CORRESPONDENCE.

In fact, in the cold weather the men working under cover in the warm
rotor-house are often better off than those working outside; but in the
very hot summer weather the work is certainly distressing. Moreover, in
the summer the men can enjoy the extra time the eight-hours system gives
them. Further, the work is irregular. The number of men required in
December is about two and a half to three times as many as in June.

It therefore occurred to me some months ago that it would be an advan-
tage to the men to work on the three-shift system during the four or five
summer months, and on the two shifts during the winter. It would pro-
vide constant work throughout the year for a larger proportion of the
winter men, give the men relief, when they most need it, in the hot weather,
and when they can make the best use of the time, and enable the Company
to retain in its service a larger number of skilled stewards. With the re-
duction of hours the men were, of course, to have a reduction of pay
proportioned to the diminished amount of work.

The experiment was first tried at our Rotherhithe station. The men
voted by ballot, and by a large majority decided to work on the eight-hour
system in the summer, and to return to the eleven-hour system in the
winter.

Their example, however, has not been followed by the men at the other
stations, where they are working two shifts. At two of these stations they
have been asked by the respective engineers whether they will follow
Rotherhithe or not, and they have declined; and at the other station they
have shown no desire to change. It seems they prefer the eleven-hour
system, and its higher pay, with a "draw" every two hours, to the eight-
hour system, under which a "draw" takes place every hour, as the pay
under the last named, although they do twenty per cent. less work in the
aggregate, have to do more work per hour for a shifting a day less pay than
when working two shifts.

I may say that the men made no request for the change. There was no
agitation whatever. The offer came without pressure or suggestion of any
kind from outside or inside, and it was accepted in the spirit in which it
was offered.

Believe me,
Yours faithfully,
GEORGE LIVNEK.

*-" The Editor of this Review cannot undertake to return any Manuscript.
MR. HENLEY'S POETRY.

This book of poems which Mr. Henley has just published, remarkable in itself and for its own merits, is also in some sort a manifesto. For a man of such active and eager temperament, a writer of such intellectual vivacity, Mr. Henley's literary baggage is singularly small. It consists of two volumes of verse, a volume of prose criticisms, some essays about painting, and one or two plays written in collaboration with Mr. Stevenson. To these we should perhaps add the National Observer, a weekly paper written in collaboration with a number of clever young men. Five years ago Mr. Henley's name was practically unknown. Journalists knew him as a clever journalist, and that was all. It was only by an accident that the editor (at that time) of the Magazine of Art, the brilliant reviewer of the Athenæum, was discovered by the general public in the character of a poet. The accident was somewhat curious. In 1887 a volume of Ballades and Rondouns appeared in the Canterbury Series under the editorship of Mr. Glosson White. It was a collection of all the tolerable work in French forms that could be found in English and American literature, and its consequence (for our salvation) was such an indigestion of ingenuity that scarce a ballade, scarce a rondeau, has seen the light since its publication. As a curiosity the book had its interest; containing, as it did, some of the splendid work of Mr. Swinburne, the exquisite work of Mr. Dobson, it could not but have its value; but, after all, the main interest and value of the book lay in some five-and-thirty pieces signed W. E. Henley. Mr. Glosson White explained in his preface that he had discovered these pieces in a society paper called London,—a paper which had two years of a very vivid existence during 1877-78—and that he had made his selection without the slightest idea that they were all by one author, and that author Mr. Henley. Written in the artificial forms of the ballade, the rondeau, the villanelle, they stood out from a mass of work, mainly artificial in substance as in form, by the freshness of their inspiration, the joyous individuality of their note. One felt that there was a new voice, and a voice with capacities for a better kind of singing. It was in answer to a demand which would take no denying—and how rarely does the British public ever make such demand!—that A Book of Verses appeared in the following year. It was a complete success—welcomed by the critics, talked about in the drawing-rooms, even bought for ready-money. In 1890 a volume of Views and Reviews was received with much curiosity, as a challenge that
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Given me! And did you hear
That little twitter-and-cheep?
Breaking inchOn this still, spectral, exquisite atmosphere:
It’s a first nest at mating; And behold
A rattle-pit—how fruitful and a-cold?
A spent witch-hexing from some infamous dance—
Oceana, quick-trotting, see her tip and tale
Through shadowy rollings into a bit of shade
And is a little wind and sky,
The sound of ships (that earnest of romance),
A sense of space and water, and thereby
A lamp-bridge sushing the troubled sky.
And look, O look! a tangle of silver pleases
And dusky lights, our River and all his dreams,
His dreams of a dead past that cannot die.”

