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THE

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OF

THOMAS
DE QUINCEY

BY

DAVID MASSON
EMERITUS PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH LITERATURE
IN THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

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EDITOR'S PREFACE

THE present volume continues and concludes the series of De Quincey's papers brought together in this edition of his writings as distinctively his essays in Literary Theory and Criticism.

In the first paper, entitled *Schlosser's Literary History of the Eighteenth Century*, we have, under the guise of a very severe review of parts of a voluminous German historical work, once of considerable notoriety among ourselves through an English translation, De Quincey's own impressions of a few of the eighteenth-century chiefs of English Literary History. Swift, Addison, and Pope are selected for general comment; after which there is a leap over a generation or more for a comparison of Fox and Burke as English orators, and a reiteration of De Quincey's very decided views on the question of the authorship of "Junius" and the character of Sir Philip Francis. In the next two papers, *The Poetry of Pope* and *Lord Carlisle on Pope*, with their appended *Postscripts*, there is a return to Pope, for that larger and more elaborate treatment which the subject deserved. The fact that we have two such long critical papers on Pope from De Quincey's pen, in addition to the more strictly biographical article on Pope which he contributed to the Encyclopædia Britannica, is worthy of attention. Pope, as the sovereign of the English Poetical Literature of the Eighteenth Century, had obviously fascinated De Quincey, as he still fascinates others on the same account. In De Quincey's case, however, it was, to a great extent, a fascination of dissent and antagonism. Possessed as he was by that doctrine of literary criticism which, after having slowly fought its way in the early part of the present century, may now perhaps be considered as prevalent,—the doctrine, to wit, that the whole of the eighteenth century, or more particularly the period between the supremacy of Dryden and the appearance of Wordsworth, was a kind of interregnum in the history of English Poetry, a period during which the very notion of the essentially poetical in matter had been all but lost, and poetry had become a degraded synonym for Verse-Literature promiscuously,—possessed by this doctrine, De Quincey approached Pope in a corresponding spirit. The result is that, while the highest admiration is expressed for Pope in some respects, a larger proportion of space is devoted to Pope's defects. Especially, the tradition of Pope's title to supreme praise for the quality of *correctness* is challenged and contradicted. Instances are produced, on the contrary, of his extreme *incorrectness*, whether in matters of historical fact or in diction; and,—what will be relished least by some readers,—this fault of inaccuracy, whether in fact or in phrase, is traced up remorselessly to what De Quincey considered a radical insincerity of character in Pope throughout his whole life, an indifference to truth whenever and wheresoever it stood in the way of pungent invective, or of any other kind of momentary literary effect. In this respect he discerns far more of real generosity and heart, far more of a manly character, in Dryden than in Pope. Subsidiary to this criticism and comparison, however, there is a defence both of Dryden and of Pope, and derivatively of the English Literature of the eighteenth century in general, against the imputation of indebtedness to French influence or example. The defence is successful, it may be admitted, so far as regarded De Quincey's main contention that there had never been anything in the history of English Literature answering strictly to the name of "The French School" so frequently employed in compilations of that History about and after the epoch of the Restoration, but with the effect at the same time, I think, of a decided undervaluation, all in all, of the French influence on the entire course of the Literature.

If De Quincey resented the idea of the indebtedness of English Literature to the French, he did his best, on the other hand, to bring about an indebtedness of the English Literature to the German. The three German writers of whom we have his impressions in the present volume are Lessing, Goethe, and Jean Paul Richter. Of the triad of articles relating to Lessing,—first the short introductory article entitled simply *Lessing* and sketching him generally, then the long annotated *Translation from Lessing's Laocoon*, and finally the appended *Postscript on Didactic Poetry*,—we would bespeak attention more particularly to the second. Although it is more than a century since Lessing's famous essay on the "Laocoon" was given to the world, and more than sixty years since De Quincey performed the important service of first translating the chief portions of it into English, it may be questioned whether nine-tenths of those of the British public who now concern themselves with Art-Criticism are aware of the store of deep instruction and suggestion as to the principles of Art, the differences between Poetry and Painting, &c., which lies yet unappropriated in that old essay. But it is the paper on *Goethe's Wilhelm Meister* that follows; and oh! what an anachronism is that! Best, in fact, to regard the paper now merely as a curiosity in literary history; in which respect its interest is increased by the circumstance that, while recording De Quincey's unfortunate attempt at a murderous assault on the great German, it records also, as an independently memorable incident of the same affair, a collision between De Quincey, as Goethe's critic, and Carlyle, as Goethe's translator. The recollection thus suggested of Carlyle in connexion with De Quincey accompanies us into the sketch entitled *John Paul Frederick Richter* and the subsequent paper of *Analects from Richter*. Though the effective introduction of Richter to the British public was left for Carlyle, De Quincey had certainly preceded Carlyle in that honourable business, and had been the first in Britain to throw radiance round the name of Jean Paul.

