

**CHARACTERS AND
CRITICISMS; IN TWO
VOLUMES, VOL. II**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649425389

Characters and Criticisms; In Two Volumes, Vol. II by W. Alfred Jones

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

W. ALFRED JONES

**CHARACTERS AND
CRITICISMS; IN TWO
VOLUMES, VOL. II**

CHARACTERS

AND

CRITICISMS.

BY

W. ALFRED JONES, A. M.

.....
In Two Volumes.

VOL. II.



NEW YORK:
I. V. WESTERVELT, 311 BROADWAY.

1887.

CONTENTS OF VOL. II.

	Page.
I.—Essay Writing—The Champion.....	1
II.—Traits of American Authorship.....	9
III.—Home Criticism.....	14
IV.—The Two Everetts.....	18
V.—Poems by Clement C. Moore, LL. D.....	23
VI.—American Verse—Ralph Hoyt.....	27
VII.—The Literary Character of R. H. Dana.....	33
VIII.—Tales of the South and West.....	39
IX.—The Lecture.....	45
X.—Hugh Latimer.....	54
XI.—Sir Philip Sidney's "Defense of Poesy".....	61
XII.—Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy.....	69
XIII.—Memoirs of Lady Fanshawe.....	79
XIV.—The Spiritual Quixote.....	83
XV.—Satire and Sentiment.....	88
XVI.—Summer Reading.....	94
XVII.—The Culture of the Imagination.....	102
XVIII.—Political Satire.....	112
XIX.—Farrago.....	118
XX.—The Literature of Quakerism.....	130
XXI.—Poetry for the People.....	136
XXII.—Æsthetical Fragments.....	144
XXIII.—Correspondence of Richardson.....	157
XXIV.—Thomas Moore.....	159
XXV.—Literary Portraits.....	164
XXVI.—Lord Bolingbroke.....	171
XXVII.—Literature by Professional Men.....	175
XXVIII.—The Profession of an Actor.....	182
XXIX.—Children's Books.....	189

	Page
XXX.—A Rainy Day with the Poets.....	195
XXXI.—Tea-Table Talk.....	199
XXXII.—Philosophical Chit-Chat.....	204
XXXIII.—A Welsh Rare-bit for St. David's Day.....	213

APPENDIX.

XXXIV.—Literary Egotism.....	221
XXXV.—Walking the Streets.....	225
XXXVI.—The House-wife—A Character.....	227
XXXVII.—Reading and Study.....	229
XXXVIII.—On the Value of Metaphysical Studies.....	232
XXXIX.—Male Scolds.....	234
XL.—The Sexton—A Character.....	237
XLI.—The Linguist.....	238
XLII.—The Italian Opera.....	241
XLIII.—The Modern Politician—A Character.....	244
XLIV.—The Familiar Philosophy.....	248
XLV.—The Old English Comedy.....	248
XLVI.—The Old Songs and Ballads.....	251
XLVII.—Suggestions for the Reflective.....	255
XLVIII.—Thoughts on Bulwer.....	258
XLIX.—Table Talk.....	261

CHARACTERS AND CRITICISMS.

L

ESSAY WRITING.—THE CHAMPION.

"TEN censure wrong for one who writes amiss," sang Pope, and a juster line he never wrote himself. We have daily evidence of its truth, especially in this era of multifarious and indiscriminate criticism. Every man is a reader, and a critic, of course; the corollary follows the proposition as closely as demonstration upon mathematical reasoning. To be a tolerable author requires some brains and tact in writing; but to become a regular critic, nothing is needed but the not uncommon union of arrogance, ignorance, insolence, and stupidity. To praise judiciously the rarest works (the verdict of love and knowledge combined) appears tame and insipid, to those who love the slashing style, who consider abuse, satire; and presumption, boldness; who vote ribaldry, wit; and give the palm of copious, manly eloquence to coarse, declamatory invective.