Is not this, which I take from the first of the “London Volunteers,” almost as fine as a Whistler?—instinct with the same sense of the poetry of cities, the romance of what lies beneath our eyes, if we only have the vision and the point of view. Here, at last, is a poet who can so enlarge the limits of his verse as to take in London. And I think that might be the test of poetry which professes to be modern—its capacity for dealing with London, with what one sees or might see there, indoors and out.

To be modern in poetry—to represent really oneself and one’s surroundings, the world as it is to-day—to be modern and yet poetical, is, perhaps, the most difficult as it is certainly the most interesting of all the artistic achievements. In music the modern soi seems to have found expression in Wagner; in painting it seems to have found form and colour in Whistler and Degas; in sculpture it seems to have found an exponent in Rodin; on the stage it is certainly typified in Sarah Bernhardt. Essentially modern poetry may be said to have commenced in France, with Baudelaire. The art which he invented—a perverse, self-scrutinizing, troubled art of sensation and nerves, has been yet further developed, sublimated—volatilized, rather, by Verlaine. Verlaine, indeed, remains at the present the typical modern poet. In England we find the first suggestions of a really modern conception of poetical art in some of the smaller and finer poems of Browning. Mr. George Meredith’s Modern Love almost realizes an ideal. The poem stands alone in the literature of its time; moving by “tragic hint,” moving to the measure of an irony that achieves a quite new expression in song, it gives voice—in that acid, stinging, bitter-sweet style fashioned out of the very moods of those modern lovers—to all that is new, troubled, unexpressed, in the convolutions of passion, all that is strange, novel, and unexpected, in the accidents of passionate situation, among our sophisticated lovers of to-day. In quite another way Mr. Coventry Patmore has achieved wonders, not in the demon-

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The Angel, but in the less popular and immeasurably superior Unkown Era, by working, with that extraordinarily delicate touch of his, on the emotions and destinies of the more spiritual kind of love, which is no less, in essentials and accidents alike, “modern love.” Had Walt Whitman only possessed the art, as he possessed, and at times revealed, the soul of poetry, it is possible that in him we should have found the typical modern poet. But his work remains a suggestion, not an accomplishment. In James Thomson we find a violent and incoherent attempt to deal with modern themes, often in a somewhat old-fashioned way. He was a man of genius who never found the right utterance, but his endeavour was in the right direction. He indeed aimed at doing much of what Mr. Henley seems to me to have actually done.

To some of the writers I have named, and to some others, Mr. Henley owes not a little. The style of the “Hospital Sonnets” is founded on the style of Modern Love: both from the rhymed and unrhymed poems in irregular metres, it is evident that Mr. Henley has learnt something from the odes of the Unknown Era; there are touches of Walt Whitman, some of the notes of Iacon; there is, too, something of the exquisitely disarticulated style of Verlaine. But with all this assimilation of influences that are in the air, Mr. Henley has developed for himself a style that becomes in the highest degree personal, and one realizes behind it a most vigorous, distinct, and interesting personality. Like as a human document, and as an artistic experiment, the “rhymes and rhythms” named “In Hospital” have a peculiar value. Dated from the Old Edinburgh Infirmary, 1875-76, they tell the story of life in hospital, from the first glimpse of the “tragic meanness” of stairs and corridors, through the horrors of the operation, by way of visitors, doctors, and patients, to the solitary captivity of the discharge, the freedom of wind, sunshine, and the beautiful world. The poet to whom such an experience has come, the man, perhaps, whom such an experience has made a poet, must be accounted singularly fortunate. Of the men who rhyme, so large a number are cursed with suburban comforts. A villa and books never made a poet; they do but tend to the building up of the respectable virtues; and for the respectable virtues poetry has but the slightest use. To roam in the sun and air with vagabonds, to haunt the strange corners of cities, to know all the useless, and improper, and amusing people who are alone very much worth knowing; to live, as well as to observe life; or, as he shut up in hospital, drawn out of the rapid current of life into a weird and exasperating inaction—to wait, for a time, in the ante-room of death: it is such things as these that make for poetry. Just as those months in prison had their influence upon Verlaine, bringing out in his work a deeper note than even the passionate experi-

