

§ 260. FACETIOUS AND HUMOROUS.

2718. WHITTIER'S APOSTROPHE TO CLAY.

The editor of the New York Despatch, in a review of Whittier's poems, says, —

“In looking through the volume, we fail to find several of Whittier's early poems — an ‘Apostrophe to Clay,’ in particular. Our readers will remember it: —

‘Not fallen! As well the tall  
And pillared Alleghany fall.’

“That poem has given Whittier a world of trouble. In 1844, during the presidential contest, it was reproduced, and run the rounds of the whig press. Whittier protested against its publication, issued a card, beseeching the editors to let ‘Not Fallen’ fall; that the verses no longer expressed his sentiments; that he had changed his mind; that — that, in fact, and to be candid, Mr. Clay *had* fallen in the poet's estimation. Poor Whittier! did he think to light a fire on a dry prairie, and then extinguish the flames?

“The poem literally ran like wildfire, and Whittier, in chasing it, got clean out of breath. But this was not the worst of it. The admirers of Thomas H. Benton clapped his name over it, and compelled Whittier to maintain that Benton was as firm, strong, and upright as

‘————— the tall  
And pillared Alleghany.’

“And to make matters more provoking. a country editor, of the democratic side, immediately after the defeat of Silas Wright, clapped that smart statesman's name to the ‘Not Fallen;’ and forthwith every democratic paper in the state forced Whittier to assure the world that Mr. Wright was right side up. The history of this little poem is a curiosity in American literature.”