In a late notice of Chambers' Essays in the London Spectator, we find the writer, who gives the author his fair share of praise, speaking of the decline of the Essay, and of its gradual extinction, as if the shortest, the most direct, the most personal, the most natural, form of prose-writing could ever become extinct, any more than letters, or songs,

or oratory. With all of these the essay has much in common, and especially in its personal character, implying a familiarity, a mutual confidence and an explicit directness, not to be attained in a higher or more ambitious form of composition. Since composition has become the business of men of the world and men of business—since it has found its way into other hands than those of the monks and scholastics of the Middle Ages, it has become more and more conversational, pithy, plain, and unpretending. Respectability in authorship is now nothing to be proud of, in intellectual circles and in the midst of a high civilization. No longer do we gaze with awe and admiring wonder at poet or philosopher. They have become commonplace people in the popular eye. They are as wise, as good, as imaginative as ever, but they do not seem to be so.

Essay-writing in prose is very much the same thing as song-writing in verse. A certain lyrical spirit is to be found in the best essayists, however homely and anti-poetical the essays may be; as in Franklin's, or the second-rate papers of Hazlitt (who is hardly a fair instance, for he was a poet as much as Burke or Jeremy Taylor.) Some of Lamb's are conceived in the highest poetic strain, as Bulwer has remarked of the Horatian Apostrophe to the Shade of Elliston, and numberless passages in the *Essays of Elia*. Hunt displays as much fancy in prose description often as in his poetry. Emerson's essays often *conceal* more poetic feeling than he develops in his poetry.

This kind of writing is as natural to a young prose writer to attempt as it is in a genuine poet to commence his career by songs, as natural as for the "feathered songster of the field" to pour forth his "unpremeditated lay." It is certainly a matter of impulse with most, and most naturally is with

those who are destined to succeed in that way of writing. With the scholar, in one of the old comedies, the youthful aspirant may honestly confess, "I did essay to write essays." That a vast proportion of failures might be recorded, weighs no more against our views than the as frequent failures in lyric efforts. The essayist is thus an humbler sort of bard, a prose lyricist, a writer of the walk of poetry, which Horace includes under the designation "*musa pedestris*." Under this class fall most of the essayists. Swift, in verse and in prose, is much the same; so we may say of Pope, and of the earlier English satirists.

Essays, too, are very similar to letters, in their variety of topics; in their familiarity of address, and in the "handling" or style. Most letter-writers address individuals only; the regular essayist addresses the public as well. There is only a wider circle of readers, and something by way of difference, in the feelings of professed authorship. Equal vanity, or egotism, or wise self-consideration, as you will, is to be allowed to either writer, equal room for portraits of character and sketches of manners, for humorous satire or generous compliment, for speculative or ethical discussion, for æsthetical analysis, or historical retrospect. Both are in the nature of confessions as well as homilies, though the latter are apt to predominate. The history of a man's mind, his only true autobiography, change of tastes and pursuits, favorite opinions held at different periods, why changed, and how often, these are to be studied in volumes of essays, with more confidence than in most volumes of biography. There are two remarks of Zimmerman that deserve to be noticed on this subject. Defending the practice of a man's writing memoirs of himself, he says, he thinks it wiser and more laudable, than for him to leave his body by will to a pro-

fessor of anatomy ; and, in another place, he tells an obvious truth, (not noticed perhaps for that reason,) that the great advantage of writing, is to give a man an opportunity to express that upon paper, which he could not with freedom or courtesy, in the ordinary intercourse with society. Now, essays give that freedom in its widest allowable limits, restrict the writer less in the development of his humors, whims, and agreeable prejudices upon paper than any other species of composition. It is indeed a mixed kind of writing, personal authorship, as free as possible from mere scholasticism or pedantry.

Neither is it any nearer extinction now than in the days of Montagne, who is commonly known as the father of the Essay. Its features may be somewhat changed, but there is the same outline, the same expression. It may at one epoch handle different topics from those which engross it at another,—Fashion, manners, character, books and politics. The commonest leaders in the penny papers are strictly essays, no less than most of the Review articles. The best portion of the contemporary lectures and addresses is strictly of an essay character, and the passages in the greatest orations are of the same description, and can be taken from the text in which they appear as independent essays.

Trifling writers of insipid imitations of Byron and Moore speak contemptuously of essays, as dull or vapid. No more such, we venture to say than the same attempts of writers in verse of equal power. Dull essayists enough are to be found, but at least as many bad poets, and certainly a larger number of indifferent books of sermons. Indeed, a good essay is likely to be better than even a good sermon ; we entirely exclude those of the great old divines, who rank with the poets