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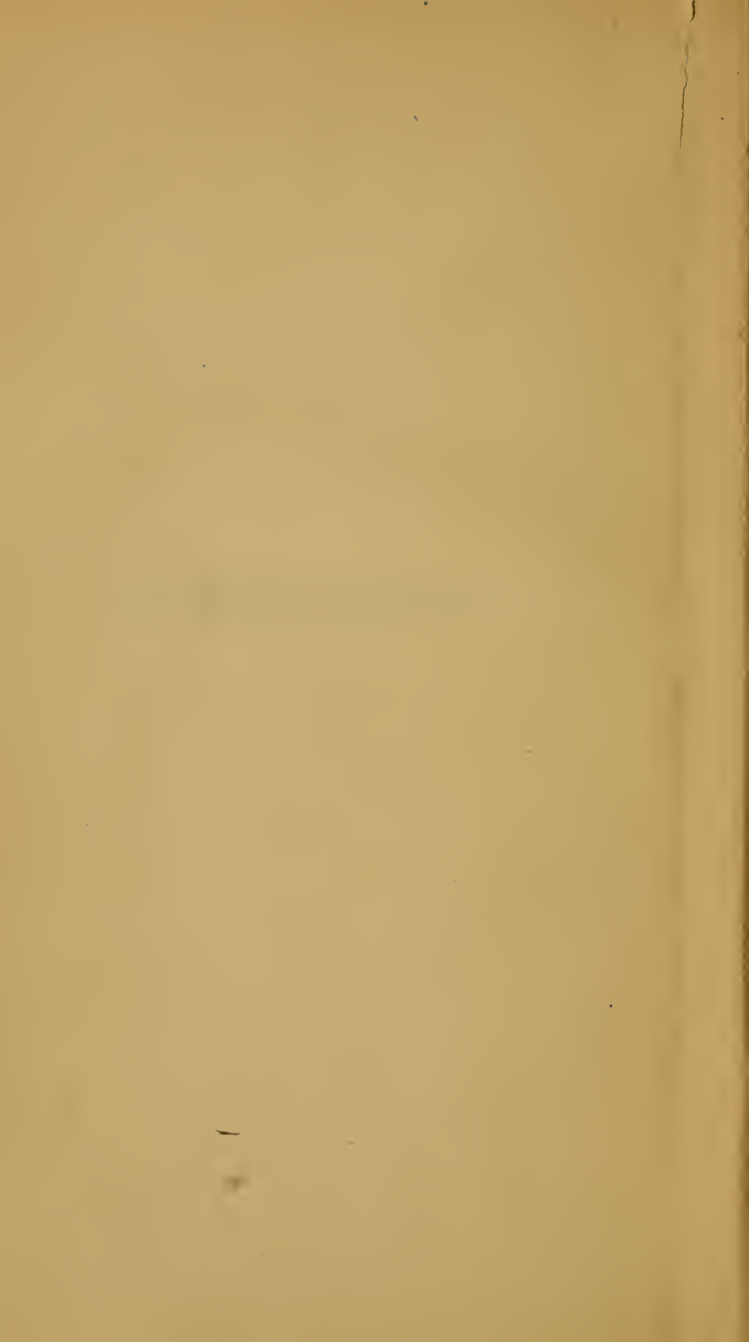

De Quincey's Works.

AUTHOR'S LIBRARY EDITION.

BIOGRAPHICAL ESSAYS,

AND

ESSAYS ON THE POETS.

BY

THOMAS DE QUINCEY.

TWO VOLUMES IN ONE.

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FROM THE AUTHOR, TO THE AMERICAN EDITOR OF HIS WORKS.

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THESE papers I am anxious to put into the hands of your house, and, so far as regards the U. S., of *your* house exclusively; not with any view to further emolument, but as an acknowledgment of the services which you have already rendered me; namely, first, in having brought together so widely scattered a collection, — a difficulty which in my own hands by too painful an experience I had found from nervous depression to be absolutely insurmountable; secondly, in having made me a participator in the pecuniary profits of the American edition, without solicitation or the shadow of any expectation on my part, without any legal claim that I could plead, or equitable warrant in established usage, solely and merely upon your own spontaneous motion. Some of these new papers, I hope, will not be without their value in the eyes of those who have taken an interest in the original series. But at all events, good or bad, they are now tendered to the appropriation of your individual house, the MESSRS. TICKNOR AND FIELDS, according to the amplest extent of any power to make such a transfer that I may be found to possess by law or custom in America.

I wish this transfer were likely to be of more value. But the veriest trifle, interpreted by the spirit in which I offer it, may express my sense of the liberality manifested throughout this transaction by your honorable house.

Ever believe me, my dear sir,

Your faithful and obliged,

THOMAS DE QUINCEY.

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BIOGRAPHICAL ESSAYS.

SHAKSPEARE.[1]

WILLIAM SHAKSPEARE, the protagonist on the great arena of modern poetry, and the glory of the human intellect, was born at Stratford-upon-Avon, in the county of Warwick, in the year 1564, and upon some day, not precisely ascertained, in the month of April. It is certain that he was baptized on the 25th; and from that fact, combined with some shadow of a tradition, Malone has inferred that he was born on the 23d. There is doubtless, on the one hand, no absolute necessity deducible from law or custom, as either operated in those times, which obliges us to adopt such a conclusion; for children might be baptized, and were baptized, at various distances from their birth: yet, on the other hand, the 23d is as likely to have been the day as any other; and more likely than any earlier day, upon two arguments. First, because there was probably a tradition floating in the seventeenth century, that Shakspeare died upon his birthday: now it is beyond a doubt that he died upon the 23d of April. Secondly, because it is a reasonable presumption, that no parents, living in a simple community, tenderly alive to the pieties of household duty, and in an age still clinging reverentially to the ceremonial ordinances of religion, would much delay the adoption of their child into the great family of Christ. Considering the

extreme frailty of an infant's life during its two earliest years, to delay would often be to disinherit the child of its Christian privileges; privileges not the less eloquent to the feelings from being profoundly mysterious, and, in the English church, forced not only upon the attention, but even upon the eye of the most thoughtless. According to the discipline of the English church, the unbaptized are buried with 'maimed rites,' shorn of their obsequies, and sternly denied that 'sweet and solemn farewell,' by which otherwise the church expresses her final charity with all men; and not only so, but they are even *locally* separated and sequestrated. Ground the most hallowed, and populous with Christian burials of households,

> 'That died in peace with one another,
> Father, sister, son, and brother,'

opens to receive the vilest malefactor; by which the church symbolically expresses her maternal willingness to gather back into her fold those even of her flock who have strayed from her by the most memorable aberrations; and yet, with all this indulgence, she banishes to unhallowed ground the innocent bodies of the unbaptized. To them and to suicides she turns a face of wrath. With this gloomy fact offered to the very external senses, it is difficult to suppose that any parents would risk their own reproaches, by putting the fulfilment of so grave a duty on the hazard of a convulsion fit. The case of royal children is different; their baptisms, it is true, were often delayed for weeks, but the household chaplains of the palace were always at hand, night and day, to baptize them in the very agonies of death.[2] We must presume, therefore, that William Shakspeare was born on some day very little

anterior to that of his baptism: and the more so because the season of the year was lovely and genial, the 23d of April in 1564, corresponding in fact with what we now call the 3d of May, so that, whether the child was to be carried abroad, or the clergyman to be summoned, no hindrance would arise from the weather. One only argument has sometimes struck us for supposing that the 22d might be the day, and not the 23d; which is, that Shakspeare's sole grand-daughter, Lady Barnard, was married on the 22d of April, 1626, ten years exactly from the poet's death; and the reason for choosing this day *might* have had a reference to her illustrious grandfather's birthday, which, there is good reason for thinking, would be celebrated as a festival in the family for generations. Still this choice *may* have been an accident, or governed merely by reason of convenience. And, on the whole, it is as well perhaps to acquiesce in the old belief, that Shakspeare was born and died on the 23d of April. We cannot do wrong if we drink to his memory on both 22d and 23d.

On a first review of the circumstances, we have reason to feel no little perplexity in finding the materials for a life of this transcendent writer so meagre and so few; and amongst them the larger part of doubtful authority. All the energy of curiosity directed upon this subject, through a period of one hundred and fifty years, (for so long it is since Betterton the actor began to make researches,) has availed us little or nothing. Neither the local traditions of his provincial birthplace, though sharing with London through half a century the honor of his familiar presence, nor the recollections of that brilliant literary

circle with whom he lived in the metropolis, have yielded much more than such an outline of his history, as is oftentimes to be gathered from the penurious records of a gravestone. That he lived, and that he died, and that he was 'a little lower than the angels;' — these make up pretty nearly the amount of our undisputed report. It may be doubted, indeed, whether at this day we are as accurately acquainted with the life of Shakspeare as with that of Chaucer, though divided from each other by an interval of two centuries, and (what should have been more effectual towards oblivion) by the wars of the two roses. And yet the traditional memory of a rural and a sylvan region, such as Warwickshire at that time was, is usually exact as well as tenacious; and, with respect to Shakspeare in particular, we may presume it to have been full and circumstantial through the generation succeeding to his own, not only from the curiosity, and perhaps something of a scandalous interest, which would pursue the motions of one living so large a part of his life at a distance from his wife, but also from the final reverence and honor which would settle upon the memory of a poet so preëminently successful; of one who, in a space of five and twenty years, after running a bright career in the capital city of his native land, and challenging notice from the throne, had retired with an ample fortune, created by his personal efforts, and by labors purely intellectual.

How are we to account, then, for that deluge, as if from Lethe which has swept away so entirely the traditional memorials of one so illustrious? Such is the fatality of error which overclouds every question connected with Shakspeare, that two of his principal

critics, Steevens and Malone, have endeavored to solve the difficulty by cutting it with a falsehood. They deny in effect that he *was* illustrious in the century succeeding to his own, however much he has since become so. We shall first produce their statements in their own words, and we shall then briefly review them.

Steevens delivers *his* opinion in the following terms: 'How little Shakspeare was once read, may be understood from Tate, who in his dedication to the altered play of King Lear, speaks of the original as an obscure piece, recommended to his notice by a friend: and the author of the Tatler, having occasion to quote a few lines out of Macbeth, was content to receive them from Davenant's alteration of that celebrated drama, in which almost every original beauty is either awkwardly disguised or arbitrarily omitted.' Another critic, who cites this passage from Steevens, pursues the hypothesis as follows: 'In fifty years after his death, Dryden mentions that he was then become *a little obsolete.* In the beginning of the last century, Lord Shaftesbury complains of his *rude unpolished style, and his antiquated phrase and wit.* It is certain that, for nearly a hundred years after his death, partly owing to the immediate revolution and rebellion, and partly to the licentious taste encouraged in Charles II.'s time, and perhaps partly to the incorrect state of his works, he was ALMOST ENTIRELY NEGLECTED.' This critic then goes on to quote with approbation the opinion of Malone, — 'that if he had been read, admired, studied, and imitated, in the same degree as he is now, the enthusiasm of some one or other of his admirers in the last age would have induced him to

make some inquiries concerning the history of his theatrical career, and the anecdotes of his private life.' After which this enlightened writer re-affirms and clenches the judgment he has quoted, by saying, —'His admirers, however, *if he had admirers in that age*, possessed no portion of such enthusiasm.'

It may, perhaps, be an instructive lesson to young readers, if we now show them, by a short sifting of these confident dogmatists, how easy it is for a careless or a half-read man to circulate the most absolute falsehoods under the semblance of truth; falsehoods which impose upon himself as much as they do upon others. We believe that not one word or illustration is uttered in the sentences cited from these three critics, which is not *virtually* in the very teeth of the truth.

To begin with Mr. Nahum Tate. This poor grub of literature, if he did really speak of Lear as 'an *obscure* piece, recommended to his notice by a friend,' of which we must be allowed to doubt, was then uttering a conscious falsehood. It happens that Lear was one of the few Shakspearian dramas which had kept the stage unaltered. But it is easy to see a mercenary motive in such an artifice as this. Mr. Nahum Tate is not of a class of whom it can be safe to say that they are 'well known:' they and their desperate tricks are essentially obscure, and good reason he has to exult in the felicity of such obscurity; for else this same vilest of travesties, Mr. Nahum's Lear, would consecrate his name to everlasting scorn. For himself, he belonged to the age of Dryden rather than of Pope: he 'flourished,' if we can use such a phrase of one who was always withering, about the era of the Revolution; and his Lear, we believe, was arranged in the year

1682. But the family to which he belongs is abundantly recorded in the Dunciad, and his own name will be found amongst its catalogues of heroes.

With respect to *the author of the Tatler*, a very different explanation is requisite. Steevens means the reader to understand Addison; but it does not follow that the particular paper in question was from his pen. Nothing, however, could be more natural than to quote from the common form of the play as then in possession of the stage. It was *there*, beyond a doubt, that a fine gentleman living upon town, and not professing any deep scholastic knowledge of literature, (a light in which we are always to regard the writers of the Spectator, Guardian, &c.,) would be likely to have learned anything he quoted from Macbeth. This we say generally of the writers in those periodical papers; but, with reference to Addison in particular, it is time to correct the popular notion of his literary character, or at least to mark it by severer lines of distinction. It is already pretty well known, that Addison had no very intimate acquaintance with the literature of his own country. It is known, also, that he did not think such an acquaintance any ways essential to the character of an elegant scholar and *littérateur*. Quite enough he found it, and more than enough for the time he had to spare, if he could maintain a tolerable familiarity with the foremost Latin poets, and a very slender one indeed with the Grecian. *How* slender, we can see in his 'Travels.' Of modern authors, none as yet had been published with notes, commentaries, or critical collations of the text; and, accordingly, Addison looked upon all of them, except those few who professed themselves followers in the

retinue and equipage of the ancients, as creatures of a lower race. Boileau, as a mere imitator and propagator of Horace, he read, and probably little else amongst the French classics. Hence it arose that he took upon himself to speak sneeringly of Tasso. To this, which was a bold act for his timid mind, he was emboldened by the countenance of Boileau. Of the elder Italian authors, such as Ariosto, and, *à fortiori*, Dante, he knew absolutely nothing. Passing to our own literature, it is certain that Addison was profoundly ignorant of Chaucer and Spenser. Milton only, — and why? simply because he was a brilliant scholar, and stands like a bridge between the Christian literature and the Pagan, — Addison had read and esteemed. There was also in the very constitution of Milton's mind, in the majestic regularity and planetary solemnity of its *epic* movements, something which he could understand and appreciate. As to the meteoric and incalculable eccentricities of the *dramatic* mind, as it displayed itself in the heroic age of our drama, amongst the Titans of 1590 – 1630, they confounded and overwhelmed him.

In particular with regard to Shakspeare, we shall now proclaim a discovery which we made some twenty years ago. We, like others, from seeing frequent references to Shakspeare in the Spectator, had acquiesced in the common belief, that although Addison was no doubt profoundly unlearned in Shakspeare's language, and thoroughly unable to do him justice, (and this we might well assume, since his great rival, Pope, who had expressly studied Shakspeare, was, after all, so memorably deficient in the appropriate knowledge,) — yet, that of course he had a vague popular knowl-

edge of the mighty poet's cardinal dramas. Accident only led us into a discovery of our mistake. Twice or thrice we had observed, that if Shakspeare were quoted, that paper turned out not to be Addison's; and at length, by express examination, we ascertained the curious fact, that Addison has never in one instance quoted or made any reference to Shakspeare. But was this, as Steevens most disingenuously pretends, to be taken as an exponent of the public feeling towards Shakspeare? Was Addison's neglect representative of a general neglect? If so, whence came Rowe's edition, Pope's, Theobald's, Sir Thomas Hanmer's, Bishop Warburton's, all upon the heels of one another? With such facts staring him in the face, how shameless must be that critic who could, in support of such a thesis, refer to '*the author of the Tatler*,' contemporary with all these editors. The truth is, Addison was well aware of Shakspeare's hold on the popular mind; too well aware of it. The feeble constitution of the poetic faculty, as existing in himself, forbade his sympathizing with Shakspeare; the proportions were too colossal for his delicate vision; and yet, as one who sought popularity himself, he durst not shock what perhaps he viewed as a national prejudice. Those who have happened, like ourselves, to see the effect of passionate music and 'deep-inwoven harmonies' upon the feeling of an idiot,[3] may conceive what we mean. Such music does not utterly revolt the idiot; on the contrary, it has a strange but a horrid fascination for him; it alarms, irritates, disturbs, makes him profoundly unhappy; and chiefly by unlocking imperfect glimpses of thoughts and slumbering instincts, which it is for his peace to have entirely obscured, because for him

they can be revealed only partially, and with the sad effect of throwing a baleful gleam upon his blighted condition. Do we mean, then, to compare Addison with an idiot? Not generally, by any means. Nobody can more sincerely admire him where he was a man of real genius, viz., in his delineations of character and manners, or in the exquisite delicacies of his humor. But assuredly Addison, as a poet, was amongst the sons of the feeble; and between the authors of Cato and of King Lear there was a gulf never to be bridged over.[4]

But Dryden, we are told, pronounced Shakspeare already in *his* day '*a little obsolete*.' Here now we have wilful, deliberate falsehood. *Obsolete*, in Dryden's meaning, does not imply that he was so with regard to his popularity, (the question then at issue,) but with regard to his diction and choice of words. To cite Dryden as a witness for any purpose against Shakspeare, — Dryden, who of all men had the most ransacked wit and exhausted language in celebrating the supremacy of Shakspeare's genius, does indeed require as much shamelessness in feeling as mendacity in principle.

But then Lord Shaftesbury, who may be taken as half way between Dryden and Pope, (Dryden died in 1700, Pope was then twelve years old, and Lord S. wrote chiefly, we believe, between 1700 and 1710,) 'complains,' it seems, 'of his rude unpolished style, and his antiquated phrase and wit.' What if he does? Let the whole truth be told, and then we shall see how much stress is to be laid upon such a judgment. The second Lord Shaftesbury, the author of the Characteristics, was the grandson of that famous political agitator,

the Chancellor Shaftesbury, who passed his whole life in storms of his own creation. The second Lord Shaftesbury was a man of crazy constitution, querulous from ill health, and had received an eccentric education from his eccentric grandfather. He was practised daily in *talking* Latin, to which afterwards he added a competent study of the Greek; and finally he became unusually learned for his rank, but the most absolute and undistinguished pedant that perhaps literature has to show. He sneers continually at the regular built academic pedant; but he himself, though no academic, was essentially the very impersonation of pedantry. No thought however beautiful, no image however magnificent, could conciliate his praise as long as it was clothed in English; but present him with the most trivial commonplaces in Greek, and he unaffectedly fancied them divine; mistaking the pleasurable sense of his own power in a difficult and rare accomplishment for some peculiar force or beauty in the passage. Such was the outline of his literary taste. And was it upon Shakspeare only, or upon him chiefly, that he lavished his pedantry? Far from it. He attacked Milton with no less fervor; he attacked Dryden with a thousand times more. Jeremy Taylor he quoted only to ridicule; and even Locke, the confidential friend of his grandfather, he never alludes to without a sneer. As to Shakspeare, so far from Lord Shaftesbury's censures arguing his deficient reputation, the very fact of his noticing him at all proves his enormous popularity; for upon system he noticed those only who ruled the public taste. The insipidity of his objections to Shakspeare may be judged from this, that he comments in a spirit of absolute puerility upon the name

Desdemona, as though intentionally formed from the Greek word for *superstition*. In fact, he had evidently read little beyond the list of names in Shakspeare; yet there is proof enough that the irresistible beauty of what little he *had* read was too much for all his pedantry, and startled him exceedingly; for ever afterwards he speaks of Shakspeare as one who, with a little aid from Grecian sources, really had something great and promising about him. As to modern authors, neither this Lord Shaftesbury nor Addison read any thing for the latter years of their lives but Bayle's Dictionary. And most of the little scintillations of erudition, which may be found in the notes to the Characteristics, and in the Essays of Addison, are derived, almost without exception, and uniformly without acknowledgment, from Bayle.[5]

Finally, with regard to the sweeping assertion, that 'for nearly a hundred years after his death Shakspeare was almost entirely neglected,' we shall meet this scandalous falsehood, by a rapid view of his fortunes during the century in question. The tradition has always been, that Shakspeare was honored by the especial notice of Queen Elizabeth, as well as by that of James I. At one time we were disposed to question the truth of this tradition; but that was for want of having read attentively the lines of Ben Jonson to the memory of Shakspeare, those generous lines which have so absurdly been taxed with faint praise. Jonson could make no mistake on this point; he, as one of Shakspeare's familiar companions, must have witnessed at the very time, and accompanied with friendly sympathy, every motion of royal favor towards Shakspeare. Now he, in words which leave no room for doubt, exclaims,

'Sweet swan of Avon, what a sight it were
To see thee in our waters yet appear;
And make those flights upon the banks of Thames,
That so did take Eliza and our James.'

These princes, then, *were* taken, were fascinated, with some of Shakspeare's dramas. In Elizabeth the approbation would probably be sincere. In James we can readily suppose it to have been assumed; for he was a pedant in a different sense from Lord Shaftesbury; not from undervaluing modern poetry, but from caring little or nothing for any poetry, although he wrote about its mechanic rules. Still the royal *imprimatur* would be influential and serviceable no less when offered hypocritically than in full sincerity. Next let us consider at the very moment of Shakspeare's death, who were the leaders of the British youth, the *principes juventutis*, in the two fields, equally important to a great poet's fame, of rank and of genius. The Prince of Wales and John Milton; the first being then about sixteen years old, the other about eight. Now these two great powers, as we may call them, these presiding stars over all that was English in thought and action, were both impassioned admirers of Shakspeare. Each of them counts for many thousands. The Prince of Wales[6] had learned to appreciate Shakspeare, not originally from reading him, but from witnessing the court representations of his plays at Whitehall. Afterwards we know that he made Shakspeare his closet companion, for he was reproached with doing so by Milton. And we know also, from the just criticism pronounced upon the character and diction of Caliban by one of Charles's confidential counsellors, Lord Falkland, that the king's

admiration of Shakspeare had impressed a determination upon the court reading. As to Milton, by double prejudices, puritanical and classical, his mind had been preoccupied against the full impressions of Shakspeare. And we know that there is such a thing as keeping the sympathies of love and admiration in a dormant state, or state of abeyance; an effort of self-conquest realized in more cases than one by the ancient fathers, both Greek and Latin, with regard to the profane classics. Intellectually they admired, and would not belie their admiration; but they did not give their hearts cordially, they did not abandon themselves to their natural impulses. They averted their eyes and weaned their attention from the dazzling object. Such, probably, was Milton's state of feeling towards Shakspeare after 1642, when the theatres were suppressed, and the fanatical fervor in its noontide heat. Yet even then he did not belie his reverence intellectually for Shakspeare: and in his younger days we know that he had spoken more enthusiastically of Shakspeare, than he ever did again of any uninspired author. Not only did he address a sonnet to his memory, in which he declares that kings would wish to die, if by dying they could obtain such a monument in the hearts of men; but he also speaks of him in his *Il Penseroso*, as the tutelary genius of the English stage. In this transmission of the torch (λαμπαδοφορια) Dryden succeeds to Milton; he was born nearly thirty years later; about thirty years they were contemporaries; and by thirty years, or nearly, Dryden survived his great leader. Dryden, in fact, lived out the seventeenth century. And we have now arrived within nine years of the era, when the critical editions started in hot succession to

one another. The names we have mentioned were the great influential names of the century. But of inferior homage there was no end. How came Betterton the actor, how came Davenant, how came Rowe, or Pope, by their intense (if not always sound) admiration for Shakspeare, unless they had found it fuming upwards like incense to the pagan deities in ancient times, from altars erected at every turning upon all the paths of men?

But it is objected that inferior dramatists were sometimes preferred to Shakspeare; and again that vile travesties of Shakspeare were preferred to the authentic dramas. As to the first argument, let it be remembered, that if the saints in the chapel are always in the same honor, because *there* men are simply discharging a duty, which once due will be due forever; the saints of the theatre, on the other hand, must bend to the local genius, and to the very reasons for having a theatre at all. Men go thither for amusement. This is the paramount purpose, and even acknowledged merit or absolute superiority must give way to it. Does a man at Paris expect to see Molière reproduced in proportion to his admitted precedency in the French drama? On the contrary, that very precedency argues such a familiarization with his works, that those who are in quest of relation will reasonably prefer any recent drama to that which, having lost all its novelty, has lost much of its excitement. We speak of ordinary minds; but in cases of *public* entertainments, deriving part of their power from scenery and stage pomp, novelty is for all minds an essential condition of attraction. Moreover, in some departments of the comic, Beaumont and Fletcher, when writing in com-

bination, really had a freedom and breadth of manner which excels the comedy of Shakspeare. As to the altered Shakspeare as taking precedency of the genuine Shakspeare, no argument can be so frivolous. The public were never allowed a choice; the great majority of an audience even now cannot be expected to carry the real Shakspeare in their mind, so as to pursue a comparison between that and the alteration. Their comparisons must be exclusively amongst what they have opportunities of seeing; that is, between the various pieces presented to them by the managers of theatres. Further than this, it is impossible for them to extend their office of judging and collating; and the degenerate taste which substituted the caprices of Davenant, the rants of Dryden, or the filth of Tate, for the jewelry of Shakspeare, cannot with any justice be charged upon the public, not one in a thousand of whom was furnished with any means of comparing, but exclusively upon those (viz., theatrical managers,) who had the very amplest. Yet even in excuse for *them* much may be said. The very length of some plays compelled them to make alterations. The best of Shakspeare's dramas, King Lear, is the least fitted for representation; and even for the vilest alteration, it ought in candor to be considered that possession is nine points of the law. He who would not have introduced, was often obliged to retain.

Finally, it is urged that the small number of editions through which Shakspeare passed in the seventeenth century, furnishes a separate argument, and a conclusive one against his popularity. We answer, that, considering the bulk of his plays collectively, the editions were *not* few. Compared with any known

case, the copies sold of Shakspeare were quite as many as could be expected under the circumstances. Ten or fifteen times as much consideration went to the purchase of one great folio like Shakspeare, as would attend the purchase of a little volume like Waller or Donne. Without reviews, or newspapers, or advertisements, to diffuse the knowledge of books, the progress of literature was necessarily slow, and its expansion narrow. But this is a topic which has already been treated unfairly, not with regard to Shakspeare only, but to Milton, as well as many others. The truth is, we have not facts enough to guide us; for the number of editions often tells nothing accurately as to the number of copies. With respect to Shakspeare it is certain, that, had his masterpieces been gathered into small volumes, Shakspeare would have had a most extensive sale. As it was, there can be no doubt, that from his own generation, throughout the seventeenth century, and until the eighteenth began to accommodate, not any greater popularity in *him*, but a greater taste for reading in the public, his fame never ceased to be viewed as a national trophy of honor; and the most illustrious men of the seventeenth century were no whit less fervent in their admiration than those of the eighteenth and the nineteenth, either as respected its strength and sincerity, or as respected its open profession.[7]

It is therefore a false notion, that the general sympathy with the merits of Shakspeare ever beat with a languid or intermitting pulse. Undoubtedly, in times when the functions of critical journals and of newspapers were not at hand to diffuse or to strengthen the impressions which emanated from the capital, all opin-

ions must have travelled slowly into the provinces. But even then, whilst the perfect organs of communication were wanting, indirect substitutes were supplied by the necessities of the times, or by the instincts of political zeal. Two channels especially lay open between the great central organ of the national mind, and the remotest provinces. Parliaments were occasionally summoned, (for the judges' circuits were too brief to produce much effect,) and during their longest suspensions, the nobility, with large retinues, continually resorted to the court. But an intercourse more constant and more comprehensive was maintained through the agency of the two universities. Already, in the time of James I., the growing importance of the gentry, and the consequent birth of a new interest in political questions, had begun to express itself at Oxford, and still more so at Cambridge. Academic persons stationed themselves as sentinels at London, for the purpose of watching the court and the course of public affairs. These persons wrote letters, like those of the celebrated Joseph Mede, which we find in Ellis's Historical Collections, reporting to their fellow-collegians all the novelties of public life as they arose, or personally carried down such reports, and thus conducted the general feelings at the centre into lesser centres, from which again they were diffused into the ten thousand parishes of England; for, (with a very few exceptions in favor of poor benefices, Welsh or Cumbrian,) every parish priest must unavoidably have spent his three years at one or other of the English universities. And by this mode of diffusion it is, that we can explain the strength with which Shakspeare's thoughts and diction impressed themselves from a very

early period upon the national literature, and even more generally upon the national thinking and conversation.[8]

The question, therefore, revolves upon us in threefold difficulty — How, having stepped thus prematurely into this inheritance of fame, leaping, as it were, thus abruptly into the favor alike of princes and the enemies of princes, had it become possible that in his native place, (honored still more in the final testimonies of his preference when founding a family mansion,) such a man's history, and the personal recollections which cling so affectionately to the great intellectual potentates who have recommended themselves by gracious manners, could so soon and so utterly have been obliterated?

Malone, with childish irreflection, ascribes the loss of such memorials to the want of enthusiasm in his admirers. Local researches into private history had not then commenced. Such a taste, often petty enough in its management, was the growth of after ages. Else how came Spenser's life and fortunes to be so utterly overwhelmed in oblivion? No poet of a high order could be more popular.

The answer we believe to be this: Twenty-six years after Shakspeare's death commenced the great parliamentary war. This it was, and the local feuds arising to divide family from family, brother from brother, upon which we must charge the extinction of traditions and memorials, doubtless abundant up to that era. The parliamentary contest, it will be said, did not last above three years; the king's standard having been first raised at Nottingham in August, 1642, and the battle of Naseby (which terminated the open warfare)

having been fought in June, 1645. Or even if we extend its duration to the surrender of the last garrison, that war terminated in the spring of 1646. And the brief explosions of insurrection or of Scottish invasion, which occurred on subsequent occasions, were all locally confined, and none came near to Warwickshire, except the battle of Worcester, more than five years after. This is true; but a short war will do much to efface recent and merely personal memorials. And the following circumstances of the war were even more important than the general fact.

First of all, the very mansion founded by Shakspeare became the military head-quarters for the queen, in 1644, when marching from the eastern coast of England to join the king in Oxford; and one such special visitation would be likely to do more serious mischief in the way of extinction, than many years of general warfare. Secondly, as a fact, perhaps, equally important, Birmingham, the chief town of Warwickshire, and the adjacent district, the seat of our hardware manufactures, was the very focus of disaffection towards the royal cause. Not only, therefore, would this whole region suffer more from internal and spontaneous agitation, but it would be the more frequently traversed vindictively from without, and harassed by flying parties from Oxford, or others of the king's garrisons. Thirdly, even apart from the political aspects of Warwickshire, this county happens to be the central one of England, as regards the roads between the north and south; and Birmingham has long been the great central axis,[9] in which all the radii from the four angles of England proper meet and intersect. Mere accident, therefore, of local position, much more

when united with that avowed inveteracy of malignant feeling, which was bitter enough to rouse a re-action of bitterness in the mind of Lord Clarendon, would go far to account for the wreck of many memorials relating to Shakspeare, as well as for the subversion of that quiet and security for humble life, in which the traditional memory finds its best *nidus*. Thus we obtain one solution, and perhaps the main one, of the otherwise mysterious oblivion which had swept away all traces of the mighty poet, by the time when those quiet days revolved upon England, in which again the solitary agent of learned research might roam in security from house to house, gleaning those personal remembrances which, even in the fury of civil strife, might long have lingered by the chimney corner. But the fierce furnace of war had probably, by its *local* ravages, scorched this field of natural tradition, and thinned the gleaner's inheritance by three parts out of four. This, we repeat, may be one part of the solution to this difficult problem.

And if another is still demanded, possibly it may be found in the fact, hostile to the perfect consecration of Shakspeare's memory, that, after all, he was a player. Many a coarse-minded country gentleman, or village pastor, who would have held his town glorified by the distinction of having sent forth a great judge or an eminent bishop, might disdain to cherish the personal recollections which surrounded one whom custom regarded as little above a mountebank, and the illiberal law as a vagabond. The same degrading appreciation attached both to the actor in plays and to their author. The contemptuous appellation of 'play-book,' served as readily to degrade the mighty volume which con-

tained Lear and Hamlet, as that of 'play-actor,' or 'player-man,' has always served with the illiberal or the fanatical to dishonor the persons of Roscius or of Garrick, of Talma or of Siddons. Nobody, indeed, was better aware of this than the noble-minded Shakspeare; and feelingly he has breathed forth in his sonnets this conscious oppression under which he lay of public opinion, unfavorable by a double title to his own pretensions; for, being both dramatic author and dramatic performer, he found himself heir to a two-fold opprobrium, and at an era of English society when the weight of that opprobrium was heaviest. In reality, there was at this period a collision of forces acting in opposite directions upon the estimation of the stage and scenical art, and therefore of all the ministers in its equipage. Puritanism frowned upon these pursuits, as ruinous to public morals; on the other hand, loyalty could not but tolerate what was patronized by the sovereign; and it happened that Elizabeth, James, and Charles I., were all alike lovers and promoters of theatrical amusements, which were indeed more indispensable to the relief of court ceremony, and the monotony of aulic pomp, than in any other region of life. This royal support, and the consciousness that any brilliant success in these arts implied an unusual share of natural endowments, did something in mitigation of a scorn which must else have been intolerable to all generous natures.

But whatever prejudice might thus operate against the perfect sanctity of Shakspeare's posthumous reputation, it is certain that the splendor of his worldly success must have done much to obliterate that effect; his admirable colloquial talents a good deal, and his

gracious affability still more. The wonder, therefore, will still remain, that Betterton, in less than a century from his death, should have been able to glean so little. And for the solution of this wonder, we must throw ourselves chiefly upon the explanations we have made as to the parliamentary war, and the local ravages of its progress in the very district, of the very town, and the very house.

If further arguments are still wanted to explain this mysterious abolition, we may refer the reader to the following succession of disastrous events, by which it should seem that a perfect malice of misfortune pursued the vestiges of the mighty poet's steps. In 1613, the Globe theatre, with which he had been so long connected, was burned to the ground. Soon afterwards a great fire occurred in Stratford; and next, (without counting upon the fire of London; just fifty years after his death, which, however, would consume many an important record from periods far more remote,) the house of Ben Jonson, in which probably, as Mr. Campbell suggests, might be parts of his correspondence, was also burned. Finally, there was an old tradition that Lady Barnard, the sole grand-daughter of Shakspeare, had carried off many of his papers from Stratford, and these papers have never since been traced.

In many of the elder lives it has been asserted, that John Shakspeare, the father of the poet, was a butcher, and in others that he was a woolstapler. It is now settled beyond dispute that he was a glover. This was his professed occupation in Stratford, though it is certain that, with this leading trade, from which he took his denomination, he combined some collateral pur-

suits; and it is possible enough that, as openings offered, he may have meddled with many. In that age, in a provincial town, nothing like the exquisite subdivision of labor was attempted which we now see realized in the great cities of Christendom. And one trade is often found to play into another with so much reciprocal advantage, that even in our own days we do not much wonder at an enterprising man, in country places, who combines several in his own person. Accordingly, John Shakspeare is known to have united with his town calling the rural and miscellaneous occupations of a farmer.

Meantime his avowed business stood upon a very different footing from the same trade as it is exercised in modern times. Gloves were in that age an article of dress more costly by much, and more elaborately decorated, than in our own. They were a customary present from some cities to the judges of assize, and to other official persons; a custom of ancient standing, and in some places, we believe, still subsisting; and in such cases it is reasonable to suppose that the gloves must originally have been more valuable than the trivial modern article of the same name. So also, perhaps, in their origin, of the gloves given at funerals. In reality, whenever the simplicity of an age makes it difficult to renew the parts of a wardrobe, except in capital towns of difficult access, prudence suggests that such wares should be manufactured of more durable materials; and, being so, they become obviously susceptible of more lavish ornament. But it will not follow, from this essential difference in the gloves of Shakspeare's age, that the glover's occupation was more lucrative. Doubtless he sold more costly gloves,

and upon each pair had a larger profit, but for that very reason he sold fewer. Two or three gentlemen 'of worship' in the neighborhood might occasionally require a pair of gloves, but it is very doubtful whether any inhabitant of Stratford would ever call for so mere a luxury.

The practical result, at all events, of John Shakspeare's various pursuits, does not appear permanently to have met the demands of his establishment, and in his maturer years there are indications still surviving that he was under a cloud of embarrassment. He certainly lost at one time his social position in the town of Stratford; but there is a strong presumption, in *our* construction of the case, that he finally retrieved it; and for this retrieval of a station, which he had forfeited by personal misfortunes or neglect, he was altogether indebted to the filial piety of his immortal son.

Meantime the earlier years of the elder Shakspeare wore the aspect of rising prosperity, however unsound might be the basis on which it rested. There can be little doubt that William Shakspeare, from his birth up to his tenth or perhaps his eleventh year, lived in careless plenty, and saw nothing in his father's house but that style of liberal housekeeping, which has ever distinguished the upper yeomanry and the rural gentry of England. Probable enough it is, that the resources for meeting this liberality were not strictly commensurate with the family income, but were sometimes allowed to entrench, by means of loans or mortgages, upon capital funds. The stress upon the family finances was perhaps at times severe; and that it was borne at all, must be imputed to the large and even splendid

portion which John Shakspeare received with his wife.

This lady, for such she really was in an eminent sense, by birth as well as by connections, bore the beautiful name of Mary Arden, a name derived from the ancient forest district[10] of the country; and doubtless she merits a more elaborate notice than our slender materials will furnish. To have been *the mother of Shakspeare*, — how august a title to the reverence of infinite generations and of centuries beyond the vision of prophecy. A plausible hypothesis has been started in modern times, that the facial structure, and that the intellectual conformation, may be deduced more frequently from the corresponding characteristics in the mother than in the father. It is certain that no very great man has ever existed, but that his greatness has been rehearsed and predicted in one or other of his parents. And it cannot be denied that in the most eminent men, where we have had the means of pursuing the investigation, the mother has more frequently been repeated and reproduced than the father. We have known cases where the mother has furnished all the intellect, and the father all the moral sensibility, upon which assumption, the wonder ceases that Cicero, Lord Chesterfield, and other brilliant men, who took the utmost pains with their sons, should have failed so conspicuously; for possibly the mothers had been women of excessive and even exemplary stupidity. In the case of Shakspeare, each parent, if we had any means of recovering their characteristics, could not fail to furnish a study of the most profound interest; and with regard to his mother in particular, if the modern hypothesis be true, and if we are indeed to deduce

from *her* the stupendous intellect of her son, in that case she must have been a benefactress to her husband's family, beyond the promises of fairy land or the dreams of romance; for it is certain that to her chiefly this family was also indebted for their worldly comfort.

Mary Arden was the youngest daughter and the heiress of Robert Arden, of Wilmecote, Esq., in the county of Warwick. The family of Arden was even then of great antiquity. About one century and a quarter before the birth of William Shakspeare, a person bearing the same name as his maternal grandfather had been returned by the commissioners in their lis' of the Warwickshire gentry; he was there styled Robert Arden, Esq., of Bromich. This was in 1433, or the 12th year of Henry VI. In Henry VII.'s reign, the Arden's received a grant of lands from the crown; and in 1568, four years after the birth of William Shakspeare, Edward Arden, of the same family, was sheriff of the county. Mary Arden was, therefore, a young lady of excellent descent and connections, and an heiress of considerable wealth. She brought to her husband, as her marriage portion, the landed estate of Asbies, which, upon any just valuation, must be considered as a handsome dowry for a woman of her station. As this point has been contested, and as it goes a great way towards determining the exact social position of the poet's parents, let us be excused for sifting it a little more narrowly than might else seem warranted by the proportions of our present life. Every question which it can be reasonable to raise at all, it must be reasonable to treat with at least so much of minute research, as may justify the conclusions which it is made to support.

The estate of Asbies contained fifty acres of arable land, six of meadow, and a right of commonage. What may we assume to have been the value of its fee-simple? Malone, who allows the total fortune of Mary Arden to have been £110 13*s.* 4*d.*, is sure that the value of Asbies could not have been more than one hundred pounds. But why? Because, says he, the 'average' rent of land at that time was no more than three shillings per acre. This we deny; but upon that assumption, the total yearly rent of fifty-six acres would be exactly eight guineas.[11] And therefore, in assigning the value of Asbies at one hundred pounds, it appears that Malone must have estimated the land at no more than twelve years' purchase, which would carry the value to £100 16*s.* 'Even at this estimate,' as the latest annotator [12] on this subject *justly* observes, 'Mary Arden's portion was a larger one than was usually given to a landed gentleman's daughter.' But this writer objects to Malone's principle of valuation. 'We find,' says he, 'that John Shakspeare also farmed the meadow of Tugton, containing sixteen acres, at the rate of eleven shillings per acre. Now what proof has Mr. Malone adduced, that the acres of Asbies were not as valuable as those of Tugton? And if they were so, the former estate must have been worth between three and four hundred pounds.' In the main drift of his objections we concur with Mr. Campbell. But as they are liable to some criticism, let us clear the ground of all plausible cavils, and then see what will be the result. Malone, had he been alive, would probably have answered that Tugton was a farm especially privileged by nature; and that if any man contended for so unusual a rent as eleven

shillings an acre for land not known to him, the *onus probandi* would lie upon *him*. Be it so; eleven shillings is certainly above the ordinary level of rent, but three shillings is below it. We contend, that for tolerably good land, situated advantageously, that is, with a ready access to good markets and good fairs, such as those of Coventry, Birmingham, Gloucester, Worcester, Shrewsbury, &c., one noble might be assumed as the annual rent; and that in such situations twenty years' purchase was not a valuation, even in Elizabeth's reign, very unusual. Let us, however, assume the rent at only five shillings, and land at sixteen years' purchase. Upon this basis, the rent would be £14, and the value of the fee-simple £224. Now, if it were required to equate that sum with its present value, a very operose [13] calculation might be requisite. But contenting ourselves with the gross method of making such equations between 1560 and the current century, that is, multiplying by five, we shall find the capital value of the estate to be eleven hundred and twenty pounds, whilst the annual rent would be exactly seventy. But if the estate had been sold, and the purchase-money lent upon mortgage, (the only safe mode of investing money at that time,) the annual interest would have reached £28, equal to £140 of modern money; for mortgages in Elizabeth's age readily produced ten per cent.

A woman who should bring at this day an annual income of £140 to a provincial tradesman, living in a sort of *rus in urbe*, according to the simple fashions of rustic life, would assuredly be considered as an excellent match. And there can be little doubt that Mary Arden's dowry it was which, for some ten or a dozen

years succeeding to his marriage, raised her husband to so much social consideration in Stratford. In 1550 John Shakspeare is supposed to have first settled in Stratford, having migrated from some other part of Warwickshire. In 1557 he married Mary Arden; in 1565, the year subsequent to the birth of his son William, his third child, he was elected one of the aldermen; and in the year 1568 he became first magistrate of the town, by the title of high bailiff. This year we may assume to have been that in which the prosperity of this family reached its zenith; for in this year it was, over and above the presumptions furnished by his civic honors, that he obtained a grant of arms from Clarencieux of the Heralds' College. On this occasion he declared himself worth five hundred pounds derived from his ancestors. And we really cannot understand the right by which critics, living nearly three centuries from his time, undertake to know his affairs better than himself, and to tax him with either inaccuracy or falsehood. No man would be at leisure to court heraldic honors, when he knew himself to be embarrassed, or apprehended that he soon might be so. A man whose anxieties had been fixed at all upon his daily livelihood would, by this chase after the aërial honors of heraldry, have made himself a butt for ridicule, such as no fortitude could enable him to sustain.

In 1568, therefore, when his son William would be moving through his fifth year, John Shakspeare, (now honored by the designation of *Master*,) would be found at times in the society of the neighboring gentry. Ten years in advance of this period he was already in difficulties. But there is no proof that these difficulties

had then reached a point of degradation, or of memorable distress. The sole positive indications of his decaying condition are, that in 1578 he received an exemption from the small weekly assessment levied upon the aldermen of Stratford for the relief of the poor; and that in the following year, 1579, he is found enrolled amongst the defaulters in the payment of taxes. The latter fact undoubtedly goes to prove that, like every man who is falling back in the world, he was occasionally in arrears. Paying taxes is not like the honors awarded or the possessions regulated by the Clarencieux; no man is ambitious of precedency there; and if a laggard pace in that duty is to be received as evidence of pauperism, nine tenths of the English people might occasionally be classed as paupers. With respect to his liberation from the weekly assessment, that may bear a construction different from the one which it has received. This payment, which could never have been regarded as a burden, not amounting to five pounds annually of our present money, may have been held up as an exponent of wealth and consideration; and John Shakspeare may have been required to resign it as an honorable distinction, not suitable to the circumstances of an embarrassed man. Finally, the fact of his being indebted to Robert Sadler, a baker, in the sum of five pounds, and his being under the necessity of bringing a friend as security for the payment, proves nothing at all. There is not a town in Europe, in which opulent men cannot be found that are backward in the payment of their debts. And the probability is, that Master Sadler acted like most people who, when they suppose a man to be going down in the world, feel their

respect for him sensibly decaying, and think it wise to trample him under foot, provided only in that act of trampling they can squeeze out of him their own individual debt. Like that terrific chorus in Spohr's oratorio of St. Paul, '*Stone him to death*,' is the cry of the selfish and the illiberal amongst creditors, alike towards the just and the unjust amongst debtors.

It was the wise and beautiful prayer of Agar, 'Give me neither poverty nor riches;' and, doubtless, for quiet, for peace, and the *latentis semita vitæ*, that is the happiest dispensation. But, perhaps, with a view to a school of discipline and of moral fortitude, it might be a more salutary prayer, 'Give me riches *and* poverty, and afterwards neither.' For the transitorial state between riches and poverty will teach a lesson both as to the baseness and the goodness of human nature, and will impress that lesson with a searching force, such as no borrowed experience ever can approach. Most probable it is that Shakspeare drew some of his powerful scenes in the Timon of Athens, those which exhibit the vileness of ingratitude and the impassioned frenzy of misanthropy, from his personal recollections connected with the case of his own father. Possibly, though a cloud of two hundred and seventy years now veils it, this very Master Sadler, who was so urgent for his five pounds, and who so little apprehended that he should be called over the coals for it in the Encyclopædia Britannica, may have sate for the portrait of that Lucullus who says of Timon:

> 'Alas, good lord! a noble gentleman
> tis, if he would not keep so good a house. Many a time and often I have dined with him, and told him on't; and come again to supper to him, of purpose to have him spend less; and yet he

would embrace no counsel, take no warning by my coming. Every man has his fault, and honesty is his; I have told him on't; but could never get him from it.'

For certain years, perhaps, John Shakspeare moved on in darkness and sorrow:

> 'His familiars from his buried fortunes
> Slunk all away; left their false vows with him,
> Like empty purses pick'd; and his poor self,
> A dedicated beggar to the air,
> With his disease of all shunn'd poverty,
> Walk'd, like contempt, alone.'

We, however, at this day, are chiefly interested in the case as it bears upon the education and youthful happiness of the poet. Now if we suppose that from 1568, the high noon of the family prosperity, to 1578, the first year of their mature embarrassments, one half the interval was passed in stationary sunshine, and the latter half in the gradual twilight of declension, it will follow that the young William had completed his tenth year before he heard the first signals of distress; and for so long a period his education would probably be conducted on as liberal a scale as the resources of Stratford would allow. Through this earliest section of his life he would undoubtedly rank as a gentleman's son, possibly as the leader of his class, in Stratford. But what rank he held through the next ten years, or, more generally, what was the standing in society of Shakspeare until he had created a new station for himself by his own exertions in the metropolis, is a question yet unsettled, but which has been debated as keenly as if it had some great dependencies. Upon this we shall observe, that could we by possibility be called to settle beforehand what rank were best for

favoring the development of intellectual powers, the question might wear a face of deep practical importance; but when the question is simply as to a matter of fact, what *was* the rank held by a man whose intellectual development has long ago been completed, this becomes a mere question of curiosity. The tree has fallen; it is confessedly the noblest of all the forest; and we must therefore conclude that the soil in which it flourished was either the best possible, or, if not so, that anything bad in its properties had been disarmed and neutralized by the vital forces of the plant, or by the benignity of nature. If any future Shakspeare were likely to arise, it might be a problem of great interest to agitate, whether the condition of a poor man or of a gentleman were best fitted to nurse and stimulate his faculties. But for the actual Shakspeare, since what he was he was, and since nothing greater can be imagined, it is now become a matter of little moment whether his course lay for fifteen or twenty years through the humilities of absolute poverty, or through the chequered paths of gentry lying in the shade. Whatever *was*, must, in this case at least, have been the best, since it terminated in producing Shakspeare; and thus far we must all be optimists.

Yet still, it will be urged, the curiosity is not illiberal which would seek to ascertain the precise career through which Shakspeare ran. This we readily concede; and we are anxious ourselves to contribute anything in our power to the settlement of a point so obscure. What we have wished to protest against, is the spirit of partisanship in which this question has too generally been discussed. For, whilst some with a foolish affectation of plebeian sympathies overwhelm us

with the insipid commonplaces about birth and ancient descent, as honors containing nothing meritorious, and rush eagerly into an ostentatious exhibition of all the circumstances which favor the notion of a humble station and humble connections; others, with equal forgetfulness of true dignity, plead with the intemperance and partiality of a legal advocate for the pretensions of Shakspeare to the hereditary rank of gentleman. Both parties violate the majesty of the subject. When we are seeking for the sources of the Euphrates or the St. Lawrence, we look for no proportions to the mighty volume of waters in that particular summit amongst the chain of mountains which embosoms its earliest fountains, nor are we shocked at the obscurity of these fountains. Pursuing the career of Mahommed, or of any man who has memorably impressed his own mind or agency upon the revolutions of mankind, we feel solicitude about the circumstances which might surround his cradle to be altogether unseasonable and impertinent. Whether he were born in a hovel or a palace, whether he passed his infancy in squalid poverty, or hedged around by the glittering spears of body-guards, as mere questions of fact may be interesting; but, in the light of either accessories or counter-agencies to the native majesty of the subject, are trivial and below all philosophic valuation. So with regard to the creator of Lear and Hamlet, of Othello and Macbeth; to him from whose golden urns the nations beyond the far Atlantic, the multitude of the isles, and the generations unborn in Australian climes, even to the realms of the rising sun (the ἀνατολαι ἠελιοιο,) must in every age draw perennial streams of intellectual life, we feel that the little accidents of birth and social condition

are so unspeakably below the grandeur of the theme, are so irrelevant and disproportioned to the real interest at issue, so incommensurable with any of its relations, that a biographer of Shakspeare at once denounces himself as below his subject, if he can entertain such a question as seriously affecting the glory of the poet In some legends of saints, we find that they were born with a lambent circle or golden aureola about their heads. This angelic coronet shed light alike upon the chambers of a cottage or a palace, upon the gloomy limits of a dungeon, or the vast expansion of a cathedral; but the cottage, the palace, the dungeon, the cathedral, were all equally incapable of adding one ray of color or one pencil of light to the supernatural halo.

Having, therefore, thus pointedly guarded ourselves from misconstruction, and consenting to entertain the question as one in which we, the worshippers of Shakspeare, have an interest of curiosity, but in which he, the object of our worship, has no interest of glory, we proceed to state what appears to us the result of the scanty facts surviving when collated with each other.

By his mother's side, Shakspeare was an authentic gentleman. By his father's he would have stood in a more dubious position: but the effect of municipal honors to raise and illustrate an equivocal rank, has always been acknowledged under the popular tendencies of our English political system. From the sort of lead, therefore, which John Shakspeare took at one time amongst his fellow-townsmen, and from his rank of first magistrate, we may presume that, about the year 1568, he had placed himself at the head of the

Stratford community. Afterwards he continued for some years to descend from this altitude; and the question is, at what point this gradual degradation may be supposed to have settled. Now we shall avow it as our opinion, that the composition of society in Stratford was such that, even had the Shakspeare family maintained their superiority, the main body of their daily associates must still have been found amongst persons below the rank of gentry. The poet must inevitably have mixed chiefly with mechanics and humble tradesmen, for such people composed perhaps the total community. But had there even been a gentry in Stratford, since they would have marked the distinctions of their rank chiefly by greater reserve of manners, it is probable that, after all, Shakspeare, with his enormity of delight in exhibitions of human nature, would have mostly cultivated that class of society in which the feelings are more elementary and simple, in which the thoughts speak a plainer language, and in which the restraints of factitious or conventional decorum are exchanged for the restraints of mere sexual decency. It is a noticeable fact to all who have looked upon human life with an eye of strict attention, that the abstract image of womanhood, in its loveliness, its delicacy, and its modesty, nowhere makes itself more impressive or more advantageously felt than in the humblest cottages, because it is there brought into immediate juxtaposition with the grossness of manners, and the careless license of language incident to the fathers and brothers of the house. And this is more especially true in a nation of unaffected sexual gallantry,[14] such as the English and the Gothic races in general; since, under the immunity which their women

enjoy from all servile labors of a coarse or out-of-doors order, by as much lower as they descend in the scale of rank, by so much more do they benefit under the force of contrast with the men of their own level. A young man of that class, however noble in appearance, is somewhat degraded in the eyes of women, by the necessity which his indigence imposes of working under a master; but a beautiful young woman, in the very poorest family, unless she enters upon a life of domestic servitude, (in which case her labors are light, suited to her sex, and withdrawn from the public eye,) so long in fact as she stays under her father's roof, is as perfectly her own mistress and *sui juris* as the daughter of an earl. This personal dignity, brought into stronger relief by the mercenary employments of her male connections, and the feminine gentleness of her voice and manners, exhibited under the same advantages of contrast, oftentimes combine to make a young cottage beauty as fascinating an object as any woman of any station.

Hence we may in part account for the great event of Shakspeare's early manhood, his premature marriage. It has always been known, or at least traditionally received for a fact, that Shakspeare had married whilst yet a boy, and that his wife was unaccountably older than himself. In the very earliest biographical sketch of the poet, compiled by Rowe, from materials collected by Betterton, the actor, it was stated, (and that statement is now ascertained to have been correct,) that he had married Anne Hathaway, 'the daughter of a substantial yeoman.' Further than this nothing was known. But in September, 1836, was published a very remarkable document, which gives the assurance of law to the time and fact of this event, yet still,

unless collated with another record, does nothing to lessen the mystery which had previously surrounded its circumstances. This document consists of two parts; the first, and principal, according to the logic of the case, though second according to the arrangement, being a *license* for the marriage of William Shakspeare with Anne Hathaway, under the condition 'of *once* asking of the bannes of matrimony,' that is, in effect, dispensing with two out of the three customary askings; the second or subordinate part of the document being a *bond* entered into by two sureties, viz.: Fulke Sandells and John Rychardson, both described as *agricolæ* or yeomen, and both marksmen, (that is, incapable of writing, and therefore subscribing by means of *marks*,) for the payment of forty pounds sterling, in the event of Shakspeare, yet a minor, and incapable of binding himself, failing to fulfil the conditions of the license. In the bond, drawn up in Latin, there is no mention of Shakspeare's name; but in the license, which is altogether English, *his* name, of course, stands foremost; and, as it may gratify the reader to see the very words and orthography of the original, we here extract the *operative* part of this document, prefacing only that the license is attached by way of explanation to the bond. 'The condition of this obligation is suche, that if hereafter there shall not appere any lawfull lett or impediment, by reason of any precontract, &c., but that Willm. Shagspere, one thone ptie,' [on the one party,] 'and Anne Hathwey of Stratford, in the diocess of Worcester, maiden, may lawfully solemnize matrimony together; and in the same afterwards remaine and continew like man and wiffe. And, moreover, if the said Willm. Shagspere

do not proceed to solemnization of mariadg with the said Anne Hathwey, without the consent of hir frinds; — then the said obligation' [viz., to pay forty pounds] 'to be voyd and of none effect, or els to stand & abide in full force and vertue.'

What are we to think of this document? Trepidation and anxiety are written upon its face. The parties are not to be married by a special license; not even by an ordinary license; in that case no proclamation of banns, no public asking at all, would have been requisite. Economical scruples are consulted; and yet the regular movement of the marriage 'through the bell-ropes'[15] is disturbed. Economy, which retards the marriage, is here evidently in collision with some opposite principle which precipitates it. How is all this to be explained? Much light is afforded by the date when illustrated by another document. The bond bears date on the 28th day of November, in the 25th year of our lady the queen, that is, in 1582. Now the baptism of Shakspeare's eldest child, Susanna, is registered on the 26th of May in the year following. Suppose, therefore, that his marriage was solemnized on the 1st day of December; it was barely possible that it could be earlier, considering that the sureties, drinking, perhaps, at Worcester throughout the 28th of November, would require the 29th, in so dreary a season, for their return to Stratford; after which some preparation might be requisite to the bride, since the marriage was *not* celebrated at Stratford. Next suppose the birth of Miss Susanna to have occurred, like her father's, two days before her baptism, viz., on the 24th of May. From December the 1st to May the 24th, both days inclusively, are one hundred and

seventy-five days; which, divided by seven, gives precisely twenty-five weeks, that is to say, six months short by one week. Oh, fie, Miss Susanna, you came rather before you were wanted.

Mr. Campbell's comment upon the affair is, that '*if* this was the case,' viz., if the baptism were really solemnized on the 26th of May, 'the poet's first child would *appear* to have been born only six months and eleven days after the bond was entered into.' And he then concludes that, on this assumption, 'Miss Susanna Shakspeare came into the world a little prematurely.' But this is to doubt where there never was any ground for doubting; the baptism was *certainly* on the 26th of May; and, in the next place, the calculation of six months and eleven days is sustained by substituting lunar months for calendar, and then only by supposing the marriage to have been celebrated on the very day of subscribing the bond in Worcester, and the baptism to have been coincident with the birth; of which suppositions the latter is improbable, and the former, considering the situation of Worcester, impossible.

Strange it is, that, whilst all biographers have worked with so much zeal upon the most barren dates or most baseless traditions in the great poet's life, realizing in a manner the chimeras of Laputa, and endeavoring 'to extract sunbeams from cucumbers,' such a story with regard to such an event, no fiction of village scandal, but involved in legal documents, a story so significant and so eloquent to the intelligent, should formerly have been dismissed without notice of any kind, and even now, after the discovery of 1836, with nothing beyond a slight conjectural insinuation.

For our parts, we should have been the last amongst the biographers to unearth any forgotten scandal, or after so vast a lapse of time, and when the grave had shut out all but charitable thoughts, to point any moral censures at a simple case of natural frality, youthful precipitancy of passion, of all trespasses the most venial, where the final intentions are honorable. But in this case there seems to have been something moie in motion than passion or the ardor of youth. 'I like not,' says Parson Evans, (alluding to Falstaff in masquerade,) 'I like not when a woman has a great peard; I spy a great peard under her muffler.' Neither do we like the spectacle of a mature young woman, five years past her majority, wearing the semblance of having been led astray by a boy who had still two years and a half to run of his minority. Shakspeare himself, looking back on this part of his youthful history from his maturest years, breathes forth pathetic counsels against the errors into which his own inexperience had been insnared. The disparity of years between himself and his wife he notices in a beautiful scene of the Twelfth Night. The Duke, Orsino, observing the sensibility which the pretended Cesario had betrayed on hearing some touching old snatches of a love strain, swears that his beardless page must have felt the passion of love, which the other admits. Upon this the dia ogue proceeds thus:

'*Duke*. What kind of woman is't?
Viola. Of your complexion.
Duke. She is not worth thee then. What years?
Viola. I' faith.
About your years, my lord.
Duke. Too old, by heaven. *Let still the woman take*
An elder than herself: so wears she to him,

So sways she level in her husband's heart.
For, boy, however we do praise ourselves,
Our fancies are more giddy and unfirm,
More longing, wavering, sooner lost and won,
Than women's are.

Viola. I think it well, my lord.

Duke. Then *let thy love be younger than thyself,*
Or thy affection cannot hold the bent;
For women are as roses, whose fair flower,
Being once display'd, doth fall that very hour.'

These counsels were uttered nearly twenty years after the event in his own life, to which they probably look back; for this play is supposed to have been written in Shakspeare's thirty-eighth year. And we may read an earnestness in pressing the point as to the *inverted* disparity of years, which indicates pretty clearly an appeal to the lessons of his personal experience. But his other indiscretion, in having yielded so far to passion and opportunity as to crop by prelibation, and before they were hallowed, those flowers of paradise which belonged to his marriage day; this he adverts to with even more solemnity of sorrow, and with more pointed energy of moral reproof, in the very last drama which is supposed to have proceeded from his pen, and therefore with the force and sanctity of testamentary counsel. The Tempest is all but ascertained to have been composed in 1611, that is, about five years before the poet's death; and indeed could not have been composed much earlier; for the very incident which suggested the basis of the plot, and of the local scene, viz., the shipwreck of Sir George Somers on the Bermudas, (which were in consequence denominated the Somers' Islands,) did not occur until the year 1609. In the opening of the

fourth act, Prospero formally betroths his daughter to Ferdinand; and in doing so he pays the prince a well-merited compliment of having 'worthily purchas'd' this rich jewel, by the patience with which, for her sake, he had supported harsh usage, and other painful circumstances of his trial. But, he adds solemnly,

> 'If thou dost break her virgin knot before
> All sanctimonious ceremonies may
> With full and holy rite be ministered;

in that case what would follow?

> 'No sweet aspersion shall the heavens let fall,
> To make this contract grow; *but barren hate,*
> *Sour-ey'd disdain and discord, shall bestrew*
> *The union of your bed with weeds so loathly*
> *That you shall hate it both.* Therefore take heed,
> As Hymen's lamps shall light you.'

The young prince assures him in reply, that no strength of opportunity, concurring with the uttermost temptation, not

> 'the murkiest den,
> The most opportune place, the strong'st suggestion
> Our worser genius can ———,'

should ever prevail to lay asleep his jealousy of self-control, so as to take any advantage of Miranda's innocence. And he adds an argument for this abstinence, by way of reminding Prospero, that not honor only, but even prudential care of his own happiness, is interested in the observance of his promise. Any unhallowed anticipation would, as he insinuates,

> 'take away
> The edge of that day's celebration,
> When I shall think, or Phœbus' steeds are founder'd,
> Or night kept chain'd below;'

that is, when even the winged hours would seem to

move too slowly. Even thus Prospero is not quite satisfied. During his subsequent dialogue with Ariel, we are to suppose that Ferdinand, in conversing apart with Miranda, betrays more impassioned ardor than the wise magician altogether approves. The prince's caresses have not been unobserved; and thus Prospero renews his warning:

> 'Look thou be true: do not give dalliance
> Too much the rein: the strongest oaths are straw
> To the fire i' the blood: be more abstemious,
> Or else — good night your vow.'

The royal lover reassures him of his loyalty to his engagements; and again the wise father, so honorably jealous for his daughter, professes himself satisfied with the prince's pledges.

Now in all these emphatic warnings, uttering the language 'of that sad wisdom folly leaves behind,' who can avoid reading, as in subtle hieroglyphics, the secret record of Shakspeare's own nuptial disappointments? We, indeed, that is, universal posterity through every age, have reason to rejoice in these disappointments; for, to them, past all doubt, we are indebted for Shakspeare's subsequent migration to London, and his public occupation, which, giving him a deep pecuniary interest in the productions of his pen, such as no other literary application of his powers could have approached in that day, were eventually the means of drawing forth those divine works which have survived their author for our everlasting benefit.

Our own reading and deciphering of the whole case is as follows. The Shakspeares were a handsome family, both father and sons. This we assume upon the following grounds: First, on the presumption

arising out of John Shakspeare's having won the favor of a young heiress in higher rank than himself; secondly, on the presumption involved in the fact of three amongst his four sons, having gone upon the stage, to which the most obvious (and perhaps in those days a *sine qua non*) recommendation would be a good person and a pleasing countenance; thirdly, on the direct evidence of Aubrey, who assures us that William Shakspeare was a handsome and a well-shaped man; fourthly, on the implicit evidence of the Stratford monument, which exhibits a man of good figure and noble countenance; fifthly, on the confirmation of this evidence by the Chandos portrait, which exhibits noble features, illustrated by the utmost sweetness of expression; sixthly, on the selection of theatrical parts, which it is known that Shakspeare personated, most of them being such as required some dignity of form, viz., kings, the athletic (though aged) follower of an athletic young man, and supernatural beings. On these grounds, direct or circumstantial, we believe ourselves warranted in assuming that William Shakspeare was a handsome and even noble looking boy. Miss Anne Hathaway had herself probably some personal attractions; and, if an indigent girl, who looked for no pecuniary advantages, would probably have been early sought in marriage. But as the daughter of 'a substantial yeoman,' who would expect some fortune in his daughter's suitors, she had, to speak coarsely, a little outlived her market. Time she had none to lose. William Shakspeare pleased her eye; and the gentleness of his nature made him an apt subject for female blandishments, possibly for female arts. Without imputing, however, to this Anne Hathaway any thing

so hateful as a settled plot for insnaring him, it was easy enough for a mature woman, armed with such inevitable advantages of experience and of self-possession, to draw onward a blushing novice; and, without directly creating opportunities, to place him in the way of turning to account such as naturally offered. Young boys are generally flattered by the condescending notice of grown-up women; and perhaps Shakspeare's own lines upon a similar situation, to a young boy adorned with the same natural gifts as himself, may give us the key to the result:

> 'Gentle thou art, and therefore to be won;
> Beauteous thou art, therefore to be assail'd;
> And, when a woman woes, what woman's son
> Will sourly leave her till he have prevail'd?'

Once, indeed, entangled in such a pursuit, any person of manly feeling would be sensible that he had no retreat; *that* would be — to insult a woman, grievously to wound her sexual pride, and to insure her lasting scorn and hatred. These were consequences which the gentle-minded Shakspeare could not face. He pursued his good fortunes, half perhaps in heedlessness, half in desperation, until he was roused by the clamorous displeasure of her family upon first discovering the situation of their kinswoman. For such a situation there could be but one atonement, and that was hurried forward by both parties: whilst, out of delicacy towards the bride the wedding was not celebrated in Stratford, (where the register contains no notice of such an event); nor, as Malone imagined, in Weston-upon-Avon, that being in the diocese of Gloucester; but in some parish, as yet undiscovered, in the diocese of Worcester.

But now arose a serious question as to the future maintenance of the young people. John Shakspeare was depressed in his circumstances, and he had other children besides William, viz., three sons and a daughter. The elder lives have represented him as burdened with ten ; but this was an error, arising out of the confusion between John Shakspeare the glover, and John Shakspeare a shoemaker. This error has been thus far of use, that, by exposing the fact of two John Shakspeares (not kinsmen) residing in Stratford-upon-Avon, it has satisfactorily proved the name to be amongst those which are locally indigenous to Warwickshire. Meantime it is now ascertained that John Shakspeare the glover had only eight children, viz., four daughters and four sons. The order of their succession was this : Joan, Margaret, WILLIAM, Gilbert, a second Joan, Anne, Richard, and Edmund. Three of the daughters, viz., the two eldest of the family, Joan and Margaret, together with Anne, died in childhood. All the rest attained mature ages, and of these William was the eldest. This might give him some advantage in his father's regard ; but in a question of pecuniary provision, precedency amongst the children of an insolvent is nearly nominal. For the present John Shakspeare could do little for his son ; and, under these circumstances, perhaps the father of Anne Hathaway would come forward to assist the new-married couple. This condition of dependency would furnish matter for painful feelings and irritating words. The youthful husband, whose mind would be expanding as rapidly as the leaves and blossoms of spring-time in polar latitudes, would soon come to appreciate the sort of wiles by which he had been caught. The female

mind is quick, and almost gifted with the power of witchcraft, to decipher what is passing in the thoughts of familiar companions. Silent and forbearing as William Shakspeare might be, Anne, his staid wife, would read his secret reproaches; ill would she dissemble her wrath, and the less so from the consciousness of having deserved them. It is no uncommon case for women to feel anger in connection with one subject, and to express it in connection with another; which other, perhaps, (except as a serviceable mask,) would have been a matter of indifference to their feelings. Anne would, therefore, reply to those inevitable reproaches which her own sense must presume to be lurking in her husband's heart, by others equally stinging, on his inability to support his family, and on his obligations to her father's purse. Shakspeare, we may be sure, would be ruminating every hour on the means of his deliverance from so painful a dependency; and at length, after four years' conjugal discord, he would resolve upon that plan of solitary emigration to the metropolis, which, at the same time that it released him from the humiliation of domestic feuds, succeeded so splendidly for his worldly prosperity, and with a train of consequences so vast for all future ages.

Such, we are persuaded, was the real course of Shakspeare's transition from school-boy pursuits to his public career. And upon the known temperament of Shakspeare, his genial disposition to enjoy life without disturbing his enjoyment by fretting anxieties, we build the conclusion, that had his friends furnished him with ampler funds, and had his marriage been well assorted or happy, we — the world of posterity — should have

lost the whole benefit and delight which we have since reaped from his matchless faculties. The motives which drove him *from* Stratford are clear enough; but what motives determined his course *to* London, and especially to the stage, still remains to be explained. Stratford-upon-Avon, lying in the high road from London through Oxford to Birmingham, (or more generally to the north,) had been continually visited by some of the best comedians during Shakspeare's childhood. One or two of the most respectable metropolitan actors were natives of Stratford. These would be well known to the elder Shakspeare. But, apart from that accident, it is notorious that mere legal necessity and usage would compel all companies of actors, upon coming into any town, to seek, in the first place, from the chief magistrate, a license for opening a theatre, and next, over and above this public sanction, to seek his personal favor and patronage. As an alderman, therefore, but still more whilst clothed with the official powers of chief magistrate, the poet's father would have opportunities of doing essential services to many persons connectod with the London stage. The conversation of comedians acquainted with books, fresh from the keen and sparkling circles of the metropolis, and filled with racy anecdotes of the court, as well as of public life generally, could not but have been fascinating, by comparison with the stagnant society of Stratford. Hospitalities on a liberal scale would be offered to these men. Not impossibly this fact might be one principal key to those dilapidations which the family estate had suffered. These actors, on *their* part, would retain a grateful sense of the kindness they had received, and would seek to repay it to John Shak-

speare, now that he was depressed in his fortunes, as opportunities might offer. His oldest son, growing up a handsome young man, and beyond all doubt from his earliest days of most splendid colloquial powers, (for assuredly of *him* it may be taken for granted,

'Nec licuit populis parvum te, Nile, videre,)

would be often reproached in a friendly way for burying himself in a country life. These overtures, prompted alike by gratitude to the father, and a real selfish interest in the talents of his son, would at length take a definite shape; and upon some clear understanding as to the terms of such an arrangement, William Shakspeare would at length, (about 1586, according to the received account, that is, in the fifth year of his married life, and the twenty-third or twenty-fourth of his age,) unaccompanied by wife or children, translate himself to London. Later than 1586 it could not well be, for already in 1589 it has been recently ascertained that he held a share in the property of a leading theatre.

We must here stop to notice, and the reader will allow us to notice with summary indignation, the slanderous and idle tale which represents Shakspeare as having fled to London in the character of a criminal, from the persecutions of Sir Thomas Lucy of Charlecot. This tale has long been propagated under two separate impulses. Chiefly, perhaps, under the vulgar love of pointed and glaring contrasts; the splendor of the man was in this instance brought into a sort of epigrammatic antithesis with the humility of his fortunes; secondly, under a baser impulse, the malicious pleasure of seeing a great man degraded. Accord-

ingly, as in the case of Milton,[16] it has been affirmed that Shakspeare had suffered corporal chastisement, in fact, (we abhor to utter such words,) that he had been judicially whipt. Now, first of all, let us mark the inconsistency of this tale. The poet was whipped, that is, he was punished most disproportionately, and yet he fled to avoid punishment. Next, we are informed that his offence was deer-stealing, and from the park of Sir Thomas Lucy. And it has been well ascertained that Sir Thomas had no deer, and had no park. Moreover, deer-stealing was regarded by our ancestors exactly as poaching is regarded by us. Deer ran wild in all the great forests; and no offence was looked upon as so venial, none so compatible with a noble Robin-Hood style of character, as this very trespass upon what were regarded as *feræ naturæ*, and not at all as domestic property. But had it been otherwise, a trespass was not punishable with whipping; nor had Sir Thomas Lucy the power to irritate a whole community, like Stratford-upon-Avon, by branding with permanent disgrace a young man so closely connected with three at least of the best families in the neighborhood. Besides, had Shakspeare suffered any dishonor of that kind, the scandal would infallibly have pursued him at his very heels to London; and in that case Greene, who has left on record, in a posthumous work of 1592, his malicious feelings towards Shakspeare, could not have failed to notice it. For, be it remembered, that a judicial flagellation contains a twofold ignominy. Flagellation is ignominious in its own nature, even though unjustly inflicted, and by a ruffian; secondly, any judicial punishment is ignominious, even though not wearing a shade of personal degradation.

Now a judicial flagellation includes both features of dishonor. And is it to be imagined that an enemy, searching with the diligence of malice for matter against Shakspeare, should have failed, six years after the event, to hear of that very memorable disgrace which had exiled him from Stratford, and was the very occasion of his first resorting to London; or that a leading company of players in the metropolis, *one of whom*, and a chief one, *was his own townsman*, should cheerfully adopt into their society, as an honored partner, a young man yet flagrant from the lash of the executioner or the beadle?

This tale is fabulous, and rotten to its core; yet even this does less dishonor to Shakspeare's memory than the sequel attached to it. A sort of scurrilous rondeau, consisting of nine lines, so loathsome in its brutal stupidity, and so vulgar in its expression, that we shall not pollute our pages by transcribing it, has been imputed to Shakspeare ever since the days of the credulous Rowe. The total point of this idiot's drivel consists in calling Sir Thomas 'an asse;' and well it justifies the poet's own remark, 'Let there be gall enough in thy ink, no matter though thou write with a goose-pen.' Our own belief is, that these lines were a production of Charles II.'s reign, and applied to a Sir Thomas Lucy, not very far removed, if at all, from the age of him who first picked up the precious filth. The phrase 'parliament *member*,' we believe to be quite unknown in the colloquial use of Queen Elizabeth's reign.

'But, that we may rid ourselves once and for ever of this outrageous calumny upon Shakspeare's memory, we shall pursue the story to its final stage. Even

Malone has been thoughtless enough to accredit this closing chapter, which contains, in fact, such a superfetation of folly as the annals of human dulness do not exceed. Let us recapitulate the points of the story. A baronet, who has no deer and no park, is supposed to persecute a poet for stealing these aerial deer out of this aerial park, both lying in *nephelococcygia*. The poet sleeps upon this wrong for eighteen years; but at length, hearing that his persecutor is dead and buried, he conceives bloody thoughts of revenge. And this revenge he purposes to execute by picking a hole in his dead enemy's coat-of-arms. Is this coat-of-arms, then, Sir Thomas Lucy's? Why, no; Malone admits that it is not. For the poet, suddenly recollecting that this ridicule would settle upon the son of his enemy, selects another coat-of-arms, with which his dead enemy never had any connection, and he spends his thunder and lightning upon this irrelevant object; and, after all, the ridicule itself lies in a Welshman's mispronouncing one single heraldic term — a Welshman who mispronounces all words. The last act of the poet's malice recalls to us a sort of jest-book story of an Irishman, the vulgarity of which the reader will pardon in consideration of its relevancy. The Irishman having lost a pair of silk stockings, mentions to a friend that he has taken steps for recovering them by an advertisement, offering a reward to the finder. His friend objects that the costs of advertising, and the reward, would eat out the full value of the silk stockings. But to this the Irishman replies, with a knowing air, that he is not so green as to have overlooked *that;* and that, to keep down the reward, he had advertised the stockings as worsted. Not at all less flagrant is the

bull ascribed to Shakspeare, when he is made to punish a dead man by personalities meant for his exclusive ear, through his coat-of-arms, but at the same time, with the express purpose of blunting and defeating the edge of his own scurrility, is made to substitute for the real arms some others which had no more relation to the dead enemy than they had to the poet himself. This is the very sublime of folly, beyond which human dotage cannot advance.

It is painful, indeed, and dishonorable to human nature, that whenever men of vulgar habits and of poor education wish to impress us with a feeling of respect for a man's talent, they are sure to cite, by way of evidence, some gross instance of malignity. Power, in their minds, is best illustrated by malice or by the infliction of pain. To this unwelcome fact we have some evidence in the wretched tale which we have just dismissed; and there is another of the same description to be found in all lives of Shakspeare, which we will expose to the contempt of the reader whilst we are in this field of discussion, that we may not afterwards have to resume so disgusting a subject.

This poet, who was a model of gracious benignity in his manners, and of whom, amidst our general ignorance, thus much is perfectly established, that the term *gentle* was almost as generally and by prescriptive right associated with his name as the affix of *venerable* with Bede, or *judicious* with Hooker, is alleged to have insulted a friend by an imaginary epitaph beginning '*Ten in the Hundred*,' and supposing him to be damned, yet without wit enough (which surely the Stratford bellman could have furnished) for devising any, even fanciful, reason for such a supposi-

tion; upon which the comment of some foolish critic is, 'The *sharpness of the satire* is said to have stung the man so much that he never forgave it.' We have heard of the sting in the tail atoning for the brainless head; but in this doggerel the tail is surely as stingless as the head is brainless. For, 1*st*, *Ten in the hundred* could be no reproach in Shakspeare's time, any more than to call a man *Three-and-a-half-per-cent.* in this present year, 1838; except, indeed, amongst those foolish persons who built their morality upon the Jewish ceremonial law. Shakspeare himself took ten per cent. 2*dly*. It happens that John Combe, so far from being the object of the poet's scurrility, or viewing the poet as an object of implacable resentment, was a Stratford friend; that one of his family was affectionately remembered in Shakspeare's will by the bequest of his sword; and that John Combe himself recorded his perfect charity with Shakspeare by leaving him a legacy of £5 sterling. And in this lies the key to the whole story. For, 3*dly*, The four lines were written and printed before Shakspeare was born. The name Combe is a common one; and some stupid fellow, who had seen the name in Shakspeare's will, and happened also to have seen the lines in a collection of epigrams, chose to connect the cases by attributing an identity to the two John Combe's, though at war with chronology.

Finally, there is another specimen of doggerel attributed to Shakspeare, which is not equally unworthy of him, because not equally malignant, but otherwise equally below his intellect, no less than his scholarship; we mean the inscription on his gravestone. This, as a sort of *siste viator* appeal to future sextons

is worthy of the grave-digger or the parish-clerk, who was probably its author. Or it may have been an antique formula, like the vulgar record of ownership in books: —

> 'Anthony Timothy Dolthead's book,
> God give him grace therein to look.'

Thus far the matter is of little importance; and it might have been supposed that malignity itself could hardly have imputed such trash to Shakspeare. But when we find, even in this short compass, scarcely wider than the posy of a ring, room found for traducing the poet's memory, it becomes important to say, that the leading sentiment, the horror expressed at any disturbance offered to his bones, is not one to which Shakspeare could have attached the slightest weight; far less could have outraged the sanctities of place and subject, by affixing to any sentiment whatever (and, according to the fiction of the case, his farewell sentiment) the sanction of a curse.

Filial veneration and piety towards the memory of this great man, have led us into a digression that might have been unseasonable in any cause less weighty than one, having for its object to deliver his honored name from a load of the most brutal malignity. Never more, we hope and venture to believe, will any thoughtless biographer impute to Shakspeare the asinine doggerel with which the uncritical blundering of his earliest biographer has caused his name to be dishonored. We now resume the thread of our biography. The stream of history is centuries in working itself clear of any calumny with which it has once been polluted.

Most readers will be aware of an old story, according to which Shakspeare gained his livelihood for some time after coming to London by holding the horses of those who rode to the play. This legend is as idle as any one of those which we have just exposed. No custom ever existed of riding on horseback to the play. Gentlemen, who rode valuable horses, would assuredly not expose them systematically to the injury of standing exposed to cold for two or even four hours; and persons of inferior rank would not ride on horseback in the town. Besides, had such a custom ever existed, stables (or sheds at least) would soon have arisen to meet the public wants; and in some of the dramatic sketches of the day, which noticed every fashion as it arose, this would not have been overlooked. The story is traced originally to Sir William Davenant. Betterton the actor, who professed to have received it from him, passed it onwards to Rowe, he to Pope, Pope to Bishop Newton, the editor of Milton, and Newton to Dr. Johnson. This pedigree of the fable, however, adds nothing to its credit, and multiplies the chances of some mistake. Another fable, not much less absurd, represents Shakspeare as having from the very first been borne upon the establishment of the theatre, and so far contradicts the other fable, but originally in the very humble character of *call-boy* or deputy prompter, whose business it was to summon each performer according to his order of coming upon the stage. This story, however, quite as much as the other, is irreconcilable with the discovery recently made by Mr. Collier, that in 1589 Shakspeare was a shareholder in the important property of a principal London theatre. It seems destined that all the un-

doubted facts of Shakspeare's life should come to us through the channel of legal documents, which are better evidence even than imperial medals; whilst, on the other hand, all the fabulous anecdotes not having an attorney's seal to them, seem to have been the fictions of the wonder maker. The plain presumption from the record of Shakspeare's situation in 1589, coupled with the fact that his first arrival in London was possibly not until 1587, but according to the earliest account not before 1586, a space of time which leaves but little room for any remarkable changes of situation, seems to be, that, either in requital of services done to the players by the poet's family, or in consideration of money advanced by his father-in-law, or on account of Shakspeare's personal accomplishments as an actor, and as an adapter of dramatic works to the stage; for one of these reasons, or for all of them united, William Shakspeare, about the 23d year of his age, was adopted into the partnership of a respectable histrionic company, possessing a first-rate theatre in the metropolis. If 1586 were the year in which he came up to London, it seems probable enough that his immediate motive to that step was the increasing distress of his father; for in that year John Shakspeare resigned the office of alderman. There is, however, a bare possibility that Shakspeare might have gone to London about the time when he completed his twenty-first year, that is, in the spring of 1585, but not earlier. Nearly two years after the birth of his eldest daughter Susanna, his wife lay in for a second and a *last* time; but she then brought her husband twins, a son and a daughter. These children were baptized in February of the year 1585; so that Shakspeare's

whole family of three children were born and baptized two months before he completed his majority. The twins were baptized by the names of Hamnet and Judith, those being the names of two amongst their sponsors, viz., Mr. Sadler and his wife. Hamnet, which is a remarkable name in itself, becomes still more so from its resemblance to the immortal name of Hamlet[17] the Dane; it was, however, the real baptismal name of Mr. Sadler, a friend of Shakspeare's, about fourteen years older than himself. Shakspeare's son must then have been most interesting to his heart, both as a twin child and as his only boy. He died in 1596, when he was about eleven years old. Both daughters survived their father; both married; both left issue, and thus gave a chance for continuing the succession from the great poet. But all the four grandchildren died without offspring.

Of Shakspeare personally, at least of Shakspeare the man, as distinguished from the author, there remains little more to record. Already in 1592, Greene, in his posthumous Groat's-worth of Wit, had expressed the earliest vocation of Shakspeare in the following sentence: 'There is an upstart crow, beautified with our feathers; in his own conceit the only *Shakscene* in a country!' This alludes to Shakspeare's office of recasting, and even recomposing, dramatic works, so as to fit them for representation; and Master Greene, it is probable, had suffered in his self-estimation, or in his purse, by the alterations in some piece of his own, which the duty of Shakspeare to the general interest of the theatre had obliged him to make. In 1591 it has been supposed that Shakspeare wrote his first drama, the Two Gentlemen of Verona; the

least characteristically marked of all his plays, and, with the exception of Love's Labor's Lost, the least interesting.

From this year, 1591, to that of 1611, are just twenty years, within which space lie the whole dramatic creations of Shakspeare, averaging nearly one for every six months. In 1611 was written the Tempest, which is supposed to have been the last of all Shakspeare's works. Even on that account, as Mr. Campbell feelingly observes, it has 'a sort of sacredness;' and it is a most remarkable fact, and one calculated to make a man superstitious, that in this play the great enchanter Prospero, in whom, '*as if conscious*,' says Mr. Campbell, '*that this would be his last work*, the poet has been *inspired to typify himself as* a wise, potent, and *benevolent magician*,' of whom, indeed, as of Shakspeare himself, it may be said, that 'within that circle' (the circle of his own art) 'none durst tread but he,' solemnly and forever renounces his mysterious functions, symbolically breaks his enchanter's wand; and declares that he will bury his books, his science, and his secrets,

> 'Deeper than did ever plummet sound.'

Nay, it is even ominous, that in this play, and from the voice of Prospero, issues that magnificent prophecy of the total destruction which should one day swallow up

> 'The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
> Yea all which it inherit.'

And this prophecy is followed immediately by a most profound ejaculation, gathering into one pathetic abstraction the total philosophy of life:

> 'We are such stuff
> As dreams are made of; and our little life
> Is rounded by a sleep;'

that is, in effect, our life is a little tract of feverish vigils, surrounded and islanded by a shoreless ocean of sleep — sleep before birth, sleep after death.

These remarkable passages were probably not undesigned; but if we suppose them to have been thrown off without conscious notice of their tendencies, then, according to the superstition of the ancient Grecians, they would have been regarded as prefiguring words, prompted by the secret genius that accompanies every man, such as insure along with them their own accomplishment. With or without intention, however, it is believed that Shakspeare wrote nothing more after this exquisite romantic drama. With respect to the remainder of his personal history, Dr. Drake and others have supposed, that during the twenty years from 1591 to 1611, he visited Stratford often, and latterly once a year.

In 1589 he had possessed some share in a theatre; in 1596 he had a considerable share. Through Lord Southampton, as a surviving friend of Lord Essex, who was viewed as the martyr to his Scottish politics, there can be no doubt that Shakspeare had acquired the favor of James I.; and accordingly, on the 29th of May, 1603, about two months after the king's accession to the throne of England, a patent was granted to the company of players who possessed the Globe theatre; in which patent Shakspeare's name stands second. This patent raised the company to the rank of his majesty's servants, whereas previously they are supposed to have been simply the servants of the Lord

Chamberlain. Perhaps it was in grateful acknowledgment of this royal favor that Shakspeare afterwards, in 1606, paid that sublime compliment to the house of Stuart, which is involved in the vision shown to Macbeth. This vision is managed with exquisite skill. It was impossible to display the whole series of princes from Macbeth to James I.; but he beholds the posterity of Banquo, one 'gold-bound brow' succeeding to another, until he comes to an eighth apparition of a Scottish king,

> 'Who bears a glass
> Which shows him many more; and some he sees
> Who *twofold* balls and *treble* sceptres carry;'

thus bringing down without tedium the long succession to the very person of James I., by the symbolic image of the two crowns united on one head.

About the beginning of the century Shakspeare had become rich enough to purchase the best house in Stratford, called *The Great House*, which name he altered to *New Place;* and in 1602 he bought one hundred and seven acres adjacent to this house for a sum (£320) corresponding to about 1500 guineas of modern money. Malone thinks that he purchased the house as early as 1597; and it is certain that about that time he was able to assist his father in obtaining a renewed grant of arms from the Herald's College, and therefore, of course, to re-establish his father's fortunes. Ten years of a well-directed industry, viz., from 1591 to 1601, and the prosperity of the theatre in which he was a proprietor, had raised him to affluence; and after another ten years, improved with the same success, he was able to retire with an income of £300, or (according to the customary computations) in

modern money of £1500, per annum. Shakspeare was in fact the first man of letters, Pope the second, and Sir Walter Scott the third, who, in Great Britain, has ever realized a large fortune by literature; or in Christendom, if we except Voltaire, and two dubious cases in Italy. The four or five latter years of his life Shakspeare passed in dignified ease, in profound meditation, we may be sure, and in universal respect, at his native town of Stratford; and there he died, on the 23d of April, 1616.[18]

His daughter Susanna had been married on the 5th of June of the year 1607, to Dr. John Hall,[19] a physician in Stratford. The doctor died in November, 1635, aged sixty; his wife, at the age of sixty-six, on July 11, 1640. They had one child, a daughter, named Elizabeth, born in 1608, married April 22, 1626, to Thomas Nash, Esq., left a widow in 1647, and subsequently remarried to Sir John Barnard; but this Lady Barnard, the sole grand-daughter of the poet, had no children by either marriage. The other daughter, Judith, on February 10, 1616, (about ten weeks before her father's death,) married Mr. Thomas Quiney of Stratford, by whom she had three sons, Shakspeare, Richard, and Thomas. Judith was about thirty-one years old at the time of her marriage; and living just forty-six years afterwards, she died in February, 1662, at the age of seventy-seven. Her three sons died without issue; and thus, in the direct lineal descent, it is certain that no representative has survived of this transcendent poet, the most august amongst created intellects.

After this review of Shakspeare's life, it becomes our duty to take a summary survey of his works, of

his intellectual powers, and of his station in literature, a station which is now irrevocably settled, not so much (which happens in other cases) by a vast overbalance of favorable suffrages as by acclamation; not so much by the *voices* of those who admire him up to the verge of idolatry, as by the *acts* of those who everywhere seek for his works among the primal necessities of life, demand them, and crave them as they do their daily bread; not so much by eulogy openly proclaiming itself, as by the silent homage recorded in the endless multiplication of what he has bequeathed us; not so much by his own compatriots, who, with regard to almost every other author,[20] compose the total amount of his *effective* audience, as by the unanimous 'all hail!' of intellectual Christendom; finally, not by the hasty partisanship of his own generation, nor by the biassed judgment of an age trained in the same modes of feeling and of thinking with himself,—but by the solemn award of generation succeeding to generation, of one age correcting the obliquities or peculiarities of another; by the verdict of two hundred and thirty years, which have now elapsed since the very *latest* of his creations, or of two hundred and forty-seven years if we date from the earliest; a verdict which has been continually revived and re-opened, probed, searched, vexed by criticism in every spirit, from the most genial and intelligent, down to the most malignant and scurrilously hostile which feeble heads and great ignorance could suggest when coöperating with impure hearts and narrow sensibilities; a verdict, in short, sustained and countersigned by a longer series of writers, many of them eminent for wit or learning, than were ever before congregated upon any inquest

relating to any author, be he who he might, ancient [21] or modern, Pagan or Christian. It was a most witty saying with respect to a piratical and knavish publisher, who made a trade of insulting the memories of deceased authors by forged writings, that he was 'among the new terrors of death.' But in the gravest sense it may be affirmed of Shakspeare, that he is among the modern luxuries of life; that life, in fact, is a new thing, and one more to be coveted, since Shakspeare has extended the domains of human consciousness, and pushed its dark frontiers into regions not so much as dimly descried or even suspected before his time, far less illuminated (as now they are) by beauty and tropical luxuriance of life. For instance, — a single instance, indeed one which in itself is a world of new revelation, — the possible beauty of the female character had not been seen as in a dream before Shakspeare called into perfect life the radiant shapes of Desdemona, of Imogene, of Hermione, of Perdita, of Ophelia, of Miranda, and many others. The Una of Spenser, earlier by ten or fifteen years than most of these, was an idealized portrait of female innocence and virgin purity, but too shadowy and unreal for a dramatic reality. And as to the Grecian classics, let not the reader imagine for an instant that any prototype in this field of Shakspearian power can be looked for there. The *Antigone* and the *Electra* of the tragic poets are the two leading female characters that classical antiquity offers to our respect, but assuredly not to our impassioned love, as disciplined and exalted in the school of Shakspeare. They challenge our admiration, severe, and even stern, as impersonations of filial duty, cleaving to the steps of a desolate and afflicted old

man; or of sisterly affection, maintaining the rights of a brother under circumstances of peril, of desertion, and consequently of perfect self-reliance. Iphigenia, again, though not dramatically coming before us in her own person, but according to the beautiful report of a spectator, presents us with a fine statuesque model of heroic fortitude, and of one whose young heart, even in the very agonies of her cruel immolation, refused to forget, by a single indecorous gesture, or so much as a moment's neglect of her own princely descent, and that she herself was 'a lady in the land.' These are fine marble groups, but they are not the warm breathing realities of Shakspeare; there is 'no speculation' in their cold marble eyes; the breath of life is not in their nostrils; the fine pulses of womanly sensibilities are not throbbing in their bosoms. And besides this immeasurable difference between the cold moony reflexes of life, as exhibited by the power of Grecian art, and the true sunny life of Shakspeare, it must be observed that the Antigones, &c. of the antique put forward but one single trait of character, like the aloe with its single blossom. This solitary feature is presented to us as an abstraction, and as an insulated quality; whereas in Shakspeare all is presented in the *concrete;* that is to say, not brought forward in relief, as by some effort of an anatomical artist; but embodied and imbedded, so to speak, as by the force of a creative nature, in the complex system of a human life; a life in which all the elements move and play simultaneously, and with something more than mere simultaneity or co-existence, acting and re-acting each upon the other, nay, even acting by each other and through each other. In Shakspeare's characters is felt

for ever a real *organic* life, where each is for the whole and in the whole, and where the whole is for each and in each. They only are real incarnations.