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ences of early life had fashioned, so that hospital experience has had its influence upon Mr. Henley. The very subject, to begin with, was a discovery. Here is poetry made out of personal sensation, poetry which is half physiological, poetry which is pathology—yet essentially poetry. It is one of the modern discoveries that the dignity of the subject is a mere figure of speech, and a misleading one. See what Mr. Whistler can make out of "Brook's Benefit": in place of fireworks and vulgarity you have a harmonious black and gold, and a work of art. See what Degas can discover for you in the crossing of colours, the violent rhythm of movements, the crowded and empty spaces of a ballet rehearsal. And so, in place of prattling about Phyllis, Mr. Henley has set himself to the task of rendering the most difficult poetry of the disagreeable. And in these wonderful poems—the sonnets and the "rhythm," as he calls his unrhymed verse—he has etched a series of impressions which are like nothing else that I know in poetry. What a triumph of remembered and recorded sensation is this picture, for instance, "The Operation":—

"You are carried in a basket,
Like a canoe from the shallows,
To the theatre, a cockpit
Where they stretch you on a table.

"Then they bid you close your eyes,
And they mask you with a napkin,
And the anaesthetic reaches
Hot and subtle through your being.

"And you gasp and reel and stagger
In a rushing, swaying rapture,
While the voices at your elbow
Fade—reeling—fainter—farther.

"Lights about you shower and tumble,
And your blood seems crystallising—
Edged and vibrant, yet within you
Backed and hurried back and forward.

"Then the lights grow fast and furious,
And you hear a noise of voices,
And you wrestle, blind and dizzy,
In an agony of effort.

"Till a sudden bell Accepts you,
And you sound an utter darkness
And awakes . . . with a struggle
On a hushed, attentive audience."

Then there are the long nights of lying awake, the restlessness of the rumpled bed, the sound of a leaking cistern when, "at the barren heart of midnight," it "taps upon the heartstrings."

the long days of wandering at the spring through one's prison window, with only the change of a new patient brought in—the man who had tried to cut his throat, the man whose spine was broken—occasionally a visitor, the "Apparition" (who, we know, was Mr. Stevenson), the "interlude" of a New Year's frolic among the patients. It is all there, and the impression is conveyed to us by what one can only describe as a new process.

"In Hospital" gives us one side of Mr. Henley's talent, and it throws a vivid light on the conditions under which so much brave work has been done. For Mr. Henley, of all the poets of the day, is the most strenuously certain that life is worth living, the most eagerly defiant of fate, the most heroically content with death. There is, indeed, something of the spirit of Walt Whitman in his passion for living, his acceptance of the hour when man,

"Tired of experience,
To the friendly and comfort of breast
Of the old nurse, Death,"

His special "note," in the earlier work particularly, is a manly Bohemianism, a refreshing recklessness in the happy accidents of existence. Always insistently modern, with such fine use of "hansoms," of "fifth-floor windows," of bards that "boh," of "washermade" in the midst of "a shower of mud," he has set some of the most human of emotions to a music that is itself curiously modern:—

"There is a wheel inside my head
Of wantonness and woe,
A cracked old fiddle grating without,
But the wind with scents of the sea is fed,
And the sun seems glad to shine.

"The sun and the wind are akin to you,
As you are akin to June:
But the fiddle . . . it giggles and buzzes about,
And love and laughter! who gave him the cue?—
He's playing your favourite tune."

