"The Dictator Caesar craves a conference."
 "Whom Shakspeare limned in divine alchemy."
 "Awaits all soldiers who sleep on their watch."
 "One worthy to sit throned upon the world."
 "Her dramatists, poets and philosophers."
 "The Dictator guessed true at his first guess."

These lines, selected from the first few pages of "The Serpent Of Old Nile," are not blank verse at all. They are simply blank, very blank, and none too lucid prose. Considered as verse they creak like ungreased cartwheels. In the third example the crash of an accent on two words merely connective is of precious value as a terrible warning to the younger choir of bards.

AN HOMERIC SIMPLICITY.

I am compelled, however, to admire a certain simplicity, almost Homeric, in Mr. Chaloner's first tragedy.

"The Serpent Of Old Nile" opens like "Hamlet," with a conversation between two soldiers. They are outside Cleopatra's tent. Says one:

My lord, if but the Queen should miss our tread,
 Each of us would swiftly lose his head.

In general tone, Mr. Chaloner bases himself on Shakespeare, and the speeches of his heroes are interlarded with Shakespearian tags, old friends in strange surroundings—that is, he imitates that which is gratuitously imitable. We have the agreeable atmospheric particle "an," and even the sylvan and Jacobean preposition "sans." I suspect that Shakespeare used these terms because they were current in his day. I suspect that Mr. Chaloner uses them because they were current in Shakespeare's day. This is the difference between the natural and the affected.

Certain lines in "Hamlet" gave the bard of Roanoke the inspiration for the following Aeschylean explosion:

CLEOPATRA—

"B-r-r-r thy polished methods lend to me a chill,
A Hycran tiger, but no lover thou!"

The personage who is "lent a chill" is none other than Cleopatra. It was scarcely in her torrid nature to welcome it. Note the poet's sudden translation from the easy chair of semi-slang to the throne of heroic diction; from b-r-r- and a chill to the Hycranian beast. This is versatility. Roanoke is dazed!

RIMED COUPLETS.

Another Shakespearian touch of Mr. Chaloner is to relieve his blank verse and point his moral with some rimed couplets. In one purple patch we have two together:

CLEOPATRA—

Both looks and tone may be but surface deep,
None know what's in the heart—what dark thoughts sleep.

SAPPHO—

True my fair Queen, most true as general rule,
But not when you men's feelings put to school.

In another cerulean spot Mr. Chaloner writes "th' comparison." I should like to pronounce "thc" at the beginning of a word.

The tragedy involves the rival loves of Hephaestion and Julius Caesar for Cleopatra. It is a commonplace of literature to say that Shakespeare has drawn no very successful portrait of the greatest man the world has seen in his Julius Caesar. Mr. Chaloner, however, industriously improves. He makes Caesar say:

Poetry ever was beyond my reach,
I'm frank to say my verses are frank weak;
So I, perforce, content myself with prose.
Prose from my pen and prose from off my tongue.

My learned readers will be pained to see that our bard makes the palpable spondee "frank weak" an imbus. This is syncopation, rag-time in verse. Where was Dicky when John twitched his mantle blue to such musical angularity as this? My duty to our tragic bard and candor to my readers demand that I should print some more of Julius Caesar's self-revelations. The soaring fancy of the ensuing is quite in the manner of Euripides. Cleopatra has told Caesar that there would be cold meat for dinner. One enjoys these domestic if non-Lucreatian details.

CAESAR (smiling frankly)—

Frankly, fair Queen all's one with me for that,
I care not what I eat so that it be
So cooked digestion gets no shock thereby.
My health is not the strongest thing I have—
Like sword of Damocles health hangs o'er me
E'er threatening to descend and mar my work
Hinder and balk me of my fruits of toil.
And no man ever since this world began

Was forced to fiercer strive for what he won.
Thy choice of viands cold for th' feast here spread
Jumps with my soldier's humor perfectly.
For often have I eat my victuals cold
Upon the march or after victory.
For after victory there's so much to do
I ne'er could find a cook could furnish me
With any fit to eat—so long I kept
The rascal waiting on emergencies

CLEOPATRA—

These oysters which my slaves do now bring on
Are thought the best along all Afric's coast
Small, but less bitter than your Roman kind.

(Caesar Tries One with his Fork. The Anachronism of Forks is Braved to Avoid the Barbaric Appearance—to Modern Eyes at Least—of Eating With the Fingers.)

This pleasing address of Caesar, this piece of gastronomic autobiography, gives us not only a taste of Mr. Chaloner as a tragic poet, but it also casts some clear light on his conception of humor, rhetoric, syntax and grammar. One is particularly solicitous to know how health could descend and mar anyone's work, or how a man's own health could be his sword of Damocles. Mr. Chaloner has written a play called "Scorpio." This one is called "The Serpent." Let Mr. Chaloner be fraternal and still zoological and write a pastoral called "The Giraffe." Then his brother the artist-sheriff and painter and encruster of those stately animals would be delighted. Great artists should cling together.

The Virginian, Richmond, Va., September 29, 1915.

"THE SERPENT OF OLD NILE," MASTERPIECE.

John Armstrong Chaloner Produces Sequel to "The Hazard Of The Die." Deals With Caesar.

Following close upon the heels of his "The Hazard of the Die," John Armstrong Chaloner has written a three-act drama, "The Serpent Of Old Nile," which he terms a sequel to the other in that both plays treat of the same epoch and the same man—Julius Caesar. In the former he is shown as a young man when he was scheming for power and in the later effort he is depicted as the man of maturer years, who has achieved power. In "The Serpent Of Old Nile" Mr. Chaloner essays to paint a sorceress and her wiles and probably not even Shakespeare himself would be ashamed to claim what the "Master of Merry Mills," who is a past master of English as it is written, has put forth in blank verse. It should have a stage production and with intelligent interpretation would make a hit.

The book has been issued by the Palmetto Press, of Roanoke Rapids, N. C., in paper cover at fifty cents.

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