The Greek poets could not exhibit any approximations to *female* character, without violating the truth of Grecian life, and shocking the feelings of the audience. The drama with the Greeks, as with us, though much less than with us, was a picture of human life; and that which could not occur in life could not wisely be exhibited on the stage. Now, in ancient Greece, women were secluded from the society of men. The conventual sequestration of the γυναικωνῖτις, or female apartment [22] of the house, and the Mahommedan consecration of its threshold against the ingress of males, had been transplanted from Asia into Greece thousands of years perhaps before either convents or Mahommed existed. Thus barred from all open social intercourse, women could not develope or express any character by word or action. Even to *have* a character, violated, to a Grecian mind, the ideal portrait of feminine excellence; whence, perhaps, partly the too generic, too little individualized, style of Grecian beauty. But prominently to *express* a character was impossible under the common tenor of Grecian life, unless when high tragical catastrophes transcended the decorums of that tenor, or for a brief interval raised the curtain which veiled it. Hence the subordinate part which women play upon the Greek stage in all but some half dozen cases. In the paramount tragedy on that stage, the model tragedy, the *Œdipus Tyrannus* of Sophocles, there is virtually no woman at all; for Jocasta is a party to the story merely as the dead Laius or the self-murdered Sphinx was a party, viz., by her contribu-

tions to the fatalities of the event, not by anything she does or says spontaneously. In fact, the Greek poet, if a wise poet, could not address himself genially to a task in which he must begin by shocking the sensibilities of his countrymen. And hence followed, not only the dearth of female characters in the Grecian drama, but also a second result still more favorable to the sense of a new power evolved by Shakspeare. Whenever the common law of Grecian life did give way, it was, as we have observed, to the suspending force of some great convulsion or tragical catastrophe. This for a moment (like an earthquake in a nunnery) would set at liberty even the timid, fluttering Grecian women, those doves of the dove-cot, and would call some of them into action. But which? Precisely those of energetic and masculine minds; the timid and feminine would but shrink the more from public gaze and from tumult. Thus it happened, that such female characters as *were* exhibited in Greece, could not but be the harsh and the severe. If a gentle Ismene appeared for a moment in contest with some energetic sister Antigone, (and, chiefly, perhaps, by way of drawing out the fiercer character of that sister,) she was soon dismissed as unfit for scenical effect. So that not only were female characters few, but, moreover, of these few the majority were but repetitions of masculine qualities in female persons. Female agency being seldom summoned on the stage, except when it had received a sort of special dispensation from its sexual character, by some terrific convulsions of the house or the city, naturally it assumed the style of action suited to these circumstances. And hence it arose, that not woman as she differed from man, but woman

as she resembled man — woman, in short, seen under circumstances so dreadful as to abolish the effect of sexual distinction, was the woman of the Greek tragedy.[23] And hence generally arose for Shakspeare the wider field, and the more astonishing by its perfect novelty, when he first introduced female characters, not as mere varieties or echoes of masculine characters, a Medea or Clytemnestra, or a vindictive Hecuba, the mere tigress of the tragic tiger, but female characters that had the appropriate beauty of female nature; woman no longer grand, terrific, and repulsive, but woman 'after her kind' — the other hemisphere of the dramatic world; woman, running through the vast gamut of womanly loveliness; woman, as emancipated, exalted, ennobled, under a new law of Christian morality; woman, the sister and coequal of man, no longer his slave, his prisoner, and sometimes his rebel. 'It is a far cry to Loch Awe;' and from the Athenian stage to the stage of Shakspeare, it may be said, is a prodigious interval. True; but prodigious as it is, there is really nothing between them. The Roman stage, at least the tragic stage, as is well known, was put out, as by an extinguisher, by the cruel amphitheatre, just as a candle is made pale and ridiculous by daylight. Those who were fresh from the real murders of the bloody amphitheatre regarded with contempt the mimic murders of the stage. Stimulation too coarse and too intense had its usual effect in making the sensibilities callous. Christian emperors arose at length, who abolished the amphitheatre in its bloodier features. But by that time the genius of the tragic muse had long slept the sleep of death. And that muse had no resurrection until the age of Shak-

speare. So that, notwithstanding a gulf of nineteen centuries and upwards separates Shakspeare from Euripides, the last of the surviving Greek tragedians, the one is still the nearest successor of the other, just as Connaught and the islands in Clew Bay are next neighbors to America, although three thousand watery columns, each of a cubic mile in dimensions, divide them from each other.

A second reason, which lends an emphasis of novelty and effective power to Shakspeare's female world, is a peculiar fact of contrast which exists between that and his corresponding world of men. Let us explain. The purpose and the intention of the Grecian stage was not primarily to develope human *character*, whether in men or in women: human *fates* were its object; great tragic situations under the mighty control of a vast cloudy destiny, dimly descried at intervals, and brooding over human life by mysterious agencies, and for mysterious ends. Man, no longer the representative of an august *will*, man, the passion-puppet of fate, could not with any effect display what we call a character, which is a distinction between man and man, emanating originally from the will, and expressing its determinations, moving under the large variety of human impulses. The will is the central pivot of character; and this was obliterated, thwarted, cancelled by the dark fatalism which brooded over the Grecian stage. That explanation will sufficiently clear up the reason why marked or complex variety of character was slighted by the great principles of the Greek tragedy. And every scholar who has studied that grand drama of Greece with feeling, — that drama, so magnificent, so regal, so stately, — and who has

thoughtfully investigated its principles, and its difference from the English drama, will acknowledge that powerful and elaborate character, character, for instance, that could employ the fiftieth part of that profound analysis which has been applied to Hamlet, to Falstaff, to Lear, to Othello, and applied by Mrs. Jamieson so admirably to the full development of the Shakspearian heroines, would have been as much wasted, nay, would have been defeated, and interrupted the blind agencies of fate, just in the same way as it would injure the shadowy grandeur of a ghost to individualize it too much. Milton's angels are slightly touched, superficially touched, with differences of character; but they are such differences, so simple and general, as are just sufficient to rescue them from the reproach applied to Virgil's '*fortemque Gyan, fortemque Cloanthem;*' just sufficient to make them knowable apart. Pliny speaks of painters who painted in one or two colors; and, as respects the angelic characters, Milton does so; he is *monochromatic*. So, and for reasons resting upon the same ultimate philosophy, were the mighty architects of the Greek tragedy. They also were monochromatic; they also, as to the characters of their persons, painted in one color. And so far there might have been the same novelty in Shakpeare's men as in his women. There *might* have been; but the reason why there is *not* must be sought in the fact, that History, the muse of History, had there even been no such muse as Melpomene, would have forced us into an acquaintance with human character. History, as the representative of actual life, of real man, gives us powerful delineations of character in its chief agents, that is, in men; and therefore it

is that Shakspeare, the absolute creator of female character, was but the mightiest of all painters with regard to male character. Take a single instance. The Antony of Shakspeare, immortal for its execution, is found, after all, as regards the primary conception, in history. Shakspeare's delineation is but the expansion of the germ already preëxisting, by way of scattered fragments, in Cicero's Philippics, in Cicero's Letters, in Appian, &c. But Cleopatra, equally fine is a pure creation of art. The situation and the scenic circumstances belong to history, but the character belongs to Shakspeare.

In the great world, therefore, of woman, as the interpreter of the shifting phases and the lunar varieties of that mighty changeable planet, that lovely satellite of man, Shakspeare stands not the first only, not the original only, but is yet the sole authentic oracle of truth. Woman, therefore, the beauty of the female mind, *this* is one great field of his power. The supernatural world, the world of apparitions, *that* is another. For reasons which it would be easy to give, reasons emanating from the gross mythology of the ancients, no Grecian,[24] no Roman, could have conceived a ghost. That shadowy conception, the protesting apparition, the awful projection of the human conscience, belongs to the Christian mind. And in all Christendom, who, let us ask, who, who but Shakspeare has found the power for effectually working this mysterious mode of being? In summoning back to earth 'the majesty of buried Denmark,' how like an awful necromancer does Shakspeare appear! All the pomps and grandeurs which religion, which the grave, which the popular superstition had gathered about the subject

of apparitions, are here converted to his purpose, and bend to one awful effect. The wormy grave brought into antagonism with the scenting of the early dawn; the trumpet of resurrection suggested, and again as an antagonist idea to the crowing of the cock, (a bird ennobled in the Christian mythus by the part he is made to play at the Crucifixion;) its starting 'as a guilty thing' placed in opposition to its majestic expression of offended dignity when struck at by the partisans of the sentinels; its awful allusions to the secrets of its prison-house; its ubiquity, contrasted with its local presence; its aerial substance, yet clothed in palpable armor; the heart-shaking solemnity of its language, and the appropriate scenery of its haunt, viz., the ramparts of a capital fortress, with no witnesses but a few gentlemen mounting guard at the dead of night, — what a mist, what a *mirage* of vapor, is here accumulated, through which the dreadful being in the centre looms upon us in far larger proportions, than could have happened had it been insulated and left naked of this circumstantial pomp! In the *Tempest*, again, what new modes of life, preternatural, yet far as the poles from the spiritualities of religion! Ariel in antithesis to Caliban! What is most ethereal to what is most animal! A phantom of air, an abstraction of the dawn and of vesper sun-lights, a bodiless sylph on the one hand; on the other a gross carnal monster, like the Miltonic Asmodai, 'the fleshliest incubus' among the fiends, and yet so far ennobled into interest by his intellectual power, and by the grandeur of misanthropy! [25] In the *Midsummer-Night's Dream*, again, we have the old traditional fairy, a lovely mode of preternatural life, remodified

by Shakspeare's eternal talisman. Oberon and Titania remind us at first glance of Ariel. They approach, but how far they recede. They are like — 'like, but, oh, how different!' And in no other exhibition of this dreamy population of the moonlight forests and forest-lawns, are the circumstantial proprieties of fairy life so exquisitely imagined, sustained, or expressed. The dialogue between Oberon and Titania is, of itself and taken separately from its connection, one of the most delightful poetic scenes that literature affords. The witches in Macbeth are another variety of supernatural life, in which Shakspeare's power to enchant and to disenchant are alike portentous. The circumstances of the blasted heath, the army at a distance, the withered attire of the mysterious hags, and the choral litanies of their fiendish Sabbath, are as finely imagined in their kind as those which herald and which surround the ghost in Hamlet. There we see the *positive* of Shakspeare's superior power. But now turn and look to the *negative*. At a time when the trials of witches, the royal book on demonology, and popular superstition (all so far useful, as they prepared a basis of undoubting faith for the poet's serious use of such agencies) had degraded and polluted the ideas of these mysterious beings by many mean associations, Shakspeare does not fear to employ them in high tragedy, (a tragedy moreover which, though not the very greatest of his efforts as an intellectual whole, nor as a struggle of passion, is *among* the greatest in any view, and positively *the* greatest for scenical grandeur, and in that respect makes the nearest approach of all English tragedies to the Grecian model;) he does not fear to introduce, for the same appalling effect

as that for which Æschylus introduced the Eumenides, a triad of old women, concerning whom an English wit has remarked this grotesque peculiarity in the popular creed of that day, — that although potent over winds and storms, in league with powers of darkness, they yet stood in awe of the constable, — yet relying on his own supreme power to disenchant as well as to enchant, to create and to uncreate, he mixes these women and their dark machineries with the power of armies, with the agencies of kings, and the fortunes of martial kingdoms. Such was the sovereignty of this poet, so mighty its compass !

A third fund of Shakspeare's peculiar power lies in his teeming fertility of fine thoughts and sentiments. From his works alone might be gathered a golden bead-roll of thoughts the deepest, subtilest, most pathetic, and yet most catholic and universally intelligible ; the most characteristic, also, and appropriate to the particular person, the situation, and the case, yet, at the same time, applicable to the circumstances of every human being, under all the accidents of life, and all vicissitudes of fortune. But this subject offers so vast a field of observation, it being so eminently the prerogative of Shakspeare to have thought more finely and more extensively than all other poets combined, that we cannot wrong the dignity of such a theme by doing more, in our narrow limits, than simply noticing it as one of the emblazonries upon Shakspeare's shield.

Fourthly, we shall indicate (and, as in the last case, *barely* indicate, without attempting in so vast a field to offer any inadequate illustrations) one mode of Shakspeare's dramatic excellence, which hitherto has not

attracted any special or separate notice. We allude to the forms of life, and natural human passion, as apparent in the structure of his dialogue. Among the many defects and infirmities of the French and of the Italian drama, indeed, we may say of the Greek, the dialogue proceeds always by independent speeches, replying indeed to each other, but never modified in its several openings by the momentary effect of its several terminal forms immediately preceding. Now, in Shakspeare, who first set an example of that most important innovation, in all his impassioned dialogues, each reply or rejoinder seems the mere rebound of the previous speech. Every form of natural interruption, breaking through the restraints of ceremony under the impulses of tempestuous passion; every form of hasty interrogative, ardent reiteration when a question has been evaded; every form of scornful repetition of the hostile words; every impatient continuation of the hostile statement; in short, all modes and formulæ by which anger, hurry, fretfulness, scorn, impatience, or excitement under any movement whatever, can disturb or modify or dislocate the formal bookish style of commencement, — these are as rife in Shakspeare's dialogue as in life itself; and how much vivacity, how profound a verisimilitude, they add to the scenic effect as an imitation of human passion and real life, we need not say. A volume might be written, illustrating the vast varieties of Shakspeare's art and power in this one field of improvement; another volume might be dedicated to the exposure of the lifeless and unnatural result from the opposite practice in the foreign stages of France and Italy. And we may truly say, that were Shakspeare distinguished from them by this

single feature of nature and propriety, he would on that account alone have merited a great immortality.

The dramatic works of Snakspeare generally acknowledged to be genuine consist of thirty-five pieces. The following is the chronological order in which they are supposed to have been written, according to Mr. Malone, as given in his second edition of Shakspeare, and by Mr. George Chalmers in his Supplemental Apology for the Believers in the Shakspeare Papers:

	Chalmers.	Malone.
1. The Comedy of Errors,	1591	1592
2. Love's Labor's Lost,	1592	1594
3. Romeo and Juliet,	1592	1596
4. Henry VI., the First Part,	1593	1589
5. Henry VI., the Second Part,	1595	1591
6. Henry VI., the Third Part,	1595	1591
7. The Two Gentlemen of Verona,	1595	1591
8. Richard III.,	1596	1593
9. Richard II.,	1596	1593
10. The Merry Wives of Windsor,	1596	1601
11. Henry IV., the First Part,	1597	1597
12. Henry IV., the Second Part,	1597	1599
13. Henry V.,	1597	1599
14. Merchant of Venice,	1597	1594
15. Hamlet,	1598	1600
16. King John,	1598	1596
17. A Midsummer-Night's Dream,	1598	1594
18. The Taming of the Shrew,	1599	1596
19. All's Well that Ends Well,	1599	1606
20. Much Ado about Nothing,	1599	1600
21. As You Like It,	1602	1599

	Chalmers.	Malone.
22. Troilus and Cressida,	1610	1602
23. Timon of Athens,	1611	1610
24. The Winter's Tale,	1601	1611
25. Measure for Measure,	1604	1603
26. King Lear,	1605	1605
27. Cymbeline,	1606	1609
28. Macbeth,	1606	1606
29. Julius Cæsar,	1607	1607
30. Antony and Cleopatra,	1608	1608
31. Coriolanus,	1609	1610
32. The Tempest,	1613	1611
33. The Twelfth Night,	1613	1607
34. Henry VIII.,	1613	1603
35. Othello,	1614	1604

Pericles and Titus Andronicus, although inserted in all the late editions of Shakspeare's Plays, are omitted in the above list, both by Malone and Chalmers, as not being Shakspeare's.

The first edition of the Works was published in 1623, in a folio volume entitled Mr. William Shakspeare's Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies. The second edition was published in 1632, the third in 1664, and the fourth in 1685, all in folio; but the edition of 1623 is considered the most authentic. Rowe published an edition in seven vols. 8vo, in 1709. Editions were published by Pope, in six vols. 4to, in 1725; by Warburton, in eight vols. 8vo, in 1747; by Dr. Johnson, in eight vols. 8vo, in 1765; by Stevens, in four vols. 8vo, in 1766; by Malone, in ten vols. 8vo, in 1789; by Alexander Chalmers, in nine vols. 8vo, in 1811; by Johnson and Steevens, revised by Isaac Reed, in twenty-one vols. 8vo, in 1813; and the Plays

and Poems, with notes by Malone, were edited by James Boswell, and published in twenty-one vols. 8vo, in 1821. Besides these, numerous editions have been published from time to time.

NOTES.

Note 1. Page 9.

Mr. Campbell, the latest editor of Shakspeare's dramatic works, observes that 'the poet's name has been variously written Shaxpeare, Shackspeare, Shakspeare, and Shakspere:' to which varieties might be added Shagspere, from the Worcester Marriage License, published in 1836 But the fact is, that by combining with all the differences in spelling the first syllable, all those in spelling the second, more than twenty-five distinct varieties of the name may be expanded, (like an algebraic series,) for the choice of the curious in mis-spelling. Above all things, those varieties which arise from the intercalation of the middle *e*, (that is, the *e* immediately before the final syllable *spear*,) can never be overlooked by those who remember, at the opening of the Dunciad, the note upon this very question about the orthography of Shakspeare's name, as also upon the other great question about the title of the immortal Satire, Whether it ought not to have been the Dunceiade, seeing that Dunce, its great author and progenitor, cannot possibly dispense with the letter *e*. Meantime we must remark, that the first three of Mr. Campbell's variations are mere caprices of the press; as is Shagspere; or, more probably, this last euphonious variety arose out of the gross clownish pronunciation of the two hiccuping '*marksmen*' who rode over to Worcester for the license; and one cannot forbear laughing at the bishop's secretary for having been so misled by two varlets, professedly incapable of signing their own names. The same drunken villains had cut down the bride's name *Hathaway* into *Hathwey*. Finally, to treat the matter with seriousness, Sir Frederick Madden has shown, in his recent letter to the Society of Antiquaries, that the poet himself in all probability wrote the name uniformly

Shakspere. Orthography, both of proper names, of appellatives, and of words universally, was very unsettled up to a period long subsequent to that of Shakspeare. Still it must usually have happened that names written variously and laxly by others, would be written uniformly by the owners; especially by those owners who had occasion to sign their names frequently, and by literary people, whose attention was often, as well as consciously, directed to the proprieties of spelling. *Shakspeare* is now too familiar to the eye for any alteration to be attempted; but it is pretty certain that Sir Frederick Madden is right in stating the poet's own signature to have been uniformly *Shakspere.* It is so written twice in the course of his will, and it is so written on a blank leaf of Florio's English translation of Montaigne's Essays; a book recently discovered, and sold, on account of its autograph, for a hundred guineas.

Note 2. Page 10.

But, as a proof that, even in the case of royal christenings, it was not thought pious to 'tempt God,' as it were by delay, Edward VI., the only son of Henry VIII., was born on the 12th day of October, in the year 1537. And there was a delay on account of the sponsors, since the birth was not in London. Yet how little that delay was made, may be seen by this fact: The birth took place in the dead of the night, the day was Friday; and yet, in spite of all delay, the christening was most pompously celebrated on the succeeding Monday. And Prince Arthur, the elder brother of Henry VIII., was christened on the very next Sunday succeeding to his birth, notwithstanding an inevitable delay, occasioned by the distance of Lord Oxford, his godfather, and the excessive rains, which prevented the earl being reached by couriers, or himself reaching Winchester, without extraordinary exertions.

Note 3. Page 17.

A great modern poet refers to this very case of music entering 'the mouldy chambers of the dull idiot's brain;' but in support of what seems to us a baseless hypothesis.

Note 4. Page 18.

Probably Addison's fear of the national feeling was a good deal

strengthened by his awe of Milton and of Dryden, both of whom had expressed a homage towards Shakspeare which language cannot transcend. Amongst his political friends also were many intense admirers of Shakspeare.

NOTE 5. Page 20.

He who is weak enough to kick and spurn his own native literature, even if it were done with more knowledge than is shown by Lord Shaftesbury, will usually be kicked and spurned in his turn; and accordingly it has often been remarked that the Characteristics are unjustly neglected in our days. For Lord Shafesbury, with all his pedantry, was a man of great talents. Leibnitz had the sagacity to see this through the mists of a translation.

NOTE 6. Page 21.

Perhaps the most bitter political enemy of Charles I. will have the candor to allow that, for a prince of those times, he was truly and eminently accomplished. His knowledge of the arts was considerable; and, as a patron of art, he stands foremost amongst all British sovereigns to this hour. He said truly of himself, and wisely as to the principle, that he understood English law as well as a gentleman ought to understand it; meaning that an attorney's minute knowledge of forms and technical niceties was illiberal. Speaking of him as an author, we must remember that the *Eikon Basilike* is still unappropriated; that question is still open. But supposing the king's claim negatived, still, in his controversy with Henderson, in his negotiations at the Isle of Wight and elsewhere, he discovered a power of argument, a learning and a strength of memory, which are truly admirable; whilst the whole of his accomplishments are recommended by a modesty and a humility as rare as they are unaffected.

NOTE 7. Page 25.

The necessity of compression obliges us to omit many arguments and references by which we could demonstrate the fact, that Shakspeare's reputation was always in a progressive state; allowing only for the interruption of about seventeen years, which this poet, in common with all others, sustained, not so much from the state of war, (which did not fully occupy four of those years,) as

from the triumph of a gloomy fanaticism. Deduct the twenty-three years of the seventeenth century, which had elapsed before the first folio appeared, to this space add seventeen years of fanatical madness, during fourteen of which *all* dramatic entertainments were suppressed, the remainder is sixty years. And surely the sale of four editions of a vast folio in that space of time was an expression of an abiding interest. *No other poet, except Spenser, continued to sell throughout the century.* Besides, in arguing the case of a *dramatic* poet, we must bear in mind, that although readers of learned books might be diffused over the face of the land, and readers of poetry would be chiefly concentrated in the metropolis; and such persons would have no need to buy what they heard at the theatres. But then comes the question, whether Shakspeare kept possession of the theatres. And we are really humiliated by the gross want of sense which has been shown, by Malone chiefly, but also by many others, in discussing this question. From the Restoration to 1682, says Malone, no more than four plays of Shakspeare's were performed by a principal company in London. 'Such was the lamentable taste of those times, that the plays of Fletcher, Jonson, and Shirley, were much oftener exhibited than those of our author.' What cant is this ! If that taste were 'lamentable,' what are we to think of our own times, when plays a thousand times below those of Fletcher, or even of Shirley, continually displace Shakspeare ? Shakspeare would himself have exulted in finding that he gave way only to dramatists so excellent. And, as we have before observed, both then and now, it is the very familiarity with Shakspeare, which often banishes him from audiences honestly in quest of relaxation and amusement. Novelty is the very soul of such relaxation; but in our closets, when we are *not* unbending, when our minds are in a state of tension from intellectual cravings, then it is that we resort to Shakspeare : and oftentimes those who honor him most, like ourselves, are the most impatient of seeing his divine scenes disfigured by unequal representation, (good, perhaps, in a single personation, bad in all the rest;) or to hear his divine thoughts mangled in the recitation; or, (which is worst of all,) to hear them dishonored and defeated by imperfect apprehension in the audience, or by defective sympathy. Meantime, if one theatre played only four of Shakspeare's dramas, another played at least seven. But

the grossest fault of Malone is, in fancying the numerous alterations so many insults to Shakspeare, whereas they expressed as much homage to his memory as if the unaltered dramas had been retained. The substance *was* retained. The changes were merely concessions to the changing views of scenical propriety; sometimes, no doubt, made with a simple view to the revolution effected by Davenant at the Restoration, in bringing *scenes* (in the painter's sense) upon the stage; sometimes also with a view to the altered fashions of the audience during the suspensions of the action, or perhaps to the introduction of *after-pieces*, by which, of course, the time was abridged for the main performance. A volume might be written upon this subject. Meantime let us never be told, that a poet was losing, or had lost his ground, who found in his lowest depression, amongst his almost idolatrous supporters, a great king distracted by civil wars, a mighty republican poet distracted by puritanical fanaticism, the greatest successor by far of that great poet, a papist and a bigoted royalist, and finally, the leading actor of the century, who gave and reflected the ruling impulses of his age.

Note 8. Page 27.

One of the profoundest tests by which we can measure the congeniality of an author with the national genius and temper, is the degree in which his thoughts or his phrases interweave themselves with our daily conversation, and pass into the currency of the language. *Few French authors, if any, have imparted one phrase to the colloquial idiom;* with respect to Shakspeare, a large dictionary might be made of such phrases as 'win golden opinions,' 'in my mind's eye,' 'patience on a monument,' 'o'erstep the modesty of nature,' 'more honor'd in the breach than in the observance,' 'palmy state,' 'my poverty and not my will consents,' and so forth, without end. This reinforcement of the general language, by aids from the mintage of Shakspeare, had already commenced in the seventeenth century.

Note 9. Page 28.

In fact, by way of representing to himself the system or scheme of the English roads, the reader has only to imagine one great letter X, or a St. Andrew's cross, laid down from north to south,

and decussating at Birmingham. Even Coventry, which makes a slight variation for one or two roads, and so far disturbs this decussation, by shifting it eastwards, is still in Warwickshire.

Note 10. Page 34.

And probably so called by some remote ancestor who had emigrated from the forest of Ardennes, in the Netherlands, and *now* forever memorable to English ears from its proximity to Waterloo

Note 11. Page 36.

Let not the reader impute to us the gross anachronism of making an estimate for Shakspeare's days in a coin which did not exist until a century, within a couple of years, after Shakspeare's birth, and did not settle to the value of twenty-one shillings until a century after his death. The nerve of such an anachronism would lie in putting the estimate into a mouth of that age. And this is precisely the blunder into which the foolish forger of Vortigern, &c., has fallen. He does not indeed directly mention guineas; but indirectly and virtually he does, by repeatedly giving us accounts imputed to Shakspearian contemporaries, in which the sum total amounts to £5 5*s.*; or to £26 5*s.*; or, again, to £17 17*s.* 6*d.* A man is careful to subscribe £14 14*s.*, and so forth. But how could such amounts have arisen unless under a secret reference to guineas, which were not in existence until Charles II.'s reign; and, moreover, to guineas at their final settlement by law into twenty-one shillings each, which did not take place until George I.'s reign?

Note 12. Page 36.

Thomas Campbell, the poet, in his eloquent Remarks on the Life and Writings of William Shakspeare, prefixed to a popular edition of the poet's dramatic works. London, 1838.

Note 13. Page 37.

After all the assistance given to such equations between different times or different places by Sir George Shuckborough's tables, and other similar investigations, it is still a very difficult problem, complex, and, after all, merely tentative in the results, to assign the true value in such cases; not only for the obvious

reason, that the powers of money have varied in different directions with regard to different objects, and in different degrees where the direction has on the whole continued the same, but because the very objects to be taken into computation are so indeterminate, and vary so much, not only as regards century and century, kingdom and kingdom, but also, even in the same century and the same kingdom, as regards rank and rank. That which is a mere necessary to one, is a luxurious superfluity to another. And, in order to ascertain these differences, it is an indispensable qualification to have studied the habits and customs of the several classes concerned, together with the variations of those habits and customs.

NOTE 14. Page 45.

Never was the *esse quam videri* in any point more strongly discriminated than in this very point of gallantry to the female sex, as between England and France. In France, the verbal homage to woman is so excessive as to betray its real purpose, viz., that it is a mask for secret contempt. In England, little is *said;* but, in the meantime, we allow our sovereign ruler to be a woman; which in France is impossible. Even that fact is of some importance, but less so than what follows. In every country whatsoever, if any principle has a deep root in the moral feelings of the people, we may rely upon its showing itself, by a thousand evidences amongst the very lowest ranks, and in their daily intercourse, and their *undress* manners. Now in England there is, and always has been, a manly feeling, most widely diffused, of unwillingness to see labors of a coarse order, or requiring muscular exertions, thrown upon women. Pauperism, amongst other evil effects, has sometimes locally disturbed this predominating sentiment of Englishmen; but never at any time with such depth as to kill the root of the old hereditary manliness. Sometimes at this day, a gentleman, either from carelessness, or from overruling force of convenience, or from real defect of gallantry, will allow a female servant to carry his portmanteau for him; though, after all, that spectacle is a rare one. And everywhere women of all ages engage in the pleasant, nay elegant, labors of the hay-field; but in Great Britain women are never suffered to mow, which is a most athletic and exhausting labor,

nor to load a cart, nor to drive a plough or hold it. In France, on the other hand, before the Revolution, (at which period the pseudo-homage, the lip-honor, was far more ostentatiously professed towards the female sex than at present,) a Frenchman of credit, and vouching for his statement by the whole weight of his name and personal responsibility, (M. Simond, now an American citizen,) records the following abominable scene as one of no uncommon occurrence. A woman was in some provinces yoked side by side with an ass to the plough or the harrow; and M. Simond protests that it excited no horror to see the driver distributing his lashes impartially between the woman and her brute yoke-fellow. So much for the wordy pomps of French gallantry. In England, we trust, and we believe, that any man caught in such a situation, and in such an abuse of his power, (supposing the case otherwise a possible one,) would be killed on the spot.

Note 15. Page 48.

Amongst the people of humble rank in England, who only were ever asked in church, until the new-fangled systems of marriage came up within the last ten or fifteen years, during the currency of the three Sundays on which the banns were proclaimed by the clergyman from the reading desk, the young couple elect were said jocosely to be 'hanging in the bell-ropes;' alluding perhaps to the joyous peal contingent on the final completion of the marriage.

Note 16. Page 60.

In a little memoir of Milton, which the author of this article drew up some years ago for a public society, and which is printed in an abridged shape, he took occasion to remark, that Dr. Johnson, who was meanly anxious to revive this slander against Milton, as well as some others, had supposed Milton himself to have this flagellation in his mind, and indirectly to confess it, in one of his Latin poems, where, speaking of Cambridge, and declaring that he has no longer any pleasure in the thoughts of revisiting that university, he says,

> 'Nec duri libet usque minas preferre magistri,
> Cæteraque ingenio non subeunda meo.'

This last line the malicious critic would translate — 'And other things insufferable to a man of my temper.' But, as we then observed, *ingenium* is properly expressive of the *intellectual* constitution, whilst it is the *moral* constitution that suffers degradation from personal chastisement — the sense of honor, of personal dignity, of justice, &c. *Indoles* is the proper term for this latter idea ; and in using the word *ingenium*, there cannot be a doubt that Milton alluded to the dry scholastic disputations, which were shocking and odious to his fine poetical genius. If, therefore, the vile story is still to be kept up in order to dishonor a great man, at any rate let it not in future be pretended that any countenance to such a slander can be drawn from the confessions of the poet himself.

Note 17. Page 68.

And singular enough it is, as well as interesting, that Shakspeare had so entirely superseded to his own ear and memory the name Hamnet by the dramatic name of Hamlet, that in writing his will, he actually misspells the name of his friend Sadler, and calls him Hamlet. His son, however, who should have familiarized the true name to his ear, had then been dead for twenty years.

Note 18. Page 72.

'I have heard that Mr. Shakspeare was a natural wit, without any art at all. Hee frequented the plays all his younger time, but in his elder days lived at Startford, and supplied the stage with two plays every year, and for itt had an allowance so large, that he spent at the rate of £1,000 a year, as I have heard. Shakespeare, Drayton, and Ben Jonson, had a merie meeting, and it seems drank too hard, for Shakespear died of a feavour there contracted.' (Diary of the Rev. John Ward, A. M., Vicar of Stratford-upon-Avon, extending from 1648 to 1679, p. 183. Lond. 1839, 8vo.)

Note 19. Page 72.

It is naturally to be supposed that Dr. Hall would attend the sick bed of his father-in-law ; and the discovery of this gentleman's medical diary promised some gratification to our curiosity

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as to the cause of Shakspeare's death. Unfortunately, it does not commence until the year 1617.

Note 20. Page 73.

An exception ought perhaps to be made for Sir Walter Scott and for Cervantes; but with regard to all other writers, Dante, suppose, or Ariosto amongst Italians, Camoens amongst those of Portugal, Schiller amongst Germans, however ably they may have been naturalized in foreign languages, as all of those here mentioned (excepting only Ariosto) have in one part of their works been most powerfully naturalized in English, it still remains true, (and the very sale of the books is proof sufficient,) that an alien author never does take root in the general sympathies out of his own country; he takes his station in libraries, he is read by the man of learned leisure, he is known and valued by the refined and the elegant, but he is not (what Shakspeare is for Germany and America) in any proper sense a *popular* favorite.

Note 21. Page 74.

It will occur to many readers, that perhaps Homer may furnish the sole exception to this sweeping assertion. Any *but* Homer is clearly and ludicrously below the level of the competition; but even Homer, 'with his tail on,' (as the Scottish Highlanders say of their chieftains when belted by their ceremonial retinues,) musters nothing like the force which *already* follows Shakspeare; and be it remembered, that Homer sleeps and has long slept as a subject of criticism or commentary, while in Germany as well as England, and *now even in France*, the gathering of wits to the vast equipage of Shakspeare is advancing in an accelerated ratio. There is, in fact, a great delusion current upon this subject. Innumerable references to Homer, and brief critical remarks on this or that pretension of Homer, this or that scene, this or that passage, lie scattered over literature ancient and modern; but the express works dedicated to the separate service of Homer are, after all, not many. In Greek we have only the large Commentary of Eustathius, and the Scholia of Didymus, &c.; in French little or nothing before the prose translation of the seventeenth century, which Pope esteemed 'elegant,' and the skirmishings of Madame Dacier, La Motte, &c. ; in English, be-

sides the various translations and their prefaces, (which, by the way, began as early as 1555,) nothing of much importance until the elaborate preface of Pope to the Iliad, and his elaborate postscript to the Odyssey — nothing certainly before that, and very little indeed since that, except Wood's Essay on the Life and Genius of Homer. On the other hand, of the books written in illustration or investigation of Shakspeare, a very considerable library might be formed in England, and another in Germany.

Note 22. Page 76.

Apartment is here used, as the reader will observe, in its true and continental acceptation, as a division or *compartment* of a house including many rooms; a suite of chambers, but a suite which is partitioned off, (as in palaces,) not a single chamber; a sense so commonly and so erroneously given to this word in England.

Note 23. Page 78.

And hence, by parity of reason, under the opposite circumstances, under the circumstances which, instead of abolishing, most emphatically drew forth the sexual distinctions, viz., in the *comic* aspects of social intercourse, the reason that we see no women on the Greek stage; the Greek Comedy, unless when it affects the extravagant fun of farce, rejects women.

Note 24. Page 81.

It may be thought, however, by some readers, that Æschylus, in his fine phantom of Darius, has approached the English ghost. As a foreign ghost we would wish (and we are sure that our excellent readers would wish) to show every courtesy and attention to this apparition of Darius. It has the advantage of being royal, an advantage which it shares with the ghost of the royal Dane. Yet how different, how removed by a total world, from that or any of Shakspeare's ghosts! Take that of Banquo, for instance. How shadowy, how unreal, yet how real! Darius is a mere state ghost — a diplomatic ghost. But Banquo — he exists only for Macbeth; the guests do not see him, yet how solemn, how real, how heart-searching he is.

Note 25. Page 82.

Caliban has not yet been thoroughly fathomed. For all Shakspeare's great creations are like works of nature, subjects of inexhaustible study. It was this character of whom Charles I. and some of his ministers expressed such fervent admiration; and, among other circumstances, most justly they admired the new language almost with which he is endowed, for the purpose of expressing his fiendish and yet carnal thoughts of hatred to his master. Caliban is evidently not meant for scorn, but for abomination mixed with fear and partial respect. He is purposely brought into contrast with the drunken Trinculo and Stephano, with an advantageous result. He is much more intellectual than either, uses a more elevated language, not disfigured by vulgarisms, and is not liable to the low passion for plunder as they are. He is mortal, doubtless, as his 'dam' (for Shakspeare will not call her mother) Sycorax. But he inherits from her such qualities of power as a witch could be supposed to bequeath. He trembles indeed before Prospero; but that is, as we are to understand, through the moral superiority of Prospero in Christian wisdom; for when he finds himself in the presence of dissolute and unprincipled men, he rises at once into the dignity of intellectual power.

POPE

Alexander Pope, the most brilliant of all wits who have at any period applied themselves to the poetic treatment of human manners, to the selecting from the play of human character what is picturesque, or the arresting what is fugitive, was born in the city of London on the 21st[1] day of May, in the memorable year 1688; about six months, therefore, before the landing of the Prince of Orange, and the opening of the great revolution which gave the final ratification to all previous revolutions of that tempestuous century. By the 'city' of London the reader is to understand us as speaking with technical accuracy of that district, which lies within the ancient walls and the jurisdiction of the lord mayor. The parents of Pope, there is good reason to think, were of 'gentle blood,' which is the expression of the poet himself when describing them in verse. His mother was so undoubtedly; and her illustrious son, in speaking of her to Lord Harvey, at a time when any exaggeration was open to an easy refutation, and writing in a spirit most likely to provoke it, does not scruple to say, with a tone of dignified haughtiness not unbecoming the situation of a filial champion on behalf of an insulted mother, that by birth and descent she was not below that young lady, (one of the two beautiful Miss Lepels,) whom his

lordship had selected from all the choir of court beauties as the future mother of his children. Of Pope's extraction and immediate lineage for a space of two generations we know enough. Beyond that we know little. Of this little a part is dubious; and what we are disposed to receive as *not* dubious, rests chiefly on his own authority. In the prologue to his Satires, having occasion to notice the lampooners of the times, who had represented his father as 'a mechanic, a hatter, a farmer, nay a bankrupt,' he feels himself called upon to state the truth about his parents; and naturally much more so at a time when the low scurrilities of these obscure libellers had been adopted, accredited, and diffused by persons so distinguished in all points of personal accomplishment and rank as Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and Lord Harvey: '*hard as thy heart*,' was one of the lines in their joint pasquinade, '*hard as thy heart, and as thy birth obscure.*' Accordingly he makes the following formal statement: 'Mr. Pope's father was of a gentleman's family in Oxfordshire, the head of which was the Earl of Downe. His mother was the daughter of William Turner, Esq., of York. She had three brothers, one of whom was killed; another died in the service of King Charles [meaning Charles I.]; the eldest, following his fortunes, and becoming a general officer in Spain, left *her* what estate remained after the sequestrations and forfeitures of her family.' The sequestrations here spoken of were those inflicted by the commissioners for the parliament; and usually they levied a fifth, or even two fifths, according to the apparent delinquency of the parties. But in such cases two great differences arose in the treatment of

the royalists; first, that the report was colored according to the interest which a man possessed, or other private means for biassing the commissioners; secondly, that often, when money could not be raised on mortgage to meet the sequestration, it became neccessary to sell a family estate suddenly, and therefore in those times at great loss; so that a nominal fifth might be depressed by favor to a tenth, or raised by the necessity of selling to a half. And hence might arise the small dowry of Mrs. Pope, notwithstanding the family estate in Yorkshire had centred in her person. But, by the way, we see from the fact of the eldest brother having sought service in Spain, that Mrs. Pope was a Papist; not, like her husband, by conversion, but by hereditary faith. This account, as publicly thrown out in the way of challenge by Pope, was, however, sneered at by a certain Mr. Pottinger of those days, who, together with his absurd name, has been safely transmitted to posterity in connection with this single feat of having contradicted Alexander Pope. We read in a diary published by the Microcosm, '*Met a large hat, with a man under it.*' And so, here, we cannot so properly say that Mr. Pottinger brings down the contradiction to our times, as that the contradiction brings down Mr. Pottinger. 'Cousin Pope,' said Pottinger, 'had made himself out a fine pedigree, but he wondered where he got it.' And he then goes on to plead in abatement of Pope's pretensions, 'that an old maiden aunt, equally related,' (that is, standing in the same relation to himself and to the poet,) 'a great genealogist, who was always talking of her family, never mentioned this circumstance.' And again we are told, from another quarter, that the Earl of Guildford, after ex-

press investigation of this matter, 'was sure that,' amongst the descendants of the Earls of Downe, 'there was none of the name of Pope.' How it was that Lord Guildford came to have any connection with the affair, is not stated by the biographers of Pope; but we have ascertained that, by marriage with a female descendant from the Earls of Downe, he had come into possession of their English estates.

Finally, though it is rather for the honor of the Earls of Downe than of Pope to make out the connection, we must observe that Lord Guildford's testimony, *if ever given at all*, is simply negative; he had found no proofs of the connection, but he had not found any proofs to destroy it; whilst, on the other hand, it ought to be mentioned, though unaccountably overlooked, by all previous biographers, that one of Pope's anonymous enemies, who hated him personally, but was apparently master of his family history, and too honorable to belie his own convictions, expressly affirms of his own authority, and without reference to any claim put forward by Pope, that he was descended from a junior branch of the Downe family. Which testimony has a double value; first as corroborating the probability of Pope's statement viewed in the light of a fact; and, secondly, as corroborating that same statement viewed in the light of a current story, true or false, and not as a disingenuous fiction put forward by Pope to confute Lord Harvey.

It is probable to us, that the Popes, who had been originally transplanted from England to Ireland, had in the person of some cadet been re-transplanted to England; and that having in that way been disconnected from all personal recognition, and all local memorials

of the capital house, by this sort of *postliminium*, the junior branch had ceased to cherish the honor of a descent which had now divided from all direct advantage. At all events, the researches of Pope's biographers have not been able to trace him farther back in the paternal line than to his grandfather; and he (which is odd enough, considering the popery of his descendants) was a clergyman of the established church in Hampshire. This grandfather had two sons. Of the eldest nothing is recorded beyond the three facts, that he went to Oxford, that he died there, and that he spent the family estate.[2] The younger son, whose name was Alexander, had been sent when young, in some commercial character, to Lisbon;[3] and there it was, in that centre of bigotry, that he became a sincere and most disinterested Catholic. He returned to England; married a Catholic young widow; and became the father of a second Alexander Pope, *ultra Sauromatas notus et Antipodes.*

By his own account to Spence, Pope learned 'very early to read;' and writing he taught himself 'by copying from printed books;' all which seems to argue, that as an only child, with an indolent father and a most indulgent mother, he was not molested with much schooling in his infancy. Only one adventure is recorded of his childhood, viz., that he was attacked by a cow, thrown down, and wounded in the throat.

Pope escaped this disagreeable kind of vaccination without serious injury, and was not farther tormented by cows or schoolmasters until he was about eight years old, when the family priest, that is, we presume, the confessor of his parents, taught him, agreeably to the Jesuit system, the rudiments of Greek and Latin

concurrently. This priest was named Banister; and his name is frequently employed, together with other fictitious names, by way of signature to the notes in the Dunciad, an artifice which was adopted for the sake of giving a characteristic variety to the notes, according to the tone required for the illustration of the text. From his tuition Pope was at length dismissed to a Catholic school at Twyford, near Winchester. The selection of a school in this neighborhood, though certainly the choice of a Catholic family was much limited, points apparently to the old Hampshire connection of his father. Here an incident occurred which most powerfully illustrates the original and constitutional determination to satire of this irritable poet. He knew himself so accurately, that in after times, half by way of boast, half of confession, he says,

> 'But touch me, and no Minister so sore:
> Whoe'er offends, at some unlucky time
> Slides into verse and hitches in a rhyme,
> Sacred to ridicule his whole life long,
> And the sad burthen of some merry song.'

Already, it seems, in childhood he had the same irresistible instinct, victorious over the strongest sense of personal danger. He wrote a bitter satire upon the presiding pedagogue, was brutally punished for this youthful indiscretion, and indignantly removed by his parents from the school. Mr. Roscoe speaks of Pope's personal experience as necessarily unfavorable to public schools; but in reality he knew nothing of public schools. All the establishments for Papists were narrow, and suited to their political depression; and his parents were too sincerely anxious for their son's religious principles to risk the contagion of Protestant association by sending him elsewhere.

From the scene[4] of his disgrace and illiberal punishment, he passed, according to the received accounts, under the tuition of several other masters in rapid succession. But it is the less necessary to trouble the reader with their names, as Pope himself assures us, that he learned nothing from any of them. To Banister he had been indebted for such trivial elements of a schoolboy's learning as he possessed at all, excepting those which he had taught himself. And upon himself it was, and his own admirable faculties, that he was now finally thrown for the rest of his education, at an age so immature that many boys are then first entering their academic career. Pope is supposed to have been scarcely twelve years old when he assumed the office of self-tuition, and bade farewell for ever to schools and tutors.

Such a phenomenon is at any rate striking. It is the more so, under the circumstances which attended the plan, and under the results which justified its execution. It seems, as regards the plan, hardly less strange that prudent parents should have acquiesced in a scheme of so much peril to his intellectual interests, than that the son, as regards the execution, should have justified their confidence by his final success. More especially this confidence surprises us in the father. A doating mother might shut her eyes to all remote evils in the present gratification to her affections; but Pope's father was a man of sense and principle; he must have weighed the risks besetting a boy left to his own intellectual guidance; and to these risks he would allow the more weight from his own conscious defect of scholarship and inability to guide or even to accompany his son's studies. He could

neither direct the proper choice of studies; nor in any one study, taken separately, could he suggest the proper choice of books.

The case we apprehend to have been this. Alexander Pope, the elder, was a man of philosophical desires and unambitious character. Quiet and seclusion and innocence of life, — these were what he affected for himself; and that which had been found available for his own happiness, he might reasonably wish for his son. The two hinges upon which his plans may be supposed to have turned, were, first, the political degradation of his sect; and, secondly, the fact that his son was an only child. Had he been a Protestant, or had he, though a Papist, been burthened with a large family of children, he would doubtless have pursued a different course. But to him, and, as he sincerely hoped, to his son, the strife after civil honors was sternly barred. Apostasy only could lay it open. And, as the sentiments of honor and duty in this point fell in with the vices of his temperament, high principle concurring with his constitutional love of ease, we need not wonder that he should early retire from commerce with a very moderate competence, or that he should suppose the same fortune sufficient for one who was to stand in the same position. This son was from his birth deformed. That made it probable that he might not marry. If he should, and happened to have children, a small family would find an adequate provision in the patrimonial funds; and a large one at the worst could only throw him upon the same commercial exertions to which he had been obliged himself. The Roman Catholics, indeed, were just then situated as our modern Quakers are. Law to the one, as conscience

to the other, closed all modes of active employment except that of commercial industry. Either his son, therefore, would be a rustic recluse, or, like himself, he would be a merchant.

With such prospects, what need of an elaborate education? And where was such an education to be sought? At the petty establishments of the suffering Catholics, the instruction, as he had found experimentally, was poor. At the great national establishments his son would be a degraded person; one who was permanently repelled from every arena of honor, and sometimes, as in cases of public danger, was banished from the capital, deprived of his house, left defenceless against common ruffians, and rendered liable to the control of every village magistrate. To one in these circumstances solitude was the wisest position, and the best qualification, for that was an education that would furnish aids to solitary thought. No need for brilliant accomplishments to him who must never display them; forensic arts, pulpit erudition, senatorial eloquence, academical accomplishments — these would be lost to one against whom the courts, the pulpit, the senate, the universities, were closed. Nay, by possibility worse than lost; they might prove so many snares or positive bribes to apostasy. Plain English, therefore, and the high thinking of his compatriot authors, might prove the best position for the mind of an English Papist destined to seclusion.

Such are the considerations under which we read and interpret the conduct of Pope's parents; and they lead us to regard as wise and conscientious a scheme which, under ordinary circumstances, would have been pitiably foolish. And be it remembered, that to these

considerations, derived exclusively from the civil circumstances of the family, were superadded others derived from the astonishing prematurity of the individual. That boy who could write at twelve years of age the beautiful and touching stanzas on Solitude, might well be trusted with the superintendence of his own studies. And the stripling of sixteen, who could so far transcend in good sense the accomplished statesmen or men of the world with whom he afterwards corresponded, might challenge confidence for such a choice of books as would best promote the development of his own faculties.

In reality, one so finely endowed as Alexander Pope, could not easily lose his way in the most extensive or ill-digested library. And though he tells Atterbury, that at one time he abused his opportunities by reading controversial divinity, we may be sure that his own native activities, and the elasticity of his mind, would speedily recoil into a just equilibrium of study, under wider and happier opportunities. Reading, indeed, for a person like Pope, is rather valuable as a means of exciting his own energies and of feeding his own sensibilities, than for any direct acquisitions of knowledge, or for any trains of systematic research. All men are destined to devour much rubbish between the cradle and the grave; and doubtless the man who is wisest in the choice of his books, will have read many a page before he dies, that a thoughtful review would pronounce worthless. This is the fate of all men. But the reading of Pope, as a general result or measure of his judicious choice, is best justified in his writings. They show him well furnished with whatsoever he wanted for matter or for embellishment, for

argument or illustration, for example and model, or for direct and explicit imitation.

Possibly, as we have already suggested, within the range of English literature Pope might have found all that he wanted. But variety the widest has its uses; and, for the extension of his influence with the polished classes amongst whom he lived, he did wisely to add other languages; and a question has thus arisen with regard to the extent of Pope's attainments as a self-taught linguist. A man, or even a boy, of great originality, may happen to succeed best, in working his own native mines of thought, by his unassisted energies. Here it is granted that a tutor, a guide, or even a companion, may be dispensed with, and even beneficially. But in the case of foreign languages, in attaining this machinery of literature, though anomalies even here do arise, and men there are, like Joseph Scaliger, who form ther own dictionaries and grammars in the mere process of reading an unknown language, by far the major part of students will lose their time by rejecting the aid of tutors. As there has been much difference of opinion with regard to Pope's skill in languages, we shall briefly collate and bring into one focus the stray notices.

As to the French, Voltaire, who knew Pope personally, declared that he 'could hardly *read* it, and spoke not one syllable of the language.' But perhaps Voltaire might dislike Pope? On the contrary, he was acquainted with his works, and admired them to the very level of their merits. Speaking of him *after death* to Frederick of Prussia, he prefers him to Horace and Boileau, asserting that, by comparison with *them*,

> 'Pope *approfondit* ce qu'ils ont *effleuré.*
> D'un esprit plus hardi, d'un pas plus assuré,
> Il porta le flambeau dans l'abîme de l'être;
> Et l'homme *avec lui seul* apprit à se connître.
> L'art quelquefois frivole, et quelquefois divine,
> L'art des vers est dans Pope utile au genre humain.'

This is not a wise account of Pope, for it does not abstract the characteristic feature of his power ; but it is a very kind one. And of course Voltaire could not have meant any unkindness in denying his knowledge of French. But he was certainly wrong. Pope, in *his* presence, would decline to speak or to read a language of which the pronunciation was confessedly beyond him. Or, if he did, the impression left would be still worse. In fact, no man ever will pronounce or talk a language which he does not use, for some part of every day, in the real intercourse of life. But that Pope read French of an ordinary cast with fluency enough, is evident from the extensive use which he made of Madame Dacier's labors on the Illiad, and still more of La Valterie's prose translation of the Iliad. Already in the year 1718, and long before his personal knowledge of Voltaire, Pope had shown his accurate acquaintance with some voluminous French authors, in a way which, we suspect, was equally surprising and offensive to his noble correspondent. The Duke of Buckingham [5] had addressed to Pope a letter, containing some account of the controversy about Homer, which had then been recently carried on in France between La Motte and Madame Dacier. This account was delivered with an air of teaching, which was very little in harmony with its excessive shallowness. Pope, who sustained the part of pupil in this interlude, re-

plied in a manner that exhibited a knowledge of the parties concerned in the controversy much superior to that of the duke. In particular, he characterized the excellent notes upon Horace of M. Dacier, the husband, in very just terms, as distinguished from those of his conceited and half-learned wife; and the whole reply of Pope seems very much as though he had been playing off a mystification on his grace. Undoubtedly the pompous duke felt that he had caught a Tartar. Now, M. Dacier's Horace, which, with the text, fills nine volumes, Pope could not have read *except* in French; for they are not even yet translated into English. Besides, Pope read critically the French translations of his own Essay on Man, Essay on Criticism, Rape of the Lock, &c. He spoke of them as a critic; and it was at no time a fault of Pope's to make false pretensions. All readers of Pope's Satires must also recollect numerous proofs, that he had read Boileau with so much feeling of his peculiar merit, that he has appropriated and naturalized in English some of his best passages. Voltaire was, therefore, certainly wrong.

Of Italian literature, meantime, Pope knew little or nothing; and simply because he knew nothing of the language. Tasso, indeed, he admired; and, which is singular, more than Ariosto. But we believe that he had read him only in English; and it is certain that he could not take up an Italian author, either in prose or verse, for the unaffected amusement of his leisure.

Greek, we all know, has been denied to Pope, ever since he translated Homer, and chiefly in consequence of that translation. This seems at first sight unfair,

because criticism has not succeeded in fixing upon Pope any errors of ignorance. His deviations from Homer were uniformly the result of imperfect sympathy with the naked simplicity of the antique, and therefore wilful deviations, not (like those of his more pretending competitors, Addison and Tickell) pure blunders of misapprehension. But yet it is not inconsistent with this concession to Pope's merits, that we must avow our belief in his thorough ignorance of Greek when he first commenced his task. And to us it seems astonishing that nobody should have adverted to that fact as a sufficient solution, and in fact the only plausible solution, of Pope's excessive depression of spirits in the earliest stage of his labors. This depression, after he had once pledged himself to his subscribers for the fulfilment of his task, arose from, and could have arisen from nothing else than, his conscious ignorance of Greek in connection with the solemn responsibilities he had assumed in the face of a great nation. Nay, even countries as presumptuously disdainful of tramontane literature as Italy took an interest in this memorable undertaking. Bishop Berkeley found Salvini reading it at Florence; and Madame Dacier even, who read little but Greek, and certainly no English until then, condescended to study it. Pope's dejection therefore, or rather agitation (for it impressed by sympathy a tumultuous character upon his dreams, which lasted for years after the cause had ceased to operate) was perfectly natural under the explanation we have given, but not otherwise. And how did he surmount this unhappy self-distrust? Paradoxical as it may sound, we will venture to say, that with the innumerable aids for interpreting Homer

which even then existed, a man sufficiently acquainted with Latin might make a translation even critically exact. This Pope was not long in discovering. Other alleviations of his labor concurred, and in a ratio daily increasing.

The same formulæ were continually recurring, such as,

'*But him answering, thus addressed the swift-footed Achilles;*'

Or,

'*But him sternly beholding, thus spoke Agamemnon the king of men.*'

Then, again, universally the Homeric Greek, from many causes, is easy; and especially from these two: 1*st*, The simplicity of the thought, which never gathers into those perplexed knots of rhetorical condensation, which we find in the dramatic poets of a higher civilization. 2*dly*, From the constant bounds set to the expansion of the thought by the form of the metre; an advantage of verse which makes the poets so much easier to a beginner in the German language than the illimitable weavers of prose. The line or the stanza reins up the poet tightly to his theme, and will not suffer him to expatiate. Gradually, therefore, Pope came to read the Homeric Greek, but never accurately; nor did he ever read Eustathius without aid from Latin. As to any knowledge of the Attic Greek, of the Greek of the dramatists, the Greek of Plato, the Greek of Demosthenes, Pope neither had it nor affected to have it. Indeed it was no foible of Pope's, as we will repeat, to make claims which he had not, or even to dwell ostentatiously upon those which he had. And with respect to Greek in particular, there is a manuscript letter in existence from Pope to a Mr.

Bridges at Falham, which, speaking of the original Homer, distinctly records the knowledge which he had of his own imperfectness in the language.' Chapman, a most spirited translator of Homer, probably had no very critical skill in Greek; and Hobbes was, beyond all question, as poor a Grecian as he was a doggerel translator; yet in this letter Pope professes his willing submission to the 'authority' of Chapman and Hobbes, as superior to his own.

Finally, in *Latin*, Pope was a 'considerable proficient,' even by the cautious testimony of Dr. Johnson; and in this language only the doctor was an accomplished critic. If Pope had really the proficiency here ascribed to him, he must have had it already in his boyish years; for the translation from Statius, which is the principal monument of his skill, was executed *before* he was fourteen. We have taken the trouble to throw a hasty glance over it; and whilst we readily admit the extraordinary talent which it shows, as do all the juvenile essays of Pope, we cannot allow that it argues any accurate skill in Latin. The word Malĕa; as we have seen noticed by some editor, he makes Malēa; which in itself, as the name was not of common occurrence, would not have been an error worth noticing; but taken in connection with the certainty that Pope had the original line before him —

> 'Arripit ex templo Maleæ de valle resurgens,'

when not merely the scanning theoretically, but the whole rhythmus practically, to the most obtuse ear, would be annihilated by Pope's false quantity, is a blunder which serves to show his utter ignorance of prosody. But, even as a version of the sense, with

every allowance for a poet's license of compression and expansion, Pope's translation is defective, and argues an occasional inability to construe the text. For instance, at the council summoned by Jupiter, it is said that he at his first entrance seats himself upon his starry throne, but not so the inferior gods;

> 'Nec protinus ausi
> Cœlicolæ, veniam donec pater ipse sedendi
> Tranquilla jubet esse manu.'

In which passage there is a slight obscurity, from the ellipsis of the word *sedere*, or *sese locare;* but the meaning is evidently that the other gods did not presume to sit down *protinus*, that is, in immediate succession to Jupiter, and interpreting his example as a tacit license to do so, until, by a gentle wave of his hand, the supreme father signifies his express permission to take their seats. But Pope, manifestly unable to extract any sense from the passage, translates thus:

> 'At Jove's assent the deities around
> In solemn state the consistory *crown'd;*'

where at once the whole picturesque solemnity of the celestial ritual melts into the vaguest generalities. Again, at v. 178, *ruptæque vices* is translated, '*and all the ties of nature broke;*' but by *vices* is indicated the alternate reign of the two brothers, as ratified by mutual oaths, and subsequently violated by Eteocles. Other mistakes might be cited, which seem to prove that Pope, like most self-taught linguists, was a very imperfect one.[6] Pope, in short, never rose to such a point in classical literature as to read either Greek or Latin authors without effort, and for his private amusement

The result, therefore, of Pope's self-tuition appears to us, considered in the light of an attempt to acquire certain accomplishments of knowledge, a most complete failure. As a linguist, he read no language with ease; none with pleasure to himself; and none with so much accuracy as could have carried him through the most popular author with a general independence of interpreters. But, considered with a view to his particular faculties and slumbering originality of power which required perhaps the stimlation of accident to arouse them effectually, we are very much disposed to think that the very failure of his education as an artificial training was a great advantage finally for inclining his mind to throw itself, by way of indemnification, upon its native powers. Had he attained, as with better tuition he would have attained, distinguished excellence as a scholar, or as a student of science, the chances are many that he would have settled down into such studies as thousands could pursue not less successfully than he; whilst as it was, the very dissatisfaction which he could not but feel with his slender attainments, must have given him a strong motive for cultivating those impulses of original power which he felt continually stirring within him, and which were vivified into trials of competition as often as any distinguished excellence was introduced to his knowledge.

Pope's father, at the time of his birth, lived in Lombard Street;[7] a street still familiar to the public eye, from its adjacency to some of the chief metropolitan establishments, and to the English ear possessing a degree of historical importance; first, as the residence of those Lombards, or Milanese, who affiliated our

infant commerce *to* the matron splendors of the Adriatic and the Mediterranean; next, as the central resort of those jewellers, or 'goldsmiths,' as they were styled, who performed all the functions of modern bankers from the period of the parliamentary war to the rise of the Bank of England, that is, for six years after the birth of Pope; and, lastly, as the seat, until lately, of that vast Post-Office, through which, for so long a period, has passed the correspondence of all nations and languages, upon a scale unknown to any other country. In this street Alexander Pope the elder had a house, and a warehouse, we presume annexed, in which he conducted the wholesale business of a linen merchant. As soon as he had made a moderate fortune he retired from business, first to Kensington, and afterwards to Binfield, in Windsor Forest. The period of this migration is not assigned by any writer. It is probable that a prudent man would not adopt it with any prospect of having more children. But this chance might be considered as already extinguished at the birth of Pope; for though his father had then only attained his forty-fourth year, Mrs. Pope had completed her forty-eighth. It is probable, from the interval of seven days which is said to have elapsed between Pope's punishment and his removal from the school, that his parents were then living at such a distance from him as to prevent his ready communication with them, else we may be sure that Mrs. Pope would have flown on the wings of love and wrath to the rescue of her darling. Supposing, therefore, as we *do* suppose, that Mr. Bromley's school in London was the scene of his disgrace, it would appear on this argument that his parents were then living in Windsor Forest.

And this hypothesis falls in with another anecdote in Pope's life, which we know partly upon his own authority. He tells Wycherley that he had seen Dryden, and barely seen him. *Virgilium vidi tantum.* This is presumed to have been in Will's Coffee-house, whither any person in search of Dryden would of course resort; and it must have been before Pope was twelve years old, for Dryden died in 1700. Now there is a letter of Sir Charles Wogen's, stating that he first took Pope to Will's; and his words are, 'from our forest.' Consequently, at that period, when he had not completed his twelfth year, Pope was already living in the forest.

From this period, and so long as the genial spirits of youth lasted, Pope's life must have been one dream of pleasure. He tells Lord Harvey that his mother did not spoil him; but that was no doubt because there was no room for wilfulness or waywardness on either side, when all was one placid scene of parental obedience and gentle filial authority. We feel persuaded that, if not in words, in spirit and inclination, they would, in any notes they might have occasion to write, subscribe themselves 'Your dutiful parents.' And of what consequence in whose hands were the reins which were never needed? Every reader must be pleased to know that these idolizing parents lived to see their son at the very summit of his public elevation; even his father lived two years and a half after the publication of his Homer had commenced, and when his fortune was made; and his mother lived for nearly eighteen years more. What a felicity for her, how rare and how perfect to find that he, who to her maternal eyes was naturally the most perfect of human

beings, and the idol of her heart, had already been the idol of the nation before he had completed his youth. She had also another blessing not always commanded by the most devoted love; many sons there are who think it essential to manliness that they should treat their mother's doating anxiety with levity or even ridicule. But Pope, who was the model of a good son; never swerved in words, manners, or conduct, from the most respectful tenderness, or intermitted the piety of his attentions. And so far did he carry this regard for his mother's comfort, that, well knowing how she lived upon his presence or by his image, he denied himself for many years all excursions which could not be fully accomplished within the revolution of a week. And to this cause, combined with the excessive length of his mother's life, must be ascribed the fact that Pope never went abroad; not to Italy with Thomson or with Berkeley, or any of his diplomatic friends; not to Ireland, where his presence would have been hailed as a national honor; not even to France, on a visit to his admiring and admired friend Lord Bolingbroke. For as to the fear of sea-sickness, *that* did not arise until a late period of his life; and at any period would not have operated to prevent his crossing from Dover to Calais. It is possible that, in his earlier and more sanguine years, all the perfection of his filial love may not have availed to prevent him from now and then breathing a secret murmur at confinement so constant. But it is certain that, long before he passed the meridian of his life, Pope had come to view this confinement with far other thoughts. Experience had then taught him that to no man is the privilege granted of possessing more than one or two friends who are such in extrem-

.ty. By that time he had come to view his mother's death with fear and anguish. She, he knew by many a sign, would have been happy to lay down her life for his sake; but for others, even those who were the most friendly and the most constant in their attentions, he felt but too certainly that his death, or his heavy affliction, might cost them a few sighs, but would not materially disturb their peace of mind. 'It is but in a very narrow circle,' says he, in a confidential letter, 'that friendship walks in this world, and I care not to tread out of it more than I needs must; knowing well it is but to two or three, (if quite so many,) that any man's welfare or memory can be of consequence.' After such acknowledgments, we are not surprised to find him writing thus of his mother, and his fearful struggles to fight off the shock of his mother's death, at a time when it was rapidly approaching. After having said of a friend's death, 'The subject is beyond writing upon, beyond cure or ease by reason or reflection, beyond all but one thought, that it is the will of God,' he goes on thus, 'So will the death of my mother be, which now I tremble at, now resign to, now bring close to me, now set farther off; every day alters, turns me about, confuses my whole frame of mind.' There is no pleasure, he adds, which the world can give, 'equivalent to countervail either the death of one I have so long lived with, or of one I have so long lived for.' How will he comfort himself after her death? 'I have nothing left but to turn my thoughts to one comfort, the last we usually think of, though the only one we should in wisdom depend upon. I sit in her room, and she is always present before me but when I sleep. I wonder I am so well. I have shed many tears; but now I weep at nothing.'

A man, therefore, happier than Pope in his domestic relations cannot easily have lived. It is true these relations were circumscribed; had they been wider, they could not have been so happy. But Pope was equally fortunate in his social relations. What, indeed, most of all surprises us, is the courteous, flattering, and even brilliant reception which Pope found from his earliest boyhood amongst the most accomplished men of the world. Wits, courtiers, statesmen, grandees the most dignified, and men of fashion the most brilliant, all alike treated him not only with pointed kindness, but with a respect that seemed to acknowledge him as their intellectual superior. Without rank, high birth, fortune, without even a literary name, and in defiance of a deformed person, Pope, whilst yet only sixteen years of age, was caressed, and even honored; and all this with no one recommendation but simply the knowledge of his dedication to letters, and the premature expectations which he raised of future excellence. Sir William Trumbull, a veteran statesman, who had held the highest stations, both diplomatic and ministerial, made him his daily companion. Wycherley, the old *roué* of the town, a second-rate wit, but not the less jealous on that account, showed the utmost deference to one whom, as a man of fashion, he must have regarded with contempt, and between whom and himself there were nearly 'fifty good years of fair and foul weather.' Cromwell,[8] a fox-hunting country gentleman, but uniting with that character the pretensions of a wit, and affecting also the reputation of a rake, cultivated his regard with zeal and conscious inferiority. Nay, which never in any other instance happened to the most fortunate poet, his very inaugural

essays in verse were treated, not as prelusive efforts of auspicious promise, but as finished works of art, entitled to take their station amongst the literature of the land; and in the most worthless of all his poems, Walsh, an established authority, and whom Dryden pronounced the ablest critic of the age, found proofs of equality with Virgil.

The literary correspondence with these gentlemen is interesting, as a model of what once passed for fine letter-writing. Every nerve was strained to outdo each other in carving all thoughts into a filagree work of rhetoric; and the amœbæan contest was like that between two village cocks from neighboring farms endeavoring to overthrow each other. To us, in this age of purer and more masculine taste, the whole scene takes the ludicrous air of old and young fops dancing a minuet with each other, practising the most elaborate grimaces, sinkings and risings the most awful, bows the most overshadowing, until plain walking, running, or the motions of natural dancing, are thought too insipid for endurance. In this instance the taste had perhaps really been borrowed from France, though often enough we impute to France what is the native growth of all minds placed in similar circumstances. Madame de Sevigné's Letters were really models of grace. But Balzac, whose letters, however, are not without interest, had in some measure formed himself upon the truly magnificent rhetoric of Pliny and Seneca. Pope and his correspondents, meantime, degraded the dignity of rhetoric by applying it to trivial commonplaces of compliment; whereas Seneca applied it to the grandest themes which life or contemplation can supply. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu,

on first coming amongst the wits of the day, naturally adopted their style. She found this sort of *euphuism* established; and it was not for a very young woman to oppose it. But her masculine understanding and powerful good sense, shaken free, besides, from all local follies by travels and extensive commerce with the world, first threw off these glittering chains of affectation. Dean Swift, by the very constitution of his mind, plain, sinewy, nervous, and courting only the strength that allies itself with homeliness, was always indisposed to this mode of correspondence. And, finally, Pope himself, as his earlier friends died off, and his own understanding acquired strength, laid it aside altogether. One reason doubtless was, that he found it too fatiguing; since in this way of letter-writing he was put to as much expense of wit in amusing an individual correspondent, as would for an equal extent have sufficed to delight the whole world. A funambulist may harass his muscles and risk his neck on the tight-rope, but hardly to entertain his own family. Pope, however, had another reason for declining this showy system of fencing; and strange it is that he had not discovered this reason from the very first. As life advanced, it happened unavoidably that real business advanced; the careless condition of youth prompted no topics, or at least prescribed none, but such as were agreeable to the taste, and allowed of an ornamental coloring. But when downright business occurred, exchequer bills to be sold, meetings to be arranged, negotiations confided, difficulties to be explained, here and there by possibility a jest or two might be scattered, a witty illusion thrown in, or a sentiment interwoven; but for the main body of the case, t neithe•

could receive any ornamental treatment, nor if, by any effort of ingenuity, it *had*, could it look otherwise than silly and unreasonable :

'Ornari res ipsa negat, contenta doceri.'

Pope's idleness, therefore, on the one hand, concurring with good sense and the necessities of business on the other, drove him to quit his gay rhetoric in letter-writing. But there are passages surviving in his correspondence which indicate, that, after all, had leisure and the coarse perplexities of life permitted it, he still looked with partiality upon his youthful style, and cherished it as a first love. But in this harsh world, as the course of true love, so that of rhetoric, never did run smooth ; and thus it happened that, with a lingering farewell, he felt himself forced to bid it adieu. Strange that any man should think his own sincere and confidential overflowings of thought and feeling upon books, men, and public affairs, less valuable in a literary view than the legerdemain of throwing up bubbles into the air for the sake of watching their prismatic hues, like an Indian juggler with his cups and balls. We of this age, who have formed our notions of epistolary excellence from the chastity of Gray's, the brilliancy of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's during her later life, and the mingled good sense and fine feelings of Cowper's, value only those letters of Pope which he himself thought of inferior value. And even with regard to these, we may say that there is a great mistake made ; the best of those later letters between Pope and Swift, &c., are not in themselves at all superior to the letters of sensible and accomplished women, such as leave every town in the island by

every post. Their chief interest is a derivative one; we are pleased with any letter, good or bad, which relates to men of such eminent talent; and sometimes the subjects discussed have a separate interest for themselves. But as to the quality of the discussion, apart from the person discussing and the thing discussed, so trivial is the value of these letters in a large proportion, that we cannot but wonder at the preposterous value which was set upon them by the writers.[9] Pope especially ought not to have his ethereal works loaded by the mass of trivial prose which is usually attached to them.

This correspondence, meantime, with the wits of the time, though one mode by which, in the absence of reviews, the reputation of an author was spread, did not perhaps serve the interests of Pope so effectually as the poems which in this way he circulated in those classes of English society whose favor he chiefly courted. One of his friends, the truly kind and accomplished Sir William Trumbull, served him in that way, and perhaps in another eventually even more important. The library of Pope's father was composed exclusively of polemical divinity, a proof, by the way, that he was not a blind convert to the Roman Catholic faith; or, if he was so originally, had reviewed the grounds of it, and adhered to it after strenuous study. In this dearth of books at his own home, and until he was able to influence his father in buying more extensively, Pope had benefited by the loans of his friends; amongst whom it is probable that Sir William, as one of the best scholars of the whole, might assist him most. He certainly offered him the most touching compliment, as it was also the wisest and most paternal

counsel, when he besought him as one *goddess-born*, to quit the convivial society of deep drinkers :

'Heu, fuge nate dea, teque his, ait, eripe malis.'

With these aids from friends of rank, and his way thus laid open to public favor, in the year 1709 Pope first came forward upon the stage of literature. The same year which terminated his legal minority introduced him to the public. *Miscellanies* in those days were almost periodical repositories of fugitive verse. Tonson happened at this time to be publishing one of some extent, the sixth volume of which offered a sort of ambush to the young aspirant of Windsor Forest, from which he might watch the public feeling. The volume was opened by Mr. Ambrose Philips, in the character of pastoral poet ; and in the same character, but stationed at the end of the volume, and thus covered by his bucolic leader, as a soldier to the rear by the file in advance, appeared Pope ; so that he might win a little public notice, without too much seeming to challenge it. This half-clandestine emersion upon the stage of authorship, and his furtive position, are both mentioned by Pope as accidents, but as accidents in which he rejoiced, and not improbably accidents which Tonson had arranged with a view to his satisfaction.

It must appear strange that Pope at twenty-one should choose to come forward for the first time with a work composed at sixteen. A difference of five years at that stage of life is of more effect than of twenty at a later ; and his own expanding judgment could hardly fail to inform him, that his Pastorals were by far the worst of his works. In reality, let us not deny, that had Pope never written any thing else, his name would

not have been known as a name even of promise, but would probably have been redeemed from oblivion by some satirist or writer of a Dunciad. Were a man to meet with such a nondescript monster as the following, viz., '*Love out of Mount Ætna by Whirlwind,*' he would suppose himself reading the Racing Calendar. Yet this hybrid creature is one of the many zoölogical monsters to whom the Pastorals introduce us:

> 'I know thee, love! on foreign mountains bred,
> Wolves gave thee suck, and savage tigers fed.
> Thou wert from Ætna's burning entrails torn,
> Got by fierce whirlwinds, and in thunder born.'

But the very names 'Damon' and 'Strephon,' 'Phillis' and 'Delia,' are rank with childishness. Arcadian life is, at the best, a feeble conception, and rests upon the false principle of crowding together all the luscious sweets of rural life, undignified by the danger which attends pastoral life in our climate, and unrelieved by shades, either moral or physical. And the Arcadia of Pope's age was the spurious Arcadia of the opera theatre, and, what is worse, of the French opera.

The hostilities which followed between these rival wooers of the pastoral muse are well known. Pope, irritated at what he conceived the partiality shown to Philips in the Guardian, pursued the review ironically, and, whilst affecting to load his antagonist with praises draws into pointed relief some of his most flagrant faults. The result, however, we cannot believe. That all the wits, except Addison, were duped by the irony, is quite impossible. Could any man of sense mistake for praise the remark, that Philips had imitated '*every* line of Strada;' that he had introduced wolves into England, and proved himself the first of gardeners by

making his flowers 'blow all in the same season.' Or, suppose those passages unnoticed, could the broad sneer escape him, where Pope taxes the other writer (viz., himself) with having deviated 'into downright poetry;' or the outrageous ridicule of Philips's style, as setting up for the ideal type of the pastoral style, the quotation from Gay, beginning,

> 'Rager, go vetch the kee, or else the zun
> Will quite bego before ch' 'avs half a don!'

Philips is said to have resented this treatment by threats of personal chastisement to Pope, and even hanging up a rod at Button's coffee-house. We may be certain that Philips never disgraced himself by such ignoble conduct. If the public indeed were universally duped by the paper, what motive had Philips for resentment? Or, in any case, what plea had he for attacking Pope, who had not come forward as the author of the essay? But, from Pope's confidential account of the matter, we know that Philips saw him daily, and never offered him 'any indecorum;' though, for some cause or other, Pope pursued Philips with virulence through life.

In the year 1711, Pope published his Essay on Criticism, which some people have very unreasonably fancied his best performance; and in the same year his Rape of the Lock, the most exquisite monument of playful fancy that universal literature offers. It wanted, however, as yet, the principle of its vitality, in wanting the machinery of sylphs and gnomes, with which addition it was first published in 1714.

In the year 1712, Pope appeared again before the public as the author of the Temple of Fame, and the Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady. Much

speculation has arisen on the question concerning the name of this lady, and the more interesting question concerning the nature of the persecutions and misfortunes which she suffered. Pope appears purposely to decline answering the questions of his friends upon that point; at least the questions have reached us, and the answers have not. Joseph Warton supposed himself to have ascertained four facts about her: that her name was Wainsbury; that she was deformed in person; that she retired into a convent from some circumstances connected with an attachment to a young man of inferior rank; and that she killed herself, not by a sword, as the poet insinuates, but by a halter. As to the latter statement, it may very possibly be true; such a change would be a very slight exercise of the poet's privileges. As to the rest, there are scarcely grounds enough for an opinion. Pope certainly speaks of her under the name of Mrs. (*i. e* Miss) W——, which at least argues a poetical exaggeration in describing her as a being 'that once had *titles*, honor, wealth, and fame;' and he may as much have exaggerated her pretensions to beauty. It is indeed noticeable, that he speaks simply of her *decent* limbs, which, in any English use of the word, does not imply much enthusiasm of praise. She appears to have been the niece of a Lady A——; and Mr. Craggs, afterwards secretary of state, wrote to Lady A—— on her behalf, and otherwise took an interest in her fate. As to her being a relative of the Duke of Buckingham's, that rests upon a mere conjectural interpretation applied to a letter of that nobleman's. But all things about this unhappy lady are as yet enveloped in mystery. And not the least part of the

mystery is a letter of Pope's to a Mr. C——, bearing date 1732, that is, just twenty years after the publication of the poem, in which Pope, in a manly tone, justifies himself for his estrangement, and presses against his unknown correspondent the very blame which he had applied generally to the kinsman of the poor victim in 1712. Now, unless, there is some mistake in the date, how are we to explain this gentleman's long lethargy, and his sudden sensibility to Pope's anathema, with which the world has resounded for twenty years?

Pope had now established his reputation with the public as the legitimate successor and heir to the poetical supremacy of Dryden. His Rape of the Lock was unrivalled in ancient or modern literature, and the time had now arrived when, instead of seeking to extend his fame, he might count upon a pretty general support in applying what he had already established to the promotion of his own interest. Accordingly, in the autumn of 1713, he formed a final resolution of undertaking a new translation of the Iliad. It must be observed, that already in 1709, concurrently with his Pastorals, he had published specimens of such a translation; and these had been communicated to his friends some time before. In particular, Sir William Trumbull, on the 9th of April, 1708, urged upon Pope a complete translation of both Iliad and Odyssey. Defective skill in the Greek language, exaggeration of the difficulties, and the timidity of a writer as yet unknown, and not quite twenty years old, restrained Pope for five years and more. What he had practised as a sort of *bravura*, for a single effort of display, he recoiled from as a

daily task to be pursued through much toil, and a considerable section of his life. However, he dallied with the purpose, starting difficulties in the temper of one who wishes to hear them undervalued ; until at length Sir Richard Steele determined him to the undertaking, a fact overlooked by the biographer, but which is ascertained by Ayre's account of that interview between Pope and Addison, probably in 1716, which sealed the rupture between them. In the autumn of 1713, he made his design known amongst his friends. Accordingly, on the 21st of October, we have Lord Lansdown's letter, expressing his great pleasure at the communication ; on the 26th we have Addison's letter encouraging him to the task ; and in November of the same year occurs the amusing scene so graphically described by Bishop Kennet, when Dean Swift presided in the conversation, and, amongst other indications of his conscious authority, 'instructed a young nobleman, that the best poet in England was Mr. Pope, who had *begun* a translation of Homer into English verse, for which he must have them all subscribe ; for,' says he, '*the author shall not begin to print until I have a thousand guineas for him.*'

If this were the extent of what Swift anticipated from the work, he fell miserably below the result. But, perhaps, he spoke only of a cautionary *arrha* or earnest. As this was unquestionably the greatest literary labor, as to profit, ever executed, not excepting the most lucrative of Sir Walter Scott's, if due allowance be made for the altered value of money, and if we consider the Odyssey as forming part of the labor, it may be right to state the particulars of Pope's contract with Lintot.

The number of subscribers to the Iliad was 574, and the number of copies subscribed for was 654. The work was to be printed in six quarto volumes; and the subscription was a guinea a volume. Consequently by the subscription Pope obtained six times 654 guineas, or £4218 6*s*., (for the guinea then passed for 21*s*. 6*d*.); and for the copyright of each volume Lintot offered £200, consequently £1200 for the whole six; so that from the Iliad the profit exactly amounted to £5310 16*s*. Of the Odyssey, 574 copies were subscribed for. It was to be printed in five quarto volumes, and the subscription was a guinea a volume. Consequently by the subscription Pope obtained five times 574 guineas, or £3085 5*s*.; and for the copyright Lintot offered £600. The total sum received, therefore, by Pope, on account of the Odyssey, was £3685 5*s*. But in this instance he had two coadjutors, Broome and Fenton; between them they translated twelve books, leaving twelve to Pope. The notes also were compiled by Broome; but the postscript to the notes was written by Pope. Fenton received £300, Broome £500. Such at least is Warton's account, and more probable than that of Ruffhead, who not only varies the proportions, but increases the whole sum given to the assistants by £100. Thus far we had followed the guidance of mere probabilities, as they lie upon the face of the transaction. But we have since detected a written statement of Pope's, unaccountably overlooked by the biographers, and serving of itself to show how negligently they have read the works of their illustrious subject. The statement is entitled to the fullest attention and confidence, not being a hasty or casual notice of the transaction, but pointedly shaped

to meet a calumnious rumor against Pope in his character of paymaster; as if he who had found so much liberality from publishers in his own person, were niggardly or unjust as soon as he assumed those relations to others. Broome, it was alleged, had expressed himself dissatisfied with Pope's remuneration. Perhaps he had. For he would be likely to frame his estimate for his own services from the scale of Pope's reputed gains; and those gains would, at any rate, be enormously exaggerated, as uniformly happens where there is a basis of the marvellous to begin with. And, secondly, it would be natural enough to assume the previous result from the Iliad as a fair standard for computation; but in this, as we know, all parties found themselves disappointed, and Broome had the less right to murmur at this, since the agreement with himself as chief journeyman in the job was one main cause of the disappointment. There was also another reason why Broome should be less satisfied than Fenton. Verse for verse, any one thousand lines of a translation so purely mechanical might stand against any other thousand; and so far the equation of claims was easy. A book-keeper, with a pen behind his ear, and Cocker's Golden Rule open before him, could do full justice to Mr. Broome *as a poet* every Saturday night. But Broome had a separate account current for pure prose against Pope. One he had in conjunction with Fenton for verses delivered on the premises at so much per hundred, on which there could be no demur, except as to the allowance for tare and tret as a discount in favor of Pope. But the prose account, the account for notes, requiring very various degrees of reading and research, allowed of no such easy

equation. *There* it was, we conceive, that Broome's discontent arose. Pope, however, declares that he had given him £500, thus confirming the proportions of Warton against Ruffhead, (that is, in effect, Warburton,) and some other advantages which were not in money, nor deductions at all from his own money profits, but which may have been worth so much money to Broome, as to give some colorable truth to Ruffhead's allegation of an additional £100. In direct money, it remains certain that Fenton had three, and Broome five hundred pounds. It follows, therefore, that for the Iliad and Odyssey jointly he received a sum of £8996 1*s*., and paid for assistance £800, which leaves to himself a clear sum of £8196 1*s*. And, in fact, his profits ought to be calculated without deduction, since it was his own choice, from indolence, to purchase assistance.

The Iliad was commenced about October, 1713. In the summer of the following year he was so far advanced as to begin making arrangements with Lintot for the printing; and the first two books, in manuscript, were put into the hands of Lord Halifax. In June, 1715, between the 10th and 28th, the subscribers received their copies of the first volume; and in July Lintot began to publish that volume generally. Some readers will inquire, who paid for the printing and paper, &c.? All this expense fell upon Lintot, for whom Pope was superfluously anxious. The sagacious bookseller understood what he was about; and, when a pirated edition was published in Holland, he counteracted the injury by printing a cheap edition, of which 7500 copies were sold in a few weeks; an extraordinary proof of the extended interest in literature. The

second, third, and fourth volumes of the Iliad, each containing, like the first, four books, were published successively in 1716, 1717, 1718; and in 1720, Pope completed the work by publishing the fifth volume, containing five books, and the sixth, containing the last three, with the requisite supplementary apparatus.

The Odyssey was commenced in 1723, (not 1722, as Mr. Roscoe virtually asserts at p. 259,) and the publication of it was finished in 1725. The sale, however, was much inferior to that of the Iliad; for which more reasons than one might be assigned. But there can be no doubt that Pope himself depreciated the work, by his undignified arrangements for working by subordinate hands. Such a process may answer in sculpture, because there a quantity of rough-hewing occurs, which can no more be improved by committing it to a Phidias, than a common shop-bill could be improved in its arithmetic by Sir Isaac Newton. But in literature such arrangements are degrading; and above all, in a work which was but too much exposed already to the presumption of being a mere effort of mechanic skill, or (as Curll said to the House of Lords) '*a knack;*' it was deliberately helping forward that idea to let off parts of the labor. Only think of Milton letting off by contract to the lowest offer, and to be delivered by such a day, (for which good security to be found,) six books of Paradise Lost. It is true the great dramatic authors were often *collaborateurs* but their case was essentially different. The loss, however, fell not upon Pope, but upon Lintot, who, on this occasion, was out of temper, and talked rather broadly of prosecution. But that was out of the question. Pope had acted indiscreetly, but nothing could

be alleged against his honor ; for he had expressly warned the public, that he did not, as in the other case, profess *to translate*, but to *undertake*[10] *a translation* of the Odyssey. Lintot, however, was no loser, absolutely, though he might be so in relation to his expectations ; on the contrary, he grew rich, bought land, and became sheriff of the county in which his estates lay.

We have pursued the Homeric labors uninterruptedly from their commencement in 1713, till their final termination in 1725, a period of twelve years or nearly ; because this was the task to which Pope owed the dignity, if not the comforts of his life, since it was this which enabled him to decline a pension from all administrations, and even from his friend Craggs, the secretary, to decline the express offer of £300 per annum. Indeed Pope is always proud to own his obligations to Homer. In the interval, however, between the Iliad and the Odyssey, Pope listened to proposals made by Jacob Tonson, that he should revise an edition of Shakspeare. For this, which was in fact the first attempt at establishing the text of the mighty poet, Pope obtained but little money, and still less reputation. He received, according to tradition, only £217 12*s*. for his trouble of collation, which must have been considerable, and some other trifling editorial labor. And the opinion of all judges, from the first so unfavorable as to have depreciated the money-value of the book enormously perhaps from a prepossession of the public mind against the fitness of Pope for executing the dull labors of revision, has ever since pronounced this work the very worst edition in existence. For the edition we have little to plead ; but for

the editor it is but just to make three apologies. In the *first* place, he wrote a brilliant preface, which, although (like other works of the same class) too much occupied in displaying his own ability, and too often, for the sake of an effective antithesis, doing deep injustice to Shakspeare, yet undoubtedly, as a whole, extended his fame, by giving the sanction and countersign of a great wit to the national admiration. *Secondly*, as Dr. Johnson admits, Pope's failure pointed out the right road to his successors. *Thirdly*, even in this failure it is but fair to say, that in a graduated scale of merit, as distributed amongst the long succession of editors through that century, Pope holds a rank proportionable to his age. For the year 1720, he is no otherwise below Theobald, Hanmer, Capell, Warburton, or even Johnson, than as they are successively below each other, and all of them as to accuracy below Steevens, as he again was below Malone and Reed.

The gains from Shakspeare would hardly counterbalance the loss which Pope sustained this year from the South Sea Bubble. One thing, by the way, is still unaccountably neglected by writers on this question. How it was that the great Mississippi Bubble, during the Orleans regency in Paris, should have happened to coincide with that of London. If this were accident, how marvellous that the same insanity should possess the two great capitals of Christendom in the same year! If, again, it were not accident, but due to some common cause, why is not that cause explained? Pope to his nearest friends never stated the amount of his loss. The biographers report that at one time his stock was worth from twenty to thirty thousand pounds

But that was quite impossible. It is true, that as the stock rose at one time a thousand per cent., this would not imply on Pope's part an original purchase beyond twenty-five hundred pounds or thereabouts. But Pope has furnished an argument against *that*, which we shall improve. He quotes more than once, as applicable to his own case, the old proverbial riddle of Hesiod, πλεον ἡμισυ παντος, *the half is more than the whole.* What did he mean by that? We understand it thus: That between the selling and buying, the variations had been such as to sink his shares to one half of the price they had once reached, but, even at that depreciation, to leave him richer on selling out than he had been at first. But the half of £25,000 would be a far larger sum than Pope could have ventured to risk upon a fund confessedly liable to daily fluctuation. £3000 would be the utmost he could risk; in which case the half of £25,000 would have left him so very much richer, that he would have proclaimed his good fortune as an evidence of his skill and prudence. Yet, on the contrary, he wished his friends to understand at times that he had lost. But his friends forgot to ask one important question: Was the word *loss* to be understood in relation to the imaginary and nominal wealth which he once possessed, or in relation to the absolute sum invested in the South Sea fund? The truth is, Pope practised on this, as on other occasions, a little finessing, which is the chief foible in his character. His object was, that, according to circumstances, he might vindicate his own freedom from the common mania, in case his enemies should take that handle for attacking him; or might have it in his power to plead poverty, and to account for it, in case he should ever

accept that pension which had been so often tendered but never sternly rejected.

In 1723 Pope lost one of his dearest friends, Bishop Atterbury, by banishment; a sentence most justly incurred, and mercifully mitigated by the hostile Whig government. On the bishop's trial a circumstance occurred to Pope which flagrantly corroborated his own belief in his natural disqualification for public life. He was summoned as an evidence on his friend's behalf. He had but a dozen words to say, simply explaining the general tenor of his lordship's behavior at Bromley, and yet, under this trivial task, though supported by the enthusiasm of his friendship, he broke down. Lord Bolingbroke, returning from exile, met the bishop at the sea-side; upon which it was wittily remarked that they were 'exchanged.' Lord Bolingbroke supplied to Pope the place, or perhaps more than supplied the place, of the friend he had lost; for Bolingbroke was a free-thinker, and so far more entertaining to Pope, even whilst partially dissenting, than Atterbury, whose clerical profession laid him under restraints of decorum, and latterly, there is reason to think, of conscience.

In 1725, on closing the Odyssey, Pope announces his intention to Swift of quitting the labors of a translator, and thenceforwards applying himself to original composition. This resolution led to the Essay on Man, which appeared soon afterwards; and, with the exception of two labors, which occupied Pope in the interval between 1726 and 1729, the rest of his life may properly be described as dedicated to the further extension of that Essay. The two works which he interposed were a collection of the fugitive papers, whether

prose or verse, which he and Dean Swift had scattered amongst their friends at different periods of life. The avowed motive for this publication, and, in fact, the secret motive, as disclosed in Pope's confidential letters, was to make it impossible thenceforwards for piratical publishers like Curll. Both Pope and Swift dreaded the malice of Curll in case they should die before him. It was one of Curll's regular artifices to publish a heap of trash on the death of any eminent man, under the title of his Remains; and in allusion to that practice, it was that Arbuthnot most wittily called Curll 'one of the new terrors of death.' By publishing *all*, Pope would have disarmed Curll beforehand; and *that* was in fact the purpose; and that plea only could be offered by two grave authors, one forty, the other sixty years old, for reprinting *jeux d'esprit*, that never had any other apology than the youth of their authors. Yet, strange to say, after all, some were omitted; and the omission of one opened the door to Curll as well as that of a score. Let Curll have once inserted the narrow end of the wedge, he would soon have driven it home.

This Miscellany, however, in three volumes, (published in 1727, but afterwards increased by a fourth in 1732,) though in itself a trifling work, had one vast consequence. It drew after it swarms of libels and lampoons, levelled almost exclusively at Pope, although the cipher of the joint authors stood entwined upon the title-page. These libels in *their* turn produced a second reaction; and, by stimulating Pope to effectual anger, eventually drew forth, for the everlasting admiration of posterity, the very greatest of Pope's works; a monument of satirical power the greatest which man

has produced, not excepting the MacFleckno of Dryden, namely, the immortal Dunciad.

In October of the year 1727, this poem, in its original form, was completed. Many editions, not spurious altogether, nor surreptitious, but with some connivance, not yet explained, from Pope, were printed in Dublin and in London. But the first quarto and acknowledged edition was published in London early in '1728–9,' as the editors choose to write it, that is, (without perplexing the reader,) in 1729. On March 12th of which year it was presented by the prime minister, Sir Robert Walpole, to the king and queen at St. James's.

Like a hornet, who is said to leave his sting in the wound, and afterwards to languish away, Pope felt so greatly exhausted by the efforts connected with the Dunciad, (which are far greater, in fact, than all his Homeric labors put together,) that he prepared his friends to expect for the future only an indolent companion and a hermit. Events rapidly succeeded which tended to strengthen the impression he had conceived of his own decay, and certainly to increase his disgust with the world. In 1732 died his friend Atterbury; and on December the 7th of the same year Gay, the most unpretending of all the wits whom he knew, and the one with whom he had at one time been domesticated, expired, after an illness of three days, which Dr. Arbuthnot declares to have been 'the most precipitate' he ever knew. But in fact Gay had long been decaying from the ignoble vice of too much and too luxurious eating. Six months after this loss, which greatly affected Pope, came the last deadly wound which this life could inflict, in the death of his mother

She had for some time been in her dotage, and recognized no face but that of her son, so that her death was not unexpected; but that circumstance did not soften the blow of separation to Pope. She died on the 7th of June, 1733, being then ninety-three years old. Three days after, writing to Richardson, the painter, for the purpose of urging him to come down and take her portrait before the coffin was closed, he says, 'I thank God, her death was as easy as her life was innocent; and as it cost her not a groan, nor even a sigh, there is yet upon her countenance such an expression of tranquillity,' that 'it would afford the finest image of a saint expired that ever painting drew. Adieu, may you die as happily.' The funeral took place on the 11th; Pope then quitted the house, unable to support the silence of her chamber, and did not return for months, nor in fact ever reconciled himself to the sight of her vacant apartment.