There is a match, a jingle, which, slight as one may call it, seems to us to give a particular, well-known, hardly defined sensation with wonderful success. It is a sensation which is so vague in itself, so vague and delicious, a frivolous, an inconstant, an inconsequent sensation, born of chance and happy silence, and a pleasant and unimportant memory, that to render it requires a more genuine attack of what we call inspiration than I know not how many fine, sobering sonnets, marching to order. Songs like this, and like so many of Mr. Henley's, are only possible to a rare union of a very special temperament (more often found in people who are not writers) and a very special artistic endowment. There are poets who could express everything if they could only feel anything; others who feel

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acutely, but can never give out in poetry what they have received in sensation. Perhaps the typical example of the latter was the late Lord Lyttton. A diplomatist, a man of the world, a traveller, he was a diligent student of life, a man of many capacities, many adventures, with infinite opportunities and the keenest desire to profit by them. His personal appreciation of the human comedy was immense; his own part in it was constant, considerable, and to himself always an excitement. Yet, after all, he was never able to strike the personal note in verse: it is only from some stray suggestion that one divines the genuine emotion that has doubtless really awakened this music which he plays to us with studied fingers on a borrowed lute. A large part of contemporary verse is, of course, concerned with quite other issues, does not even try to do the one thing worth doing, the one thing left to be done. This, which Mr. Stevenson has done in prose, Mr. Henley has done in verse. One might call it personal romance, the romance of oneself—just what nine-tenths of the world never discover at all, even for private use. I feel a bourgeois solemnity in much of the really quite good, the very respectable work in verse that is done now-a-days—bourgeois, for all its distinction, of a kind. Our fine craftsmen are aghast of passion, afraid of emotion, ashamed of frivolity; only anxious that the sentiment as well as the rhyme should be right. It is the bourgeois, perhaps I should say the genteel, point of view: poetry from the clubs for the clubs. I am inclined to believe that no good poetry was ever written in a club arm-chair. Something in the air of those ponderous institutions seems to forbid the exercise of so casual a freak as verse. And with Mr. Henley it is indeed casual—casual as one’s moods, sensations, caprices; casual as the only aspect of fate that we can see.

To say this is not to deny to Mr. Henley any of the deeper qualities of song. His outlook on life is joyous, in spite of misfortune; his outlook on destiny and death is grave, collected, welcoming:

"Creases and troubles a-many have proved me. One or two women (God bless them!) have loved me. I have worked and dreamed, and I’ve talked at will. Of art and drink I have had my fill. I’ve comforted here, I’ve succoured there. I’ve faced my foe, and I’ve backed my friends. I’ve blundered, and sometimes made amends. I have prayed for light, and I’ve known despair. Now I look before, as I look behind, Come storm, come shine, whatever befall. With a grateful heart and a constant mind, For the end I know is the best of all."

There is a sort of epilogue, or last will and testament, and it is very explicit. Prizing in life much that is merely delightful and

the charm of passing moments, what he prizes most of all is the emotion of vital deeds, the passion of love, of patriotism—

"What have I done for you, England, my England? What is there I would not do, England, my own?"

The most terrible poem in the new volume—a poem which may be compared and contrasted at once with Mr. Rudyard Kipling’s "Tomlinson"—tells the tale of deeds undone that hunger for their day, the rejection of death and the grave, and the frightful triumph of the worm:

"And writhing, faint
And like a lover, he his fill shall take
Where no triumphant memory lives to make
It is obscene victory vain!"

"The Song of the Sword," the splendidly eloquent "voice of the sword from the heart of the sword," is a hymn to the ecstasy of conflict, the quickening forces that advance the world:

"He! thou, the Trumpet,
Handmaid of heroes,
Calling the sons
To the place of espousal.
Thou! thou, the splendour—
And sheen of my ministry,
Clothing the earth
With the livery of lightnings!
He! thou, the music
Of battles in onset,
And raining armours,
And God’s gift returning
In fury to God!
Glittering and keen
As the song of the winter stars.
He! then, the sound
Of my voice, the implacable
Angel of Destiny—
I am the sword."

