

TEMA CON VARIAZIONI

[Why is it that Poetry has never yet been subjected to that process of Dilution which has proved so advantageous to her sister-art Music? The Diluter gives us first a few notes of some well-known Air, then a dozen bars of his own, then a few more notes of the Air, and so on alternately: thus saving the listener, if not from all risk of recognising the melody at all, at least from the too- exciting transports which it might produce in a more concentrated form. The process is termed "setting" by Composers, and any one, that has ever experienced the emotion of being unexpectedly set down in a heap of mortar, will recognise the truthfulness of this happy phrase.

For truly, just as the genuine Epicure lingers lovingly over a morsel of supreme Venison--whose every fibre seems to murmur "Excelsior!"--yet swallows, ere returning to the toothsome dainty, great mouthfuls of oatmeal-porridge and winkles: and just as the perfect Connoisseur in Claret permits himself but one delicate sip, and then tosses off a pint or more of boarding-school beer: so also -

I never loved a dear Gazelle - NOR ANYTHING THAT COST ME MUCH:
HIGH PRICES PROFIT THOSE WHO SELL, BUT WHY SHOULD I BE FOND
OF SUCH?

To glad me with his soft black eye MY SON COMES TROTTING HOME
FROM SCHOOL; HE'S HAD A FIGHT BUT CAN'T TELL WHY - HE ALWAYS
WAS A LITTLE FOOL!

But, when he came to know me well, HE KICKED ME OUT, HER TESTY
SIRE: AND WHEN I STAINED MY HAIR, THAT BELLE MIGHT NOTE THE
CHANGE, AND THUS ADMIRE

And love me, it was sure to dye A MUDDY GREEN OR STARING BLUE:
WHILST ONE MIGHT TRACE, WITH HALF AN EYE, THE STILL
TRIUMPHANT CARROT THROUGH.