Swift also he had virtually lost for ever. In April, 1727, this unhappy man had visited Pope for the last time. During this visit occurred the death of George I. Great expectations arose from that event amongst the Tories, in which, of course, Swift shared. It was reckoned upon as a thing of course that Walpole would be dismissed. But this bright gleam of hope proved as treacherous as all before; and the anguish of this final disappointment perhaps it was which brought on a violent attack of Swift's constitutional malady. On the last of August he quitted Pope's house abruptly, concealed himself in London, and finally quitted it, as stealthily as he had before quitted Twickenham, for Ireland, never more to return. He left a most affectionate letter for Pope; but his afflic-

tion and his gloomy anticipations of insanity, were too oppressive to allow of his seeking a personal interview.

Pope might now describe himself pretty nearly as *ultimus suorum;* and if he would have friends in future, he must seek them, as he complains bitterly, almost amongst strangers and another generation. This sense of desolation may account for the acrimony which too much disfigures his writings henceforward. Between 1732 and 1740, he was chiefly engaged in satires, which uniformly speak a high moral tone in the midst of personal invective; or in poems directly philosophical, which almost as uniformly speak the bitter tone of satire in the midst of dispassionate ethics. His Essay on Man was but one link in a general course which he had projected of moral philosophy, here and there pursuing his themes into the fields of metaphysics, but no farther in either field of morals or metaphysics than he could make compatible with a poetical treatment. These works, however, naturally entangled him in feuds of various complexions with people of very various pretensions; and to admirers of Pope so fervent as we profess ourselves, it is painful to acknowledge that the dignity of his latter years, and the becoming tranquillity of increasing age, are sadly disturbed by the petulance and the tone of irritation which, alike to those in the wrong and in the right, inevitably besiege all personal disputes. He was agitated, besides, by a piratical publication of his correspondence. This emanated, of course, from the den of Curll, the universal robber and '*blatant beast*' of those days; and, besides the injury offered to his feelings by exposing some youthful sallies which he wished to have suppressed, it drew upon him a far

more disgraceful imputation, most assuredly unfounded, but accredited by Dr. Johnson, and consequently in full currency to this day, of having acted collusively with Curll, or at least through Curll, for the publication of what he wished the world to see, but could not else have devised any decent pretext for exhibiting. The disturbance of his mind on this occasion led to a circular request, dispersed among his friends, that they would return his letters. All complied except Swift. He only delayed, and in fact shuffled. But it is easy to read in his evasions, and Pope, in spite of his vexation, read the same tale, viz., that, in consequence of his recurring attacks and increasing misery, he was himself the victim of artifices amongst those who surrounded him. What Pope apprehended happened. The letters were all published in Dublin and in London, the originals being then only returned when they had done their work of exposure.

Such a tenor of life, so constantly fretted by petty wrongs, or by leaden insults, to which only the celebrity of their object lent force or wings, allowed little opportunity to Pope for recalling his powers from angry themes, and converging them upon others of more catholic philosophy. To the last he continued to conceal vipers beneath his flowers ; or rather, speaking proportionately to the case, he continued to sheath amongst the gleaming but innocuous lightnings of his departing splendors, the thunderbolts which blasted for ever. His last appearance was his greatest. In 1742 he published the fourth book of the Dunciad ; to which it has with much reason been objected, that it stands in no obvious relation to the other three, but which, taken as a separate whole, is by far the most brilliant and the

weightiest of his works. Pope was aware of the *hiatus* between this last book and the rest, on which account he sometimes called it the greater Dunciad; and it would have been easy for him, with a shallow Warburtonian ingenuity to invent links that might have satisfied a mere *verbal* sense of connection. But he disdained this puerile expedient. The fact was, and could not be disguised from any penetrating eye, that the poem was not a pursuit of the former subjects; it had arisen spontaneously at various times, by looking at the same general theme of dulness, (which, in Pope's sense, includes all aberrations of the intellect, nay, even any defective equilibrium amongst the faculties,) under a different angle of observation, and from a different centre. In this closing book, not only bad authors, as in the other three, but all abuses of science or antiquarian knowledge, or connoisseurship in the arts, are attacked. Virtuosi, medalists, butterfly-hunters, florists, erring metaphysicians, &c., are all pierced through and through as with the shafts of Apollo. But the imperfect plan of the work as to its internal economy, no less than its exterior relations, is evident in many places; and in particular the whole catastrophe of the poem, if it can be so called, is linked to the rest by a most insufficient incident. To give a closing grandeur to his work, Pope had conceived the idea of representing the earth as lying universally under the incubation of one mighty spirit of dulness; a sort of millennium, as we may call it, for ignorance, error, and stupidity. This would take leave of the reader with effect; but how was it to be introduced? at what era? under what exciting cause? As to the eras, Pope could not settle that; unless it

were a *future* era, the description of it could not be delivered as a prophecy; and, not being prophetic, it would want much of its grandeur. Yet *as* a part of futurity, how is it connected with our present times? Do they and their pursuits lead to it as a possibility, or as a contingency upon certain habits which we have it in our power to eradicate, (in which case this vision of dulness has a *practical* warning,) or is it a mere necessity, one amongst the many changes attached to the cycles of human destiny, or which chance brings round with the revolutions of its wheel? All this Pope could not determine; but the exciting cause he *has* determined, and it is preposterously below the effect. The goddess of dulness yawns; and her yawn, which, after all, should rather express the fact and state of universal dulness than its cause, produces a change over all nations tantamount to a long eclipse. Meantime, with all its defects of plan, the poem, as to execution, is superior to all which Pope has done; the composition is much superior to that of the Essay on Man, and more profoundly poetic. The parodies drawn from Milton, as also in the former books, have a beauty and effect which cannot be expressed; and if a young lady wished to cull for her album a passage from all Pope's writings, which, without a trace of irritation or acrimony, should yet present an exquisite gem of independent beauty, she could not find another passage equal to the little story of the florist and the butterfly-hunter. They plead their cause separately before the throne of dulness; the florist telling how he had reared a superb carnation, which, in honor of the queen, he called Caroline, when his enemy, pursuing a butterfly which settled on the carnation, in securing his

own object, had destroyed that of the plaintiff. The defendant replies with equal beauty; and it may certainly be affirmed, that, for brilliancy of coloring and the art of poetical narration, the tale is not surpassed by any in the language.

This was the last effort of Pope worthy of separate notice. He was now decaying rapidly, and sensible of his own decay. His complaint was a dropsy of the chest, and he knew it to be incurable. Under these circumstances, his behavior was admirably philosophical. He employed himself in revising and burnishing all his later works, as those upon which he wisely relied for his reputation with future generations. In this task he was assisted by Dr. Warburton, a new literary friend, who had introduced himself to the favorable notice of Pope about four years before, by a defence of the Essay on Man, which Crousaz had attacked, but in general indirectly and ineffectually, by attacking it through the blunders of a very faulty translation. This poem, however, still labors, to religious readers, under two capital defects. If man, according to Pope, is now so admirably placed in the universal system of things, that evil only could result from any change, then it seems to follow, either that a fall of man is inadmissible; or at least, that, by placing him in his true centre, it had been a blessing universally. The other objection lies in this, that if all is right already, and in this earthly station, then one argument for a future state, as the scene in which evil is to be redressed, seems weakened or undermined.

As the weakness of Pope increased, his nearest friends, Lord Bolingbroke, and a few others, gathered

around him. The last scenes were passed almost with ease and tranquillity. He dined in company two days before he died; and on the very day preceding his death he took an airing on Blackheath. A few mornings before he died, he was found very early in his library writing on the immortality of the soul. This was an effort of delirium; and he suffered otherwise from this affection of the brain, and from inability to think in his closing hours. But his humanity and goodness, it was remarked, had survived his intellectual faculties. He died on the 30th of May, 1744; and so quietly, that the attendants could not distinguish the exact moment of his dissolution.

We had prepared an account of Pope's quarrels, in which we had shown that, generally, he was not the aggressor; and often was atrociously ill used before he retorted. This service to Pope's memory we had judged important, because it is upon these quarrels chiefly that the erroneous opinion has built itself of Pope's fretfulness and irritability. And this unamiable feature of his nature, together with a proneness to petty manœuvring, are the main foibles that malice has been able to charge upon Pope's moral character. Yet, with no better foundation for their malignity than these doubtful propensities, of which the first perhaps was a constitutional defect, a defect of his temperament rather than his will, and the second has been much exaggerated, many writers have taken upon themselves to treat Pope as a man, if not absolutely unprincipled and without moral sensibility, yet as mean, little-minded, indirect, splenetic, vindictive, and morose. Now the difference between ourselves and these writers is fundamental. They fancy that in

Pope's character a basis of ignoble qualities was here and there slightly relieved by a few shining spots; we, on the contrary, believe that in Pope lay a disposition radically noble and generous, clouded and overshadowed by superficial foibles, or, to adopt the distinction of Shakspeare, they see nothing but 'dust a little gilt,' and we 'gold a little dusted.' A very rapid glance we will throw over the general outline of his character.

As a friend, it is noticed emphatically by Martha Blount and other contemporaries, who must have had the best means of judging, that no man was so warm-hearted, or so much sacrificed himself for others, as Pope; and in fact many of his quarrels grew out of this trait in his character. For once that he levelled his spear in his own quarrel, at least twice he did so on behalf of his insulted parents or his friends. Pope was also noticeable for the duration of his friendships;[11] some dropped him, but he never any throughout his life. And let it be remembered, that amongst Pope's friends were the men of most eminent talents in those days; so that envy at least, or jealousy of rival power, was assuredly no foible of his. In that respect how different from Addison, whose petty manœuvring against Pope proceeded entirely from malignant jealousy. That Addison was more in the wrong even than has generally been supposed, and Pope more thoroughly innocent as well as more generous, we have the means at a proper opportunity of showing decisively. As a son, we need not insist on Pope's preëminent goodness. Dean Swift, who had lived for months together at Twickenham, declares that he had not only never witnessed, but had never heard

of anything like it. As a Christian, Pope appears in a truly estimable light. He found himself a Roman Catholic by accident of birth; so was his mother; but his father was so upon personal conviction and conversion, yet not without extensive study of the questions at issue. It would have laid open the road to preferment, and preferment was otherwise abundantly before him, if Pope would have gone over to the Protestant faith. And in his conscience he found no obstacle to that change; he was a philosophical Christian, intolerant of nothing but intolerance, a bigot only against bigots. But he remained true to his baptismal profession, partly on a general principle of honor in adhering to a distressed and dishonored party, but chiefly out of reverence and affection to his mother. In his relation to women, Pope was amiable and gentlemanly; and accordingly was the object of affectionate regard and admiration to many of the most accomplished in that sex. This we mention especially, because we would wish to express our full assent to the manly scorn with which Mr. Roscoe repels the libellous insinuations against Pope and Miss Martha Blount. A more innocent connection we do not believe ever existed. As an author, Warburton has recorded that no man ever displayed more candor or more docility to criticisms offered in a friendly spirit. Finally, we sum up all in saying, that Pope retained to the last a true and diffusive benignity; that this was the quality which survived all others, notwithstanding the bitter trial which his benignity must have stood through life, and the excitement to a spiteful reaction of feeling which was continually pressed upon him by the scorn and

insult which his deformity drew upon him from the unworthy.

But the moral character of Pope is of secondary interest. We are concerned with it only as connected with his great intellectual power. There are three errors which seem current upon this subject. *First*, that Pope drew his impulses from French literature; *secondly*, that he was a poet of inferior rank; *thirdly*, that his merit lies in superior 'correctness.' With respect to the first notion, it has prevailed by turns in every literature. One stage of society, in every nation, brings men of impassioned minds to the contemplation of manners, and of the social affections of man as exhibited in manners. With this propensity coöperates, no doubt, some degree of despondency when looking at the great models of the literature who have usually preoccupied the grander passions, and displayed their movements in the earlier periods of literature. Now it happens that the French, from an extraordinary defect in the higher qualities of passion, have attracted the notice of foreign nations chiefly to that field of their literature, in which the taste and the unimpassioned understanding preside. But in all nations such literature is a natural growth of the mind, and would arise equally if the French literature had never existed. The wits of Queen Anne's reign, or even of Charles II.'s, were not French by their taste or their imitation. Butler and Dryden were surely not French; and of Milton we need not speak; as little was Pope French, either by his institution or by his models. Boileau he certainly admired too much; and, for the sake of a poor parallelism with a passage about Greece in Horace, he has falsified history in the most

ludicrous manner, without a shadow of countenance from facts, in order to make our that we, like the Romans, received laws of taste from those whom we had conquered. But these are insulated cases and accidents, not to insist on his known and most profound admiration, often expressed, for both Chaucer, and Shakspeare, and Milton. Secondly, that Pope is to be classed as an inferior poet, has arisen purely from a confusion between the departments of poetry which he cultivated and the merit of his culture. The first place must undoubtedly be given for ever, — it cannot be refused, — to the impassioned movements of the tragic, and to the majestic movements of the epic muse. We cannot alter the relations of things out of favor to an individual. But in his own department, whether higher or lower, that man is supreme who has not yet been surpassed; and such a man is Pope. As to the final notion, first started by Walsh, and propagated by Warton, it is the most absurd of all the three; it is not from superior correctness that Pope is esteemed more correct, but because the compass and sweep of his performances lies more within the range of ordinary judgments. Many questions that have been raised upon Milton or Shakspeare, questions relating to so subtile a subject as the flux and reflux of human passion, lie far above the region of ordinary capacities; and the indeterminateness or even carelessness of the judgment is transferred by a common confusion to its objects. But waiving this, let us ask, what is meant by 'correctness?' Correctness in what? In developing the thought? In connecting it, or effecting the transitions? In the use of words? In the grammar? In the metre? Under every one of these limitations

of the idea, we maintain that Pope is *not* distinguished by correctness; nay, that, as compared with Shakspeare, he is eminently incorrect. Produce us from any drama of Shakspeare one of those leading passages that all men have by heart, and show us any eminent defect in the very sinews of the thought. It is impossible; defects there may be, but they will always be found irrelevant to the main central thought, or to its expression. Now turn to Pope; the first striking passage which offers itself to our memory, is the famous character of Addison, ending thus:

> 'Who would not laugh, if such a man there be,
> Who but must weep, if Atticus were he?'

Why must we laugh? Because we find a grotesque assembly of noble and ignoble qualities. Very well; but why then must we weep? Because this assemblage is found actually existing in an eminent man of genius. Well, that is a good reason for weeping; we weep for the degradation of human nature. But then revolves the question, why must we laugh? Because, if the belonging to a man of genius were a sufficient reason for weeping, so much we know from the very first. The very first line says, 'Peace to all such. But were there one whose fires *true genius kindles* and fair fame inspires?' Thus falls to the ground the whole antithesis of this famous character. We are to change our mood from laughter to tears upon a sudden discovery that the character belonged to a man of genius; and this we had already known from the beginning. Match us this prodigious oversight in Shakspeare. Again, take the Essay on Criticism. It is a collection of independent maxims, tied together

into a fasciculus by the printer, but having no natural order or logical dependency; generally so vague as to mean nothing. Like the general rules of justice, &c. in ethics, to which every man assents; but when the question comes about any practical case, *is* it just? the opinions fly asunder far as the poles. And, what is remarkable, many of the rules are violated by no man so often as by Pope, and by Pope nowhere so often as in this very poem. As a single instance, he proscribes monosyllabic lines; and in no English poem of any pretensions are there so many lines of that class as in this. We have counted above a score, and the last line of all is monosyllabic.

Not, therefore, for superior correctness, but for qualities the very same as belong to his most distinguished brethren, is Pope to be considered a great poet; for impassioned thinking, powerful description, pathetic reflection, brilliant narration. His characteristic difference is simply that he carried these powers into a different field, and moved chiefly amongst the social paths of men, and viewed their characters as operating through their manners. And our obligations to him arise chiefly on this ground, that having already, in the persons of earlier poets, carried off the palm in all the grander trials of intellectual strength, for the majesty of the epopee and the impassioned vehemence of the tragic drama, to Pope we owe it that we can now claim an equal preëminence in the sportive and aerial graces of the mock heroic and satiric muse; that in the Dunciad we possess a peculiar form of satire, in which (according to a plan unattempted by any other nation) we see alternately her festive smile and her gloomiest scowl; that the grave good sense of

the nation has here found its brightest mirror; and, finally, that through Pope the cycle of our poetry is perfected and made orbicular, that from that day we might claim the laurel equally, whether for dignity or grace.

NOTES.

Note 1. Page 101.

Dr. Johnson, however, and Joseph Warton, for reasons not stated, have placed his birth on the 22d. To this statement, as opposed to that which comes from the personal friends of Pope, little attention is due. Ruffhead and Spence, upon such questions, must always be of higher authority than Johnson and Warton, and *a fortiori* than Bowles. But it ought not to be concealed, though hitherto unnoticed by any person, that some doubt after all remains whether *any* of the biographers is right. An anonymous writer, contemporary with Pope, and evidently familiar with his personal history, declares that he was born on the 8th of June; and he connects it with an event that, having a public and a partisan interest, (the birth of that Prince of Wales, who was known twenty-seven years afterwards as the Pretender,) would serve to check his own recollections, and give them a collateral voucher. It is true he wrote for an ill-natured purpose; but no purpose whatever could have been promoted by falsifying this particular date. What is still more noticeable, however, Pope himself puts a most emphatic negative upon all these statements. In a pathetic letter to a friend, when his attention could not have been wandering, for he is expressly insisting upon a sentiment which will find an echo in many a human heart, viz., that a birthday, though from habit usually celebrated as a festal day, too often is secretly a memorial of disappointment, and an anniversary of sorrowful meaning, he speaks of the very day on which he is then writing as his own birthday; and indeed what else could give any propriety to the passage? Now the date of this letter is January 1, 1733. Surely Pope knew his own birthday better than those who have adopted a random rumor without investigation

But, whilst we are upon this subject, we must caution the readers of Pope against too much reliance upon the chronological accuracy of his editors. *All* are scandalously careless; and generally they are faithless. Many allusions are left unnoticed, which a very little research would have illustrated; many facts are omitted, even yet recoverable, which are essential to the just appreciation of Pope's satirical blows; and dates are constantly misstated. Mr. Roscoe is the most careful of Pope's editors; but even he is often wrong. For instance, he has taken the trouble to write a note upon Pope's humorous report to Lord Burlington of his Oxford journey on horseback with Lintot; and this note involves a sheer impossibility. The letter is undated, except as to the month; and Mr. Roscoe directs the reader to supply 1714 as the true date, which is a gross anachronism. For a ludicrous anecdote is there put into Linton's mouth, representing some angry critic, who had been turning over Pope's Homer, with frequent *pshaws*, as having been propitiated, by Mr. Lintot's dinner, into a gentler feeling towards Pope, and, finally, by the mere effect of good cheer, without an effort on the publisher's part, as coming to a confession, that what he ate and what he had been reading were equally excellent. But in the year 1714, *no part* of Pope's Homer was printed; June, 1715, was the month in which even the subscribers first received the four earliest books of the Iliad; and the public generally not until July. This we notice by way of specimen; in itself, or as an error of mere negligence, it would be of little importance; but it is a case to which Mr. Roscoe has expressly applied his own conjectural skill, and solicited the attention of his reader. We may judge, therefore, of his accuracy in other cases which he did not think worthy of examination.

There is another instance, presenting itself in every page, of ignorance concurring with laziness, on the part of all Pope's editors, and with the effect not so properly of misleading as of perplexing the general reader. Until Lord Macclesfield's bill for altering the style in the very middle of the eighteenth century, six years, therefore, after the death of Pope, there was a custom, arising from the collision between the civil and ecclesiastical year, of dating the whole period that lies between December 31st and March 25th, (both days *exclusively*,) as belonging indifferently to the past or the current year. This peculiarity had nothing to

do with the old and new style, but was, we believe, redressed by the same act of Parliament. Now in Pope's time it was absolutely necessary that a man should use this double date, because else he was liable to be seriously misunderstood. For instance, it was then always said that Charles I. had suffered on the 30th of January, $164\frac{8}{9}$; and why? Because, had the historian fixed the date to what it really was, 1649, in that case all those (a very numerous class) who supposed the year 1649 to commence on Ladyday, or March 25, would have understood him to mean that this event happened in what we *now* call 1650, for not until 1650 was there any January which *they* would have acknowledged as belonging to 1649, since *they* added to the year 1648 all the days from January 1 to March 24. On the other hand, if he had said simply that Charles suffered in 1648, he would have been truly understood by the class we have just mentioned; but by another class, who began the year from the 1st of January, he would have been understood to mean what we *now* mean by the year 1648. There would have been a sheer difference, not of one, as the reader might think at first sight, but of *two* entire years in the chronology of the two parties; which difference, and all possibility of doubt, is met and remedied by the fractional date $\frac{1648}{1649}$; for that date says in effect it was 1648 to you who do not open the new year till Ladyday; it was 1649 to you who open it from January 1. Thus much to explain the real sense of the case; and it follows from this explanation, that no part of the year ever *can* have the fractional or double date except the interval from January 1 to March 24 inclusively. And hence arises a practical influence, viz., that the very same reason, and no other, which formerly enjoined the use of the compound or fractional date, viz., the prevention of a capital ambiguity or dilemma, now enjoins its omission. For in our day, when the double opening of the year is abolished, what sense is there in perplexing a reader by using a fraction which offers him a choice without directing him how to choose? In fact, it is the *denominator* of the fraction, if one may so style the lower figure, which expresses to a modern eye the true year. Yet the editors of Pope, as well as many other writers, have confused their readers by this double date; and why? Simply because they were confused themselves. Many errors in literature of large extent have arisen from this

confusion. Thus it was said properly enough in the contemporary accounts, for instance, in Lord Monmouth's Memoirs, that Queen Elizabeth died on the last day of the year 1602, for she died on the 24th of March; and by a careful writer this event would have been dated as March 24, $\frac{1602}{1603}$. But many writers, misled by the phrase above cited, have asserted that James I. was proclaimed on the 1st of January, 1603. Heber, Bishop of Calcutta, again, has ruined the entire chronology of the Life of Jeremy Taylor, and unconsciously vitiated the facts, by not understanding this fractional date. Mr. Roscoe even too often leaves his readers to collect the true year as they can. Thus, *e. g.* at p. 509, of his Life, he quotes from Pope's letter to Warburton, in great vexation for the surreptitious publication of his letters in Ireland, under date of February 4, $174\frac{0}{1}$. But why not have printed it intelligibly as 1741 ? Incidents there are in most men's lives, which are susceptible of a totally different moral value, according as they are dated in one year or another. That might be a kind and honorable liberality in 1740, which would be a fraud upon creditors in 1741. Exile to a distance of ten miles from London in January, 1744, might argue, that a man was a turbulent citizen, and suspected of treason; whilst the same exile in January, 1745, would simply argue that, as a Papist, he had been included amongst his whole body in a general measure of precaution to meet the public dangers of that year. This explanation we have thought it right to make, both for its extensive application to *all* editions of Pope, and on account of the serious blunders which have arisen from the case when ill understood; and because, in a work upon education, written jointly by Messrs. Lant Carpenter and Shephard, though generally men of ability and learning, this whole point is erroneously explained.

NOTE 2. Page 105.

It is apparently with allusion to this part of the history, which he would often have heard from the lips of his own father, that Pope glances at his uncle's memory somewhat disrespectfully in his prose letter to Lord Harvey.

NOTE 3. Page 105.

Some accounts, however, say to Flanders, in which case,

perhaps, Antwerp or Brussels would have the honor of his conversion.

Note 4. Page 107.

This, however, was not Twyford, according to an anonymous pamphleteer of the times, but a Catholic seminary in Devonshire Street, that is, in the Bloomsbury district of London; and the same author asserts, that the scene of his disgrace, as indeed seems probable beforehand, was not the first, but the last of his arenas as a schoolboy. Which indeed was first, and which last, is very unimportant; but with a view to another point, which is not without interest, namely, as to the motive of Pope for so bitter a lampoon as we must suppose it to have been, as well as with regard to the topics which he used to season it, this anonymous letter throws the only light which has been offered; and strange it is, that no biographer of Pope should have hunted upon the traces indicated by him. Any solution of Pope's virulence, and of the master's bitter retaliation, even *as* a solution, is so far entitled to attention; apart from which the mere straightforwardness of this man's story, and its minute circumstantiality, weigh greatly in its favor. To our thinking, he unfolds the whole affair in the simple explanation, nowhere else to be found, that the master of the school, the mean avenger of a childish insult by a bestial punishment, was a Mr. Bromley, one of James II.'s Popish apostates; whilst the particular statements which he makes with respect to himself and the young Duke of Norfolk of 1700, as two schoolfellows of Pope at that time and place, together with his voluntary promise to come forward in person, and verify his account if it should happen to be challenged, — are all, we repeat, so many presumptions in favor of his veracity. 'Mr. Alexander Pope,' says he, 'before he had been four months at this school, or was able to construe Tully's Offices, employed his muse in satirizing his master. It was a libel of at least one hundred verses, which (a fellow-student having given information of it) was found in his pocket; and the young satirist was soundly whipped, and kept a prisoner to his room for seven days; whereupon his father fetched him away, and I have been told he never went to school more.' This Bromley, it has been ascertained, was the son of a country gentleman in Worcestershire, and must have had

considerable prospects at one time, since it appears that he had been a gentleman-commoner at Christ's Church, Oxford There is an error in the punctuation of the letter we have just quoted, which affects the sense in a way very important to the question before us. Bromley is described as 'one of King James's converts in Oxford, some years *after* that prince's abdication;' but, if this were really so, he must have been a conscientious convert. The latter clause should be connected with what follows: '*Some years after that prince's abdication he kept a little seminary;*' that is, when his mercenary views in quitting his religion were effectually defeated, when the Boyne had sealed his despair, he humbled himself into a petty schoolmaster. These facts are interesting, because they suggest at once the motive for the merciless punishment inflicted upon Pope. His own father was a Papist like Bromley, but a sincere and honest Papist, who had borne double taxes, legal stigmas, and public hatred for conscience' sake. His contempt was habitually pointed at those who tampered with religion for interested purposes. His son inherited these upright feelings. And we may easily guess what would be the bitter sting of any satire he would write on Bromley. Such a topic was too true to be forgiven, and too keenly barbed by Bromley's conscience. By the way, this writer, like ourselves, reads in this juvenile adventure a prefiguration of Pope's satirical destiny.

Note 5. Page 112.

That is, Sheffield, and, legally speaking, of Buckingham*shire*. For he would not take the title of Buckingham, under a fear that there was lurking somewhere or other a claim to that title amongst the connections of the Villiers family. He was a pompous grandee, who lived in uneasy splendor, and, as a writer, most extravagantly overrated; accordingly, he is now forgotten. Such was his vanity and his ridiculous mania for allying himself with royalty, that he first of all had the presumption to court the Princess (afterwards Queen) Anne. Being rejected, he then offered himself to the illegitimate daughter of James II., by the daughter of Sir Charles Sedley. She was as ostentatious as himself, and accepted him.

NOTE 6. Page 117.

Meantime, the felicities of this translation are at times perfectly astonishing; and it would be scarcely possible to express more nervously or amply the words,

——— '*jurisque secundi*
Ambitus impatiens, er summo dulcius unum
Stare loco,' ————

than this child of fourteen has done in the following couplet, which, most judiciously, by reversing the two clauses, gains the power of fusing them into connection :

'And impotent desire to reign alone,
That scorns the dull reversion of a throne.'

But the passage for which beyond all others we must make room, is a series of eight lines, corresponding to six in the original; and this for two reasons : First, Because Dr. Joseph Warton has deliberately asserted, that in our whole literature, 'we have scarcely eight more beautiful lines than these;' and though few readers will subscribe to so sweeping a judgment, yet certainly these must be wonderful lines for a boy, which could challenge such commendation from an experienced *polyhistor* of infinite reading. Secondly, Because the lines contain a night-scene. Now it must be well known to many readers, that the famous night-scene in the Iliad, so familiar to every schoolboy, has been made the subject, for the last thirty years, of severe, and in many respects. of just criticisms. This description will therefore have a double interest by comparison; whilst, whatever may be thought of either taken separately for itself, considered as a translation, this which we now quote is as true to Statius as the other is undoubtedly faithless to Homer :

'*Jamque per emeriti surgens confinia Phœbi*
Titanis, late mundo subvecta silenti
Rorifera gelidum tenuaverat aera biga.
Jam pecudes volucresque tacent : jam somnus avaris
Inserpit curis, pronusque per aera nutat,
Grata laboratæ referens oblivia vitæ.'

Theb. i. 336–341.

'’T was now the time when Phœbus yields to night,
And rising Cynthia sheds her silver light;
Wide o'er the world in solemn pomp she drew
Her airy chariot hung with pearly dew.
All birds and beasts lie hush'd. Sleep steals away
The wild desires of men and toils of day;
And brings, descending through the silent air,
A sweet forgetfulness of human care'

NOTE 7. Page 118.

One writer of that age says, in Cheapside; but probably this difference arose from contemplating Lombard Street as a prolongation of Cheapside.

NOTE 8. Page 123.

Dr. Johnson said, that all he could discover about Mr. Cromwell, was the fact of his going a hunting in a tie-wig; but Gay has added another fact to Dr. Johnson's by calling him, 'honest *hatless* Cromwell with red breeches' This epithet has puzzled the commentators; but its import is obvious enough. Cromwell, as we learn from more than one person, was anxious to be considered a fine gentleman, and devoted to women. Now it was long the custom in that age for such persons, when walking with ladies, to carry their hats in their hand. Louis XV. used to ride by the side of Madame de Pompadour hat in hand.

NOTE 9. Page 127.

It is strange enough to find, not only that Pope had so frequently kept rough copies of his own letters, and that he thought so well of them as to repeat the same letter to different persons, as in the case of the two lovers killed by lightning, or even to two sisters, Martha and Therese Blount, (who were sure to communicate their letters,) and that even Swift had retained copies of *his*.

NOTE 10. Page 138.

The word *undertake* had not yet lost the meaning of Shakspeare's age, in which it was understood to describe those cases where, the labor being of a miscellaneous kind, some person in

chief offered to overlook and conduct the whole, whether with or without personal labor. The modern *undertaker*, limited to the care of funerals, was then but one of numerous cases to which the term was applied.

NOTE 11. Page 151.

We may illustrate this feature in the behavior of Pope to Savage. When all else forsook him, when all beside pleaded the insults of Savage for withdrawing their subscriptions, Pope sent his in advance. And when Savage had insulted *him* also, arrogantly commanding him never 'to presume to interfere or meddle in his affairs,' dignity and self-respect made Pope obedient to these orders, except when there was an occasion of serving Savage. On his second visit to Bristol, (when he returned from Glamorganshire,) Savage had been thrown into the jail of the city. One person only interested himself for this hopeless profligate, and was causing an inquiry to be made about his debts at the time Savage died. So much Dr. Johnson admits; but he *forgets* to mention the name of this long-suffering friend. *It was Pope.* Meantime, let us not be supposed to believe the lying legend of Savage; he was doubtless no son of Lady Macclesfield's, but an impostor, who would not be sent to the tread-mill.

CHARLES LAMB.

It sounds paradoxical, but is not so in a bad sense, to say that in every literature of large compass some authors will be found to rest much of the interest which surrounds them on their essential *non*-popularity. They are good for the very reason that they are not in conformity to the current taste. They interest because to the world they are *not* interesting. They attract by means of their repulsion. Not as though it could separately furnish a reason for loving a book, that the majority of men had found it repulsive. *Primâ facie*, it must suggest some presumption *against* a book, that it has failed to gain public attention. To have roused hostility indeed, to have kindled a feud against its own principles or its temper, may happen to be a good sign. *That* argues power. Hatred may be promising. The deepest revolutions of mind sometimes begin in hatred. But simply to have left a reader unimpressed, is in itself a neutral result, from which the inference is doubtful. Yet even *that*, even simple failure to impress, may happen at times to be a result from positive powers in a writer, from special originalities, such as rarely reflect themselves in the mirror of the ordinary understanding. It seems little to be perceived, how much the great scriptural [1] idea

of the *worldly* and the *unworldly* is found to emerge in literature as well as in life. In reality the very same combinations of moral qualities, infinitely varied, which compose the harsh physiognomy of what we call worldliness in the living groups of life, must unavoidably present themselves in books. A library divides into sections of worldly and unworldly, even as a crowd of men divides into that same majority and minority. The world has an instinct for recognizing its own ; and recoils from certain qualities when exemplified in books, with the same disgust or defective sympathy as would have governed it in real life. From qualities for instance of childlike simplicity, of shy profundity, or of inspired self-communion, the world does and must turn away its face towards grosser, bolder, more determined, or more intelligible expressions of character and intellect; and not otherwise in literature, nor at all less in literature, than it does in the realities of life.

Charles Lamb, if any ever *was*, is amongst the class here contemplated ; he, if ever any *has*, ranks amongst writers whose works are destined to be for ever unpopular, and yet for ever interesting ; interesting, moreover, by means of those very qualities which guarantee their non-popularity. The same qualities which will be found forbidding to the worldly and the thoughtless, which will be found insipid to many even amongst robust and powerful minds, are exactly those which will continue to command a select audience in every generation. The prose essays, under the signature of *Elia*, form the most delightful section amongst Lamb's works. They traverse a peculiar field of observation, sequestered from general interest; and they are composed in a spirit too delicate and unobtrusive to catch the ear of

the noisy crowd, clamoring for strong sensations. But this retiring delicacy itself, the pensiveness chequered by gleams of the fanciful, and the humor that is touched with cross-lights of pathos, together with the picturesque quaintness of the objects casually described, whether men, or things, or usages, and, in the rear of all this, the constant recurrence to ancient recollections and to decaying forms of household life, as things retiring before the tumult of new and revolutionary generations; these traits in combination communicate to the papers a grace and strength of originality which nothing in any literature approaches, whether for degree or kind of excellence, except the most felicitous papers of Addison, such as those on Sir Roger de Coverley, and some others in the same vein of composition. They resemble Addison's papers also in the diction, which is natural and idiomatic, even to carelessness. They are equally faithful to the truth of nature; and in this only they differ remarkably — that the sketches of *Elia* reflect the stamp and impress of the writer's own character, whereas in all those of Addison the personal peculiarities of the delineator (though known to the reader from the beginning through the account of the club) are nearly quiescent. Now and then they are recalled into a momentary notice, but they do not act, or at all modify his pictures of Sir Roger or Will Wimble. *They* are slightly and amiably eccentric; but the Spectator himself, in describing them, takes the station of an ordinary observer.

Everywhere, indeed, in the writings of Lamb, and not merely in his *Elia*, the character of the writer coöperates in an undercurrent to the effect of the thing written To understand in the fullest sense either the

gayety or the tenderness of a particular passage, you must have some insight into the peculiar bias of the writer's mind, whether native and original, or impressed gradually by the accidents of situation; whether simply developed out of predispositions by the action of life, or violently scorched into the constitution by some fierce fever of calamity. There is in modern literature a whole class of writers, though not a large one, standing within the same category; some marked originality of character in the writer becomes a coëfficient with what he says to a common result; you must sympathize with this *personality* in the author before you can appreciate the most significant parts of his views. In most books the writer figures as a mere abstraction, without sex or age or local station, whom the reader banishes from his thoughts. What is written seems to proceed from a blank intellect, not from a man clothed with fleshly peculiarities and differences. These peculiarities and differences neither do, nor (generally speaking) *could* intermingle with the texture of the thoughts so as to modify their force or their direction. In such books, and they form the vast majority, there is nothing to be found or to be looked for beyond the direct objective. (*Sit venia verbo!*) But, in a small section of books, the objective in the thought becomes confluent with the subjective in the thinker — the two forces unite for a joint product; and fully to enjoy the product, or fully to apprehend either element, both must be known. It is singular, and worth inquiring into, for the reason that the Greek and Roman literature had no such books. Timon of Athens, or Diogenes, one may conceive qualified for this mode of authorship, had journalism existed to rouse them in those days; their

'articles' would no doubt have been fearfully caustic. But, as *they* failed to produce anything, and Lucian in an after age is scarcely characteristic enough for the purpose, perhaps we may pronounce Rabelais and Montaigne the earliest of writers in the class described In the century following *theirs*, came Sir Thomas Browne, and immediately after *him* La Fontaine. Then come Swift, Sterne, with others less distinguished; in Germany, Hippel, the friend of Kant, Harmann, the obscure; and the greatest of the whole body — John Paul Fr. Richter. In *him*, from the strength and determinateness of his nature as well as from the great extent of his writing, the philosophy of this interaction between the author as a human agency and his theme as an intellectual reägency, might best be studied. From *him* might be derived the largest number of cases illustrating boldly his absorption of the universal into the concrete — of the pure intellect into the human nature of the author. But nowhere could illustrations be found more interesting — shy, delicate, evanescent — shy as lightning, delicate and evanescent as the colored pencillings on a frosty night from the northern lights, than in the better parts of Lamb.

To appreciate Lamb, therefore, it is requisite that his character and temperament should be understood in their coyest and most wayward features. A capital defect it would be if these could not be gathered silently from Lamb's works themselves. It would be a fatal mode of dependency upon an alien and separable accident if they needed an external commentary. But they do *not*. The syllables lurk up and down the writings of Lamb which decipher his eccentric nature. His character lies there dispersed in anagram; and to

any attentive reader the regathering and restoration of the total word from its scattered parts is inevitable without an effort. Still it is always a satisfaction in knowing a result, to know also its *why* and *how;* and in so far as every character is likely to be modified by the particular experience, sad or joyous, through which the life has travelled, it is a good contribution towards the knowledge of that resulting character as a whole to have a sketch of that particular experience. What trials did it impose? What energies did it task? What temptations did it unfold? These calls upon the moral powers, which, in music so stormy, many a life is doomed to hear, how were they faced? The character in a capital degree moulds oftentimes the life, but the life *always* in a subordinate degree moulds the character. And the character being in this case of Lamb so much of a key to the writings, it becomes important that the life should be traced, however briefly, as a key to the character.

That is *one* reason for detaining the reader with some slight record of Lamb's career. Such a record by preference and of right belongs to a case where the intellectual display, which is the sole ground of any public interest at all in the man, has been intensely modified by the *humanities* and moral *personalities* distinguishing the subject. We read a Physiology, and need no information as to the life and conversation of its author; a meditative poem becomes far better understood by the light of such information; but a work of genial and at the same time eccentric sentiment, wandering upon untrodden paths, is barely intelligible without it. There is a good reason for arresting judgment on the writer, that the court may receive evidence

on the life of the man. But there is another reason, and, in any other place, a better; which reason lies in the extraordinary value of the life considered separately for itself. Logically, it is not allowable to say that *here;* and considering the principal purpose of this paper, any possible *independent* value of the life must rank as a better reason for reporting it. Since, in a case where the original object is professedly to estimate the writings of a man, whatever promises to further that object must, merely by that tendency, have, in relation to that place, a momentary advantage which it would lose if valued upon a more abstract scale. Liberated from this casual office of throwing light upon a book — raised to its grander station of a solemn deposition to the moral capacities of man in conflict with calamity — viewed as a return made into the chanceries of heaven — upon an issue directed from that court to try the amount of power lodged in a poor desolate pair of human creatures for facing the very anarchy of storms — this obscure life of the two Lambs, brother and sister, (for the two lives were one life,) rises into a grandeur that is not paralleled once in a generation.

Rich, indeed, in moral instruction was the life of Charles Lamb; and perhaps in one chief result it offers to the thoughtful observer a lesson of consolation that is awful, and of hope that ought to be immortal, viz., in the record which it furnishes, that by meekness of submission, and by earnest conflict with evil, in the spirit of cheerfulness it is possible ultimately to disarm or to blunt the very heaviest of curses — even the curse of lunacy. Had it been whispered, in hours of infancy, to Lamb, by the angel who stood by his

cradle — 'Thou, and the sister that walks by ten years before thee, shall be through life, each to each, the solitary fountain of comfort; and except it be from this fountain of mutual love, except it be as brother and sister, ye shall not taste the cup of peace on earth!' — here, if there was sorrow in reversion, there was also consolation.

But what funeral swamps would have instantly engulfed this consolation, had some meddling fiend prolonged the revelation, and, holding up the curtain from the sad feature a little longer, had said scornfully — 'Peace on earth! Peace for you two, Charles and Mary Lamb! What peace is possible under the curse which even now is gathering against your heads? Is there peace on earth for the lunatic — peace for the parenticide — peace for the girl that, without warning, and without time granted for a penitential cry to Heaven, sends her mother to the last audit? And then, without treachery, speaking bare truth, this prophet of woe might have added — 'Thou, also, thyself, Charles Lamb, thou in thy proper person, shalt enter the skirts of this dreadful hail-storm; even thou shalt taste the secrets of lunacy, and enter as a captive its house of bondage; whilst over thy sister the accursed scorpion shall hang suspended through life, like death hanging over the beds of hospitals, striking at times, but more often threatening to strike: or withdrawing its instant menaces only to lay bare her mind more bitterly to the persecutions of a haunted memory!' Considering the nature of the calamity, in the first place; considering, in the second place, its lifelong duration; and, in the last place, considering the quality of the resistance by which it was met, and

under what circumstances of humble resources in money or friends — we have come to the deliberate judgment, that the whole range of history scarcely presents a more affecting spectacle of perpetual sorrow, humiliation, or conflict, and that was supported to the end, (that is, through forty years,) with more resignation, or with moré absolute victory.

Charles Lamb was born in February of the year 1775. His immediate descent was humble; for his father, though on one particular occasion civilly described as a 'scrivener,' was in reality a domestic servant to Mr. Salt — a bencher (and therefore a barrister of some standing) in the Inner Temple. John Lamb the father belonged by birth to Lincoln; from which city, being transferred to London whilst yet a boy, he entered the service of Mr. Salt without delay; and apparently from this period throughout his life continued in this good man's household to support the honorable relation of a Roman client to his *patronus*, much more than that of a mercenary servant to a transient and capricious master. The terms on which he seems to live with the family of the Lambs, argue a kindness and a liberality of nature on both sides. John Lamb recommended himself as an attendant by the versatility of his accomplishments; and Mr. Salt, being a widower without children, which means in effect an old bachelor, naturally valued that encyclopædic range of dexterity which made his house independent of external aid for every mode of service. To kill one's own mutton is but an operose way of arriving at a dinner, and often a more costly way; whereas to combine one's own carpenter, locksmith, hair-dresser, groom, &c., all in one man's person, — to have a

Robinson Crusoe, up to all emergencies of life, always in waiting, — is a luxury of the highest class for one who values his ease.

A consultation is held more freely with a man familiar to one's eye, and more profitably with a man aware of one's peculiar habits. And another advantage from such an arrangement is, that one gets any little alteration or repair executed on the spot. To hear is to obey, and by an inversion of Pope's rule —

'One always *is*, and never *to be*, blest.'

People of one sole accomplishment, like the *homo unius libri*, are usually within that narrow circle disagreeably perfect, and therefore apt to be arrogant. People who can do all things, usually do every one of them ill; and living in a constant effort to deny this too palpable fact they become irritably vain. But Mr. Lamb the elder seems to have been bent on perfection. He did all things; he did them all well; and yet was neither gloomily arrogant nor testily vain. And being conscious apparently that all mechanic excellences tend to illiberal results, unless counteracted by perpetual sacrifices to the muses, he went so far as to cultivate poetry; he even printed his poems, and were we possessed of a copy, (which we are *not*, nor probably is the Vatican,) it would give us pleasure at this point to digress for a moment, and to cut them up, purely on considerations of respect to the author's memory. It is hardly to be supposed that they did not really merit castigation; and we should best show the sincerity of our respect for Mr. Lamb, senior, in all those cases where we *could* conscientiously profess respect, by an unlimited application of the knout in the cases where we could *not*.

The whole family of the Lambs seems to have won from Mr. Salt the consideration which is granted to humble friends; and from acquaintances nearer to their own standing, to have won a tenderness of esteem such as is granted to decayed gentry. Yet naturally, the social rank of the parents, as people still living, must have operated disadvantageously for the children. It is hard, even for the practised philosopher to distinguish aristocratic graces of manner, and capacities of delicate feeling, in people whose very hearth and dress bear witness to the servile humility of their station. Yet such distinctions as wild gifts of nature, timidly and half-unconsciously asserted themselves in the unpretending Lambs. Already in *their* favor there existed a silent privilege analogous to the famous one of Lord Kinsale. He, by special grant from the crown, is allowed, when standing before the king, to forget that he is not himself a king; the bearer of that peerage, through all generations, has the privilege of wearing his hat in the royal presence. By a general though tacit concession of the same nature, the rising generation of the Lambs, John and Charles, the two sons, and Mary Lamb, the only daughter, were permitted to forget that their grandmother had been a housekeeper for sixty years, and that their father had worn a livery. Charles Lamb, individually was so entirely humble, and so careless of social distinctions, that he has taken pleasure in recurring to these very facts in the family records amongst the most genial of his Elia recollections. He only continued to remember, without shame, and with a peculiar tenderness, these badges of plebeian rank, when everybody else, amongst the few survivors that could have known of their existence, had long dismissed them from their thoughts.

Probably through Mr. Salt's interest, Charles Lamb, in the autumn of 1782, when he wanted something more than four months of completing his eighth year, received a presentation to the magnificent school of Christ's Hospital. The late Dr. Arnold, when contrasting the school of his own boyish experience, Winchester, with Rugby, the school confided to his management, found nothing so much to regret in the circumstances of the latter as its forlorn condition with respect to historical traditions. Wherever these were wanting, and supposing the school of sufficient magnitude, it occurred to Dr. Arnold that something of a compensatory effect for impressing the imagination might be obtained by connecting the school with the nation through the link of annual prizes issuing from the exchequer. An official basis of national patronage might prove a substitute for an antiquarian or ancestral basis. Happily for the great educational foundations of London, none of them is in the naked condition of Rugby. Westminster, St. Paul's, Merchant Tailors,' the Charter-house, &c., are all crowned with historical recollections; and Christ's Hospital, besides the original honors of its foundation, so fitted to a consecrated place in a youthful imagination — an asylum for boy-students, provided by a boy-king — innocent, religious, prematurely wise, and prematurely called away from earth — has also a mode of perpetual connection with the state. It enjoys, therefore, *both* of Dr. Arnold's advantages. Indeed, all the great foundation schools of London, bearing in their very codes of organization the impress of a double function — viz., the conservation of sound learning and of pure religion — wear something of a monastic or cloisteral

character in their aspect and usages, which is peculiarly impressive, and even pathetic, amidst the uproars of a capital the most colossal and tumultuous upon earth.

Here Lamb remained until his fifteenth year, which year threw him on the world, and brought him alongside the golden dawn of the French Revolution. Here he learned a little elementary Greek, and of Latin more than a little; for the Latin notes to Mr. Cary (of Dante celebrity) though brief, are sufficient to reveal a true sense of what is graceful and idiomatic in Latinity. *We* say this, who have studied that subject more than most men. It is not that Lamb would have found it an easy task to compose a long paper in Latin — nobody *can* find it easy to do what he has no motive for habitually practising; but a single sentence of Latin wearing the secret countersign of the 'sweet Roman hand,' ascertains sufficiently that, in reading Latin classics, a man feels and comprehends their peculiar force or beauty. That is enough. It is requisite to a man's expansion of mind that he should make acquaintance with a literature so radically differing from all modern literature as is the Latin. It is *not* requisite that he should practise Latin composition. Here, therefore, Lamb obtained in sufficient perfection one priceless accomplishment, which even singly throws a graceful air of liberality over all the rest of a man's attainments: having rarely any pecuniary value, it challenges the more attention to its intellectual value. Here also Lamb commenced the friendships of his life; and, of all which he formed he lost none. Here it was, as the consummation and crown of his advantages from the time-honored hospital, that he came to know 'Poor S. T. C.'[2] *τον θαυμασιωτατον.*

Until 1796, it is probable that he lost sight of Coleridge, who was then occupied with Cambridge, having been transferred thither as a 'Grecian' from the house of Christ Church. The year 1795, was a year of change and fearful calamity for Charles Lamb. On that year revolved the wheels of his after-life. During the three years succeeding to his school days, he had held a clerkship in the South Sea House. In 1795, he was transferred to the India House. As a junior clerk, he could not receive more than a slender salary; but even this was important to the support of his parents and sister. They lived together in lodgings near Holborn; and in the spring of 1796, Miss Lamb, (having previously shown signs of lunacy at intervals,) in a sudden paroxysm of her disease, seized a knife from the dinner table, and stabbed her mother, who died upon the spot. A coroner's inquest easily ascertained the nature of a case which was transparent in all its circumstances, and never for a moment indecisive as regarded the medical symptoms. The poor young lady was transferred to the establishment for lunatics at Hoxton. She soon recovered, we believe; but her relapses were as sudden as her recoveries, and she continued through life to revisit, for periods of uncertain seclusion, this house of woe. This calamity of his fireside, followed soon after by the death of his father, who had for some time been in a state of imbecility, determined the future destiny of Lamb. Apprehending, with the perfect grief of perfect love, that his sister's fate was sealed for life — viewing her as his own greatest benefactress, which she really *had* been through her advantage by ten years of age — yielding with impassioned readiness to the depth of his fraternal affec-

tion, what at any rate he would have yielded to the sanctities of duty as interpreted by his own conscience — he resolved for ever to resign all thoughts of marriage with a young lady whom he loved, for ever to abandon all ambitious prospects that might have tempted him into uncertainties, humbly to content himself with the *certainties* of his Indian clerkship, to dedicate himself for the future to the care of his desolate and prostrate sister, and to leave the rest to God. These sacrifices he made in no hurry or tumult, but deliberately, and in religious tranquillity. These sacrifices were accepted in heaven — and even on this earth they *had* their reward. She, for whom he gave up all, in turn gave up all for *him*. She devoted herself to his comfort. Many times she returned to the lunatic establishment, but many times she was restored to illuminate the household for *him;* and of the happiness which for forty years and more he had, no hour seemed true that was not derived from *her*. Henceforward, therefore, until he was emancipated by the noble generosity of the East India Directors, Lamb's time for nine-and-twenty years, was given to the India House.

'*O fortunati nimium, sua si bona nôrint*,' is applicable to more people than '*agricolæ*.' Clerks of the India House are as blind to their own advantages as the blindest of ploughmen. Lamb was summoned, it is true, through the larger and more genial section of his life, to the drudgery of a copying clerk — making confidential entries into mighty folios, on the subject of calicoes and muslins. By this means, whether he would or not, he became gradually the author of a great 'serial' work, in a frightful number of volumes,

on as dry a department of literature as the children of the great desert could have suggested. Nobody, he must have felt, was ever likely to study this great work of his, not even Dr. Dryasdust. He had written in vain, which is not pleasant to know. There would be no second edition called for by a discerning public in Leadenhall Street; not a chance of *that*. And consequently the *opera omnia* of Lamb, drawn up in a hideous battalion, at the cost of labor so enormous, would be known only to certain families of spiders in one generation, and of rats in the next. Such a labor of Sisyphus, — the rolling up a ponderous stone to the summit of a hill only that it might roll back again by the gravitation of its own dulness, — seems a bad employment for a man of genius in his meridian energies. And yet, perhaps not. Perhaps the collective wisdom of Europe could not have devised for Lamb a more favorable condition of toil than this very India House clerkship. His works (his Leadenhall Street works) were certainly not read; popular they *could* not be, for they were not read by anybody; but then, to balance *that*, they were not reviewed. His folios were of that order, which (in Cowper's words,) 'not even critics criticize.' *Is that* nothing? Is it no happiness to escape the hands of scoundrel reviewers? Many of us escape being *read*; the worshipful reviewer does not find time to read a line of us; but we do not for that reason escape being criticized, 'shown up,' and martyred. The list of *errata* again, committed by Lamb, was probably of a magnitude to alarm any possible compositor; and yet these *errata* will never be known to mankind. They are dead and buried. They have been cut off prematurely; and for any effect upon

their generation, might as well never have existed. Then the returns, in a pecuniary sense, from these folios — how important were *they!* It is not common, certainly, to write folios; but neither is it common to draw a steady income of from 300*l.* to 400*l.* per annum from volumes of any size. This will be admitted; but would it not have been better to draw the income without the toil? Doubtless it would always be more agreeable to have the rose without the thorn. But in the case before us, taken with all its circumstances, we deny that the toil is truly typified as a thorn; so far from being a thorn in Lamb's daily life, on the contrary, it was a second rose ingrafted upon the original rose of the income, that he had to earn it by a moderate but continued exertion. Holidays, in a national establishment so great as the India House, and in our too fervid period, naturally could not be frequent; yet all great English corporations are gracious masters, and indulgences of this nature could be obtained on a special application. Not to count upon these accidents of favor, we find that the regular toil of those in Lamb's situation, began at ten in the morning and ended as the clock struck four in the afternoon. Six hours composed the daily contribution of labor, that is precisely one fourth part of the total day. Only that, as Sunday was exempted, the rigorous expression of the quota was one fourth of six-sevenths, which makes six twenty-eighths and not six twenty-fourths of the total time. Less toil than this would hardly have availed to deepen the sense of value in that large part of the time still remaining disposable. Had there been any resumption whatever of labor in the evening, though but for half an hour, that one ex-

croachment upon the broad continuous area of the eighteen free hours would have killed the tranquillity of the whole day, by *sowing* it (so to speak) with intermitting anxieties — anxieties that, like tides, would still be rising and falling. Whereas now, at the early hour of four, when daylight is yet lingering in the air, even at the dead of winter, in the latitude of London, and when the *enjoying* section of the day is barely commencing, everything is left which a man would care to retain. A mere *dilettante* or amateur student, having no mercenary interest concerned, would, upon a refinement of luxury — would, upon choice, give up so so much time to study, were it only to sharpen the value of what remained for pleasure. And thus the only difference between the scheme of the India House distributing his time for Lamb, and the scheme of a wise voluptuary distributing his time for himself, lay, not in the *amount* of time deducted from enjoyment, but in the particular mode of appropriating that deduction. An *intellectual* appropriation of the time, though casually fatiguing, must have pleasures of its own; pleasures denied to a task so mechanic and so monotonous as that of reiterating endless records of sales or consignments not *essentially* varying from each other. True; it is pleasanter to pursue an intellectual study than to make entries in a ledger. But even an intellectual toil is toil; few people can support it for more than six hours in a day. And the only question, therefore, after all, is, at what period of the day a man would prefer taking this pleasure of study. Now, upon that point, as regards the case of Lamb, there is no opening for doubt. He. amongst his *Popular Fallacies*, admirably illustrates

the necessity of evening and artificial lights to the prosperity of studies. After exposing, with the perfection of fun, the savage unsociality of those elder ancestors who lived (if life it was) before lamp-light was invented, showing that 'jokes came in with candles,' since 'what repartees *could* have passed' when people were 'grumbling at one another in the dark,' and 'when you must have felt about for a smile, and handled a neighbor's cheek to be sure that he understood it?' — he goes on to say, 'This accounts for the seriousness of the elder poetry,' viz., because they had no candle-light. Even eating he objects to as a very imperfect thing in the dark; you are not convinced that a dish tastes as it should do by the promise of its name, if you dine in the twilight without candles. Seeing is believing. 'The senses absolutely give and take reciprocally.' The sight guarantees the taste. For instance, 'Can you tell pork from veal in the dark, or distinguish Sherries from pure Malaga?' To all enjoyments whatsoever candles are indispensable as an adjunct; but, as to *reading*, 'there is,' says Lamb, 'absolutely no such thing but by a candle. We have tried the affectation of a book at noon-day in gardens, but it was labor thrown away. It is a mockery, all that is reported of the influential Phœbus. No true poem ever owed its birth to the sun's light. The mild internal light, that reveals the fine shapings of poetry, like fires on the domestic hearth, goes out in the sunshine. Milton's morning hymn in Paradise, we would hold a good wager, was penned at midnight; and Taylor's rich description of a sunrise smells decidedly of the taper.' This view of evening and candle-light as involved in literature may seem no more than a pleas-

ant extravaganza; and no doubt it is in the nature of such gayeties to travel a little into exaggeration, but substantially it is certain that Lamb's feelings pointed habitually in the direction here indicated. His literary studies, whether taking the color of tasks or diversions, courted the aid of evening, which, by means of physical weariness, produces a more luxurious state of repose than belongs to the labor hours of day, and courted the aid of lamp-light, which, as Lord Bacon remarked, gives a gorgeousness to human pomps and pleasures, such as would be vainly sought from the homeliness of daylight. The hours, therefore, which were withdrawn from his own control by the India House, happened to be exactly that part of the day which Lamb least valued, and could least have turned to account.

The account given of Lamb's friends, of those whom he endeavored to love because he admired them, or to esteem intellectually because he loved them personally, is too much colored for general acquiescence by Sergeant Talfourd's own early prepossessions. It is natural that an intellectual man like the Sergeant, personally made known in youth to people, whom from childhood he had regarded as powers in the ideal world, and in some instances as representing the eternities of human speculation, since their names had perhaps dawned upon his mind in concurrence with the very earliest suggestion of topics which they had treated, should overrate their intrinsic grandeur. Hazlitt accordingly is styled 'The great thinker.' But had he been such potentially, there was an absolute bar to his achievement of that station in act and consummation. No man *can* be a great thinker in our days upon large

and elaborate questions without being also a great student. To think profoundly, it is indispensable that a man should have read down to his own starting point, and have read as a collating student to the particular stage at which he himself takes up the subject. At this moment, for instance, how could geology be treated otherwise than childishly by one who should rely upon the encyclopædias of 1800? or comparative physiology by the most ingenious of men unacquainted with Marshall Hall, and with the apocalyptic glimpses of secrets unfolding under the hands of Professor Owen? In such a condition of undisciplined thinking, the ablest man thinks to no purpose. He lingers upon parts of the inquiry that have lost the importance which once they had, under imperfect charts of the subject; he wastes his strength upon problems that have become obsolete; he loses his way in paths that are not in the line of direction upon which the improved speculation is moving; or he gives narrow conjectural solutions of difficulties that have long since received sure and comprehensive ones. It is as if a man should in these days attempt to colonize, and yet, through inertia or through ignorance, should leave behind him all modern resources of chemistry, of chemical agriculture, or of steam-power. Hazlitt had read nothing. Unacquainted with Grecian philosophy, with Scholastic philosophy, and with the recomposition of these philosophies in the looms of Germany during the last sixty and odd years, trusting merely to the unrestrained instincts of keen mother-wit — whence should Hazlitt have had the materials for great thinking? It is through the collation of many abortive voyages to polar regions that a man gains his first chance of entering the polar

basin, or of running ahead on a true line of approach to it. The very reason for Hazlitt's defect in eloquence as a lecturer, is sufficient also as a reason why he could not have been a comprehensive thinker. 'He was not eloquent,' says the Sergeant, 'in the true sense of the term.' But why? Because it seems 'his thoughts were too weighty to be moved along by the shallow stream of feeling which an evening's excitement can rouse,' — an explanation which leaves us in doubt whether Hazlitt forfeited his chance of eloquence by accommodating himself to this evening's excitement, or by gloomily resisting it. Our own explanation is different; Hazlitt was not eloquent, because he was discontinuous. No man can be eloquent whose thoughts are abrupt, insulated, capricious, and (to borrow an impressive word from Coleridge) non-sequacious. Eloquence resides not in separate or fractional ideas, but in the relations of manifold ideas, and in the mode of their evolution from each other. It is not indeed enough that the ideas should be many, and their relations coherent; the main condition lies in the *key* of the evolution, in the *law* of the succession. The elements are nothing without the atmosphere that moulds, and the dynamic forces that combine. Now Hazlitt's brilliancy is seen chiefly in separate splinterings of phrase or image which throw upon the eye a vitreous scintillation for a moment, but spread no deep suffusions of color, and distribute no masses of mighty shadow. A flash, a solitary flash, and all is gone. Rhetoric, according to its quality, stands in many degrees of relation to the permanences of truth; and all rhetoric, like all flesh, is partly unreal, and the glory of both is fleeting. Even the mighty rhetoric

of Sir Thomas Browne, or Jeremy Taylor, to whom only it has been granted to open the trumpet-stop on that great organ of passion, oftentimes leaves behind it the sense of sadness which belongs to beautiful apparitions starting out of darkness upon the morbid eye, only to be reclaimed by darkness in the instant of their birth, or which belongs to pageantries in the clouds. But if all rhetoric is a mode of pyrotechny, and all pyrotechnics are by necessity fugacious, yet even in these frail pomps, there are many degrees of frailty. Some fireworks require an hour's duration for the expansion of their glory; others, as if formed from fulminating powder, expire in the very act of birth. Precisely on that scale of duration and of power stand the glitterings of rhetoric that are not worked into the texture, but washed on from the outside. Hazlitt's thoughts were of the same fractured and discontinuous order as his illustrative images — seldom or never self-diffusive; and *that* is a sufficient argument that he had never cultivated philosophic thinking.

Not, however, to conceal any part of the truth, we are bound to acknowledge that Lamb thought otherwise on this point, manifesting what seemed to us an extravagant admiration of Hazlitt, and perhaps even in part for that very glitter which we are denouncing — at least he did so in conversation with ourselves. But, on the other hand, as this conversation travelled a little into the tone of a disputation, and *our* frost on this point might seem to justify some undue fervor by way of balance, it is very possible that Lamb did not speak his absolute and most dispassionate judgment. And yet again, if he *did*, may we, with all reverence for Lamb's exquisite genius have permission to say — that his own

constitution of intellect sinned by this very habit of discontinuity. It was a habit of mind not unlikely to be cherished by his habits of life. Amongst these habits was the excess of his social kindness. He scorned so much to deny his company and his redundant hospitality to any man who manifested a wish for either by calling upon him, that he almost seemed to think it a criminality in himself if, by accident, he really *was* from home on your visit, rather than by possibility a negligence in you, that had not forewarned him of your intention. All his life, from this and other causes, he must have read in the spirit of one liable to sudden interruption ; like a dragoon, in fact, reading with one foot in the stirrup, when expecting momentarily a summons to mount for action. In such situations, reading by snatches, and by intervals of precarious leisure, people form the habit of seeking and unduly valuing condensations of the meaning, where in reality the truth suffers by this short-hand exhibition, or else they demand too vivid illustrations of the meaning. Lord Chesterfield himself, so brilliant a man by nature, already therefore making a morbid estimate of brilliancy, and so hurried throughout his life as a public man, read under this double coercion for craving instantaneous effects. At one period, his only time for reading was in the morning, whilst under the hands of his hair-dresser ; compelled to take the hastiest of flying shots at his author, naturally he demanded a very conspicuous mark to fire at. But the author could not, in so brief a space, be always sure to crowd any very prominent objects on the eye, unless by being audaciously oracular and peremptory as regarded the sentiment, or flashy in excess as regarded its expression.

'Come now, my friend,' was Lord Chesterfield's morning adjuration to his author; 'come now, cut it short — don't prose — don't hum and haw.' The author had doubtless no ambition to enter his name on the honorable and ancient roll of gentleman prosers; probably he conceived himself not at all tainted with the asthmatic infirmity of humming and hawing; but as to 'cutting it short,' how could he be sure of meeting his lordship's expectations in that point, unless by dismissing the limitations that might be requisite to fit the idea for use, or the adjuncts that might be requisite to integrate its truth, or the final consequences that might involve some deep *arrière pensée*, which, coming last in the succession, might oftentimes be calculated to lie deepest on the mind. To be lawfully and usefully brilliant after this rapid fashion, a man must come forward as a refresher of old truths, where *his* suppressions are supplied by the reader's memory; not as an expounder of new truths, where oftentimes a dislocated fraction of the true is more dangerous than the false itself.

To read therefore habitually, by hurried instalments, has this bad tendency — that it is likely to found a taste for modes of composition too artificially irritating, and to disturb the equilibrium of the judgment in relation to the colorings of style. Lamb, however, whose constitution of mind was even ideally sound in reference to the natural, the simple, the genuine, might seem of all men least liable to a taint in this direction. And undoubtedly he *was* so, as regarded those modes of beauty which nature had specially qualified him for apprehending. Else, and in relation to other modes of beauty, where his sense of the true, and of its dis-

tinction from the spurious, had been an acquired sense, it is impossible for us to hide from ourselves — that not through habits only, not through stress of injurious accidents only, but by original structure and temperament of mind, Lamb had a bias towards those very defects on which rested the startling characteristics of style which we have been noticing. He himself, we fear, not bribed by indulgent feelings to another, not moved by friendship, but by native tendency, shrank from the continuous, from the sustained, from the elaborate.

The elaborate, indeed, without which much truth and beauty must perish in germ, was by name the object of his invectives. The instances are many, in his own beautiful essays, where he literally collapses, literally sinks away from openings suddenly offering themselves to flights of pathos or solemnity in direct prosecution of his own theme. On any such summons where an ascending impulse, and an untired pinion were required, he *refuses* himself (to use military language) invariably. The least observing reader of *Elia* cannot have failed to notice that the most felicitous passages always accomplish their circuit in a few sentences. The gyration within which the sentiment wheels, no matter of what kind it may be, is always the shortest possible. It does not prolong itself, and it does not repeat itself. But in fact, other features in Lamb's mind would have argued this feature by analogy, had we by accident been left unaware of it directly. It is not by chance, or without a deep ground in his nature, *common* to all his qualities, both affirmative and negative, that Lamb had an insensibility to music more absolute that can have been often shared by any human creature, or

perhaps than was ever before acknowledged so candidly. The sense of music, — as a pleasurable sense, or as any sense at all other than of certain unmeaning and impertinent differences in respect to high and low, sharp or flat, — was utterly obliterated as with a sponge by nature herself from Lamb's organization. It was a corollary, from the same large *substratum* in his nature, that Lamb had no sense of the rhythmical in prose compositions. Rhythmus, or pomp of cadence, or sonorous ascent of clauses, in the structure of sentences, were effects of art as much thrown away upon *him* as the voice of the charmer upon the deaf adder. We ourselves, occupying the very station of polar opposition to that of Lamb, being as morbidly, perhaps, in the one excess as he in the other, naturally detected this omission in Lamb's nature at an early stage of our acquaintance. Not the fabled Regulus with his eyelids torn away, and his uncurtained eye-balls exposed to the noon-tide glare of a Carthaginian sun, could have shrieked with more anguish of recoil from torture than we from certain sentences and periods in which Lamb perceived no fault at all. *Pomp*, in our apprehension, was an idea of two categories; the *pompous* might be spurious, but it might also be genuine. It is well to love the simple — *we* love it; nor is there any opposition at all between *that* and the very glory of pomp. But, as we once put the case to Lamb, if, as a musician, as the leader of a mighty orchestra, you had this theme offered to you — 'Belshazzar the king gave a great feast to a thousand of his lords' — or this, 'And on a certain day, Marcus Cicero stood up, and in a set speech rendered solemn thanks to Caius Cæsar for Quintus Ligarius pardoned, and for Marcus Marcellus

restored ' — surely no man would deny that, in such a case, simplicity, though in a passive sense not lawfully absent, must stand aside as totally insufficient for the *positive* part. Simplicity might guide, even here, but could not furnish the power ; a rudder it might be, but not an oar or a sail. This, Lamb was ready to allow ; as an intellectual *quiddity*, he recognized pomp in the character of a privileged thing ; he was obliged to do so ; for take away from great ceremonial festivals, such as the solemn rendering of thanks, the celebration of national anniversaries, the commemoration of public benefactors, &c., the element of pomp, and you take away their very meaning and life ; but, whilst allowing a place for it in the rubric of the logician, it is certain that, *sensuously*, Lamb would not have sympathized with it, nor have *felt* its justification in any concrete instance. We find a difficulty in pursuing this subject, without greatly exceeding our limits. We pause, therefore, and add only this one suggestion as partly explanatory of the case. Lamb had the dramatic intellect and taste, perhaps, in perfection ; of the Epic, he had none at all. Here, as happens sometimes to men of genius preternaturally endowed in one direction, he might be considered as almost starved. A favorite of nature, so eminent in some directions, by what right could he complain that her bounties were not indiscriminate ? From this defect in his nature it arose, that, except by culture and by reflection, Lamb had no genial appreciation of Milton. The solemn planetary wheelings of the Paradise Lost were not to his taste. What he *did* comprehend, were the motions like those of lightning, the fierce angular coruscations of that wild agency which comes forward so vividly in the sudden

περιπέτεια, in the revolutionary catastrophe, and in the tumultuous conflicts, through persons or through situations, of the tragic drama.

There is another vice in Mr. Hazlitt's mode of composition, viz., the habit of trite quotation, too common to have challenged much notice, were it not for these reasons : 1st, That Sergeant Talfourd speaks of it in equivocal terms, as a fault perhaps, but as a 'felicitous' fault, 'trailing after it a line of golden associations ;' 2dly, because the practice involves a dishonesty. On occasion of No. 1, we must profess our belief that a more ample explanation from the Sergeant would have left him in substantial harmony with ourselves. We cannot conceive the author of Ion, and the friend of Wordsworth, seriously to countenance that paralytic 'mouth-diarrhœa,' (to borrow a phrase of Coleridge's) — that *fluxe de bouche* (to borrow an earlier phrase of Archbishop Huet's,) which places the reader at the mercy of a man's tritest remembrances from his most school-boy reading. To have the verbal memory infested with tags of verse and 'cues' of rhyme is in itself an infirmity as vulgar and as morbid as the stable-boy's habit of whistling slang airs upon the mere mechanical excitement of a bar or two whistled by some other blockhead in some other stable. The very stage has grown weary of ridiculing a folly, that having been long since expelled from decent society has taken refuge amongst the most imbecile of authors. Was Mr. Hazlitt then of that class ? No ; he was a man of great talents, and of capacity for greater things than he ever attempted, though without any pretensions of the philosophic kind ascribed to him by the Sergeant. Meantime the reason for resisting the example and

practice of Hazlitt lies in this — that essentially it is at war with sincerity, the foundation of all good writing, to express one's own thoughts by another man's words. This dilemma arises. The thought is, or it is not, worthy of that emphasis which belongs to a metrical expression of it. If it is *not*, then we shall be guilty of a mere folly in pushing into strong relief that which confessedly cannot support it. If it *is*, then how incredible that a thought strongly conceived, and bearing about it the impress of one's own individuality, should naturally, and without dissimulation or falsehood, bend to another man's expression of it! Simply to back one's own view, by a similar view derived from another, may be useful; a quotation that repeats one's own sentiment, but in a varied form, has the grace which belongs to the *idem in alio*, the same radical idea expressed with a difference — similarity in dissimilarity; but to throw one's own thoughts, matter and form, through alien organs so absolutely as to make another man one's interpreter for evil and good, is either to confess a singular laxity of thinking that can so flexibly adapt itself to any casual form of words, or else to confess that sort of carelessness about the expression which draws its real origin from a sense of indifference about the things to be expressed. Utterly at war this distressing practice is with all simplicity and earnestness of writing; it argues a state of indolent ease inconsistent with the pressure and coersion of strong fermenting thoughts, before we can be at leisure for idle or chance quotations. But lastly, in reference to No. 2, we must add that the practice is signally dishonest. It 'trails after it a line of golden associations.' Yes, and the burglar, who leaves an army-tailor's after

a midnight visit, trails after him perhaps a long roll of gold bullion epaulettes which may look pretty by lamp-light.

But *that*, in the present condition of moral philosophy amongst the police, is accounted robbery; and to benefit too much by quotations is little less. At this moment we have in our eye a work, at one time not without celebrity, which is one continued *cento* of splendid passages from other people. The natural effect from so much fine writing is, that the reader rises with the impression of having been engaged upon a most eloquent work. Meantime the whole is a series of mosaics; a tessellation made up from borrowed fragments: and first, when the reader's attention is expressly directed upon the fact, he becomes aware that the nominal author has contributed nothing more to the book than a few passages of transition, or brief clauses of connection.

In the year 1796, the main incident occurring of any importance for English literature was the publication by Southey of an epic poem. This poem, the *Joan of Arc*, was the earliest work of much pretension amongst all that Southey wrote; and by many degrees it was the worst. In the four great narrative poems of his later years, there is a combination of two striking qualities, viz., a peculiar command over the *visually* splendid, connected with a deep-toned grandeur of moral pathos. Especially we find this union in the *Thalaba* and the *Roderick;* but in the *Joan of Arc* we miss it. What splendor there is for the fancy and the eye belongs chiefly to the Vision, contributed by Coleridge, and this was subsequently withdrawn. The fault lay in Southey's political relations at that era;

his sympathy with the French Revolution in its earlier stages had been boundless; in all respects it was a noble sympathy, fading only as the gorgeous coloring faded from the emblazonries of that awful event, drooping only when the promises of that golden dawn sickened under stationary eclipse. In 1796, Southey was yet under the tyranny of his own earliest fascination; in *his* eyes the Revolution had suffered a momentary blight from refluxes of panic; but blight of some kind is incident to every harvest on which human hopes are suspended. Bad auguries were also ascending from the unchaining of martial instincts. But that the Revolution, having ploughed its way through unparalleled storms, was preparing to face other storms, did but quicken the apprehensiveness of his love — did but quicken the duty of giving utterance to this love. Hence came the rapid composition of the poem, which cost less time in writing than in printing. Hence, also, came the choice of his heroine. What he needed in his central character was, a heart with a capacity for the wrath of Hebrew prophets applied to ancient abuses, and for evangelic pity applied to the sufferings of nations. This heart, with this double capacity — where should he seek it? A French heart it must be, or how should it follow with its sympathies a French movement? *There* lay Southey's reason for adopting the Maid of Orleans as the depositary of hopes and aspirations on behalf of France as fervid as his own. In choosing this heroine, so inadequately known at that time, Southey testified at least his own nobility of feeling;[3] but in executing his choice, he and his friends overlooked two faults fatal to his purpose. One was this: sympathy with the French Revolution

meant sympathy with the opening prospects of man — meant sympathy with the Pariah of every clime — with all that suffered social wrong, or saddened in hopeless bondage.

That was the movement at work in the French Revolution. But the movement of Joanna d'Arc took a different direction. In *her* day also, it is true, the human heart had yearned after the same vast enfranchisement for her children of labor as afterwards worked in the great vision of the French Revolution. In *her* days also, and shortly before them, the human hand had sought by bloody acts to realize this dream of the heart. And in her childhood, Joanna had not been insensible to these premature motions upon a path too bloody and too dark to be safe. But this view of human misery had been utterly absorbed to *her* by the special misery then desolating France. The lilies of France had been trampled underfoot by the conquering stranger. Within fifty years, in three pitched battles that resounded to the ends of the earth, the chivalry of France had been exterminated. Her oriflamme had been dragged through the dust. The eldest son of Baptism had been prostrated. The daughter of France had been surrendered on coercion as a bride to her English conqueror. The child of that marriage, so ignominious to the land, was king of France by the consent of Christendom; that child's uncle domineered as regent of France; and that child's armies were in military possession of the land. But were they undisputed masters? No; and *there* precisely lay the sorrow of the time. Under a perfect conquest there would have been repose; whereas the presence of the English armies did but furnish a plea, masking itself in

patriotism, for gatherings everywhere of lawless marauders; of soldiers that had deserted their banners; and of robbers by profession. This was the woe of France more even than the military dishonor. That dishonor had been palliated from the first by the genealogical pretensions of the English royal family to the French throne, and these pretensions were strengthened in the person of the present claimant. But the military desolation of France, this it was that woke the faith of Joanna in her own heavenly mission of deliverance. It was the attitude of her prostrate country, crying night and day for purification from blood, and not from feudal oppression, that swallowed up the thoughts of the impassioned girl. But *that* was not the cry that uttered itself afterwards in the French Revolution. In Joanna's days, the first step towards rest for France was by expulsion of the foreigner. Independence of a foreign yoke, liberation as between people and people, was the one ransom to be paid for French honor and peace. *That* debt settled, there might come a time for thinking of civil liberties. But this time was not within the prospects of the poor sheperdess. The field — the area of her sympathies — never coincided with that of a Revolutionary period. It followed, therefore, that Southey *could* not have raised Joanna (with her condition of feeling) by any management, into the interpreter of his own. *That* was the first error in his poem, and it was irremediable. The second was — and strangely enough this also escaped notice — that the heroine of Southey is made to close her career precisely at the point when its grandeur commences. She believed herself to have a mission for the deliverance of France; and the great instrument which she was

authorized to use towards this end, was the king, Charles VII. Him she was to crown. With this coronation, her triumph, in the plain historical sense, ended. And *there* ends Southey's poem. But exactly at this point, the grander stage of her mission commences, viz., the ransom which she, a solitary girl, paid in her own person for the national deliverance. The grander half of the story was thus sacrificed, as being irrelevant to Southey's political object; and yet, after all, the half which he retained did not at all symbolize that object. It is singular, indeed, to find a long poem, on an ancient subject, adapting itself hieroglyphically to a modern purpose; 2dly, to find it failing of this purpose; and 3dly, if it had *not* failed, so planned that it could have succeeded only by a sacrifice of all that was grandest in the theme.

To these capital oversights, Southey, Coleridge, and Lamb, were all joint parties; the two first as concerned in the composition, the last as a frank though friendly reviewer of it in his private correspondence with Coleridge. It is, however, some palliation of these oversights, and a very singular fact in itself, that neither from English authorities nor from French, though the two nations were equally brought into close connection with the career of that extraordinary girl, could any adequate view be obtained of her character and acts. The *official* records of her trial, apart from which nothing can be depended upon, were first in the course of publication from the Paris press during the currency of last year. First in 1847, about four hundred and sixteen years after her ashes had been dispersed to the winds, could it be seen distinctly

through the clouds of fierce partisanships and national prejudices, what had been the frenzy of the persecution against her, and the utter desolation of her position; what had been the grandeur of her conscientious existence.

Anxious that our readers should see Lamb from as many angles as possible, we have obtained from an old friend of his a memorial — slight, but such as the circumstances allowed — of an evening spent with Charles and Mary Lamb, in the winter of 1821–22. The record is of the most unambitious character; it pretends to nothing as the reader will see, not so much as to a pun, which it really required some singularity of luck to have missed from Charles Lamb, who often continued to fire puns, as minute guns, all through the evening. But the more unpretending this record is, the more appropriate it becomes by that very fact to the memory of *him* who, amongst all authors, was the humblest and least pretending. We have often thought that the famous epitaph written for his grave by Piron, the cynical author of *La Métromanie*, might have come from Lamb, were it not for one objection; Lamb's benign heart would have recoiled from a sarcasm, however effective, inscribed upon a grave-stone; or from a jest, however playful, that tended to a vindictive sneer amongst his own farewell words. We once translated this Piron epitaph into a kind of rambling Drayton couplet; and the only point needing explanation is, that, from the accident of scientific men, fellows of the Royal Society being usually very solemn men, with an extra chance, therefore, for being dull men in conversation, naturally it arose that some wit amongst our great-grandfathers

translated F. R. S. into a short-hand expression for a Fellow Remarkably Stupid; to which version of the three letters our English epitaph alludes. The French original of Piron is this:

> 'Ci git Piron ; qui ne fut rien;
> Pas même académicien.'

The bitter arrow of the second line was feathered to hit the French Académie, who had declined to elect him a member. Our translation is this:

> 'Here lies Piron; who was — nothing; or, if *that* could be, was less :
> How ! — nothing? Yes, nothing; not so much as F. R. S.'

But now to our friend's memorandum:

"October 6, 1848.

"MY DEAR X. — You ask me for some memorial, however trivial, of any dinner party, supper party, water party, no matter what, that I can circumstantially recall to recollection, by any features whatever, puns or repartees, wisdom or wit, connecting it with Charles Lamb. I grieve to say that my meetings of *any* sort with Lamb were few, though spread through a score of years. That sounds odd for one that loved Lamb so entirely, and so much venerated his character. But the reason was, that I so seldom visited London, and Lamb so seldom quitted it. Somewhere about 1810 and 1812 I must have met Lamb repeatedly at the *Courier Office* in the Strand ; that is, at Coleridge's, to whom, as an intimate friend, Mr. Stuart (a proprietor of the paper) gave up for a time the use of some rooms in the office. Thither, in the London season, (May especially and June,) resorted Lamb, Godwin, Sir H. Davy, and, once or twice, Wordsworth, who visited Sir George Beaumont's Leicestershire residence

of Coleorton early in the spring, and then travelled up to Grosvenor Square with Sir George and Lady Beaumont: '*spectatum veniens, veniens spectetur ut ipse.*'

But in these miscellaneous gatherings, Lamb said little except when an opening arose for a pun. And how effectual that sort of small shot was from *him*, I need not say to anybody who remembers his infirmity of stammering, and his dexterous management of it for purposes of light and shade. He was often able to train the roll of stammers in settling upon the words immediately preceding the effective one; by which means the key-note of the jest or sarcasm, benefiting by the sudden liberation of his embargoed voice, was delivered with the force of a pistol shot. That stammer was worth an annuity to him as an ally of his wit. Firing under cover of that advantage, he did triple execution; for, in the first place, the distressing sympathy of the hearers with *his* distress of utterance won for him unavoidably the silence of deep attention; and then, whilst he had us all hoaxed into this attitude of mute suspense by an appearance of distress that he perhaps did not really feel, down came a plunging shot into the very thick of us, with ten times the effect it would else have had. If his stammering, however, often did him true 'yeoman's service,' sometimes it led him into scrapes. Coleridge told me of a ludicrous embarrassment which it caused him at Hastings. Lamb had been medically advised to a course of sea-bathing; and accordingly at the door of his bathing machine, whilst he stood shivering with cold, two stout fellows laid hold of him, one at each shoulder, like heraldic supporters: they waited for the word of command

from their principal, who began the following oration to them: 'Hear me, men! Take notice of this — I am to be dipped.' What more he would have said is unknown to land or sea or bathing machines; for having reached the word dipped, he commenced such a rolling fire of Di — di — di — di, that when at length he descended *à plomb* upon the full word *dipped*, the two men, rather tired of the long suspense, became satisfied that they had reached what lawyers call the 'operative clause' of the sentence; and both exclaiming at once, 'Oh yes, Sir, we're quite aware of *that*,' down they plunged him into the sea. On emerging, Lamb sobbed so much from the cold, that he found no voice suitable to his indignation; from necessity he seemed tranquil; and again addressing the men, who stood respectfully listening, he began thus: 'Men! is it possible to obtain your attention?' 'Oh surely, Sir, by all means.' 'Then listen: once more I tell you, I am to be di — di — di —' — and then, with a burst of indignation, 'dipped, I tell you,' —— 'Oh decidedly, Sir,' rejoined the men, 'decidedly,' and down the stammerer went for the second time. Petrified with cold and wrath, once more Lamb made a feeble attempt at explanation — 'Grant me pa — pa — patience; is it mum — um — murder you me — me — mean? Again and a — ga — ga — gain, I tell you, I'm to be di — di — di — dipped,' now speaking furiously, with the voice of an injured man. 'Oh yes, Sir,' the men replied, 'we know that, we fully understood it,' and for the third time down went Lamb into the sea. 'Oh limbs of Satan!' he said, on coming up for the third time, 'it's now too late; I tell you that I am — no, that I *was* — to be di — di — di — dipped only *once*.'

Since the rencontres with Lamb at Coleridge's, I had met him once or twice at literary dinner parties. One of these occurred at the house of Messrs. Taylor & Hessey, the publishers. I myself was suffering too much from illness at the time to take any pleasure in what passed, or to notice it with any vigilance of attention. Lamb, I remember, as usual, was full of gayety; and as usual he rose too rapidly to the zenith of his gayety; for he shot upwards like a rocket, and, as usual, people said he was 'tipsy.' To me Lamb never seemed intoxicated, but at most aerially elevated. He never talked nonsense, which is a great point gained; nor polemically, which is a greater; for it is a dreadful thing to find a drunken man bent upon converting oneself; nor sentimentally, which is greatest of all. You can stand a man's fraternizing with you; or if he swears an eternal friendship only once in an hour, you do not think of calling the police; but once in every three minutes is too much. Lamb did none of these things; he was always rational, quiet, and gentlemanly in his habits. Nothing memorable, I am sure, passed upon this occasion, which was in November, of 1821; and yet the dinner was memorable by means of one fact not discovered until many years later. Amongst the company of all literary men, sate a murderer, and a murderer of a freezing class; cool, calculating, wholesale in his operations, and moving all along under the advantages of unsuspecting domestic confidence and domestic opportunities. This was Mr. Wainwright, who was subsequently brought to trial, but not for any of his murders, and transported for life. The story has been told by Sergeant Talfourd, in the second volume of these 'Final Memoirs,' and pre-

viously by Sir Edward B. Lytton. Both have been much blamed for the use made of this extraordinary case; but we know not why. In itself it is a most remarkable case, for more reasons than one. It is remarkable for the apalling revelation which it makes of power spread through the hands of people not liable to suspicion, for purposes the most dreadful. It is remarkable also by the contrast which existed in this case between the murderer's appearance, and the terrific purposes with which he was always dallying. He was a contributor to a journal in which I also had written several papers. This formed a shadowy link between us; and, ill as I was, I looked more attentively at *him* than at anybody else. Yet there were several men of wit and genius present, amongst whom Lamb (as I have said), and Thomas Hood, Hamilton Reynolds, and Allan Cunningham. But *them* I already knew, whereas Mr. W. I now saw for the first time and the last. What interested me about *him* was this, the papers which had been pointed out to me as his, (signed *Janus Weathercock*, *Vinkbooms*, &c.) were written in a spirit of coxcombry that did not so much disgust as amuse. The writer could not conceal the ostentatious pleasure which he took in the luxurious fittings up of his rooms, in the fancied splendor of his *bijouterie*, &c. Yet it was easy for a man of any experience to read two facts in all this idle *étalage;* one being, that his finery was but of a second-rate order; the other, that he was a *parvenu*, not at home even amongst his second-rate splendor. So far there was nothing to distinguish Mr. W——'s papers from the papers of other triflers. But in this point there *was*, viz., that in his judgments upon the great Italian

masters of painting, Da Vinci, Titian, &c., there seemed a tone of sincerity and of native sensibility, as in one who spoke from himself, and was not merely a copier from books. This it was that interested me; as also his reviews of the chief Italian engravers, Morghen, Volpato, &c.; not for the manner, which overflowed with levities and impertinence, but for the substance of his judgments in those cases where I happened to have had an opportunity of judging for myself. Here arose also a claim upon Lamb's attention; for Lamb and his sister had a deep feeling for what was excellent in painting. Accordingly Lamb paid him a great deal of attention, and continued to speak of him for years with an interest that seemed disproportioned to his pretensions. This might be owing in part to an indirect compliment paid to Miss Lamb in one of W —— 's papers; else his appearance would rather have repelled Lamb; it was commonplace, and better suited to express the dandyism which overspread the surface of his manner, than the unaffected sensibility which apparently lay in his nature Dandy or not, however, this man, on account of the schism in his papers, so much amiable puppyism on one side, so much deep feeling on the other, (feeling, applied to some of the grandest objects that earth has to show,) did really move a trifle of interest in me, on a day when I hated the face of man and woman. Yet again, if I had known this man for the murderer that even then he was, what sudden loss of interest, what sudden growth of another interest, would have changed the face of that party! Trivial creature, that didst carry thy dreadful eye kindling with perpetual treasons! Dreadful creature, that didst carry thy trivial

eye, mantling with eternal levity, over the sleeping surfaces of confiding household life — oh, what a revolution for man wouldst thou have accomplished had thy deep wickedness prospered! What *was* that wickedness? In a few words I will say.

At this time (October 1848) the whole British island is appalled by a new chapter in the history of poisoning. Locusta in ancient Rome, Madame Brinvilliers in Paris, were people of original genius: not in any new artifice of toxicology, not in the mere management of poisons, was the audacity of their genius displayed. No; but in profiting by domestic openings for murder, unsuspected through their very atrocity. Such an opening was made some years ago by those who saw the possibility of founding purses for parents upon the murder of their children. This was done upon a larger scale than had been suspected, and upon a plausible pretence. To bury a corpse is costly; but of a hundred children only a few, in the ordinary course of mortality, will die within a given time. Five shillings a-piece will produce £25 annually, and *that* will bury a considerable number. On this principle arose Infant Burial Societies. For a few shillings annually, a parent could secure a funeral for every child. If the child died, a few guineas fell due to the parent, and the funeral was accomplished without cost of *his*. But on this arose the suggestion — Why not execute an insurance of this nature twenty times over? One single insurance pays for the funeral — the other nineteen are so much clear gain, a *lucro ponatur*, for the parents. Yes; but on the supposition that the child died! twenty are no better than one, unless they are gathered into the garner. Now, if the child died

naturally, all was right; but how, if the child did *not* die? Why, clearly this, — the child that *can* die, and won't die, may be made to die. There are many ways of doing that; and it is shocking to know, that, according to recent discoveries, poison is comparatively a very merciful mode of murder. Six years ago a dreadful communication was made to the public by a medical man, viz., that three thousand children were annually burned to death under circumstances showing too clearly that they had been left by their mothers with the means and the temptations to set themselves on fire in her absence. But more shocking, because more lingering, are the deaths by artificial appliances of wet, cold, hunger, bad diet, and disturbed sleep, to the frail constitutions of children. By that machinery it is, and not by poison, that the majority qualify themselves for claiming the funeral allowances. Here, however, there occur to any man, on reflection, two eventual restraints on the extension of this domestic curse: — 1st, as there is no pretext for wanting more than one funeral on account of one child, any insurances beyond one are in themselves a ground of suspicion. Now, if any plan were devised for securing the *publication* of such insurances, the suspicions would travel as fast as the grounds for them. 2dly, it occurs, that eventually the evil checks itself, since a society established on the ordinary rates of mortality would be ruined when a murderous stimulation was applied to that rate too extensively. Still it is certain that, for a season, this atrocity *has* prospered in manufacturing districts for some years, and more recently, as judicial investigations have shown, in one agricultural district of Essex. Now, Mr. W. ——'s scheme

of murder was, in its outline, the very same, but not applied to the narrow purpose of obtaining burials from a public fund. He persuaded, for instance, two beautiful young ladies, visitors in his family, to insure their lives for a short period of two years. This insurance was repeated in several different offices, until a sum of £18,000 had been secured in the event of their deaths within the two years. Mr. W—— took care that they *should* die, and very suddenly, within that period; and then, having previously secured from his victims an assignment to himself of this claim, he endeavored to make this assignment available. But the offices, which had vainly endeavored to extract from the young ladies any satisfactory account of the reasons for this limited insurance, had their suspicions at last strongly roused. One office had recently experienced a case of the same nature, in which also the young lady had been poisoned by the man in whose behalf she had effected the insurance; all the offices declined to pay; actions at law arose; in the course of the investigation which followed, Mr. W.'s character was fully exposed. Finally, in the midst of the embarrassments which ensued, he committed forgery, and was transported.

From this Mr. W——, some few days afterwards, I received an invitation to a dinner party, expressed in terms that were obligingly earnest. He mentioned the names of his principal guests, and amongst them rested most upon those of Lamb and Sir David Wilkie. From an accident I was unable to attend, and greatly regretted it. Sir David one might rarely happen to see, except at a crowded party. But as regarded Lamb, I was sure to see him or to hear of him again

in some way or other within a short time. This opportunity, in fact, offered itself within a month through the kindness of the Lambs themselves. They had heard of my being in solitary lodgings, and insisted on my coming to dine with them, which more than once I did in the winter of 1821–22.

The mere reception by the Lambs was so full of goodness and hospitable feeling, that it kindled animation in the most cheerless or torpid of invalids. I cannot imagine that any *memorabilia* occurred during the visit; but I will use the time that would else be lost upon the settling of that point, in putting down any triviality that occurs to my recollection. Both Lamb and myself had a furious love for nonsense, headlong nonsense. Excepting Professor Wilson, I have known nobody who had the same passion to the same extent. And things of that nature better illustrate the *realities* of Lamb's social life than the gravities, which weighing so sadly on his solitary hours he sought to banish from his moments of relaxation.

There were no strangers; Charles Lamb, his sister, and myself made up the party. Even this was done in kindness. They knew that I should have been oppressed by an effort such as must be made in the society of strangers; and they placed me by their own fireside, where I could say as little or as much as I pleased.

We dined about five o'clock, and it was one of the hospitalities inevitable to the Lambs, that any game which they might receive from rural friends in the course of the week, was reserved for the day of a friend's dining with them.