He is ashamed of none of the natural human instincts, and writes of women like a man, without effeminacy and without offence, content to be at one with the beneficent seasons, the will of nature. And has he not written, once and for all, the song of the soul of man in the shadow of the unknown? Such a song is the equivalent of a great deed.
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"Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unrequited soul.

"In the full clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

"Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Looms but the Horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds and shall find me unafraid.

"It matters not how straight the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate,
I am the captain of my soul."

I began by quoting from the "London Voluntaries," and I find myself returning to the "London Voluntaries" as perhaps the most individual, the most characteristically modern, and the most entirely successful of Mr. Henley's work in verse. Here the subject is the finest of modern subjects, the pageant of London. Intensely personal in the feeling that transmutes the picture, it is with a touch of passionate impressiveness that he paints for us the London of midsummer nights, London at "the golden end" of October mornings, London dawning in winter under the Wind-Fiend "out of the poisonous east," London in all the chesty of spring. The style is freer, the choice of words, the direction of rhythms, more sure, the language more select and effectual in eloquence, than elsewhere. There is no eccentricity in rhythm, no experimentalising, nothing tentative. There is something classical—a note of Logos—in the most modern of poems, almost as if modernity had become classical. The outcome of many experiments, they have passed beyond that stage into the stage of existence.

Revolutionary always, Mr. Henley has had a wholesome but perilous discontent with the conventions of language and of verse. He is an artist who is also a critic, and the book of "Visions and Reviews," striking on its own account, has its value also in illustration of his artistic principles, preferences, and innovations. That book—"a book," the author tells us, "than a mosaic of scraps and shreds recovered from the shorn ruffles of some fourteen years of journalism"—shows us an active and varied intelligence, precipitately concerned with things in general, very emphatic in likes and dislikes, never quite dispassionately, always acutely, honestly, eagerly. His characteristics of feeling and expression, and not any reasoned or prejudiced, partially, make him the champion of the free of every writer with whom he concerns himself. Brilliant, original, pictorial, his style tires by its pungency, dazzles by its glitter. Every word must be emphatic, every stroke must score heavily, every sentence must be an epigram or a picture or a challenge. With a preference, he tells us, for the "unobtrusive grace," for "tranquil writing," for "eloquence without adjectives," he is consistent in his negation of all these ideals of the urbane style. And, with this, immense cleverness, an acuteness that pierces and delights to pierce, an invention of phrases that is often of the essence of criticism, an extensive knowledge, extensive sympathies. His vocabulary is unusually large, and it is used, too recklessly indeed, but in a surprisingly novel, personal way. Turning to the poems, we find that the artist in verse is far more careful than the craftsman in prose, and that here he has curbed himself to a restraint in the display of coloured and sounding words, still sufficiently coloured and sounding for an equally novel and personal effect. What Mr. Henley has brought into the language of poetry is a certain freshness, a daring straightforwardness and pungency of epithet, very refreshing in contrast with the traditional limness and timidity of the respectable verse of the day. One feels indeed at times that the touch is a little rough, the voice a trifle loud, the word just a little unnecessary. But with these unaccustomed words and tones Mr. Henley does certainly succeed in flashing the picture, the impression upon us, in realising the intangible, in saying new things in a new and fascinating manner. Here, for instance, in the recent volume, is an impression of night and the sea, in their mood of deadly companionship, which has never, I think, been rendered more vigorously, more authentically, in verse:

"A desolate shore,
The sinister seduction of the moon,
The names of the irremediable sea.

"Flaming, tawny and grim,
From cloud to cloud along her breast,
Leering her battered and involute leer,
She signals where he prowls in the dark alone.
Her horrible old man,
Mumbling oaths and warming.
His villainous old house with villainous talk—
The secrets of their grisly housekeeping
Since they went out upon the pad
In the first twilight of self-conscious Tom:
Growing, obscene and hoarse,
Tales of unnumbered ships,
Goodly and strong, companions of the Advance,
In some vale away of the light
Waylaid and bludgeoned—
Dead.