In regard to wine, Lamb and myself had the same

habit — perhaps it rose to the dignity of a principle — viz., to take a great deal *during* dinner — none *after* it. Consequently, as Miss Lamb (who drank only water) retired almost with the dinner itself, nothing remained for men of our principles, the rigor of which we had illustrated by taking rather too much of old port before the cloth was drawn, except talking; amœbæan colloquy, or, in Dr. Johnson's phrase, a dialogue of 'brisk reciprocation.' But this was impossible; over Lamb, at this period of his life, there passed regularly, after taking wine, a brief eclipse of sleep. It descended upon him as softly as a shadow. In a gross person, laden with superfluous flesh, and sleeping heavily, this would have been disagreeable; but in Lamb, thin even to meagreness, spare and wiry as an Arab of the desert, or as Thomas Aquinas, wasted by scholastic vigils, the affection of sleep seemed rather a network of aërial gossamer than of earthly cobweb — more like a golden haze falling upon him gently from the heavens than a cloud exhaling upwards from the flesh. Motionless in his chair as a bust, breathing so gently as scarcely to seem certainly alive, he presented the image of repose midway between life and death, like the repose of sculpture; and to one who knew his history, a repose affectingly contrasting with the calamities and internal storms of his life. I have heard more persons than I can now distinctly recall, observe of Lamb when sleeping, that his countenance in that state assumed an expression almost seraphic, from its intellectual beauty of outline, its childlike simplicity and its benignity. It could not be called a transfiguration that sleep had worked in his face; for the features wore essentially the same expression when waking; but sleep spiritual-

ized that expression, exalted it, and also harmonized it. Much of the change lay in that last process. The eyes it was that disturbed the unity of effect in Lamb's waking face. They gave a restlessness to the character of his intellect, shifting, like northern lights, through every mode of combination with fantastic playfulness, and sometimes by fiery gleams obliterating for the moment that pure light of benignity which was the predominant reading on his features. Some people have supposed that Lamb had Jewish blood in his veins, which seemed to account for his gleaming eyes. It might be so; but this notion found little confidence in Lamb's own way of treating the gloomy mediæval traditions propagated throughout Europe about the Jews, and their secret enmity to Christian races. Lamb, indeed, might not be more serious than Shakspeare is supposed to have been in his Shylock; yet he spoke at times as from a station of wilful bigotry, and seemed (whether laughingly or not) to sympathize with the barbarous Christian superstitions upon the pretended bloody practices of the Jews, and of the early Jewish physicians. Being himself a Lincoln man, he treated Sir Hugh[4] of Lincoln, the young child that suffered death by secret assassination in the Jewish quarter rather than suppress his daily anthems to the Virgin, as a true historical personage on the rolls of martyrdom: careless that this fable, like that of the apprentice murdered out of jealousy by his master, the architect, had destroyed its own authority by ubiquitous diffusion. All over Europe the same legend of the murdered apprentice and the martyred child reäppears under different names — so that in effect the verification of the tale is none a' all, because it is unanimous; is too narrow,

because it is too impossibly broad. Lamb, however, though it was often hard to say whether he were not secretly laughing, swore to the truth of all these old fables, and treated the liberalities of the present generation on such points as mere fantastic and effeminate affectations, which, no doubt, they often are as regards the sincerity of those who profess them. The bigotry which it pleased his fancy to assume, he used like a sword against the Jew, as the official weapon of the Christian, upon the same principle that a Capulet would have drawn upon a Montague, without conceiving it any duty of *his* to rip up the grounds of so ancient a quarrel; it was a feud handed down to him by his ancestors, and it was *their* business to see that originally it had been an honest feud. I cannot yet believe that Lamb, if seriously aware of any family interconnection with Jewish blood, would, even in jest, have held that one-sided language. More probable it is, that the fiery eye recorded not any alliance with Jewish blood, but that disastrous alliance with insanity which tainted his own life, and laid desolate his sister's.

On awakening from his brief slumber, Lamb sat for some time in profound silence, and then, with the most startling rapidity, sang out — 'Diddle, diddle, dumpkins;' not looking at me, but as if soliloquizing. For five minutes he relapsed into the same deep silence; from which again he started up into the same abrupt utterance of — 'Diddle, diddle, dumpkins.' I could not help laughing aloud at the extreme energy of this sudden communication, contrasted with the deep silence that went before and followed. Lamb smilingly begged to know what I was laughing at, and with a look of as much surprise as if it were I that

had done something unaccountable, and not himself. I told him (as was the truth) that there had suddenly occurred to me the possibility of my being in some future period or other called on to give an account of this very evening before some literary committee. The committee might say to me — (supposing the case that I outlived him) — 'You dined with Mr. Lamb in January, 1822; now, can you remember any remark or memorable observation which that celebrated man made before or after dinner?'

I as *respondent.* 'Oh yes, I can.'

Com. 'What was it?'

Resp. 'Diddle, diddle, dumpkins.'

Com. 'And was this his only observation? Did Mr. Lamb not strengthen this remark by some other of the same nature?'

Resp. 'Yes, he did.'

Com. 'And what was it?'

Resp. 'Diddle, diddle, dumpkins.'

Com. 'What is your secret opinion of Dumpkins? Do you conceive Dumpkins to have been a thing or a person?'

Resp. 'I conceive Dumpkins to have been a person, having the rights of a person.'

Com. 'Capable, for instance, of suing and being sued?'

Resp. 'Yes, capable of both; though I have reason to think there would have been very little use in suing Dumpkins.'

Com. 'How so? Are the committee to understand that you, the respondent, in your own case, have found it a vain speculation, countenanced only by visionary lawyers, to sue Dumpkins?'

Resp. 'No; I never lost a shilling by Dumpkins, the reason for which may be that Dumpkins never owed me a shilling; but from his *prænomen* of "diddle," I apprehend that he was too well acquainted with joint-stock companies!'

Com. 'And your opinion, is, that he may have diddled Mr. Lamb?'

Resp. 'I conceive it to be not unlikely.'

Com. 'And, perhaps, from Mr. Lamb's pathetic reiteration of his name, "Diddle, diddle," you would be disposed to infer that Dumpkins had practised his diddling talents upon Mr. L. more than once?'

Resp. 'I think it probable.'

Lamb laughed and brightened up; tea was announced; Miss Lamb returned. The cloud had passed away from Lamb's spirits, and again he realized the pleasure of evening, which, in *his* apprehension, was so essential to the pleasure of literature.

On the table lay a copy of Wordsworth, in two volumes: it was the edition of Longman, printed about the time of Waterloo. Wordsworth was held in little consideration, I believe, amongst the house of Longman; at any rate, *their* editions of his works were got up in the most slovenly manner. In particular, the table of contents was drawn up like a short-hand bill of parcels. By accident the book lay open at a part of this table, where the sonnet beginning —

> 'Alas! what boots the long laborious quest' —

had been entered with mercantile speed, as —

> 'Alas what boots,' ——

'Yes,' said Lamb, reading this entry in a dolorous tone of voice, 'he may well say *that*. I paid Hoby

three guineas for a pair that tore like blotting-paper, when I was leaping a ditch to escape a farmer that pursued me with a pitch-fork for trespassing. But why should W. wear boots in Westmoreland? Pray, advise him to patronize shoes.'

The mercurialities of Lamb were infinite, and always uttered in a spirit of absolute recklessness for the quality or the prosperity of the sally. It seemed to liberate his spirits from some burthen of blackest melancholy which oppressed it, when he had thrown off a jest: he would not stop one instant to improve it; nor did he care the value of a straw whether it were good enough to be remembered, or so mediocre as to extort high moral indignation from a collector who refused to receive into his collection of jests and puns any that were not felicitously good or revoltingly bad.

After tea, Lamb read to me a number of beautiful compositions, which he had himself taken the trouble to copy out into a blank paper folio from unsuccessful authors. Neglected people in every class won the sympathy of Lamb. One of the poems, I remember, was a very beautiful sonnet from a volume recently published by Lord Thurlow — which, and Lamb's just remarks upon it, I could almost repeat *verbatim* at this moment, nearly twenty-seven years later, if your limits would allow me. But these, you tell me, allow of no such thing; at the utmost they allow only twelve lines more. Now all the world knows that the sonnet itself would require fourteen lines; but take fourteen from twelve, and there remains very little, I fear; besides which, I am afraid two of my twelve are already exhausted. This forces me to interrupt my account of

Lamb's reading, by reporting the very accident that *did* interrupt it in fact; since that no less characteristically expressed Lamb's peculiar spirit of kindness, (always quickening itself towards the ill-used or the down-trodden,) than it had previously expressed itself in his choice of obscure readings. Two ladies came in, one of whom at least had sunk in the scale of worldly consideration. They were ladies who would not have found much recreation in literary discussions; elderly, and habitually depressed. On *their* account, Lamb proposed whist, and in that kind effort to amuse *them*, which naturally drew forth some momentary gayeties from himself, but not of a kind to impress themselves on the recollection, the evening terminated."

We have left ourselves no room for a special examination of Lamb's writings, some of which were failures, and some were so memorably beautiful as to be uniques in their class. The character of Lamb it is, and the life-struggle of Lamb, that must fix the attention of many, even amongst those wanting in sensibility to his intellectual merits. This character and this struggle, as we have already observed, impress many traces of themselves upon Lamb's writings. Even in that view, therefore, they have a ministerial value; but separately, for themselves, they have an independent value of the highest order. Upon this point we gladly adopt the eloquent words of Sergeant Talfourd: —

'The sweetness of Lamb's character, breathed through his writings, was felt even by strangers; but its heroic aspect was unguessed even by many of his friends. Let them now consider it, and ask if the annals of self-sacrifice can show anything in human action and endurance more lovely

than its self-devotion exhibits? It was not merely that he saw, through the ensanguined cloud of misfortune which had fallen upon his family, the unstained excellence of his sister, whose madness had caused it; that he was ready to take her to his own home with reverential affection, and cherish her through life; and he gave up, for *her* sake, all meaner and more selfish love, and all the hopes which youth blends with the passion which disturbs and ennobles it; not even that he did all this cheerfully, without pluming himself upon his brotherly nobleness as a virtue, or seeking to repay himself (as some uneasy martyrs do) by small instalments of long repining; but that he carried the spirit of the hour in which he first knew and took his course to his last. So far from thinking that his sacrifice of youth and love to his sister gave him a license to follow his own caprice at the expense of her feelings, even in the lightest matters, he always wrote and spoke of her as his wiser self, his generous benefactress, of whose protecting care he was scarcely worthy.'

It must be remembered, also, which the Sergeant does not overlook, that Lamb's efforts for the becoming support of his sister lasted through a period of forty years. Twelve years before his death, the munificence of the India House, by granting him a liberal retiring allowance, had placed his own support under shelter from accidents of any kind. But this died with himself; and he could not venture to suppose that, in the event of his own death, the India House would grant to his sister the same allowance as by custom is granted to a wife. This they did; but not venturing to calculate upon such nobility of patronage, Lamb had applied himself through life to the saving of a provision for his sister under any accident to himself. And this he did with a persevering prudence, so little known in the literary class, amongst a continued tenor

of generosities, often so princely as to be scarcely known in any class.

Was this man, so memorably good by life-long sacrifice of himself, in any profound sense a Christian? The impression is, that he was *not*. We, from private communications with him, can undertake to say that, according to his knowledge and opportunities for the study of Christianity, he *was*. What has injured Lamb on this point is, that his early opinions (which, however, from the first were united with the deepest piety) are read by the inattentive, as if they had been the opinions of his mature days; secondly, that he had few religious persons amongst his friends, which made him reserved in the expression of his own views; thirdly, that in any case where he altered opinions for the better, the credit of the improvement is assigned to Coleridge. Lamb, for example, beginning life as a Unitarian, in not many years became a Trinitarian. Coleridge passed through the same changes in the same order; and here, at least, Lamb is supposed simply to have obeyed the influence, confessedly great, of Coleridge. This, on our own knowledge of Lamb's views, we pronounce to be an error. And the following extracts from Lamb's letters will show, not only that he was religiously disposed on impulses self-derived, but that, so far from obeying the bias of Coleridge, he ventured, on this one subject, firmly as regarded the matter, though humbly as regarded the manner, affectionately to reprove Coleridge.

In a letter to Coleridge, written in 1797, the year after his first great affliction, he says:

'Coleridge, I have not one truly elevated character among my acquaintance; not one Christian; not one but under-

values Christianity. Singly, what am I to do? Wesley — [have you read his life?] — was he not an elevated character? Wesley has said religion was not a solitary thing. Alas! it is necessarily so with me, or next to solitary. 'Tis true you write to me; but correspondence by letter and personal intimacy are widely different. Do, do write to me; and do some good to my mind — already how much "warped and relaxed" by the world!'

In a letter written about three months previously, he had not scrupled to blame Coleridge at some length for audacities of religious speculation, which seemed to him at war with the simplicities of pure religion. He says:

'Do continue to write to me. I read your letters with my sister, and they give us both abundance of delight. Especially they please us two when you talk in a religious strain. Not but we are offended occasionally with a certain freedom of expression, a certain air of mysticism, more consonant to the conceits of pagan philosophy than consistent with the humility of genuine piety.'

Then, after some instances of what he blames, he says:

'Be not angry with me, Coleridge. I wish not to cavil; I know I cannot instruct you; I only wish to remind you of that humility which best becometh the Christian character. God, in the New Testament, our best guide, is represented to us in the kind, condescending, amiable, familiar light of a parent; and, in my poor mind, 'tis best for us so to consider him as our heavenly Father, and our best friend, without indulging too bold conceptions of his character.'

About a month later, he says:

'Few but laugh at me for reading my Testament. They talk a language I understand not; I conceal sentiments that would be a puzzle to *them*.'

We see by this last quotation *where* it was that Lamb originally sought for consolation. We personally can vouch that, at a maturer period, when he was approaching his fiftieth year, no change had affected his opinions upon that point; and, on the other hand, that no changes had occurred in his needs for consolation, we see, alas! in the records of his life. Whither, indeed, could he fly for comfort, if not to his Bible? And to whom was the Bible an indispensable resource, if not to Lamb? We do not undertake to say, that in his knowledge of Christianity he was everywhere profound or consistent, but he was always earnest in his aspirations after its spiritualities, and had an apprehensive sense of its power.

Charles Lamb is gone; his life was a continued struggle in the service of love the purest, and within a sphere visited by little of contemporary applause. Even his intellectual displays won but a narrow sympathy at any time, and in his earlier period were saluted with positive derision and contumely on the few occasions when they were not oppressed by entire neglect. But slowly all things right themselves. All merit, which is founded in truth, and is strong enough, reaches by sweet exhalations in the end a higher sensory; reaches higher organs of discernment, lodged in a selecter audience. But the original obtuseness or vulgarity of feeling that thwarted Lamb's just estimation in life, will continue to thwart its popular diffusion. There are even some that continue to regard him with the old hostility. And we, therefore, standing by the side of Lamb's grave, seemed to hear, on one side, (but in abated tones,) strains of the ancient malice — 'This man, that thought himself to be some-

body, is dead — is buried — is forgotten!' and, on the other side, seemed to hear ascending, as with the solemnity of an anthem — 'This man, that thought himself to be nobody, is dead — is buried; his life has been searched; and his memory is hallowed for ever!'

NOTES.

Note 1. Page 167.

'*Scriptural*,' we call it, because this element of thought, so indispensable to a profound philosophy of morals, is not simply *more* used in Scripture than elsewhere, but is so exclusively significant or intelligible amidst the correlative ideas of Scripture, as to be absolutely insusceptible of translation into classical Greek or classical Latin. It is disgraceful that more reflection has not been directed to the vast causes and consequences of so pregnant a truth.

Note 2. Page 179.

'*Poor S. T. C.*'—The affecting expression by which Coleridge indicates himself in the few lines written during his last illness for an inscription upon his grave; lines ill constructed in point of diction and compression, but otherwise speaking from the depths of his heart.

Note 3. Page 198.

It is right to remind the reader of this, for a reason applying forcibly to the present moment. Michelet has taxed Englishmen with yielding to national animosities in the case of Joan, having no plea whatever for that insinuation but the single one drawn from Shakspeare's Henry VI. To this the answer is, first, that Shakspeare's share in that trilogy is not nicely ascertained. Secondly, that M. Michelet forgot (or, which is far worse, *not* forgetting it, he dissembled) the fact, that in undertaking a series of dramas upon the basis avowedly of national chronicles, and for the very purpose of profiting by old traditionary recollections connected with ancestral glories, it was mere lunacy to recast the

circumstances at the bidding of antiquarian research, so as entirely to disturb these glories. Besides that, to Shakspeare's age no such spirit of research had blossomed. Writing for the stage, a man would have risked lapidation by uttering a whisper in that direction. And, even if not, what sense could there have been in openly running counter to the very motive that had originally prompted that particular class of chronicle plays? Thirdly, if one Englishman had, in a memorable situation, adopted the popular view of Joan's conduct, (*popular* as much in France as in England;) on the other hand, fifty years before M. Michelet was writing this flagrant injustice, another Englishman (viz., Southey) had, in an epic poem, reversed this misjudgment, and invested the shepherd girl with a glory nowhere else accorded to her, unless indeed by Schiller. Fourthly, we are not entitled to view as an *attack* upon Joanna, what, in the worst construction, is but an unexamining adoption of the contemporary historical accounts. A poet or a dramatist is not responsible for the accuracy of chronicles. But what *is* an attack upon Joan, being briefly the foulest and obscenest attempt ever made to stifle the grandeur of a great human struggle, viz., the French burlesque poem of *La Pucelle* — what memorable man was it that wrote *that*? Was he a Frenchman, or was he not? That M. Michelet should *pretend* to have forgotten this vilest of pasquinades, is more shocking to the general sense of justice than any special untruth as to Shakspeare *can* be to the particular nationality of an Englishman.

Note 4. Page 214.

The story which furnishes a basis to the fine ballad in Percy's Reliques, and to the Canterbury Tale of Chaucer's Lady Abbess.

GOETHE.

John Wolfgang von Goethe, a man of commanding influence in the literature of modern Germany throughout the latter half of his long life, and possessing two separate claims upon our notice; one in right of his own unquestionable talents; and another much stronger, though less direct, arising out of his position, and the extravagant partisanship put forward on his behalf for the last forty years. The literary body in all countries, and for reasons which rest upon a sounder basis than that of private jealousies, have always been disposed to a republican simplicity in all that regards the assumption of rank and personal pretensions. *Valeat quantum valere potest*, is the form of license to every man's ambition, coupled with its caution. Let his influence and authority be commensurate with his attested value; and because no man in the present infirmity of human speculation, and the present multiformity of human power can hope for more than a very limited superiority, there is an end at once to all *absolute* dictatorship. The dictatorship in any case could be only *relative*, and in relation to a single department of art or knowledge; and this for a reason stronger even than that already noticed, viz., the vast extent of the field on which the intellect is now summoned to employ itself. That objection, as it applies only to the *degree* of the difficulty, might be met by a corresponding de-

gree of mental energy; such a thing may be supposed, at least. But another difficulty there is of a profounder character which cannot be so easily parried. Those who have reflected at all upon the fine arts, know that power of one kind is often inconsistent, positively incompatible with power of another kind. For example, the *dramatic* mind is incompatible with the *epic*. And though we should consent to suppose that some intellect might arise endowed upon a scale of such angelic comprehensiveness, as to vibrate equally and indifferently towards either pole, still it is next to impossible, in the exercise and culture of the two powers, but some bias must arise which would give that advantage to the one over the other which the right arm has over the left. But the supposition, the very case put, is baseless, and countenanced by no precedent. Yet, under this previous difficulty, and with regard to a literature convulsed, if any ever was, by an almost total anarchy, it is a fact notorious to all who take an interest in Germany and its concerns, that Goethe did in one way or other, through the length and breadth of that vast country, establish a supremacy of influence wholly unexampled; a supremacy indeed perilous in a less honorable man, to those whom he might chance to hate, and with regard to himself thus far unfortunate, that it conferred upon every work proceeding from his pen a sort of papal indulgence, an immunity from criticism, or even from the appeals of good sense, such as it is not wholesome that any man should enjoy. Yet we repeat that German literature was and is in a condition of total anarchy. With this solitary exception, no name, even in the most narrow section of knowledge or of power, has ever been able in that country to

challenge unconditional reverence; whereas, with us and in France, name the science, name the art, and we will name the dominant professor; a difference which partly arises out of the fact that England and France are governed in their opinions by two or three capital cities, whilst Germany looks for its leadership to as many cities as there are *residenzen* and universities. For instance, the little territory with which Goethe was connected presented no less than two such public lights; Wiemar, the *residenz* or privileged abode of the Grand Duke, and Jena, the university founded by that house. Partly, however, this difference may be due to the greater restlessness, and to the greater energy as respects mere speculation, of the German mind. But no matter whence arising, or how interpreted, the fact is what we have described; absolute confusion, the 'anarch old' of Milton, is the one deity whose sceptre is there paramount; and yet *there* it was, in that very realm of chaos, that Goethe built his throne. That he must have looked with trepidation and perplexity upon his wild empire and its 'dark foundations,' may be supposed. The tenure was uncertain to *him* as regarded its duration; to us it is equally uncertain, and in fact mysterious, as regards its origin. Meantime the mere fact, contrasted with the general tendencies of the German literary world, is sufficient to justify a notice, somewhat circumstantial, of the man in whose favor, whether naturally by force of genius, or by accident concurring with intrigue, so unexampled a result was effected.

Goethe was born at noonday on the 28th of August, 1749, in his father's house at Frankfort-on-the-Maine. The circumstances of his birth were thus far remark-

able, that, unless Goethe's vanity deceived him, they led to a happy revolution hitherto retarded by female delicacy falsely directed. From some error of the midwife who attended his mother, the infant Goethe appeared to be still-born. Sons there were as yet none from this marriage; everybody was therefore interested in the child's life; and the panic which arose in consequence, having survived its immediate occasion, was improved into a public resolution, (for which no doubt society stood ready at that moment,) to found some course of public instruction from this time forward for those who undertook professionally the critical duties of accoucheur.

We have noticed the house in which Goethe was born, as well as the city. Both were remarkable, and fitted to leave lasting impressions upon a young person of sensibility. As to the city, its antiquity is not merely venerable, but almost mysterious; towers were at that time to be found in the mouldering lines of its earliest defences, which belonged to the age of Charlemagne, or one still earlier; battlements adapted to a mode of warfare anterior even to that of feudalism or romance. The customs, usages, and local privileges of Frankfort, and the rural districts adjacent, were of a corresponding character. Festivals were annually celebrated at a short distance from the walls, which had descended from a dateless antiquity. Everything which met the eye spoke the language of elder ages; whilst the river on which the place was seated, its great fair, which still held the rank of the greatest in Christendom, and its connection with the throne of Cæsar and his inauguration, by giving to Frankfort an interest and a public character in the eyes of all Germany,

had the effect of countersigning, as it were, by state authority, the importance which she otherwise challenged to her ancestral distinctions. Fit house for such a city, and in due keeping with the general scenery, was that of Goethe's father. It had in fact been composed out of two contiguous houses; that accident had made it spacious and rambling in its plan; whilst a further irregularity had grown out of the original difference in point of level between the corresponding stories of the two houses, making it necessary to connect the rooms of the same *suite* by short flights of steps. Some of these features were no doubt removed by the recast of the house under the name of 'repairs,' (to evade a city by-law,) afterwards executed by his father; but such was the house of Goethe's infancy, and in all other circumstances of style and furnishing equally antique.

The spirit of society in Frankfort, without a court, a university, or a learned body of any extent, or a resident nobility in its neighborhood, could not be expected to display any very high standard of polish. Yet, on the other hand, as an independent city, governed by its own separate laws and tribunals, (that privilege of *autonomy* so dearly valued by ancient Greece,) and possessing besides a resident corps of jurisprudents and of agents in various ranks for managing the interests of the German emperor and other princes, Frankfort had the means within herself of giving a liberal tone to the pursuits of her superior citizens, and of co-operating in no inconsiderable degree with the general movement of the times, political or intellectual. The memoirs of Goethe himself, and in particular the picture there given of his own family, as well as other

contemporary glimpses of German domestic society in those days, are sufficient to show that much knowledge, much true cultivation of mind, much sound refinement of taste, were then distributed through the middle classes of German society; meaning by that very indeterminate expression those classes which for Frankfort composed the aristocracy, viz., all who had daily leisure, and regular funds for employing it to advantage. It is not necessary to add, because that is a fact applicable to all stages of society, that Frankfort presented many and various specimens of original talent, moving upon all directions of human speculation.

Yet, with this general allowance made for the capacities of the place, it is too evident that, for the most part, they lay inert and undeveloped. In many respects Frankfort resembled an English cathedral city, according to the standard of such places seventy years ago, not, that is to say, like Carlisle in this day, where a considerable manufacture exists, but like Chester as it is yet. The chapter of a cathedral, the resident ecclesiastics attached to the duties of so large an establishment, men always well educated, and generally having families, compose the original *nucleus*, around which soon gathers all that part of the local gentry who, for any purpose, whether of education for their children, or of social enjoyment for themselves, seek the advantages of a town. Hither resort all the timid old ladies who wish for conversation, or other forms of social amusement; hither resort the valetudinarians, male or female, by way of commanding superior medical advice at a cost not absolutely ruinous to themselves; and multitudes besides, with narrow incomes, to whom these quiet retreats are so many cities of refuge.

Such, in one view, they really are; and yet in another they have a vicious constitution. Cathedral cities in England, imperial cities without manufactures in Germany, are all in an improgressive condition. The amount of superior families oscillates rather than changes; that is, it fluctuates within fixed limits; and, for all inferior families, being composed either of shopkeepers or of menial servants, they are determined by the number, or, which, on a large average, is the same, by the pecuniary power, of their employers. Hence it arises, that room is made for one man, in whatever line of dependence, only by the death of another; and the constant increments of the population are carried off into other cities. Not less is the difference of such cities as regards the standard of manners. How striking is the soft and urbane tone of the lower orders in a cathedral city, or in a watering-place dependent upon ladies, contrasted with the bold, often insolent demeanor of a self-dependent artisan or mutinous mechanic of Manchester and Glasgow.

Children, however, are interested in the state of society around them, chiefly as it affects their parents. Those of Goethe were respectable, and perhaps tolerably representative of the general condition in their own rank. An English authoress of great talent, in her *Characteristics of Goethe*, has too much countenanced the notion that he owed his intellectual advantages exclusively to his mother. Of this there is no proof. His mother wins more esteem from the reader of this day, because she was a cheerful woman of serene temper, brought into advantageous comparison with a husband much older than herself, whom circumstances had rendered moody, fitful, sometimes capricious, and

confessedly obstinate in that degree which Pope has taught us to think connected with inveterate error:

> 'Stiff in opinion, always in the wrong,'

unhappily presents an association too often actually occurring in nature, to leave much chance for error in presuming either quality from the other. And, in fact, Goethe's father was so uniformly obstinate in pressing his own views upon all who belonged to him, whenever he did come forward in an attitude of activity, that his family had much reason to be thankful for the rarity of such displays. Fortunately for them, his indolence neutralized his obstinacy. And the worst shape in which his troublesome temper showed itself, was in what concerned the religious reading of the family. Once begun, the worst book as well as the best, the longest no less than the shortest, was to be steadfastly read through to the last word of the last volume; no excess of yawning availed to obtain a reprieve, not, adds his son, though he were himself the leader of the yawners. As an illustration he mentions Bowyer's *History of the Popes;* which awful series of records, the catacombs, as it were, in the palace of history, were actually traversed from one end to the other of the endless *suite* by the unfortunate house of Goethe. Allowing, however, for the father's unamiableness in this one point, upon all intellectual ground both parents seem to have met very much upon a level. Two illustrations may suffice, one of which occurred during the infancy of Goethe. The science of education was at that time making its first rude motions towards an ampler development; and, amongst other reforms then floating in the general mind, was one for eradicating the child-

ish fear of ghosts, &c. The young Goethes, as it happened, slept not in separate beds only, but in separate rooms; and not unfrequently the poor children, under the stinging terrors of their lonely situation, stole away from their 'forms,' to speak in the hunter's phrase, and sought to rejoin each other. But in these attempts they were liable to surprises from the enemy; papa and mamma were both on the alert, and often intercepted the young deserter by a cross march or an ambuscade; in which cases each had a separate policy for enforcing obedience. The father, upon his general system of 'perseverance,' compelled the fugitive back to his quarters, and, in effect, exhorted him to persist in being frightened out of his wits. To his wife's gentle heart that course appeared cruel, and she reclaimed the delinquent by bribes; the peaches which her garden walls produced being the fund from which she chiefly drew her supplies for this branch of the secret service. What were her winter bribes, when the long nights would seem to lie heaviest on the exchequer, is not said. Speaking seriously, no man of sense can suppose that a course of suffering from terrors the most awful, under whatever influence supported, whether under the naked force of compulsion, or of *that* connected with bribes, could have any final effect in mitigating the passion of awe, connected, by our very dreams, with the shadowy and the invisible, or in tranquillizing the infantine imagination.

A second illustration involves a great moral event in the history of Goethe, as it was, in fact, the first occasion of his receiving impressions at war with his religious creed. Piety is so beautiful an ornament of the youthful mind, doubt or distrust so unnatural a

growth from confiding innocence, that an infant free-thinker is heard of not so much with disgust as with perplexity. A sense of the ludicrous is apt to intermingle; and we lose our natural horror of the result in wonder at its origin. Yet in this instance there is no room for doubt; the fact and the occasion are both on record; there can be no question about the date; and, finally, the accuser is no other than the accused. Goethe's own pen it is which proclaims, that already, in the early part of his seventh year, his reliance upon God as a moral governor had suffered a violent shock, was shaken, if not undermined. On the 1st of November, 1755, occurred the great earthquake at Lisbon. Upon a double account, this event occupied the thoughts of all Europe for an unusual term of time; both as an expression upon a larger scale than usual of the mysterious physical agency concerned in earthquakes, and also for the awful human tragedy* which attended either the earthquake itself, or its immediate sequel in the sudden irruption of the Tagus. Sixty thousand persons, victims to the dark power in its first or its second *avatar*, attested the Titanic scale upon which it worked. Here it was that the shallow piety of the Germans found a stumbling-block. Those who have read any circumstantial history of the physical

* Of this no picture can ever hope to rival that hasty one sketched in the letter of the chaplain to the Lisbon factory. The plague of Athens as painted by Thucydides or Lucretius, nay even the fabulous plague of London by De Foe, contain no scenes or situations equal in effect to some in this plain historic statement. Nay, it would perhaps be difficult to produce a passage from Ezekiel, from Æschylus, or from Shakspeare, which would so profoundly startle the sense of sublimity as one or two of his incidents.

signs which preceded this earthquake, are aware that in England and Northern Germany many singular phenomena were observed, more or less manifestly connected with the same dark agency which terminated at Lisbon, and running before this final catastrophe at times so accurately varying with the distances, as to furnish something like a scale for measuring the velocity with which it moved. These German phenomena, circulated rapidly over all Germany by the journals of every class, had seemed to give to the Germans a nearer and more domestic interest in the great event, than belonged to them merely in their universal character of humanity. It is also well known to observers of national characteristics, that amongst the Germans the household charities, the *pieties of the hearth*, as they may be called, exist, if not really in greater strength, yet with much less of the usual balances or restraints. A German father, for example, is like the grandfather of other nations; and thus a piety, which in its own nature scarcely seems liable to excess, takes, in its external aspect, too often an air of effeminate imbecility. These two considerations are necessary to explain the intensity with which this Lisbon tragedy laid hold of the German mind, and chiefly under the one single aspect of its *undistinguishing* fury. Women, children, old men — these, doubtless, had been largely involved in the perishing sixty thousand; and that reflection, it would seem from Goethe's account, had so far embittered the sympathy of the Germans with their distant Portuguese brethren, that, in the Frankfort discussions, sullen murmurs had gradually ripened into bold impeachments of Providence. There can be no gloomier form of infidelity

than that which questions the moral attributes of the Great Being, in whose hands are the final destinies of us all. Such, however, was the form of Goethe's earliest scepticism, such its origin; caught up from the very echoes which rang through the streets of Frankfort when the subject occupied all men's minds. And such, for anything that appears, continued to be its form thenceforwards to the close of his life, if speculations so crude could be said to have any form at all. Many are the analogies, some close ones, between England and Germany with regard to the circle of changes they have run through, political or social, for a century back. The challenges are frequent to a comparison; and sometimes the result would be to the advantage of Germany, more often to ours. But in religious philosophy, which in reality is the true *popular* philosophy, how vast is the superiority on the side of this country. Not a shopkeeper or mechanic, we may venture to say, but would have felt this obvious truth, that surely the Lisbon earthquake yielded no fresh lesson, no peculiar moral, beyond what belonged to every man's experience in every age. A passage in the New Testament about the fall of the tower of Siloam, and the just construction of that event, had already anticipated the difficulty, if such it could be thought. Not to mention, that calamities upon the same scale in the earliest age of Christianity, the fall of the amphitheatre at Fidenæ, or the destruction of Pompeii, had presented the same problem as the Lisbon earthquake. Nay, it is presented daily in the humblest individual case, where wrong is triumphant over right, or innocence confounded with guilt in one common disaster. And that the parents of Goethe

should have authorized his error, if only by their silence, argues a degree of ignorance in them, which could not have co-existed with much superior knowledge in the public mind.

Goethe, in his Memoirs, (Book vi.,) commends his father for the zeal with which he superintended the education of his children. But apparently it was a zeal without knowledge. Many things were taught imperfectly, but all casually, and as chance suggested them. Italian was studied a little, because the elder Goethe had made an Italian tour, and had collected some Italian books, and engravings by Italian masters. Hebrew was studied a little, because Goethe the son had a fancy for it, partly with a view to theology, and partly because there was a Jewish quarter, gloomy and sequestrated, in the city of Frankfort. French offered itself no doubt on many suggestions, but originally on occasion of a French theatre, supported by the staff of the French army when quartered in the same city. Latin was gathered in a random way from a daily sense of its necessity. English upon the temptation of a stranger's advertisement, promising upon moderate terms to teach that language in four weeks; a proof, by the way, that the system of bold innovations in the art of tuition had already commenced. Riding and fencing were also attempted under masters apparently not very highly qualified, and in the same desultory style of application. Dancing was taught to his family, strange as it may seem, by Mr. Goethe himself. There is good reason to believe that not one of all these accomplishments was possessed by Goethe, when ready to visit the university, in a degree which made it practically of any use to him. Drawing and

music were pursued confessedly as amusements; and it would be difficult to mention any attainment whatsoever which Goethe had carried to a point of excellence in the years which he spent under his father's care, unless it were his mastery over the common artifices of metre and the common topics of rhetoric, which fitted him for writing what are called occasional poems and *impromptus*. This talent he possessed in a remarkable degree, and at an early age; but he owed its cultivation entirely to himself.

In a city so orderly as Frankfort, and in a station privileged from all the common hardships of poverty, it can hardly be expected that many incidents should arise, of much separate importance in themselves, to break the monotony of life; and the mind of Goethe was not contemplative enough to create a value for common occurrences through any peculiar impressions which he had derived from them. In the years 1763 and 1764, when he must have been from fourteen to fifteen years old, Goethe witnessed the inauguration and coronation of a king of the Romans, a solemn spectacle connected by prescription with the city of Frankfort. He describes it circumstantially, but with very little feeling, in his Memoirs. Probably the prevailing sentiment, on looking back at least to this transitory splendor of dress, processions, and ceremonial forms, was one of cynical contempt. But this he could not express, as a person closely connected with a German court, and without giving much and various offence. It is with some timidity even that he hazards a criticism upon single parts of the costume adopted by some of the actors in that gorgeous scene. White silk stockings, and pumps of the common form, he

objects to as out of harmony with the antique and heraldic aspects of the general costume, and ventures to suggest either boots or sandals as an improvement. Had Goethe felt himself at liberty from all restraints of private consideration in composing these memoirs, can it be doubted that he would have taken his retrospect of this Frankfort inauguration from a different station; from the station of that stern revolution which, within his own time and partly under his own eyes, had shattered the whole imperial system of thrones, in whose equipage this gay pageant made so principal a figure, had humbled Cæsar himself to the dust, and left him an emperor without an empire? We at least, for our parts, could not read without some emotion one little incident of these gorgeous scenes recorded by Goethe, namely, that when the emperor, on rejoining his wife for a few moments, held up to her notice his own hands and arms arrayed in the antique habiliments of Charlemagne, Maria Theresa — she whose children were summoned to so sad a share in the coming changes — gave way to sudden bursts of loud laughter, audible to the whole populace below her. That laugh, on surveying the departing pomps of Charlemagne, must, in any contemplative ear, have rung with a sound of deep significance, and with something of the same effect which belongs to a figure of death introduced by a painter, as mixing in the festal dances of a bridal assembly.

These pageants of 1763–64 occupy a considerable space in Goethe's Memoirs, and with some *logical* propriety at least, in consideration of their being exclusively attached to Frankfort, and connected by

manifold links of person and office with the privileged character of the city. Perhaps he might feel a sort of narrow local patriotism in recalling these scenes to public notice by description, at a time when they had been irretrievably extinguished as realities. But, after making every allowance for their local value to a Frankfort family, and for their memorable splendor, we may venture to suppose that by far the most impressive remembrances which had gathered about the boyhood of Goethe, were those which pointed to Frederick of Prussia. This singular man, so imbecile as a pretender to philosophy and new lights, so truly heroic under misfortunes, was the first German who created a German interest, and gave a transient unity to the German name, under all its multiplied divisions. Were it only for this conquest of difficulties so peculiar, he would deserve his German designation of Fred. the Unique (*Fritz der einzige*). He had been partially tried and known previously; but it was the Seven Years' War which made him the popular idol. This began in 1756; and to Frankfort, in a very peculiar way, that war brought dissensions and heartburnings in its train. The imperial connections of the city with many public and private interests, pledged it to the anti-Prussian cause. It happened also that the truly German character of the reigning imperial family, the domestic habits of the empress and her young daughters, and other circumstances, were of a nature to endear the ties of policy; self-interest and affection pointed in the same direction. And yet were all these considerations allowed to melt away before the brilliant qualities of one man, and the romantic enthusiasm kindled by his victories. Frank-

fort was divided within herself; the young and the generous were all dedicated to Frederick. A smaller party, more cautious and prudent, were, for the imperialists. Families were divided upon this question against families, and often against themselves; feuds, begun in private, issued often into public violence; and, according to Goethe's own illustration, the streets were vexed by daily brawls as hot and as personal as of old between the Capulets and Montagues.

These dissensions, however, were pursued with not much personal risk to any of the Goethes, until a French army passed the Rhine as allies of the imperialists. One corps of this force took up their quarters in Frankfort; and the Compte Thorane, who held a high appointment on the staff, settled himself for a long period of time in the spacious mansion of Goethe's father. This officer, whom his place made responsible for the discipline of the army in relation to the citizens, was naturally by temper disposed to moderation and forbearance. He was indeed a favorable specimen of French military officers under the old system; well bred, not arrogant, well informed, and a friend of the fine arts. For painting, in particular, he professed great regard and some knowledge. The Goethes were able to forward his views amongst German artists; whilst, on the other hand, they were pleased to have thus an opportunity of directing his patronage towards some of their own needy connections. In this exchange of good offices, the two parties were for some time able to maintain a fair appearance of reciprocal good-will. This on the comte's side, if not particularly warm, was probably sincere; but in Goethe the father it was a masque for inveterate dislike. A

natural ground of this existed in the original relations between them. Under whatever disguise or pretext, the Frenchman was in fact a military intruder. He occupied the best suite of rooms in the house, used the furniture as his own; and, though upon private motives he abstained from doing all the injury which his situation authorized, (so as in particular to have spread his fine military maps upon the floor, rather than disfigure the decorated walls by nails,) still he claimed credit, if not services of requital, for all such instances of forbearance. Here were grievances enough; but, in addition to those, the comte's official appointments drew upon him a weight of daily business which kept the house in a continual uproar. Farewell to the quiet of a literary amateur, and the orderliness of a German household. Finally, the comte was a Frenchman. These were too many assaults upon one man's patience. It will be readily understood, therefore, how it happened, that, whilst Goethe's gentle minded mother, with her flock of children, continued to be on the best terms with Comte Thorane, the master of the house kept moodily aloof, and retreated from all intercourse.

Goethe, in his own Memoir, enters into large details upon this subject; and from him we shall borrow the *denouement* of the tale. A crisis had for some time been lowering over the French affairs in Frankfort; things seemed ripening for a battle; and at last it came. Flight, siege, bombardment, possibly a storm, all danced before the eyes of the terrified citizens. Fortunately, however, the battle took place at the distance of four or five miles from Frankfort. Monsieur le Comte was absent, of course, on the field of battle.

His unwilling host thought that on such an occasion he also might go out in quality of spectator; and with this purpose he connected another, worthy of a Parson Adams. It is his son who tells the story, whose filial duty was not proof against his sense of the ludicrous. The old gentleman's hatred of the French had by this time brought him over to his son's admiration of the Prussian hero. Not doubting for an instant that victory would follow that standard, he resolved on this day to offer in person his congratulations to the Prussian army, whom he already viewed as his liberator from a domestic nuisance. So purposing, he made his way cautiously to the suburbs; from the suburbs, still listening at each advance, he went forward to the country; totally forgetting, as his son insists, that, however completely beaten, the French army must still occupy some situation or other between himself and his German deliverer. Coming, however, at length to a heath, he found some of those marauders usually to be met with in the rear of armies, prowling about, and at intervals amusing themselves with shooting at a mark. For want of a better, it seemed not improbable that a large German head might answer their purpose. Certain signs admonished him of this, and the old gentleman crept back to Frankfort. Not many hours after came back also the comte, by no means creeping, however; on the contrary, crowing with all his might for a victory which he averred himself to have won. There had in fact been an affair, but on no very great scale, and with no distinguishing results. Some prisoners, however, he brought, together with some wounded; and naturally he expected all well disposed persons to make their compliments of congratulations upon this

triumph. Of this duty poor Mrs. Goethe and her children cheerfully acquitted themselves that same night; and Monsieur le Comte was so well pleased with the sound opinions of the little Goethes, that he sent them in return a collection of sweetmeats and fruits. All promised to go well; intentions, after all, are not acts; and there certainly is not, nor ever was, any treason in taking a morning's walk. But, as ill luck would have it, just as Mr. Goethe was passing the comte's door, out came the comte in person, purely by accident, as we are told; but we suspect that the surly old German, either under his morning hopes or his evening disappointments, had talked with more frankness than prudence. 'Good evening to you, Herr Goethe,' said the comte; 'you are come, I see, to pay your tribute of congratulation. Somewhat of the latest, to be sure; but no matter.' 'By no means,' replied the German: 'by no means; *mit nichten.* Heartily I wished, the whole day long, that you and your cursed gang might all go to the devil together.' Here was plain speaking, at least. The Comte Thorane could no longer complain of dissimulation. His first movement was to order an arrest; and the official interpreter of the French army took to himself the whole credit that he did not carry it into effect. Goethe takes the trouble to report a dialogue, of length and dulness absolutely incredible, between this interpreter and the comte. No such dialogue, we may be assured, ever took place. Goethe may, however, be right in supposing that, amongst a foreign soldiery, irritated by the pointed contrasts between the Frankfort treatment of their own wounded, and of their prisoners, who happened to be in the same circumstances, and

under a military council not held to any rigorous responsibility, his father might have found no very favorable consideration of his case. It is well, therefore, that after some struggle the comte's better nature triumphed. He suffered Mrs. Goethe's merits to outweigh her husband's delinquency; countermanded the order for arrest, and, during the remainder of their connection, kept at such a distance from his moody host as was equally desirable for both. Fortunately that remainder was not very long. Comte Thorane was soon displaced; and the whole army was soon afterwards withdrawn from Frankfort.

In his fifteenth year Goethe was entangled in some connection with young people of inferior rank, amongst whom was Margaret, a young girl about two years older than himself, and the object of his first love. The whole affair, as told by Goethe, is somewhat mysterious. What might be the final views of the elder parties it is difficult to say; but Goethe assures us that they used his services only in writing an occasional epithalamium, the pecuniary acknowledgment for which was spent jovially in a general banquet. The magistrates, however, interfered, and endeavored to extort a confession from Goethe. He, as the son of a respectable family, was to be pardoned; the others to be punished. No confession, however, could be extorted; and for his own part he declares that, beyond the offence of forming a clandestine connection, he had nothing to confess. The affair terminated, as regarded himself, in a severe illness. Of the others we hear no more.

The next event of importance in Goethe's life was his removal to college. His own wishes pointed to

Göttingen, but his father preferred Leipsic. Thither accordingly he went, but he carried his obedience no farther. Declining the study of jurisprudence, he attached himself to general literature. Subsequently he removed to the university of Strasburg; but in neither place could it be said that he pursued any regular course of study. His health suffered at times during this period of his life; at first, from an affection of the chest, caused by an accident on his first journey to Leipsic; the carriage had stuck fast in the muddy roads, and Goethe exerted himself too much in assisting to extricate the wheels. A second illness connected with the digestive organs brought him into considerable danger.

After his return to Frankfort, Goethe commenced his career as an author. In 1773, and the following year, he made his maiden essay in *Goetz of Berlichingen*, a drama, (the translation of which, remarkably enough, was destined to be the literary *coup d'essai* of Sir Walter Scott,) and in the far-famed *Werther*. The first of these was pirated; and in consequence the author found some difficulty in paying for the paper of the genuine edition, which part of the expense, by his contract with the publisher, fell upon himself. The general and early popularity of the second work is well known. Yet, except in so far as it might spread his name abroad, it cannot be supposed to have had much influence in attracting that potent patronage which now began to determine the course of his future life. So much we collect from the account which Goethe himself has left us of this affair in its earliest stages.

'I was sitting alone in my room,' says he, 'at my father's house in Frankfort, when a gentleman entered,

whom at first I took for Frederick Jacobi, but soon discovered by the dubious light to be a stranger. He had a military air; and announcing himself by the name of Von Knebel, gave me to understand in a short explanation, that being in the Prussian service, he had connected himself, during a long residence at Berlin and Potsdam, with the literati of those places; but that at present he held the appointment from the court of Weimar of travelling tutor to the Prince Constantine. This I heard with pleasure; for many of our friends had brought us the most interesting accounts from Weimar, in particular that the Duchess Amelia, mother of the young grand duke and his brother, summoned to her assistance in educating her sons the most distinguished men in Germany; and that the university of Jena coöperated powerfully in all her liberal plans. I was aware also that Wieland was in high favor; and that the German Mercury (a literary journal of eminence) was itself highly creditable to the city of Jena, from which it issued. A beautiful and well-conducted theatre had besides, as I knew, been lately established at Weimar. This, it was true, had been destroyed; but that event, under common circumstances so likely to be fatal as respected the present, had served only to call forth the general expression of confidence in the young prince as a restorer and upholder of all great interests, and true to his purposes under any calamity.' Thinking thus, and thus prepossessed in favor of Weimar, it was natural that Goethe should be eager to see the prince. Nothing was easier. It happened that he and his brother Constantine were at this moment in Frankfort, and Von Knebel willingly offered to present Goethe. No sooner said than done; they repaired to

the hotel, where they found the illustrious travellers, with Count Goertz, the tutor of the elder.

Upon this occasion an accident, rather than any previous reputation of Goethe, was probably the determining occasion which led to his favor with the future sovereign of Weimar. A new book lay upon the table; that none of the strangers had read it, Goethe inferred from observing that the leaves were as yet uncut. It was a work of Moser, (*Patriotische Phantasien;*) and, being political rather than literary in its topics, it presented to Goethe, previously acquainted with its outline, an opportunity for conversing with the prince upon subjects nearest to his heart, and of showing that he was not himself a mere studious recluse. The opportunity was not lost; the prince and his tutor were much interested, and perhaps a little surprised. Such subjects have the further advantage, according to Goethe's own illustration, that, like the Arabian thousand and one nights, as conducted by Sultana Scheherezade, 'never ending, still beginning,' they rarely come to any absolute close, but so interweave one into another, as still to leave behind a large arrear of interest. In order to pursue the conversation, Goethe was invited to meet them soon after at Mentz. He kept the appointment punctually; made himself even more agreeable; and finally received a formal invitation to enter the service of this excellent prince, who was now beginning to collect around him all those persons who have since made Weimar so distinguished a name in connection with the German literature. With some opposition from his father, who held up the rupture between Voltaire and Frederick of Prussia as a precedent applying to all possible connections of princes and literati,

Goethe accepted the invitation; and henceforwards, for upwards of fifty-five years, his fortunes were bound up with the ducal house of Weimar.

The noble part which that house played in the great modern drama of German politics is well known, and would have been better known had its power been greater. But the moral value of its sacrifices and its risk is not the less. Had greater potentates shown equal firmness, Germany would not have been laid at the feet of Napoleon. In 1806, the Grand Duke was aware of the peril which awaited the allies of Prussia; but neither his heart nor his conscience would allow of his deserting a friend in whose army he held a principal command. The decisive battle took place in his own territory, and not far from his own palace and city of Weimar. Personally he was with the Prussian army; but his excellent consort stayed in the palace to encourage her subjects, and as far as possible to conciliate the enemy by her presence. The fortune of that great day, the 14th of October, 1806, was decided early; and the awful event was announced by a hot retreat and a murderous pursuit through the streets of the town. In the evening Napoleon arrived in person; and now came the trying moment. 'The duchess,' says an Englishman well acquainted with Weimar and its court, 'placed herself on the top of the staircase to greet him with the formality of a courtly reception. Napoleon started when he beheld her: *Qui êtes vous?* he exclaimed with characteristic abruptness. *Je suis la Duchesse de Weimar. Je vous plains*, he retorted fiercely, *J'écraserai votre mari;* he then added, 'I shall dine in my apartment,' and rushed by her. The night was spent on the part of the soldiery in all the

horrid excesses of rapine. In the morning the duchess sent to inquire concerning the health of his majesty the emperor, and to solicit an audience. He, who had now benefited by his dreams, or by his reflections, returned a gracious answer, and invited himself to breakfast with her in her apartment.' In the conversation which ensued, Napoleon asked her if her husband were mad; upon which she justified the duke by appealing to his own magnanimity, asking in her turn if his majesty would have approved of his deserting the king of Prussia at the moment when he was attacked by so potent a monarch as himself. The rest of the conversation was in the same spirit, uniting with a sufficient concession to the circumstances of the moment a dignified vindication of a high-minded policy. Napoleon was deeply impressed with respect for her, and loudly expressed it. For her sake, indeed, he even affected to pardon her husband, thus making a merit with her of the necessity which he felt, from other motives, for showing forbearance towards a family so nearly allied to that of St. Petersburg. In 1813 the Grand Duke was found at his post in that great gathering of the nations which took place on the stupendous fields of Leipsic, and was complimented by the allied sovereigns as one of the most faithful amongst the faithful to the great cause, yet undecided, of national independence.

With respect to Goethe, as a councillor so near the duke's person, it may be supposed that his presence was never wanting where it promised to be useful. In the earlier campaigns of the duke, Goethe was his companion; but in the final contest with Napoleon he was unequal to the fatigues of such a post. In all the functions of peace, however, he continued to be a useful

servant to the last, though long released from all official duties. Each had indeed most honorably earned the gratitude of the other. Goethe had surrendered the flower of his years and the best energies of his mind to the service of his serene master. On the other hand, that master had to him been at once his Augustus and his Mæcenas; such is his own expression. Under him he had founded a family, raised an estate, obtained titles and decorations from various courts; and in the very vigor of his life he had been allowed to retire, with all the honors of long service, to the sanctuary of his own study, and to the cultivation of his leisure, as the very highest mode in which he could further the public interest.

The life of Goethe was so quiet and so uniform after the year 1775, when he may first be said to have entered into active life, by taking service with the Duke of Weimar, that a biographer will find hardly any event to notice, except two journeys to Italy, and one campaign in 1792, until he draws near the close of his long career. It cannot interest an English reader to see the dates of his successive appointments. It is enough to know that they soon raised him to as high a station as was consistent with literary leisure; and that he had from the beginning enjoyed the unlimited confidence of his sovereign. Nothing remained, in fact, for the subject to desire which the prince had not previously volunteered. In 1825 they were able to look back upon a course of uninterrupted friendship, maintained through good and evil fortunes, unexampled in their agitation and interest for fifty years. The duke commemorated this remarkable event by a jubilee, and by a medal in honor of Goethe. Full of years and honor, this emi-

nent man might now begin to think of his departure. However, his serenity continued unbroken nearly for two years more, when his illustrious patron died. That shock was the first which put his fortitude to trial. In 1830 others followed; the duchess who had won so much admiration from Napoleon died; then followed his own son; and there remained little now to connect his wishes with the earth. The family of his patron he had lived to see flourishing in his descendants to the fourth generation. His own grandchildren were prosperous and happy. His intellectual labors were now accomplished. All that remained to wish for was a gentle dismission. This he found in the spring of 1832. After a six days' illness, which caused him no apparent suffering, on the morning of the 22d of March he breathed away as if into a gentle sleep, surrounded by his daughter-in-law and her children. Never was a death more in harmony with the life it closed; both had the same character of deep and absolute serenity.

Such is the outline of Goethe's life, traced through its principal events. But as the events, after all, borrow their interest mainly from the consideration allowed to Goethe as an author, and as a model in the German literature, — *that* being the centre about which all secondary feelings of interest in the man must finally revolve, — it thus becomes a duty to throw a glance over his principal works. Dismissing his songs, to which has been ascribed by some critics a very high value for their variety and their lyrical enthusiasm; dismissing also a large volume of short miscellaneous poems; suited to the occasional circumstances in which they arose; we may throw the capital works of Goethe into two classes, philosophic novels and dramas. The

novels, which we call *philosophic* by way of expressing their main characteristic in being written to serve a preconceived purpose, or to embody some peculiar views of life, or some aspects of philosophic truth, are three, viz., the *Werther's Leiden;* secondly, the *Wilhelm Meister;* and, lastly, the *Wahloer-wandschaften.* The first two exist in English translations; and though the *Werther* had the disadvantage of coming to us through a French version, already, perhaps, somewhat colored and distorted to meet the Parisian standards of sentiment, yet, as respects Goethe and his reputation amongst us, this wrong has been redressed, or compensated at least, by the good fortune of his *Wilhelm Meister*, in falling into the hands of a translator whose original genius qualified him for sympathizing even to excess with any real merits in that work. This novel is in its own nature and purpose sufficiently obscure; and the commentaries which have been written upon it by the Humboldts, Schlegels, &c., make the enigma still more enigmatical. We shall not venture abroad upon an ocean of discussion so truly dark, and at the same time so illimitable. Whether it be qualified to excite any deep and *sincere* feeling of one kind or another in the German mind, — in a mind trained under German discipline, — this we will consent to waive as a question not immediately interesting to ourselves. Enough that it has not gained, and will not gain, any attention in this country; and this not only because it is thoroughly deficient in all points of attraction to readers formed upon our English literature, but because in some capital circumstances it is absolutely repulsive. We do not wish to offend the admirers of Goethe; but the simplicity of truth will not

allow us to conceal, that in various points of description or illustration, and sometimes in the very outline of the story, the *Wilhelm Meister* is at open war, not with decorum and good taste merely, but with moral purity and the dignity of human nature. As a novelist, Goethe and his reputation are problems, and likely to continue such, to the countrymen of Mrs. Inchbald, Miss Harriet Lee, Miss Edgeworth, and Sir Walter Scott. To the dramatic works of Goethe we are disposed to pay more homage; but neither in the absolute amount of our homage at all professing to approach his public admirers, nor to distribute the proportions of this homage amongst his several performances according to the graduations of *their* scale. The *Iphigenie* is built upon the old subject of Iphigenia in Tauris, as treated by Euripides and other Grecian dramatists; and, if we are to believe a Schlegel, it is in beauty and effect a mere echo or reverberation from the finest strains of the old Grecian music. That it is somewhat nearer to the Greek model than a play after the fashion of Racine, we grant. Setting aside such faithful transcripts from the antique as the Samson Agonistes, we might consent to view Goethe as that one amongst the moderns who had made the closest approximation to the Greek stage. *Proximus*, we might say, with Quintilian, but with him we must add, '*sed longo intervallo;*' and if in the second rank, yet nearer to the third than to the first. Two other dramas, the *Clavigo* and the *Egmont*, fall below the *Iphigenie* by the very character of their pretensions; the first as too openly renouncing the grandeurs of the ideal; the second as confessedly violating the historic truth of character, without temptation to do so, and

without any consequent indemnification. The *Tasso* has been supposed to realize an Italian beauty of genial warmth and of sunny repose; but from the common defect of German criticism — the absence of all sufficient illustrations — it is as difficult to understand the true nature and constituents of the supposed Italian standard set up for the regulation of our judgments, as it is to measure the degree of approach made to that standard in this particular work. *Eugenie* is celebrated for the artificial burnish of the style, but otherwise has been little relished. It has the beauty of marble sculpture, say the critics of Goethe, but also the coldness. We are not often disposed to quarrel with these critics as *below* the truth in their praises; in this instance we are. The *Eugenie* is a fragment, or (as Goethe himself called it in conversation) a *torso*, being only the first drama in a trilogy or series of three dramas, each having a separate plot, whilst all are parts of a more general and comprehensive plan. It may be charged with languor in the movement of the action, and with excess of illustration. Thus, *e. g.* the grief of the prince for the supposed death of his daughter, is the monotonous topic which occupies one entire act. But the situations, though not those of *scenical* distress, are so far from being unexciting, that, on the contrary, they are too powerfully afflicting.

The lustre of all these performances, however, is eclipsed by the unrivalled celebrity amongst German critics of the *Faust*. Upon this it is better to say nothing than too little. How trifiing an advance has been made towards clearing the ground for any sane criticism, may be understood from this fact, that as yet no two people have agreed about the meaning o

any separate scene, or about the drift of the whole. Neither is this explained by saying, that until lately the *Faust* was a fragment; for no additional light has dawned upon the main question since the publication of the latter part.

One work there is of Goethe's which falls into neither of the classes here noticed; we mean the *Hermann and Dorothea*, a narrative poem, in hexameter verse. This appears to have given more pleasure to readers not critical, than any other work of its author; and it is remarkable that it traverses humbler ground, as respects both it subject, its characters, and its scenery. From this, and other indications of the same kind, we are disposed to infer that Goethe mistook his destination; that his aspiring nature misled him; and that his success would have been greater had he confined himself to the *real* in domestic life, without raising his eyes to the *ideal*.

We must also mention, that Goethe threw out some novel speculations in physical science, and particularly in physiology, in the doctrine of colors, and in comparative anatomy, which have divided the opinions of critics even more than any of those questions which have arisen upon points more directly connected with his avowed character of poet.

It now remains to say a few words by way of summing up his pretensions as a man, and his intellectual power in the age to which he belonged. His rank and value as a moral being are so plain as to be legible to him who runs. Everybody must feel that his temperament and constitutional tendency was of that happy quality, the animal so nicely balanced with the intellectual, that with any ordinary measure of propriety

he could not be otherwise than a good man. He speaks himself of his own 'virtue,' *sans phrase;* and we tax him with no vanity in doing so. As a young man even at the universities, which at that time were barbarously sensual in Germany, he was (or so much we collect from his own Memoirs) eminently capable of self-restraint. He preserves a tone of gravity, of sincerity, of respect for female dignity, which we never find associated with the levity and recklessness of vice. We feel throughout, the presence of one who, in respecting others, respects himself; and the cheerfulness of the presiding tone persuades us at once that the narrator is in a healthy moral condition, fears no ill, and is conscious of having meditated none. Yet at the same time we cannot disguise from ourselves, that the moral temperament of Goethe was one which demanded prosperity. Had he been called to face great afflictions, singular temptations, or a billowy and agitated course of life, our belief is that his nature would have been found unequal to the strife; he would have repeated the mixed and moody character of his father. Sunny prosperity was essential to his nature; his virtues were adapted to that condition. And happily that was his fate. He had no personal misfortunes; his path was joyous in this life; and even the reflex sorrow from the calamities of his friends did not press too heavily on his sympathies; none of these were in excess either as to degree or duration.

In this estimate of Goethe as a moral being, few people will differ with us, unless it were the religious bigot. And to him we must concede thus much, that Goethe was not that religious creature which by nature he was intended to become. This is to be regretted.

Goethe was naturally pious and reverential towards higher natures; and it was in the mere levity or wantonness of youthful power, partly also through that early false bias growing out of the Lisbon earthquake, that he falsified his original destination. Do we mean, then, that a childish error could permanently master his understanding? Not so; *that* would have been corrected with his growing strength. But having once arisen, it must for a long time have moulded his feelings; *until* corrected, it must have impressed a corresponding false bias upon his practical way of viewing things; and that sort of false bias, once established, might long survive a mere error of the understanding. One thing is undeniable, — Goethe had so far corrupted and clouded his natural mind, that he did not look up to God, or the system of things beyond the grave, with the interest of reverence and awe, but with the interest of curiosity.

Goethe, however, in a moral estimate, will be viewed pretty uniformly. But Goethe intellectually, Goethe as a power acting upon the age in which he lived, that is another question. Let us put a case; suppose that Goethe's death had occurred fifty years ago, that is, in the year 1785, what would have been the general impression? Would Europe have felt a shock? Would Europe have been sensible even of the event? Not at all; it would have been obscurely noticed in the newspapers of Germany, as the death of a novelist who had produced some effect about ten years before. In 1832, it was announced by the post-horns of all Europe as the death of him who had written the *Wilhelm Meister*, the *Iphigenie*, and the *Faust*, and who had been enthroned by some of his admirers on the same seat

with Homer and Shakspeare, as composing what they termed the *trinity of men of genius.* And yet it is a fact, that, in the opinion of some amongst the acknowledged leaders of our own literature for the last twenty-five years, the *Werther* was superior to all which followed it, and for mere power was the paramount work of Goethe. For ourselves, we must acknowledge our assent upon the whole to this verdict; and at the same time we will avow our belief that the reputation of Goethe must decline for the next generation or two, until it reaches its just level. Three causes, we are persuaded, have concurred to push it so far beyond the proportion of real and genuine interest attached to his works, for in Germany his works are little read, and in this country not at all. *First*, his extraordinary age; for the last twenty years Goethe had been the patriarch of the German literature. *Secondly*, the splendor of his official rank at the court of Weimar; he was the minister and private friend of the patriot sovereign amongst the princes of Germany. *Thirdly*, the quantity of enigmatical and unintelligible writing which he has designedly thrown into his latter works, by way of keeping up a system of discussion and strife upon his own meaning amongst the critics of his country. These disputes, had his meaning been of any value in his own eyes, he would naturally have settled by a few authoritative words from himself; but it was his policy to keep alive the feud in a case where it was of importance that his name should continue to agitate the world, but of none at all that he should be rightly interpreted.

SCHILLER.

John Christopher Frederick von Schiller was born at Marbach, a small town in the duchy of Würtemberg, on the 10th day of November, 1759. It will aid the reader in synchronizing the periods of this great man's life with the corresponding events throughout Christendom, if we direct his attention to the fact, that Schiller's birth nearly coincided in point of time with that of Robert Burns, and that it preceded that of Napoleon by about ten years.

The position of Schiller is remarkable. In the land of his birth, by those who undervalue him the most, he is ranked as the second name in German literature; everywhere else he is ranked as the first. For us, who are aliens to Germany, Schiller is the representative of the German intellect in its highest form; and to him, at all events, whether first or second, it is certainly due, that the German intellect has become a known power, and a power of growing magnitude, for the great commonwealth of Christendom. Luther and Kepler, potent intellects as they were, did not make themselves known as Germans. The revolutionary vigor of the one, the starry lustre of the other, blended with the convulsions of reformation, or with the aurora of ascending science, in too kindly and genial a tone to

call off the attention from the work which they performed, from the service which they promoted, to the circumstances of their personal position. Their country, their birth, their abode, even their separate existence, was merged in the mighty cause to which they lent their coöperation. And thus at the beginning of the sixteenth century, thus at the beginning of the seventeenth, did the Titan sons of Germany defeat their own private pretensions by the very grandeur of their merits. Their interest as patriots was lost and confounded in their paramount interest as cosmopolites. What they did for man and for human dignity eclipsed what they had designed for Germany. After them there was a long interlunar period of darkness for the land of the Rhine and the Danube. The German energy, too spasmodically excited, suffered a collapse. Throughout the whole of the seventeenth century, but one vigorous mind arose for permanent effects in literature. This was Optiz, a poet who deserves even yet to be read with attention, but who is no more worthy to be classed as the Dryden, whom his too partial countrymen have styled him, than the Germany of the Thirty Years' War of taking rank by the side of civilized and cultured England during the Cromwellian era, or Klopstock of sitting on the same throne with Milton. Leibnitz was the one sole potentate in the fields of intellect whom the Germany of this century produced; and he, like Luther and Kepler, impresses us rather as a European than as a German mind, partly perhaps from his having pursued his self-development in foreign lands, partly from his large circle of foreign connections, but most or all from his having written chiefly in French or in Latin

Passing onwards to the eighteenth century, we find, through its earlier half, an absolute wilderness, unreclaimed and without promise of natural vegetation, as the barren arena on which the few insipid writers of Germany paraded. The torpor of academic dulness domineered over the length and breadth of the land. And as these academic bodies were universally found harnessed in the equipage of petty courts, it followed that the lethargies of pedantic dulness were uniformly deepened by the lethargies of aulic and ceremonial dulness; so that, if the reader represents to himself the very abstract of birthday odes, sycophantish dedications, and court sermons, he will have some adequate idea of the sterility and the mechanical formality which at that era spread the sleep of death over German literature. Literature, the very word literature, points the laughter of scorn to what passed under that name during the period of Gottsched. That such a man indeed as this Gottsched, equal at the best to the composition of a Latin grammar or a school arithmetic, should for a moment have presided over the German muses, stands out as in itself a brief and significant memorial, too certain for contradiction, and yet almost too gross for belief, of the apoplectic sleep under which the mind of central Europe at that era lay oppressed. The rust of disuse had corroded the very principles of activity. And, as if the double night of academic dulness, combined with the dulness of court inanities, had not been sufficient for the stifling of all native energies, the feebleness of French models (and of these moreover naturalized through still feebler imitations) had become the law and standard for all attempts at original composition. The darkness of

night, it is usually said, grows deeper as it approaches the dawn ; and the very enormity of that prostration under which the German intellect at this time groaned, was the most certain pledge to any observing eye of that intense re-action soon to stir and kindle among the smouldering activities of this spell-bound people. This re-action, however, was not abrupt and theatrical. It moved through slow stages and by equable gradations. It might be said to commence from the middle of the eighteenth century, that is, about nine years before the birth of Schiller; but a progress of forty years had not carried it so towards its meridian altitude, as that the sympathetic shock from the French Revolution was by one fraction more rude and shattering than the public torpor still demanded. There is a memorable correspondency throughout all members of Protestant Christendom in whatsoever relates to literature and intellectual advance. However imperfect the organization which binds them together, it was sufficient even in these elder times to transmit reciprocally from one to every other, so much of that illumination which could be gathered into books, that no Christian state could be much in advance of another, supposing that Popery opposed no barriers to free communication, unless only in those points which depended upon local gifts of nature, upon the genius of a particular people, or upon the excellence of its institutions. These advantages were incommunicable, let the freedom of intercourse have been what it might. England could not send off by posts or by heralds her iron and coals; she could not send the indomitable energy of her population ; she could not send the absolute security of property ; she could not send the good faith

of her parliaments. These were gifts indigenous to herself, either through the temperament of her people, or through the original endowments of her soil. But her condition of moral sentiment, her high-toned civic elevation, her atmosphere of political feeling and popular boldness, much of these she could and did transmit, by the radiation of the press, to the very extremities of the German empire. Not only were our books translated, but it is notorious to those acquainted with German novels, or other pictures of German society, that as early as the Seven Years' War, (1756–1763,) in fact from the very era when Cave and Dr. Johnson first made the parliamentary debates accessible to the English themselves, most of the German journals repeated, and sent forward as by telegraph, those senatorial displays to every village throughout Germany. From the polar latitudes to the Mediterranean, from the mouths of the Rhine to the Euxine, there was no other exhibition of free deliberative eloquence in any popular assembly. And the *Luise* of Voss alone, a metrical idyl not less valued for its truth of portraiture than our own Vicar of Wakefield, will show, that the most sequestered clergyman of a rural parish did not think his breakfast equipage complete without the latest report from the great senate that sat in London. Hence we need not be astonished that German and English literature were found by the French Revolution in pretty nearly the same condition of semi-vigilance and imperfect animation. That mighty event reached us both, reached us all, we may say, (speaking of Protestant states,) at the same moment, by the same tremendous galvanism. The snake, the intellectual snake, that lay in ambush

among all nations, roused itself, sloughed itself, renewed its youth, in all of them at the same period. A new world opened upon us all; new revolutions of thought arose; new and nobler activities were born; 'and other palms were won.'

But by and through Schiller it was, as its main organ, that this great revolutionary impulse expressed itself. Already, as we have said, not less than forty years before the earthquake by which France exploded and projected the scoria of her huge crater over all Christian lands, a stirring had commenced among the dry bones of intellectual Germany; and symptoms arose that the breath of life would soon disturb, by nobler agitations than by petty personal quarrels, the deathlike repose even of the German universities. Precisely in those bodies, however, it was, in those as connected with tyrannical governments, each academic body being shackled to its own petty centre of local despotism, that the old spells remained unlinked; and to them, equally remarkable as firm trustees of truth, and as obstinate depositories of darkness or of superannuated prejudice, we must ascribe the slowness of the German movement on the path of re-ascent. Meantime the earliest torch-bearer to the murky literature of this great land, this crystallization of political states, was Bodmer. This man had no demoniac genius, such as the service required; but he had some taste, and, what was better, he had some sensibility. He lived among the Alps; and his reading lay among the alpine sublimities of Milton and Shakspeare. Through his very eyes he imbibed a daily scorn of Gottsched and his monstrous compound of German coarseness, with French sensual levity. He could not look at his

native Alps, but he saw in them, and their austere grandeurs or their dread realities, a spiritual reproach to the hollowness and falsehood of that dull imposture, which Gottsched offered by way of substitute for nature. He was taught by the Alps to crave for something nobler and deeper. Bodmer, though far below such a function, rose by favor of circumstances into an apostle or missionary of truth for Germany. He translated passages of English literature. He inoculated with his own sympathies the more fervent mind of the youthful Klopstock, who visited him in Switzerland. And it soon became evident, that Germany was not dead, but sleeping; and once again, legibly for any eye, the pulses of life began to play freely through the vast organization of central Europe.

Klopstock, however, though a fervid, a religious, and, for that reason, an anti-Gallican mind, was himself an abortion. Such, at least, is our own opinion of this poet. He was the child and creature of enthusiasm, but of enthusiasm not allied with a masculine intellect, or any organ for that capacious vision, and meditative range, which his subjects demanded. He was essentially thoughtless, betrays everywhere a most effeminate quality of sensibility, and is the sport of that pseudo-enthusiasm, and baseless rapture, which we see so often allied with the excitement of strong liquors. In taste, or the sense of proportions and congruencies, or the harmonious adaptations, he is perhaps the most defective writer extant.

But if no patriarch of German literature, in the sense of having shaped the moulds in which it was to flow, in the sense of having disciplined its taste, or excited its rivalship, by classical models of excellence, or raised a

finished standard of style, perhaps we must concede that, on a minor scale, Klopstock did something of that service in every one of these departments. His works were at least Miltonic in their choice of subjects, if ludicrously non-Miltonic in their treatment of those subjects. And whether due to him or not, it is undeniable that in his time the mother-tongue of Germany revived from the most absolute degradation on record, to its ancient purity. In the time of Gottsched, the authors of Germany wrote a macaronic jargon, in which French and Latin made up a considerable proportion of every sentence: nay, it happened often that foreign words were inflected with German forms; and the whole result was such as to remind the reader of the medical examination in the *Malade Imaginaire* of Molière:

> 'Quid poetea est à faire?
> Saignare
> Baignare
> Ensuita purgare,' &c.

Now, is it not reasonable to ascribe some share in the restoration of good to Klopstock, both because his own writings exhibit nothing of this most abject euphuism, (a euphuism expressing itself not in fantastic refinements on the staple of the language, but altogether in rejecting it for foreign words and idioms,) and because he wrote expressly on the subject of style and composition?

Wieland, meantime, if not enjoying so intense an acceptation as Klopstock, had a more extensive one; and it is in vain to deny him the praise of a festive, brilliant, and most versatile wit. The Schlegels showed the haughty malignity of their ungenerous natures, in

depreciating Wieland, at a time when old age had laid a freezing hand upon the energy which he would once have put forth in defending himself. He was the Voltaire of Germany, and very much more than the Voltaire; for his romantic and legendary poems are above the level of Voltaire. But, on the other hand, he was a Voltaire in sensual impurity. To work, to carry on a plot, to affect his readers by voluptuous impressions, — these were the unworthy aims of Wieland; and though a good-natured critic would not refuse to make some allowance for a youthful poet's aberrations in this respect, yet the indulgence cannot extend itself to mature years. An old man corrupting his readers, attempting to corrupt them, or relying for his effect upon corruptions already effected, in the purity of their affections, is a hideous object; and that must be a precarious influence indeed which depends for its durability upon the licentiousness of men. Wieland, therefore, except in parts, will not last as a national idol; but such he was nevertheless for a time.

Bürger wrote too little of any expansive compass to give the measure of his powers, or to found national impression; Lichtenberg, though a very gracious observer, never rose into what can be called a *power*, he did not modify his age; yet these were both men of extraordinary talent, and Bürger a man of undoubted genius. On the other hand, Lessing was merely a man of talent, but of talent in the highest degree adapted to popularity. His very defects, and the shallowness of his philosophy, promoted his popularity; and by comparison with the French critics on the dramatic or scenical proprieties he is ever profound. His plummet, if not suited to the soundless depths of

Shakspeare, was able ten times over to fathom the little rivulets of Parisian philosophy. This he did effectually, and thus unconsciously levelled the path for Shakspeare, and for that supreme dominion which he has since held over the German stage, by crushing with his sarcastic shrewdness the pretensions of all who stood in the way. At that time, and even yet, the functions of a literary man were very important in Germany; the popular mind and the popular instinct pointed one way, those of the little courts another. Multitudes of little German states (many of which were absorbed since 1816 by the process of *mediatizing*) made it their ambition to play at keeping mimic armies in their pay, and to ape the greater military sovereigns, by encouraging French literature only, and the French language at their courts. It was this latter propensity which had generated the anomalous macaronic dialect, of which we have already spoken as a characteristic circumstance in the social features of literary Germany during the first half of the eighteenth century. Nowhere else, within the records of human follies do we find a corresponding case, in which the government and the patrician orders in the state, taking for granted, and absolutely postulating the utter worthlessness for intellectual aims of those in and by whom they maintained their own grandeur and independence, undisguisedly and even professedly sought to ally themselves with a foreign literature, foreign literati, and a foreign language. In this unexampled display of scorn for native resources, and the consequent collision between the two principles of action, all depended upon the people themselves. For a time the wicked and most profligate contempt of the local governments for that

native merit which it was their duty to evoke and to cherish, naturally enough produced its own justification. Like Jews or slaves, whom all the world have agreed to hold contemptible, the German literati found it hard to make head against so obstinate a prejudgment; and too often they became all that they were presumed to be. *Sint Mæcenates, non deerunt, Flacce, Marones.* And the converse too often holds good — that when all who should have smiled scowl upon a man, he turns out the abject thing they have predicted. Where Frenchified Fredericks sit upon German thrones, it should not surprise us to see a crop of Gottscheds arise as the best fruitage of the land. But when there is any latent nobility in the popular mind, such scorn, by its very extremity, will call forth its own counteraction. It was perhaps good for Germany that a prince so eminent in one aspect as *Fritz der einziger*,* should put on record so emphatically his intense conviction, that no good thing could arise out of Germany. This creed was expressed by the quality of the French minds which he attracted to his court. The very refuse and dregs of the Parisian coteries satisfied his hunger for French garbage: the very offal of their shambles met the demand of his palate; even a Maupertuis, so long as he could produce a French baptismal certificate, was good enough to manufacture into the president of a Berlin academy. Such scorn challenged a re-action; the contest lay between the thrones of Germany and the popular intellect, and the final result was inevitable.

* '*Freddy the unique;*' which is the name by which the Prussians expressed their admiration of the martial and indomitable, though somewhat fantastic, king.'

Once aware that they were insulted, once enlightened to the full consciousness of the scorn which trampled on them as intellectual and predestined Heliots, even the mild-tempered Germans became fierce, and now began to aspire, not merely under the ordinary instincts of personal ambition, but with a vindictive feeling, and as conscious agents of retribution. It became a pleasure with the German author, that the very same works which elevated himself, wreaked his nation upon their princes, and poured retorted scorn upon their most ungenerous and unparental sovereigns. Already, in the reign of the martial Frederick, the men who put most weight of authority into his contempt of Germans, — Euler, the matchless Euler, Lambert, and Immanuel Kant, — had vindicated the preëminence of German mathematics. Already, in 1755, had the same Immanuel Kant, whilst yet a probationer for the chair of logic in a Prussian university, sketched the outline of that philosophy which has secured the admiration, though not the assent, of all men known and proved to have understood it, of all men able to state its doctrines in terms admissible by its disciples. Already, and even previously, had Haller, who wrote in German, placed himself at the head of the current physiology. And in the fields of science or of philosophy, the victory was already decided for the German intellect in competition with the French.

But the fields of literature were still comparatively barren. Klopstock was at least an anomaly; Lessing did not present himself in the impassioned walks of literature; Herder was viewed too much in the exclusive and professional light of a clergyman; and, with the exception of John Paul Richter, a man of

most original genius, but quite unfitted for general popularity, no commanding mind arose in Germany with powers for levying homage from foreign nations, until the appearance, as a great scenical poet, of Frederick Schiller.

The father of this great poet was Caspar Schiller, an officer in the military service of the Duke of Würtemberg. He had previously served as a surgeon in the Bavarian army; but on his final return to his native country of Würtemberg, and to the service of his native prince, he laid aside his medical character for ever, and obtained a commission as ensign and adjutant. In 1763, the Peace of Paris threw him out of his military employment, with the nominal rank of captain. But, having conciliated the duke's favor, he was still borne on the books of the ducal establishment; and, as a planner of ornamental gardens, or in some other civil capacity, he continued to serve his serene highness for the rest of his life.

The parents of Schiller were both pious, upright persons, with that loyal fidelity to duty, and that humble simplicity of demeanor towards their superiors, which is so often found among the unpretending natives of Germany. It is probable, however, that Schiller owed to his mother exclusively the preternatural endowments of his intellect. She was of humble origin, the daughter of a baker, and not so fortunate as to have received much education. But she was apparently rich in gifts of the heart and the understanding. She read poetry with delight; and through the profound filial love with which she had inspired her son, she found it easy to communicate her own literary tastes. Her husband was not illiterate, and

had in mature life so laudably applied himself to the improvement of his own defective knowledge, that at length he thought himself capable of appearing before the public as an author. His book related simply to the subjects of his professional experience as a horticulturist, and was entitled *Die Baumzucht, im Grossen* (On the management of Forests). Some merit we must suppose it to have had, since the public called for a second edition of it long after his own death, and even after that of his illustrious son. And although he was a plain man, of no pretensions, and possibly even of slow faculties, he has left behind him a prayer, in which there is one petition of sublime and pathetic piety, worthy to be remembered by the side of Agar's wise prayer against almost the equal temptations of poverty and riches. At the birth of his son, he had been reflecting with sorrowful anxiety, not unmingled with self-reproach, on his own many disqualifications for conducting the education of the child. But at length, reading in his own manifold imperfections but so many reiterations of the necessity that he should rely upon God's bounty, converting his very defects into so many arguments of hope and confidence in Heaven, he prayed thus: 'Oh God, that knowest my poverty in good gifts for my son's inheritance, graciously permit that, even as the want of bread became to thy son's hunger-stricken flock in the wilderness the pledge of overflowing abundance, so likewise my darkness may, in its sad extremity, carry with it the measure of thy unfathomable light; and because I, thy worm, cannot give to my son the least of blessings, do thou give the greatest; because in my hands there is not any thing, do thou from thine pour out all things;

and that temple of a new-born spirit, which I cannot adorn even with earthly ornaments of dust and ashes, do thou irradiate with the celestial adornment of thy presence, and finally with that peace that passeth all understanding.'

Reared at the feet of parents so pious and affectionate, Schiller would doubtless pass a happy childhood; and probably to this utter tranquillity of his earlier years, to his seclusion from all that could create pain, or even anxiety, we must ascribe the unusual dearth of anecdotes from this period of his life; a dearth which has tempted some of his biographers into improving and embellishing some puerile stories, which a man of sense will inevitably reject as too trivial for his gravity or too fantastical for his faith. That nation is happy, according to a common adage, which furnishes little business to the historian; for such a vacuity in facts argues a condition of perfect peace and silent prosperity. That childhood is happy, or may generally be presumed such, which has furnished few records of external experience, little that has appeared in doing or in suffering to the eyes of companions; for the child who has been made happy by early thoughtfulness, and by infantine struggles with the great ideas of his origin and his destination, (ideas which settle with a deep, dove-like brooding upon the mind of childhood, more than of mature life, vexed with inroads from the noisy world,) will not manifest the workings of his spirit by much of external activity. The *fallentis semita vitæ*, that path of noiseless life, which eludes and deceives the conscious notice both of its subject and of all around him, opens equally to the man and to the child; and the happiest of all child-

hoods will have been that of which the happiness has survived and expressed itself, not in distinct records, but in deep affection, in abiding love, and the hauntings of meditative power.

Such a childhood, in the bosom of maternal tenderness, was probably passed by Schiller; and his first awaking to the world of strife and perplexity happened in his fourteenth year. Up to that period his life had been vagrant, agreeably to the shifting necessities of the ducal service, and his education desultory and domestic. But in the year 1773 he was solemnly entered as a member of a new academical institution, founded by the reigning duke, and recently translated to his little capital of Stutgard. This change took place at the special request of the duke, who, under the mask of patronage, took upon himself the severe control of the whole simple family. The parents were probably both too humble and dutiful in spirit towards one whom they regarded in the double light of sovereign lord and of personal benefactor, ever to murmur at the ducal behests, far less to resist them. The duke was for them an earthly providence; and they resigned themselves, together with their child, to the disposal of him who dispensed their earthly blessings, not less meekly than of Him whose vicegerent they presumed him to be. In such a frame of mind, requests are but another name for commands; and thus it happened that a second change arose upon the first, even more determinately fatal to the young Schiller's happiness. Hitherto he had cherished a day-dream pointing to the pastoral office in some rural district, as that which would harmonize best with his intellectual purposes, with his love of quiet, and by means of its preparatory require-

ments, best also with his own peculiar choice of studies. But this scheme he now felt himself compelled to sacrifice; and the two evils which fell upon him concurrently in his new situation, were, first, the formal military discipline and monotonous routine of duty; secondly, the uncongenial direction of the studies, which were shaped entirely to the attainment of legal knowledge, and the narrow service of the local tribunals. So illiberal and so exclusive a system of education was revolting to the expansive mind of Schiller; and the military bondage under which this system was enforced, shocked the aspiring nobility of his moral nature, not less than the technical narrowness of the studies shocked his understanding. In point of expense, the whole establishment cost nothing at all to those parents who were privileged servants of the duke; in this number were the parents of Schiller, and that single consideration weighed too powerfully upon his filial piety to allow of his openly murmuring at his lot; while on *their* part the parents were equally shy of encouraging a disgust which too obviously tended to defeat the promises of ducal favor. This system of monotonous confinement was therefore carried to its completion, and the murmurs of the young Schiller were either dutifully suppressed, or found vent only in secret letters to a friend. In one point only Schiller was able to improve his condition; jointly with the juristic department, was another for training young aspirants to the medical profession. To this, as promising a more enlarged scheme of study, Schiller by permission transferred himself in 1775. But whatever relief he might find in the nature of his new

studies, he found none at all in the system of personal discipline which prevailed.

Under the oppression of this detested system, and by pure re-action against its wearing persecutions, we learn from Schiller himself, that in his nineteenth year he undertook the earliest of his surviving plays, the Robbers, beyond doubt the most tempestuous, the most volcanic, we might say, of all juvenile creations anywhere recorded. He himself calls it 'a monster,' and a monster it is; but a monster which has never failed to convulse the heart of young readers with the temperament of intellectual enthusiasm and sensibility. True it is, and nobody was more aware of that fact than Schiller himself in after years, the characters of the three Moors, father and sons, are mere impossibilities; and some readers, in whom the judicious acquaintance with human life in its realities has outrun the sensibilities, are so much shocked by these hypernatural phenomena, that they are incapable of enjoying the terrific sublimities which on that basis of the visionary do really exist. A poet, perhaps Schiller might have alleged, is entitled to assume hypothetically so much in the previous positions or circumstances of his agents as is requisite to the basis from which he starts. It is undeniable that Shakspeare and others have availed themselves of this principle, and with memorable success. Shakspeare, for instance, *postulates* his witches, his Caliban, his Ariel: grant, he virtually says, such modes of spiritual existence or of spiritual relations as a possibility: do not expect me to demonstrate this, and upon that single concession I will rear a superstructure that shall be self-consistent; every-

thing shall be *internally* coherent and reconciled, whatever be its *external* relations as to our human experience. But this species of assumption, on the largest scale, is more within the limits of credibility and plausible verisimilitude when applied to modes of existence, which, after all, are in such total darkness to us, (the limits of the possible being so undefined and shadowy as to what can or cannot exist,) than the very slightest liberties taken with human character, or with those principles of action, motives, and feelings, upon which men would move under given circumstances, or with the modes of action which in common prudence they would be likely to adopt. The truth is, that, as a coherent work of art, the Robbers is indefensible; but, however monstrous it may be pronounced, it possesses a power to agitate and convulse, which will always obliterate its great faults to the young, and to all whose judgment is not too much developed. And the best apology for Schiller is found in his own words, in recording the circumstances and causes under which this anomalous production arose. 'To escape,' says he, 'from the formalities of a discipline which was odious to my heart, I sought a retreat in the world of ideas and shadowy possibilities, while as yet I knew nothing at all of that human world from which I was harshly secluded by iron bars. Of men, the actual men in this world below, I knew absolutely nothing at the time when I composed my Robbers. Four hundred human beings, it is true, were my fellow-prisoners in this abode; but they were mere tautologies and reiterations of the self-same mechanic creature, and like so many plaster-casts

from the same original statue. Thus situated, of necessity I failed. In making the attempt, my chisel brought out a monster, of which [and that was fortunate] the world had no type or resemblance to show.'

Meantime this demoniac drama produced very opposite results to Schiller's reputation. Among the young men of Germany it was received with an enthusiasm absolutely unparalleled, though it is perfectly untrue that it excited some persons of rank and splendid expectations (as a current fable asserted) to imitate Charles Moor in becoming robbers. On the other hand, the play was of too powerful a cast not in any case to have alarmed his serenity the Duke of Würtemberg; for it argued a most revolutionary mind, and the utmost audacity of self-will. But besides this general ground of censure, there arose a special one, in a quarter so remote, that this one fact may serve to evidence the extent as well as intensity of the impression made. The territory of the Grisons had been called by Spiegelberg, one of the robbers, 'The Thief's Athens.' Upon this the magistrates of that country presented a complaint to the duke; and his highness having cited Schiller to his presence, and severely reprimanded him, issued a decree that this dangerous young student should henceforth confine himself to his medical studies.

The persecution which followed exhibits such extraordinary exertions of despotism, even for that land of irresponsible power, that we must presume the duke to have relied more upon the hold which he had upon Schiller through his affection for parents so absolutely dependent on his highness's power, than upon any

laws, good or bad, which he could have pleaded as his warrant. Germany, however, thought otherwise of the new tragedy than the serene critic of Würtemberg: it was performed with vast applause at the neighboring city of Mannheim; and thither, under a most excusable interest in his own play, the young poet clandestinely went. On his return he was placed under arrest. And soon afterwards, being now thoroughly disgusted, and, with some reason, alarmed by the tyranny of the duke, Schiller finally eloped to Mannheim, availing himself of the confusion created in Stutgard by the visit of a foreign prince.

At Mannheim he lived in the house of Dalberg, a man of some rank and of sounding titles, but in Mannheim known chiefly as the literary manager (or what is called director) of the theatre. This connection aided in determining the subsequent direction of Schiller's talents; and his Fiesco, his Intrigue and Love, his Don Carlos, and his Maria Stuart, followed within a short period of years. None of these are so far free from the faults of the Robbers as to merit a separate notice; for with less power, they are almost equally licentious. Finally, however, he brought out his Wallenstein, an immortal drama, and, beyond all competition, the nearest in point of excellence to the dramas of Shakspeare. The position of the characters of Max Piccolomini and the Princess Thekla is the finest instance of what, in a critical sense, is called *relief*, that literature offers. Young, innocent, unfortunate, among a camp of ambitious, guilty, and blood-stained men, they offer a depth and solemnity of impression which is equally required by way of contrast and of final repose.

From Mannheim, where he had a transient love affair with Laura Dalberg, the daughter of his friend the director, Schiller removed to Jena, the celebrated university in the territory of Weimar. The Grand Duke of that German Florence was at this time gathering around him the most eminent of the German intellects; and he was eager to enroll Schiller in the body of his professors. In 1799 Schiller received the chair of civil history; and not long after he married Miss Lengefeld, with whom he had been for some time acquainted. In 1803 he was ennobled; that is, he was raised to the rank of gentleman, and entitled to attach the prefix of *Von* to his name. His income was now sufficient for domestic comfort and respectable independence; while in the society of Goethe, Herder, and other eminent wits, he found even more relaxation for his intellect, than his intellect, so fervent and so self-sustained, could require.

Meantime the health of Schiller was gradually undermined: his lungs had been long subject to attacks of disease; and the warning indications which constantly arose of some deep-seated organic injuries in his pulmonary system ought to have put him on his guard for some years before his death. Of all men, however, it is remarkable that Schiller was the most criminally negligent of his health; remarkable, we say, because for a period of four years Schiller had applied himself seriously to the study of medicine. The strong coffee, and the wine which he drank, may not have been so injurious as his biographers suppose; but his habit of sitting up through the night, and defrauding his wasted frame of all natural and restorative sleep, had something in it of that guilt which belongs to suicide. On

the 9th of May, 1805, his complaint reached its crisis. Early in the morning he became delirious ; at noon his delirium abated ; and at four in the afternoon he fell into a gentle unagitated sleep, from which he soon awoke. Conscious that he now stood on the very edge of the grave, he calmly and fervently took a last farewell of his friends. At six in the evening he fell again into sleep, from which, however, he again awoke once more to utter the memorable declaration, 'that many things were growing plain and clear to his understanding.' After this the cloud of sleep again settled upon him ; a sleep which soon changed into the cloud of death.

This event produced a profound impression throughout Germany. The theatres were closed at Weimar, and the funeral was conducted with public honors. The position in point of time, and the peculiar services of Schiller to the German literature, we have already stated : it remains to add, that in person he was tall, and of a strong bony structure, but not muscular, and strikingly lean. His forehead was lofty, his nose aquiline, and his mouth almost of Grecian beauty. With other good points about his face, and with auburn hair, it may be presumed that his whole appearance was pleasing and impressive, while in latter years the character of sadness and contemplative sensibility deepened the impression of his countenance. We have said enough of his intellectual merit, which places him in our judgment at the head of the Trans-Rhenish literature. But we add in concluding, that Frederick von Schiller was something more than a great author ; he was also in an eminent sense a

great man ; and his works are not more worthy of being studied for their singular force and originality, than his moral character from its nobility and aspiring grandeur.

ESSAYS ON THE POETS,

AND

OTHER ENGLISH WRITERS.

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ON WORDSWORTH'S POETRY.

Heretofore, upon one impulse or another, I have retraced fugitive memorials of several persons celebrated in our own times; but I have never undertaken an examination of any man's writings. The one labor is, comparatively, without an effort; the other is both difficult, and, with regard to contemporaries, is invidious. In genial moments the characteristic remembrances of men expand as fluently as buds travel into blossoms; but criticism, if it is to be conscientious and profound, and if it is applied to an object so unlimited as poetry, must be almost as unattainable by any hasty effort as fine poetry itself. "Thou hast convinced me," says Rasselas to Imlac, "that it is impossible to be a poet;" so vast had appeared to be the array of qualifications. But, with the same ease, Imlac might have convinced the prince that it was impossible to be a critic. And hence it is, that, in the sense of absolute and philosophic criticism, we have little or none; for, before *that* can exist, we must have a good psychology; whereas, at present, we have none at all.

If, however, it is more difficult to write critical sketches than sketches of personal recollections, often

it is much less connected with painful scruples. Of books, resting only on grounds which, in sincerity, you believe to be true, and speaking without anger or scorn, you can hardly say the thing which *ought* to be taken amiss. But of men and women you dare not, and must not, tell all that chance may have revealed to you. Sometimes you are summoned to silence by pity for that general human infirmity, which you also, the writer, share. Sometimes you are checked by the consideration that perhaps your knowledge of the case was originally gained under opportunities allowed by confidence or by unsuspecting carelessness. Sometimes the disclosure would cause quarrels between parties now at peace. Sometimes it would carry pain, such as you could not feel justified in carrying, into the mind of him who was its object. Sometimes, again, if right to be told, it might be difficult to prove. Thus, for one cause or another, some things are sacred, and some things are perilous, amongst any personal revelations that else you might have it in your power to make. And seldom, indeed, is your own silent retrospect of such connections altogether happy. "Put not your trust in princes, nor in the sons of princes," — this has been the warning, — this has been the farewell moral, winding up and pointing the experience of dying statesmen. Not less truly it might be said, "Put not your trust in the intellectual princes of your age:" form no connections too close with any who live only in the atmosphere of admiration and praise. The love or the friendship of such people rarely contracts itself into the narrow circle of individuals. You, if you are brilliant like themselves, they will hate; you, if you are dull, they will despise. Gaze, therefore, on

the splendor of such idols as a passing stranger. Look for a moment as one sharing in the idolatry; but pass on before the splendor has been sullied by human frailty, or before your own generous homage has been confounded with offerings of weeds.

Safer, then, it is to scrutinize the works of eminent poets, than long to connect yourself with themselves, or to revive your remembrances of them in any personal record. Now, amongst all works that have illustrated our own age, none can more deserve an earnest notice than those of the Laureate; and on some grounds, peculiar to themselves, none so much. Their merit in fact is not only supreme but unique; not only supreme in their general class, but unique as in a class of their own. And there is a challenge of a separate nature to the curiosity of the readers, in the remarkable contrast between the first stage of Wordsworth's acceptation with the public and that which he enjoys at present. One original obstacle to the favorable impression of the Wordsworthian poetry, and an obstacle purely self-created, was his theory of poetic diction. The diction itself, without the theory, was of less consequence; for the mass of readers would have been too blind or too careless to notice it. But the preface to the second edition of his Poems (2 vols. 1799–1800), compelled them to notice it. Nothing more injudicious was ever done by man. An unpopular truth would, at any rate, have been a bad inauguration, for what, on *other* accounts, the author had announced as "an experiment." His poetry was already an experiment as regarded the quality of the subjects selected, and as regarded the mode of treating them. That was surely trial enough for the

reader's untrained sensibilities, without the unpopular truth besides, as to the diction. But, in the mean time, this truth, besides being unpopular, was also, in part, false: it was true, and it was *not* true. And it was not true in a double way. Stating broadly, and allowing it to be taken for his meaning, that the diction of ordinary life, in his own words, "the very language of man," was the proper diction for poetry, the writer meant no such thing; for only a *part* of this diction, according to his own subsequent restriction, was available for such a use. And, secondly, as his own subsequent practice showed, even this part was available only for peculiar classes of poetry. In his own exquisite "Laodamia," in his "Sonnets," in his "Excursion," few are his obligations to the idiomatic language of life, as distinguished from that of books, or of prescriptive usage. Coleridge remarked, justly, that "The Excursion" bristles beyond most poems with what are called "dictionary" words; that is, polysyllabic words of Latin or Greek origin. And so it must ever be, in meditative poetry upon solemn philosophic themes. The gamut of ideas needs a corresponding gamut of expressions; the scale of the thinking, which ranges through *every* key, exacts, for the artist, an unlimited command over the entire scale of the instrument which he employs. Never, in fact, was there a more erroneous direction than that given by a modern rector of the Glasgow University to the students, — viz., that they should cultivate the Saxon part of our language, at the cost of the Latin part. Nonsense! Both are indispensable; and, speaking generally without stopping to distinguish as to subjects, both are *equally* indispensable. Pathos, in situations which are homely, or at all

connected with domestic affections, naturally moves by Saxon words. Lyrical emotion of every kind, which (to merit the name of *lyrical*), must be in the state of flux and reflux, or, generally, of agitation, also requires the Saxon element of our language. And why? Because the Saxon is the aboriginal element; the basis, and not the superstructure: consequently it comprehends all the ideas which are natural to the heart of man and to the elementary situations of life. And, although the Latin often furnishes us with duplicates of these ideas, yet the Saxon or monosyllabic part has the advantage of precedency in our use and knowledge; for it is the language of the nursery, whether for rich or poor, in which great philological academy no toleration is given to words in "*osity*" or "*ation*." There is, therefore, a great advantage, as regards the consecration to our feelings, settled, by usage and custom, upon the Saxon strands, in the mixed yarn of our native tongue. And, universally, this may be remarked — that, wherever the passion of a poem is of that sort which *uses*, *presumes*, or *postulates* the ideas, without seeking to extend them, Saxon will be the "cocoon" (to speak by the language applied to silk-worms) which the poem spins for itself But, on the other hand, where the motion of the feeling is *by* and *through* the ideas, where (as in religious or meditative poetry — Young's for instance, or Cowper's) the pathos creeps and kindles underneath the very tissues of the thinking, there the Latin will predominate; and so much so that, whilst the flesh, the blood and the muscle, will be often almost exclusively Latin, the articulations only, or hinges of connection, will be anglo-Saxon.

But a blunder, more perhaps from thoughtlessness and

careless reading, than from malice on the part of the professional critics, ought to have roused Wordsworth into a firmer feeling of the entire question These critics have fancied that, in Wordsworth's estimate, whatsoever was plebeian was also poetically just in diction; not as though the impassioned phrase were sometimes the vernacular phrase, but as though the vernacular phrase were universally the impassioned. They naturally went on to suggest, as a corollary, which Wordsworth could not refuse, that Dryden and Pope must be translated into the flash diction of prisons and the slang of streets, before they could be regarded as poetically costumed. Now, so far as these critics were concerned, the answer would have been — simply to say, that much in the poets mentioned, but especially of the racy Dryden, actually *is* in that vernacular diction for which Wordsworth contended; and, for the other part, which is *not*, frequently it *does* require the very purgation, (if *that* were possible), which the critics were presuming to be so absurd. In Pope, and sometimes in Dryden, there is much of the unfeeling and the prescriptive slang which Wordsworth denounced. During the eighty years between 1660 and 1740, grew up that scrofulous taint in our diction which was denounced by Wordsworth as technically "poetic language;" and, if Dryden and Pope were less infected than others, this was merely because their understandings were finer. Much there is in both poets, as regards diction, which *does* require correction. And if, *so* far, the critics should resist Wordsworth's principle of reform, not he, but they, would have been found the patrons of deformity. This course would soon have turned the tables upon the critics. For the

poets, or the class of poets, whom they unwisely selected as models, susceptible of no correction, happen to be those who chiefly require it. But *their* foolish selection ought not to have intercepted or clouded the question when put in another shape, since in this shape it opens into a very troublesome dilemma. Spenser, Shakspeare, the Bible of 1610, and Milton, — how say you, William Wordsworth, — are these right and true as to diction, or are they not? If you say they *are*, then what is it that you are proposing to change? What room for a revolution? Would you, as Sancho says, have "better bread than is made of wheat?" But if you say, no, they are *not*; then, indeed, you open a fearful range to your own artillery, but in a war greater than you could, apparently, have contemplated. In the first case, that is, if the leading classics of the English literature are, in quality of diction and style, loyal to the canons of sound taste, then you cut away the *locus standi* for yourself as a reformer: the reformation applies only to secondary and recent abuses. In the second, if they also are faulty, you undertake an *onus* of hostility so vast that you will be found fighting against the stars.

It is clear, therefore, that Wordsworth erred, and caused unnecessary embarrassment, equally to the attack and to the defence, by not assigning the names of the parties offended, whom he had specially contemplated. The bodies of the criminals should have been had into court. But much more he erred in another point, where his neglect cannot be thought of without astonishment. The whole appeal turned upon a comparison between two modes of phraseology; each of these, the bad and the good, should have been extensively illustrated; and,

until that is done, the whole dispute is an aërial subtilty equally beyond the grasp of the best critic and the worst. How *could* a man so much in earnest, and so deeply interested in the question, commit so capital an oversight? *Tantamne rem tam negligenter?* The truth is, that, at this day, after a lapse of forty-seven years, and some discussion, the whole question moved by Wordsworth is still a *res integra.* And for this reason, that no sufficient specimen has ever been given of the particular phraseology which each party contemplates as good or as bad: no man, in this dispute, steadily understands even himself; and, if he did, no other person understands him for want of distinct illustrations. Not only the answer, therefore, is still entirely in arrear, but even the question has not yet practically explained itself so as that an answer to it could be possible.

Passing from the diction of Wordsworth's poetry to its matter, the least plausible objection ever brought against it was that of Mr. Hazlitt: "One would suppose," he said, "from the tenor of his subjects, that on this earth there was neither marrying nor giving in marriage." But as well might it be said of Aristophanes: "One would suppose, that in Athens no such thing had been known as sorrow and weeping." Or Wordsworth himself might say reproachfully to some of Mr. Hazlitt's more favored poets: "Judging by *your* themes, a man must believe that there is no such thing on our planet as fighting and kicking." Wordsworth has written many memorable poems (for instance, "On the Tyrolean and the Spanish Insurrections;" "On the Retreat from Moscow;" "On the Feast of Brougham Castle"), all sympathizing powerfully with the martial spirit. Other

poets, favorites of Mr. Hazlitt, have never struck a solitary note from this Tyrtæan lyre; and who blames them? Surely, if every man finds his powers limited, every man would do well to respect this silent admonition of nature, by not travelling out of his appointed walk, through any coxcombry of sporting a spurious versatility. And in this view, what Mr. Hazlitt made the reproach of the poet, is amongst the first of his praises But there is another reason why Wordsworth could not meddle with festal raptures like the glory of a wedding-day. These raptures are not only too brief, but (which is worse) they tend downwards: even for as long as they last, they do not move upon an ascending scale. And even *that* is not their worst fault: they do not diffuse or communicate themselves: the wretches chiefly interested in a marriage are so selfish, that they keep all the rapture to themselves. Mere joy, that does not linger and reproduce itself in reverberations or mirrors, is not fitted for poetry. What would the sun be itself, if it were a mere blank orb of fire that did not multiply its splendors through millions of rays refracted and reflected; or if its glory were not endlessly caught, splintered, and thrown back by atmospheric repercussions?

There is, besides, a still subtler reason (and one that ought not to have escaped the acuteness of Mr. Hazlitt), why the muse of Wordsworth could not glorify a wedding festival. Poems no longer than a sonnet he *might* derive from such an impulse: and one such poem of his there really is. But whosoever looks searchingly into the characteristic genius of Wordsworth, will see that he does not willingly deal with a passion in its direct aspect,

or presenting an unmodified contour; but in forms more complex and oblique, and when passing under the shadow of some secondary passion. Joy, for instance, that wells up from constitutional sources, joy that is ebullient from youth to age, and cannot cease to sparkle, he yet exhibits in the person of Matthew,[1] the village schoolmaster, as touched and overgloomed by memories of sorrow. In the poem of "We are Seven," which brings into day for the first time a profound fact in the abysses of human nature, namely, that the mind of an infant cannot admit the idea of death, any more than the fountain of light can comprehend the aboriginal darkness (a truth on which Mr. Ferrier has since commented beautifully in his "Philosophy of Consciousness"); the little mountaineer, who furnishes the text for this lovely strain, she whose fulness of life could not brook the gloomy faith in a grave, is yet (for the effect upon the reader) brought into connection with the reflex shadows of the grave: and if she herself has *not*, the reader *has*, the gloom of that contemplation obliquely irradiated, as raised in relief upon his imagination, even by *her*. Death and its sunny antipole are forced into connection. I remember again to have heard a man complain, that in a little poem having for its very subject the universal diffusion and the gratuitous diffusion of joy —

> "Pleasure is spread through the earth,
> In stray gifts to be claimed by whoever shall find,"

a picture occurs which overpowered him with melancholy: it was this —

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[1] See the exquisite poems, so little understood by the commonplace reader, of *The Two April Mornings*, and *The Fountain*.

> "In sight of the spires
> All alive with the fires
> Of the sun going down to his rest,
> In the broad open eye of the solitary sky,
> They dance,— there are three, as jocund as free,—
> While they dance on the calm river's breast."[1]

Undeniably there is (and without ground for complaint there is) even here, where the spirit of gayety is professedly invoked, an oblique though evanescent image flashed upon us of a sadness that lies deep behind the laughing figures, and of a solitude that is the real possessor in fee of all things, but is waiting an hour or so for the dispossession of the false dancing tenants.

An inverse case, as regards the three just cited, is found in the poem of 'Hart-leap-well,' over which the mysterious spirit of the noon-day, Pan, seems to brood. Out of suffering is there evoked the image of peace. Out of the cruel leap, and the agonizing race through thirteen hours; out of the anguish in the perishing brute, and the headlong courage of his final despair,

> "Not unobserved by sympathy divine,"—

out of the ruined lodge and the forgotten mansion,

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1 Coleridge had a grievous infirmity of mind as regarded pain. He could not contemplate the shadows of fear, of sorrow, of suffering, with any steadiness of gaze. He was, in relation to that subject, what in Lancashire they call *nesh*, *i. e.*, soft, or effeminate. This frailty claimed indulgence, had he not erected it at times into a ground of superiority. Accordingly, I remember that he also complained of this passage in Wordsworth, and on the same ground, as being too overpoweringly depressing in the fourth line, when modified by the other five

bowers that are trodden under foot, and pleasure-houses that are dust, the poet calls up a vision of *palingenesis;* he interposes his solemn images of suffering, of decay, and ruin, only as a visionary haze through which gleams transpire of a trembling dawn far off, but surely on the road.

> "The pleasure-house is dust: behind, before,
> This is no common waste, no common gloom;
> But Nature in due course of time once more
> Shall here put on her beauty and her bloom.
>
> She leaves these objects to a slow decay,
> That what we are, and have been, may be known
> But, at the coming of the milder day,
> These monuments shall all be overgrown."

This influx of the joyous into the sad, and the sad into the joyous, this reciprocal entanglement of darkness in light, and of light in darkness, offers a subject too occult for popular criticism; but merely to have suggested it, may be sufficient to account for Wordsworth not having chosen a theme of pure garish sunshine, such as the hurry of a wedding-day, so long as others, more picturesque or more plastic, were to be had. A wedding-day is, in many a life, the sunniest of its days. But unless it is overcast with some event more tragic than could be wished, its uniformity of blaze, without shade or relief, makes it insipid to the mere bystander. Accordingly, all *epithalamia* seem to have been written under the inspiration of a bank-note.

Far beyond these causes of repulsiveness to ordinary readers was the class of subjects selected, and the mode of treating them. The earliest line of readers, the van

in point of time, always includes a majority of the young, the commonplace, and the unimpassioned. Subsequently, these are sifted and winnowed, as the rear ranks come forward in succession. But at first it was sure to ruin any poems, that the situations treated are not those which reproduce to the fancy of readers their own hopes and prospects. The meditative are interested by all that has an interest for human nature. But what cares a young lady, dreaming of lovers kneeling at her feet, for the agitations of a mother forced into resigning her child? or of a shepherd at eighty parting forever amongst mountain solitudes with an only son of seventeen, innocent and hopeful, whom soon afterwards the guilty town seduces into ruin irreparable? Romances and novels in verse constitute the poetry which is *immediately* successful; and that is a poetry, it may be added, which, after one generation, is unsuccessful forever.

But this theme is too extensive. Let us pass to the separate works of Wordsworth; and, in deference to the opinion of the world, let us begin with "The Excursion." This poem, as regards its opening, seems to require a recast. The inaugurating story of Margaret is in a wrong key, and rests upon a false basis. It is a case of sorrow from desertion. So at least it is represented. Margaret loses, in losing her husband, the one sole friend of her heart. And the wanderer, who is the presiding philosopher of the poem, in retracing her story, sees nothing in the case but a wasting away through sorrow, at once natural in its kind, and preternatural in its degree.

There is a story somewhere told of a man who com-

plained, and his friends complained, that his face looked almost always dirty. The man explained this strange affection out of a mysterious idiosyncrasy in the face itself, upon which the atmosphere so acted as to force out stains or masses of gloomy suffusion, just as it does upon some qualities of stone in vapory weather. But, said his friend, had you no advice for this strange affection? O yes: surgeons had prescribed; chemistry had exhausted its secrets upon the case; magnetism had done its best; electricity had done its worst. His friend mused for some time, and then asked: "Pray, amongst these painful experiments, did it ever happen to you to try one that I have read of, namely, a basin of soap and water?" And perhaps, on the same principle, it might be allowable to ask the philosophic wanderer, who washes the case of Margaret with so many coats of metaphysical varnish, but ends with finding all unavailing, "Pray, amongst your other experiments, did you ever try the effect of a guinea?" Supposing this, however, to be a remedy beyond his fortitude, at least he might have offered a little rational advice, which costs no more than civility. Let us look steadily at the case. The particular calamity under which Margaret groaned was the loss of her husband, who had enlisted. There is something, even on the husband's part, in this enlistment, to which the reader can hardly extend his compassion. The man had not gone off, it is true, as a heartless deserter of his family, or in profligate quest of pleasure: cheerfully he would have stayed and worked, had trade been good; but, as it was *not*, he found it impossible to support the spectacle of domestic suffering: he takes the bounty of a recruiting sergeant, and off he

marches with his regiment. Nobody reaches the summit of heartlessness at once; and, accordingly, in this early stage of his desertion, we are not surprised to find that part (but what part?) of the bounty had been silently conveyed to his wife. So far we are barely not indignant; but as time wears on we become highly so; for no letter does he ever send to his poor, forsaken partner, either of tender excuse, or of encouraging prospects. Yet, if *he had* done this, still we must condemn him. Millions have supported (and supported without praise or knowledge of man) that trial from which he so weakly fled. Even in this, and going no further, he was a voluptuary. Millions have heard and acknowledged, as a secret call from Heaven, the summons, not only to take their own share of household suffering, as a mere sacrifice to the spirit of manliness, but also to stand the far sterner trial of witnessing the same privations in a wife and little children. To evade this, to slip his neck out of the yoke, when God summons a poor man to such a trial, is the worst form of cowardice. And Margaret's husband, by adding to this cowardice subsequently an entire neglect of his family, not so much as intimating the destination of the regiment, forfeits his last hold upon our lingering sympathy. But with *him*, it will be said, the poet has not connected the leading thread of the interest. Certainly not; though in some degree by a reaction from *his* character depends the respectability of Margaret's grief. And it is impossible to turn away from his case entirely, because from the act of the enlistment is derived the whole movement of the story. Here it is that we must tax the wandering philosopher with treason. He found so luxurious a

pleasure in contemplating a pathetic *phthisis* of heart in the abandoned wife, that the one obvious counsel in her particular distress which dotage could not have overlooked he suppresses. And yet this in the revolution of a week would have brought her effectual relief. Surely the regiment, into which her husband had enlisted, bore some number: it was the king's "dirty half-hundred"— or the rifle brigade — or some corps known to men and the Horse Guards. Instead, therefore, of suffering poor Margaret to loiter at a gate, looking for answers to her questions from vagrant horsemen,— a process which reminds one of a sight, sometimes extorting at once smiles and deep pity, in the crowded thoroughfares of London, namely, a little child innocently asking with tearful eyes from strangers for the mother whom it has lost in that vast wilderness,— the wanderer should at once have inquired for the station of that detachment which had enlisted him. This *must* have been in the neighborhood. Here he would have obtained all the particulars. That same night he would have written to the War-Office; and in a very few days, an official answer, bearing the indorsement, *On H. M.'s Service*, would have placed Margaret in communication with the truant. To have overlooked a point of policy so broadly apparent as this, vitiates and nullifies the very basis of the story. Even for a romance it will not do; far less for a philosophic poem dealing with intense realities. No such case of distress could have lived for one fortnight, nor have survived a single interview with the rector, the curate, the parish-clerk, with the schoolmaster, the doctor, the attorney, the innkeeper, or the exciseman.

But, apart from the vicious mechanism of the incidents, the story is even more objectionable by the doubtful quality of the leading character from which it derives its pathos. Had any one of us readers held the office of coroner in her neighborhood, he would have found it his duty to hold an inquest upon the body of her infant. This child, as every reader could depose (*now* when the details have been published by the poet), died of neglect; not through direct cruelty, but through criminal self-indulgence. Self-indulgence in what? Not in liquor, yet not altogether in fretting. Sloth, and the habit of gadding abroad, were most in fault. The wanderer himself might have been called as a witness for the crown, to prove that the infant was left to sleep in solitude for hours: the key even was taken away, as if to intercept the possibility (except through burglary) of those tender attentions from some casual stranger, which the unfeeling mother had withdrawn. The child absolutely awoke whilst the philosopher was listening at the door. It cried; but finally hushed itself to sleep. That looks like a case of Dalby's carminative. But this crisis could not have been relied on: tragical catastrophes arise from neglected crying; ruptures in the first place, a very common result in infants; rolling out of bed followed by dislocation of the neck; fits, and other short cuts to death. It is hardly any praise to Margaret that she carried the child to that consummation by a more lingering road.

This first tale, therefore, must and will, if Mr. Wordsworth retains energy for such recasts of a laborious work, be cut away from its connection with "The Excursion." This is the more to be expected from a

poet aware of his own importance and anxious for the perfection of his works, because nothing in the following books depends upon this narrative. No timbers or main beams need to be sawed away; it is but a bolt that is to be slipped, a rivet to be unscrewed. And yet, on the other hand, if the connection is slight, the injury is great; for we all complain heavily of entering a temple dedicated to new combinations of truth through a vestibule of falsehood. And the falsehood is double; falsehood in the adjustment of the details (however separately possible), falsehood in the character which, wearing the mask of profound sentiment, does apparently repose upon dyspepsy and sloth.

Far different in value and in principle of composition is the next tale in "The Excursion." This occupies the fourth book, and is the impassioned record from the infidel solitary of those heart-shaking chapters in his own life which had made him what the reader finds him. Once he had not been a solitary; once he had not been an infidel; now he is both. He lives in a little, urn-like valley (a closet-recess from Little Langdale by the description), amongst the homely household of a yeoman: he is become a bitter cynic; and not against man alone, or society alone, but against the laws of hope or fear, upon which both repose. If he endures the society with which he is now connected, it is because, being dull, that society is of few words; it is because, being tied to hard labor, that society goes early to bed, and packs up its dulness at eight, P. M., in blankets; it is because, under the acute inflictions of Sunday, or the chronic inflictions of the Christmas holidays, that dull society is easily laid into a magnetic sleep by three

passes of metaphysical philosophy. The narrative of this misanthrope is grand and impassioned; not creeping by details and minute touches, but rolling through capital events, and uttering its pathos through great representative abstractions. Nothing can be finer than when, upon the desolation of his household, upon the utter emptying of his domestic chambers by the successive deaths of children and youthful wife, just at that moment the mighty phantom of the French Revolution rises solemnly above the horizon; even then new earth and new heavens are promised to human nature; and suddenly the solitary man, translated by the frenzy of human grief into the frenzy of supernatural hopes, adopts these radiant visions for the darlings whom he has lost —

> "Society becomes his glittering bride,
> And airy hopes his children."

Yet it is a misfortune in the fate of this fine tragic movement, rather than its structure, that it tends to collapse: the latter strains, colored deeply by disappointment, do not correspond with the grandeur of the first. And the hero of the record becomes even more painfully a contrast to himself than the tenor of the incidents to their earlier tenor. Sneering and querulous comments upon so broad a field as human folly, make poor compensation for the magnificence of youthful enthusiasm. But may not this defect be redressed in a future section of the poem? It is probable, from a hint dropped by the author, that one collateral object of the philosophical discussions is — the reconversion of the splenetic infidel to his ancient creed in some higher form, and to his ancient temper of benignant hope: in which case, what

now we feel to be a cheerless depression, will sweep round into a noble reäscent — quite on a level with the aspirations of youth, and differing, not in degree, but only in quality of enthusiasm. Yet, if this is the poet's plan, it seems to rest upon a misconception. For how should the sneering sceptic, who has actually found solace in Voltaire's "Candide," be restored to the benignities of faith and hope by argument? It was not in this way that he lost his station amongst Christian believers. No false philosophy it had been which wrecked his Christian spirit of hope; but, on the contrary, his bankruptcy in hope which wrecked his Christian philosophy. Here, therefore, the poet will certainly find himself in an "almighty fix;" because any possible treatment, which could restore the solitary's former self, such as a course of sea-bathing, could not interest the reader; and reversely, any successful treatment through argument that could interest the philosophic reader would not, under the circumstances, seem a plausible restoration for the case.

What is it that has made the recluse a sceptic? Is it the reading of bad books? In that case he may be reclaimed by the arguments of those who have read better. But not at all. He has become the unbelieving cynic that he is, 1st, through his own domestic calamities predisposing him to *gloomy* views of human nature; and, 2dly, through the overclouding of his high-toned expectations from the French Revolution, which has disposed him, in a spirit of revenge for his own disappointment, to *contemptuous* views of human nature. Now, surely the dejection which supports his gloom, and the despondency which supports his contempt, are not of a

nature to give way before philosophic reasonings. Make him happy by restoring what he has lost, and his genial philosophy will return of itself. Make him triumphant by realizing what had seemed to him the golden promises of the French Revolution, and his political creed will moult her sickly feathers. Do this, and he is still young enough for hope; but less than this restoration of his morning visions will not call back again his morning happiness; and breaking spears with him in logical tournaments will mend neither his hopes nor his temper.

Indirectly, besides, it ought not to be overlooked, that, as respects the French Revolution, the whole college of philosophy in "The Excursion," who are gathered together upon the case of the recluse, make the same mistake that *he* makes. Why is the recluse disgusted with the French Revolution? Because it had not fulfilled many of his expectations; and, of those which it *had* fulfilled, some had soon been darkened by reverses. But really this was childish impatience. If a man depends for the exuberance of his harvest upon the splendor of the coming summer, you do not excuse him for taking prussic acid because it rains cats and dogs through the first ten days of April. All in good time, we say; take it easy; make acquaintance with May and June before you do anything rash. The French Revolution has not, even yet [1845], come into full action. It was the explosion of a prodigious volcano, which scattered its lava over every kingdom of every continent, everywhere silently manuring them for social struggles; this lava is gradually fertilizing all; the revolutionary movement is moving onwards at this hour as inexorably as ever. Listen, if you have ears for such spiritual

sounds, to the mighty tide even now slowly coming up from the sea to Milan, to Rome, to Naples, to Vienna. Hearken to the gentle undulations already breaking against the steps of that golden throne which stretches from St. Petersburgh to Astrachan; — tremble at the hurricanes which have long been mustering about the pavilions of the Ottoman Padishah. All these are long swells setting in from the French Revolution. Even as regards France herself, that which gave the mortal offence to the sympathies of the solitary was the Reign of Terror. But how thoughtless to measure the cycles of vast national revolutions by metres that would not stretch round an ordinary human passion! Even to a frail sweetheart you would grant more indulgence than to be off in a pet because some transitory cloud arose between you. The Reign of Terror was a mere fleeting phasis. The Napoleon dynasty was nothing more. Even that scourge, which was supposed by many to have *mastered* the Revolution, has itself passed away upon the wind, — leaving no wreck, relic, or record behind, except precisely those changes which it worked, *not as an enemy to the Revolution* (which also it was), *but as its servant and its tool.* See, even whilst we speak, the folly of that cynical sceptic who would not allow time for great natural processes of purification to travel onwards to their birth, or wait for the evolution of natural results; — the storm that shocked him has wheeled away; — the frost and the hail that offended him have done their office; — the rain is over and gone; — happier days have descended upon France; — the voice of the turtle is heard in all her forests; — man walks with his head erect; — bastiles are no more; — every cottage is

searched by the golden light of law; and the privileges of conscience are consecrated forever.

Here, then, the poet himself, the philosophic wanderer, the learned vicar, are all equally in fault with the solitary sceptic; for they all agree in treating his disappointment as sound and reasonable in itself; but blamable only in relation to those exalted hopes which he never ought to have encouraged. Right (they say), to consider the French Revolution, now, as a failure; but *not* right originally, to have expected that it should succeed. Whereas, in fact, it *has* succeeded; it is propagating its life; it is travelling on to new births — conquering, and yet to conquer.

It is not easy to see, therefore, how the Laureate can avoid making some change in the constitution of his poem, were it only to rescue his philosophers, and, therefore, his own philosophy, from the imputation of precipitancy in judgment. They charge the sceptic with rash judgment *à parte ante*; and, meantime, they themselves are more liable to that charge *à parte post*. If he, at the first, hoped too much (which is not clear, but only that he hoped too impatiently), they afterwards recant too blindly. And this error they will not, themselves, fail to acknowledge, as soon as they awaken to the truth, that the Revolution did not close on the 18th Brumaire, 1799, at which time it was only arrested or suspended, in one direction, by military shackles, but is still mining under ground, like the ghost in Hamlet, through every quarter of the globe.[1]

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[1] The reader must not understand the writer as unconditionally approving of the French Revolution. It is his belief that the

In paying so much attention to "The Excursion" (of which, in a more extended notice, the two books entitled, "The Churchyard amongst the Mountains," would have claimed the profoundest attention), we yield less to our own opinion than to that of the public. Or, perhaps, it is not so much the public as the vulgar opinion, governed entirely by the consideration that "The Excursion" is very much the longest poem of its author; and, secondly, that it bears currently the title of a *philosophic* poem; on which account it is presumed to have a higher dignity. The big name and the big size are allowed to settle its rank. But in this there is much delusion. In the very scheme and movement of "The Excursion" there are two defects which interfere greatly with its power to act upon the mind as a whole, or with any effect of unity; so that, infallibly it will be read, by future generations, in parts and fragments; and, being thus virtually dismembered into many small poems, it will scarcely justify men in allowing it the rank of a long one. One of these defects is the *undulatory* character of the course pursued by the poem, which

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resistance to the revolution was, in many high quarters, a sacred duty; and that this resistance it was which forced out, from the Revolution itself, the benefits which it has since diffused. To speak by the language of mechanics, the case was one which illustrated the composition of forces. Neither the Revolution singly, nor the resistance to the Revolution singly, was calculated to regenerate social man. But the two forces in union — where the one modified, mitigated, or even neutralized the other, at times, and where, at times, each entered into a happy combination with the other, — yielded for the world those benefits which, by its separate tendency, either of the two was fitted to stifle.

does not ascend uniformly, or even keep one steady level, but trespasses, as if by forgetfulness, or chance, into topics furnishing little inspiration, and not always closely connected with the presiding theme. In part this arises from the accident that a slight tissue of narrative connects the different sections; and to this the movement of the narrative, the fluctuations of the speculative themes, are in part obedient: the succession of the incidents becomes a law for the succession of the thoughts, as oftentimes it happens that these incidents are the proximate occasions of the thoughts. Yet, as the narrative is not of a nature to be moulded by any determinate principle of coercing passion, but bends easily to the caprices of chance and the moment, unavoidably it stamps, by reaction, a desultory or even incoherent character upon the train of the philosophic discussions. You know not what is coming next; and, when it *does* come, you do not always know *why* it comes. This has the effect of crumbling the poem into separate segments, and causes the whole (when looked at *as* a whole) to appear a rope of sand. A second defect lies in the colloquial form which the poem sometimes assumes. It is dangerous to conduct a philosophic discussion by *talking*. If the nature of the argument could be supposed to roll through logical quillets, or metaphysical conundrums, so that, on putting forward a problem, the interlocutor could bring matters to a crisis, by saying, "Do you give it up?"— in that case there might be a smart reciprocation of dialogue, of swearing and denying, giving and taking, butting, rebutting, and "surrebutting;"[1] and

[1] "Surrebutting:" this is not, directly, a term from Aristotle's

this would confer an interlocutory or *amœbæan* character upon the process of altercation. But the topics, and the quality of the arguments being *moral*, in which always the reconciliation of the feelings is to be secured by gradual persuasion, rather than the understanding to be floored by a solitary blow, inevitably it becomes impossible that anything of this brilliant conversational sword-play, cut-and-thrust, "carte" and "tierce," can make for itself an opening. Mere decorum requires that the speakers should be prosy. And you yourself, though sometimes disposed to say, "Do now, dear old soul, cut it short," are sensible that he *cannot* cut it short. Disquisitions, in a certain key, can no more turn round upon a sixpence than a coach-and-six. They must have sea-room to "wear" ship, and to tack. This in itself is often tedious; but it leads to a worse tediousness: a practised eye sees from afar the whole evolution of the coming argument; and then, besides the pain of hearing the parties preach, you hear them preach from a text which already in germ had warned you of all the buds and blossoms which it was laboriously to produce. And this *second* blemish, unavoidable if the method of dialogue is adopted, becomes more painfully apparent through a *third*, almost inalienable from the natural constitution of the subjects concerned. It is, that in cases where a large interest of human nature is treated, such as the position of man in this world, his duties, his difficulties, many parts become necessary as transitional

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mint, but indirectly it is; for it belongs to the old science of "special pleading," which, in part, is an offset from the Aristotelian logic.

or connecting links, which, *per se*, are not attractive, nor can by any art be made so. Treating the whole theme *in extenso*, the poet is driven, by natural corollary, or by objections too obvious to be evaded, into discussions not chosen by his own taste, but dictated by the logic or the tendencies of the question, and by the impossibility of dismissing with partiality any one branch of a subject which is essential to the integrity of the speculation, simply because it is at war with the brilliancy of its development.

Not, therefore, in "The Excursion" must we look for that reversionary influence which awaits Wordsworth with posterity. It is the vulgar superstition in behalf of big books and sounding titles; it is the weakness of supposing no book entitled to be considered a power in the literature of the land, unless physically it is weighty, that must have prevailed upon Coleridge and others to undervalue, by comparison with the direct philosophic poetry of Wordsworth, those earlier poems which are all short, but generally scintillating with gems of far profounder truth. Let the reader understand, however, that, by "truth," I understand, not merely that truth which takes the shape of a formal proposition, reducible to "mood" and "figure," but truth which suddenly strengthens into solemnity an impression very feebly acknowledged previously, or truth which suddenly unveils a connection between objects always before regarded as irrelate and independent. In astronomy, to gain the rank of discoverer, it is not required that you should reveal a star absolutely new; find out with respect to an old star some new affection — as, for instance, that it has an ascertainable parallax —

and immediately you bring it within the verge of a human interest; or of some old familiar planet, that its satellites suffer periodical eclipses, and immediately you bring it within the verge of terrestrial uses. Gleams of steadier vision, that brighten into certainty appearances else doubtful, or that unfold relations else unsuspected, are not less discoveries of truth than the revelations of the telescope, or the conquests of the diving-bell. It is astonishing how large a harvest of new truths would be reaped, simply through the accident of a man's feeling, or being made to feel, more *deeply* than other men. He sees the same objects, neither more nor fewer, but he sees them engraved in lines far stronger and more determinate; and the difference in the strength makes the whole difference between consciousness and sub-consciousness. And in questions of the mere understanding, we see the same fact illustrated: the author who rivets notice the most, is not he that perplexes men by truths drawn from fountains of absolute novelty,— truths unsunned as yet, and obscure from that cause; but he that awakens into illuminated consciousness old lineaments of truth long slumbering in the mind, although too faint to have extorted attention. Wordsworth has brought many a truth into life, both for the eye and for the understanding, which previously had slumbered indistinctly for all men.

For instance, as respects the eye, who does not acknowledge instantaneously the strength of reality in that saying upon a cataract seen from a station two miles off, that it was "frozen by distance"? In all nature there is not an object so essentially at war with the stiffening of frost, as the headlong and desperate life

of a cataract; and yet notoriously the effect of distance is to lock up this frenzy of motion into the most petrific column of stillness. This effect is perceived at once when pointed out; but how few are the eyes that ever *would* have perceived it for themselves! Twilight, again, — who before Wordsworth ever distinctly noticed its *abstracting* power? — that power of removing, softening, harmonizing, by which a mode of obscurity executes for the eye the same mysterious office which the mind so often within its own shadowy realms executes for itself. In the dim interspace between day and night, all disappears from our earthly scenery, as if touched by an enchanter's rod, which is either mean or inharmonious, or unquiet, or expressive of temporary things. Leaning against a column of rock, looking down upon a lake or river, and at intervals carrying your eyes forward through a vista of mountains, you become aware that your sight rests upon the very same spectacle, unaltered in a single feature, which once at the same hour was beheld by the legionary Roman from his embattled camp, or by the roving Briton in his "wolf-skin vest,' lying down to sleep, and looking

> ——— "through some leafy bower,
> Before his eyes were closed."

How magnificent is the summary or abstraction of the elementary features in such a scene, as executed by the poet himself, in illustration of this abstraction daily executed by nature, through her handmaid Twilight! Listen, reader, to the closing strain, solemn as

twilight is solemn, and grand as the spectacle which it describes: —

> "By him [*i. e.*, the roving Briton] was seen,
> The self-same vision which *we* now behold,
> At thy meek bidding, shadowy Power, brought forth,
> These mighty barriers, and the gulf between ;
> The floods, the stars, — a spectacle as old
> As the beginning of the heavens and earth."

Another great field there is amongst the pomps of nature, which, if Wordsworth did not first notice, he certainly has noticed most circumstantially. I speak of cloud-scenery, or those pageants of sky-built architecture, which sometimes in summer, at noon-day, and in all seasons about sunset, arrest or appal the meditative ; "perplexing monarchs" with the spectacle of armies manœuvring, or deepening the solemnity of evening by towering edifices that mimic — but which also in mimicking mock — the transitory grandeurs of man. It is singular that these gorgeous phenomena, not less than those of the *Aurora Borealis*, have been so little noticed by poets. The *Aurora* was naturally neglected by the southern poets of Greece and Rome, as not much seen in their latitudes.[1] But the cloud-architecture of the day-

[1] But then, says the reader, why is it not proportionably the more noticed by poets of the north ? Certainly, that question is fair. And the answer, it is scarcely possible to doubt, is this: — That until the rise of Natural Philosophy, in Charles the Second's reign, *there was no name* for the appearance ; on which account, some writers have been absurd enough to believe that the Aurora did not exist, noticeably, until about 1690. Shakspeare, in his journey down to Stratford (always performed on horseback), must often have been belated : he must sometimes have seen, he could not but have admired, the fiery skirmishes of the Aurora. And

.ight belongs alike to north and south. Accordingly, I remember one notice of it in Hesiod, a case were the clouds exhibited

"The beauteous semblance of a flock at rest."

Another there is, a thousand years later, in Lucan: amongst the portents which prefigured the dreadfu. convulsions destined to shake the earth at Pharsalia, is noticed by him some fiery coruscation of arms in the heavens; but, so far as I recollect, the appearances might have belonged equally to the workmanship of the clouds or the Aurora. Up and down the next eight hundred years are scattered evanescent allusions to these vapory appearances; in Hamlet and elsewhere occur gleams of such allusions; but I remember no distinct picture of one before that in the "Antony and Cleopatra" of Shakspeare, beginning,

"Sometimes we see a cloud that 's dragonish."

Subsequently to Shakspeare, these notices, as of all phenomena whatsoever that demanded a familiarity with nature in the spirit of love, became rarer and rarer. At length, as the eighteenth century was winding up its accounts, forth stepped William Wordsworth, of whom, as a reader of all pages in nature, it may be said that, if we except Dampier, the admirable buccaneer, and some few professional naturalists, he first and he .ast looked at natural objects with the eye that neither will be dazzled from without nor cheated by preconceptions from within. Most men look at nature in the hurry of

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yet, for want of a word to fix and identify the object, how could he introduce it as an image or allusion in his writings?

a confusion that distinguishes nothing; *their* error is from without. Pope, again, and many who live in towns,[1] make such blunders as that of supposing the moon to tip with silver the hills *behind* which she is rising, not by erroneous use of their eyes (for they use them not at all), but by inveterate preconceptions. Scarcely has there been a poet with what could be called a learned eye, or an eye *extensively* learned, before Wordsworth. Much affectation there has been of that sort since *his* rise, and at all times much counterfeit enthusiasm; but the sum of the matter is this, that Wordsworth had his passion for nature fixed in his blood; —it was a necessity, like that of the mulberry-leaf to the silk-worm; and through his commerce with nature did he live and breathe. Hence it was, namely, from the *truth* of his love, that his knowledge grew; whilst most others, being merely hypocrites in their love, have turned out merely *charlatans* in their knowledge. This chapter, therefore, of *sky* scenery, may be said to have been revivified amongst the resources of poetry by Wordsworth — rekindled, if not absolutely kindled. The sublime scene endorsed upon the draperies of the storm in "The Excursion," — that witnessed upon the passage of the Hamilton Hills in Yorkshire, — the

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[1] It was not, however, that all poets then lived in towns; neither had Pope himself generally lived in towns. But it is perfectly useless to be familiar with nature unless there is a public trained to love and value nature. It is not what the individual sees that will fix itself as beautiful in his recollections, but what he sees under a consciousness that others will sympathize with his feelings. Under any other circumstances familiarity does but realize the adage, and "breeds contempt." The great despisers of rural scenery are rustics.

solemn "sky prospect" from the fields of France, are unrivalled in that order of composition; and in one of these records Wordsworth has given first of all the true key-note of the sentiment belonging to these grand pageants. They are, says the poet, speaking in a case where the appearance had occurred towards night,

> "Meek nature's evening comment on the shows
> And all the fuming vanities of earth"

Yes, that is the secret moral whispered to the mind. These mimicries express the laughter which is in heaven at earthly pomps. Frail and vapory are the glories of man, even as the parodies of those glories are frail which nature weaves in clouds.

As another of those natural appearances which must have haunted men's eyes since the Flood, but yet had never forced itself into *conscious* notice until arrested by Wordsworth, I may notice an effect of *iteration* daily exhibited in the habits of cattle: —

> "The cattle are grazing,
> Their heads never raising;
> There are forty feeding like one."

Now, merely as a *fact*, and if it were nothing more, this characteristic appearance in the habits of cows, when all repeat the action of each, ought not to have been overlooked by those who profess themselves engaged in holding up a mirror to nature. But the fact has also a profound meaning as a hieroglyphic. In all animals which live under the protection of man a life of peace and quietness, but do not share in his labors or in his pleasures, what we regard is the species, and not the

individual. Nobody but a grazier ever looks at one cow amongst a field of cows, or at one sheep in a flock. But as to those animals which are more closely connected with man, not passively connected, but actively, being partners in his toils and perils and recreations, such as horses, dogs, falcons, they are regarded as individuals, and are allowed the benefit of an individual interest. It is not that cows have not a differential character, each for herself; and sheep, it is well known, have all a separate physiognomy for the shepherd who has cultivated their acquaintance. But men generally have no opportunity or motive for studying the individualities of creatures, however otherwise respectable, that are too much regarded by all of us in the reversionary light of milk, and beef, and mutton. Far otherwise it is with horses, who share in man's martial risks, who sympathize with man's frenzy in hunting, who divide with man the burdens of noonday. Far otherwise it is with dogs, that share the hearths of man, and adore the footsteps of his children. These man loves; of these he makes dear, though humble friends. These often fight for *him;* and for them he he will sometimes fight. Of necessity, therefore, every horse and every dog is an individual — has a sort of personality that makes him *separately* interesting — has a beauty and a character of his own. Go to Melton, therefore, and what will you see? Every man, every horse, every dog, glorying in the plentitude of life, is in a different attitude, motion, gesture, action. It is not there the sublime unity which you must seek, where forty are like one; but the sublime infinity, like that of ocean, like that of Flora, like that of nature, where no

repetitions are endured, no leaf the copy of another leaf, no absolute identity, and no painful tautologies. This subject might be pursued into profounder recesses; but in a popular discussion it is necessary to forbear.

A volume might be filled with such glimpses of novelty as Wordsworth has first laid bare, even to the apprehension of the *senses*. For the *understanding*, when moving in the same track of human sensibilities, he has done only not so much. How often (to give an instance or two) must the human heart have felt that there are sorrows which descend far below the region in which tears gather; and yet who has ever given utterance to this feeling until Wordsworth came with his immortal line —

> "Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears"?

This sentiment, and others that might be adduced (such as "The child is father of the man"), have even passed into the popular mind, and are often quoted by those who know not *whom* they are quoting. Magnificent, again, is the sentiment, and yet an echo to one which lurks amongst all hearts, in relation to the frailty of merely human schemes for working good, which so often droop and collapse through the unsteadiness of human energies,—

> ——— "foundations must be laid
> In Heaven."

How? Foundations laid in realms that are *above?* But *that* is at war with physics; — foundations must be laid *below*. Yes; and even so the poet throws the mind yet more forcibly on the hyperphysical character

— on the grandeur transcending all physics — of those shadowy fountains which alone are enduring.

But the great distinction of Wordsworth, and the pledge of his increasing popularity, is the extent of his sympathy with what is *really* permanent in human feelings, and also the depth of this sympathy. Young and Cowper, the two earlier leaders in the province of meditative poetry, are too circumscribed in the range of their sympathies, too exclusive, and oftentimes not sufficiently profound. Both these poets manifested the quality of their strength by the quality of their public reception Popular in some degree from the first, they entered upon the inheritance of their fame almost at once. Far different was the fate of Wordsworth ; for, in poetry of this class, which appeals to what lies deepest in man, in proportion to the native power of the poet, and his fitness for permanent life, is the strength of resistance in the public taste. Whatever is too original will be hated at the first. It must slowly mould a public for itself; and the resistance of the early thoughtless judgments must be overcome by a counter resistance to itself, in a better audience slowly mustering against the first. Forty and seven years it is since William Wordsworth first appeared as an author. Twenty of those years he was the scoff of the world, and his poetry a by-word of scorn. Since then, and more than once, senates have rung with acclamations to the echo of his name. Now at this moment, while we are talking about him, he has entered upon his seventy-sixth year. For himself, according to the course of nature, he cannot be far from his setting; but his poetry is but now clearing the clouds that gathered about its rising. Meditative poetry is perhaps that

which will finally maintain most power upon generations more thoughtful; and in this department, at least, there is little competition to be appprehended by Wordsworth from anything that has appeared since the death of Shakspeare.

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY.

There is no writer named amongst men, of whom, so much as of Percy Bysshe Shelley, it is difficult for a conscientious critic to speak with the truth and the respect due to his exalted powers, and yet without offence to feelings the most sacred, which too memorably he outraged. The indignation which this powerful young writer provoked, had its root in no personal feelings — those might have been conciliated; in no worldly feelings — those might have proved transitory; but in feelings the holiest which brood over human life, and which guard the sanctuary of religious truth. Consequently, — which is a melancholy thought for any friend of Shelley's, — the indignation is likely to be coextensive and coënduring with the writings that provoked it. That bitterness of scorn and defiance which still burns against his name in the most extensively meditative section of English society, namely, the religious section, is not of a nature to be propitiated. Selfish interests, being wounded, might be compensated; merely human interests might be soothed; but interests that transcend all human valuation, being *so* insulted, must upon principle reject all human ransom

or conditions of human compromise. Less than penitential recantation could not be accepted: and *that* is now impossible. "Will ye *transact*[1] with God?" is the indignant language of Milton in a case of that nature. And in this case the language of many pious men said aloud, — "It is for God to forgive; but we, his servants, are bound to recollect that this young man offered to Christ and to Christianity the deepest insult which ear has heard, or which it has entered into the heart of man to conceive." Others, as in Germany, had charged Christ with committing suicide, on the principle that he who tempts or solicits death by doctrines fitted to provoke that result, is virtually the causer of his own destruction. But in this sense every man commits suicide, who will not betray an interest confided to his keeping under menaces of death; the martyr, who perishes for truth, when by deserting it he might live; the patriot, who perishes for his country, when by betraying it he might win riches and honor. And, were this even otherwise, the objection would be nothing to Christians — who, recognizing the Deity in Christ, recognize his unlimited right over life. Some, again, had pointed their insults at a part more vital in Christianity, if it had happened to be as vulnerable as they fancied. The new doctrine introduced by Christ, of forgiveness to those who injure or who hate us, — on what footing was it placed? Once, at least in appearance, on the idea, that by assisting or forgiving an enemy, we should be eventually "heaping coals of fire upon his head." Mr. Howdon, in a very clever book [*Rational Investigation of the Principles of Natural Philosophy: London*, 1840], calls this "a

fiendish idea" (p. 290): and I acknowledge that to myself, in one part of my boyhood, it *did* seem a refinement of malice. My subtilizing habits, however, even in those days, soon suggested to me that this aggravation of guilt in the object of our forgiveness was not held out as the motive to the forgiveness, but as the result of it; secondly, that perhaps no aggravation of his guilt was the point contemplated, but the salutary stinging into life of his remorse, hitherto sleeping; thirdly, that every doubtful or perplexing expression must be overruled and determined by the prevailing spirit of the system in which it stands. If Mr. Howdon's sense were the true one, then this passage would be in pointed hostility to every other part of the Christian ethics.[2]

These were affronts to the Founder of Christianity, offered too much in the temper of malignity. But Shelley's was worse; more bitter, and with less of countenance, even in show or shadow, from any fact, or insinuation of a fact, that Scripture suggests. In his "Queen Mab," he gives a dreadful portrait of God; and that no question may arise, of *what* God? he names him; it is Jehovah. He asserts his existence; he affirms him to be "an almighty God, and vengeful as almighty." He goes on to describe him as the "omnipotent fiend," who found "none but slaves" [Israel in Egypt, no doubt] to be "his tools," and none but "a murderer" [Moses, I presume] "to be his accomplice in crime." He introduces this dreadful Almighty as speaking, and as speaking thus, —

> "From an eternity of idleness
> I, God, awoke; in seven days' toil made earth
> From nothing; rested; and created man."

But man he hates; and he goes on to curse him; till at the intercession of "the murderer," who is electrified into pity for the human race by the very horror of the divine curses, God promises to send his son — only, however, for the benefit of a few. This son appears, the poet tells us that —

> —— "the Incarnate came; humbly he came,
> Veiling his horrible Godhead in the shape
> Of man, scorned by the world, his name unheard
> Save by the rabble of his native town."

The poet pursues this incarnate God as a teacher of men; teaching, "in semblance," justice, truth, and peace; but underneath all this, kindling "quenchless flames," which eventually were destined

> —— "to satiate, with the blood
> Of truth and freedom, his malignant soul."

He follows him to his crucifixion; and describes him, whilst hanging on the cross, as shedding malice upon a reviler, — *malice on the cross!*

> "A smile of godlike malice reïllumined
> His fading lineaments:"

and his parting breath is uttered in a memorable curse.

This atrocious picture of the Deity, in his dealings with man, both pre-Christian and post-Christian, is certainly placed in the mouth of the wandering Jew. But the internal evidence, as well as collateral evidence from without, make it clear that the Jew (whose version of scriptural records nobody in the poem disputes) here represents the person of the poet. Shelley had opened his career as an atheist; and as a proselytizing atheist.

But he was then a boy. At the date of "Queen Mab," he was a young man. And we now find him advanced from the station of an atheist to the more intellectual one of a believer in God and in the mission of Christ; but of one who fancied himself called upon to defy and to hate both, in so far as they had revealed their relations to man.

Mr. Gilfillan* thinks that "Shelley was far too harshly treated in his speculative boyhood;" and it strikes him "that, had pity and kind-hearted expostulation been tried, instead of reproach and abrupt expulsion, they might have weaned him from the dry dugs of Atheism to the milky breast of the faith and "worship of sorrow;" and the touching spectacle had been renewed, of the demoniac sitting, "clothed, and in his right mind," at the feet of Jesus. I am not of that opinion; and it is an opinion which seems to question the *sincerity* of Shelley, — that quality which in him was deepest, so as to form the basis of his nature, — if we allow ourselves to think that, by personal irritation, he had been piqued into infidelity, or that by flattering conciliation he could have been bribed back into a profession of Christianity. Like a wild horse of the pampas, he would have thrown up his heels, and *whinnied* his disdain of any man coming to catch *him* with a bribe of oats. He had a constant vision of a manger and a halter in the rear of all such caressing tempters, once having scented the gales of what he thought perfect freedom, from the lawless desert. His feud with Christianity was a craze derived from some early wrench of

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* "Gallery of Literary Portraits."

his understanding, and made obstinate to the degree in which we find it, from having rooted itself in certain combinations of ideas that, once coalescing, could not be shaken loose; such as, that Christianity underpropped the corruptions of the earth, in the shape of wicked governments that might else have been overthrown, or of wicked priesthoods that, but for the shelter of shadowy and spiritual terrors, must have trembled before those whom they overawed. Kings that were clothed in bloody robes; dark hierarchies that scowled upon the poor children of the soil; these objects took up a permanent station in the background of Shelley's imagination, not to be dispossessed more than the phantom of Banquo from the festival of Macbeth, and composed a towering Babylon of mystery that, to *his* belief, could not have flourished under any umbrage less vast than that of Christianity. Such was the inextricable association of images that domineered over Shelley's mind; such was the hatred which he built upon that association, — an association casual and capricious, yet fixed and petrified as if by frost. Can we imagine the case of an angel touched by lunacy? Have we ever seen the spectacle of a human intellect, exquisite by its functions of creation, yet in one chamber of its shadowy house already ruined before the light of manhood had cleansed its darkness? Such an angel, such a man, — if ever such there were, — such a lunatic angel, such a ruined man, was Shelley, whilst yet standing on the earliest threshold of life.

Mr. Gilfillan, whose eye is quick to seize the lurking and the stealthy aspect of things, does not overlook

the absolute midsummer madness which possessed Shelley upon the subject of Christianity. Shelley's total nature was altered and darkened when that theme arose; transfiguration fell upon him. He that was so gentle, became savage; he that breathed by the very lungs of Christianity — that was so merciful, so full of tenderness and pity, of humility, of love and forgiveness, then raved and screamed like an idiot whom once I personally knew, when offended by a strain of heavenly music at the full of the moon. In both cases, it was the sense of perfect beauty revealed under the sense of morbid estrangement. This it is, as I presume, which Mr. Gilfillan alludes to in the following passage (p. 104): "On all *other* subjects the wisest of the wise, the gentlest of the gentle, the bravest of the brave, yet, when *one* topic was introduced, he became straightway insane; his eyes glared, his voice screamed, his hand vibrated frenzy." But Mr. Gilfillan is entirely in the wrong when he countenances the notion that harsh treatment had any concern in riveting the fanaticism of Shelley. On the contrary, he met with an indulgence to the first manifestation of his anti-Christian madness, better suited to the goodness of the lunatic than to the pestilence of his lunacy. It was at Oxford that this earliest explosion of Shelleyism occurred; and though, with respect to secrets of prison-houses, and to discussions that proceed "with closed doors," there is always a danger of being misinformed, I believe, from the uniformity of such accounts as have reached myself, that the following *brief* of the matter may be relied on. Shelley, being a venerable sage of sixteen, or rather less, came to the resolution that he

would convert, and that it was his solemn duty to convert, the universal Christian church to Atheism or to Pantheism, no great matter *which*. But, as such large undertakings require time, twenty months, suppose, or even two years, — for you know, reader, that a railway requires on an average little less, — Shelley was determined to obey no impulse of youthful rashness. O no! Down with presumption, down with levity, down with boyish precipitation! Changes of religion are awful things, people must have time to think: He would move slowly and discreetly. So first he wrote a pamphlet, clearly and satisfactorily explaining the necessity of being an atheist; and with his usual exemplary courage (for, seriously, he was the least *false* of human creatures), Shelley put his name to the pamphlet, and the name of his college. His ultimate object was to accomplish a general apostasy in the Christian church of whatever name. But for one six months, it was quite enough if he caused a revolt in the Church of England. And as, before a great naval action, when the enemy is approaching, you throw a long shot or two by way of trying his range, — on that principle Shelley had thrown out his tract in Oxford. Oxford formed the advanced squadron of the English Church; and, by way of a *coup d'essai*, though in itself a bagatelle, what if he should begin with converting Oxford? To make any beginning at all is one half the battle; or, as a writer in this magazine [June, 1845] suggests, a good deal more. To speak seriously, there is something even thus far in the boyish presumption of Shelley not altogether without nobility. He affronted the armies of Christendom. Had it been

possible for *him* to be jesting, it would *not* have been noble. But here, even in the most monstrous of his undertakings, here, as always, he was perfectly sincere and single-minded. Satisfied that Atheism was the sheet-anchor of the world, he was not the person to speak by halves. Being a boy, he attacked those (upon a point the most sure to irritate) who were gray; having no station in society, he flew at the throats of none but those who *had;* weaker than an infant for the purpose before him, he planted his fist in the face of a giant, saying, "Take *that*, you devil, and *that*, and *that*." The pamphlet had been published; and though an undergraduate of Oxford is not (technically speaking) a member of the university as a responsible corporation, still he bears a near relation to it. And the heads of colleges felt a disagreeable summons to an extra meeting. There are in Oxford five-and-twenty colleges, to say nothing of halls. Frequent and full the heads assembled in Golgotha, a well-known Oxonian chamber, which, being interpreted (as scripturally we know), is "the place of a skull," and must, therefore, naturally be the place of a head. There the heads met to deliberate. What was to be done? Most of them were inclined to mercy: to proceed at all — was to proceed to extremities; and (generally speaking) to expel a man from Oxford, is to ruin his prospects in any of the liberal professions. Not, therefore, from consideration for Shelley's position in society, but on the kindest motives of forbearance towards one so young, the heads decided for declining all notice of the pamphlet. Levelled *at* them, it was not specially addressed *to* them; and amongst the infinite children born every morning from

that mightiest of mothers, the press, why should Golgotha be supposed to have known anything, officially, of this little brat? That evasion might suit some people, but not Percy Bysshe Shelley. There was a flaw (was there?) in his process; his pleading could not, regularly, come up before the court. Very well — he would heal that defect immediately. So he sent his pamphlet, with five-and-twenty separate letters, addressed to the five-and-twenty heads of colleges in Golgotha assembled; courteously "inviting" all and every of them to notify, at his earliest convenience, his adhesion to the enclosed unanswerable arguments for Atheism. Upon this, it is undeniable that Golgotha looked black; and, after certain formalities, "invited" P. B. Shelley to consider himself expelled from the University of Oxford. But, if this were harsh, how would Mr. Gilfillan have had them to proceed? Already they had done, perhaps, too much in the way of forbearance. There were many men in Oxford who knew the standing of Shelley's family. Already it was whispered that any man of obscure connections would have been visited for his Atheism, whether writing to Golgotha or not. And this whisper would have strengthened, had any further neglect been shown to formal letters, which requested a formal answer. The authorities of Oxford, deeply responsible to the nation in a matter of so much peril, could not have acted otherwise than they did. They were not severe. The severity was *extorted* and imposed by Shelley. But, on the other hand, in some palliation of Shelley's conduct, it ought to be noticed that he is unfairly placed, by the undistinguishing, on the manly

station of an ordinary Oxford student. The undergraduates of Oxford and Cambridge are not "boys," as a considerable proportion must be, for good reasons in other universities, — the Scottish universities, for instance, of Glasgow and St. Andrews, and many of those on the continent. Few of the English students even *begin* their residence before eighteen; and the larger proportion are at least twenty. Whereas Shelley was *really* a boy at this era, and no man. He had entered on his sixteenth year, and he was still in the earliest part of his academic career, when his obstinate and reiterated attempt to inoculate the university with a disease that he fancied indispensable to their mental health, caused his expulsion.

I imagine that Mr. Gilfillan will find himself compelled, hereafter, not less by his own second thoughts, than by the murmurs of some amongst his readers, to revise that selection of memorial traits, whether acts or habits, by which he seeks to bring Shelley, as a familiar presence, within the field of ocular apprehension. The acts selected, unless characteristic, — the habits selected, unless representative, — must be absolutely impertinent to the true identification of the man; and most of those rehearsed by Mr. Gilfillan, unless where they happen to be merely accidents of bodily constitution, are such as all of us would be sorry to suppose naturally belonging to Shelley. To "rush out of the room in terror, as his wild imagination painted to him a pair of eyes in a lady's breast," is not so much a movement of poetic frenzy, as of typhus fever — to "terrify an old lady out of her wits," by assuming, in a stage-coach, the situation of a regal sufferer from Shakspeare, is not eccentricity

so much as painful discourtesy — and to request of Rowland Hill, a man most pious and sincere, "the use of Surrey chapel," as a theatre for publishing infidelity, would have been so thoroughly the act of a heartless coxcomb, that I, for one, cannot bring myself to believe it an authentic anecdote. Not that I doubt of Shelley's violating at times his own better nature, as every man is capable of doing, under youth too fervid, wine too potent, and companions too misleading; but it strikes me that, during Shelley's very earliest youth, the mere accident of Rowland Hill's being a man well-born and aristocratically connected, yet sacrificing these advantages to what he thought the highest of services, spiritual service on behalf of poor laboring men, would have laid a pathetic arrest upon any impulse of fun in one who, with the very same advantages of birth and position, had the same deep reverence for the rights of the poor. Willing, at all times, to forget his own pretensions in the presence of those who seemed powerless — willing in a degree that seems sublime — Shelley could not but have honored the same nobility of feeling in another. And Rowland Hill, by his guileless simplicity, had a separate hold upon a nature so childlike as Shelley's. He was full of love to man; so was Shelley. He was full of humility; so was Shelley. Difference of creed, however vast the interval which it created between the men, could not have hid from Shelley's eye the close approximation of their natures. Infidel by his intellect, Shelley was a Christian in the tendencies of his heart. As to his "lying asleep on the hearth-rug, with his small round head thrust almost into the very fire," this, like his "basking in the hottest beams of an Italian sun," illus-

trates nothing but his physical temperament. That he should be seen "devouring large pieces of bread amid his profound abstractions," simply recalls to my eye some hundred thousands of children in the streets of great cities, Edinburgh, Glasgow, London, whom I am daily detecting in the same unaccountable practice; and yet, probably, with very little abstraction to excuse it; whilst his "endless cups of tea," in so tea-drinking a land as ours, have really ceased to offer the attractions of novelty which, eighty years ago, in the reign of Dr. Johnson, and under a higher price of tea, they might have secured. Such habits, however, are inoffensive, if not particularly mysterious, nor particularly significant. But that, in defect of a paper boat, Shelley should launch upon the Serpentine a fifty pound bank note, seems to my view an act of childishness, or else (which is worse) an act of empty ostentation, not likely to proceed from one who generally exhibited in his outward deportment a sense of true dignity. He who, through his family,[3] connected himself with that "spirit without spot" (as Shelley calls him in the "Adonais"), Sir Philip Sidney (a man how like in gentleness, and in faculties of mind, to himself!) — he that, by consequence, connected himself with that later descendant of Penshurst, the noble martyr of freedom, Algernon Sidney, could not have degraded himself by a pride so mean as any which roots itself in wealth. On the other hand, in the anecdote of his repeating Dr. Johnson's benign act, by "lifting a poor houseless outcast upon his back, and carrying her to a place of refuge," I read so strong a character of internal probability, that it would be gratifying to know upon what external testimony it rests.

The life of Shelley, according to the remark of Mr. Gilfillan, was "among the most romantic in literary story." Everything was romantic in his short career; everything wore a tragic interest. From his childhood he moved through a succession of afflictions. Always craving for love, loving and seeking to be loved, always he was destined to reap hatred from those with whom life had connected him. If in the darkness he raised up images of his departed hours, he would behold his family disowning him, and the home of his infancy knowing him no more; he would behold his magnificent university, that, under happier circumstances, would have gloried in his genius, rejecting him forever; he would behold his first wife, whom once he had loved passionately, through calamities arising from himself, called away to an early and tragic death. The peace after which his heart panted forever, in what dreadful contrast it stood to the eternal contention upon which his restless intellect or accidents of position threw him like a passive victim! It seemed as if not any choice of his, but some sad doom of opposition from without, forced out, as by a magnet, struggles of frantic resistance from *him*, which as gladly he would have evaded as ever victim of epilepsy yearned to evade his convulsions! Gladly he would have slept in eternal seclusion, whilst eternally the trump summoned him to battle. In storms unwillingly created by himself, he lived; in a storm, cited by the finger of God, he died.

It is affecting, — at least it is so for any one who believes in the profound sincerity of Shelley, a man (however erring) whom neither fear, nor hope, nor vanity, nor hatred, ever seduced into falsehood, or even into

dissimulation, — to read the account which he gives of a revolution occurring in his own mind at school: so early did his struggles begin! It is in verse, and forms part of those beautiful stanzas addressed to his second wife, which he prefixed to "The Revolt of Islam." Five or six of these stanzas may be quoted with a certainty of pleasing many readers, whilst they throw light on the early condition of Shelley's feelings, and of his early anticipations with regard to the promises and the menaces of life.

"Thoughts of great deeds were mine, dear friend, when first
The clouds which wrap this world, from youth did pass.
I do remember well the hour which burst
My spirit's sleep; a fresh May-dawn it was,
When I walked forth upon the glittering grass,
And wept — I knew not why; until there rose,
From the near school-room, voices that, alas!
Were but one echo from a world of woes —
The harsh and grating strife of tyrants and of foes.

And then I clasped my hands, and looked around —
(But none was near to mock my streaming eyes,
Which poured their warm drops on the sunny ground) —
So without shame I spake — I will be wise,
And just, and free, and mild, if in me lies
Such power; for I grow weary to behold
The selfish and the strong still tyrannize
Without reproach or check. I then controlled
My tears; my heart grew calm; and I was meek and bold.

And from that hour did I with earnest thought
Heap knowledge from forbidden mines of lore:
Yet nothing, that my tyrants knew or taught,
I cared to learn; but from that secret store
Wrought linked armor for my soul, before
It might walk forth to war among mankind:

Thus power and hope were strengthened more and more
Within me, till there came upon my mind
A sense of loneliness, a thirst with which I pined.

Alas, that love should be a blight and snare
To those who seek all sympathies in one ! —
Such once I sought in vain ; then black despair,
The shadow of a starless night, was thrown
Over the world in which I moved alone : —
Yet never found I one not false to me,
Hard hearts and cold, like weights of icy stone
Which crushed and withered mine, that could not be
Aught but a lifeless clog, until revived by thee.

Thou, friend, whose presence on my wintry heart
Fell, like bright spring upon some herbless plain ;
How beautiful and calm and free thou wert
In thy young wisdom, when the mortal chain
Of Custom[1] thou didst burst and rend in twain,
And walk'd as free as light the clouds among,
Which many an envious slave then breathed in vain
From his dim dungeon, and my spirit sprung
To meet thee from the woes which had begirt it long.

No more alone through the world's wilderness,
Although I trod the paths of high intent,
I journeyed now ; no more companionless,
Where solitude is like despair, I went.

. . . .

Now has descended a serener hour ;
And, with inconstant fortune, friends return :
Though suffering leaves the knowledge and the power
Which says — Let scorn be not repaid with scorn.
And from thy side two gentle babes are born
To fill our home with smiles ; and thus are we
Most fortunate beneath life's beaming morn ;
And these delights and thou have been to me
The parents of the song I consecrate to thee."

My own attention was first drawn to Shelley by the report of his Oxford labors as a missionary in the service of infidelity. Abstracted from the absolute sincerity and simplicity which governed that boyish movement, qualities which could not be known to a stranger, or even suspected in the midst of so much extravagance, there was nothing in the Oxford reports of him to create any interest beyond that of wonder at his folly and presumption in pushing to such extremity what, naturally, all people viewed as an elaborate jest. Some curiosity, however, even at that time, must have gathered about his name; for I remember seeing, in London, a little Indian ink sketch of him in the academic costume of Oxford. The sketch tallied pretty well with a verbal description which I had heard of him in some company, namely, that he looked like an elegant and slender flower, whose head drooped from being surcharged with rain. This gave, to the chance observer, an impression that he was tainted, even in his external deportment, by some excess of sickly sentimentalism, from which I believe that, in all stages of his life, he was remarkably free. Between two and three years after this period, which was that of his expulsion from Oxford, he married a beautiful girl named Westbrook. She was respectably connected; but had not moved in a rank corresponding to Shelley's; and that accident brought him into my own neighborhood For his family, already estranged from him, were now thoroughly irritated by what they regarded as a *mesalliance*, and withdrew, or greatly reduced, his pecuniary allowances. Such, at least, was the story current. In this

embarrassment, his wife's father made over to him an annual income of £200; and, as economy had become important, the youthful pair — both, in fact, still children — came down to the Lakes, supposing this region of Cumberland and Westmoreland to be a sequestered place, which it *was*, for eight months in the year, and also to be a cheap place — which it was *not*. Another motive to this choice arose with the then Duke of Norfolk. He was an old friend of Shelley's family, and generously refused to hear a word of the young man's errors, except where he could do anything to relieve him from their consequences. His grace possessed the beautiful estate of Gobarrow Park on Ulleswater, and other estates of greater extent in the same two counties;[5] his own agents he had directed to furnish any accommodations that might meet Shelley's views; and he had written to some gentlemen amongst his agricultural friends in Cumberland, requesting them to pay such neighborly attentions to the solitary young people as circumstances might place in their power. This bias, being impressed upon Shelley's wanderings, naturally brought him to Keswick as the most central and the largest of the little towns dispersed amongst the lakes. Southey, made aware of the interest taken in Shelley by the Duke of Norfolk, with his usual kindness immediately called upon him; and the ladies of Southey's family subsequently made an early call upon Mrs. Shelley. One of them mentioned to me as occurring in this first visit an amusing expression of the youthful matron, which, four years later, when I heard of her gloomy end, recalled with the force

of a pathetic contrast, that icy arrest then chaining up her youthful feet forever. The Shelleys had been induced by one of their new friends to take part of a house standing about half a mile out of Keswick, on the Penrith road; more, I believe, in that friend's intention for the sake of bringing them easily within his hospitalities, than for any beauty in the place. There was, however, a pretty garden attached to it. And whilst walking in this, one of the Southey party asked Mrs. Shelley if the garden had been let with *their* part of the house. "O, no," she replied, "the garden is not ours; but then, you know, the people let us run about in it whenever Percy and I are tired of sitting in the house." The *naïveté* of this expression "run about," contrasting so picturesquely with the intermitting efforts of the girlish wife at supporting a matron-like gravity, now that she was doing the honors of her house to married ladies, caused all the party to smile. And *me* it caused profoundly to sigh, four years later, when the gloomy death of this young creature, now frozen in a distant grave, threw back my remembrance upon her fawn-like playfulness, which, unconsciously to herself, the girlish phrase of *run about* so naturally betrayed.

At that time I had a cottage myself in Grasmere, just thirteen miles distant from Shelley's new abode. As he had then written nothing of any interest, I had no motive for calling upon him, except by way of showing any little attentions in my power to a brother Oxonian, and to a man of letters. These attentions, indeed, he might have claimed simply in the character of a neighbor. For as men living on the coast of

Mayo or Galway are apt to consider the dwellers on the sea-board of North America in the light of next-door neighbors, divided only by a party-wall of crystal, — and what if accidentally three thousand miles thick? — on the same principle we amongst the slender population of this lake region, and wherever no ascent intervened between two parties higher than Dunmail Raise and the spurs of Helvellyn, were apt to take with each other the privileged tone of neighbors. Some neighborly advantages I might certainly have placed at Shelley's disposal — Grasmere, for instance, itself, which tempted at that time [6] by a beauty that had not been sullied; Wordsworth, who then lived in Grasmere; Elleray and Professor Wilson, nine miles further; finally, my own library, which, being rich in the wickedest of German speculations, would naturally have been more to Shelley's taste than the Spanish library of Southey.

But all these temptations were negatived for Shelley by his sudden departure. Off he went in a hurry; but *why* he went, or *whither* he went, I did not inquire; not guessing the interest which he would create in my mind, six years later, by his "Revolt of Islam." A life of Shelley, in a continental edition of his works, says that he went to Edinburgh and to Ireland. Some time after, we at the lakes heard that he was living in Wales. Apparently he had the instinct within him of his own Wandering Jew for eternal restlessness. But events were now hurrying upon his heart of hearts. Within less than ten years the whole arrear of his life was destined to revolve. Within that space, he had the whole burden of life and death

to exhaust; he had all his suffering to suffer, and all his work to work.

In about four years his first marriage was dissolved by the death of his wife. She had brought to Shelley two children. But feuds arose between them, owing to incompatible habits of mind. They parted. And it is one chief misery of a beautiful young woman, separated from her natural protector, that her desolate situation attracts and stimulates the calumnies of the malicious. Stung by these calumnies, and oppressed (as I have understood) by the loneliness of her abode, perhaps also by the delirium of fever, she threw herself into a pond, and was drowned. The name under which she first enchanted all eyes, and sported as the most playful of nymph-like girls, is now forgotten amongst men; and that other name, for a brief period her ambition and her glory, is inscribed on her grave-stone as the name under which she wept and she despaired, — suffered and was buried, — turned away even from the faces of her children, and sought a hiding-place in darkness.

After this dreadful event, an anonymous life of Shelley asserts that he was for some time deranged. Pretending to no private and no circumstantial acquaintance with the case, I cannot say how that really was. There is a great difficulty besetting all sketches of lives so steeped in trouble as was Shelley's. If you have a confidential knowledge of the case, as a dear friend privileged to stand by the bed-side of raving grief, how base to use such advantages of position for the gratification of a fugitive curiosity in strangers! If you have no such knowledge, how

little qualified you must be for tracing the life with the truth of sympathy, or for judging it with the truth of charity! To me it appears, from the peace of mind which Shelley is reported afterwards to have recovered for a time, that he could not have had to reproach himself with any harshness or neglect as contributing to the shocking catastrophe. Neither ought any reproach to rest upon the memory of this first wife, as respects her relation to Shelley. Non-conformity of tastes might easily rise between two parties, without much blame to either, when one of the two had received from nature an intellect and a temperament so dangerously eccentric, and constitutionally carried, by delicacy so exquisite of organization, to eternal restlessness and irritability of nerves, if not absolutely at times to lunacy.

About three years after this tragic event, Shelley, in company with his second wife, the daughter of Godwin, and Mary Wollstonecraft, passed over for a third time to the Continent, from which he never came back. On Monday, July 8, 1822, being then in his twenty-ninth year, he was returning from Leghorn to his home at Lerici, in a schooner-rigged boat of his own, twenty-four feet long, eight in the beam, and drawing four feet water. His companions were only two, — Mr. Williams, formerly of the Eighth Dragoons, and Charles Vivian, an English seaman in Shelley's service. The run homewards would not have occupied more than six or eight hours. But the Gulf of Spezia is peculiarly dangerous for small craft in bad weather; and unfortunately a squall of about one hour's duration came on, the wind at the same time shifting so as to

blow exactly in the teeth of the course to Lerici From the interesting narrative drawn up by Mr. Tre lawney, well known at that time for his connection with the Greek Revolution, it seems that for eight days the fate of the boat was unknown; and during that time couriers had been despatched along the whole line of coast between Leghorn and Nice, under anxious hopes that the voyagers might have run into some creek for shelter. But at the end of the eight days this suspense ceased. Some articles belonging to Shelley's boat had previously been washed ashore: these might have been thrown overboard; but finally the two bodies of Shelley and Mr. Williams came on shore near Via Reggio, about four miles apart. Both were in a state of advanced decomposition, but were fully identified. Vivian's body was not recovered for three weeks. From the state of the two corpses, it had become difficult to remove them; and they were there fore burned by the seaside, on funeral pyres, with the classic rites of paganism, four English gentlemen being present, — Capt. Shenley of the navy, Mr. Leigh Hunt, Lord Byron, and Mr. Trelawney. A circum stance is added by Mr. Gilfillan, which previous accounts do not mention, namely, that Shelley's heart remained unconsumed by the fire; but this is a phenomenon that has repeatedly occurred at judicial deaths by fire. The remains of Mr. Williams, when collected from the fire, were conveyed to England; but Shelley's were buried in the Protestant burying-ground at Rome, not far from a child of his own and Keats the poet. It is remarkable that Shelley, in the preface to his Adonais, dedicated to the memory of that young

poet, had spoken with delight of this cemetery, — as "An open space among the ruins" (of ancient Rome), "covered in winter with violets and daisies;" adding, "It might make one in love with death, to think that one should be buried in so sweet a place."

I have allowed myself to abridge the circumstances as reported by Mr. Trelawney and Mr. Hunt, partly on the consideration that three-and-twenty years have passed since the event, so that a new generation has had time to grow up — not feeling the interest of *contemporaries* in Shelley, and generally, therefore, unacquainted with the case; but partly for the purpose of introducing the following comment of Mr. Gilfillan on the striking points of a catastrophe, "which robbed the world of this strange and great spirit," and which secretly tempts men to superstitious feelings, even whilst they are denying them: —

"Everybody knows that, on the arrival of Leigh Hunt in Italy, Shelley hastened to meet him. During all the time he spent in Leghorn, he was in brilliant spirits — to him ever a sure prognostic of coming evil." [That is, in the Scottish phrase, he was *fey*.] "On his return to his home and family, his skiff was overtaken by a fearful hurricane, and all on board perished. To a gentleman, who, at that time, was with a glass surveying the sea, the scene of his drowning assumed a very striking appearance. A great many vessels were visible, and among them one small skiff, which attracted his particular attention. Suddenly a dreadful storm, attended by thunder and columns of lightning, swept over the sea and eclipsed the prospect. When it had passed he looked again. The larger vessels

were all safe, riding upon the swell; the skiff only had gone down forever. And in that skiff was Alastor![7] Here he had met his fate. Wert thou, O religious sea, only avenging on his head the cause of thy denied and insulted Deity? Were ye, ye elements, in your courses, commissioned to destroy him? Ah! there is no reply. The surge is silent; the elements have no voice. In the eternal councils the secret is hid of the reason of the man's death. And there, too, rests the still more tremendous secret of the character of his destiny."[8]

The last remark possibly pursues the scrutiny too far; and, conscious that it tends beyond the limits of charity, Mr. Gilfillan recalls himself from the attempt to fathom the unfathomable. But undoubtedly the temptation is great, in minds the least superstitious, to read a significance, and a silent personality, in such a fate applied to such a defier of the Christian heavens. As a shepherd by his dog fetches out one of his flock from amongst five hundred, so did the holy hurricane seem to fetch out from the multitude of sails *that* one which carried him that hated the hopes of the world; and the sea, which swelled and ran down within an hour, was present at the audit. We are reminded forcibly of the sublime storm in the wilderness (as given in the fourth book of "Paradise Regained"), and the remark upon it made by the mysterious tempter —

> "This tempest at this desert most was bent,
> Of men at thee."

Undoubtedly, I do not understand Mr. Gilfillan, more

than myself, to read a "judgment" in this catastrophe. But there is a solemn appeal to the thoughtful, in a death of so much terrific grandeur following upon defiances of such unparalleled audacity. Æschylus acknowledged the same sense of mysterious awe, and all antiquity acknowledged it, in the story of Amphiaraus.[9]

Shelley, it must be remembered, carried his irreligion to a point beyond all others. Of the darkest beings we are told, that they "believe and tremble;" but Shelley believed and *hated;* and his defiances were meant to show that he did *not* tremble. Yet, has he not the excuse of something like *monomania* upon this subject? I firmly believe it. But a superstition, old as the world, clings to the notion, that words of deep meaning, uttered even by lunatics or by idiots, execute themselves; and that also, when uttered in presumption, they bring round their own retributive chastisements.

On the other hand, however shocked at Shelley's obstinate revolt from all religious sympathies with his fellow-men, no man is entitled to deny the admirable qualities of his moral nature, which were as striking as his genius. Many people remarked something seraphic in the expression of his features; and something seraphic there was in his nature. No man was better qualified to have loved Christianity; and to no man, resting under the shadow of that one darkness, would Christianity have said more gladly — *talis cum sis, utinam noster esses!* Shelley would, from his earliest manhood, have sacrificed all that he possessed to any comprehensive purpose of good for the race of man

He dismissed all injuries and insults from his memory. He was the sincerest and the most truthful of human creatures. He was also the purest. If he denounced marriage as a vicious institution, *that* was but another phasis of the partial lunacy which affected him; for to no man were purity and fidelity more essential elements in his idea of real love.

I agree, therefore, heartily with Mr. Gilfillan, in protesting against the thoughtless assertion of some writer in *The Edinburgh Review* — that Shelley at all selected the story of his "Cenci" on account of its horrors, or that he has found pleasure in dwelling on those horrors. So far from it, he has retreated so entirely from the most shocking feature of the story, namely, the incestuous violence of Cenci the father, as actually to leave it doubtful whether the murder were in punishment of the last outrage committed, or in repulsion of a menace continually repeated. The true motive of the selection of such a story was — not its darkness, but (as Mr. Gilfillan, with so much penetration, perceives) the light which fights with the darkness: Shelley found the whole attraction of this dreadful tale in the angelic nature of Beatrice, as revealed in the portrait of her by Guido. Everybody who has read with understanding the "Wallenstein" of Schiller, is aware of the repose and the divine relief arising upon a background of so much darkness, such a tumult of ruffians, bloody intriguers, and assassins, from the situation of the two lovers, Max. Piccolomini and the Princess Thekla, both yearning so profoundly after peace, both so noble, both so young, and both destined to be so unhappy. The same fine relief, the same light shining in darkness

arises here from the touching beauty of Beatrice, from her noble aspirations after deliverance, from the remorse which reaches her in the midst of real innocence, from her meekness, and from the agitation of her inexpressible affliction. Even the murder, even the parricide, though proceeding from herself, do but deepen that background of darkness, which throws into fuller revelation the glory of that suffering face immortalized by Guido.

Something of a similar effect arises to myself when reviewing the general abstract of Shelley's life, — so brief, so full of agitation, so full of strife. When one thinks of the early misery which he suffered, and of the insolent infidelity which, being yet so young, he wooed with a lover's passion, then the darkness of midnight begins to form a deep, impenetrable background, upon which the phantasmagoria of all that is to come may arrange itself in troubled phosphoric streams, and in sweeping processions of woe. Yet, again, when one recurs to his gracious nature, his fearlessness, his truth, his purity from all fleshliness of appetite, his freedom from vanity, his diffusive love and tenderness, — suddenly, out of the darkness, reveals itself a morning of May; forests and thickets of roses advance to the foreground; from the midst of them looks out "the eternal [10] child," cleansed from his sorrow, radiant with joy, having power given him to forget the misery which he suffered, power given him to forget the misery which he caused, and leaning with his heart upon that dove-like faith against which his erring intellect had rebelled.

NOTES.

Note 1. Page 43.

"Transact:" — this word, used in this Roman sense, illustrates the particular mode of Milton's liberties with the English language: liberties which have never yet been properly examined, collated, numbered, or appreciated. In the Roman law, *transigere* expressed the case, where each of two conflicting parties conceded something of what originally he had claimed as the rigor of his right; and *transactio* was the technical name for a legal compromise. Milton has here introduced no new word into the English language, but has given a new and more learned sense to an old one. Sometimes, it is true, as in the word *sensuous*, he introduces a pure coinage of his own, and a very useful coinage; but generally to reëndow an old foundation is the extent of his innovations. M. de Tocqueville is therefore likely to be found wrong in saying, that "Milton alone introduced more than six hundred words into the English language, almost all derived from the Latin, the Greek, or the Hebrew." The passage occurs in the 16th chapter of his "Democracy in America," Part II., where M. de Tocqueville is discussing the separate agencies through which democratic life on the one hand, or aristocratic on the other, affects the changes of language. His English translator, Mr. H. Reeve, an able and philosophic annotator, justly views this bold assertion as "startling and probably erroneous."

Note 2. Page 44.

Since the boyish period in which these redressing corrections occurred to me, I have seen some reason (upon considering the oriental practice of placing live coals in a pan upon the head, and its meaning as still in use amongst the Turks) to alter the whole interpretation of the passage. It would too much interrupt the tenor of the subject to explain this at length; but, if right, it would equally harmonize with the spirit of Christian morals

Note 3. Page 54.

"Family:" *i. e.*, the *gens* in the Roman sense, or collective house. Shelley's own immediate branch of the house did not, in a legal sense, represent the family of Penshurst, because the *rights* of the lineal descent had settled upon another branch. But *his* branch had a collateral participation in the glory of the Sidney name, and might, by accidents possible enough, have come to be its sole representative.

Note 4. Page 57.

"Of Custom:"—This alludes to a theory of Shelley's, on the subject of marriage as a vicious institution, and an attempt to realize his theory by way of public example; which attempt there is no use in noticing more particularly, as it was subsequently abandoned. Originally he had derived his theory from the writings of Mary Wollstonecraft, the mother of his second wife, whose birth in fact had cost that mother her life. But by the year 1812, (the year following his first marriage), he had so fortified, from other quarters, his previous opinions upon the wickedness of all nuptial ties consecrated by law or by the church, that he apologized to his friends for having submitted to the marriage ceremony as for an offence; but an offence, he pleaded, rendered necessary by the vicious constitution of society, for the comfort of his female partner.

Note 5. Page 59.

Two counties:"—the frontier line between Westmoreland

and Cumberland, traverses obliquely the Lake of Ulleswater, so that the banks on both sides lie partly in both counties.

Note 6. Page 61.

"At *that* time!"— the reader will say, who happens to be aware of the mighty barriers which engirdle Grasmere, Fairfield, Arthur's Chair, Seat Sandal, Steil Fell, &c. (the lowest above two thousand, the highest above *three* thousand feet high), — "what then? do the mountains change, and the mountain tarns?" Perhaps not; but, if they do not change in substance or in form, they "change countenance" when they are disfigured from below. One cotton-mill, planted by the side of a torrent, disenchants the scene, and banishes the ideal beauty even in the case where it leaves the physical beauty untouched: a truth which, many years ago, I saw illustrated in the little hamlet of Church Coniston. But is there any cotton-mill in Grasmere? Not that I have heard: but if no water has been filched away from Grasmere, there is one water too much which has crept lately into that loveliest of mountain chambers; and *that* is the "water-cure," which has built unto itself a sort of residence in that vale; whether a rustic nest, or a lordly palace, I do not know. Meantime, in honesty it must be owned, that many years ago the vale was half ruined by an insane substruction carried along the eastern margin of the lake as a basis for a mail-coach road. This infernal mass of solid masonry swept away the loveliest of sylvan recesses, and the most absolutely charmed against intrusive foot or angry echoes. It did worse; it swept away the stateliest of Flora's daughters, and swept away, at the same time, the birth-place of a well-known verse, describing that stately plant, which is perhaps (as a separate line) the most exquisite that the poetry of earth can show. The plant was the *Osmunda regalis:*

"Plant lovelier in its own recess
Than Grecian Naiad seen at earliest dawn
Tending her fount, or *lady of the lake*
Sole-sitting by the shores of old romance."

It is this last line and a half which some have held to ascend in beauty as much beyond any single line known to literature, as the

Osmunda ascends in luxury of splendor above other ferns. I have restored the original word *lake*, which the poet himself under an erroneous impression had dismissed for *mere*. But the line rests no longer on an earthly reality — the recess, which suggested it, is gone : the Osmunda has fled ; and a vile causeway, such as Sin and Death build in Milton over Chaos, fastening it with "asphaltic slime" and "pins of adamant," having long displaced the loveliest chapel (as I may call it) in the whole cathedral of Grasmere, I have since considered Grasmere itself a ruin of its former self.

Note 7. Page 66.

"Alastor," *i. e.*, Shelley. Mr. Gilfillan names him thus from the designation, self-assumed by Shelley, in one of the least intelligible amongst his poems.

Note 8. Page 66.

The immediate cause of the catastrophe was supposed to be this : — Shelley's boat had reached a distance of four miles from the shore, when the storm suddenly arose, and the wind suddenly shifted : "from excessive smoothness," says Mr. Trelawney, all at once the sea was "foaming, breaking, and getting up into a very heavy swell." After one hour the swell went down ; and towards evening it was almost a calm. The circumstances were all adverse : the gale, the current setting into the gulf, the instantaneous change of wind, acting upon an undecked boat, having all the sheets fast, overladen, and no expert hands on board but one, made the foundering as sudden as it was inevitable. The boat is supposed to have filled to leeward, and (carrying two tons of ballast) to have gone down like a shot. A book found in the pocket of Shelley, and the unaltered state of the dress on all the corpses when washed on shore, sufficiently indicated that not a moment's preparation for meeting the danger had been possible.

Note 9. Page 67.

See "The Seven against Thebes" of Æschylus.

Note 10. Page 69.

"The eternal child:" — this beautiful expression, so true in its application to Shelley, I borrow from Mr. Gilfillan; and I am tempted to add the rest of his eloquent parallel between Shelley and Lord Byron, so far as it relates to their external appearance: — "In the forehead and head of Byron there is more massive power and breadth: Shelley's has a smooth, arched, spiritual expression; wrinkle there seems none on his brow; it is as if perpetual youth had there dropped its freshness. Byron's eye seems the focus of pride and lust; Shelley's is mild, pensive, fixed on you, but seeing you through the mist of his own idealism. Defiance curls on Byron's nostril, and sensuality steeps his full large lips; the lower features of Shelley's face are frail, feminine, flexible. Byron's head is turned upwards; as if, having risen proudly above his cotemporaries, he were daring to claim kindred, or to demand a contest, with a superior order of beings: Shelley's is half bent, in reverence and humility, before some vast vision seen by his own eye alone. Misery erect, and striving to cover its retreat under an aspect of contemptuous fury, is the permanent and pervading expression of Byron's countenance: — sorrow, softened and shaded away by hope and habit, lies like a 'holier day' of still moonshine upon that of Shelley. In the portrait of Byron, taken at the age of nineteen, you see the unnatural age of premature passion; his hair is young, his dress is youthful; but his face is old: — in Shelley you see the eternal child, none the less that his hair is gray, and that 'sorrow seems half his immortality.'"

JOHN KEATS.

Mr. Gilfillan * introduces this section with a discussion upon the constitutional peculiarities ascribed to men of genius; such as nervousness of temperament, idleness, vanity, irritability, and other disagreeable tendencies ending in *ty* or in *ness ;* one of the *ties* being "poverty;" which disease is at least not amongst those morbidly cherished by the patients. All that can be asked from the most penitent man of genius is, that he should humbly confess his own besetting infirmities, and endeavor to hate them; and, as respects this one infirmity at least, I never heard of any man (however eccentric in genius) who did otherwise. But what special relation has such a preface to Keats? His whole article occupies twelve pages; and six of these are allotted to this preliminary discussion, which perhaps equally concerns every other man in the household of literature. Mr. Gilfillan seems to have been acting here on celebrated precedents. The "*Omnes homines qui sese student præstare cæteris animalibus*" has long been "smoked" by a wicked posterity as an old hack of Sallust's fitted on with paste and scissors to the Catilinarian conspiracy.

* "Gallery of Literary Portraits."

Cicero candidly admits that he kept in his writing-desk an assortment of movable prefaces, beautifully fitted (by means of avoiding all questions but "the general question") for parading, *en grand costume*, before any conceivable book. And Coleridge, in his early days, used the image of a man's "sleeping under a manchineel tree," alternately with the case of Alexander's killing his friend Clitus, as resources for illustration which Providence had bountifully made inexhaustible in their applications. No emergency could by possibility arise to puzzle the poet, or the orator, but one of these similes (please Heaven!) should be made to meet it. So long as the manchineel continued to blister with poisonous dews those who confided in its shelter, so long as Niebuhr should kindly forbear to prove that Alexander of Macedon was a hoax, and his friend Clitus a myth, so long was Samuel Taylor Coleridge fixed and obdurate in his determination that one or other of these images should come upon duty whenever, as a youthful writer, he found himself on the brink of insolvency.