"Deep colored in primeval seas,
Rumined, disdreamed, spoiled.
They lie where the lean water-worn
Crawls free of their secrets, and their broken sides
Bulge with the slime of life. Thus they abide,
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This poem, with others of Mr. Henley’s “rhythms,” seems to me so fine, so satisfying, that I am at a loss to wonder whether it is an unreasonable prejudice that inclines me to question the wisdom of doing without rhyme in measures that seem to demand it. The experiment has been made by Heine, by Matthew Arnold, and undoubtedly with a certain measure of success. But to do without rhyme is to do without one of the beauties of poetry, I should say one of the inherent beauties. Our ears are so accustomed to it that they have come to require it, and it is certain, for one thing, that no rhymeless lyric could become really popular, and extremely likely, for another, that an innovation which begins by dropping rhyme will end by abandoning rhythm. It has been tried in France, persistently, most ingeniously, never, I think, successfully. The example of the French Decadents should be a warning to those in England who are anxious to loosen the bonds of verse. Everything that can be done has been done: there are treatises on poetic orchestration as well as examples of it: there is a Poesia Positiva and its little fame to boast of. Yet the really great, the really modern poet of France—the leader, as they would rank him, of the noisy little school of Decadents, the brainy little school of Symbolists, has always held aloof from these extravagances, and he has given his opinion very frankly on those young confessors who repudiate him with having kept a metre, and in this metre some essays, and rhymes at the end of the lines. “Mon Dieu!” he says. “I thought I had broken verse quite sufficiently.” Yet, supposing even that one admits the legitimacy of the experiment, is not the insubordinacy of it somewhat strongly indicated by the deeper impressiveness of the more certain mastery of the “London Voluntaries” which are rhymed 2 There, surely, is Mr. Henley’s perfectly satisfactory work, his entirely characteristic rendering of modern subject-matter in appropriate form. A new subject, an individual treatment, a form which retains all that is helpful in tradition, while admitting all that is valuable in experiment: that, I think, is modernity becoming classical.

ARTHUR SYMONS.

THE WORKING LADY IN LONDON.

“Lady” is a term of wide meaning in these days. It must be taken in this place to signify any woman whose birth or breeding has been such as to make a certain standard of comfort and refinement a necessity of life and who cannot sink to the level of the daughter of the artisan, or even of the small tradesman, without undergoing real hardship and suffering of mind and body. I have tried in vain to get any approximate estimate of the numbers of these ladies—so many are not regularly employed, are partly dependent on private means, or make a living in ways which give little clue to social status. One person thinks their numbers are overstated, another that they are much higher than is generally supposed, but we shall certainly not exceed the mark if we reckon them at least at several thousands. They may be roughly divided into two classes—the trained and the untrained. With the former I include some few whose special qualifications or experience enable them to fill posts in which technical knowledge is not required, and whose natural ability and high purpose fit them for valuable work. They are exceptional persons, and when once they find their niche they will not be easily displaced. Every year a good many girls come up from Girton, Newnham, and the sister colleges, keen to turn their expensive education to account. For the most part their earnings are supplemented by some allowance; they have a home to turn to in sickness and for holidays, and the prospect of help towards support in after-life. A large body of young women see the necessity early in life for maintaining themselves. They intend to make a livelihood much as a young man does; they go through the recognised training for whatever profession, art, trade, or handicraft they may elect to follow, and carry it out often with thoroughness and capacity. Many of these are dependent on their own exertions when the fees for their training have been scraped together, and they have been tied over the time which must intervene before they can hope for much return. This is often a time of great struggle, but the thoroughly trained woman is nearly always able to find work, and, given fair health, can in time earn what ought to afford her pleasant and comfortable surroundings. Trained workers are largely on the increase, as the next issue of the Census will undoubtedly show. Fewer girls sit down with folded hands nowadays, waiting for a possible husband to solve the problem of the future, or resign themselves to the monotony of making one of several gradually aging spinsteresses in a not always harmonious family interior. An important position