But it is less the generality of this preface, or even its disproportion, which fixes the eye, than the questionableness of its particular statements. In that part which reviews the *idleness* of authors, Horace is given up as too notoriously indolent; the thing, it seems, is past denying; but "not so Lucretius." Indeed! and how shall this be brought to proof? Perhaps the reader has heard of that barbarian prince, who sent to Europe for a large map of the world accompanied by the best of English razors; and the clever use which he made of his importation was, that, first

cutting out with exquisite accuracy the whole ring fence of his own dominions, and then doing the same office, with the same equity (barbarous or barber-ous), for the dominions of a hostile neighbor, next he proceeded to weigh off the rival segments against each other in a pair of gold scales; after which, of course, he arrived at a satisfactory algebraic equation between himself and his enemy. Now, upon this principle of comparison, if we should take any *common* edition (as the *Delphin* or the *Variorum*) of Horace and Lucretius, strictly shaving away all notes, prefaces, editorial absurdities, &c., all "flotsom" and "jetsom" that may have gathered like barnacles about the two weather-beaten hulks; in that case we should have the two old files undressed, and *in puris naturalibus;* they would be prepared for being weighed; and, going to the nearest grocer's, we might then settle the point at once, as to which of the two had been the idler man. I back Horace for *my* part; and it is my private opinion that, in the case of a quarto edition, the grocer would have to throw at least a two-ounce weight into the scale of Lucretius, before he could be made to draw against the other. Yet, after all, this would only be a collation of quantity against quantity; whilst, upon a second collation of quality against quality (I do not mean quality as regards the final merit of the composition, but quality as regards the difficulties in the process of composition), the difference in amount of labor would appear to be as between the weaving of a blanket and the weaving of an exquisite cambric. The *curiosa felicitas* of Horace in his lyric compositions, the elaborate delicacy of workmanship

in his thoughts and in his style, argue a scale of labor that, as against any equal number of lines in Lucretius, would measure itself by months against days. There are single odes in Horace that must have cost him a six weeks' seclusion from the wickedness of Rome. Do I then question the extraordinary power of Lucretius? On the contrary, I admire him as the first of demoniacs; the frenzy of an earth-born or a hell-born inspiration; divinity of stormy music sweeping round us in eddies, in order to prove that for us there could be nothing divine; the grandeur of a prophet's voice rising in angry gusts, by way of convincing us that prophets were swindlers; oracular scorn of oracles; frantic efforts, such as might seem reasonable in one who was scaling the heavens, for the purpose of degrading all things, making man to be the most abject of necessities as regarded his causes, to be the blindest of accidents as regarded his expectations; these fierce antinomies expose a mode of insanity, but of an insanity affecting a sublime intellect.[1] One would suppose him partially mad by the savagery of his headlong manner. And most people who read Lucretius at all, are aware of the traditional story current in Rome, that he did actually write in a delirious state; not under any figurative disturbance of brain, but under a real physical disturbance caused by philters administered to him without his own knowledge. But this kind of supernatural *afflatus* did not deliver into words and metre by lingering oscillations, and through processes of self-correction; it threw itself forward, and precipitated its own utterance, with the hurrying and bounding of a cataract. It was an

œstrum, a rapture, the bounding of a mœnad, by which the muse of Lucretius lived and moved. So much is known by the impression about him current among his contemporaries: so much is evident in the characteristic manner of his poem, if all anecdotes had perished. And, upon the whole, let the proportions of power between Horace and Lucretius be what they may, the proportions of labor are absolutely incommensurable: in Horace the labor was *directly* as the power, in Lucretius *inversely* as the power. Whatsoever in Horace was best — had been obtained by *most* labor; whatsoever in Lucretius was best — by *least*. In Horace, the exquisite skill coöperated with the exquisite nature; in Lucretius, the powerful nature disdained the skill, which, indeed, would not have been applicable to *his* theme, or to *his* treatment of it, and triumphed by means of mere precipitation of volume, and of headlong fury.

Another paradox of Mr. Gilfillan's, under this head, is, that he classes Dr. Johnson as indolent; and it is the more startling, because he does not utter it as a careless opinion upon which he might have been thrown by inconsideration, but as a concession extorted from him reluctantly; he had sought to evade it, but could not. Now, that Dr. Johnson had a morbid predisposition to decline labor from his scrofulous habit of body,[2] is probable. The question for us however, is, not what nature prompted him to do, but what he did. If he had an extra difficulty to fight with in attempting to labor, the more was his merit in the known result, that he *did* fight with that difficulty, and that he conquered it. This is undeniable.

And the attempt to deny it presents itself in a comic shape, when one imagines some ancient shelf in a library, that has groaned for nearly a century under the weight of the doctor's works, demanding, "How say you? Is this Sam Johnson, whose Dictionary alone is a load for a camel, one of those authors whom you call idle? Then Heaven preserve us poor oppressed book-shelves from such as you will consider active." George III., in a compliment as happily turned as if it had proceeded from Louis XIV., expressed his opinion upon this question of the doctor's industry by saying, that he also should join in thinking Johnson too voluminous a contributor to literature, were it not for the extraordinary merit of his contributions. Now it would be an odd way of turning the royal praise into a reproach, if we should say: "Sam, had you been a pretty good writer, we, your countrymen, should have held you to be also an industrious writer; but, because you are a *very* good writer, therefore we pronounce you a lazy vagabond."

Upon other points in this discussion there is some room to differ with Mr. Gilfillan. For instance, with respect to the question of the comparative happiness enjoyed by men of genius, it is not necessary to argue, nor does it seem possible to prove, even in the case of any one individual poet, that, on the whole, he was either more happy or less happy than the average mass of his fellow-men; far less could this be argued as to the whole class of poets. What seems *really* open to proof, is, that men of genius have a larger *capacity* of happiness, which capacity, both from within and from without, may be defeated in ten thou

sand ways. This seems involved in the very word *genius*. For, after all the pretended and hollow attempts to distinguish genius from talent, I shall continue to think (what heretofore I have explained) that no distinction in the case is tenable for a moment but this; namely, that genius is that mode of intellectual power which moves in alliance with the *genial* nature, that is, with the capacities of pleasure and pain; whereas talent has no vestige of such an alliance, and is perfectly independent of all human sensibilities. Consequently, genius is a voice or breathing that represents the *total* nature of man; whilst, on the contrary, talent represents only a single function of that nature. Genius is the language which interprets the synthesis of the human spirit with the human intellect, each acting through the other; whilst talent speaks only from the insulated intellect. And hence also it is that, besides its relation to suffering and enjoyment, genius always implies a deeper relation to virtue and vice; whereas talent has no shadow of a relation to *moral* qualities, any more than it has to vital sensibilities. A man of the highest talent is often obtuse and below the ordinary standard of men in his feelings; but no man of genius can unyoke himself from the society of moral perceptions that are brighter, and sensibilities that are more tremulous, than those of men in general.

As to the examples[3] by which Mr. Gilfillan supports his prevailing views, they will be construed by any ten thousand men in ten thousand separate modes. The objections are so endless that it would be abusing the reader's time to urge them; especially as every man of the ten thousand will be wrong, and will also be

right, in all varieties of proportion. Two only it may be useful to notice as examples, involving some degree of error, namely, Addison and Homer. As to the first, the error, if an error, is one of fact only. Lord Byron had said of Addison, that he "died drunk." This seems to Mr. Gilfillan a "horrible statement;" for which he supposes that no authority can exist but "a rumor circulated by an inveterate gossip," meaning Horace Walpole. But gossips usually go upon some foundation, broad or narrow; and, until the rumor had been authentically put down, Mr. Gilfillan should not have pronounced it a "malignant calumny." Me this story caused to laugh exceedingly; not at Addison, whose fine genius extorts pity and tenderness towards his infirmities; but at the characteristic misanthropy of Lord Byron, who chuckles as he would do over a glass of nectar, on this opportunity for confronting the old solemn legend about Addison's sending for his step-son, Lord Warwick, to witness the peaceful death of a Christian, with so rich a story as this, that he, the said Christian, "died drunk." Supposing that he *did*, the mere physical fact of inebriation, in a stage of debility where so small an excess of stimulating liquor (though given medicinally) sometimes causes such an appearance, would not infer the moral blame of drunkenness; and if such a thing were ever said by any person *present* at the bed-side, I should feel next to certain that it was said in that spirit of exaggeration to which most men are tempted by circumstances unusually fitted to impress a startling picturesqueness upon the statement. But, without insisting upon Lord Byron's way of putting the case, I believe it is generally understood that, latterly,

Addison gave way to habits of intemperance. He suffered, not only from his wife's dissatisfied temper, but also (and probably much more) from *ennui*. He did not walk one mile a day, and he ought to have walked ten. Dyspepsy was, no doubt, the true ground of his unhappiness; and he had nothing to hope for. To remedy these evils, I have always understood that every day (and especially towards night) he drank too much of that French liquor, which, calling itself *water of life*, nine times in ten proves the water of death. He lived latterly at Kensington, namely, in Holland House, the well-known residence of the late Lord Holland; and the tradition attached to the gallery in that house, is, that duly as the sun drew near to setting, on two tables, one at each end of the long *ambulachrum*, the right honorable Joseph placed, or caused to be placed, two tumblers of brandy, somewhat diluted with water; and those, the said vessels, then and there did alternately to the lips of him, the aforesaid Joseph, diligently apply, walking to and fro during the process of exhaustion, and dividing his attention between the two poles, arctic and antartic, of his evening *diaulos*, with the impartiality to be expected from a member of the Privy Council. How often the two "blessed bears," northern and southern, were replenished, entered into no *affidavit* that ever reached *me*. But so much I have always understood, that in the gallery of Holland House, the ex-secretary of state caught a decided hiccup, which never afterwards subsided. In all this there would have been little to shock people, had it not been for the sycophancy which ascribed to Addison a religious reputation such as he neither merited nor wished to claim.

But one penal reaction of mendacious adulation, for him who is weak enough to accept it, must ever be to impose restraints upon his own conduct, which otherwise he would have been free to decline. How lightly would Sir Roger de Coverley have thought of a little sotting in any honest gentleman of right politics! And Addison would not, in that age, and as to that point, have carried his scrupulosity higher than his own Sir Roger. But such knaves as he who had complimented Addison with the praise of having written "no line which, dying, he could wish to blot," whereas, in fact, Addison started in life by publishing a translation of Petronius Arbiter, had painfully coerced his free agency. This knave, I very much fear, was Tickell the first; and the result of his knavery was, to win for Addison a disagreeable sanctimonious reputation that was, first, founded in lies; second, that painfully limited Addison's free agency; and, thirdly, that prepared insults to his memory, since it pointed a censorious eye upon those things, viewed as the acts of a demure pretender to piety, which would else have passed without notice as the most venial of frailties in a layman.

Something I had to say also upon Homer, who mingles amongst the examples cited by Mr. Gilfillan, of apparent happiness connected with genius. But, for want of room,[4] I forbear to go further, than to lodge my protest against imputing to Homer as any personal merit, what belongs altogether to the stage of society in which he lived. "They," says Mr. Gilfillan, speaking of the "Iliad" and the "Odyssey," "are the healthiest of works. There are in them no sullenness, no querulous complaint, not one personal allusion." No; but

how *could* there have been? Subjective poetry had not an existence in those days. Not only the powers for introverting the eye upon the *spectator*, as himself, the *spectaculum*, were then undeveloped and inconceivable, but the sympathies did not exist to which such an innovation could have appealed. Besides, and partly from the same cause, even as objects, the human feelings and affections were too broadly and grossly distinguished, had not reached even the infancy of that stage in which the passions begin their process of intermodification, nor *could* have reached it, from the simplicity of social life, as well as from the barbarism of the Greek religion. The author of the "Iliad," or even of the "Odyssey" (though doubtless a product of a later period), could not have been "unhealthy," or "sullen," or "querulous," from any cause, except *psora* or *elephantiasis*, or scarcity of beef, or similar afflictions with which it is quite impossible to inoculate poetry. The metrical romances of the middle ages have the same shivering character of starvation, as to the inner life of man; and, if *that* constitutes a meritorious distinction, no man ought to be excused for wanting what it is so easy to obtain by simple neglect of culture. On the same principle, a cannibal, if truculently indiscriminate in his horrid diet, might win sentimental praises for his temperance, others were picking and choosing, miserable epicures! but he, the saint upon earth, cared not what he ate; any joint satisfied *his* moderate desires; shoulder of man, leg of child; anything, in fact, that was nearest at hand, so long as it was good, wholesome human flesh; and the more plainly dressed the better.

But these topics, so various and so fruitful, I touch

only because they are introduced, amongst many others, by Mr. Gilfillan. Separately viewed, some of these would be more attractive than any merely personal interest connected with Keats. His biography, stripped of its false coloring, offers little to win attention; for he was not the victim of any systematic malignity, as has been represented. He met, as I have understood, with unusual kindness from his liberal publishers, Messrs. Taylor and Hessey. He met with unusual severity from a cynical reviewer, the late Mr. Gifford, then editor of *The Quarterly Review*. The story ran, that this article of Mr. G.'s had killed Keats; upon which with natural astonishment, Lord Byron thus commented in the 11th canto of Don Juan: —

> "John Keats who was killed off by one critique,
> Just as he really promised something great,
> If not intelligible, — without Greek,
> Contrived to talk about the gods of late,
> Much as they might have been supposed to speak.
> Poor fellow! his was an untoward fate:
> 'T is strange the mind, that very fiery particle,
> Should let itself be snuffed out by an Article."

Strange, indeed! and the friends who honor Keats' memory, should not lend themselves to a story so degrading. He died, I believe, of pulmonary consumption and would have died of it, probably, under any circumstances of prosperity as a poet. Doubtless, in a condition of languishing decay, slight causes of irritation act powerfully. But it is hardly conceivable that one ebullition of splenetic bad feeling, in a case so proverbially open to revision as the pretensions of a poet, could have overthrown any masculine life, unless where that life

had already been *irrecoverably* undermined by sickness. As a man, and viewed in relation to social objects, Keats was nothing. It was as mere an affectation when he talked with apparent zeal of liberty, or human rights, or human prospects, as is the hollow enthusiasm which many people profess for music, or most poets for external nature. For these things Keats fancied that he cared; but in reality he cared not at all. Upon them, or any of their aspects, he had thought too little, and too indeterminately, to feel for them as personal concerns. Whereas Shelley, from his earliest days, was mastered and shaken by the great moving realities of life, as a prophet is by the burden of wrath or of promise which he has been commissioned to reveal. Had there been no such thing as literature, Keats would have dwindled into a cipher. Shelley, in the same event, would hardly have lost one plume from his crest. It is in relation to literature, and to the boundless questions as to the true and the false arising out of literature and poetry, that Keats challenges a fluctuating interest; sometimes an interest of strong disgust, sometimes of deep admiration. There is not, I believe, a case on record throughout European literature, where feelings so repulsive of each other have centred in the same individual. The very midsummer madness of affectation, of false vapory sentiment, and of fantastic effeminacy, seemed to me combined in Keats' *Endymion*, when I first saw it near the close of 1821. The Italian poet, Marino, had been reputed the greatest master of gossamery affectation in Europe. But *his* conceits showed the palest of rosy blushes by the side of Keats' bloody crimson. Naturally, I was discouraged from looking further But

about a week later, by pure accident, my eye fell upon his *Hyperion.* The first feeling was that of incredulity that the two poems could, under change of circumstances or lapse of time, have emanated from the same mind. The *Endymion* displays absolutely the most shocking revolt against good sense and just feeling, that all literature does now, or ever *can* furnish. The *Hyperion*, as Mr. Gilfillan truly says, "is the greatest of poetical torsos." The first belongs essentially to the vilest collections of wax-work filigree, or gilt gingerbread. The other presents the majesty, the austere beauty, and the simplicity of Grecian temples enriched with Grecian sculpture.

We have in this country a word, namely, the word *Folly*, which has a technical appropriation to the case of fantastic buildings. Any building is called "a folly,"[5] which mimics purposes incapable of being realized, and makes a promise to the eye which it cannot keep to the experience. The most impressive illustration of this idea, which modern times have seen, was, undoubtedly, the ice-palace of the Empress Elizabeth[6] —

> "That most magnificent and mighty freak,"

which, about eighty years ago, was called up from the depths of winter by

> "The imperial mistress of the fur-clad Russ."

Winter and the Czarina were, in this architecture, fellow-laborers. She, by her servants, furnished the blocks of ice, hewed them, dressed them, laid them: winter furnished the cement, by freezing them together. The palace has long melted back into water; and the poet

who described it best, namely, Cowper, is not so much read in this age, except by the religious. It will, therefore, be a sort of resurrection for both the palace and the poet, if I cite his description of this gorgeous folly. It is a passage in which Cowper assumes so much of a Miltonic tone, that, of the two, it is better to have read his lasting description, than to have seen, with bodily eyes the fleeting reality. The poet is apostrophizing the Empress Elizabeth.

——— "No forest fell,
When *thou* wouldst build : no quarry sent its stores
To enrich thy walls : but thou didst hew the floods
And make thy marble of the glassy wave.

. . . .

Silently as a dream the fabric rose :
No sound of hammer or of saw was there :
Ice upon ice, the well adjusted parts
Were soon conjoined, nor other cement asked
Than water interfused to make them one.
Lamps gracefully disposed, and of all hues,
Illumined every side ; a watery light
Gleamed through the clear transparency, that seemed
Another moon new-risen :———

. . . .

——— Nor wanted aught within
That royal residence might well befit
For grandeur or for use. Long weavy wreaths
Of flowers, that feared no enemy but warmth,
Blushed on the panels. Mirror needed none,
Where all was vitreous : but in order due
Convivial table and commodious seat
(What *seemed* at least commodious seat) were there
Sofa, and couch, and high-built throne august.
The same lubricity was found in all,

> And all was moist to the warm touch ; a scene
> Of evanescent glory, once a stream,
> And soon to slide into a stream again."

The poet concludes by viewing the whole as an unintentional stroke of satire by the Czarina,

> ——— "On her own estate,
> On human grandeur, and the courts of kings.
> 'T was transient in its nature, as in show
> 'T was durable ; as worthless, as it seemed
> Intrinsically precious : to the foot
> Treacherous and false, — it smiled, and it was cold."

Looking at this imperial plaything of ice in the month of March, and recollecting that in May all its crystal arcades would be weeping away into vernal brooks, one would have been disposed to mourn over a beauty so frail, and to marvel at a frailty so elaborate. Yet still there was some proportion observed : the saloons were limited in number, though *not* limited in splendor. It was a *petit Trianon.* But what if, like Versailles this glittering bauble, to which all the science of Europe could not have secured a passport into June, had contained six thousand separate rooms ? A "folly" on so gigantic a scale would have moved every man to indignation. For all that could be had, the beauty to the eye, and the gratification to the fancy, in seeing water tortured into every form of solidity, resulted from two or three suites of rooms, as fully as from a thousand.

Now, such a folly, as *would* have been the Czarina's, if executed upon the scale of Versailles, or of the new palace at St. Petersburg, *was* the Endymion : a gigantic edifice (for its tortuous engimas of thought multiplied every line of the four thousand into fifty) reared upon a

basis slighter and less apprehensible than moonshine. As reasonably, and as hopefully in regard to human sympathies, might a man undertake an epic poem upon the loves of two butterflies. The modes of existence in the two parties to the love-fable of the Endymion, their relations to each other and to us, their prospects finally, and the obstacles to the *instant* realization of these prospects, — all these things are more vague and incomprehensible than the reveries of an oyster. Still the unhappy subject, and its unhappy expansion, must be laid to the account of childish years and childish inexperience. But there is another fault in Keats, of the first magnitude, which youth does not palliate, which youth even aggravates. This lies in the most shocking abuse of his mother-tongue. If there is one thing in this world that, next after the flag of his country and its spotless honor, should be wholly in the eyes of a young poet, — it is the *language* of his country. He should spend the third part of his life in studying this language, and cultivating its total resources. He should be willing to pluck out his right eye, or to circumnavigate the globe, if by such a sacrifice, if by such an exertion, he could attain to greater purity, precision, compass, or idiomatic energy of diction. This if he were even a Kalmuck Tartar, who by the way *has* the good feeling and patriotism to pride himself upon his beastly language.[7] But Keats was an Englishman; Keats had the honor to speak the language of Chaucer, Shakspeare, Bacon, Milton, Newton. The more awful was the obligation of his allegiance. And yet upon this mother tongue, upon this English language, has Keats trampled as with the hoofs of a buffalo. With its syntax, with its pros-

ody, with its idiom, he has played such fantastic tricks as could enter only into the heart of a barbarian, and for which only the anarchy of Chaos could furnish a forgiving audience. Verily it required the *Hyperion* to weigh against the deep treason of these unparalleled offences.

NOTES.

Note 1. Page 80.

There is one peculiarity about Lucretius which, even in the absence of all anecdotes to that effect, would have led an observing reader to suspect some unsoundness in his brain. It is this, and it lies in his manner. In all poetic enthusiasm, however grand and sweeping may be its compass, so long as it is healthy and natural, there is a principle of self-restoration in the opposite direction: there is a counter state of repose, a compensatory state, as in the tides of the sea, which tends continually to reëstablish the equipoise. The lull is no less intense than the fury of commotion. But in Lucretius there is no lull. Nor would there *seem* to be any, were it not for two accidents: 1st, the occasional pause in his raving tone enforced by the interruption of an episode; 2dly, the restraints (or at least the suspensions) imposed upon him by the difficulties of *argument conducted in verse.* To dispute metrically, is as embarrassing as to run or dance when knee-deep in sand. Else, and apart from these counteractions, the motion of the style is not only stormy, but self-kindling and continually accelerated.

Note 2. Page 81.

"*Habit of body:*" but much more from mismanagement of his body. Dr. Johnson tampered with medical studies, and fancied himself learned enough to prescribe for his female correspondents. The affectionateness with which he sometimes did this is interesting; but his ignorance of the subject is not the less apparent. In

his own case he had the merit of one heroic self-conquest ; he weaned himself from wine, having once become convinced that it was injurious. But he never brought himself to take regular exercise. He ate too much at all times of his life. And in another point, he betrayed a thoughtlessness, which (though really common as laughter) is yet extravagantly childish. Everybody knows that Dr. Johnson was all his life reproaching himself with lying too long in bed. Always he was sinning (for he thought it a sin) ; always he was repenting , always he was vainly endeavoring to reform. But why vainly ? Cannot a resolute man in six weeks bring himself to rise at *any* hour of the twenty-four ? Certainly he can ; but not without appropriate means. Now the Doctor rose about eleven, A. M. This, he fancied, was shocking ; he was determined to rise at eight, or at seven. Very well ; why not ? But will it be credited that the one sole change occurring to the Doctor's mind, was to take a flying leap backwards from eleven to eight, without any corresponding leap at the other terminus of his sleep ? To rise at eight instead of eleven, presupposes that a man goes off to bed at twelve instead of three. Yet this recondite truth never to his dying day dawned on Dr. Johnson's mind. The conscientious man continued to offend ; continued to repent ; continued to pave a disagreeable place with good intentions, and daily resolutions of amendment ; but at length died full of years, without having once seen the sun rise, except in some Homeric description, written (as Mr. Fynes Clifton makes it probable) thirty centuries before. The fact of the sun's rising at all, the Doctor adopted as a point of faith, and by no means of personal knowledge, from an insinuation to that effect in the most ancient of Greek books.

Note 3. Page 83.

One of these examples is equivocal, in a way that Mr. Gilfillan is apparently not aware of. He cites Tickell, " whose very name " (he says) " savors of laughter," as being, " in fact, a very happy fellow." In the first place, Tickell would have been likely to " square " at Mr. Gilfillan for that liberty taken with his name ; or might even, in Falstaff's language, have tried to " tickle his catastrophe." It is a ticklish thing to lark with honest men's names

But, secondly, *which* Tickell? For there are two at the least in the field of English literature; and if one of them was "very happy," the chances are, according to D. Bernoulli and De Moivre, that the other was particularly miserable. The first Tickell, who may be described as Addison's Tickell, never tickled anything, that I know of, except Addison's vanity. But Tickell the second, who came into working order about fifty years later, was really a very pleasant fellow. In the time of Burke he diverted the whole nation by his poem of "*Anticipation*," in which he anticipated and dramatically rehearsed the course of a whole parliamentary debate (on the king's speech), which did not take place till a week or two afterwards. Such a mimicry was easy enough; but *that* did not prevent its fidelity and characteristic truth from delighting the political world.

Note 4. Page 86.

For the same reason, I refrain from noticing the pretensions of Savage. Mr. Gilfillan gives us to understand, that not from want of room, but of time, he does not (which else he *could*) prove him to be the man he pretended to be. For my own part, I believe Savage to have been the vilest of swindlers; and in these days, under the surveillance of an active police, he would have lost the chance which he earned of being hanged, by having long previously been transported to the plantations. How can Mr. Gilfillan allow himself, in a case of this nature, to speak of "universal impression" (if it had really existed) as any separate ground of credibility for Savage's tale? When the public have no access at all to sound means of judging, what matters it in which direction their "impression" lies, or how many thousands swell the belief, for which not one of all these thousands has anything like a reason to offer?

Note 5. Page 90.

"*A folly.*" We English limit the application of this term to buildings; but the idea might as fitly be illustrated in other objects. For instance, the famous galley presented to one of the Ptolemies, which offered the luxurious accommodations of capital

cities, but required a little army of four thousand men to row it, whilst its draught of water was too great to allow of its often approaching the shore; this was "a folly" in our English sense. So again was the Macedonian phalanx. The Roman legion could form upon *any* ground; it was a true working tool. But the phalanx was too fine and showy for use. It required for its manœuvring a sort of opera stage, or a select bowling-green, such as few fields of battle offered.

NOTE 6. Page 90.

I had written the "Empress *Catherine;*" but, on second thoughts, it occurred to me that the "mighty freak" was, in fact, due to the Empress Elizabeth. There is, however, a freak connected with ice, not quite so "mighty," but quite as autocratic, and even more feminine in its caprice, which belongs exclusively to the Empress Catherine. A lady had engaged the affections of some young nobleman, who was regarded favorably by the imperial eye. No pretext offered itself for interdicting the marriage; but, by way of freezing it a little at the outset, the Czarina coupled with her permission this condition — that the wedding night should be passed by the young couple on a mattress of *her* gift. The mattress turned out to be a block of ice, elegantly cut, by the court upholsterer, into the likeness of a well-stuffed Parisian mattress. One pities the poor bride, whilst it is difficult to avoid laughing in the midst of one's sympathy. But it is to be hoped that no *ukase* was issued against spreading seven Turkey carpets, by way of under-blankets, over this amiable nuptial present. Amongst others who have noticed the story, is Captain Colville Frankland, of the navy.

NOTE 7. Page 93.

Bergmann, the German traveller, in his account of his long rambles and residence amongst the Kalmucks, makes us acquainted with the delirious vanity which possesses these demi-savages. Their notion is, that excellence of every kind, perfection in the least things as in the greatest, is briefly expressed by calling it *Kalmuckish.* Accordingly, their hideous language, and their vast

national poem (doubtless equally hideous), they hold to be the immediate gifts of inspiration: and for this I honor them, as each generation learns both from the lips of their mothers. This great poem, by the way, measures (if I remember) seventeen English miles in length; but the most learned man amongst them, in fact a monster of erudition, never read further than the eighth mile-stone. What he could repeat by heart was little more than a mile and a half; and, indeed, *that* was found too much for the choleric part of his audience. Even the Kalmuck face, which to us foolish Europeans looks so unnecessarily flat and ogre-like, these honest Tartars have ascertained to be the pure classical model of human beauty, — which, in fact, it *is*, upon the principle of those people who hold that the chief use of a face is — to frighten one's enemy.

OLIVER GOLDSMITH.*

This book accomplishes a retribution which the world has waited for through seventy and odd years. Welcome at any rate by its purpose, it is trebly welcome by its execution, to all hearts that linger indulgently over the frailties of a national favorite once wickedly exaggerated — to all hearts that brood indignantly over the powers of that favorite once maliciously undervalued.

A man of original genius, shown to us as revolving through the leisurely stages of a biographical memoir, lays open, to readers prepared for sympathy, two separate theatres of interest: one in his personal career; the other in his works and his intellectual development. Both unfold together; and each borrows a secondary interest from the other: the life from the recollection of the works — the works from the joy and sorrow of the life. There have, indeed, been authors whose great creations, severely preconceived in a region of thought transcendent to all impulses of earth, would have been pretty nearly what they are under any possible changes in the

* The Life and Adventures of Goldsmith, by John Forster.

dramatic arrangement of their lives. Happy or not happy — gay or sad — these authors would equally have fulfilled a mission too solemn and too stern in its obligations to suffer any warping from chance, or to bend before the accidents of life, whether dressed in sunshine or in wintry gloom. But generally this is otherwise. Children of Paradise, like the Miltons of our planet, have the privilege of stars — to "dwell apart." But the children of flesh, whose pulses beat too sympathetically with the agitations of mother-earth, cannot sequester themselves in that way. They walk in no such altitudes, but at elevations easily reached by ground-winds of humble calamity. And from that cup of sorrow, which upon all lips is pressed in some proportion, they must submit, by the very tenure on which they hold their gifts, to drink, if not more profoundly than others, yet always with more peril to the accomplishment of their earthly mission.

Amongst this household of children too tremulously associated to the fluctuations of earth, stands forward conspicuously Oliver Goldsmith. And there is a belief current, that he was conspicuous, not only in the sense of being constitutionally flexible to the impressions of sorrow and adversity, in case they had happened to occur, but also that he really *had* more than his share of those afflictions. We are disposed to think that this was not so. Our trust is, that Goldsmith lived upon the whole a life which, though troubled, was one of average enjoyment. Unquestionably, when reading at midnight, and in the middle watch of a century which *he* never reached, this record of one so amiable, so guileless, so upright, or

seeming to be otherwise for a moment only in the eyes of those who did not know his difficulties, nor could have understood them; when recurring also to his admirable genius, to the sweet natural gayety of his oftentimes pathetic humor, and to the varied accomplishments from talent or erudition, by which he gave effect to endowments so fascinating — one cannot but sorrow over the strife which he sustained, and over the wrong by which he suffered. A few natural tears one sheds at the rehearsal of so much contumely from fools, which he stood under unresistingly as one bareheaded under a hail-storm;[1] and worse to bear than the scorn of fools, were the imperfect sympathy and jealous, self-distrusting esteem which he received to the last from friends. Doubtless he suffered much wrong; but so, in one way or other, do most men: he suffered also this special wrong, that in his lifetime he never was fully appreciated by any one friend — something of a counter-movement ever mingled with praise for *him* — he never saw himself enthroned in the heart of any young and fervent admirer, and he was always overshadowed by men less deeply genial, though more showy than himself; but these things happen, and *have* happened, to myriads amongst the benefactors of earth. Their names ascend in songs of thankful commemoration, but not until the ears are deaf that would have thrilled to the music. And these were the heaviest of Goldsmith's afflictions: what are likely to be thought such, namely, the battles which he fought for his daily bread, we do not number amongst them. To struggle is not to suffer. Heaven grants to few of us a life of untroubled prosperity,

and grants it least of all to its favorites. Charles I. carried, as it was thought by a keen Italian judge of physiognomy, a predestination to misery written in his features. And it is probable that if any Cornelius Agrippa had then been living, to show him in early life the strife, the bloodshed, the triumphs of enemies, the treacheries of friends, the separation forever from the familiar faces of his hearth, which darkened the years from 1642 to 1649, he would have said — "Prophet of woe! if I bear to live through this vista of seven years, it is because at the further end of it thou showest me the consolation of a scaffold." And yet our persuasion is, that in the midst of its deadly agitations and its torments of suspense, probably enough by the energies of hope, or even of anxiety which exalted it, that period of bitter conflict was found by the king a more ennobling life than he *would* have found in the torpor of a prosperity too profound. To be cloyed perpetually is a worse fate than sometimes to stand within the vestibule of starvation; and we need go no further than the confidential letters of the court ladies of this and other countries to satisfy ourselves how much worse in its effects upon happiness than any condition of alarm and peril, is the lethargic repose of luxury too monotonous, and of security too absolute. If, therefore, Goldsmith's life *had* been one of continual struggle, it would not follow that it had therefore sunk below the standard of ordinary happiness. But the life-struggle of Goldsmith, though severe enough (after all allowances) to challenge a feeling of tender compassion, was not in such a degree severe as has been represented.[2] He en

joyed two great immunities from suffering that have been much overlooked; and *such* immunities that, in our opinion, four in five of all the people ever connected with Goldsmith's works, as publishers, printers, compositors (that is, men taken at random), have very probably suffered more, upon the whole, than he. The immunities were these: — 1st, From any *bodily* taint of low spirits. He had a constitutional gayety of heart; an elastic hilarity; and, as he himself expresses it, "a knack of hoping" — which knack could not be bought with Ormus and with Ind, nor hired for a day with the peacock-throne of Delhi. How easy was it to bear the brutal affront of being to his face described as "*Doctor minor*," when one hour or less would dismiss the *Doctor major*, so invidiously contradistinguished from himself, to a struggle with scrofulous melancholy; whilst *he*, if returning to solitude and a garret, was returning also to habitual cheerfulness. *There* lay one immunity, beyond all price, from a mode of strife to which others, by a large majority, are doomed — strife with bodily wretchedness. Another immunity he had of almost equal value, and yet almost equally forgotten by his biographers, namely, from the responsibilities of a family. Wife and children he had not. They it is that, being a man's chief blessings, create also for him the deadliest of his anxieties, that stuff his pillow with thorns, that surround his daily path with snares. Suppose the case of a man who has helpless dependents of this class upon himself summoned to face some sudden failure of his resources: how shattering to the power of exertion, and, above all, of exertion by an organ

so delicate as the creative intellect, dealing with subjects so coy as those of imaginative sensibility, to know that instant ruin attends his failure! Success in such paths of literature might at the best be doubtful; but success is impossible, with any powers whatever, unless in a genial state of those powers; and this geniality is to be sustained, in the case supposed, whilst the eyes are fixed upon the most frightful of abysses yawning beneath his feet. He is to win his inspiration for poetry or romance from the prelusive cries of infants clamoring for daily bread. Now, on the other hand, in the case of an extremity equally sudden alighting on the head of a man in Goldsmith's position, having no burden to support but the trivial one of his own personal needs, the resources are endless for gaining time enough to look around. Suppose him ejected from his lodgings; let him walk into the country, with a pencil and a sheet of paper; there, sitting under a hay-stack for one morning, he may produce what will pay his expenses for a week: a day's labor will carry the sustenance of ten days. Poor may be the trade of authorship, but it is as good as that of a slave in Brazil, whose one hour's work will defray the twenty-four hours' living. As a reader, or corrector of proofs, a good Latin and French scholar (like Goldsmith) would always have enjoyed a preference, we presume, at any eminent printing-office. This again would have given him time for looking round; or, he might perhaps have obtained the same advantage for deliberation from some confidential friend's hospitality. In short, Goldsmith enjoyed the two privileges, one subjective — the other objective —

which, when uniting in the same man, would prove more than a match for all difficulties that *could* arise in a literary career to him who was at once a man of genius so popular, of talents so versatile, of reading so various, and of opportunities so large for still more extended reading. The subjective privilege lay in his buoyancy, of animal spirits; the objective in his freedom from responsibilities. Goldsmith wanted very little more than Diogenes; now Diogenes *could* only have been robbed of his tub;[3] which perhaps was about as big as most of poor Goldsmith's sitting-rooms, and far better ventilated. So that the liability of these two men cynic and non-cynic, to the kicks of fortune, was pretty much on a par; whilst Goldsmith had the advantage of a better temper for bearing them, though certainly Diogenes had the better climate for soothing his temper.

But it may be imagined, that if Goldsmith were thus fortunately equipped for authorship, on the other hand, the position of literature, as a money-making resource, was in Goldsmith's days less advantageous than ours. We are not of that opinion; and the representation by which Mr. Forster endeavors to sustain it seems to us a showy but untenable refinement. The outline of his argument is, that the aristocratic patron had, in Goldsmith's day, by the progress of society, disappeared; he belonged to the past — that the mercenary publisher had taken his place — he represented the ugly present — but that the great reading public (that true and equitable patron, as some fancy) had not yet matured its means of effectual action upon literature; this reading public virtually, perhaps, belonged to the future. All this we

steadfastly resist. No doubt the old full-blown patron *en grand costume*, with his heraldic bearings emblazoned at the head of the Dedication, was dying out, like the golden pippin. But he still lingered in sheltered situations. And part of the machinery by which patronage had ever moved, namely, using influence for obtaining subscriptions, was still in capital working order, — a fact which we know from Goldsmith himself (see the *Enquiry*) ; for he tells us that a popular mode of publication amongst bad authors, and certainly it needed no publisher's countersign, was by means of subscription papers : upon which, as we believe, a considerable instalment was usually paid down when as yet the book existed only by way of title-page, supposing that the whole sum were not even paid *up*. Then as to the publisher (a nuisance, we dare say, in all stages of his Natural History), *he* could not have been a weed first springing up in Goldsmith's time, but must always have been an indispensable broker or middleman between the author and the world. In the days even of Horace and Martial the book-*seller* (bibliopola) clearly acted as book *publisher*. Amongst other passages proving this, and showing undeniably that Martial at least had sold the copyright of his work to *his* publisher, is one arguing pretty certainly that the price of a gay drawing-room copy must have been hard upon £1. 11*s*. 6*d*. Did eve any man hear the like ? A New York newspaper would have been too happy to pirate the whole of Martia had he been three times as big, and would have en gaged to drive the bankrupt publisher into a madhous for twopence. Now, it cannot be supposed that Mar tial, a gay, light-hearted fellow, willing to let the public

have his book for a shilling, or perhaps for love, had been the person to put that ridiculous price upon it. We may conclude that it was the publisher. As to the public, *that* respectable character must always have presided over the true and final court of appeal, silently defying alike the *prestige* of patronage and the intriguing mysteries of publishing. Lordly patronage might fill the sails of one edition, and masterly publishing of three. But the books that ran contagiously through the educated circles, or that lingered amongst them for a generation, must have owed their success to the unbiased feelings of the reader — not overawed by authority, not mystified by artifice. Varying, however, in whatever proportion as to power, the three possible parties to an act of publication will always be seen intermittingly at work — the voluptuous self-indulging public, and the insidious publisher, of course; but even the brow-beating patron still exists in a new *avatar*. Formerly he made his descent upon earth in the shape of Dedicatee; and it is true that this august being, to whom dedications burned incense upon an altar, withdrew into sunset and twilight during Goldsmith's period; but he still revisits the glimpses of the moon in the shape of author. When the *auctoritas* of a peer could no longer sell a book by standing at the head of a dedication, it lost none of its power when standing on the title-page as the author. Vast catalogues might be composed of books and pamphlets that have owed a transient success to no other cause on earth than the sonorous title, or the distinguished position of those who wrote them. Ceasing to patronize other people's books, the grandee has still power to

patronize his own. All *celebrities* have this form of patronage. And, for instance, had the boy Jones[4] (otherwise called Inigo Jones) possessed enough of book-making skill to forge a plausible curtain-lecture, as overheard by himself when concealed in Her Majesty's bed-room, ten steam-presses, working day and night, would not have supplied the public demand; and even Her Majesty must herself have sent for a large paper copy, were it only to keep herself *au courant* of English literature. In short, first, the extrinsic patronage of books; secondly, the self-patronage of books in right of their merits; and, thirdly, the artificial machineries for diffusing the knowledge of their existence, are three forces, in current literature that ever *have* existed and must exist, in some imperfect degree. Horace recognizes them in his

> "Non Dî, non homines, non concessere columnæ."

The *Dî* are the paramount public, arbitrating finally on the fates of books, and generally on some just ground of judgment, though it may be fearfully exaggerated on the scale of importance. The *homines* are the publishers; and a sad *homo* the publisher sometimes is, particularly when he commits insolvency. But the *columnæ* are those pillars of state, the grandees of our own age, or any other patrons, that support the golden canopy of our transitory pomps, and thus shed an alien glory of colored light from above upon the books falling within that privileged area.

We are not, therefore, of Mr. Forster's opinion, that Goldsmith fell upon an age less favorable to the expansion of literary powers, or to the attainment of

literary distinction, than any other. The patron might be a tradition — but the public was not therefore a prophecy. My lord's trumpets had ceased to sound, but the *vox populi* was not therefore muffled. The means, indeed, of diffusive advertisement and of rapid circulation, the combinations of readers into reading societies, and of roads into iron net-works, were as yet imperfectly developed. These gave a potent stimulus to periodic literature. And a still more operative difference between ourselves and them is — that a new class of people has since then entered our reading public, namely, the class of artisans and of all below the gentry, which (taken generally) was in Goldsmith's day a cipher, as regarded any real encouragement to literature. In our days, if *The Vicar of Wakefield* had been published as a Christmas tale, it would have produced a fortune to the writer. In Goldsmith's time, few below the gentry were readers on any large scale. So far there really *was* a disadvantage. But it was a disadvantage which applied chiefly to novels. The new influx of readers in our times, the collateral affluents into the main stream from the mechanic and provincial sections of our population, which have centupled the volume of the original current, cannot be held as telling favorably upon literature, or telling at all, except in the departments of popularized science, of religion, of fictitious tales, and of journalism. To be a reader, is no longer, as once it was, to be of a meditative turn. To be a *very* popular author is no longer that honorary distinction which once it might have been amongst a more elevated because more select body of readers. We

do not say this invidiously, or with any special reference. But it is evident that writers and readers must often act and reäct for reciprocal degradation. A writer of this day, either in France or England, to be *very* popular, must be a story-teller; which is a function of literature neither very noble in itself, nor, secondly, tending to permanence. All novels whatever, the best equally with the worst, have faded almost with the generation that produced them. This is a curse written as a superscription above the whole class. The modes of combining characters, the particular objects selected for sympathy, the diction, and often the manners,[5] hold up an imperfect mirror to any generation that is not their own. And the reader of novels belonging to an obsolete era, whilst acknowledging the skill of the groupings, or the beauty of the situations, misses the echo to that particular revelation of human nature which has met him in the social aspects of his own day; or too often he is perplexed by an expression which, having dropped into a lower use, disturbs the unity of the impression, or is revolted by a coarse sentiment, which increasing refinement has made unsuitable to the sex or to the rank of the character. How bestial and degrading at this day seem many of the scenes in Smollett! How coarse are the ideals of Fielding! — his odious Squire Western, his odious Tom Jones! What a gallery of histrionic masqueraders is thrown open in the novels of Richardson, powerful as they were once found by the two leading nations of the earth. A popular writer, therefore, who, *in order* to be popular, must speak through novels, speaks to what is least permanent in

human sensibilities. That is already to be self-degraded. *Secondly*, because the novel-reading class is by far the most comprehensive one, and, being such, must count as a large majority amongst its members those who are poor in capacities of thinking, and are passively resigned to the instinct of immediate pleasure — to these the writer must chiefly humble himself; he must study *their* sympathies, must assume them, must give them back. In our days, he must give them back even their own street slang; so servile is the modern novelist's dependence on his *canaille* of an audience. In France, amongst the Sues, &c., it has been found necessary to give back even the closest portraits of obscene atrocities that shun the light, and burrow only in the charnel-houses of vast manufacturing towns. Finally, the very principle of commanding attention only by the interest of a tale, which means the interest of a momentary curiosity that is to vanish forever in a sense of satiation, and of a momentary suspense, that, having once collapsed, can never be rekindled, is in itself a confession of reliance upon the meaner offices of the mind. The result from all which is — that to be popular in the most extensive walk of popularity, that is, as a novelist, a writer must generally be in a very considerable degree self-degraded by sycophancy to the lowest order of minds, and cannot (except for mercenary purposes) think himself advantageously placed.

To have missed, therefore, this enormous expansion of the reading public, however unfortunate for Goldsmith's purse, was a great escape for his intellectual purity. Every man has two-edged tendencies lurking

within himself, pointing in one direction to what will expand the elevating principles of his nature, pointing in another to what will tempt him to its degradation. A mob is a dreadful audience for chafing and irritating the latent vulgarisms of the human heart. Exaggeration and caricature, before such a tribunal, become inevitable, and sometimes almost a duty. The genial but not very delicate humor of Goldsmith would in such circumstances have slipped, by the most natural of transitions, into buffoonery; the unaffected pathos of Goldsmith would, by a monster audience, have been debauched into theatrical sentimentality. All the motions of Goldsmith's nature moved in the direction of the true, the natural, the sweet, the gentle. In the quiet times, politically speaking, through which his course of life travelled, he found a musical echo to the tenor of his own original sensibilities — in the architecture of European history, as it unfolded its proportions along the line of his own particular experience, there was a symmetry with the propositions of his own unpretending mind. Our revolutionary age would have unsettled his brain. The colossal movements of nations, from within and from without; the sorrow of the times, which searches so deeply; the grandeur of the times, which aspires so loftily; these forces, acting for the last fifty years by secret sympathy upon our fountains of thinking and impassioned speculation, have raised them from depths never visited by our fathers, into altitudes too dizzy for *their* contemplating. This generation and the last with their dreadful records, would have untuned Goldsmith for writing in the key that suited him: and *us*

they would have untuned for understanding his music, had we not learned to understand it in childhood, before the muttering hurricanes in the upper air had begun to reach our young ears, and forced them away to the thundering overhead, from the carolling of birds amongst earthly powers.

Goldsmith, therefore, as regards the political aspects of his own times, was fortunately placed; a thrush or a nightingale is hushed by the thunderings which are awakening to Jove's eagle. But an author stands in relation to other influences than political; and some of these are described by Mr. Forster as peculiarly unfavorable to comfort and respectability at the era of Goldsmith's novitiate in literature. Will Mr. Forster excuse us for quarrelling with his whole doctrine upon this subject — a subject and a doctrine continually forced upon our attention, in these days, by the extending lines of our own literary order, and continually refreshed in warmth of coloring by the contrast as regards *social* consideration, between our literary body and the corresponding order in France. The questions arising have really a general interest, as well as a special one, in connection with Goldsmith; and therefore we shall stir them a little, not with any view of exhausting the philosophy that is applicable to the case, but simply of amusing some readers (since Pliny's remark on history is much more true of literature or literary gossip, namely, that "*quoquo* modo scripta delectat"); and with the more ambitious purpose of recalling some other readers from precipitate conclusions upon a subject where nearly all that is most plausible happens to be most untrue.

Mr. Forster, in his views upon the *social* rights of literature, is rowing pretty nearly in the same boat as Mr. Carlyle in *his* views upon the rights of labor. Each denounces, or by implication denounces, as an oppression and a nuisance, what *we* believe to be a necessity inalienable from the economy and structure of our society. Some years ago Mr. Carlyle offended us all (or all of us that were interested in social philosophy) by enlarging on a social affliction, which few indeed needed to see exposed, but most men would have rejoiced to see remedied, if it were but on paper, and by way of tentative suggestion. Precisely at that point, however, where his aid was invoked, Mr. Carlyle halted. So does Mr. Forster with regard to *his* grievance; he states it, and we partly understand him — as ancient Pistol says — "We hear him with ears;" and when we wait for him to go on, saying — "Well, here 's a sort of evil in life, how would you redress it? you 've shown, or you 've made another hole in the tin-kettle of society; how do you propose to tinker it?" — behold! he is suddenly almost silent. But this cannot be allowed. The right to insist upon a well-known grievance cannot be granted to that man (Mr. Carlyle, for instance, or Mr. Forster) who uses it as matter of blame and denunciation, unless, at the same time, he points out the methods by which it could have been prevented. He that simply bemoans an evil has a right to his moan, though he should make no pretensions to a remedy; but he that criminates, that imputes the evil as a fault, that charges the evil upon selfishness or neglect lurking in some alterable arrangements of society, has no right to do so, unless he can

instantly sketch the remedy; for the very first step by which he could have learned that the evil involved a blame, the first step that could have entitled him to denounce it as a wrong, must have been that step which brought him within the knowledge (wanting to everybody else) that it admitted of a cure. A wrong it could not have been even in *his* eyes, so long as it was a necessity, nor a ground of complaint until the cure appeared to him a possibility. And the over-riding motto for these parallel speculations of Messrs. Carlyle and Forster, in relation to the frailties of our social system, ought to have been, "*Sanabilibus ægrotamus malis.*" Unless with this watchword they had no right to commence their crusading march. *Curable* evils justify clamorous complaints; the incurable justify only prayers.

Why it was that Mr. Carlyle, in particular, halted so steadily at the point where his work of love was first beginning, it is not difficult to guess. As the "Statutes at large" have not one word against the liberty of unlicensed hypothesis, it is conceivable that Mr. C. might have indulged a little in that agreeable pastime; but this, he was well aware, would have brought him in one moment under the fire of Political Economy, from the whole vast line of its modern batteries. These gentlemen, the economists, would have torn to ribbons, within fifteen minutes, any *positive* speculation for amending the evil. It was better, therefore. to keep within the trenches of the blank negative, pointing to everything as *wrong*—horribly wrong, but never hinting at the mysterious *right;* which, to this

day, we grieve to say, remains as mysterious as ever.[6]

Passing to Mr. Forster, who (being capable of a splendor so original) disappoints us most when he reminds us of Mr. Carlyle, by the most disagreeable of that gentleman's phraseological forms; and, in this instance, by a speculation twin-sister to the economic one just noticed; we beg to premise that in anything here said, it is far from our wish to express disaffection to the cause of our literary brothers. We grudge them nothing that they are ever likely to get. We wish even that the House of Commons would see cause for creating *majorats* in behalf of us all; only whispering in the ear of that honorable House to appoint a Benjamin's portion to ourselves, as the parties who suggested the idea. But what is the use of benevolently bequeathing larks for dinner to all literary men, in all time coming, if the sky must fall before they can bag our bequest? We shall discuss Mr. Forster's views, not perhaps according to any arrangement of his, but according to the order in which they come back to our own remembrance.

Goldsmith's period, Mr. F. thinks, was bad — not merely by the transitional misfortune (before noticed) of coming too late for the patron, and too soon for the public (which is the compound ill-luck of being a day after one fair, and a month too soon for the next), — but also by some coöperation in this evil destiny through misconduct on the part of authors themselves (p. 70). Not "the circumstances" only of authors were damaged, but the "literary character" itself. We are sorry to hear *that*. But, as long as they did

not commit murder, we have a great indulgence for the frailties of authors. If ever the "benefit of clergy" could be fairly pleaded, it might have been by Grub Street for petty larceny. The "clergy" they surely could have pleaded; and the call for larceny was so audible in their condition, that in *them* it might be called an instinct of self-preservation, which surely was not implanted in man to be disobeyed. One word allow us to say on these three topics:—1. The condition of the literary body in its hard-working section at the time when Goldsmith belonged to it. 2. Upon the condition of that body in England as compared with that of the corresponding body in France. 3. Upon the condition of the body in relation to patronage purely *political*.

1. The pauperized (or Grub Street) section of the literary body, at the date of Goldsmith's taking service amongst it, was (in Mr. Forster's estimate) at its very lowest point of depression. And one comic presumption in favor of that notion we ourselves remember; namely, that Smart, the prose translator of Horace, and a well-built scholar, actually *let* himself out to a monthly journal on a regular lease of ninety-nine years.[7] What could move the rapacious publisher to draw the lease for this monstrous term of years, we cannot conjecture. Surely the villain might have been content with threescore years and ten. But think, reader, of poor Smart two years after, upon another publisher's applying to him vainly for contributions, and angrily demanding what possible objection could be made to offers so liberal, being reduced to answer — "No objection, sir, whatever, except an unexpired term of ninety-

seven years yet to run." The bookseller saw that he must not apply again in *that* century; and, in fact, Smart could no longer let himself, but must be sub-let (if let at all) by the original lessee. Query now — was Smart entitled to vote as a freeholder, and Smart's children (if any were born during the currency of the lease), would they be serfs, and *ascripti prelo?* Goldsmith's own terms of self-conveyance to Griffiths — the terms we mean on which he "conveyed" his person and free-agency to the uses of the said Griffiths (or his assigns?) — do not appear to have been much more dignified than Smart's in the quality of the *conditions*, though considerably so in the duration of the *term;* Goldsmith's lease being only for one year, and not for ninety-nine, so that he had (as the reader perceives) a clear ninety-eight years at his own disposal. We suspect that poor Oliver, in his guileless heart, never congratulated himself on having made a more felicitous bargain. Indeed, it was not so bad, if everything be considered; Goldsmith's situation at the time was bad; and for that very reason the lease (otherwise monstrous) was *not* bad. He was to have lodging, board, and "a small salary," *very* small, we suspect; and in return for all these blessings, he had nothing to do, but to sit still at a table, to work hard from an early hour in the morning until 2 P. M. (at which elegant hour we presume that the parenthesis of dinner occurred), but also — which, not being an article in the lease, might have been set aside, on a motion before the King's Bench — to endure without mutiny the correction and revisal of all his MSS. by *Mrs.* Griffiths, wife to Dr. G. the lessee. This affliction of Mrs. *Dr.*

G. surmounting his shoulders, and controlling his pen, seems to us not at all less dreadful than that of Sinbad when indorsed with the old man of the sea; and we, in Goldsmith's place, should certainly have tried how far Sinbad's method of abating the nuisance had lost its efficacy by time, namely, the tempting our oppressor to get drunk once or twice a day, and then suddenly throwing Mrs. Dr. G. off her perch. From that "bad eminence," which she had audaciously usurped, what harm could there be in thus dismounting this "old *woman* of the sea"? And as to an occasional thump or so on the head, which Mrs. Dr. G. might have caught in tumbling, that was *her* look-out; and might besides have improved her style. For really now, if the candid reader will believe us, we know a case, odd certainly but very true, where a young man, an author by trade,[8] who wrote pretty well, happening to tumble out of a first-floor in London, was afterwards observed to grow very perplexed and almost unintelligible in his style; until some years later, having the good fortune (like Wallenstein at Vienna) to tumble out of a two-pair of stairs window, he slightly fractured his skull, but, on the other hand, recovered the brilliancy of his long fractured style. Some people there are of our acquaintance who would need to tumble out of the attic story before they could seriously improve their style.

Certainly these conditions — the hard work, the being chained by the leg to the writing-table, and above all the having one's pen chained to that of Mrs. Dr. Griffiths, *do* seem to countenance Mr. F.'s idea, that Goldsmith's period was the purgatory of authors. And we freely confess — that excepting Smart's ninety-nine

years' lease, or the contract between the Devil and Dr. Faustus, we never heard of a harder bargain driven with any literary man. Smart, Faustus, and Goldsmith, were clearly overreached. Yet, after all, was this treatment in any important point (excepting as regards Dr. Faustus) worse than that given to the whole college of Grub Street in the days of Pope? The first edition of the Dunciad dates from 1727: Goldsmith's matriculation in Grub Street dates from 1757—just thirty years later; which is one generation. And it is important to remember that Goldsmith, at this time in his twenty-ninth year, was simply an usher at an obscure boarding-school; had never practised writing for the press; and had not even himself any faith at all in his own capacity for writing. It is a singular fact, which we have on Goldsmith's own authority, that until his thirtieth year (that is, the year he spent with Dr. and Mrs. Griffiths) it never entered into his head that literature was his natural vocation. That vanity, which has been so uncandidly and sometimes so falsely attributed to Goldsmith, was compatible, we see, if at all it existed, with the humblest estimate of himself. Still, however much this deepens our regard for a man of so much genius united with so much simplicity and unassumingness, humility would not be likely to raise his salary; and we must not forget that his own want of self-esteem would reasonably operate on the terms offered by Griffiths. A man, who regarded himself as little more than an amanuensis, could not expect much better wages than an under-gardener, which perhaps he had. And, weighing all this, we see little to have altered in the lease—that was fair enough; only as

regarded the execution of the lease, we really must have protested, under any circumstances, against Mrs. Doctor Griffiths. That woman would have broken the back of a camel, which must be supposed tougher than the heart of an usher. There we should have made a ferocious stand; and should have struck for much higher wages, before we could have brought our mind to think of capitulation. It is remarkable, however, that this year of humble servitude was not only (or, as if by accident) the epoch of Goldsmith's intellectual development, but also the occasion of it. Nay, if all were known, perhaps it may have been to Mrs. Doctor Griffiths in particular that we owe that revolution in his self-estimation which made Goldsmith an author by deliberate choice. Hag-ridden every day, he must have plunged and kicked violently to break loose from this harness; but, not impossibly, the very effort of contending with the hag when brought into collision with his natural desire to soothe the hag, and the inevitable counter-impulse in any continued practice of composition, towards the satisfaction at the same time of his own reason and taste, must have furnished a most salutary *palæstra* for the education of his literary powers. When one lives at Rome, one must do as they do at Rome: when one lives with a hag, one must accommodate oneself to haggish caprices; besides, that once in a month the hag might be right; or if not, and supposing her *always* in the wrong, which perhaps is too much to assume even of Mrs. Dr. G., *that* would but multiply the difficulties of reconciling *her* demands with the demands of the general reader and of Goldsmith's own judgment. And in the pres-

sure of these difficulties would lie the very value of this rough Spartan education. Rope-dancing cannot be very agreeable in its elementary lessons; but it must be a capital process for calling out the agilities that slumber in a man's legs.

Still, though these hardships turned out so beneficially to Goldsmith's intellectual interests, and, consequently, so much to the advantage of all who have since delighted in his works, not the less on that account they *were* hardships, and hardships that imposed heavy degradation. So far, therefore, they would seem to justify Mr. Forster's characterization of Goldsmith's period by comparison with Addison's period[9] on the one side, and our own on the other. But, on better examination, it will be found that this theory is sustained only by an unfair selection of the antithetic objects in the comparison. Compare Addison's age *generally* with Goldsmith's — authors, prosperous or unprosperous, in each age taken indiscriminately — and the two ages will be found to offer "much of a muchness." But, if you take the paupers of one generation to contrast with the grandees of another, how is there any justice in the result? Goldsmith at starting was a penniless man. Except by random accidents he had not money enough to buy a rope, in case he had fancied himself in want of such a thing. Addison, on the contrary, was the son of a tolerably rich man; lived gayly at a most aristocratic college (Magdalen), in a most aristocratic university; formed early and brilliant connections with the political party that were magnificently preponderant until the last four years of Queen Anne; travelled on the Continent, not as a

pedestrian mendicant, housing with owls, and thankful for the bounties of a village fair, but with the appointments and introduction of a young nobleman; and became a secretary of state, not by means of his "delicate humor," as Mr. Forster chooses to suppose, but through splendid patronage, and (speaking *Hibernicé*) through a "strong back." His bad verses, his Blenheim, his Cato, in later days, and other rubbish, had been the only part of his works that aided his rise; and even these would have availed him little, had he not originally possessed a *locus standi*, from which he could serve his artilleries of personal flatteries with commanding effect, and could *profit* by his successes. As to the really exquisite part of his writings, *that* did him no yeoman's service at all, nor *could* have done; for he was a made man, and had almost received notice to quit this world of prosperous whiggery, before he had finished those exquisite prose miscellanies. Pope, Swift, Gay, Prior, &c., all owed their social positions to early accidents of good connections and sometimes of luck, which would not, indeed, have supplied the place of personal merit, but which gave lustre and effect to merit where it existed in strength. There were authors quite as poor as Goldsmith in the Addisonian age; there were authors quite as rich as Pope, Steele, &c., in Goldsmith's age, and having the same social standing. Goldsmith struggled with so much distress, not because his period was more inauspicious, but because his connections and starting advantages were incomparably less important. His profits were so trivial because his capital was next to none.

So far, as regards the comparison between Goldsmith's age and the one immediately before it. But now, as regards the comparison with our own, removed by two generations — can it be said truly that the literary profession has risen in estimation, or is rising? There is a difficulty in making such an appraisement; and from different minds there would proceed very different appraisements; and even from the same mind, surveying the case at different stations. For, on the one hand, if a greater breadth of social respectability catches the eye on looking carelessly over the body of our modern literati, which may be owing chiefly to the large increase of gentlemen that in our day have entered the field of literature; on the other hand, the hacks and *handicraftsmen* whom the shallow education of newspaper journalism has introduced to the press, and whom poverty compels to labors not meriting the name of literature, are correspondingly expanding their files. There is, however, one reason from analogy, which may incline us to suppose that a higher consideration is now generally conceded to the purposes of literature, and, consequently, a juster estimate made of the persons who minister to those purposes. Literature — provided we use that word not for the mere literature of knowledge, but for the literature of power, using it for literature as it speaks to what is genial in man, namely, to the human *spirit*, and *not* for literature (falsely so called) as it speaks to the meagre understanding — is a fine art; and not only so, it is the supreme of the fine arts; nobler, for instance, potentially, than painting, or sculpture, or architecture. Now *all* the fine arts, *that popularly are*

called such, have risen in esteem within the last generation. The most aristocratic of men will now ask into his own society an artist, whom fifty years ago he would have transferred to the house-steward's table And why? Not simply because more attention having been directed to the arts, more notoriety has gathered about the artist; for that sort of *éclat* would not work any durable change; but it is because the interest in the arts having gradually become much more of an enlightened interest, the public has been slowly trained to fix its attention upon the *intellect* which is presupposed in the arts, rather than upon the offices of *pleasure* to which they minister. The fine arts have now come to be regarded rather as powers that are to mould, than as luxuries that are to embellish. And it has followed that artists are valued more by the elaborate agencies which they guide, than by the fugitive sensations of wonder or sympathy which they evoke.

Now this is a change honorable to both sides. The public has altered its estimate of certain men; and yet has not been able to do so, without previously enlarging its idea of the means through which those men operate. It could not elevate the men, without previously elevating itself. But, if so, then, in correcting their appreciation of the fine arts, the public must simultaneously have corrected their appreciation of literature; because, whether men have or have not been in the habit of regarding literature as a fine art, this they must have felt, namely, that literature, in its more genial functions, works by the very same organs as the liberal arts, speaks to the same heart, operates through the same compound nature, and educates the same deep

sympathies with mysterious ideals of beauty. *There* lies the province of the arts usually acknowledged as fine or liberal; *there* lies the province of fine or liberal literature. And with justifiable pride a *littérateur* may say — that *his* fine art wields a sceptre more potent than any other; literature is more potent than other fine arts, because *deeper* in its impressions according to the usual tenor of human sensibilities; because more *extensive*, in the degree that books are more diffused than pictures or statues; because more *durable*, in the degree that language is durable beyond marble or canvas, and in the degree that vicarious powers are opened to books for renewing their phœnix immortality through unlimited translations; powers denied to painting except through copies that are feeble, and denied to sculpture except to casts that are costly.

We infer that, as the fine arts have been rising, literature (on the secret feeling that essentially it moves by the same powers) must also have been rising; that, as the arts will continue to rise, literature will continue to rise; and that, in both cases, the men, the ministers, must ascend in social consideration as the things, the ministrations, ascend. But there is another form, in which the same result offers itself to our notice; and this should naturally be the last paragraph in this section 1, but, as we have little room to spare, it may do equally well as the first paragraph in section 2, namely, on the condition of our own literary body by comparison with the same body in France.

2. Who were the people amongst ourselves, that, throughout the eighteenth century, chiefly came for

ward as undervaluers of literature? They belonged to two very different classes — the aristocracy and the commercial body, who agreed in the thing, but on very different impulses. To the mercantile man, the author was an object of ridicule, from natural poverty; *natural*, because there was no regular connection between literature and any mode of money-making. By accident the author might *not* be poor, but professionally, or according to any obvious opening for an income, he *was*. Poverty was the badge of all his tribe. Amongst the aristocracy, the instinct of contempt, or at least of slight regard towards literature, was supported by the irrelation of literature to the *state*. Aristocracy itself was the flower and fruitage of the state; a nobility was possible only in the ratio of the grandeur and magnificence developed for *social* results; so that a poor and unpopulous nation cannot create a great aristocracy: the flower and foliation must be in relation to the stem and the radix out of which they germinate. Inevitably, therefore, a nobility so great as the English — that not in pride, but in the mere logic of its political relations, felt its order to be a sort of heraldic shield, charged with the trophies and ancestral glories of the nation — could not but in its *public* scale of appreciation estimate every profession and rank of men by the mode of their natural connection with the state. Law and arms, for instance, were honored, not because any capricious precedent had been established of a title to public honor in favor of those professions, but because, through their essential functions, they opened for themselves a permanent necessity of introsusception into the organism of the state. A grea

law officer, a great military leader, a popular admiral, is already, by virtue of his functions, a noble in men's account, whether you gave or refused him a title; and in such cases it has always been the policy of an aristocratic state to confer, or even impose the title, lest the disjunction of the virtual nobility from the titular should gradually disturb the estimate of the latter But literature, by its very grandeur, is degraded socially; for its relations are essentially cosmopolitan, or. speaking more strictly, not cosmopolitan, which might mean to all other peoples considered as national states. whereas literature has no relation to any sections or social schisms amongst men — its relations are to the race. In proportion as any literary work rises in its pretensions; for instance, if it works by the highest forms of passion, its *nisus*, its natural effort is to address the race, and not any individual nation. That it found a bar to this *nisus*, in a limited language, was but an accident: the essential relations of every great intellectual work are to those capacities in man by which he tends to brotherhood, and not to those by which he tends to alienation. Man is ever coming nearer to agreement, ever narrowing his differences, notwithstanding that the interspace may cost an eternity to traverse. Where the agreement is, not where the difference is, in the centre of a man's affinities, not of his repulsions, *there* lies the magnetic centre towards which all poetry that is potent, and all philosophy that is faithful, are eternally travelling by natural tendency. Consequently, if indirectly literature may hold a patriotic value as a gay plumage in the cap of a nation, directly, and, by a far deeper tendency, litera-

ture is essentially alien. A poet, a book, a system of religion, belongs to the nation best qualified for appreciating their powers, and not to the nation that, perhaps by accident, gave them birth. How, then, is it wonderful that an intense organ of the social principle in a nation, namely, a nobility, should fail, in their professional character, to rate highly, or even to recognize, as having any proper existence, a fine art which is by tendency anti-social (anti-social in this sense, that what it seeks, it seeks by transcending all social barriers and separations)? Yet it is remarkable that in England, where the aristocracy for three centuries (16th, 17th, 18th) paid so little honor, in their public or corporate capacity, to literature, privately they honored it with a rare courtesy. That same grandee, who would have looked upon Camden, Ben Jonson, Selden, or Hobbes, as an audacious intruder, if occupying any prominent station at a state festival, would have received him with a kind of filial reverence in his own mansion; for, in this place, as having no national reference, as sacred to hospitality, which regards the human tie, and not the civic tie, he would be at liberty to regard the man of letters in his cosmopolitan character. And on the same instinct, a prince in the very meanest state, would, in a state-pageant commemorating the national honors, assign a distinguished place to the national high admiral, though he were the most stupid of men, and would utterly neglect the stranger Columbus. But in his own palace, and at his own table, he would perhaps invert this order of precedency, and would place Columbus at his own right hand.

Some such principle, as is here explained, did certainly prevail in the practice (whether consciously perceived or not in the philosophy) of that England, which extended through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. First, in the eighteenth century all honor to literature, under *any* relation, began to give way. And why? Because expanding politics, expanding partisanship, and expanding journalism, then first called into the field of literature an inferior class of laborers. Then first it was that, from the noblest of professions, literature became a trade. Literature it was that gave the first wound to literature; the hack scribbler it was that first degraded the lofty literary artist. For a century and a half we have lived under the shade of this fatal revolution. But, however painful such a state of things may be to the keen sensibilities of men pursuing the finest of vocations — carrying forward as inheritors from past generations the eternal chase after truth, and power, and beauty — still we must hold that the dishonor to literature has issued from internal sources proper to herself, and not from without. The nobility of England have, for three and a half centuries, personally practised literature as an elevated accomplishment: our royal and noble authors are numerous; and they would have continued the same cordial attentions to the literary body, had that body maintained the same honorable composition. But a *littérateur*, simply *as* such, it is no longer safe to distinguish with favor; once, but not now, he was liable to no misjudgment. Once he was pretty sure to be a man of some genius, or, at the least, of unusual scholarship. Now, on the contrary

a mob of traitors have mingled with the true men, and the loyal perish with the disloyal, because it is impossible, in a mob, so vast and fluctuating, for the artillery of avenging scorn to select its victims.

All this, bitter in itself, has become *more* bitter from the contrast furnished by France. We know that literature has long been misappreciated amongst ourselves. In France it has long been otherwise appreciated — more advantageously appreciated. And we infer that therefore it is in France more wisely appreciated. But this does not follow. We have ever been of opinion that the valuation of literature in France, or at least of current literature, and as it shows itself in the treatment of literary men, is unsound, extravagant, and that it rests upon a basis originally false. Simply to have been the translator from the English of some prose book, a history or a memoir, neither requiring nor admitting any display of mastery over the resources of language, conferred, throughout the eighteenth century, so advantageous a position in society upon one whom we English should view as a literary scrub or mechanic drudge, that we really had a right to expect the laws of France and the court ceremonies to reflect this feature of public manners. Naturally, for instance, any man honored so preposterously ought in law to have enjoyed, in right of his book, the *jus trium liberorum*, and perpetual immunity from taxes. Or again, as regards ceremonial honors, on any fair scale of proportions, it was reasonable to expect that to any man who had gone into a fourth edition, the royal sentinels should present arms; that to the author of a successful tragedy, the guard should

everywhere turn out; and that an epic poet, if ever such a difficult birth should make its epiphany in Paris, must look to have his approach towards a *soirée* announced by a salvo of a hundred and one guns.

Our space will not allow us to go into the illustrative details of this monstrous anomaly in French society. We confine ourselves to its cause — as sufficiently explaining why it is that no imitation of such absurdities can or ought to prosper in England. The same state of things, under a different modification, takes place in Germany; and from the very same cause. Is it not monstrous, or *was* it not until within recent days, to find every German city drawing the pedantic materials and the pedantic interest of its staple conversation from the systems and the conflicts of a few rival academic professors? Generally these paramount lords of German conversation, that swayed its movements this way or that, as a lively breeze sways a cornfield, were metaphysicians; Fichte, for instance, and Hegel. These were the arid sands that bibulously absorbed all the perennial gushings of German enthusiasm. France of the last century and the modern Germany were, as to this point, on the same level of foolishness. But France had greatly the advantage in point of liberality. For general literature furnishes topics a thousand times more graceful and fitted to blend with social pleasure, than the sapless problems of ontological systems meant only for scholastic use.

But what then was the cause of this social deformity? Why was literature allowed eventually to disfigure itself by disturbing the natural currents of

conversation, to make itself odious by usurpation, and thus virtually to operate as a mode of pedantry? It was because in neither land had the people any power of free discussion. It was because every question growing out of religion, or connecting itself with laws, or with government, or with governors, with political interests or political machineries, or with judical courts, was an interdicted theme. The mind sought in despair for some free area wide enough to allow of boundless openings for individualities of sentiment — human enough to sustain the interests of festive discussion. That open area was found in books. In Paris to talk of politics was to talk of the king; *l'état c'est moi;* to talk of the king in any spirit of discussion, to talk of that *Jupiter optimus maximus*, from whom all fountains flowed of good and evil things, before whom stood the two golden urns, one filled with *lettres de cachet*, the other with crosses, pensions, offices, what was it but to dance on the margin of a volcano, or to swim cotillons in the suction of a maelstrom? Hence it was that literature became the only safe colloquial subject of a general nature in old France; hence it was that literature furnished the only "open questions;" and hence it *is* that the mode and the expression of honor to literature in France has continued to this hour tainted with false and histrionic feeling, because originally it grew up from spurious roots, prospered unnaturally upon deep abuses in the system, and at this day (so far as it still lingers) memorializes the political bondage of the nation. Cleanse, therefore — is our prayer — cleanse, O, unknown Hercules! this

Augéan stable of our English current literature, rich in dunghills, rich therefore in precipitate mushroom and fraudulent fungus, yet rich also (if we may utter our real thoughts) — rich preëminently at this hour in seed-plots of immortal growths, and in secret vegetations of volcanic strength; — cleanse it (O coming man!) but not by turning through it any river of Lethe, such as for two centuries swept over the literature of France. Purifying waters were these in one sense; they banished the accumulated depositions of barbarism; they banished Gothic tastes; yes, but they did this by laying asleep the nobler activities of a great people, and reconciling them to forgetfulness of all which commanded them as duties, or whispered to them as rights.

If, therefore, the false homage of France towards literature still survives, it is no object for imitation amongst *us;* since it arose upon a vicious element in the social composition of that people. Partially it *does* survive, as we all know by the experience of the last twenty years, during which authors, and *as* authors (not like Mirabeau or Talleyrand in spite of authorship), have been transferred from libraries to senates and privy councils. This has done no service to literature, but, on the contrary, has degraded it by seducing the children of literature from their proper ambition. It is the glory of literature to rise as if on wings into an atmosphere nobler than that of political intrigue. And the whole result to French literature has been, — that some ten or twelve of the leading literati have been tempted away by bribes from their

appropriate duties, while some five thousand have been made envious and discontented.

At this point, when warned suddenly that the hour glass is running out, which measures our residuum of flying minutes, we first perceive, on looking round, that we have actually been skirmishing with Mr. Forster, from the beginning of our paper to this very line; and thus we have left ourselves but a corner for the main purpose (to which our other purpose of "argle-bargling" was altogether subordinate) of expressing emphatically our thanks to him for this successful labor of love in restoring a half-subverted statue to its upright position. We are satisfied that many thousands of readers will utter the same thanks to him, with equal fervor and with the same sincerity. Admiration for the versatile ability with which he has pursued his object is swallowed up for the moment in gratitude for his perfect success. It might have been imagined, that exquisite truth of household pathos, and of humor, with happy graces of style plastic as the air or the surface of a lake to the pure impulses of nature, sweeping them by the motions of her eternal breath, were qualities authorized to justify themselves before the hearts of men, in defiance of all that sickly scorn or the condescension of masquerading envy could avail for their disturbance. And so they are; and left to plead for themselves at such a bar as unbiased human hearts, they could not have their natural influences intercepted. But, in the case of Goldsmith, literary traditions have *not* left these qualities to their natural influences. It is a fact that up to this hour the contemporary falsehoods at Goldsmith's expense, and (worse perhaps than those false-

hoods the malicious constructions of incidents partly true, having wings lent to them by the levity and amusing gossip of Boswell, continue to obstruct the full ratification of Goldsmith's pretensions. To this hour the scorn from many of his own age, runs side by side with the misgiving sense of his real native power. A feeling still survives, originally derived from his own age, that the "inspired idiot," wherever he succeeded, ought *not* to have succeeded, — having owed his success to accident, or even to some inexplicable perverseness in running counter to his own nature. It was by shooting awry that he had hit the mark; and, when most he came near to the bull's eye, most of all "by rights" he ought to have missed it. He had blundered into the Traveller, into Mr. Croaker, into Tony Lumkin; and not satisfied with such dreadful blunders as these, he had consummated his guilt by blundering into the Vicar of Wakefield, and the Deserted Village; atrocities over which, in effect, we are requested to drop the veil of human charity; since, the more gem-like we may choose to think these works, the more unnatural, audacious, and indeed treasonable, it was in an idiot to produce them.

In this condition of Goldsmith's traditionary character, so injuriously disturbing to the natural effect of his inimitable works (for in its own class each of his best works *is* inimitable), Mr. Forster steps forward with a three-fold exposure of the falsehood inherent in the anecdotes upon which this traditional character has arisen. Some of these anecdotes he challenges as *literally* false; others as virtually so. They are true, perhaps, but under such a version of their circumstances as

would altogether take out the sting of their offensive in terpretation. For others again, and this is a profounder service, he furnishes a most just and philosophic explanation, that brings them at once within the reader's toleration, nay, sometimes within a deep reaction of pity. As a case, for instance, of downright falsehood, we may cite the well-known story told by Boswell, — that, when Goldsmith travelled in France with some beautiful young English women (meaning the Miss Hornecks), he was seriously uneasy at the attentions which they received from the gallantry of Frenchmen, as intruding upon his own claims. Now this story, in logical phrase, proves too much. For the man who *could* have expressed such feelings in such a situation must have been ripe for Bedlam. Coleridge mentions a man who entertained so exalted an opinion of himself, and of his own right to apotheosis, that he never uttered that great pronoun "*I*," without solemnly taking off his hat. Even to the oblique case "*me*," which no compositor ever honors with a capital *M*, and to the possessive pronoun *my* and *mine*, he held it a duty to kiss his hand. Yet this bedlamite would not have been a competitor with a lady for the attentions paid to her in right of her sex. In Goldsmith's case, the whole allegation was dissipated in the most decisive way. Some years after Goldsmith's death, one of the sisters personally concerned in the case was unaffectedly shocked at the printed story, when coming to her knowledge, as a gross calumny; her sorrow made it evident that the whole had been a malicious distortion of some light-hearted gayety uttered by Goldsmith. There is little doubt that the story of the bloom

colored coat, and of the puppet-show, rose on a similar basis — the calumnious perversion of a jest.

But in other cases, where there really *may* have been some fretful expression of self-esteem, Mr. Forster's explanation transfers the foible to a truer and a more pathetic station. Goldsmith's own precipitancy, his overmastering defect in proper reserve, in self-control, and in presence of mind, falling in with the habitual undervaluation of many amongst his associates, placed him at a great disadvantage in animated conversation. His very truthfulness, his simplicity, his frankness, his hurry of feeling, all told against him. They betrayed him into inconsiderate expressions that lent a color of plausibility to the malicious ridicule of those who disliked him the more, from being compelled, after all, to respect him. His own understanding oftentimes sided with his disparagers. He *saw* that he had been in the wrong; whilst secretly he *felt* that his meaning — if properly explained — had been right. Defrauded in this way, and by his own coöperation, of distinctions that naturally belonged to him, he was driven unconsciously to attempt some restoration of the balance, by claiming for a moment distinctions to which he had no real pretensions. The whole was a trick of sorrow, and of sorrowing perplexity. He felt that no justice had been done to him, and that he himself had made an opening for the wrong. The result he saw, but the process he could not disentangle; and, in the confusion of his distress, natural irritation threw him upon blind efforts to recover his ground by unfounded claims, when claims so well-founded had been maliciously disallowed

But a day of accounting comes at last, — a day of rehearing for the cause, and of revision for the judgment. The longer this review has been delayed, the more impressive it becomes in the changes which it works. Welcome is the spectacle when, after three-fourths of a century have passed away, a writer — qualified for such a task, by ample knowledge of things and persons, by great powers for a comprehensive estimate of the case, and for a splendid exposition of its results, with deep sensibility to the merits of the man chiefly concerned in the issue, enthusiastic, but without partisanship — comes forward to unsettle false verdicts, to recombine misarranged circumstances, and to explain anew misinterpreted facts. Such a man wields the authority of heraldic marshals. Like the Otho of the Roman theatre, he has power to raise or to degrade — to give or to take away precedency. But, like this Otho, he has so much power because he exercises it on known principles, and without caprice. To the man of true genius, like Goldsmith, when seating himself in humility on the lowest bench, he says, "Go thou up to a higher place. Seat thyself above those proud men, that once trampled thee in the dust. Be thy memorial upon earth, not (as of some who scorned thee) 'the whistling of a name.' Be thou remembered amongst men by tears of tenderness, by happy laughter untainted with malice, and by the benedictions of those that, reverencing man's nature, see gladly its frailties brought within the gracious smile of human charity, and its nobilities levelled to the apprehension of simplicity and innocence."

Over every grave, even though tenanted by guilt and

shame, the human heart, when circumstantially made acquainted with its silent records of suffering or temptation, yearns in love or in forgiveness to breathe a solemn *Requiescat!* How much more, then, over the grave of a benefactor to the human race! But it is a natural feeling, with respect to such a prayer, that, however fervent and sincere, it has no perfect faith in its own validity, so long as any unsettled feud from ancient calumny hangs over the buried person. The undressed wrong seems to haunt the sepulchre in the shape of a perpetual disturbance to its rest. First of all, when this wrong has been adjudicated and expiated, is the *Requiescat* uttered with a perfect faith in itself. By a natural confusion we then transfer our own feelings to the occupant of the grave. The tranquillization to our own wounded sense of justice seems like an atonement to *his*: the peace for *us* transforms itself under a fiction of tenderness into a peace for *him:* the reconciliation between the world that did the wrong and the grave that seemed to suffer it, is accomplished; the reconciler, in such a case, whoever he may be, seems a double benefactor — to *him* that endured the injury — to *us* that resented it; and in the particular case now before the public, we shall all be ready to agree that this reconciling friend, who might have entitled his work *Vindiciæ Oliverianæ*, has, by the piety of his service to a man of exquisite genius, so long and so foully misrepresented, earned a right to interweave forever his own cipher and cognizance in filial union with those of OLIVER GOLDSMITH.

NOTES.

Note 1. Page 103.

We do not allude chiefly to his experience in childhood, when he is reported to have been a general butt of mockery for his ugliness and his supposed stupidity ; since, as regarded the latter reproach, he could not have suffered very long, having already, at a childish age, vindicated his intellectual place by the verses which opened to him an academic destination. We allude to his mature life, and the supercilious condescension with which even his reputed friends doled out their praises to *him*.

Note 2. Page 104.

We point this remark, not at Mr. Forster, who, upon the whole, shares our opinion as to the tolerable comfort of Goldsmith's life ; he speaks indeed elsewhere of Goldsmith's depressions ; but the question still remains — were they of frequent recurrence, and had they any constitutional settlement ? We are inclined to say *no* in both cases.

Note 3. Page 107.

Which tub the reader may fancy to have been only an old tar barrel ; if so, he is wrong. Isaac Casauborn, after severe re

searches into the nature of that tub, ascertained to the general satisfaction of Christendom that it was not of wood, or within the restorative powers of a cooper, but of earthenware, and, once shattered by a horse's kick, quite past repair. In fact, it was a large oil-jar, such as the remnant of the forty thieves lurked in, when waiting for their captain's signal from Ali Baba's house; and, in Attica, it must have cost fifteen shillings, supposing that the philosopher did not steal it. Consequently a week's loss of house-room and credit to Oliver Goldsmith, at the rate of living then prevalent in Grub street, was pretty much the same thing in money value as the loss to Diogenes of his crockery house by burglary, or in any nocturnal lark of young Attic wine-bibbers. The underwriters would have done an insurance upon either man at pretty much the same premium.

NOTE 4. Page 110.

It may be necessary to explain, for the sake of the many persons who have come amongst the reading public since the period of the incident referred to, that this was a boy called Jones, who was continually entering Buckingham Palace clandestinely, was as regularly ejected by the police, but with respectable pertinacity constantly returned, and on one occasion effected a lodgment in the royal bedchamber. Some happy wit, in just admiration of such perseverance and impudence, christened him *In-I-go Jones.*

NOTE 5. Page 112.

Often, but not so uniformly (the reader will think) as the diction, because the manners are sometimes not those of the writer's own age, being ingenious adaptations to meet the modern writer's conjectural ideas of ancient manners. These, however (even in Sir Walter Scott), are precisely the most mouldering parts in the entire architecture, being always (as, for instance, in Ivanhoe) fantastic, caricatured, and betraying the true modern ground gleaming through the artificial tarnish of antiquity. All novels, in every language, are hurrying to decay; and hurrying by *internal* changes, were those all; but, in the mean time, the ever-

lasting life and fertility of the human mind is forever accelerating this hurry by *superseding* them, that is, by an external change. Old forms, fading from the interest, or even from the apprehension, have no chance at all as against new forms embodying the same passions. It is only in the grander passions of poetry, allying themselves with forms more abstract and permanent, that such a conflict of the old with the new is possible.

Note 6. Page 118.

It ought, by this time, to be known equally amongst governments and philosophers — that for the state to promise with sincerity the absorption of surplus labor, as fast as it accumulates, cannot be postulated as a duty, until it can first be demonstrated as a possibility. This was forgotten, however, by Mr. C., whose vehement complaints, that the arable field, without a ploughman, should be in one county, whilst in another county was the stout ploughman without a field ; and sometimes (which was worse still) that the surplus ploughmen should far outnumber the surplus fields, certainly proceeded on the secret assumption that all this was within the remedial powers of the state. The same doctrine was more openly avowed by various sections of our radicals, who (in their occasional insolent petitions to Parliament) many times asserted that one main use and function of a government was, to find work for everybody. At length (February and March, 1848) we see this doctrine solemnly adopted by a French body of rulers, self-appointed, indeed, or perhaps appointed by their wives, and so far sure, in a few weeks, to be answerable for nothing ; but, on the other hand, adopting it as a practical *undertaking*, in the lawyer's sense, and by no means as a mere gayety of rhetoric. Meantime, they themselves will be "broken" before they will have had time for being reproached with broken promises ; though neither fracture is likely to require much above the length of a quarantine.

Note 7. Page 119.

When writing this passage, we were not aware (as we now are) that Mr. Forster had himself noticed the case.

NOTE 8. Page 121.

His name began with A, and ended with N; there are but three more letters in the name, and if doubt arises upon our story, in the public mind, we shall publish them.

NOTE 9. Page 124.

If Addison died (as we think he did) in 1717, then, because Goldsmith commenced authorship in 1757, there would be forty years between the two periods. But, as it would be fairer to measure from the centre of Addison's literary career, that is, from 1707, the difference would be just half a century.

ALEXANDER POPE.*

EVERY great classic in our native language should from time to time be reviewed anew; and especially if he belongs in any considerable extent to that section of the literature which connects itself with manners; and if his reputation originally, or his style of composition, is likely to have been much influenced by the transient fashions of his own age. The withdrawal, for instance, from a dramatic poet, or a satirist, of any false lustre which he has owed to his momentary connection with what we may call the *personalities* of a fleeting generation, or of any undue shelter to his errors which may have gathered round them from political bias, or from intellectual infirmities amongst his partisans, will sometimes seriously modify, after a century or so, the fairest *original* appreciation of a fine writer. A window, composed of Claude Lorraine glasses, spreads over the landscape outside a disturbing effect, which not the most practised eye can evade. The *eidola theatri* effect us all. No man escapes the contagion from his contemporary bystanders. And the reader may see, further

* The Works of Pope, by Roscoe.

on, that, had Pope been merely a satiric poet, he must in these times have laid down much of the splendor which surrounds him in our traditional estimate of his merit. Such a renunciation would be a forfeit, not always to errors in himself, but sometimes to errors in that stage of English society, which forced the ablest writer into a collusion with its own meretricious tastes. The antithetical prose "characters," as they were technically termed, which circulated amongst the aristocracy in the early part of the last century, the style of the dialogue in such comedy as was then popular, and much of the occasional poetry in that age, expose an immoderate craving for glittering effects from contrasts too harsh to be natural, too sudden to be durable, and too fantastic to be harmonious. To meet this vicious taste, from which (as from any diffusive taste) it is vain to look for *perfect* immunity in any writer lying immediately under its beams, Pope sacrificed, in *one* mode of composition, the simplicities of nature and sincerity; and, had he practised no other mode, we repeat that *now* he must have descended from his pedestal. To some extent he is degraded even as it is; for the reader cannot avoid whispering to himself — what quality of thinking must *that* be which allies itself so naturally (as will be shown) with distortions of fact or of philosophic truth? But, had his whole writings been of that same cast, he must have been degraded altogether, and a star would have fallen from our English galaxy of poets.

We mention this particular case as a reason generally for renewing by intervals the examination of great writers, and liberating the verdict of their con-

temporaries from the casual disturbances to which every age is liable in its judgments, and in its tastes. As books multiply to an unmanageable excess, selection becomes more and more a necessity for readers, and the power of selection more and more a desperate problem for the busy part of readers. The possibility of selecting wisely is becoming continually more hopeless, as the necessity for selection is becoming continually more crying. Exactly as the growing weight of books overlays and stifles the power of comparison, *pari passu* is the call for comparison the more clamorous; and thus arises a duty correspondingly more urgent, of searching and revising until everything spurious has been weeded out from amongst the Flora of our highest literature; and until the waste of time for those who have so little at their command, is reduced to a *minimum*. For, where the good cannot be read in its twentieth part, the more requisite it is that no part of the bad should steal an hour of the available time; and it is not to be endured that people without a minute to spare, should be obliged first of all to read a book before they can ascertain whether it was at all *worth* reading. The public cannot read by proxy as regards the good which it is to appropriate, but it *can* as regards the poison which it is to escape. And thus, as literature expands, becoming continually more of a household necessity, the duty resting upon critics (who are the vicarious readers for the public) becomes continually more urgent — of reviewing all works that may be supposed to have benefited too much or too indiscriminately by the superstition of a name. The *prægustatores* should have tasted of every cup, and

reported its quality, before the public call for it; and above all, they should have done this in all cases of the higher literature — that is, of literature properly so called.

What is it that we mean by *literature?* Popularly, and amongst the thoughtless, it is held to include everything that is printed in a book. Little logic is required to disturb *that* definition; the most thoughtless person is easily made aware that in the idea of *literature* one essential element is, — some relation to a general and common interest of man, so that what applies only to a local, or professional, or merely personal interest, even though presenting itself in the shape of a book, will not belong to literature. So far the definition is easily narrowed; and it is as easily expanded. For not only is much that takes a station in books not literature; but, inversely, much that really *is* literature never reaches a station in books. The weekly sermons of Christendom, that vast pulpit literature which acts so extensively upon the popular mind, — to warn, to uphold, to renew, to comfort, to alarm, — does not attain the sanctuary of libraries in the ten thousandth part of its extent. The drama again, as, for instance, the finest of Shakspeare's plays in England, and all leading Athenian plays in the noontide of the Attic stage, operated as a literature on the public mind, and were (according to the strictest letter of that term) *published* through the audiences that witnessed[1] their representation some time before they were published as things to be read; and they were published in this scenical mode of publication with much more effect

than they could have had as books, during ages of costly copying or of costly printing.

Books, therefore, do not suggest an idea coëxtensive and interchangeable with the idea of literature; since much literature, scenic, forensic, or didactic (as from lecturers and public orators), may never come into books; and much that *does* come into books may connect itself with no literary interest. But a far more important correction, applicable to the common vague idea of literature, is to be sought — not so much in a better definition of literature, as in a sharper distinction of the two functions which it fulfils. In that great social organ, which collectively we call literature, there may be distinguished two separate offices that may blend and often *do* so, but capable severally of a severe insulation, and naturally fitted for reciprocal repulsion. There is, first, the literature of *knowledge*, and, secondly, the literature of *power*. The function of the first is, to *teach;* the function of the second is, to *move:* the first is a rudder, the second an oar or a sail. The first speaks to the *mere* discursive understanding; the second speaks ultimately, it may happen, to the higher understanding or reason, but always *through* affections of pleasure and sympathy. Remotely, it may travel towards an object seated in what Lord Bacon calls *dry* light; but proximately it does and must operate, else it ceases to be a literature of *power*, on and through that *humid* light which clothes itself in the mists and glittering *iris* of human passions, desires, and genial emotions. Men have so little reflected on the higher functions of literature, as to find it a paradox if one should describe it as a mean or subordinate purpose of

books to give information. But this is a paradox only in the sense which makes it honorable to be paradoxical. Whenever we talk in ordinary language of seeking information or gaining knowledge, we understand the words as connected with something of absolute novelty. But it is the grandeur of all truth which *can* occupy a very high place in human interests, that it is never absolutely novel to the meanest of minds: it exists eternally by way of germ or latent principle in the lowest as in the highest, needing to be developed but never to be planted. To be capable of transplantation is the immediate criterion of a truth that ranges on a lower scale. Besides which, there is a rarer thing than truth, namely, *power* or deep sympathy with truth. What is the effect, for instance, upon society, of children? By the pity, by the tenderness, and by the peculiar modes of admiration, which connect themselves with the helplessness, with the innocence, and with the simplicity of children, not only are the primal affections strengthened and continually renewed, but the qualities which are dearest in the sight of Heaven — the frailty, for instance, which appeals to forbearance, the innocence which symbolizes the heavenly, and the simplicity which is most alien from the worldly, are kept up in perpetual remembrance, and their ideals are continually refreshed. A purpose of the same nature is answered by the higher literature, namely, the literature of power. What do you learn from Paradise Lost? Nothing at all. What do you learn from a cookery-book? Something new, something that you did not know before, in every paragraph. But would you therefore put the wretched

cookery-book on a higher level of estimation than the divine poem? What you owe to Milton is not any knowledge, of which a million separate items are still but a million of advancing steps on the same earthly level; what you owe, is *power*, that is, exercise and expansion to your own latent capacity of sympathy with the infinite, where every pulse and each separate influx is a step upwards — a step ascending as upon a Jacob's ladder from earth to mysterious altitudes above the earth. *All* the steps of knowledge, from first to last, carry you further on the same plane, but could never raise you one foot above your ancient level of earth; whereas, the very *first* step in power is a flight — is an ascending into another element where earth is forgotten.

Were it not that human sensibilities are ventilated and continually called out into exercise by the great phenomena of infancy, or of real life as it moves through chance and change, or of literature as it recombines these elements in the mimicries of poetry, romance, &c., it is certain that, like any animal power or muscular energy falling into disuse, all such sensibilities would gradually droop and dwindle. It is in relation to these great *moral* capacities of man that the literature of power, as contradistinguished from that of knowledge, lives and has its field of action. It is concerned with what is highest in man; for the Scriptures themselves never condescended to deal by suggestion or coöperation, with the mere discursive understanding. When speaking of man in his intellectual capacity, the Scriptures speak not of the understanding, but of "*the understanding heart*," — making

the heart, that is, the great *intuitive* (or non-discursive) organ, to be the interchangeable formula for man in his highest state of capacity for the infinite. Tragedy romance, fairy tale, or epopee, all alike restore to man's mind the ideals of justice, of hope, of truth, of mercy, of retribution, which else (left to the support of daily life in its realities) would languish for want of sufficient illustration. What is meant, for instance, by *poetic justice?* — It does not mean a justice that differs by its object from the ordinary justice of human jurisprudence; for then it must be confessedly a very bad kind of justice; but it means a justice that differs from common forensic justice, by the degree in which it *attains* its object, a justice that is more omnipotent over its own ends, as dealing — not with the refractory elements of earthly life — but with elements of its own creation, and with materials flexible to its own purest preconceptions. It is certain that, were it not for the literature of power, these ideals would often remain amongst us as mere arid national forms whereas, by the creative forces of man put forth in literature, they gain a vernal life of restoration, and germinate into vital activities. The commonest novel, by moving in alliance with human fears and hopes, with human instincts of wrong and right, sustains and quickens those affections. Calling them into action, it rescues them from torpor. And hence the pre-eminency over all authors that merely *teach*, of the meanest that *moves;* or that teaches, if at all, indirectly *by* moving. The very highest work that has ever existed in the literature of knowledge is but a *provisional* work: a book upon trial and sufferance,

and *quamdiu bene se gesserit.* Let its teaching be even partially revised, let it be but expanded, nay, even let its teaching be but placed in a better order, and instantly it is superseded. Whereas the feeblest works in the literature of power, surviving at all, survive as finished and unalterable amongst men. For instance, the *Principia* of Sir Isaac Newton was a book *militant* on earth from the first. In all stages of its progress it would have to fight for its existence; first, as regards absolute truth; secondly, when that combat is over, as regards its form or mode of presenting the truth. And as soon as a La Place, or anybody else, builds higher upon the foundations laid by this book, effectually he throws it out of the sunshine into decay and darkness; by weapons won from this book he superannuates and destroys this book, so that soon the name of Newton remains, as a mere *nominis umbra*, but his book, as a living power, has transmigrated into other forms. Now, on the contrary, the Iliad, the Prometheus of Æschylus, — the Othello or King Lear, — the Hamlet or Macbeth, — and the Paradise Lost, are not militant but triumphant forever as long as the languages exist in which they speak or can be taught to speak. They never *can* transmigrate into new incarnations. To reproduce *these* in new forms, or variations, even if in some things they should be improved, would be to plagiarize. A good steam-engine is properly superseded by a better. But one lovely pastoral valley is not superseded by another, nor a statue of Praxiteles by a statue of Michael Angelo. These things are not separated by imparity, but by disparity. They are not thought of as unequal under

the same standard, but as different in *kind*, and as equal under a different standard. Human works of immortal beauty and works of nature in one respect stand on the same footing: they never absolutely repeat each other; never approach so near as not to differ; and they differ not as better and worse, or simply by more and less; they differ by undecipherable and incommunicable differences, that cannot be caught by mimicries, nor be reflected in the mirror of copies, nor become ponderable in the scales of vulgar comparison.

Applying these principles to Pope, as a representative of fine literature in general, we would wish to remark the claim which he has, or which any equal writer has, to the attention and jealous winnowing of those critics in particular who watch over public morals. Clergymen, and all the organs of public criticism put in motion by clergymen, are more especially concerned in the just appreciation of such writers, if the two canons are remembered, which we have endeavored to illustrate, namely, that all works in this class, as opposed to those in the literature of knowledge, first, work by far deeper agencies; and, secondly, are more permanent; in the strictest sense they are κτήματα ἐς ἀεί; and what evil they do, or what good they do, is commensurate with the national language, sometimes long after the nation has departed. At this hour, five hundred years since their creation, the tales of Chaucer,[2] never equalled on this earth for their tenderness, and for life of picturesqueness, are read familiarly by many in the charming language of their natal day, and by others in the modernizations of

Dryden, of Pope, and Wordsworth. At this hour, one thousand eight hundred years since their creation, the Pagan tales of Ovid, never equalled on this earth for the gayety of their movement and the capricious graces of their narrative, are read by all Christendom. This man's people and their monuments are dust; but *he* is alive: he has survived them, as he told us that he had it in his commission to do, by a thousand years; "and *shall* a thousand more."

All the literature of knowledge builds only ground nests, that are swept away by floods, or confounded by the plough; but the literature of power builds nests in aërial altitudes of temples sacred from violation, or of forests inaccessible to fraud. *This* is a great prerogative of the *power* literature; and it is a greater which lies in the mode of its influence. The *knowledge* literature, like the fashion of this world, passeth away. An Encyclopædia is its abstract; and, in this respect, it may be taken for its speaking symbol, that, before one generation has passed, an Encyclopædia is superannuated; for it speaks through the dead memory and unimpassioned understanding, which have not the *rest* of higher faculties, but are continually enlarging and varying their phylacteries. But all literature, properly so called — literature κατ' ἐξοχήν, for the very same reason that it is so much more durable than the literature of knowledge — is (and by the very same proportion it is) more intense and electrically searching in its impressions. The directions in which the tragedy of this planet has trained our human feelings to play, and the combinations into which the poetry of this planet has thrown our human

passions of love and hatred, of admiration and contempt, exercise a power bad or good over human life that cannot be contemplated, when stretching through many generations, without a sentiment allied to awe.[3] And of this let every one be assured — that he owes to the impassioned books which he has read, many a thousand more of emotions than he can consciously trace back to them. Dim by their origination, these emotions yet arise in him, and mould him through life like the forgotten incidents of childhood.

In making a revaluation of Pope, as regards some of his principal works, we should have been glad to examine more closely than we shall be able to do, some popular errors affecting his whole intellectual position; and especially these two: *first*, That he belonged to what is idly called the *French* School of our literature; *secondly*, That he was specially distinguished from preceding poets by *correctness*. The first error has infected the whole criticism of Europe. The Schlegels, with all their false airs of subtlety, fall into this error in discussing every literature of Christendom. But, if by a mere accident of life any poet *had* first turned his thoughts into a particular channel on the suggestion of some French book, *that* would not justify our classing what belongs to universal nature, and what *inevitably* arises at a certain stage of social progress, under the category of a French creation. Somebody must have been first in point of time upon every field; but this casual precedency establishes no title whatever to authority, or plea of original dominion over fields that lie within the inevitable line of march upon which nations are moving. Had it

happened that the first European writer on the higher geometry was a Græco-Sicilian, *that* would not have made it rational to call geometry the Græco-Sicilian Science. In *every* nation first comes the higher form of passion, next the lower. This is the mere order of nature in governing the movements of human intellect, as connected with social evolution; this is therefore the universal order, that in the earliest stages of literature, men deal with the great elementary grandeurs of passion, of conscience, of the will in self-conflict; they deal with the capital struggle of the human race in raising empires, or in overthrowing them — in vindicating their religion (as by crusades), or with the more mysterious struggles amongst spiritual races allied to our own, that have been dimly revealed to us. We have an Iliad, a Jerusalem Delivered, a Paradise Lost. These great subjects exhausted, or exhausted in their more inviting manifestations, inevitably by the mere endless motion of society, there succeeds a lower key of passion. Expanding social intercourse in towns, multiplied and crowded more and more, banishes those gloomier and grander phases of human history from literature. The understanding is quickened; the lower faculties of the mind — fancy, and the habit of minute distinction — are applied to the contemplation of society and manners. Passion begins to wheel in lower flights, and to combine itself with interests that in part are addressed to the insulated understanding — observing, refining, reflecting. This may be called the *minor* key of literature in opposition to the *major*, as cultivated by Shakspeare, Spenser, Milton. But this key arises spontaneously in *every*

people, and by a necessity as sure as any that moulds the progress of civilization. Milton and Spenser were *not* of any Italian school. Their Italian studies were the result and not the cause of the determination given to their minds by nature working in conjuction with their social period. It is equally childish to say of Dryden and Pope, that they belonged to any French school. That thing which they did, they *would* have done though France had been at the back of China. The school to which they belonged, was a school developed at a certain stage of progress in all nations alike by the human heart as modified by the human understanding. It is a school depending on the peculiar direction given to the sensibilities by the reflecting faculty, and by the new phases of society. Even as a fact (though a change as to the fact could not make any change at all in the philosophy of the case), it is not true that either Dryden or Pope was influenced by French literature. Both of them had a very imperfect acquaintance with the French language. Dryden ridiculed French literature; and Pope, except for some purposes connected with his Homeric translations, read as little of it as convenience would allow. But, had this been otherwise, the philosophy of the case stands good; that, after the primary formations of the fermenting intellect, come everywhere — in Thebes or Athens, France or England — the secondary; that, after the creating passion comes the reflecting and recombining passion; that after the solemnities and cloistral grandeurs of life — solitary and self-conflicting — comes the recoil of a self-observing and self-dissecting stage, derived from life social and gregarious. After the

Iliad, but doubtless many generations after, comes a Batrachomyomachia. After the gorgeous masque of our forefathers came always the anti-masque, that threw off echoes as from some devil's laughter in mockery of the hollow and transitory pomps that went before.

It is an error equally gross, and an error in which Pope himself participated, that his plume of distinction from preceding poets consisted in *correctness.* Correctness in what? Think of the admirable qualifications for settling the scale of such critical distinctions which that man must have had who turned out upon this vast world the single oracular word "correctness" to shift for itself, and explain its own meaning to all generations. Did he mean logical correctness in maturing and connecting thoughts? But of all poets that have practised reasoning in verse, Pope is the one most inconsequential in the deduction of his thoughts, and the most severely distressed in any effort to effect or to explain the dependency of their parts. There are not ten consecutive lines in Pope unaffected by this infirmity. All his thinking proceeded by insulated and discontinuous jets; and the only resource for *him*, or chance of even seeming correctness, lay in the liberty of stringing his aphoristic thoughts like pearls, having no relation to each other but that of contiguity. To *set* them like diamonds was for Pope to risk distraction; to systematize was ruin. On the other hand, if this elliptical word *correctness* is to be understood with such a complimentary qualification as would restrict it to Pope's use of *language*, that construction is even more untenable than the other — more conspicuously

untenable — for many are they who have erred by illogical thinking, or by distracted evolution of thoughts; but rare is the man amongst classical writers in any language who has disfigured his meaning more remarkably than Pope by imperfect expression. We do not speak of plebeian phrases, of exotic phrases, of slang, from which Pope was not free, though *more* free than many of his contemporaries. From vulgarism indeed he was shielded, though imperfectly, by the aristocratic society he kept: *they* being right, *he* was right; and he erred only in the cases where they misled him; for even the refinement of that age was oftentimes coarse and vulgar. His grammar, indeed, is often vicious: preterites and participles he constantly confounds, and registers this class of blunders forever by the cast-iron index of rhymes that never *can* mend. But worse than this mode of viciousness is his syntax, which is so bad as to darken his meaning at times, and at other times to defeat it. But these were errors cleaving to his times; and it would be unfair to exact from Pope a better quality of diction than belonged to his contemporaries. Still it is indisputable that a better model of diction and of grammar prevailed a century before Pope. In Spenser, in Shakspeare, in the Bible of King James' reign, and in Milton, there are very few grammatical errors.[4] But Pope's defect in language was almost peculiar to himself. It lay in an inability, nursed doubtless by indolence, to carry out and perfect the expression of the thought he wishes to communicate. The language does not realize the idea; it simply suggests or hints it. Thus, to give a single illustration: —

> "Know, God and Nature only are the same:
> In man the judgment shoots at flying game."

The first line one would naturally construe into this: that God and Nature were in harmony, whilst all other objects were scattered into incoherency by difference and disunion. Not at all; it means nothing of the kind; but that God and Nature only are exempted from the infirmities of change. *They* only continue uniform and self-consistent. This might mislead many readers; but the second line *must* do so; for who would not understand the syntax to be, that the judgment, as it exists in man, shoots at flying game? But, in fact, the meaning is, that the judgment, in aiming its calculations at man, aims at an object that is still on the wing, and never for a moment stationary. We give this as a specimen of a fault in diction, the very worst amongst all that are possible. To write bad grammar or colloquial slang does not necessarily obscure the sense; but a fault like this is a treachery, and hides the true meaning under the cloud of a conundrum; nay, worse; for even a conundrum has fixed conditions for determining its solution, but this sort of mutilated expression is left to the solutions of conjecture.

There are endless varieties of this fault in Pope, by which he sought relief for himself from half-an-hour's labor, at the price of utter darkness to his reader.

One editor distinguishes amongst the epistles that which Pope addressed to Lord Oxford some years after his fall, as about the most "*correct*, musical, dignified, and affecting," that the poet has left. Now, even as a specimen of vernacular English, it is con-

spicuously bad: the shocking gallicism, for instance, of "*attend*," for "wait his leisure," in the line, "For *him* (that is, on his behalf) thou oft hast bid the world attend," would alone degrade the verses. To bid the world attend — is to bid the world to listen attentively; whereas what Pope means is, that Lord Oxford bade the world wait in his ante-chamber, until he had leisure from his important conferences with a poet, to throw a glance upon affairs so trivial as those of the human race. This use of the word *attend* is a shocking violation of the English idiom; and even the slightest would be an unpardonable blemish in a poem of only forty lines, which ought to be polished as exquisitely as a cameo. It is a still worse disfiguration of the very same class, namely, a silent confession of defeat, in a regular wrestling match with the difficulties of a metrical expression, that the poem terminates thus -

> "Nor fears to tell that *Mortimer* is he."

Why *should* he fear? Really there is no very desperate courage required for telling the most horrible of secrets about Mortimer. Had Mortimer even been so wicked as to set the Thames on fire, safely it might have been published by Mortimer's bosom friend to all magistrates, sheriffs, and constables; for not a man of them would have guessed in what hiding-place to look for Mortimer, or who Mortimer might be. True it is, that a secondary earldom, conferred by Queen Anne upon Robert Harley, was that of Mortimer; but it lurked unknown to the public ear; it was a coronet that lay hid under the beams of *Oxford* — a title so long familiar to English ears, when descending

through six-and-twenty generations of de Veres. Quite as reasonable it would be in a birth-day ode to the Prince of Wales, if he were addressed as my Lord of Chester, or Baron of Renfrew, or your Grace of Cornwall. To express a thing in cipher may do for a conspirator; but a poet's *correctness* is shown in his intelligibility.

Amongst the early poems of Pope, the "ELOISA TO ABELARD" has a special interest of a double order First, it has a *personal* interest as the poem of Pope, because indicating the original destination of Pope's intellect, and the strength of his native vocation to a class of poetry in deeper keys of passion than any which he systematically cultivated. For itself also, and abstracting from its connection with Pope's natural destination, this poem has a *second* interest, an intrinsic interest, that will always make it dear to impassioned minds. The self-conflict — the flux and reflux of the poor agitated heart — the spectacle of Eloisa now bending penitentially before the shadowy austerities of a monastic future, now raving upon the remembrances of the guilty past — one moment reconciled by the very anguish of her soul to the grandeurs of religion and of prostrate adoration, the next moment revolting to perilous retrospects of her treacherous happiness — the recognition, by shining gleams through the very storm and darkness evoked by her earthly sensibilities, of a sensibility deeper far in its ground, and that trembled towards holier objects — the lyrical tumult of the changes, the hope, the tears, the rapture, the penitence, the despair — place the reader in tumultuous sympathy with the poor distracted nun.

Exquisitely imagined, among the passages towards the end, is the introduction of a voice speaking to Eloisa from the grave of some sister nun, that, in long-forgotten years, once had struggled and suffered like herself,

> "Once (like herself) that trembled, wept, and prayed,
> Love's victim then, though now a sainted maid."

Exquisite is the passage in which she prefigures a visit yet to come from Abelard to herself — no more in the character of a lover, but as a priest, ministering by spiritual consolation to her dying hours, pointing her thoughts to heaven, presenting the Cross to her through the mists of death, and fighting for her as a spiritual ally against the torments of flesh. That anticipation was not gratified. Abelard died long before her; and the hour never arrived for *him* of which with such tenderness she says, —

> "It will be *then* no crime to gaze on me."

But another anticipation *has* been fulfilled in a degree that she could hardly have contemplated; the anticipation, namely, —

> "That ages hence, when all her woes were o'er,
> And that rebellious heart should beat no more,"

wandering feet should be attracted from afar

> "To Paraclete's white walls and silver springs,"

as the common resting-place and everlasting marriage-bed of Abelard and Eloisa; that the eyes of many that had been touched by their story, by the memory of their extraordinary accomplishments in an age of

darkness, and by the calamitous issue of their attachment, should seek, first and last, for the grave in which the lovers trusted to meet again in peace; and should seek it with interest so absorbing, that even amidst the ascent of hosannas from the choir, amidst the grandeurs of high mass, the raising of the host, and "the pomp of dreadful sacrifice," sometimes these wandering eyes should steal aside to the solemn abiding-place of Abelard and his Eloisa, offering so pathetic a contrast, by its peaceful silence, to the agitations of their lives; and that there, amidst thoughts which by right were all due and dedicated

> "to Heaven,
> One *human* tear should drop and be forgiven."

We may properly close this subject of Abelard and Eloisa, by citing, in English, the solemn Latin inscription placed in the last century, six hundred years after their departure from earth, over their common remains. They were buried in the same grave, Abelard dying first by a few weeks more than twenty-one years; his tomb was opened again to admit the coffin of Eloisa; and the tradition at Quincey, the parish near Nogent-sur-Seine, in which the monastery of the Paraclete is situated, was, that at the moment of interment Abelard opened his arms to receive the impassioned creature that once had loved *him* so frantically, and whom *he* had loved with a remorse so memorable. The epitaph is singularly solemn in its brief simplicity, considering that it came from Paris, and from academic wits: "Here, under the same marble slab, lie the founder of this monastery, Peter

Abelard, and its earliest Abbess, Heloisa — once united in studies, in love, in their unhappy nuptial engagements, and in penitential sorrow; but now, our hope is, reünited forever in bliss."

The SATIRES of Pope, and what under another name *are* satires, namely, his MORAL EPISTLES, offer a second variety of evidence to his voluptuous indolence. They offend against philosophic truth more heavily than the Essay on Man; but not in the same way. The Essay on Man sins chiefly by want of central principle, and by want therefore of all coherency amongst the separate thoughts. But taken *as* separate thoughts, viewed in the light of fragments and brilliant aphorisms, the majority of the passages have a mode of truth; not of truth central and coherent, but of truth angular and splintered. The Satires, on the other hand, were of false origin. They arose in a sense of talent for caustic effects, unsupported by any satiric heart. Pope had neither the malice (except in the most fugitive form) which thirsts for leaving wounds, nor, on the other hand, the deep moral indignation which burns in men whom Providence has from time to time armed with scourges for cleansing the sanctuaries of truth and justice. He was contented enough with society as he found it; bad it might be, but it was good enough for *him*;—and it was the merest self-delusion if at any moment the instinct of glorying his sâtiric mission (the *magnificabo apostolatum meum*) persuaded him that in *his* case it might be said, *Facit indignatio versum.* The indignation of Juvenal was not always very noble in its origin, or pure in its purpose; it was sometimes mean in its quality, false in its direction, extravagant

in its expression; but it was tremendous in the roll of its thunders, and as withering as the scowl of a Mephistopheles. Pope, having no such internal principle of wrath boiling in his breast, being really (if one must speak the truth) in the most pacific and charitable frame of mind towards all scoundrels whatever, except such as might take it into their heads to injure a particular Twickenham grotto, was unavoidably a hypocrite of the first magnitude when he affected (or sometimes really conceited himself) to be in a dreadful passion with offenders as a body. It provokes fits of laughter, in a man who knows Pope's real nature, to watch him in the process of brewing the storm that spontaneously will not come; whistling, like a mariner, for a wind to fill his satiric sails; and pumping up into his face hideous grimaces in order to appear convulsed with histrionic rage. Pope should have been counselled never to write satire, except on those evenings when he was suffering horribly from indigestion. By this means the indignation would have been ready-made. The rancor against all mankind would have been sincere; and there would have needed to be no extra expense in getting up the steam. As it is, the short puffs of anger, the uneasy snorts of fury, in Pope's satires, give one painfully the feeling of a steam-engine with unsound lungs. Passion of any kind may become in some degree ludicrous, when disproportioned to its exciting occasions. But it is never entirely ludicrous, until it is self-betrayed as counterfeit. Sudden collapses of the manufactured wrath, sudden oblivion of the criminal, announce Pope's as *always* counterfeit.

Meantime insincerity is contagious. One falsehood

draws on another. And having begun by taking a station of moral censorship, which was in the uttermost degree a self-delusion, Pope went on to other self-delusions in reading history the most familiar, or in reporting facts the most notorious. Warburton had more to do with Pope's satires as an original suggester,[5] and not merely as a commentator, than with any other section of his works. Pope and he hunted in couples over this field; and those who know the absolute craziness of Warburton's mind, the perfect frenzy and *lymphaticus error* which possessed him for leaving all high-roads of truth and simplicity, in order to trespass over hedge and ditch after coveys of shy paradoxes, cannot be surprised that Pope's good sense should often have quitted him under such guidance. —— There is, amongst the earliest poems of Wordsworth, one which has interested many readers by its mixed strain of humor and tenderness. It describes two thieves who act in concert with each other. One is a very aged man, and the other is his great-grandson of three years old:

> "There are ninety good years of fair and foul weather
> Between them, and both go a stealing together."

What reconciles the reader to this social iniquity, is the imperfect accountability of the parties; the one being far advanced in dotage, and the other an infant. And thus

> "Into what sin soever the couple may fall,
> *This* child but half-knows it, and *that* not at all."

Nobody besides suffers from their propensities: since the child's mother makes good in excess all their

depredations; and nobody is duped for an instant by their gross attempts at fraud; for

> "Wherever they carry their plots and their wiles,
> Every face in the village is dimpled with smiles."

There was not the same disparity of years between Pope and Warburton as between old Daniel and his descendant in the third generation: Warburton was but ten years younger. And there was also this difference, that in the case of the two thieves neither was official ringleader; on the contrary, they took it turn about; great-grandpapa was ringleader to-day, and the little great-grandson to-morrow:

> "Each in his turn was both leader and led;"

whereas, in the connection of the two literary accomplices, the Doctor was latterly always the instigator to any outrage on good sense; and Pope, from mere habit of deference to the Doctor's theology and theological wig, as well as from gratitude for the Doctor's pugnacity in his defence (since Warburton really was as good as a bull-dog in protecting Pope's advance or retreat), followed with docility the leading of his reverend friend into any excess of folly. It is true that oftentimes in earlier days Pope had run into scrapes from his own heedlessness; and the Doctor had not the merit of suggesting the *escapade*, but only of defending it: which he always does (as sailors express it) "with a will;" for he never shows his teeth so much, or growls so ferociously, as when he suspects the case to be desperate. But in the satires, although the original absurdity comes forward in the text of Pope, and the Warburtonian note in defence is appar-

ently no more than an afterthought of the good Doctor in his usual style of threatening to cudgel anybody who disputes his friend's assertion ; yet sometimes the thought expressed and adorned by the poet had been prompted by the divine. This only can account for the savage crotchets, paradoxes, and conceits, which disfigure Pope's later edition of his satires.

Truth, even of the most appreciable order, truth of history, goes to wreck continually under the perversities of Pope's satire applied to celebrated men ; and as to the higher truth of philosophy, it was still less likely to survive amongst the struggles for striking effects and startling contrasts But worse are Pope's satiric sketches of women, as carrying the same outrages on good sense to a far greater excess ; and as these expose the false principles on which he worked more brightly, and have really been the chief ground of tainting Pope's memory with the reputation of a woman-hater (which he was *not*), they are worthy of separate notice.

It is painful to follow a man of genius through a succession of inanities descending into absolute nonsense, and of vulgarities sometimes terminating in brutalities. These are harsh words, but not harsh enough by half as applied to Pope's gallery of female portraits. What is the key to his failure ? It is simply that, throughout this whole satiric section, not one word is spoken in sincerity of heart, or with any vestige of self-belief. The case was one of those so often witnessed, where either the indiscretion of friends, or some impulse of erring vanity in the writer had put him upon undertaking a task in which he had

too little natural interest to have either thought upon it with originality, or observed upon it with fidelity. Sometimes the mere coercion of system drives a man into such a folly. He treats a subject which branches into A, B, and C. Having discussed A and B, upon which he really *had* something to offer, he thinks it necessary to integrate his work by going forward to C, on which he knows nothing at all, and, what is even worse, for which in his heart he cares nothing at all. Fatal is all falsehood. Nothing is so sure to betray a man into the abject degradation of self-exposure as pretending to a knowledge which he has not, or to an enthusiasm which is counterfeit. By whatever mistake Pope found himself pledged to write upon the characters of women, it was singularly unfortunate that he had begun by denying to women any characters at all.

> "Matter too soft a lasting mark to bear,
> And best distinguished by black, brown, or fair."

Well for *him* if he had stuck to that liberal doctrine: "Least said, soonest mended." And *much* he could not easily have said upon a subject that he had pronounced all but a nonentity. In Van Troil's work, or in Horrebow's, upon Iceland, there is a well-known chapter regularly booked in the index — *Concerning the Snakes of Iceland.* This is the title, the running rubric; and the body of the chapter consists of these words — "There *are* no snakes in Iceland." That chapter is soon studied, and furnishes very little opening for foot-notes or supplements. Some people have thought that Mr. Van T. might with advantage have amputated this unsnaky chapter on snakes; but at

least nobody can accuse him of forgetting his own extermination of snakes from Iceland, and proceeding immediately to describe such horrible snakes as eye had never beheld amongst the afflictions of the island. Snakes there are none, he had protested; and, true to his word, the faithful man never wanders into any description of Icelandic snakes. Not so our satiric poet. He, with Mahometan liberality, had denied characters, that is, souls, to women. "Most women," he says, "have no character at all;"[6] yet, for all that, finding himself pledged to treat this very subject of female characters, he introduces us to a museum of monsters in that department, such as few fancies could create, and no logic can rationally explain. What was he to do? He had entered upon a theme concerning which, as the result has shown, he had not one solitary thought — good, bad, or indifferent. Total bankruptcy was impending. Yet he was aware of a deep interest connected with this section of his satires; and, to meet this interest, he invented what was pungent, when he found nothing to record which was true.

It is a consequence of this desperate resource — this plunge into absolute fiction — that the true objection to Pope's satiric sketches of the other sex ought not to arise amongst women, as the people that suffered by his malice, but amongst readers generally, as the people that suffered by his fraud. He has promised one thing, and done another. He has promised a chapter in the zoology of nature, and he gives us a chapter in the fabulous zoology of the herald's college. A tigress is not much within ordinary experience, still

there *is* such a creature; and in default of a better choice, that is, of a choice settling on a more familiar object, we are content to accept a good description of a tigress. We are reconciled; but we are *not* reconciled to a description, however spirited, of a basilisk. A viper might do; but not, if you please, a dragoness or a harpy. The describer knows, as well as any of us the spectators know, that he is romancing; the *incredulus odi* overmasters us all; and we cannot submit to be detained by a picture which, according to the shifting humor of the poet, angry or laughing, as a lie, where it is not a jest, is an affront to the truth of nature, where it is not confessedly an extravagance of drollery. In a playful fiction, we can submit with pleasure to the most enormous exaggerations; but then they must be offered as such. These of Pope's are not *so* offered, but as serious portraits; and in that character they affect us as odious and malignant libels. The malignity was not real, as indeed nothing was real, but a condiment for hiding insipidity. Let us examine two or three of them, equally with a view to the possibility of the object described, and to the delicacy of the description.

> "How soft is Silia! fearful to offend;
> The frail one's advocate, the weak one's friend.
> To *her* Calista proved her conduct nice;
> And good Simplicius asks of *her* advice."

Here we have the general outline of Silia's character; not particularly striking, but intelligible. She has a suavity of disposition that accommodates itself to all infirmities. And the worst thing one apprehends in her is — falseness. People with such honeyed breath

for *present* frailties, are apt to exhale their rancor upon them when a little out of hearing. But really now this is no foible of Silia's. One likes her very well, and would be glad of her company to tea. For the dramatic reader knows who Calista is; and if Silia has indulgence for *her*, she must be a thoroughly tolerant creature. Where is her fault, then? You shall hear —

> "Sudden she storms! she raves! — You tip the wink,
> But spare your censure; Silia does *not* drink.
> All eyes may see from what the change arose:
> All eyes may see — (see what?) — a pimple on her nose."

Silia, the dulcet, is suddenly transformed into Silia the fury. But why? The guest replies to that question by *winking* at his fellow-guest; which most atrocious of vulgarities is expressed by the most odiously vulgar of phrases — he *tips* the wink — meaning to tip an insinuation that Silia is intoxicated. Not so, says the poet — drinking is no fault of hers — everybody may see [why not the winker then?] that what upsets her temper is a pimple on the nose. Let us understand you, Mr. Pope. A pimple! — what, do you mean to say that pimples jump up on ladies' faces at the unfurling of a fan? If they really *did* so in the twelfth of George II., and a lady, not having a pimple on leaving her dressing-room, might grow one whilst taking tea, then we think that a saint might be excused for storming a little. But how is it that the wretch who winks, does *not* see the pimple, the *causa teterrima* of the sudden wrath; and Silia, who has no looking-glass at her girdle, *does?* And then who is it

that Silia "storms" at — the company, or the pimple? If at the company, we cannot defend her; but if at the pimple — O, by all means — storm and welcome — she can't say anything worse than it deserves. Wrong or right, however, what moral does Silia illustrate more profound than this — that a particular lady, otherwise very amiable, falls into a passion upon suddenly finding her face disfigured? But then one remembers the song, "*My face is my fortune, sir, she said, sir, she said*" — it is a part of *every* woman's fortune, so long as she is young. Now, to find one's fortune dilapidating by changes so rapid as this — pimples rising as suddenly as April clouds — is far too trying a calamity, that a little fretfulness should merit either reproach or sneer. Dr. Johnson's opinion was, that the man who cared little for dinner, could not be reasonably supposed to care much for anything. More truly it may be said, that the woman who is reckless about her face must be an unsafe person to trust with a secret. But, seriously, what moral, what philosophic thought can be exemplified by a case so insipid, and so imperfectly explained as this? But we must move on

Next, then, let us come to the case of Narcissa: —

> "'Odious! in *woollen* ? [7] 'T would a saint provoke,'
> Were the last words that poor Narcissa spoke.
> 'No, let a charming chintz and Brussels lace
> Wrap my cold limbs and shade my lifeless face;
> One would not sure be frightful when one's dead:
> And, Betty, give this cheek a little red.'"

Well, what's the matter now? What's amiss with Narcissa, that a satirist must be called in to hold an inquest upon her corpse, and take Betty's evidence

against her mistress? Upon hearing any such question, Pope would have started up in the character (very unusual with *him*) of religious censor, and demanded whether one approved of a woman's fixing her last dying thought upon the attractions of a person so soon to dwell with darkness and worms? Was *that* right — to provide for coquetting in her coffin? Why no, not strictly right, its impropriety cannot be denied; but what strikes me even more is, the suspicion that it may be a lie. Be this as it may, there are two insurmountable objections to the case of Narcissa, even supposing it not fictitious — namely, first, that so far as it offends at all, it offends the religious sense, and not any sense of which satire takes charge; secondly, that without reference to the special functions of satire, *any* form of poetry whatever, or *any* mode of moral censure, concerns itself not at all with anomalies. If the anecdote of Narcissa were other than a fiction, then it was a case too peculiar and idiosyncratic to furnish a poetic illustration; neither moral philosophy nor poetry condescends to the monstrous or the abnormal; both one and the other deal with the catholic and the representative.

There is another *Narcissa* amongst Pope's tulip-beds of ladies, who is even more open to criticism — because offering not so much an anomaly in one single trait of her character, as an utter anarchy in all. *Flavia* and *Philomedé* again present the same multitude of features with the same absence of all central principle for locking them into unity. They must have been distracting to themselves, and they are distracting to us a century later. *Philomedé*, by the way,

stands for the second Duchess of Marlborough,[8] daughter of the great Duke. And these names lead us naturally to Sarah, the original, and (one may call her) the *historical* Duchess, who is libelled under the name of *Atossa.* This character amongst all Pope's satiric sketches has been celebrated the most, with the single exception of his *Atticus.* But the *Atticus* rested upon a different basis — it was true; and it was noble. Addison really *had* the infirmities of envious jealousy, of stimulated friendship, and of treacherous collusion with his friend's enemies — which Pope imputed to him under the happy parisyllabic name of Atticus; and the mode of imputation, the tone of expostulation — indignant as regarded Pope's own injuries, but yet full of respect for Addison, and even of sorrowful tenderness; all this in combination with the interest attached to a feud between two men so eminent, has sustained the *Atticus* as a classic remembrance in satiric literature. But the *Atossa* is a mere chaos of incompatibilities, thrown together as into some witch's cauldron. The witch, however, had sometimes an unaffected malignity, a sincerity of venom in her wrath, which acted chemically as a solvent for combining the heterogeneous ingredients in her kettle; whereas the want of truth and earnestness in Pope leaves the incongruities in his kettle of description to their natural incoherent operation on the reader. We have a great love for the great Duchess of Marlborough, though too young by a hundred years[9] or so to have been that true and faithful friend which, as contemporaries, we *might* have been.

What we love Sarah for, is partly that she has been

ill used by all subsequent authors, one copying from another a fury against her which even in the first of these authors was not real. And a second thing which we love is her very violence, qualified as it was. Sulphureous vapors of wrath rose up in columns from the crater of her tempestuous nature against him that *deeply* offended her, but she neglected petty wrongs. Wait, however, let the volcanic lava have time to cool, and all returned to absolute repose. It has been said that she did not write her own book. We are of a different opinion. The mutilations of the book were from other and inferior hands; but the main texture of the narrative and of the comments were, and must have been, from herself, since there could have been no adequate motive for altering them, and nobody else could have had the same motive for uttering them. It is singular that, in the case of the Duchess, as well as that of the Lady M. W. Montagu, the same two men, without concert, were the original aggressors amongst the *gens de plume*, namely, Pope, and subsequently Horace Walpole. Pope suffered more from his own libellous assault upon *Atossa*, through a calumny against him self rebounding from it, than *Atossa* could have done from the point-blank shot of fifty such batteries. The calumny circulated was, that he had been bribed by the Duchess with a thousand pounds to suppress the character — which of itself was bad enough; but, as the consummation of baseness, it was added, that after all, in spite of the bribe, he caused it to be published. This calumny we believe to have been utterly without foundation. It is repelled by Pope's character, incapable of any act so vile, and by his position, needing

no bribes. But what we wish to add, is that the calumny is equally repelled by Sarah's character, incapable of any propitiation so abject. Pope wanted no thousand pounds; but neither did Sarah want his clemency. *He* would have rejected the £1000 cheque with scorn; but *she* would have scorned to offer it. Pope cared little for Sarah; but Sarah cared less for Pope.

What *is* offensive, and truly so, to every generous reader, may be expressed in two items: first, not pretending to have been himself injured by the Duchess, Pope was in this instance meanly adopting some third person's malice, which sort of intrusion into other people's quarrels is a sycophantic act, even where it may not have rested upon a sycophantic motive; secondly, that even as a second-hand malice it is not sincere. More shocking than the malice is the self-imposture of the malice. In the very act of puffing out his cheeks like Æolus, with ebullient fury, and conceiting himself to be in a passion perfectly diabolic, Pope is really unmoved, or angry only by favor of dyspepsy; and at a word of kind flattery from Sarah, (whom he was quite the man to love), though not at the clink of her thousand guineas, he would have fallen at her feet, and kissed her beautiful hand with rapture. To enter a house of hatred as a junior partner, and to take the stock of malice at a valuation — (we copy from advertisements) — *that* is an ignoble act. But then how much worse in the midst of all this unprovoked wrath, real as regards the persecution which it meditates, but false as the flatteries of a slave in relation to its pretended grounds, for the spectator

to find its malice counterfeit, and the fury only a plagiarism from some personated fury in an opera!

There is no truth in Pope's satiric sketches of women — not even colorable truth; but, if there were, how frivolous, how hollow, to erect into solemn monumental protestations against the whole female sex what, if examined, turn out to be pure casual eccentricities, or else personal idiosyncrasies, or else foibles shockingly caricatured, but, above all, to be such foibles as could not have connected themselves with *sincere* feelings of indignation in any rational mind!

The length and breadth (almost we might say, the *depth*) of the shallowness, which characterizes Pope's Philosophy, cannot be better reflected than from the four well-known lines —

> "For modes of faith let graceless zealots fight,
> *His* can't be wrong, whose life is in the right:
> For forms of government let fools contest,
> Whate'er is best administered is best."

In the first couplet, what Pope says is, that a life, which is irreproachable on a *human* scale of appreciation, neutralizes and practically cancels all possible errors of creed, opinion, or theory. But this schism between the moral life of man and his moral faith, which takes for granted that either may possibly be true, whilst the other is entirely false, can wear a moment's plausibility only by understanding *life* in so limited a sense as the sum of a man's external actions, appreciable by man. He whose life is in the right, cannot, says Pope, in any sense calling for blame, have a wrong faith; that is, if his life *were* right, his creed might be disregarded. But the answer is — that

his life, according to any adequate idea of life in a moral creature, *cannot* be in the right unless in so far as it bends to the influences of a true faith. How feeble a conception must that man have of the infinity which lurks in a human spirit, who can persuade himself that its total capacities of life are exhaustible by the few gross *acts* incident to social relations or open to human valuation! An act, which may be necessarily limited and without opening for variety, may involve a large variety of motives — motives again, meaning grounds of action that are distinctly recognized for such, may (numerically speaking) amount to nothing at all when compared with the absolutely infinite influxes of feeling or combination of feeling that vary the thoughts of man; and the true internal *acts* of moral man are his thoughts, his yearnings, his aspirations, his sympathies, his repulsions of heart. This is the life of man as it is appreciable by heavenly eyes. The scale of an alphabet, how narrow is that! Four or six and twenty letters, and all is finished. Syllables range through a wider compass. Words are yet more than syllables. But what are words to thoughts? Every word has a thought corresponding to it, so that not by so much as one solitary counter can the words outrun the thoughts. But every thought has *not* a word corresponding to it; so that the thoughts may outrun the words by many a thousand counters. In a developed nature they *do* so. But what are the thoughts when set against the modifications of thoughts by feelings, hidden even from him that feels them, or against the inter-combinations of such modifications with others — complex with com

plex, decomplex with decomplex — these can be unravelled by no human eye! This is the infinite music that God only can read upon the vast harp of the human heart. Some have fancied that musical combinations might be exhausted. A new Mozart might be impossible. All that he could do might already have been done. Music laughs at *that*, as the sea laughs at palsy for its billows, as the morning laughs at old age and wrinkles for itself. But a harp, though a world in itself, is but a narrow world by comparison with the world of a human heart.

Now these thoughts, tinctured subtly with the perfume and coloring of human affections, make up the sum of what merits κατ' ἐξοχὴν the name of *life;* and these in a vast proportion depend for their possibilities of truth upon the degree of approach which the thinker makes to the appropriation of a pure faith. A man is thinking all day long, and putting thoughts into words; he is acting comparatively seldom. But are any man's thoughts brought into conformity with the openings to truth that a faith like the Christian's faith suggests? Far from it. Probably there never was one thought, from the foundation of the earth, that has passed through the mind of man, which did not offer some blemish, some sorrowful shadow of pollution, when it came up for review before a heavenly tribunal; that is, supposing it a thought entangled at all with human interests or human passions. But it is the *key* in which the thoughts move, that determines the stage of moral advancement. So long as we are human, many among the numerous and evanescent elements that enter (half-observed or not observed at all) into

our thoughts, cannot *but* be tainted. But the governing, the predominant element it is which gives the character and the tendency to the thought; and this must become such, must become a governing element, through the quality of the ideals deposited in the heart by the quality of the religious faith. One pointed illustration of this suggests itself from another poem of Pope's, in which he reiterates his shallow doctrine. In his Universal Prayer he informs us that it can matter little whether we pray to Jehovah or to Jove, so long as in either case we pray to the First Cause. To contemplate God under that purely ontological relation to the world, would have little more operative value for what is most important in man, than if he prayed to gravitation. And it would have been more honest in Pope to say, as virtually he has said in the couplet under examination, that it can matter little whether man prays at all to any being. It deepens the scandal of this sentiment, coming from a poet professing Christianity, that a clergyman (holding preferment in the English Church) namely, Dr. Joseph Warton, justifies Pope for this Pagan opinion, upon the ground that an ancient philosopher had uttered the same opinion long before. What sort of philosopher? A Christian? No; but a Pagan. What then is the value of the justification? To a Pagan it could be no blame that he should avow a reasonable Pagan doctrine. In Irish phrase, it was "true for *him*." Amongst gods that were all utterly alienated from any scheme of moral government, all equally remote from the executive powers for sustaining such a government, so long as there was a practical anarchy

and rivalship amongst themselves, there could be no sufficient reason for addressing vows to one rather than to another. The whole pantheon collectively could do nothing for moral influences; *à fortiori*, no separate individual amongst them. Pope indirectly confesses this elsewhere by his own impassioned expression of Christian feelings, though implicitly denying it here by his mere understanding. For he reverberates elsewhere, by deep echoes, that power in Christianity, which even in a legendary tale he durst not on mere principles of good sense and taste have ascribed to Paganism. For instance, how could a God, having no rebellion to complain of in man, pretend to any occasion of large forgiveness of man or of framing means for reconciling this forgiveness with his own attribute of perfect holiness? What room, therefore, for ideals of mercy, tenderness, long-suffering, under any Pagan religion, under any worship of Jove! How again from gods, disfigured by fleshly voluptuousness in every mode, could any countenance be derived to an awful ideal of purity? Accordingly we find, that even among the Romans (the most advanced, as regards moral principle, of all heathen nations) neither the deep fountain of benignity, nor that of purity, was unsealed in man's heart. So much of either was sanctioned as could fall within the purposes of the magistrate, but beyond that level neither fountain could have been permitted to throw up its column of water, nor could in fact have had any impulse to sustain it in ascending; and not merely because it would have been repressed by ridicule as a deliration of the human mind, but also

because it would have been frowned upon gravely by the very principle of the Roman polity, as wandering away from *civic* objects. Even for so much of these great restorative ventilations as Rome enjoyed, she was indebted not to her religion, but to elder forces that act *in spite of* her religion, namely, the original law written upon the human heart. Now, on the other hand, Christianity has left a separate system of ideals amongst men, which (as regards their development) are continually growing in authority. Waters, after whatever course of wandering, rise to the level of their original springs. Christianity lying so far above all other fountains of religious influence, no wonder that its irrigations rise to altitudes otherwise unknown, and from which the distribution to every level of society becomes comparatively easy. Those men are reached oftentimes — choosing or not choosing — by the healing streams, who have not sought them nor even recognized them. Infidels of the most determined class talk in Christian lands the morals of Christianity, and exact that morality with their hearts, constantly mistaking it for a morality coëxtensive with man; and why? Simply from having been moulded unawares by its universal pressure through infancy, childhood, manhood, in the nursery, in the school, in the market-place. Pope himself, not by system or by affectation an infidel, not in any coherent sense a doubter, but a careless and indolent assenter to such doctrines of Christianity as his own Church prominently put forward, or as social respectability seemed to enjoin, — Pope, therefore, so far a very lukewarm Christian, was yet unconsciously to himself searched

profoundly by the Christian types of purity. This we may read in his

> " Hark, the herald angels say,
> Sister spirit, come away ! "

Or, again, as some persons read the great lessons of spiritual ethics more pathetically in those that have transgressed them, than in those that have been faithful to the end, — read them in the Magdalen that fades away in penitential tears rather than in the virgin martyr triumphant on the scaffold, — we may see in his own Eloisa, and in her fighting with the dread powers let loose upon her tempestuous soul, how profoundly Pope also had drunk from the streams of Christian sentiment through which a new fountain of truth had ripened a new vegetation upon earth. What was it that Eloisa fought with? What power afflicted her trembling nature, that any Pagan religions *could* have evoked? The human love, " the nympholepsy of the fond despair," might have existed in a Vestal Virgin of ancient Rome; but in the Vestal what counter-influence could have come into conflict with the passion of love through any operation whatever of religion? None of any ennobling character that could reach the Vestal's own heart. The way in which religion connected itself with the case was through a traditional superstition, not built upon any fine spiritual sense of female chastity as dear to Heaven, but upon a gross fear of alienating a tutelary goddess by offering an imperfect sacrifice. This sacrifice, the sacrifice of the natural household[10] charities in a few injured women on the altar of the goddess, was selfish in all

its stages — selfish in the dark deity that could be pleased by the sufferings of a human being simply *as* sufferings, and not at all under any fiction that they were voluntary ebullitions of religious devotion — selfish in the senate and people who demanded these sufferings as a ransom paid through sighs and tears for *their* ambition — selfish in the Vestal herself, as sustained altogether by fear of a punishment too terrific to face, sustained therefore by the meanest principle in her nature. But in Eloisa how grand is the collision between deep religious aspirations and the persecuting phantoms of her undying human passion! The Vestal feared to be walled up alive — abandoned to the pangs of hunger — to the trepidations of darkness — to the echoes of her own lingering groans — to the torments perhaps of frenzy rekindling at intervals the decaying agonies of flesh. Was *that* what Eloisa feared? Punishment she had none to apprehend. The crime was past, and remembered only by the criminals. There was none to accuse but herself; there was none to judge but God. Wherefore should Eloisa fear? Wherefore and with what should she fight? She fought by turns against herself and against God, against her human nature, and against her spiritual yearnings. How grand were the mysteries of her faith, how gracious and forgiving its condescensions! How deep had been her human love, how imperishable its remembrance on earth! "What is it," the Roman Vestal would have said, "that this Christian lady is afraid of? What is the phantom that she seems to see?" Vestal! it is not fear, but grief. She sees an immeasurable heaven that seems to touch her eyes; so

near is she to its love. Suddenly, an Abelard — the glory of his race — appears, that seems to touch her lips. The heavens recede and diminish to a starry point twinkling in an unfathomable abyss; they are all but lost for *her*. Fire, it is, in Eloisa, that searches fire; the holy that fights with the earthly; fire that cleanses with fire that consumes. Like cavalry the two fires wheel and counterwheel, advancing and retreating, charging and countercharging through and through each other. Eloisa trembles, but she trembles as a guilty creature before a tribunal unveiled within the secrecy of her own nature. There was no such trembling in the heathen worlds, for there was no such secret tribunal. Eloisa fights with a shadowy enemy. There was no such fighting for Roman Vestals; because all the temples of our earth (which is the crowned Vesta), no, nor all the glory of her altars, nor all the pomp of her cruelties, could cite from the depths of a human spirit any such fearful shadow as Christian faith evokes from an afflicted conscience.

Pope, therefore, wheresoever his heart speaks loudly, shows how deep had been his early impressions from Christianity. That is shown in his intimacy with Crashaw, in his Eloisa, in his Messiah, in his adaptation to Christian purposes of the Dying Adrian, &c. It is remarkable, also, that Pope betrays, in all places where he has occasion to *argue* about Christianity, how much grander and more faithful to that great theme were the subconscious perceptions of his heart than the explicit commentaries of his understanding. He, like so many others, was unable to read or interpret the testimonies of his own heart, which is a deep over which diviner

agencies brood than are legible to the intellect. The cipher written on his Heaven-visited heart was deeper than his understanding could interpret.

If the question were asked, What ought to have been the best among Pope's poems? most people would answer, the *Essay on Man.* If the question were asked, What *is* the worst? all people of judgment would say, the *Essay on Man.* Whilst yet in its rudiments, this poem claimed the first place by the promise of its subject; when finished, by the utter failure of its execution, it fell into the last. The case possesses a triple interest — first, as illustrating the character of Pope modified by his situation; secondly, as illustrating the true nature of that "didactic" poetry to which this particular poem is usually referred; thirdly, as illustrating the anomalous condition to which a poem so grand in its ambition has been reduced by the double disturbance of its proper movement; one disturbance through the position of Pope, another through his total misconception of didactic poetry. First, as regards Pope's situation, it may seem odd — but it is not so — that a man's social position should overrule his intellect. The scriptural denunciation of riches, as a snare to any man that is striving to rise above worldly views, applies not at all less to the intellect, and to any man seeking to ascend by some aërial arch of flight above ordinary intellectual efforts. Riches are fatal to those continuities of energy without which there is no success of that magnitude. Pope had £800 a year. *That* seems not so much. No, certainly not, with a wife and six children; but by accident Pope had no wife and no children. He was

luxuriously at his ease: and this accident of his position in life fell in with a constitutional infirmity that predisposed him to indolence. Even his religious faith, by shutting him out from those public employments which else his great friends would have been too happy to obtain for him, aided his idleness, or sometimes invested it with a false character of conscientious self-denial. He cherished his religion confessedly as a plea for idleness. The result of all this was, that in his habits of thinking and of study (if *study* we can call a style of reading so desultory as *his*), Pope became a pure *dilettante;* in his intellectual eclecticism he was a mere epicure, toying with the delicacies and varieties of literature; revelling in the first bloom of moral speculations, but sated immediately; fastidiously retreating from all that threatened labor, or that exacted continuous attention; fathoming, throughout all his vagrancies amongst books, no foundation; filling up no chasms; and with all his fertility of thought expanding no germs of new life.

This career of luxurious indolence was the result of early luck which made it possible, and of bodily constitution which made it tempting. And when we remember his youthful introduction to the highest circles in the metropolis, where he never lost his footing, we cannot wonder that, without any sufficient motive for resistance, he should have sunk passively under his constitutional propensities, and should have fluttered amongst the flower-beds of literature or philosophy far more in the character of a libertine butterfly for casual enjoyment, than of a hard-working bee pursuing a premeditated purpose.

Such a character, strengthened by such a situation, would at any rate have disqualified Pope for composing a work severely philosophic, or where philosophy did more than throw a colored light of pensiveness upon some sentimental subject. If it were necessary that the philosophy should enter substantially into the very texture of the poem, furnishing its interest and prescribing its movement, in that case Pope's combining and theorizing faculty would have shrunk as from the labor of building a pyramid. And woe to him where it did *not*, as really happened in the case of the Essay on Man. For his faculty of execution was under an absolute necessity of shrinking in horror from the enormous details of such an enterprise to which so rashly he had pledged himself. He was sure to find himself, as find himself he did, landed in the most dreadful embarrassment upon reviewing his own work. A work, which, when finished, was not even begun; whose arches wanted their key-stones; whose parts had no coherency; and whose pillars, in the very moment of being thrown open to public view, were already crumbling into ruins. This utter prostration of Pope in a work so ambitious as an Essay on Man — a prostration predetermined from the first by the personal circumstances which we have noticed — was rendered still more irresistible in the *second* place by the general misconception in which Pope shared as to the very meaning of "didactic" poetry. Upon which point we pause to make an exposition of our own views.

What *is* didactic poetry? What does "didactic" mean when applied as a distinguishing epithet to such

an idea as a poem? The predicate destroys the subject. It is a case of what logicians call *contradictio in adjecto* — the unsaying by means of an attribute the very thing which is the subject of that attribute you have just affirmed. No poetry can have the function of teaching. It is impossible that a variety of species should contradict the very purpose which contradistinguishes its *genus*. The several species differ partially; but not by the whole idea which differentiates their class. Poetry, or any one of the fine arts (all of which alike speak through the genial nature of man and his excited sensibilities), can teach only as nature teaches, as forests teach, as the sea teaches, as infancy teaches, namely, by deep impulse, by hieroglyphic suggestion. Their teaching is not direct or explicit, but lurking, implicit, masked in deep incarnations. To teach formally and professedly, is to abandon the very differential character and principle of poetry. If poetry could condescend to teach anything, it would be truths moral or religious. But even these it can utter only through symbols and actions. The great moral, for instance, the last result of the Paradise Lost, is once formally announced; but it teaches itself only by diffusing its lesson through the entire poem in the total succession of events and purposes; and even this succession teaches it only when the whole is gathered into unity by a reflex act of meditation; just as the pulsation of the physical heart can exist only when all the parts in an animal system are locked into one organization.

To address the *insulated* understanding is to lay aside the Prospero's robe of poetry. The objection,

therefore, to didactic poetry, as vulgarly understood, would be fatal, even if there were none but this logical objection derived from its definition. To be in self-contradiction is, for any idea whatever, sufficiently to destroy itself. But it betrays a more obvious and practical contradiction when a little searched. If the true purpose of a man's writing a didactic poem were to teach, by what suggestion of idiocy should he choose to begin by putting on fetters? Wherefore should the simple man volunteer to handcuff and manacle himself, were it only by the incumbrances of metre, and perhaps of rhyme? But these he will find the very least of his incumbrances. A far greater exists in the sheer necessity of omitting in any poem a vast variety of details, and even capital sections of the subject, unless they will bend to purposes of ornament. Now this collision between two purposes, the purpose of use in mere teaching, and the purpose of poetic delight, shows, by the uniformity of its solution, which is the true purpose, and which the merely ostensible purpose. Had the true purpose been instruction, the moment that this was found incompatible with a poetic treatment, as soon as it was seen that the sound education of the reader-pupil could not make way without loitering to gather poetic flowers, the stern cry of "duty" would oblige the poet to remember that he had dedicated himself to a didactic mission, and that he differed from other poets, as a monk from other men, by his vows of self-surrender to harsh ascetic functions. But, on the contrary, in the very teeth of this rule, wherever such a collision does really take place, and one or other of the supposed objects must give way, it is always the

vulgar object of *teaching* (the pedagogue's object, which goes to the rear, whilst the higher object of poetic emotion moves on triumphantly. In reality not one didactic poet has ever yet attempted to use any parts or processes of the particular art which he made his theme, unless in so far as they seemed susceptible of poetic treatment, and only *because* they seemed so. Look at the poem of *Cyder*, by Philips, of the *Fleece* of Dyer, or (which is a still weightier example) at the *Georgics* of Virgil, — does any of these poets show the least anxiety for the correctness of your principles, or the delicacy of your manipulations in the worshipful arts they affect to teach ? No ; but they pursue these arts through every stage that offers any attractions of beauty. And in the very teeth of all anxiety for teaching, if there existed traditionally any very absurd way of doing a thing which happened to be eminently picturesque, and if, opposed to this, there were some improved mode that had recommended itself to poetic hatred by being dirty and ugly, the poet (if a good one) would pretend never to have heard of this disagreeable improvement. Or if obliged, by some rival poet, not absolutely to ignore it, he would allow that such a thing could be done, but hint that it was hateful to the Muses or Graces, and very likely to breed a pestilence.

This subordination of the properly didactic function to the poetic, which, leaving the old essential distinction of poetry (namely, its sympathy with the genial motions of man's heart) to override all accidents of special variation, and showing that the essence of poetry never *can* be set aside by its casual modifica-

tions, will be compromised by some loose thinkers, under the idea that in didactic poetry the element of instruction is in fact one element, though subordinate and secondary. Not at all. What we are denying is, that the element of instruction enters *at all* into didactic poetry. The subject of the Georgics, for instance, is Rural Economy as practised by Italian farmers; but Virgil not only *omits* altogether innumerable points of instruction insisted on as articles of religious necessity by Varro, Cato, Columella, &c., but, even as to those instructions which he *does* communicate, he is careless whether they are made technically intelligible or not. He takes very little pains to keep you from capital mistakes in *practising* his instructions; but he takes good care that you shall not miss any strong impression for the eye or the heart to which the rural process, or rural scene, may naturally lead. He pretends to give you a lecture on farming, in order to have an excuse for carrying you all round the beautiful farm. He pretends to show you a good plan for a farm-house, as the readiest means of veiling his impertinence in showing you the farmer's wife and her rosy children. It is an excellent plea for getting a peep at the bonny milk-maids to propose an inspection of a model dairy. You pass through the poultry-yard, under whatever pretence, in reality to see the peacock and his harem. And so on to the very end, the pretended instruction is but in secret the connecting tie which holds together the laughing flowers going off from it to the right and to the left; whilst if ever at intervals this prosy thread of pure didactics is brought forward more obtrusively, it is so by way of foil, to

make more effective upon the eye the prodigality of the floral magnificence.

We affirm, therefore, that the didactic poet is so far from seeking even a secondary or remote object in the particular points of information which he may happen to communicate, that much rather he would prefer the having communicated none at all. We will explain ourselves by means of a little illustration from Pope, which will at the same time furnish us with a miniature type of what we ourselves mean by a didactic poem, both in reference to what it *is* and to what it is *not*. In the Rape of the Lock there is a game at cards played, and played with a brilliancy of effect and felicity of selection, applied to the circumstances, which make it a sort of gem within a gem. This game was not in the first edition of the poem, but was an afterthought of Pope's, labored therefore with more than usual care. We regret that *ombre*, the game described, is no longer played, so that the entire skill with which the mimic battle is fought cannot be so fully appreciated as in Pope's days. The strategics have partly perished, which really Pope ought not to complain of, since he suffers only as Hannibal, Marius, Sertorius, suffered before him. Enough, however, survives of what will tell its own story. For what is it, let us ask, that a poet has to do in such a case, supposing that he were disposed to weave a didactic poem out of a pack of cards, as Vida has out of the chess-board? In describing any particular game, he does not seek to *teach* you that game — he postulates it as *already* known to you — but he relies upon separate resources. First, he will revive in the reader's eye, for picturesque effect,

the well-known personal distinctions of the several kings, knaves, &c., their appearances and their powers. Secondly, he will choose some game in which he may display a happy selection applied to the chances and turns of fortune, to the manœuvres, to the situations of doubt, of brightening expectation, of sudden danger, of critical deliverance, or of final defeat. The interest of a war will be rehearsed — *lis est de paupere regno* — that is true; but the depth of the agitation on such occasions, whether at chess, at draughts, or at cards, is not measured of necessity by the grandeur of the stake; he selects, in short, whatever fascinates the eye or agitates the heart by mimicry of life; but so far from *teaching*, he presupposes the reader already *taught*, in order that he may go along with the movement of the descriptions.

Now, in treating a subject so vast, indeed so inexhaustible, as man, this eclecticism ceases to be possible. Every part depends upon every other part. In such a *nexus* of truths to insulate is to annihilate. Severed from each other the parts lose their support, their coherence, their very meaning; you have no liberty to reject or to choose. Besides, in treating the ordinary themes proper for what is called didactic poetry, — say, for instance, that it were the art of rearing silk-worms or bees, or suppose it to be horticulture, landscape-gardening, hunting, or hawking, — rarely does there occur anything polemic; or if a slight controversy *does* arise, it is easily hushed asleep — it is stated in a line, it is answered in a couplet. But in the themes of Lucretius and Pope *everything* is polemic; you move only through dispute, you pros-

per only by argument and never-ending controversy There is not positively one capital proposition or doctrine about man, about his origin, his nature, his relations to God, or his prospects, but must be fought for with energy, watched at every turn with vigilance, and followed into endless mazes, not under the choice of the writer, but under the inexorable dictation of the argument.

Such a poem, so unwieldy, whilst at the same time so austere in its philosophy, together with the innumerable polemic parts essential to its good faith and even to its evolution, would be absolutely unmanageable from excess and from disproportion, since often a secondary demur would occupy far more space than a principled section. Here lay the impracticable dilemma for Pope's Essay on Man. To satisfy the demands of the subject, was to defeat the objects of poetry. To evade the demands in the way that Pope has done, is to offer us a ruin for a palace. The very same dilemma existed for Lucretius, and with the very same result. The *De Rerum Naturâ* (which might, agreeably to its theme, have been entitled *De Omnibus Rebus*), and the Essay on Man (which might equally have borne the Lucretian title *De Rerum Naturâ*), are both, and from the same cause, fragments that could not have been completed. Both are accumulations of diamond-dust without principles of coherency. In a succession of pictures, such as usually form the materials of didactic poems, the slightest thread of interdependency is sufficient. But, in works essentially and everywhere argumentative and polemic, to omit the connecting links, as often as they are insusceptible

of poetic effect, is to break up the unity of the parts, and to undermine the foundations, in what expressly offers itself as a systematic and architectural whole Pope's poem has suffered even more than that of Lucretius from this want of cohesion. It is indeed the realization of anarchy; and one amusing test of this may be found in the fact that different commentators have deduced from it the very opposite doctrines. In some instances this apparent antinomy is doubtful, and dependent on the ambiguities or obscurities of the expression. But in others it is fairly deducible; and the cause lies in the elliptical structure of the work. The ellipsis, or (as sometimes it may be called) the chasm, may be filled up in two different modes essentially hostile; and he that supplies the *hiatus*, in effect determines the bias of the poem this way or that — to a religious or to a sceptical result. In this edition the commentary of Warburton has been retained, which ought certainly to have been dismissed. The Essay is, in effect, a Hebrew word with the vowel-points omitted; and Warburton supplies one set of vowels, whilst Crousaz with equal right supplies a contradictory set.

As a whole, the edition before us is certainly the most agreeable of all that we possess. The fidelity of Mr. Roscoe to the interests of Pope's reputation, contrasts pleasingly with the harshness at times of Bowles, and the reckless neutrality of Warton. In the editor of a great classic, we view it as a virtue, wearing the grace of loyalty, that he should refuse to expose frailties or defects in a spirit of exultation. Mr. Roscoe's own notes are written with a peculiar good

sense, temperance, and kind feeling. The only objection to them, which applies, however, still more to the notes of the former editors, is the want of compactness. They are not written under that austere instinct of compression and verbal parsimony, as the ideal merit in an annotator, which ought to govern all such ministerial labors in our days. Books are becoming too much the oppression of the intellect, and cannot endure any longer the accumulation of undigested commentaries, or that species of diffusion in editors which roots itself in laziness. The efforts of condensation and selection are painful; and they are luxuriously evaded by reprinting indiscriminately whole masses of notes — though often in substance reiterating each other. But the interests of readers clamorously call for the amendment of this system. The principle of selection must now be applied even to the *text* of great authors. It is no longer advisable to reprint the whole of either Dryden or Pope. Not that we would wish to see their works mutilated. Let such as are selected be printed in the fullest integrity of the text. But some have lost their interest;[11] others, by the elevation of public morals since the days of those great wits, are felt to be now utterly unfit for general reading. Equally for the reader's sake and the poet's, the time has arrived when they may be advantageously retrenched; for they are painfully at war with those feelings of entire and honorable esteem with which all lovers of exquisite intellectual brilliancy must wish to surround the name and memory of Pope.

NOTES.

Note 1. Page 150.

Charles I., for example, when Prince of Wales, and many others in his father's court, gained their known familiarity with Shakspeare — not through the original quartos, so slenderly diffused, nor through the first folio of 1623, but through the court representations of his chief dramas at Whitehall.

Note 2. Page 156.

The Canterbury Tales were not made public until 1380, or thereabouts; but the composition must have cost thirty or more years; not to mention that the work had probably been finished for some years before it was divulged.

Note 3. Page 158.

The reason why the broad distinctions between the two literatures of power and knowledge so little fix the attention, lies in the fact, that a vast proportion of books — history, biography, travels, miscellaneous essays, &c.— lying in a middle zone, confound these distinctions by interblending them. All that we call "amusement" or "entertainment," is a diluted form of the power belonging to passion, and also a mixed form; and where threads of direct *instruction* intermingle in the texture with these threads of *power*, this absorption of the duality into one representative *nuance* neutralizes the separate perception of either. Fused into a *tertium quid*,

or neutral state, they disappear to the popular eye as the repelling forces, which in fact they are.

Note 4. Page 162.

And this purity of diction shows itself in many points arguing great vigilance of attention, and also great anxiety for using the language powerfully as the most venerable of traditions, when treating the most venerable of subjects. For instance, the Bible never condescends to the mean colloquial preterites of *chid* for *did chide*, or *writ* for *did write*, but always uses the full-dress word *chode*, and *wrote*. Pope might have been happier had he read his Bible more; but assuredly he would have improved his English. A question naturally arises, how it was that the elder writers — Shakspeare in particular (who had seen so little of higher society when he wrote his youthful poems of Lucrece and Adonis) — should have maintained so much purer a grammar? Dr. Johnson indeed, but most falsely, says that Shakspeare's grammar is licentious. "The style of Shakspeare" (these are the exact words of the doctor in his preface) "was in itself ungrammatical, perplexed, and obscure." An audacious misrepresentation! In the doctor himself, a legislator for the language, we undertake to show not only more numerically of trespasses against grammar, but (which is worse still) more unscholarlike trespasses. Shakspeare is singularly correct in grammar. One reason, we believe, was this: from the restoration of Charles II. decayed the *ceremonious* exteriors of society. Stiffness and reserve melted away before the familiarity and impudence of French manners. Social meetings grew far more numerous as towns expanded; social pleasure far more began now to depend upon conversation; and conversation, growing less formal, quickened its pace. Hence came the call for rapid abbreviations: the *'t is* and *'t was*, the *can't* and *don't*, of the two post-Miltonic generations arose under this impulse; and the general impression has ever since subsisted amongst English writers, that language, instead of being an exquisitely beautiful vehicle for the thoughts — a robe that never can be adorned with too much care or piety — is in fact a dirty high-road, which all people detest whilst all are forced to use it, and to the keeping of which in repair no rational man ever contributes a trifle that is not forced from him by some severity of Quarter Sessions. The great

corrupter of English was the conversational instinct for rapidity. A more honorable source of corruption lay in the growth of new ideas, and the continual influx of foreign words to meet them. Spanish words arose, like *reformado*, *prixado*, *desperado*, and French ones past counting. But, as these retained their foreign forms of structure, they reäcted to vitiate the language still more by introducing a piebald aspect of books which it seemed a matter of necessity to tolerate for the interests of wider thinking. The perfection of this horror was never attained except amongst the Germans.

NOTE 5. Page 170.

It was *after* his connection with Warburton that Pope introduced several of his *living* portraits into the Satires.

NOTE 6. Page 174.

By what might seem a strange oversight, but which in fact is a very natural oversight to one who was not uttering one word in which he seriously believed, Pope, in a prose note on verse 207, roundly asserts "that the particular characters of women are *more various* than those of men." It is no evasion of this insufferable contradiction, that he couples with the greater variety of *characters* in women a greater uniformity in what he presumes to be their *ruling passion*. Even as to this ruling passion he cannot agree with himself for ten minutes; generally he says, that it is the love of pleasure; but sometimes (as at verse 208) forgetting this monotony, he ascribes to women a dualism of passions, — love of pleasure and love of power, — which dualism of itself must be a source of self-conflict, and therefore of inexhaustible variety in character:

> "Those only fixed, they first or last obey —
> The love of pleasure and the love of sway."

NOTE 7. Page 177.

This refers to the Act of Parliament for burying corpses in woollen, which greatly disturbed the fashionable costume in coffins *comme il faut*.

NOTE 8. Page 179.

The sons of the Duke having died, the title and estates were so settled as to descend through this daughter, who married the Earl of Sunderland. In consequence of this arrangement, *Spenser* (until lately) displaced the great name of *Churchill*; and the Earl became that second Duke of Marlborough, about whom Smollett tells us in his History of England (Reign of George II.) so remarkable and to this hour so mysterious a story.

NOTE 9. Page 179.

The Duchess died in the same year as Pope, namely, just in time by a few months to miss the Rebellion of 1745, and the second Pretender; spectacles which for little reasons (vindictive or otherwise) both of them would have enjoyed until the spring of 1746.

NOTE 10. Page 188.

The Vestals not only renounced marriage, at least for those years in which marriage could be a natural blessing, but also left their fathers' houses at an age the most trying to the human heart as regards the pangs of separation.

NOTE 11. Page 202.

We do not include the DUNCIAD in this list. On the contrary, the arguments by which it has been generally undervalued, as though antiquated by lapse of time and by the fading of names, are all unsound. We ourselves hold it to be the greatest of Pope's efforts. But for that very reason we retire from the examination of it, which we had designed, as being wholly disproportioned to the narrow limits remaining to us.

WILLIAM GODWIN.*

It is no duty of a notice so cursory to discuss Mr. Godwin as a philosopher. Mr. Gilfillan admits that in this character he did not earn much popularity by any absolute originality; and of such popularity as he may have snatched surreptitiously without it, clearly all must have long since exhaled before it could be possible for "a respectable person" to demand of Mr. Gilfillan "*Who's Godwin?*" A question which Mr. Gilfillan justly thinks it possible that "some readers," of the present day, November, 1845, may repeat. That is, we must presume, *not* who is Godwin the novelist? but who is Godwin the political philosopher? In that character he is now forgotten. And yet in *that* he carried one single shock into the bosom of English society, fearful but momentary, like that from the electric blow of the gymnotus; or, perhaps, the intensity of the brief panic which, fifty years ago, he impressed on the public mind, may be more adequately expressed by the case of a ship in the middle ocean suddenly scraping, with her keel, a rag-

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* "A Gallery of Literary Portraits." By George Gilfillan.

ged rock, hanging for one moment, as if impaled upon the teeth of the dreadful *sierra*, then, by the mere *impetus* of her mighty sails, grinding audibly to powder the fangs of this accursed submarine harrow, leaping into deep water again, and causing the panic of ruin to be simultaneous with the deep sense of deliverance. In the *quarto* (that is, the original) edition of his "Political Justice," Mr. Godwin advanced against thrones and dominations, powers and principalities, with the air of some Titan slinger or monarchist from Thebes and Troy, saying, "Come hither, ye wretches, that I may give your flesh to the fowls of the air." But, in the second, or *octavo* edition, — and under what motive has never been explained, — he recoiled, absolutely, from the sound himself had made: everybody else was appalled by the fury of the challenge; and, through the strangest of accidents, Mr. Godwin also was appalled. The second edition, as regards principles, is not a recast, but absolutely a travesty of the first: nay, it is all but a palinode. In this collapse of a tense excitement, I myself find the true reason for the utter extinction of the "Political Justice," and of its author considered as a philosopher. Subsequently, he came forward as a philosophical speculator, in "The Enquirer," and elsewhere; but here it was always some minor question which he raised, or some mixed question, rather allied to philosophy than philosophical. As regarded the main creative *nisus* of his philosophy, it remained undeniable that, in relation to the hostility of the world, he was like one who, in some piratical ship, should drop his anchor before Portsmouth, — should defy the navies of

England to come out and fight, and then, whilst a thousand vessels were contending for the preference in blowing him out of the seas, should suddenly slip his cables and run.

But it is as a novelist, not as a political theorist, that Mr. Gilfillan values Godwin; and specially for his novel of "Caleb Williams." Now, if this were the eccentric judgment of one unsupported man, however able, and had received no countenance at all from others, it might be injudicious to detain the reader upon it. It happens, however, that other men of talent have raised "Caleb Williams" to a station in the first rank of novels; whilst many more, amongst whom I am compelled to class myself, can see in it no merit of any kind. A schism, which is really perplexing, exists in this particular case; and, that the reader may judge for himself, I will state the outline of the plot, out of which it is that the whole interest must be supposed to grow; for the characters are nothing, being mere generalities, and very slightly developed. Thirty-five years it is since I read the book; but the nakedness of the incidents makes them easily rememberable. — Falkland, who passes for a man of a high-minded and delicate honor, but is, in fact, distinguished only by acute sensibility to the opinion of the world, receives a dreadful insult in a most public situation. It is, indeed, more than an insult, being the most brutal of outrages. In a ball-room, where the local gentry and his neighbors are assembled, he is knocked down, kicked, dragged along the floor, by a ruffian squire, named Tyrrel. It is vain to resist; he himself is slightly built, and his antagonist is a powerful man. In these circumstances,

and under the eyes of all the ladies in the county witnessing every step of his humiliation, no man could severely have blamed him, nor would English law have severely punished him, if, in the frenzy of his agitation, he had seized a poker and laid his assailant dead upon the spot. Such allowance does the natural feeling of men, such allowance does the sternness of the judgment-seat, make for human infirmity when tried to extremity by devilish provocation. But Falkland does not avenge himself thus: he goes out, makes his little arrangements, and, at a later hour of the night, he comes, by surprise, upon Tyrrel, and murders him in the darkness. Here is the first vice in the story. With any gleam of generosity in his nature, no man in pursuit of vengeance would have found it in such a catastrophe. That an enemy should die by apoplexy, or by lightning, would be no gratification of wrath to an impassioned pursuer: to make it a retribution for *him*, he himself must be associated to the catastrophe in the consciousness of his victim. Falkland for some time evades or tramples on detection. But his evil genius at last appears in the shape of Caleb Williams; and the agency through which Mr. Caleb accomplishes his mission is not that of any grand passion, but of vile eavesdropping inquisitiveness. Mr. Falkland had hired him as an amanuensis; and in that character Caleb had occasion to observe that some painful remembrance weighed upon his master's mind; and that something or other — documents or personal memorials connected with this remembrance — were deposited in a trunk visited at intervals by Falkland. But of what nature could these

memorials be? Surely Mr. Falkland would not keep in brandy the gory head of Tyrrel; and anything short of *that* could not proclaim any murder at all, much less the particular murder. Strictly speaking nothing *could* be in the trunk, of a nature to connect Falkland with the murder more closely than the circumstances had already connected him; and those circumstances, as we know, had been insufficient. It puzzles one, therefore, to imagine any evidence which the trunk could yield, unless there were secreted within it some known personal property of Tyrrel's; in which case the aspiring Falkland had committed a larceny as well as murder. Caleb, meantime, wastes no labor in hypothetic reasonings, but resolves to have ocular satisfaction in the matter. An opportunity offers; an alarm of fire is given in the day-time; and whilst Mr. Falkland, with his people, is employed on the lawn manning the buckets, Caleb skulks off to the trunk; feeling, probably, that his first duty was to himself, by extinguishing the burning fire of curiosity in his own heart, after which there might be time enough for his second duty, of assisting to extinguish the fire in his master's mansion. Falkland, however, misses the absentee. To pursue him, to collar him, and, we may hope, to kick him, are the work of a moment. Had Caleb found time for accomplishing his inquest? I really forget; but no matter. Either now, or at some luckier hour, he does so: he becomes master of Falkland's secret — consequently, as both fancy, of Falkland's life. At this point commences a flight of Caleb, and a chasing of Falkland, in order to watch his motions, which forms the most spirited part

of the story. Mr. Godwin tells us that he derived this situation, the continual flight and continual pursuit, from a South American tradition of some Spanish vengeance. Always the Spaniard was riding *in* to any given town on the road, when his destined victim was riding *out* at the other end; so that the relations of "whereabouts" were never for a moment lost: the trail was perfect. Now, this might be possible in certain countries; but in England! — heavens! could not Caleb double upon his master, or dodge round a gate (like Falkland when he murdered Mr. Tyrrel), or take a headlong plunge into London, where the scent might have lain cold for forty years? * Other accidents by thousands would interrupt the chase. On the hundredth day, for instance, after the flying parties had become well known on the road, Mr. Falkland would drive furiously up to some King's Head or White Lion, putting his one question to the waiter, "Where 's Caleb?" And the waiter would reply, "Where 's Mr. Caleb, did you say, sir? Why, he went off at five by the Highflyer, booked inside the whole way to Doncaster; and Mr. Caleb is now, sir, precisely forty-five miles ahead." Then would Falkland furiously demand "four horses on;" and then would the waiter plead a contested election in excuse for having no horses at all. Really, for dramatic

* "Forty years:" so long, according to my recollection of Boswell, did Dr. Johnson walk about London before he met an old Derbyshire friend, who also had been walking about London with the same punctual regularity for every day of the same forty years. The *nodes* of intersection did not come round sooner.

effect, it is a pity that the tale were not translated forward to the days of railroads. Sublime would look the fiery pursuit, and the panic-stricken flight, when racing from Fleetwood to Liverpool, to Birmingham, to London; then smoking along the Great Western, where Mr. Caleb's forty-five miles ahead would avail him little, to Bristol, to Exeter; thence doubling back upon London, like the steam leg in Mr. H. G. Bell's admirable story.

But, after all, what was the object, and what the result of all this racing? Once I saw two young men facing each other upon a high road, but at a furlong's distance, and playing upon the foolish terrors of a young woman by continually heading her back from one to the other, as alternately she approached towards either. Signals of some dreadful danger in the north being made by the northern man, back the poor girl flew towards the southern, who, in *his* turn, threw out pantomimic warnings of an equal danger to the south. And thus, like a tennis-ball, the simple creature kept rebounding from one to the other, until she could move no further through sheer fatigue; and then first the question occurred to her, What was it that she had been running from? The same question seems to have struck at last upon the obtuse mind of Mr. Caleb; it was quite as easy to play the part of hunter, as that of hunted game, and likely to be cheaper. He turns therefore sharp round upon his master, who in *his* turn is disposed to fly, when suddenly the sport is brought to a dead lock by a constable, who tells the murdering squire that he is "wanted." Caleb has lodged informations; all parties meet for a final "reünion" before the

magistrate; Mr. Falkland, oddly enough, regards himself in the light of an ill-used man; which theory of the case, even more oddly, seems to be adopted by Mr. Gilfillan; but, for all that he can say, Mr. Falkland is fully committed; and as laws were made for every degree, it is plain that Mr. Falkland (however much of a pattern-man) is in some danger of swinging. But the catastrophe is intercepted; a novelist may raise his hero to the peerage; he may even confer the garter upon him; but it shocks against usage and courtesy that he should hang him. The circulating libraries would rise in mutiny, if he did. And therefore it is satisfactory to believe (for all along I speak from memory), that Mr. Falkland reprieves himself from the gallows by dying of exhaustion from his travels.

Such is the fable of "Caleb Williams," upon which, by the way, is built, I think, Colman's drama of "The Iron Chest." I have thought it worth the trouble (whether for the reader, or for myself), of a flying abstract; and chiefly with a view to the strange collision of opinions as to the merit of the work; some, as I have said, exalting it to the highest class of novels, others depressing it below the lowest of those which achieve any notoriety. They who vote against it are in a large majority. The Germans, whose literature offers a free port to all the eccentricities of the earth have never welcomed "Caleb Williams." Chenier, the ruling *litterateur* of Paris, in the days of Napoleon, when reviewing the literature of his own day, dismisses Caleb contemptuously as coarse and vulgar. It is not therefore to the German taste; it is not to the

French. And as to our own country, Mr. Gilfillan is undoubtedly wrong in supposing that it "is in every circulating library, and needs, more frequently than almost any novel, to be replaced." If this were so, in presence of the immortal novels which for one hundred and fifty years have been gathering into the garners of our English literature, I should look next to see the race of men returning from venison and wheat to their primitive diet of acorns. But I believe that the number of editions yet published, would at once discredit this account of the book's popularity. Neither is it likely, *à priori*, that such a popularity could arise even for a moment. The interest from secret and vindictive murder, though coarse, is undoubtedly deep. What would make us thrill in real life, — the case for instance of a neighbor lying under the suspicion of such a murder, — would make us thrill in a novel. But then it must be managed with art, and covered with mystery. For a long time it must continue doubtful, both as to the fact, and the circumstances, and the motive. Whereas, in the case of Mr. Falkland, there is little mystery of any kind; not much, and only for a short time, to Caleb; and none at all to the reader, who could have relieved the curiosity of Mr. Caleb from the first, if he were placed in communication with him.

Differing so much from Mr. Gilfillan, as to the effectiveness of the novel, I am only the more impressed with the eloquent images and expressions by which he has conveyed his own sense of its power. Power there must be, though many of us cannot discern it, to react upon us, through impressions so

powerful in other minds. Some of Mr. Gilfillan's impressions, as they are clothed in striking images by himself, I will here quote: — "His," Godwin's "heat is never that of the sun with all his beams around him; but of the round, rayless orb seen shining from the summit of Mont Blanc, still and stripped in the black ether. He has more passion than imagination. And even his passion he has learned more by sympathy than by personal feeling. And, amid his most tempestuous scenes, you see the calm and stern eye of philosophic analysis looking on. His imagery is not copious, nor always original; but its sparseness is its strength — the flash comes sudden as the lightning. No preparatory flourish, or preliminary sound; no sheets of useless splendor: each figure is a fork of fire, which strikes and needs no second blow. Nay, often his images are singularly common-place, and you wonder how they move you so, till you resolve this into the power of the hand which jaculates its own energy in *them*." And again, "His novels resemble the paintings of John Martin, being a gallery, nay a world, in themselves. In both, monotony and mannerism are incessant; but the monotony is that of the sounding deep, the mannerism that of the thunderbolts of heaven. Martin might append to his one continual flash of lightning, which is present in all his pictures, — now to reveal a deluge, now to garland the brow of a fiend — now to rend the veil of a temple, and now to guide the invaders through the breach of a city, — the words, *John Martin, his mark.* Godwin's novels are not less terribly distinguished to those who understand

their cipher — the deep scar of misery branded upon the brow of the 'victim of society.'"

And as to the earliest of these novels, the "Caleb Williams," he says, "There is about it a stronger suction and swell of interest than in any novel we know, with the exception of one or two of Sir Walter's. You are in it ere you are aware. You put your hand playfully into a child's, and are surprised to find it held in the grasp of a giant. It becomes a fascination. Struggle you may, and kick, but he holds you by his glittering eye." In reference, again, to "St. Leon," the next most popular of Godwin's novels, there is a splendid passage upon the glory and pretensions of the ancient alchemist, in the infancy of scientific chemistry. It rescues the character from vulgarity, and displays it idealized as sometimes, perhaps, it must have been. I am sorry that it is too long for extracting; but, in compensation to the reader, I quote two very picturesque sentences, describing what, to Mr. Gilfillan, appears the quality of Godwin's style: — "It is a smooth succession of short and simple sentences, each clear as crystal, and none ever distracting the attention from the subject to its own construction. It is a style in which you cannot explain how the total effect rises out of the individual parts, and which is forgotten as entirely during perusal as in the pane of glass through which you gaze at a comet or a star." Elsewhere, and limiting his remark to the style of the "Caleb Williams," he says finely: — "The writing, though far from elegant or finished, has in parts the rude power of those sentences which

criminals, martyrs, and maniacs, scrawl upon their walls or windows in the eloquence of desperation."*

These things perplex me. The possibility that any individual in the minority can have regarded Godwin with such an eye, seems to argue that we of the majority must be wrong. Deep impressions seem to justify themselves. *We* may have failed to perceive things which *are* in the object; but it is not so easy for others to perceive things which are *not;* or, at least, hardly in a case like this, where (though a minority) these "others" still exist in number sufficient to check and to confirm each other. On the other hand, Godwin's name seems sinking out of remembrance; and he is remembered less by the novels that succeeded, or by the philosophy that he abjured, than as the man that had Mary Wolstonecraft for his wife, Mrs. Shelley for his daughter, and the immortal Shelley as his son-in-law.

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* "Desperation." Yet, as *martyrs* are concerned in the picture, it ought to have been said, "of desperation and of farewell to earth," or something equivalent.

JOHN FOSTER.

Mr. Gilfillan* possibly overrates the power of this essayist, and the hold which he has upon the public mind. It is singular, meantime, that whatever might be its degree, much or little, originally his influence was due to an accident of position which in some countries would have tended to destroy it. He was a Dissenter. Now, in England, *that* sometimes operates as an advantage. To dissent from the established form of religion, which could not affect the value of a writer's speculations, may easily become the means of diffusing their reputation, as well as of facilitating their introduction. And in the following way: The great mass of the reading population are absolutely indifferent to such deflexions from the national standard. The man, suppose, is a Baptist: but to be a Baptist is still to be a Protestant, and a Protestant agreeing with his countrymen in everything essential to purity of life and faith. So far there is the most entire neutrality in the public mind, and readiness to receive any impression which the man's powers enable him to make.

* "Gallery of Literary Portraits."

There is, indeed, so absolute a carelessness for all inoperative shades of religious difference lurking in the background, that even the ostentatiously liberal hardly feel it a case for parading their liberality. But, on the other hand, his own sectarian party are as energetic to push him forward as all others are passive. They favor him as a brother, and also as one whose credit will react upon their common sect. And this favor, pressing like a wedge upon the unresisting neutrality of the public, soon succeeds in gaining for any able writer among sectarians an exaggerated reputation. Nobody is against him; and a small section acts *for* him in a spirit of resolute partisanship.

To this accident of social position, and to his connection with the *Eclectic Review*, Mr. Foster owed his first advantageous presentation before the public. The misfortune of many an able writer is, not that he is rejected by the world, but that virtually he is never brought conspicuously before them: he is not dismissed unfavorably, but he is never effectually introduced. From this calamity, at the outset, Foster was saved by his party. I happened myself to be in Bristol at the moment when his four essays were first issuing from the press; and everywhere I heard so pointed an account of the expectations connected with Foster by his religious party, that I made it a duty to read his book without delay. It is a distant incident to look back upon — gone by for more than thirty years; but I remember my first impressions, which were these. — first, That the novelty or weight of the thinking was hardly sufficient to account for the sudden popularity without some *extra* influence at work; and,

secondly, That the contrast was remarkable between the uncolored style of his general diction, and the brilliant felicity of occasional images embroidered upon the sober ground of his text. The splendor did not seem spontaneous, or growing up as part of the texture within the loom; it was intermitting, and seemed as extraneous to the substance as the flowers which are chalked for an evening upon the floors of ball-rooms.

Subsequently, I remarked two other features of difference in his manner, neither of which has been overlooked by Mr. Gilfillan, namely, first, The unsocial gloom of his eye, travelling over all things with dissatisfaction; second (which in our days seemed unaccountable), the remarkable limitation of his knowledge. You might suppose the man, equally by his ignorance of passing things and by his ungenial moroseness, to be a specimen newly turned out from the silent cloisters of La Trappe. A monk he seemed by the repulsion of his cloistral feelings, and a monk by the superannuation of his knowledge. Both peculiarities he drew in part from that same sectarian position, operating for evil, to which, in another direction as a conspicuous advantage, he had been indebted for his favorable public introduction. It is not that Foster was generally misanthropic; neither was he, as a sectarian, "a good hater" at any special angle; that is, he was not a zealous hater; but, by temperament, and in some measure by situation, as one pledged to a polemic attitude by his sect, was a general disliker and a general suspecter. His confidence in human nature was small; for he saw the

clay of the composite statue, but not its gold; and apparently his satisfaction with himself was not much greater. Inexhaustible was his jealousy; and for that reason his philanthropy was everywhere checked by frost and wintry chills. This blight of asceticism in his nature is not of a kind to be briefly illustrated, for it lies diffused through the texture of his writings. But of his other monkish characteristic, his abstraction from the movement and life of his own age, I may give this instance, which I observed by accident about a year since in some *late* edition of his Essays. He was speaking of the term *radical* as used to designate a large political party; but so slightly was he acquainted with the history of that party, so little had he watched the growth of this important interest in our political system, that he supposes the term "Radical" to express a mere scoff or movement of irony from the antagonists of that party. It stands, as he fancies, upon the same footing as "Puritan," "Roundhead," &c., amongst our fathers, or "Swaddler," applied to the Evangelicals amongst ourselves. This may seem a trifle; nor do I mention the mistake for any evil which it can lead to, but for the dreamy inattention which it argues to what was most important in the agitations around him. It may cause nothing; but how much does it presume? Could a man, interested in the motion of human principles, or the revolutions of his own country, have failed to notice the rise of a new party which loudly proclaimed its own mission and purposes in the very name which it assumed? The term "Radical" was used elliptically: Mr. Hunt, and all about him, constantly gave out that they were

reformers who went to the *root* — *radical* reformers; whilst all previous political parties they held to be merely masquerading as reformers, or, at least, wanting in the determination to go deep enough. The party name "Radical" was no insult of enemies; it was a cognizance self-adopted by the party which it designates, and worn with pride; and whatever might be the degree of *personal* weight belonging to Mr. Hunt, no man, who saw into the composition of society amongst ourselves, could doubt that his principles were destined to a most extensive diffusion — were sure of a permanent settlement amongst the great party interests — and, therefore, sure of disturbing thenceforwards forever the previous equilibrium of forces in our English social system. To mistake the origin or history of a word is nothing; but to mistake it, when that history of a word ran along with the history of a *thing* destined to change all the aspects of our English present and future, implies a sleep of Epimenides amongst the shocks which are unsettling the realities of earth.

The four original essays, by which Foster was first known to the public, are those by which he is still best known. It cannot be said of them that they have any *practical* character calculated to serve the uses of life. They terminate in speculations that apply themselves little enough to any business of the world. Whether a man should write memoirs of himself cannot have any personal interest for one reader in a myriad. And two of the essays have even a misleading tendency. That upon "Decision of Character" places a very exaggerated valuation upon one quality of human

temperament, which is neither rare, nor at all necessarily allied with the most elevated features of moral grandeur. Coleridge, because he had no business talents himself, admired them preposterously in others or fancied them vast when they existed only in a slight degree. And, upon the same principle, I suspect that Mr. Foster rated so highly the quality of decision in matters of action, chiefly because he wanted it himself. Obstinacy is a gift more extensively sown than Foster was willing to admit. And *his* scale of appreciation, if it were practically applied to the men of history, would lead to judgments immoderately perverse. Milton would rank far below Luther. In reality, as Mr. Gilfillan justly remarks, "Decision of character is not, strictly, a moral power; and it is extremely dangerous to pay that homage to any intellectual quality, which is sacred to virtue alone." But even this estimate must often tend to exaggeration; for the most inexorable decision is much more closely connected with bodily differences of temperament than with any superiority of mind. It rests too much upon a physical basis; and, of all qualities whatever, it is the most liable to vicious varieties of degeneration. The worst result from this essay is not merely speculative; it trains the feelings to false admirations; and upon a path which is the more dangerous, as the besetting temptation of our English life lies already towards an estimate much too high of all qualities bearing upon the active and the practical. We need no spur in that direction.

The essay upon the use of technically religious language seems even worse by its tendency, although the necessities of the subject will forever neutralize

Foster's advice. Mr. Gilfillan is, in this instance disposed to defend him: "Foster does not ridicule the use, but the abuse, of technical language, as applied to divine things; and proposes, merely as an experiment, to translate it in accommodation to fastidious tastes." Safely, however, it may be assumed, that, in all such cases, the fastidious taste is but another aspect of hatred to religious themes, — a hatred which there is neither justice nor use in attempting to propitiate. Cant words ought certainly to be proscribed, as degrading to the majesty of religion: the word "prayerful," for instance, so commonly used of late years, seems objectionable; and such words as "savory," which is one of those cited by Foster himself, are absolutely abominable, when applied to spiritual or intellectual objects. It is not fastidiousness, but manliness and good feeling, which are outraged by such vulgarities. On the other hand, the word "grace" expresses an idea so exclusively belonging to Christianity, and so indispensable to the wholeness of its philosophy, that any attempt to seek for equivalent terms of mere human growth, or amongst the vocabularies of mere worldly usage, must terminate in conscious failure, or else in utter self-delusion. Christianity, having introduced many ideas that are absolutely new, such as *faith*, *charity*, *holiness*, the nature of *God*, of human *frailty*, &c., is as much entitled (nay as much obliged and pledged) to a peculiar language and terminology as chemistry. Let a man try if he can find a word in the market-place fitted to be the substitute for the word *gas* or *alkali*. The danger, in fact, lies exactly in the opposite direction to that

indicated by Foster. No fear that men of elegant taste should be revolted by the use of what, after all, is scriptural language ; for it is plain that he who *could* be so revolted, wants nothing seriously with religion. But there is great fear that any general disposition to angle for readers of *extra* refinement, or to court the effeminately fastidious, by sacrificing the majestic simplicities of scriptural diction, would and must end in a ruinous dilution of religious truths ; along with the characteristic language of Christian philosophy, would exhale its characteristic doctrines.

WILLIAM HAZLITT.*

This man, who would have drawn in the scales against a select vestry of Fosters, is for the present deeper in the world's oblivion than the man with whom I here connect his name. *That* seems puzzling. For, if Hazlitt were misanthropic, so was Foster: both as writers were splenetic and more than peevish; but Hazlitt requited his reader for the pain of travelling through so gloomy an atmosphere, by the rich vegetation which his teeming intellect threw up as it moved along. The soil in *his* brain was of a volcanic fertility; whereas, in Foster, as in some tenacious clay, if the life were deep, it was slow and sullen in its throes. The reason for at all speaking of them in connection is, that both were essayists; neither in fact writing anything of note *except* essays, moral or critical; and both were bred at the feet of Dissenters. But how different were the results from that connection! Foster turned it to a blessing, winning the jewel that is most of all to be coveted, peace and the *fallentis semita vitæ.* Hazlitt, on the other hand, sailed wilfully away

* "Gallery of Literary Portraits." By George Gilfillan.

from this sheltering harbor of his father's profession, — for sheltering it might have proved to *him*, and *did* prove to his youth, — only to toss ever afterwards as a drifting wreck at the mercy of storms. Hazlitt was not one of those who *could* have illustrated the benefits of a connection with a sect, that is, with a small confederation hostile by position to a larger; for the hostility from without, in order to react, presumes a concord from within. Nor does *his* case impeach the correctness of what I have said on that subject in speaking of Foster. He owed no introduction to the Dissenters; but it was because he *would* owe none. The Ishmaelite, whose hand is against every man, yet smiles at the approach of a brother, and gives the salutation of "Peace be with you!" to the tribe of his father. But Hazlitt smiled upon no man, nor exchanged tokens of peace with the nearest of fraternities. Wieland, in his "Oberon," says of a benign patriarch —

"*His* eye a smile on all creation beamed."

Travestied as to one word, the line would have described Hazlitt —

"*His* eye a scowl on all creation beamed."

This inveterate misanthropy was constitutional; exasperated it certainly had been by accidents of life, by disappointments, by mortifications, by insults, and still more by having wilfully placed himself in collision from the first with all the interests that were in the sunshine of this world, and with all the persons that were then powerful in England. But my impression was, if I had a right to *have* any impression with regard to one whom I knew so slightly, that no change of

position or of fortunes could have brought Hazlitt into reconciliation with the fashion of this world, or of this England, or "this now." It seemed to me that he hated those whom hollow custom obliged him to call his "friends," considerably more than those whom notorious differences of opinion entitled him to rank as his enemies. At least within the ring of politics this was so. Between those particular Whigs whom literature had connected him with, and the whole gang of *us* Conservatives, he showed the same difference in his mode of fencing and parrying, and even in his style of civilities, as between the domestic traitor hiding a stiletto among his robes of peace, and the bold enemy who sends a trumpet before him, and rides up sword-in-hand against your gates. *Whatever is* — so much I conceive to have been a fundamental lemma for Hazlitt — *is wrong.* So much he thought it safe to postulate. *How* it was wrong, might require an impracticable investigation; you might fail for a century to discover: but *that* it was wrong, he nailed down as a point of faith, that could stand out against all counter-presumptions from argument, or counter-evidences from experience. A friend of his it was, a friend wishing to love him, and admiring him almost to extravagance, who told me, in illustration of the dark, sinister gloom which sat forever upon Hazlitt's countenance and gestures, that involuntarily when Hazlitt put his hand within his waistcoat (as a mere unconscious trick of habit), he himself felt a sudden recoil of fear, as from one who was searching for a hidden dagger. Like "a Moore of Malabar," as described in the Faery Queen, at intervals Hazlitt threw up his angry eyes, and dark

locks, as if wishing to affront the sun, or to search the air for hostility. And the same friend, on another occasion, described the sort of feudal fidelity to his belligerent duties, which in company seemed to animate Hazlitt, as though he were mounting guard on all the citadels of malignity, under some *sacramentum militaire*, by the following trait, — that, if it had happened to Hazlitt to be called out of the room, or to be withdrawn for a moment from the current of the general conversation, by a fit of abstraction, or by a private whisper to himself from some person sitting at his elbow, always, on resuming his place as a party to what might be called the public business of the company, he looked round him with a mixed air of suspicion and defiance, such as seemed to challenge everybody by some stern adjuration into revealing whether, during his own absence or inattention, anything had been said demanding condign punishment at his hands. "Has any man uttered or presumed to insinuate," he seemed to insist upon knowing, "during this *interregnum*, things that I ought to proceed against as treasonable to the interests which I defend?" He had the unresting irritability of Rousseau, but in a nobler shape; for Rousseau transfigured every possible act or design of his acquaintances into some personal relation to himself. The vile act was obviously meant, as a child could understand, to injure the person of Rousseau, or his interests, or his reputation. It was meant to wound his feelings, or to misrepresent his acts calumniously, or secretly to supplant his footing. But, on the contrary, Hazlitt viewed all personal affronts or casual slights towards himself, as tending to something more

general, and masking under a pretended horror of Hazlitt, the author, a real hatred, deeper than it was always safe to avow, for those social interests which he was reputed to defend. "It was not Hazlitt whom the wretches struck at; no, no — it was democracy, or it was freedom, or it was Napoleon, whose shadow they saw in the rear of Hazlitt; and Napoleon, not for anything in him that might be really bad, but in revenge of that consuming wrath against the thrones of Christendom, for which (said Hazlitt) let us glorify his name eternally."

Yet Hazlitt, like other men, and perhaps with more bitterness than other men, sought for love and for intervals of rest, in which all anger might sleep, and enmity might be laid aside like a travelling-dress, after tumultuous journeys:

"Though the sea-horse on the ocean
  Own no dear domestic cave,
Yet he slumbers without motion
  On the still and halcyon wave.

If, on windy days, the raven
  Gambol like a dancing skiff,
Not the less he loves his haven
  On the bosom of a cliff.

If almost with eagle pinion
  O'er the Alps the chamois roam,
Yet he has some small dominion,
  Which, no doubt, he calls his home."

But Hazlitt, restless as the sea-horse, as the raven, as the chamois, found not their respites from storm; he sought, but sought in vain. And for *him* the

closing stanza of that little poem remained true to his dying hour. In the person of the "Wandering Jew," *he* might complain, —

> "Day and night my toils redouble :
> Never nearer to the goal,
> Night and day I feel the trouble
> Of the wanderer in my soul."

Domicile he had not, round whose hearth his affections might gather; rest he had not for the sole of his burning foot. One chance of regaining some peace, or a chance as he trusted for a time, was torn from him at the moment of gathering its blossoms. He had been divorced from his wife, not by the law of England, which would have argued criminality in *her*, but by Scottish law, satisfied with some proof of frailty in himself. Subsequently he became deeply fascinated by a young woman, in no very elevated rank, — for she held some domestic office of superintendence in a boarding-house kept by her father, — but of interesting person, and endowed with strong intellectual sensibilities. She had encouraged Hazlitt; had gratified him by reading his works with intelligent sympathy; and, under what form of duplicity it is hard to say, had partly engaged her faith to Hazlitt as his future wife, whilst secretly she was holding a correspondence, too tender to be misinterpreted, with a gentleman resident in the same establishment. Suspicions were put aside for a time; but they returned, and gathered too thickly for Hazlitt's penetration to cheat itself any longer. Once and forever he resolved to satisfy himself. On a Sunday, fatal to him

and his farewell hopes of domestic happiness, he had reason to believe that she, whom he now loved to excess, had made some appointment out-of-doors with his rival. It was in London; and through the crowds of London, Hazlitt followed her steps to the rendezvous. Fancying herself lost in the multitude that streamed through Lincolns-inn-fields, the treacherous young woman met her more favored lover without alarm, and betrayed, too clearly for any further deception, the state of her affections by the tenderness of her manner. *There* went out the last light that threw a guiding ray over the storm-vexed course of Hazlitt. He was too much in earnest, and he had witnessed too much, to be deceived or appeased. "I whistled her down the wind," was his own account of the catastrophe; but, in doing so, he had torn his own heart-strings, entangled with her "jesses." Neither did he, as others would have done, seek to disguise his misfortune. On the contrary, he cared not for the ridicule attached to such a situation amongst the unfeeling: the wrench within had been too profound to leave room for sensibility to the sneers outside. A fast friend of his at that time, and one who never ceased to be his apologist, described him to me as having become absolutely maniacal during the first pressure of this affliction. He went about proclaiming the case, and insisting on its details, to every stranger that would listen. He even published the whole story to the world, in his "Modern Pygmalion." And people generally, who could not be aware of his feelings, or the way in which this treachery acted upon his mind as a ratification of all other treacheries and

wrongs that he had suffered through life, laughed a him, or expressed disgust for him as too coarsely indelicate in making such disclosures. But there was no indelicacy in such an act of confidence, growing, as it did, out of his lacerated heart. It was an explosion of frenzy. He threw out his clamorous anguish to the clouds, and to the winds, and to the air; caring not *who* might listen, *who* might sympathize, or *who* might sneer. Pity was no demand of his; laughter was no wrong: the sole necessity for *him* was — to empty his over-burdened spirit.

After this desolating experience, the exasperation of Hazlitt's political temper grew fiercer, darker, steadier. His "Life of Napoleon" was prosecuted subsequently to this, and perhaps under this remembrance, as a reservoir that might receive all the vast overflows of his wrath, much of which was not merely political, or in a spirit of bacchanalian partisanship, but was even morbidly anti-social. He hated, with all his heart, every institution of man, and all his pretensions. He loathed his own relation to the human race.

It was but on a few occasions that I ever met Mr. Házlitt myself; and those occasions, or all but one, were some time subsequent to the case of female treachery which I have here described. Twice, I think, or it might be three times, we walked for a few miles together: it was in London, late at night, and after leaving a party. Though depressed by the spectacle of a mind always in agitation from the gloomier passions, I was yet amused by the pertinacity with which he clung, through bad reasons :ı

no reasons, to any public slander floating against men in power, or in the highest rank. No feather, or dowl of a feather, but was heavy enough for *him*. Amongst other instances of this willingness to be deluded by rumors, if they took a direction favorable to his own bias, Hazlitt had adopted the whole strength of popular hatred which for many years ran violently against the King of Hanover, at that time Duke of Cumberland. A dark calumny had arisen against this prince, amongst the populace of London, as though he had been accessary to the death of his valet. This valet [Sellis] had, in fact, attempted to murder the prince; and all that can be said in palliation of his act, is, that he *believed* himself to have sustained, in the person of his beautiful wife, the heaviest dishonor incident to man. How that matter stood, I pretend not to know: the attempt at murder was baffled; and the valet then destroyed himself with a razor. All this had been regularly sifted by a coroner's inquest; and I remarked to Hazlitt, that the witnesses seemed to have been called, indifferently, from all quarters likely to have known the facts; so that, if this inquest had failed to elicit the truth, we might, with equal reason, presume as much of all other inquests. From the verdict of a jury, except in very peculiar cases, no candid and temperate man will allow himself to believe any appeal sustainable; for, having the witnesses before them face to face, and hearing the *whole* of the evidence, a jury have always some means of forming a judgment which cannot be open to him who depends upon an abridged report. But, on this subject, Hazlitt would hear no reason. He said — "No.

all the princely houses of Europe have the instinct of murder running in their blood ; — they cherish it through their privilege of making war, which being wholesale murder, once having reconciled themselves to *that*, they think of retail murder, committed on you or me, as of no crime at all." Under this obstinate prejudice against the duke, Hazlitt read everything that he did, or did *not* do, in a perverse spirit. And, in one of these nightly walks, he mentioned to me, as something quite worthy of a murderer, the following little trait of casuistry in the royal duke's distribution of courtesies. "I saw it myself," said Hazlitt, "so no coroner's jury can put me down." His royal highness had rooms in St. James'; and, one day, as he was issuing from the palace into Pall-Mall, Hazlitt happened to be immediately behind him; he could therefore watch his motions along the whole line of his progress. It is the custom in England, wheresoever the persons of the royal family are familiar to the public eye, as at Windsor, &c., that all passengers in the streets, on seeing them, walk bareheaded, or make some signal of dutiful respect. On this occasion, all the men, who met the prince, took off their hats; the prince acknowledging every such obeisance by a separate bow. Pall-Mall being finished, and its whole harvest of royal salutations gathered in, next the duke came to Cockspur street. But here, and taking a station close to the crossing, which daily he beautified and polished with his broom, stood a Negro sweep. If human at all, which some people doubted, he was pretty nearly as abject a representative of our human family divine as can ever have

existed. Still he was held to be a man by the law of the land, which would have hanged any person, gentle or simple, for cutting his throat. Law (it is certain), conceived him to be a man, however poor a one; though Medicine, in an under-tone, muttered, sometimes, a demur to that opinion. But here the sweep *was*, whether man or beast, standing humbly in the path of royalty; vanish he would not; he was (as *The Times* says of the Corn-League) "a great fact," if rather a muddy one; and though, by his own confession (repeated one thousand times a day), both "a nigger" and a sweep ["Remember poor nigger, your honor!" "remember poor sweep!"], yet the creature could take off his rag of a hat, and earn the bow of a prince, as well as any white native of St. James'. What was to be done? A great case of conscience was on the point of being raised in the person of a paralytic nigger; nay, possibly a state question — Ought a son of England,* could a son of England,

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* "Son of England;" that is, prince of the blood in the *direct*, and not in the collateral, line. I mention this for the sake of some readers, who may not be aware that this beautiful formula, so well known in France, is often transferred by the French writers of memoirs to our English princes, though little used amongst ourselves. Gaston, Duke of Orleans, brother of Louis XIV., was "a *son* of France," as being a child of Louis XIII. But the son of Gaston, namely, the Regent Duke of Orleans, was a *grandson* of France. The first wife of Gaston, our Princess Henrietta, was called "*Fille* d'Angleterre," as being a daughter of Charles I. The Princess Charlotte, again, was a *daughter* of England; her present majesty, a *grand-daughter* of England. But all these ladies collectively would be called, on the French principle, the children of England.

descend from his majestic pedestal to gild with the rays of his condescension such a grub, such a very doubtful grub, as this? Total Pall-Mall was sagacious of the coming crisis; judgment was going to be delivered; a precedent to be raised; and Pall-Mall stood still, with Hazlitt at its head, to learn the issue. How if the black should be a Jacobin, and (in the event of the duke's bowing) should have a bas-relief sculptured on his tomb, exhibiting an English prince, and a German king, as two separate personages, in the act of worshipping his broom? Luckily, it was not the black's province to settle the case. The Duke of Cumberland, seeing no counsel at hand to argue either the *pro* or the *contra*, found himself obliged to settle the question *de plano;* so, drawing out his purse, he kept his hat as rigidly settled on his head as William Penn and Mead did before the Recorder of London. All Pall-Mall applauded: *contradicente* Gulielmo Hazlitt, and Hazlitt only. The black swore that the prince gave him half-a-crown; but whether he regarded this in the light of a god-send to his avarice or a shipwreck to his ambition — whether he was more thankful for the money gained, or angry for the honor lost — did not transpire. "No matter," said Hazlitt, "the black might be a fool; but I insist upon it, that he was entitled to the bow, since all Pall-Mall had it before him; and that it was unprincely to refuse it." Either as a black or as a scavenger, Hazlitt held him "qualified" for sustaining a royal bow: as a black, was he not a specimen (if rather a damaged one) of the *homo sapiens* described by Linnæus? As a sweep, in possession (by whatever title) of a lucrative cross-

ing, had he not a kind of estate in London? Was he not, said Hazlitt, a fellow-subject, capable of committing treason, and paying taxes into the treasury? Not perhaps in any direct shape, but indirect taxes most certainly on his tobacco — and even on his broom.

These things could not be denied. But still, when my turn came for speaking, I confessed frankly that (politics apart) my feeling in the case went along with the duke's. The bow would not be so useful to the black as the half-crown: he could not possibly have both; for how could any man make a bow to a beggar when in the act of giving him half-a-crown? Then, on the other hand, this bow, so useless to the sweep, and (to speak by a vulgar adage) as superfluous as a side-pocket to a cow, would react upon the other bows distributed along the line of Pall-Mall, so as to neutralize them one and all. No honor could continue such in which a paralytic negro sweep was associated. This distinction, however, occurred to me; that if, instead of a prince and a subject, the royal dispenser of bows had been a king, he ought *not* to have excluded the black from participation; because, as the common father of his people, he ought not to know of any difference amongst those who are equally his children. And in illustration of that opinion, I sketched a little scene which I had myself witnessed, and with great pleasure, upon occasion of a visit made to Drury Lane by George IV. when regent. At another time I may tell it to the reader. Hazlitt, however, listened fretfully to me when praising the deportment and beautiful gestures of one conservative leader; though he had

compelled *me* to hear the most disadvantageous comments on another.

As a lecturer, I do not know what Hazlitt was, having never had an opportunity of hearing him. Some qualities in his style of composition were calculated to assist the purposes of a lecturer, who must produce an effect oftentimes by independent sentences and paragraphs, who must glitter and surprise, who must turn round within the narrowest compass, and cannot rely upon any sort of attention that would cost an effort. Mr. Gilfillan says, that "He proved more popular than was expected by those who knew his uncompromising scorn of all those tricks and petty artifices which are frequently employed to pump up applause. His manner was somewhat abrupt and monotonous, but earnest and energetic." At the same time, Mr. Gilfillan takes an occasion to express some opinions, which appear very just, upon the unfitness (generally speaking) of men whom he describes as "fiercely inspired," for this mode of display. The truth is, that all genius implies originality, and sometimes uncontrollable singularity, in the habits of thinking, and in the modes of viewing as well as of estimating objects. Whereas a miscellaneous audience is best conciliated by that sort of talent which reflects the average mind, which is not overweighted in any one direction, is not tempted into any extreme, and is able to preserve a steady, rope-dancer's equilibrium of posture upon themes where a man of genius is most apt to lose it.

It would be interesting to have a full and accurate list of Hazlitt's works, including, of course, his contributions to journals and encyclopædias. These last,

as shorter, and oftener springing from an *impromptu* effort, are more likely, than his regular books, to have been written with a pleasurable enthusiasm; and the writer's proportion of pleasure, in such cases, very often becomes the regulating law for his reader's. Amongst the philosophical works of Hazlitt, I do not observe that Mr. Gilfillan is aware of two that are likely to be specially interesting. One is an examination of David Hartley, at least as to his law of association. Thirty years ago, I looked into it slightly; but my reverence for Hartley offended me with its tone; and afterwards, hearing that Coleridge challenged for his own most of what was important in the thoughts, I lost all interest in the essay. Hazlitt, having heard Coleridge talk on this theme, must have approached it with a mind largely preöccupied as regarded the weak points in Hartley, and the particular tactics for assailing them. But still the great talents for speculative research which Hazlitt had from nature, without having given to them the benefit of much culture or much exercise, would justify our attentive examination of the work. It forms part of the volume which contains the "Essay on Human Action;" which volume, by the way, Mr. Gilfillan supposes to have won the special applause of Sir James Mackintosh, then in Bengal. This, if accurately stated, is creditable to Sir James' generosity; for in this particular volume it is that Hazlitt makes a pointed assault, in sneering terms, and very unnecessarily, upon Sir James.

The other little work unnoticed by Mr. Gilfillan, is an examination (but under what title I cannot say) of Lindley Murray's English Grammar. This may seem

by its subject, a trifle ; yet Hazlitt could hardly have had a motive for such an effort but in some philosophic perception of the ignorance betrayed by many grammars of our language, and sometimes by that of Lindley Murray; which Lindley, by the way, though resident in England, was an American. There is great room for a useful display of philosophic subtlety in an English grammar, even though meant for schools. Hazlitt could not *but* have furnished something of value towards such a display. And if (as I was once told) his book was suppressed, I imagine that this suppression must have been purchased by some powerful publisher interested in keeping up the current reputation of Murray.

"Strange stories," says Mr. Gilfillan, "are told about his [Hazlitt's] latter days, and his death-bed." I know not whether I properly understand Mr. Gilfillan. The stories which I myself have happened to hear, were not so much "strange," since they arose, naturally enough, out of pecuniary embarrassments, as they were afflicting in the turn they took. Dramatically viewed, if a man were speaking of things so far removed from our own times and interests as to excuse that sort of language, the circumstances of Hazlitt's last hours might rivet the gaze of a critic as fitted, harmoniously, with almost scenic art, to the whole tenor of his life ; fitted equally to rouse his wrath, to deepen his dejection, and in the hour of death to justify his misanthropy. But I have no wish to utter a word on things which I know only at second-hand, and cannot speak upon without risk of misstating facts or

doing injustice to persons. I prefer closing this section with the words of Mr. Gilfillan :

"Well says Bulwer, that of all the mental wrecks which have occurred in our era, this was the most melancholy. Others may have been as unhappy in their domestic circumstances, and gone down steeper places of dissipation than he ; but they had meanwhile the breath of popularity, if not of wealth and station, to give them a certain solace." What had Hazlitt of this nature ? Mr. Gilfillan answers, — " Absolutely nothing to support and cheer him. With no hope, no fortune, no *status* in society ; no certain popularity as a writer, no domestic peace, little sympathy from kindred spirits, little support from his political party, no moral management, no definite belief; with great powers, and great passions within, and with a host of powerful enemies without, it was his to enact one of the saddest tragedies on which the sun ever shone. Such is a faithful portraiture of an extraordinary man, whose restless intellect and stormy passions have now, for fifteen years, found that repose in the grave which was denied them above it." Mr. Gilfillan concludes with expressing his conviction, in which I desire to concur, that both enemies and friends will *now* join in admiration for the man ; "both will readily concede *now*, that a subtle thinker, an eloquent writer, a lover of beauty and poetry, and man and truth, one of the best of critics, and not the worst of men, expired in William Hazlitt." *Requiescat in pace* .

NOTES ON WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR.*

Nobody in this generation reads *The Spectator.* There are, however, several people still surviving who have read No. 1; in which No. 1 a strange mistake is made. It is there asserted, as a general affection of human nature, that it is impossible to read a book with satisfaction until one has ascertained whether the author of it be tall or short, corpulent or thin, and, as to complexion, whether he be a "black" man (which, in the *Spectator's* time, was the absurd expression for a swarthy man), or a fair man, or a sallow man, or perhaps a green man, which Southey affirmed[1] to be the proper description of many stout artificers in Birmingham, too much given to work in metallic fumes; on which account the name of Southey is an abomination to this day in certain furnaces of Warwickshire. But can anything be more untrue than this Spectatorial doctrine? Did ever the youngest of female novel readers, on a sultry day, decline to eat a bunch of grapes until she knew whether the fruiterer were a good-looking man? Which of us ever heard a stranger inquiring for a "Guide to the Trosachs,"

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* The Works of Walter Savage Landor. 2 vols.

but saying, "I scruple, however, to pay for this book, until I know whether the author is heather-legged." On this principle, if any such principle prevailed, we authors should be liable to as strict a revision of our physics before having any right to be read, as we all are before having our lives insured from the medical advisers of insurance offices; fellows that examine one with stethescopes; that pinch one, that actually punch one in the ribs, until a man becomes savage, and — in case the insurance should miss fire in consequence of the medical report — speculates on the propriety of prosecuting the medical ruffian for an assault, for a most unprovoked assault and battery, and, if possible, including in the indictment the now odious insurance office as an accomplice before the fact. Meantime the odd thing is, not that Addison should have made a mistake, but that he and his readers should, in this mistake, have recognized a hidden truth, — the sudden illumination of a propensity latent in all people, but now first exposed; for it happens that there really *is* a propensity in all of us, very like what Addison describes very different, and yet, after one correction the very same. No reader cares about an author's person *before* reading his book; it is *after* reading it, and supposing the book to reveal something of the writer's *moral* nature, as modifying his intellect; it is for his fun, his fancy, his sadness, possibly his craziness, that any reader cares about seeing the author in person. Afflicted with the very satyriasis of curiosity no man ever wished to see the author of a *Ready Reckoner*, or of a treatise on the *Agistment Tithe* or on the *Present deplorable Dry-rot in Potatoes*.

"Bundle off, sir, as fast as you can," the most diligent reader would say to such an author, in case he insisted on submitting his charms to inspection. "I have had quite enough distress of mind from reading your works, without needing the additional dry-rot of your bodily presence." Neither does any man, on descending from a railway train, turn to look whether the carriage in which he has ridden happens to be a good-looking carriage, or wish for an introduction to the coach-maker. Satisfied that the one has not broken his bones, and that the other has no writ against his person, he dismisses with the same frigid scowl both the carriage and the author of its existence.

But, with respect to Mr. Landor, as at all connected with this reformed doctrine of the *Spectator*, a difficulty arises. He is a man of great genius, and, as such, he *ought* to interest the public. More than enough appears of his strong, eccentric nature, through every page of his now extensive writings, to win, amongst those who have read him, a corresponding interest in all that concerns him personally; in his social relations, in his biography, in his manners, in his appearance. Out of two conditions for attracting a *personal* interest, he has powerfully realized one. His moral nature, shining with colored light through the crystal shrine of his thoughts, will not allow of your forgetting it. A sunset of Claude, or a dying dolphin *can* be forgotten, and generally *is* forgotten; but not the fiery radiations of a human spirit built by nature to animate a leader in storms, a martyr, a national reformer, an arch-rebel, as circumstances might dictate, but whom too much wealth,[2] and the accidents of education, have

turned aside into a contemplative recluse. Had Mr. Landor, therefore, been read in any extent answering to his merits, he must have become, for the English public, an object of prodigious personal interest. We should have had novels upon him, lampoons upon him, libels upon him; he would have been shown up dramatically on the stage; he would, according to the old joke, have been "traduced" in French, and also "overset" in Dutch. Meantime he has *not* been read. It would be an affectation to think it. Many a writer is, by the sycophancy of literature, reputed to be read, whom in all Europe not six eyes settle upon through the revolving year. Literature, with its cowardly falsehoods, exhibits the largest field of conscious Phrygian adulation that human life has ever exposed to the derision of the heavens. Demosthenes, for instance, or Plato, is not read to the extent of twenty pages annually by ten people in Europe. The *sale* of their works would not account for three readers; the other six or seven are generally conceded as possibilities furnished by the great public libraries. But, then, Walter Savage Landor, though writing a little in Latin, and a *very* little in Italian, does not write at all in Greek. So far he has some advantage over Plato; and, if he writes chiefly in dialogue, which few people love to read any more than novels in the shape of letters, *that* is a crime common to both. So that he has the d——l's luck and his own, all Plato's chances, and one of his own beside — namely, his English. Still, it is no use counting chances; facts are the thing. And printing-presses, whether of Europe or of England, bear witness that neither Plato nor Landor is a marketable commodity.

In fact, these two men resemble each other in more particulars than it is at present necessary to say. Especially they were both inclined to be luxurious; both had a hankering after purple and fine linen; both hated "filthy dowlas" with the hatred of Falstaff, whether in apparelling themselves or their diction; and both bestowed pains as elaborate upon the secret *art* of a dialogue, as a lapidary would upon the cutting of a sultan's rubies.

But might not a man build a reputation on the basis of *not* being read? To be read is undoubtedly something: to be read by an odd million or so, is a sort of feather in a man's cap; but it is also a distinction that he has been read absolutely by nobody at all. There have been cases, and one or two in modern times, where an author could point to a vast array of his own works, concerning which no evidence existed that so much as one had been opened by human hand, or glanced at by human eye. That was awful; such a sleep of pages by thousands in one eternal darkness, never to be visited by light; such a rare immunity from the villanies of misconstruction; such a Sabbath from the impertinencies of critics! You shuddered to reflect that, for anything known to the contrary, *there* might lurk jewels of truth explored in vain, or treasure forever intercepted to the interests of man. But such a sublimity supposes *total* defect of readers; whereas it can be proved against Mr. Landor, that he has been read by at least a score of people, all wide awake; and if any treason is buried in a page of *his*, thank Heaven, by this time it must have been found out and reported to the authorities. So that neither

can Landor plead the unlimited popularity of a novelist, aided by the interest of a tale, and by an artist, nor the total obscuration of a German metaphysician. Neither do mobs read him, as they do M. Sue; nor do all men turn away their eyes from him, as they do from Hegel.[3]

This, however, is true only of Mr. Landor's prose works. His first work was a poem, namely, *Gebir* and it had the sublime distinction, for some time, of having enjoyed only two readers; which two were Southey and myself. It was on first entering at Oxford that I found "Gebir" printed and (nominally) published; whereas, in fact, all its advertisements of birth and continued existence were but so many notifications of its intense privacy. Not knowing Southey at that time, I vainly conceited myself to be the one sole purchaser and reader of this poem. I even fancied myself to have been pointed out in the streets of Oxford, where the Landors had been well known in times preceding my own, as the one inexplicable man authentically known to possess "Gebir," or even (it might be whispered mysteriously) to have read "Gebir." It was not clear but this reputation might stand in lieu of any independent fame, and might raise me to literary distinction. The preceding generation had greatly esteemed the man called "*Single-Speech Hamilton;*" not at all for the speech (which, though good, very few people had read), but entirely for the supposed fact that he had exhausted himself in that one speech, and had become physically incapable of making a second; so that afterwards, when he really *did* make a second, everybody was incredulous; until,

the thing being past denial, naturally the world was disgusted, and most people dropped his acquaintance. To be a Mono-Gebirist was quite as good a title to notoriety; and five years after, when I found that I had "a brother near the throne," namely, Southey, mortification would have led me willingly to resign altogether in *his* favor. Shall I make the reader acquainted with the story of Gebir?

Gebir is the king of Gibraltar; which, however, it would be an anachronism to *call* Gibraltar, since it drew that name from this very Gebir; and doubtless, by way of honor to his memory. Mussulmans tell a different story; but who cares for what is said by infidel dogs? King, then, let us call him of Calpe; and a very good king he is; young, brave, of upright intentions; but being also warlike, and inflamed by popular remembrances of ancient wrongs, he resolves to seek reparation from the children's children of the wrong-doers; and he weighs anchor in search of Mr. Pitt's "indemnity for the past," though not much regarding that right honorable gentleman's "security for the future." Egypt was the land that sheltered the wretches that represented the ancestors that had done the wrong. To Egypt, therefore, does king Gebir steer his expedition, which counted ten thousand picked men:

> ——————"Incenst
> By meditating on primeval wrongs,
> He blew his battle-horn; at which uprose
> Whole nations: here ten thousand of most might
> He called aloud; and soon Charoba saw
> His dark helm hover o'er the land of Nile."

Who is Charoba? As respects the reader, she is the heroine of the poem; as respects Egypt, she is queen by the grace of God, defender of the faith, and so forth. Young and accustomed to unlimited obedience, how could she be otherwise than alarmed by the descent of a host far more martial than her own effeminate people, and assuming a religious character — avengers of wrong in some forgotten age? In her trepidation, she turns for aid and counsel to her nurse Dalica. Dalica, by the way, considered as a word, is a dactyle, that is, you must not lay the accent on the *i*, but on the first syllable. Dalica, considered as a woman, is about as bad a one as even Egypt could furnish. She is a thorough gypsy; a fortune-teller, and something worse, in fact. She is a sorceress, "stiff in opinion;" and it needs not Pope's authority to infer that —— of course she "is always in the wrong." By her advice, but for a purpose known best to herself, an interview is arranged between Charoba and the invading monarch. At this interview, the two youthful sovereigns, Charoba the queen of hearts and Gebir the king of clubs, fall irrevocably in love with each other. There 's an end of club law; and Gebir is ever afterwards disarmed. But Dalica, that wicked Dalica, that sad old dactyle, who sees everything clearly that happens to be twenty years distant, cannot see a pikestaff if it is close before her nose; and of course she mistakes Charoba's agitations of love for paroxysms of anger. Charoba is herself partly to blame for this; but you must excuse her. The poor child readily confided her *terrors* to Dalica; but how can she be expected to make a *love* confidante of a tawny old

witch like her? Upon this mistake, however, proceeds the whole remaining plot. *Dr.* Dalica (which means *doctor* D., and by no means *dear* D.), having totally mistaken the symptoms, the diagnosis, the prognosis, and everything that ends in *osis*, necessarily mistakes also the treatment of the case, and, like some other doctors, failing to make a cure, covers up her blunders by a general slaughter. She visits her sister, a sorceress more potent than herself, living

> "Deep in the wilderness of woe, Masar."

Between them they concert hellish incantations. From these issues a venomous robe, like that of the centaur Nessus. This, at a festal meeting between the two nations and their princes, is given by Charoba to her lover — her lover, but as yet not recognized as such by *her*, nor, until the moment of his death, avowed as such by himself. Gebir dies — the accursed robe, dipped in the "viscous poison" exuding from the gums of the gray cerastes, and tempered by other venomous juices of plant and animal, proves too much for his rocky constitution — Gibraltar is found not impregnable — the blunders of Dalica, the wicked nurse, and the arts of her sister Myrthyr, the wicked witch, are found too potent; and in one moment the union of two nations, with the happiness of two sovereigns, is wrecked forever. The closing situation of the parties — monarch and monarch, nation and nation, youthful king and youthful queen, dying or despairing — nation and nation that had been reconciled, starting asunder once again amidst festival and flowers — these objects are scenically effective. The conception of the grouping

is good: the *mise en scene* is good; but, from want of pains-taking, not sufficiently brought out into strong relief; and the dying words of Gebir, which wind up the whole, are too bookish; they seem to be part of some article which he had been writing for the Gibraltar Quarterly.

There are two episodes, composing jointly about two-sevenths of the poem, and by no means its weakest parts. One describes the descent of Gebir to Hades. His guide is a man — who *is* this man?

> "Living — they called him Aroar."

Is he *not* living, then? No. Is he dead, then? No, nor dead either. Poor Aroar cannot live, and cannot die — so that he is in an almighty fix. In this disagreeable dilemma, he contrives to amuse himself with politics — and, rather of a jacobinical cast: like the Virgilian Æneas, Gebir is introduced not to the shades of the past only, but of the future. He sees the preëxisting ghosts of gentlemen who are yet to come, silent as ghosts ought to be, but destined at some far distant time to make a considerable noise in our upper world. Amongst these is our worthy old George III., who (strange to say!) is not foreseen as galloping from Windsor to Kew, surrounded by an escort of dragoons, nor in a scarlet coat riding after a fox, nor taking his morning rounds amongst his sheep and his turnips; but in the likeness of some savage creature, whom really, were it not for his eyebrows and his "*slanting*" forehead, the reader would never recognize:

> "Aroar! what wretch that nearest us? what wretch
> Is that, with eyebrows white and slanting brow?
> ———————————— O king!
> Iberia bore him; but the breed accurst
> Inclement winds blew blighting from north-east."

Iberia is spiritual England; and *north-east* is mystical Hanover. But what, then, were the "wretch's" crimes? The white eyebrows I confess to; those were certainly crimes of considerable magnitude: but what else? Gebir has the same curiosity as myself, and propounds something like the same fishing question:

> "He was a warrior then, nor feared the gods?"

To which Aroar answers —

> "Gebir! he feared the demons, not the gods;
> Though them, indeed, his daily face adored,
> And was no warrior; yet the thousand lives
> Squandered as if to exercise a sling, &c. &c."

Really Aroar is too *Tom-Painish*, and seems up to a little treason. He makes the poor king answerable for more than his own share of national offences, if such they were. All of us in the last generation were rather fond of fighting and assisting at fights in the character of mere spectators. I am sure *I* was. But if *that* is any fault, so was Plato, who (though probably inferior as a philosopher to you and me, reader) was much superior to either of us as a cock-fighter. So was Socrates in the preceding age; for, as he notoriously haunted the company of Alcibiades at all hours, he must often have found his pupil diverting himself with these fighting quails which he kept in such numbers. Be assured that the oracle's "wisest of

men" lent a hand very cheerfully to putting on the spurs when a main was to be fought; and, as to betting, probably *that* was the reason that Xantippe was so often down upon him when he went home at night. To come home reeling from a fight, without a drachma left in his pocket, would naturally provoke any woman. Posterity has been very much misinformed about these things; and, no doubt, about Xantippe, poor woman, in particular. If *she* had had a disciple to write books, as her cock-fighting husband had, perhaps we should have read a very different story. By the way, the propensity to *scandalum magnatum* in Aroar was one of the things that fixed my youthful attention, and perhaps my admiration, upon Gebir. For myself, as perhaps the reader may have heard, I was and am a Tory; and in some remote geological era, my bones may be dug up by some future Buckland as a specimen of the fossil Tory. Yet, for all that, I loved audacity; and I gazed with some indefinite shade of approbation upon a poet whom the attorney-general might have occasion to speak with.

This, however, was a mere condiment to the main attraction of the poem. *That* lay in the picturesqueness of the images, attitudes, groups, dispersed everywhere. The eye seemed to rest everywhere upon festal processions, upon the panels of Theban gates, or upon sculptured vases. The very first lines that by accident met my eye were those which follow. I cite them in mere obedience to the fact as it really was; else there are more striking illustrations of this sculpturesque faculty in Mr. Landor; and for this faculty it was that both Southey and myself separately and

independently had named him the English Valerius Flaccus.

GEBIR ON REPAIRING TO HIS FIRST INTERVIEW WITH CHAROBA.

"But Gebir, when he heard of her approach,
Laid by his orbed shield: his vizor helm,
His buckler and his corslet he laid by,
And bade that none attend him: at his side
Two faithful dogs that urge the silent course,
Shaggy, deep-chested, croucht; the crocodile,
Crying, oft made them raise their flaccid ears,
And push their heads within their master's hand.
There was a lightning paleness in his face,
Such as Diana rising over the rocks
Showered on the lonely Latmian; on his brow
Sorrow there was, but there was naught severe."

"And the long moonbeam on the hard wet sand
Lay like a jasper column half up-reared."

"The king, who sate before his tent, descried
The dust rise reddened from the setting sun."

Now let us pass to the imaginary dialogues:—

Marshal Bugeaud and Arab Chieftain.— This dialogue, which is amongst the shortest, would not challenge a separate notice, were it not for the freshness in the public mind, and the yet uncicatrized rawness of that atrocity which it commemorates. Here is an official account from the commander-in-chief:—"Of seven hundred refractory and rebellious, who took refuge in the caverns, thirty" [says the glory-hunting Marshal], "and thirty only, are alive; and of these thirty there are four only who are capable of labor, or indeed of motion." How precious to the Marshal's heart must be that harvest of misery

from which he so reluctantly allows the discount of about one-half per cent! Four only out of seven hundred, he is happy to assure Christendom, remain capable of hopping about; as to working, or getting honest bread, or doing any service in this world to themselves or others, it is truly delightful to announce, for public information, that all such practices are put a stop to forever.

Amongst the fortunate four, who retain the power of hopping, we must reckon the *Arab Chieftain*, who is introduced into the colloquy in the character of respondent. He can hop, of course, *ex hypothesi*, being one of the ever-lucky quaternion; he can hop a little also as a rhetorician; indeed, as to *that*, he is too much for the Marshal; but on the other hand he cannot see; the cave has cured him of any such impertinence as staring into other people's faces; he is also lame, the cave has shown him the absurdity of rambling about; — and, finally, he is a beggar; or, if he will not allow himself to be called by that name, upon the argument [which seems plausible] that he cannot be a beggar if he never begs, it is not the less certain that, in case of betting a sixpence, the chieftain would find it inconvenient to stake the cash.

The Marshal, who apparently does not pique himself upon politeness, adresses the Arab by the following assortment of names — "Thief, assassin, traitor; blind graybeard! lame beggar!" The three first titles being probably mistaken for compliments, the Arab pockets in silence; but to the double-barrelled discharges of the two last he replies thus: — "Cease *there* Thou canst never make me beg for bread, for

water, or for life; my gray beard is from God; my blindness and lameness are from thee." This is a pleasant way of doing business; rarely does one find little accounts so expeditiously settled and receipted. Beggar? But how if I do not beg? Graybeard? Put that down to the account of God. Cripple? Put that down to your own. Getting sulky under this mode of fencing from the desert-born, the Marshal invites him to enter one of his new-made law courts, where he will hear of something probably *not* to his advantage. Our Arab friend, however, is no connoisseur in courts of law: small wale[4] of courts in the desert; he does not so much "do himself the honor to decline" as he turns a deaf ear to this proposal, and on *his* part presents a little counter invitation to the Marshal for a *pic-nic* party to the caves of Dahra. "Enter" (says the unsparing Sheik), "and sing and whistle in the cavern where the bones of brave men are never to bleach, are never to decay. Go, where the mother and infant are inseparable forever — one mass of charcoal; the breasts that gave life, the lips that received it — all, all, save only where two arms, in color and hardness like corroded iron, cling round a brittle stem, shrunken, warped, and where two heads are calcined. Even this massacre, no doubt, will find defenders in *your* country, for it is the custom of *your* country to cover blood with lies, and lies with blood." "And (says the facetious French Marshal) here and there a sprinkling of ashes over both." Arab. "Ending in merriment, as befits ye. But *is* it ended?" But *is* it ended? Ay; the wilderness beyond Algiers returns an echo to those ominous words of the blind

and mutilated chieftain. No, brave Arab, although the Marshal scoffingly rejoins that at least it is ended for *you*, ended it is not; for the great quarrel by which human nature pleads with such a fiendish spirit of warfare, carried on under the countenance of him who stands first in authority under the nation that stands second in authority amongst the leaders of civilization; — quarrel of that sort, once arising, does not go to sleep again until it is righted forever. As the English martyr at Oxford said to his fellow-martyr — "Brother, be of good cheer, for we shall this day light up a fire in England that, by the blessing of God, cannot be extinguished forever," — even so the atrocities of these hybrid campaigns between baffled civilization and barbarism, provoked into frenzy, will, like the horrors of the middle passage rising up from the Atlantic deep, suddenly, at the bar of the British senate, sooner or later reproduce themselves, in strong reactions of the social mind throughout Christendom upon *all* the horrors of war that are wilful and superfluous. In that case there will be a consolation in reserve for the compatriots of those, the brave men, the women, and the innocent children, who died in that fiery furnace at Dahra.

> "Their moans
> The vales redoubled to the hills, and *they*
> To heaven." [5]

The caves of Dahra repeated the woe to the hills and the hills to God. But such a furnace, though fierce, may be viewed as brief indeed if it shall terminate in permanently pointing the wrath of nations

(as in this dialogue it has pointed the wrath of genius) to the particular outrage and class of outrages which it concerns. The wrath of nations is a consuming wrath, and the scorn of intellect is a withering scorn, for all abuses upon which either one or the other is led, by strength of circumstances, to settle itself *systematically*. The danger is for the most part that the very violence of public feeling should rock it asleep — the tempest exhausts itself by its own excesses — and the thunder of one or two immediate explosions, by satisfying the first clamors of human justice and indignation, is too apt to intercept that sustained roll of artillery which is requisite for the effectual assault of long-established abuses. Luckily in the present case of the Dahra massacre there is the less danger of such a result, as the bloody scene has happened to fall in with a very awakened state of the public sensibility as to the evils of war generally, and with a state of expectation almost romantically excited as to the possibility of readily or soon exterminating these evils.

Hope, meantime, even if unreasonable, becomes wise and holy when it points along a path of purposes that are more than usually beneficent. According to a fine illustration of Sir Phillip Sidney's, drawn from the practice of archery, by attempting more than we can possibly accomplish, we shall yet reach further than ever we *should* have reached with a less ambitious aim; we shall do much for the purification of war, if nothing at all for its abolition; and atrocities of this Algerine order are amongst the earliest that will give way. They will sink before the growing illumination, and (what is equally important) before the growing

combination of minds acting simultaneously from various centres, in nations otherwise the most at variance. By a rate of motion continually accelerated, the gathering power of the press, falling in with the growing facilities of personal intercourse, is, day by day, bringing Europe more and more into a state of fusion, in which the sublime name of *Christendom* will continually become more and more significant, and will express a unity of the most awful order, namely, in the midst of strife, long surviving as to inferior interests and subordinate opinions, will express an agreement continually more close, and an agreement continually more operative, upon all capital questions affecting human rights, duties, and the interests of human *progress*. Before that tribunal, which every throb of every steam-engine, in printing houses and on railroads, is hurrying to establish, all flagrant abuses of belligerent powers will fall prostrate; and, in particular, no form of pure undisguised murder will be any longer allowed to confound itself with the necessities of honorable warfare.

Much already *has* been accomplished on this path; more than people are aware of; so gradual and silent has been the advance. How noiseless is the growth of corn! Watch it night and day for a week, and you will never see it growing; but return after two months, and you will find it all whitening for the harvest. Such, and so imperceptible, in the stages of their motion, are the victories of the press. Here is one instance. Just forty-seven years ago, on the shores of Syria, was celebrated, by Napoleon Bonaparte, the most damnable carnival of murder that romance has fabled, or that

history has recorded. Rather more than four thousand men — not (like Tyrolese or Spanish guerillas), even in pretence, "insurgent rustics," but regular troops, serving the Pacha and the Ottoman Sultan, not old men that might by odd fractions have been thankful for dismissal from a life of care or sorrow, but all young Albanians, in the early morning of manhood, the oldest not twenty-four — were exterminated by successive rolls of musketry, when helpless as infants, having their arms pinioned behind their backs like felons on the scaffold, and having surrendered their muskets (which else would have made so desperate a resistance), on the faith that they were dealing with soldiers and men of honor. I have elsewhere examined, as a question in casuistry, the frivolous pretences for this infamous carnage, but that examination I have here no wish to repeat; for it would draw off the attention from one feature of the case, which I desire to bring before the reader, as giving to this Jaffa tragedy a depth of atrocity wanting in that of Dahra. The four thousand and odd young Albanians had been seduced, trepanned, fraudulently decoyed, from a post of considerable strength, in which they could and would have sold their lives at a bloody rate, by a solemn promise of safety from authorized French officers. "But," said Napoleon, in part of excuse, "these men, my aides-de-camp, were poltroons; to save their own lives, they made promises which they ought *not* to have made." Suppose it so; and suppose the case one in which the supreme authority has a right to disavow his agents; what then? This entitles that authority to refuse his ratification to the terms agreed on; but this,

at the same time, obliges him to replace the hostile parties in the advantages from which his agents had wiled them by these terms. A robber, who even owns himself such, will not pretend that he may refuse the price of the jewel as exorbitant, and yet keep possession of the jewel. And next comes a fraudulent advantage, not obtained by a knavery in the aid-de-camp, but in the leader himself. The surrender of the weapons, and the submission to the fettering of the arms, were not concessions from the Albanians, filched by the representatives of Napoleon, acting (as *he* says) without orders, but by express falsehoods, emanating from himself. The officer commanding at Dahra could not have reached his enemy without the shocking resource which he employed; Napoleon could. The officer at Dahra violated no covenant; Napoleon did. The officer at Dahra had not by lies seduced his victims from their natural advantages; Napoleon had. Such was the atrocity of Jaffa in the year 1799. Now, the relation of that great carnage to the press, the secret argument through which that vast massacre connects itself with the progress of the press, is this — that in 1799, and the two following years, when most it had become important to search the character and acts of Napoleon, excepting Sir Robert Wilson, no writer in Europe, no section of the press, cared much to insist upon this, by so many degrees, the worst deed of modern[6] military life. From that deed all the waters of the Atlantic would not have cleansed him; and yet, since 1804, we have heard much oftener of the sick men whom he poisoned in his Syrian hospital (an act of merely erroneous

humanity), and more of the Duc d'Enghien's execution, than of either; though this, savage as it was, admits of such palliations as belong to doubtful provocations in the sufferer, and to extreme personal terror in the inflicter. Here, then, we have a case of wholesale military murder, emanating from Christendom, and not less treacherous than the worst which have been ascribed to the Mahometan Timur, or even to any Hindoo Rajah, which hardly moved a vibration of anger, or a solitary outcry of protestation from the European press (then, perhaps, having the excuse of deadly fear for herself), or even from the press of moral England, having no such excuse. Fifty years have passed; a less enormity is perpetrated, but again by a French leader; and, behold, Europe is *now* convulsed from side to side by unaffected indignation! So travels the press to victory; such is the light, and so broad, which it diffuses; such is the strength for action by which it combines the hearts of nations.

MELANCTHON AND CALVIN.

Of Mr. Landor's notions in religion it would be useless, and without polemic arguments it would be arrogant, to say that they are false. It is sufficient to say that they are degrading. In the dialogue between Melancthon and Calvin, it is clear that the former represents Mr. L. himself, and is not at all the Melancthon whom we may gather from his writings. Mr. Landor has heard that he was gentle and timid in action; and he exhibits him as a mere development of that key-note; as a compromiser of all that is severe in doctrine; and as on effeminate picker and chooser in

morals. God, in *his* conception of him, is not a father so much as a benign, but somewhat weak, old grandfather; and we, his grandchildren, being now and then rather naughty, are to be tickled with a rod made of feathers, but, upon the whole, may rely upon an eternity of sugar-plums. For instance, take the puny idea ascribed to Melancthon upon *Idolatry;* and consider, for one moment, how little it corresponds to the vast machinery reared up by God himself against this secret poison and dreadful temptation of human nature. Melancthon cannot mean to question the truth or the importance of the Old Testament; and yet, if *his* view of idolatry (as reported by L.) be sound, the Bible must have been at the root of the worst mischief ever yet produced by idolatry. He begins by describing idolatry as "*Jewish;*" insinuating that it was an irregularity chiefly besetting the Jews. But how perverse a fancy! In the Jews, idolatry was a disease; in Pagan nations, it was the normal state. In a nation (if any such nation could exist) of *crétins* or of *lepers*, nobody would talk of cretinism or leprosy as of any morbid affection; *that* would be the regular and natural condition of man. But where either was spoken of with horror as a ruinous taint in human flesh, it would argue that naturally (and, perhaps, by a large majority) the people were uninfected. Amongst Pagans, nobody talked of idolatry — no such idea existed — because *that* was the regular form of religious worship. To be named at all, idolatry must be viewed as standing in opposition to some higher worship that is *not* idolatry. But, next, as we are all agreed that in idolatry there is something evil, and differ only as to

the propriety of considering it a Jewish evil, in what does this evil lie? It lies, according to the profound Landorian Melancthon, in this, that different idolaters figure the Deity under different forms; if they could all agree upon one and the same mode of figuring the invisible Being, there need be no quarrelling; and in this case, consequently, there would be no harm in idolatry, none whatever. But, unhappily, it seems each nation, or sometimes section of a nation, has a different fancy; they get to disputing; and from that they get to boxing, in which, it is argued, lies the true evil of idolatry. It is an *extra* cause of broken heads. One tribe of men represent the Deity as a beautiful young man, with a lyre and a golden bow; another as a snake; and a third — Egyptians, for instance, of old — as a beetle or an onion; these last, according to Juvenal's remark, having the happy privilege of growing their own gods in their own kitchen-gardens. In all this there would be no harm, were it not for subsequent polemics and polemical assaults. Such, if we listen to Mr. L., is Melancthon's profound theory [7] of a false idolatrous religion. Were the police everywhere on an English footing, and the magistrates as unlike as possible to Turkish Cadis, nothing could be less objectionable; but, as things are, the beetle-worshipper despises the onion-worshipper; which breeds ill blood; whence grows a cudgel; and from the cudgel a constable; and from the constable an unjust magistrate. Not so, Mr. Landor; thus did not Melancthon speak; and if he *did*, and would defend it for a thousand times, then for a thousand times he would deserve to be trampled by posterity into that

German mire which he sought to evade by his Grecian disguise.[8] The true evil of idolatry is this: There is one sole idea of God, which corresponds adequately to his total nature. Of this idea, two things may be affirmed: the first being, that it is at the root of all absolute grandeur, of all truth, and of all moral perfection; the second being, that, natural and easy as it seems when once unfolded, it could only have been unfolded by revelation; and, to all eternity, he that started with a false conception of God, could not, through any effort of his own, have exchanged it for a true one. All idolaters alike, though not all in equal degrees, by intercepting the idea of God through the prism of some representative creature that *partially* resembles God, refract, splinter, and distort that idea. Even the idea of light, of the pure, solar light — the old Persian symbol of God — has that depraving necessity. Light itself, besides being an *imperfect* symbol, is an incarnation for us. However pure itself, or in its original divine manifestation, for us it is incarnated in forms and in matter that are *not* pure: it gravitates towards physical alliances, and therefore towards unspiritual pollutions. And all experience shows that the tendency for man, left to his own imagination, is downwards. The purest symbol, derived from created things, can and will condescend to the grossness of inferior human natures, by submitting to mirror itself in more and more carnal representative symbols, until finally the mixed element of resemblance to God is altogether buried and lost. God, by this succession of imperfect interceptions, falls more and more under the taint and limitation of the *alien* elements associated

with all created things; and, for the ruin of all moral grandeur in man, every idolatrous nation left to itself will gradually bring round the idea of God into the idea of a powerful demon. Many things check and disturb this tendency for a time; but finally, and under that intense civilization to which man intellectually is always hurrying under the eternal evolution of physical knowledge, such a degradation of God's idea, ruinous to the *moral* capacities of man, would undoubtedly perfect itself, were it not for the kindling of a purer standard by revelation. Idolatry, therefore, is not merely *an* evil, and one utterly beyond the power of social institutions to redress, but, in fact, it is the fountain of all other evil that seriously menaces the destiny of the human race.

PORSON AND SOUTHEY.

The two dialogues between Southey and Porson relate to Wordsworth; and they connect Mr. Landor with a body of groundless criticism, for which vainly he will seek to evade his responsibility by pleading the caution posted up at the head of his Conversations, namely, — "Avoid a mistake in attributing to the *writer* any opinions in this book but what are spoken under his own name." If Porson, therefore, should happen to utter villanies that are indictable, *that* (you are to understand) is Porson's affair. Render unto Landor the eloquence of the dialogue, but render unto Porson any kicks which Porson may have merited by his atrocities against a man whom assuredly he never heard of, and probably never saw. Now, unless Wordsworth ran into Porson in the streets of Cam-

oridge on some dark night about the era of the French Revolution, and capsized him into the kennel — a thing which is exceedingly improbable, considering that Wordsworth was never tipsy except once in his life, yet, on the other hand, is exceeding probable, considering that Porson was very seldom otherwise — barring this one opening for a collision, there is no human possibility or contingency known to insurance offices, through which Porson ever *could* have been brought to trouble his head about Wordsworth. It would have taken three witches, and three broom-sticks, clattering about his head, to have extorted from Porson any attention to a contemporary poet that did not give first-rate feeds. And a man that, besides his criminal conduct in respect of dinners, actually made it a principle to drink nothing but water, would have seemed so depraved a character in Porson's eyes that, out of regard to public decency, he would never have mentioned his name, had he even happened to know it. "O no! he never mentioned *him*." Be assured of *that*. As to Poetry, be it known that Porson read none whatever, unless it were either political or obscene. With no seasoning of either sort, "wherefore," he would ask indignantly, "should I waste my time upon a poem?" Porson had read the Rolliad, because it concerned his political party; he had read the epistle of Obereea, Queen of Otaheite, to Sir Joseph Banks, because, if Joseph was rather too demure, the poem was *not*. Else, and with such exceptions, he condescended not to any metrical writer subsequent to the era of Pope, whose Eloisa to Abelard he could say by heart, and could even sing from beginning to end; which, indeed.

he *would* do, whether you chose it or not, after a sufficient charge of brandy, and sometimes even though threatened with a cudgel, in case he persisted in his molestations. Waller he had also read and occasionally quoted with effect. But as to a critique on Wordsworth, whose name had not begun to mount from the ground when Porson died,[9] as reasonably and characteristically might it have been put into the mouth of the Hetman Platoff. Instead of Porson's criticisms on writings which he never saw, let us hear Porson's account of a fashionable rout in an aristocratic London mansion: it was the only party of distinction that this hirsute but most learned Theban ever visited; and his history of what passed (comic alike and tragic) is better worth preserving than "Brantome," or even than Swift's "Memoirs of a Parish Clerk." It was by the hoax of a young Cantab that the professor was ever decoyed into such a party: the thing was a swindle; but his report of its natural philosophy is not on that account the less picturesque: —

Southey.— Why do you repeat the word *rout* so often?

Porson.— I was once *at* one by mistake; and really I saw there what you describe; and this made me repeat the word and smile. You seem curious.

Southey.— Rather, indeed.

Porson.— I had been dining out; there were some who smoked after dinner: within a few hours, the fumes of their pipes produced such an effect on my head that I was willing to go into the air a little. Still I continued hot and thirsty; and an undergraduate, whose tutor was my old acquaintance, proposed that we should turn into an oyster-cellar, and refresh ourselves with oysters and porter. The rogue, instead of this, conducted me to a fashionable house in the neighborhood of St.

James' ; and, although I expostulated with him, and insisted that we were going *up* stairs and not *down*, he appeared to me so ingenuous in his protestations to the contrary that I could well disbelieve him no longer. Nevertheless, receiving on the stairs many shoves and elbowings, I could not help telling him plainly, that, if indeed it *was* the oyster-cellar in Fleet street, the company was much altered for the worse ; and that, in future, I should frequent another. When the fumes of the pipes had left me, I discovered the deceit by the brilliancy and indecency of the dresses ; and was resolved not to fall into temptation. Although, to my great satisfaction, no immodest proposal was directly made to me, I looked about anxious that no other man should know me beside *him* whose wantonness had conducted me thither ; and I would have escaped, if I could have found the door, from which every effort I made appeared to remove me farther and farther. * * * A pretty woman said loudly, "He has no gloves on !" "What nails the creature has !" replied an older one — "Piano-forte keys wanting the white."

I pause to say that this, by all accounts which have reached posterity, was really no slander. The professor's forks had become rather of the dingiest, probably through inveterate habits of scratching up Greek roots from diluvian mould, some of it older than Deucalion's flood, and very good, perhaps, for turnips, but less so for the digits which turn up turnips. What followed, however, if it were of a nature to be circumstantially repeated, must have been more trying to the sensibilities of the Greek oracle, and to the blushes of the policemen dispersed throughout the rooms, than even the harsh critique upon his nails ; which, let the wits say what they would in their malice, were no doubt washed regularly enough once every three years. And, even if they were *not*, I should say that this is not

so strong a fact as some that are reported about many a continental professor. Mrs. Cl——nt, with the two-fold neatness of an Englishwoman and a Quaker, told me that, on visiting Pestalozzi, the celebrated education professor, at Yverdun, about 1820, her first impression, from a distant view of his dilapidated premises, was profound horror at the grimness of his complexion, which struck her as no complexion formed by nature, but as a deposition from half a century of atmospheric rust — a most ancient *ærugo*. She insisted on a radical purification, as a *sine qua non* towards any interview with herself. The mock professor consented. Mrs. Cl. hired a stout Swiss charwoman, used to the scouring of staircases, kitchen floors, &c.; the professor, whom, on this occasion, one may call "the prisoner," was accommodated with a seat (as prisoners at the bar sometimes are with us) in the centre of a mighty washing-tub, and then scoured through a long summer forenoon, by the strength of a brawny Helvetian arm. "And now, my dear friends," said Mrs. Cl. to myself, "is it thy opinion that this was cruel? Some people say it *was;* and I wish to disguise nothing; — it was not mere soap that I had him scoured with, but soap and sand; so say honestly, dost thee call *that* cruel?" Laughing no more than the frailty of my human nature compelled me, I replied, "Far from it; on the contrary, everybody must be charmed with her consideration for the professor, in not having him cleaned on the same principle as her carriage, namely, taken to the stable-yard, mopped severely" ["*Mobbed*, dost thee say?" she exclaimed. "No, no," I said, "not mobbed, but *mopped,* until the gravel should be all gone"], "then pelted with

buckets of water by firemen, and, finally, currycombed and rubbed down by two grooms, keeping a sharp *susurrus* between them, so as to soothe his wounded feelings; after all which, a feed of oats might not have been amiss." The result, however, of this scouring extraordinary was probably as fatal as to Mambrino's helmet in Don Quixote. Pestalozzi issued, indeed, from the washing-tub like Aeson from Medea's kettle; he took his station amongst a younger and fairer generation; and the dispute was now settled whether he belonged to the Caucasian or Mongolian race. But his intellect was thought to have suffered seriously. The tarnish of fifty or sixty years seemed to have acquired powers of reacting as a stimulant upon the professor's fancy, through the *rete mucosum*, or through — Heaven knows what. He was too old to be converted to cleanliness; the Paganism of a neglected person at seventy becomes a sort of religion interwoven with the nervous system — just as the well-known *Plica Polonica* from which the French armies suffered so much in Poland, during 1807–8, though produced by neglect of the hair, will not be cured by extirpation of the hair. The hair becomes matted into Medusa locks, or what look like snakes; and to cut these off is oftentimes to cause nervous frenzy, or other great constitutional disturbance. I never heard, indeed, that Pestalozzi suffered apoplexy from his scouring; but certainly his ideas on education grew bewildered, and will be found essentially damaged, after that great epoch — his baptism by water and sand.

Now, in comparison of an Orson like this man of Yverdun — this great Swiss reformer, who might, per-

haps, have bred a pet variety of typhus-fever for his own separate use — what signify nails, though worse than Caliban's or Nebuchadnezzar's ?

This Greek professor Porson — whose knowledge of English was so limited that his total cargo might have been embarked on board a walnut-shell, on the bosom of a slop-basin, and insured for three halfpence — astonishes me, that have been studying English for thirty years and upwards, by the strange discoveries that he announces in this field. One and all, I fear, are mares' nests. He discovered, for instance, on his first and last reception amongst aristocratic people, that in this region of society a female bosom is called her *neck*. But, if it really *had* been so called, I see no objection to the principle concerned in such disguises; and I see the greatest to that savage frankness which virtually is indicated with applause in the Porsonian remark. Let us consider. It is not that we *cannot* speak freely of the female bosom, and we do so daily. In discussing a statue, we do so without reserve; and in the act of suckling an infant, the bosom of every woman is an idea so sheltered by the tenderness and sanctity with which all but ruffians invest the organ of maternity, that no man scruples to name it, if the occasion warrants it. He suppresses it only as he suppresses the name of God; not as an idea that can itself contain any indecorum, but, on the contrary, as making other and more trivial ideas to become indecorous when associated with a conception rising so much above their own standard. Equally, the words *affliction*, *guilt*, *penitence*, *remorse*, &c., are proscribed from the ordinary current of conversation amongst

mere acquaintances; and for the same reason, namely, that they touch chords too impassioned and profound for harmonizing with the key in which the mere social civilities of life are exchanged. Meantime, it is not true that any custom ever prevailed in *any* class of calling a woman's bosom her neck. Porson goes on to say, that, for *his* part, he was born in an age when people had *thighs*. Well, a great many people have thighs still. But in all ages there must have been many of whom it is lawful to suspect such a fact zoologically; and yet, as men honoring our own race, and all its veils of mystery, not too openly to insist upon it, which, luckily, there is seldom any occasion to do.

Mr. Landor conceives that we are growing worse in the pedantries of false delicacy. I think not. His own residence in Italy has injured his sense of discrimination. It is not his countrymen that have grown conspicuously more demure and prudish, but he himself that has grown in Italy more tolerant of what is really a blamable coarseness. Various instances occur in these volumes of that faulty compliance with Southern grossness. The tendencies of the age, among ourselves, lie certainly in *one* channel towards excessive refinement. So far, however, they do but balance the opposite tendencies in some other channels. The craving for instant effect in style — as it brings forward many disgusting Germanisms and other barbarisms — as it transplants into literature much slang from the street — as it reäcts painfully upon the grandeurs of the antique scriptural diction, by recalling into *colloquial* use many consecrated words which thus lose their

Gothic beauty — also operates daily amongst journalists, by the temptations of apparent strength that lurk in plain speaking or even in brutality. What other temptation, for instance, can be supposed to govern those who, in speaking of hunger as it affects our paupers, so needlessly affect us by the very coarsest English word for the Latin word *venter?* Surely the word *stomach* would be intelligible to everybody, and yet disgust nobody. It would do for *him* that affects plain speaking; it would do for you and me that revolt from gross speaking. Signs from abroad speak the very same language, as to the *liberal* tendencies (in this point) of the nineteenth century. Formerly, it was treason for a Spaniard, even in a laudatory copy of verses, to suppose his own Queen lowered to the level of other females by the possession of legs! Constitutionally, the Queen was incapable of legs. How else her Majesty contrived to walk, or to dance, the Inquisition soon taught the poet was no concern of *his.* Royal legs for females were an inconceivable thing — except amongst Protestant nations; some of whom the Spanish Church affirmed to be even disfigured by tails! Having tails, of course they might have legs. But not *Catholic* Queens: Now-a-days, so changed is all this that if you should even express your homage to her Most Catholic Majesty, by sending her a pair of embroidered garters — which certainly presuppose legs — there is no doubt that the Spanish Minister of Finance would gratefully carry them to account — on the principle that "every little helps." Mr. Porson is equally wrong, as I conceive, in another illustration of this matter, drawn from the human toes, and spe-

cifically from the great toe. It is true, that, in refined society, upon any rare necessity arising for alluding to so inconsiderable a member of the human statue, generally this is done at present by the French term *doigt-de-pied* — though not always — as may be seen in various honorary certificates granted to chiropodists within the last twenty months. And whereas Mr. Porson asks pathetically — What harm has the great toe done, that it is never to be named? I answer — The greatest harm; as may be seen in the first act of "Coriolanus," where *Menenius* justly complains that this arrogant subaltern of the crural system,

> "——— Being basest, meanest, vilest,
> Still goeth foremost."

Even in the villany of running away from battle, this unworthy servant still asserts precedency. I repeat, however, that the general tendencies of the age, as to the just limits of *parrhesia* (using the Greek word in a sense wider than of old), are moving at present upon two opposite tracks; which fact it is, as in some other cases, that makes the final judgment difficult.

ROMAN IMPERATOR.

Mr. Landor, though really learned, often puts his learning into his pocket.

Thus, with respect to the German Empire, Mr. L asserts that it was a chimæra; that the *Imperium Germanicum* was a mere usage of speech, founded (if I understand him) not even in a legal fiction, but in a blunder; that a German *Imperator* never had a true historical existence; and, finally, that even the Roman

title of *Imperator* — which, unquestionably, surmounted in grandeur all titles of honor that ever were or will be — ranged in dignity below the title of *Rex*.

I believe him wrong in every one of these doctrines; let us confine ourselves to the last. The title of Imperator was not *originally* either above or below the title of Rex, or even upon the same level; it was what logicians call *disparatē* — it radiated from a different centre, precisely as the modern title of *Decanus*, or *Dean*, which is originally astrological [see the elder Scaliger on Manilius], has no relation, whether of superiority or equality or inferiority, to the title of *Colonel*, nor the title of *Cardinal* any such relation to that of *Field-Marshal*; and quite as little had *Rex* to *Imperator*. Masters of Ceremonies, or Lord Chamberlains, may certainly *create* a precedency in favor of any title whatever in regard to any other title; but such a precedency for any of the cases before us would be arbitrary, and not growing out of any internal principle, though useful for purposes of convenience. As regards the Roman *Imperator*, originally like the Roman *Prætor* — this title and the official rank pointed exclusively to military distinctions. In process of time the Prætor came to be a legal officer, and the Imperator to be the supreme political officer. But the motive for assuming the title of *Imperator*, as the badge or cognizance of the sovereign authority, when the great transfiguration of the Republic took place, seems to have been this. An essentially new distribution of political powers had become necessary, and this change masked itself to Romans, published itself in menaces and muttering thunder to foreign states, through the

martial title of *Imperator*. A new equilibrium was demanded by the changes which time and luxury and pauperism had silently worked on the composition of Roman society. If Rome was to be saved from herself — if she was to be saved from the eternal flux and reflux — action and reäction — amongst her oligarchy of immense estates (which condition of things it was that forced on the great *sine quâ non* reforms of Cæsar, against all the babble of the selfish Cicero, of the wicked Cato, and of the debt-ridden Senate) — then it was indispensable that a new order of powers should be combined for bridling her internal convulsions. To carry her off from her own self-generated vortex, which would, in a very few years, have engulfed her and drawn her down into fragments, some machinery as new as steam-power was required ; her own native sails filled in the wrong direction. There were already powers in the constitution equal to the work, but distracted and falsely lodged. These must be gathered into one hand. And, yet, as names are all-powerful upon our frail race, this recast must be *verbally* disguised. The title must be such as, whilst flattering the Roman pride, might yet announce to Oriental powers a plenipotentiary of Rome who argued all disputed points, not so much strongly as (an Irish phrase) with "a strong back" — not so much piquing himself on Aristotelian syllogisms that came within *Barbary* and *Celarent*, as upon thirty legions that stood within call. The Consulship was good for little ; *that*, with some reservations, could be safely resigned into subor dinate hands. The Consular name, and the name oı Senate, which was still suffered to retain an obscure

vitality and power of resurrection, continued to throw a popular lustre over the government. Millions were duped. But the essential offices, the offices in which settled the organs of all the life in the administration, were these: — 1, of Military Commander-in-Chief (including such a partition of the provinces as might seal the authority in this officer's hands, and yet flatter the people through the Senate); 2, of Censor, so as to watch the action of morals and social usages upon politics; 3, of Pontifex Maximus; 4, and finally, of Tribune. The tribunitial power, next after the military power, occupied the earliest anxieties of the Cæsars. All these powers, and some others belonging to less dignified functions, were made to run through the same central rings (or what in mail-coach harness is called the *turrets*): the "ribbons" were tossed up to one and the same imperial coachman, looking as amiable as he could, but, in fact, a very truculent personage, having powers more unlimited than was always safe for himself. And now, after all this change of things, what was to be the *name?* By what *title* should men know him? Much depended upon that. The tremendous symbols of S. P. Q. R. still remained; nor had they lost their power. On the contrary, the great idea of the Roman destiny, as of some vast phantom moving under God to some unknown end, was greater than ever; the idea was now *so* great, that it had outgrown all its representative realities. *Consul* and *Proconsul* would no longer answer, because they represented too exclusively the interior or domestic fountains of power, and not the external relations to the terraqueous globe which were beginning to expand with

sudden accelerations of velocity. The *central* power could not be forgotten by any who were near enough to have tasted its wrath; but now there was arising a necessity for expressing, by some great unity of denomination, so as no longer to lose the totality in the separate partitions — the enormity of the *circumference*. A necessity for this had repeatedly been found in negotiations, and in contests of ceremonial rank with oriental powers, as between ourselves and China. With Persia, the greatest of these powers, an instinct of inevitable collision[10] had, for some time, been ripening. It became requisite that there should be a representative officer for the whole Roman grandeur, and one capable of standing on the same level as the Persian king of kings; and this necessity arose at the very same moment that a new organization was required of Roman power for *domestic* purposes. There is no doubt that both purposes were consulted in the choice of the title of *Imperator*. The chief alternative title was that of *Dictator*. But to this, as regarded Romans, there were two objections — first, that it was a mere *provisional* title, always commemorating a transitional emergency, and pointing to some happier condition, which the extraordinary powers of the officer ought soon to establish. It was in the nature of a problem, and continually asked for its own solution. The Dictator dictated. He was the greatest *ipse dixit* that ever was heard of. It reminded the people *verbally* of despotic powers and autocracy. Then again, as regarded foreign nations, unacquainted with the Roman constitution, and throughout the servile East incapable of understanding it, the title of *Dictator* had no meaning at all. *The*

Speaker is a magnificent title in England, and makes brave men sometimes shake in their shoes. But, yet, if from rustic ignorance it is not understood, even that title means nothing.

Of the proudest Speaker that England ever saw, namely, Sir Edward Seymour, it is recorded that his grandeur failed him, sank under him, like the Newgate drop, at the very moment when his boiling anger most relied upon and required it. He was riding near Barnet, when a rustic wagoner ahead of him, by keeping obstinately the middle of the road, prevented him from passing. Sir Edward motioned to him magnificently, that he must turn his horses to the left. The carter, on some fit of the sulks (perhaps from the Jacobinism innate in man), despised this pantomime, and sturdily persisted in his mutinous disrespect. On which Sir Edward shouted — "Fellow, do you know who I am?" "*Noo-ah*," replied our rebellious friend, meaning, when faithfully translated, *no.* "Are you aware, sirrah," said Sir Edward, now thoroughly incensed, "that I am the right honorable the Speaker? At your peril, sir, in the name of the Commons of England, in Parliament assembled, quarter instantly to the left." This was said in that dreadful voice which sometimes reprimanded penitent offenders, kneeling at the bar of the House. The carter, more struck by the terrific tones than the words, spoke an aside to "Dobbin" (his "thill" horse), which procured an opening to the blazing Speaker, and then replied thus — "Speaker! Why, if so be as thou canst speak, whoy-y-y-y" (in the tremulous undulation with which he was used to utter his sovereign

whoah-h-h-h to his horses), "whoy-y-y-y didn't-a speak afore?" The wagoner, it seemed, had presumed Sir Edward, from his mute pantomime, to be a dumb man; and all which the proud Speaker gained, by the proclamation of his style and title, was, to be exonerated from that suspicion, but to the heavy discredit of his sanity. A Roman Dictator stood quite as poor a chance with foreigners, as our Speaker with a rustic. "Dictator! let him dictate to his wife; but he sha'n't dictate to us." Any title, to prosper with distant nations, must rest upon the basis of arms. And this fell in admirably with the political exigency for Rome herself. The title of *Imperator* was liable to no jealousy. Being entirely a military title, it clashed with no civil pretensions whatever. Being a military title, that recorded a triumph over external enemies in the field, it was dear to the patriotic heart; whilst it directed the eye to a quarter where all increase of power was concurrent with increase of benefit to the State. And again, as the honor had been hitherto purely titular, accompanied by some *auctoritas*, in the Roman sense (not always honor, for Cicero was an Imperator for Cilician exploits, which he reports with laughter), but no separate authority in our modern sense. Even in military circles it was open to little jealousy; nor apparently could ripen into a shape that ever *would* be so, since, according to all precedent, it would be continually balanced by the extension of the same title, under popular military suffrage, to other fortunate leaders. Who could foresee, at the inauguration of this reform, that this precedent would be abolished? who could guess that henceforwards no

more triumphs (but only a sparing distribution of triumphal decorations), henceforwards no more imperatorial titles for anybody out of the one consecrated family? All this was hidden in the bosom of the earliest Imperator; he seemed, to the great mass of the people, perfectly innocent of civic ambition; he rested upon his truncheon, that is, upon S. P. Q. R.; like Napoleon, he said, "I am but the first soldier of the republic," that is, the most dutiful of her servants; and, like Napoleon, under cover of this martial *paludamentum*, he had soon filched every ensign of authority by which the organs of public power could speak. But, at the beginning, this title of *Imperator* was the one by far the best fitted to mask all this, to disarm suspicion, and to win the confidence of the people.

The title, therefore, began in something like imposture; and it was not certainly at first the gorgeous title into which it afterwards blossomed. The earth did not yet ring with it. The rays of its diadem were not then the first that said *All hail!* to the rising — the last that said *Farewell!* to the setting sun. But still it was already a splendid distinction; and, in a Roman ear, it must have sounded far above all competition from the trivial title (in *that* day) of "Rex," unless it were the Persian Rex, namely, "Rex Regum." Romans *gave* the title; they stooped not to accept it.[11] Even Mark Antony, in the all-magnificent description of him by Shakspeare's Cleopatra, could give it in showers — kings waited in his ante-room, "and from his pocket fell crowns and sceptres." The title of *Imperator* was indeed repeated in glory that transcended the glory of earth, but it was not, therefore, sown in dishonor.

We are all astonished at Mr. Landor — myself and three hundred select readers. What *can* he mean by tilting against the Imperator — Semper Augustus? Before *him* the sacred fire (that burned from century to century) went pompously in advance — before *him* the children of Europe and Asia — of Africa and the islands, rode as *dorypheroi; his somatophulakes* were princes; and *his* empire, when burning out in Byzantium, furnished from its very ruins the models for our western honors and ceremonial. Had it even begun in circumstances of ignominy, *that* would have been cured easily by its subsequent triumph. Many are the titles of earth that have found a glory in looking back to the humility of their origin as its most memorable feature. The fisherman who sits upon Mount Palatine, in some respects the grandest of all potentates, as one wielding both earthly and heavenly thunders, is the highest example of this. Some, like the Mamelukes of Egypt and the early Janizaries of the Porte, have glorified themselves in being slaves. Others, like the Caliphs, have founded their claims to men's homage in the fact of being *successors* to those who (between ourselves) were knaves. And once it happened to Professor Wilson and myself, that we travelled in the same post-chaise with a most agreeable madman, who, amongst a variety of other select facts which he communicated, was kind enough to give us the following etymological account of our much-respected ancestors the Saxons; which furnishes a further illustration (quite unknown to the learned) of the fact — that honor may glory in deducing itself from circumstances of humility. He assured us that

these worthy Pagans were a league, comprehending every single brave man of German blood; so much so, that on sailing away they left that unhappy land in a state of universal cowardice, which accounts for the licking it subsequently received from Napoleon. The Saxons were very poor, as brave men too often are. In fact they had no breeches, and, of course, no silk stockings. They had, however, *sacks*, which they mounted on their backs, whence naturally their name *Sax-on*. *Sacks-on!* was the one word of command, and *that* spoken, the army was ready. In reality it was treason to take them off. But this indorsement of their persons was not assumed on any Jewish principle of humiliation; on the contrary, in the most flagrant spirit of defiance to the whole race of man. For they proclaimed that, having no breeches nor silk stockings of their own, they intended, wind and weather permitting, to fill these same sacks with those of other men. The Welshmen then occupying England were reputed to have a good stock of both, and in quest of this Welsh wardrobe the *Sacks-on* army sailed. With what success it is not requisite to say, since here in one post-chaise, four hundred and thirty years after, were three of their posterity, the professor, the madman, and myself, indorsees (as you may say) of the original indorsers, who were all well equipped with the object of this great *Sacks-on* exodus.

It is true that the word *emperor* is not in every situation so impressive as the word *king*. But *that* arises in part from the latter word having less of specialty about it; it is more catholic, and to that extent more poetic; and in part from accidents of

position which disturb the relations of many other titles besides. The *Proconsul* had a grander sound, as regarded military expeditions, than the principal from whom he emanated. The *Surena* left a more awful remembrance of his title upon the comrades of Julian in his Persian expedition than the Surena's master. And there are many cases extant in which the word *angel* strikes a deeper key — cases where power is contemplated, as well as beauty or mysterious existence — than the word archangel, though confessedly higher in the hierarchies of heaven.

Let me now draw the reader's attention to *Count Julian*, a great conception of Mr. Landor's.

The fable of Count Julian (that is, when comprehending all the parties to that web, of which *he* is the centre) may be pronounced the grandest which modern history unfolds. It is, and it is *not*, scenical. In some portions (as the fate so mysterious of Roderick, and in a higher sense of Julian) it rises as much above what the stage could illustrate, as does Thermopylæ above the petty details of narration. The man was mad that, instead of breathing from a hurricane of harps some mighty ode over Thermopylæ, fancied the little conceit of weaving it into a metrical novel or succession of incidents. Yet, on the other hand, though rising higher, Count Julian sinks lower: though the passions rise far above Troy, above Marathon, above Thermopylæ, and are such passions as could not have existed under Paganism, in some respects they condescend and preconform to the stage. The characters are all different, all marked, all *in position;* by which, never assuming fixed attitudes as to purpose and inter-

est, the passions are deliriously complex, and the situa tions are of corresponding grandeur. Metius Fuffetius, Alban traitor! that wert torn limb from limb by antagonist yet confederate chariots, thy tortures, seen by shuddering armies, were not comparable to the unseen tortures in Count Julian's mind; who — whether his treason prospered or not, whether his dear outraged daughter lived or died, whether his king were trampled in the dust by the horses of infidels, or escaped as a wreck from the fiery struggle, whether his dear native Spain fell for ages under misbelieving hounds, or, combining her strength, tossed off *them*, but then also *himself*, with one loathing from her shores — saw, as he looked out into the mighty darkness, and stretched out his penitential hands vainly for pity or for pardon, nothing but the blackness of ruin, and ruin that was too probably to career through centuries. "To this pass," as Cæsar said to his soldiers at Pharsalia, "had his enemies reduced him;" and Count Julian might truly say, as he stretched himself a rueful suppliant before the Cross, listening to the havoc that was driving onwards before the dogs of the Crescent, "*My* enemies, because they would not remember that I was a man, forced *me* to forget that I was a Spaniard: — to forget thee, O native Spain, — and, alas! thee, O faith of Christ!"

The story is wrapped in gigantic mists, and looms upon one like the Grecian fable of Œdipus; and there will be great reason for disgust, if the deep Arabic researches now going on in the Escurial, or at Vienna, should succeed in stripping it of its grandeurs. For, as it stands at present, it is the most fearful lesson

extant of the great moral, that crime propagates crime, and violence inherits violence; nay, a lesson on the awful *necessity* which exists at times, that one tremendous wrong should blindly reproduce itself in endless retaliatory wrongs. To have resisted the dread temptation, would have needed an angel's nature; to have yielded, is but human; should it, then, plead in vain for pardon? and yet, by some mystery of evil, to have perfected this human vengeance, is, finally, to land all parties alike, oppressor and oppressed, in the passions of hell.

Mr. Landor, who always rises with his subject, and dilates like Satan into Teneriffe or Atlas, when he sees before him an antagonist worthy of his powers, is probably the one man in Europe that has adequately conceived the situation, the stern self-dependency and the monumental misery of Count Julian. That sublimity of penitential grief, which cannot accept consolation from man, cannot hear external reproach, cannot condescend to notice insult, cannot so much as see the curiosity of by-standers; that awful carelessness of all but the troubled deeps within his own heart, and of God's spirit brooding upon their surface, and searching their abysses, never was so majestically described as in the following lines; it is the noble Spaniard, Hernando, comprehending and loving Count Julian in the midst of his treasons, who speaks: — Tarik, the gallant Moor, having said that at last the Count must be happy; for that

> "Delicious calm
> Follows the fierce enjoyment of revenge."

Hernando replies thus: —

> "That calm was never his; no other *will* be.
> Not victory, that o'ershadows him, sees he.
> No airy and light passion stirs abroad
> To ruffle or to soothe him; all are quelled
> Beneath a mightier, sterner, stress of mind.
> Wakeful he sits, and lonely, and unmoved,
> Beyond the arrows, shouts, and views of men,
> As oftentimes an eagle, ere the sun
> Throws o'er the varying earth his early ray,
> Stands solitary — stands immovable
> Upon some highest cliff, and rolls his eye,
> Clear, constant, unobservant, unabased,
> In the cold light above the dews of morn."

One change suggests itself to me as possibly for the better, namely, if the magnificent line —

> "Beyond the arrows, shouts, and views of men" —

were transferred to the secondary object, the eagle, placed after what is *now* the last line, it would give a fuller rythmus to the close of the entire passage; it would be more *literally* applicable to the majestic and solitary bird, than to the majestic and solitary man; whilst the figurative expression even more impassioned might be found for the utter self-absorption of Count Julian's spirit — too grandly sorrowful to be capable of disdain.

It completes the picture of this ruined prince, that Hernando, the sole friend (except his daughter) still cleaving to him, dwells with yearning desire upon his death, knowing the necessity of this consummation to his own secret desires, knowing the forgiveness which would settle upon his memory after that last penalty should have been paid for his errors, comprehending the peace that would then swallow up the storm: —

> " For his own sake I could endure his loss,
> Pray for it, and thank God : yet mourn I must
> Him above all, so great, so bountiful,
> So blessed once ! "

It is no satisfaction to Hernando that Julian should " yearn for death with speechless love," but Julian *does* so ; and it is in vain now amongst these irreparable ruins, to wish it otherwise.

> " 'T is not my solace that 't is[12] *his* desire :
> Of all who pass us in life's drear descent
> We grieve the most for those who *wished* to die."

How much, then, is in this brief drama of Count Julian, chiselled, as one might think, by the hands of that sculptor who fancied the great idea of chiselling Mount Athos into a demigod, which almost insists on being quoted ; which seems to rebuke and frown on one for *not* quoting it : passages to which, for their solemn grandeur, one raises one's hat as at night in walking under the Coliseum ; passages which, for their luxury of loveliness, should be inscribed on the phylacteries of brides, or upon the frescoes of Ionia, illustrated by the gorgeous allegories of Rubens.

> " Sed fugit interea, fugit irreparibile tempus,
> Singula dum capti circumvectamur amore."

Yet, reader, in spite of time, one word more on the subject we are quitting. Father Time is certainly become very importunate and clamorously shrill since he has been fitted up with that horrid railway whistle ; and even old Mother Space is growing rather impertinent, when she speaks out of monthly journals licensed to carry but small quantities of bulky goods ; yet one thing I must say in spite of them both.

It is, that although we have had from men of memorable genius, Shelley in particular, both direct and indirect attempts (some of them powerful attempts) to realize the great idea of Prometheus, which idea is *so* great, that (like the primeval majesties of Human Innocence, of Avenging Deluges that are past, of Fiery Visitations yet to come) it has had strength to pass through many climates, and through many religions, without essential loss, but surviving, without tarnish, every furnace of chance and change; so it is that, after all has been done which intellectual power *could* do since Æschylus (and since Milton in his Satan), no embodiment of the Promethean situation, none of the Promethean character, fixes the attentive eye upon itself with the same secret feeling of fidelity to the vast archetype, as Mr. Landor's "Count Julian." There is in this modern aerolith the same jewelly lustre, which cannot be mistaken; the same "*non imitabile fulgur*," and the same character of "fracture," or *cleavage*, as mineralogists speak, for its beaming iridescent grandeur, redoubling under the crush of misery. The color and the coruscation are the same when splintered by violence; the tones of the rocky[13] harp are the same when swept by sorrow. There is the same spirit of heavenly persecution against his enemy, persecution that would have hung upon his rear, and "burned after him to the bottomless pit," though it had yawned for both; there is the same gulf fixed between the possibilities of their reconciliation, the same immortality of resistance, the same abysmal anguish. Did Mr. Landor *consciously* cherish this Æschylean ideal in composing "Count Julian"? I know not: there it is.

NOTES.

NOTE 1. Page 244.

"*Southey affirmed:*"— namely, in the "Letters of Espriella," an imaginary Spaniard on a visit to England, about the year 1810.

NOTE 2. Page 246.

"*Too much wealth:*" — Mr. Landor, who *should* know best, speaks of himself (once at least), as "poor;" but *that* is all non-sense. I have known several people with annual incomes bordering on twenty thousand pounds, who spoke of themselves, and seemed seriously to think themselves, unhappy "paupers." Lady Hester Stanhope, with twenty-seven hundred pounds a year (of which about twelve arose from her government pension), and without one solitary dependent in her train, thought herself rich enough to become a queen (an Arabic *maleky*) in the Syrian mountains, but an absolute pauper for London; "for how, you know" (as she would say, pathetically), "could the humblest of spinsters live decently upon that pittance?"

NOTE 3. Page 249.

"*From Hegel:*" — I am not prepared with an affidavit that no man ever read Mr. Hegel, that great master of the impenetrable. But sufficient evidence of that fact, as I conceive, may be drawn from those who have written commentaries upon him.

NOTE 4. Page 258.

Wale (Germanicé *wahl*), the old ballad word for *choice.* But the motive for using it in this place is in allusion to an excellent old Scottish story (not sufficiently known in the south), of a rustic laird, who profited by the hospitality of his neighbors, duly to get drunk once (and no more) every lawful night, returning in the happiest frame of mind under the escort of his servant Andrew. In spite of Andrew, however, it sometimes happened that the laird fell off his horse ; and on one of these occasions, as he himself was dismounted from his saddle, his wig was dismounted from his cranium. Both fell into a peat-moss, and both were fished out by Andrew. But the laird, in his confusion, putting on the wig wrong side before, reasonably "jaloused" that this could not be his own wig, but some other man's, which suspicion he communicated to Andrew, who argued *contra* by the memorable reply — "Hout, laird ! there 's nae wale o' wigs i' a peat-moss."

NOTE 5. Page 259.

Milton, in uttering his grief (but also his hopes growing out of his grief) upon a similar tragedy, namely, the massacre of the Protestant women and children by "the bloody Piedmontese."

NOTE 6. Page 263.

"*Modern military life:*" — By modern I mean since the opening of the thirty years' war. In this war, the sack, or partial sack, of Magdeburg, will occur to the reader as one of the worst amongst martial ruffianisms. But this happens to be a hoax. It is an old experience, that, when once the demure muse of history has allowed herself to tell a lie, she never retracts it. Many are the falsehoods in our own history, which our children read traditionally for truths, merely because our uncritical grandfathers believed them to be such. Magdeburg was *not* sacked. What fault there was in the case belonged to the King of Sweden, who certainly was remiss in this instance, though with excuses more than were hearkened to at that time. Tilly, the Bavarian general had no reason for severity in this case, and showed none. Accor-

ing to the regular routine of war, Magdeburg had become forfeited to military execution ; which, let the reader remember, was not, in those days, a right of the general as against the enemy, and by way of salutary warning to other cities, lest they also should abuse the right of a reasonable defence, but was a right of the soldiery as against their own leaders. A town stormed was then a little perquisite to the ill-fed and ill-paid soldiers. So of prisoners. If I made a prisoner of "Signor Drew" [see Henry V.], it was *my* business to fix his ransom ; the general had no business to interfere with that. Magdeburg, therefore, had incurred the common penalty (which she must have foreseen) of obstinacy ; and the only difference between *her* case and that of many another brave little town, that quietly submitted to the usual martyrdom, without howl ing through all the speaking-trumpets of history, was this — that the penalty was, upon Magdeburg, but partially enforced. Harte, the tutor of Lord Chesterfield's son, first published, in his Life of Gustavus Adolphus, an authentic diary of what passed at that time, kept by a Lutheran clergyman. This diary shows sufficiently that no real departures were made from the customary routine, except in the direction of mercy. But it is evident that the people of Magdeburg were a sort of German hogs, of whom, it is notorious, that if you attempt in the kindest way to shear them, all you get is horrible yelling, and (the proverb asserts) very little wool. The case being a classical one in the annals of military outrages, I have noticed its real features.

NOTE 7. Page 266.

"*Melanchthon's profound theory.*" — That the reader may not suppose me misrepresenting Mr. L., I subjoin his words, p. 224, vol. 1 : — "The evil of idolatry is this — rival nations have raised up rival deities ; war hath been denounced in the name of Heaven ; men have been murdered for the love of God ; and such impiety hath darkened all the regions of the world, that the Lord of all things hath been mocked by all simultaneously as the Lord of hosts." The evil of idolatry is, not that it disfigures the Deity (in which, it seems, there might be no great harm), but that one man's disfiguration differs from another man's ; which leads to quarrelling, and *that* to fighting

Note 8. Page 267.

" *Grecian disguise:* " — The true German name of this learned reformer was *Schwarzerd* (black earth); but the homeliness and pun-provoking quality of such a designation induced Melanchthon to mask it in Greek. By the way, I do not understand how Mr. Landor, the arch-purist in orthography, reconciles *his* spelling of the name to Greek orthodoxy; there is no Greek word that *could* be expressed by the English syllable "cthon." Such a word as Melancthon * would be a hybrid monster — neither fish, flesh, nor good red herring.

Note 9. Page 270.

An equal mistake it is in Mr. Landor to put into the mouth of Porson any vituperation of Mathias as one that had uttered opinions upon Wordsworth. In the *Pursuits of Literature*, down to the fifteenth edition, there is no mention of Wordsworth's name. Southey is mentioned slightingly, and chiefly with reference to his then democratic principles; but not Coleridge, and not Wordsworth. Mathias soon after went to Italy, where he passed the remainder of his life — died, I believe, and was buried — never, perhaps, having heard the name of Wordsworth. As to Porson, it is very true that Mathias took a few liberties with his private habits, such as his writing paragraphs in the little cabinet fitted up for the *gens de plume*, at the *Morning Chronicle* office, and other trifles. But these, though impertinences, were not of a nature seriously to offend. They rather flattered, by the interest which they argued in his movements. And with regard to Porson's main pretension, his exquisite skill in Greek, Mathias was not the man to admire this too little; his weakness, *if in that point he had* a weakness, lay in the opposite direction. His own Greek was not a burthen that could have foundered a camel; he was neither accurate, nor extensive, nor profound. But yet Mr. Landor is wrong in thinking that he drew it from an Index. In

* The reader of this edition will notice that the American printer has altered the spelling in the text, without reference to Mr. De Quincey's remarks on Mr Landor's method.

his Italian, he had the advantage probably of Mr. Landor himself; at least he wrote it with more apparent fluency and compass.

Note 10. Page 281.

Herod the Great, and his father Antipater, owed the favor of Rome, and, finally, the throne of Judæa, to the seasonable election which they made between Rome and Persia; but made not without some doubts, as between forces hardly yet brought to a satisfactory equation.

Note 11. Page 284.

"*Stooped not to accept it.*" — The notion that Julius Cæsar, who of all men must have held cheapest the title of *Rex*, had seriously intrigued to obtain it, arose (as I conceive) from two mistakes — first, From a misinterpretation of a figurative ceremony in the pageant of the Lupercalia. The Romans were ridiculously punctilious in this kind of jealousy. They charged Pompey, at one time, with a plot for making himself king, because he wore white bandages round his thighs; now *white*, in olden days, was as much the regal color as *purple*. Think, dear reader, of us — of you and me — being charged with making ourselves kings, because we may choose to wear white cotton drawers. Pompey was very angry, and swore bloody oaths that it was *not* ambition which had cased his thighs in white *fasciæ* "Why, what is it then?" said a grave citizen. "What is it, man?" replied Pompey, "it is rheumatism." Dogberry must have had a hand in this charge: — "Dost thou hear, thou varlet? Thou art charged with incivism; and it shall go hard with me but I will prove thee to thy face a false knave, and guilty of flat rheumatism." The other reason which has tended to confirm posterity in the belief that Cæsar really coveted the title of *Rex*, was the confusion of the truth arising with Greek writers. *Basileus*, the term by which indifferently they designated the mighty Artaxerxes and the pettiest *regulus*, was the original translation used for *Imperator*. Subsequently, and especially after Dioclesian had approximated the aulic pomps to eastern models, the terms *Auto-*

crator, *Kaisar*, *Augustus*, *Sebastos*, &c., came more into use. But after Trajan's time, or even to that of Commodus, generally the same terms which expressed *Imperator* and *Imperitorial* [viz., *Basileus* and *Basilikos*] to a Grecian ear expressed *Rex* and *Regalis*.

NOTE 12. Page 291.

" *'T is :* " — Scotchmen and Irishmen (for a reason which it may be elsewhere worth while explaining) make the same mistake of supposing *'t is* and *'t was* admissible in prose ; which is shocking to an English ear, for since 1740 they have become essentially poetic forms, and cannot, without a sense of painful affectation and sentimentality, be used in conversation or in *any* mode of prose. Mr. Landor does not make *that* mistake, but the reduplication of the *'t is* in this line, — will he permit me to say ? — is dreadful. He is wide awake to such blemishes in other men of all nations ; so am I. He blazes away all day long against the trespasses of that class, like a man in spring, protecting corn-fields against birds. So do I at times. And if ever I publish that work on *Style*, which for years has been in preparation, I fear that, from Mr. Landor, it will be necessary to cull some striking flaws in composition, were it only that in *his* works must be sought some of its most striking brilliancies.

NOTE 13. Page 292.

" *Rocky harp :* " — There are now known other cases, besides the ancient one of Memnon's statue, in which the "deep-grooved " granites, or even the shifting sands of wildernesses, utter mysterious music to ears that watch and wait for the proper combination of circumstances.

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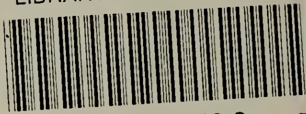
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