In what remains of the volume we are back on home-ground. The essay *On Wordsworth's Poetry*, though it contains some unnecessary carpings, and unexpectedly evades, rather than investigates, the main question of Wordsworth's Theory of Poetic Diction, is a pleasant expression on the whole of De Quincey's unshaken loyalty to the last to his old admiration of Wordsworth's poetical greatness, his continued belief in the epoch-making character of Wordsworth's literary life, their long personal estrangement notwithstanding. Then, in the *Notes on Gilfillan's Literary Portraits*, we have, in the cursory fashion which that title suggests, De Quincey's opinions, partly character-sketches and partly literary criticisms, of five others of his literary contemporaries,—Godwin, Foster the Essayist, Hazlitt, Shelley, and Keats. The most interesting of these brief articles are those on Hazlitt and Shelley; and the most disappointing is that on Keats. He acknowledges, indeed, his amazement at the splendour of Keats's dying bequest to English Poetry in the "Hyperion" fragment; but, for the rest, one sees in this case, as in so many others, that the strongest admirations must almost necessarily be retrospective, and that it is difficult for a grown-up man to be in proper relations of enthusiasm to forms of excellence that differ from his old models, or indeed to the very best of what may have come into the world later than himself. There was no such bar to De Quincey's appreciation of Walter Savage Landor. He was glad, accordingly, to have the opportunity which offered itself in 1846, by the publication of what was then a complete collective edition of Landor's works, for a discourse, somewhat at large, on the characteristics of this particular contemporary. The result was one long continuous paper on Landor, which was broken up, for magazine convenience, into the three articles entitled severally *Notes on Walter Savage Landor*, *Orthographic Mutineers*, and *Milton* versus *Southey and Landor.*

Almost all the papers in this volume have required a good deal of editing,—not, of course, in the shape of any tamperings with the text, but in that of explanation of the occasions and circumstances of the papers individually, with the restoration in some cases of the proper original arrangement, and the recovery also in some cases of original magazine concomitants which are still of interest.

D. M.

SCHLOSSER'S LITERARY HISTORY OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY[1]

In the person of this Mr. Schlosser is exemplified a common abuse, not confined to literature. An artist from the Italian Opera of London and Paris, making a professional excursion to the French or English provinces, is received deferentially and almost passively according to the tariff of the metropolis,—no rural judge being bold enough to dispute decisions coming down from the courts above. In that particular case there is seldom any reason to complain,—since really, out of Germany and Italy, there is no city, if you except Paris and London, possessing musical resources for the composition of an audience large enough to act as a court of revision. It would be presumption in the provincial audience, so slightly trained to good music and dancing, if it should affect to disturb a judgment ratified in the supreme capital. The result, therefore, will be practically just, if the original verdict was just; what was right from the first cannot be made wrong by iteration. Yet, even in such a case, there is something not satisfactory to a delicate sense of equity; for the artist returns from the tour as if from some new and independent triumph, whereas all is but the reverberation of an old one: it seems a new access of sunlight, whereas it is but a reflex illumination from lunar satellites.

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[1] From *Tait's Magazine* for September and October 1847: reprinted by De Quincey in 1858, in vol. viii of his Collective Edition. The book reviewed was "History of the Eighteenth Century and of the Nineteenth till the overthrow of the French Empire, with particular reference to Mental Cultivation and Progress. By F. C. Schlosser, Privy Counsellor, and Professor of History in the University of Heidelberg. Translated, with a Preface and Notes, by D. Davidson, M.A." The first volume was published in 1843; five volumes more had appeared before De Quincey's paper was written; and two additional volumes, in 1850 and 1852, completed the work. It treats of the Political History, as well as of the Literary History, of Europe, including France, Germany, &c., as well as Great Britain; but De Quincey confines himself to the portions of the earlier volumes that relate to the English Literature of the Eighteenth Century.—M.

In literature the corresponding case is worse. An author passing (by means of translation) before a foreign people ought *de jure* to find himself before a new tribunal; but *de facto* too often he does not. Like the opera artist, but not with the same propriety, he comes before a court that never interferes to unsettle a judgment, but only to re-affirm it. And he returns to his native country quartering in his armorial bearings these new trophies, as though won by new trials, when, in fact, they are due to servile ratifications of old ones. When Sue or Balzac, Dumas or George Sand, comes before an English audience, the opportunity is invariably lost for estimating the men at a new angle of sight. What is thought of Dumas in Paris? asks the London reviewer; and shapes his notice to catch the *aroma* of the Parisian verdicts just then current. But exactly this is what he should prudently have shunned. He will never learn his own natural and unbiassed opinion of the book when he thus deliberately intercepts all that would have been spontaneous in his impressions, by adulterating with alien views—possibly not even sincere. And thus a new set of judges, that might usefully have modified the narrow views of the old ones, fall by mere *inertia* into the humble character of echoes and sounding-boards to swell the uproar of the original mob.

In this way is thrown away the opportunity, not only of applying corrections to false national tastes, but oftentimes even to the unfair accidents of *luck* that befall books. For it is well known to all who watch literature with vigilance that books and authors have their fortunes, which travel upon a far different scale of proportions from those that measure their merits. Not even the caprice or the folly of the reading public is required to account for this. Very often, indeed, the whole difference between an extensive circulation for one book and none at all for another of about equal merit belongs to no particular blindness in men, but to the simple fact that the one *has*, whilst the other has *not*, been brought effectually under the eyes of the public. By far the greater part of books are lost, not because they are rejected, but because they are never introduced. In any proper sense of the word, very few books are published. Technically, no doubt, they *are* published,—which means, that for ten or twenty times they are *advertised* ; but they are not made known to *attentive* ears, or to ears *prepared* for attention. And amongst the causes which account for this difference in the fortune of books, although there are many, we may reckon, as foremost, *personal* accidents of position in the authors. For instance, with us in England, it will do a bad book no *ultimate* service that it is written by a lord, or by a bishop, or by a privy counsellor, or by a member of Parliament; though undoubtedly it will do an *instant* service—it will sell an edition or so. This being the case—it being certain that no rank will reprieve a bad writer from *final* condemnation—the sycophantic glorifier of the public fancies his idol justified ; but not so. A bad book, it is true, will not be saved by advantages of position in the author ; but a book moderately good will be extravagantly aided by such advantages. "Lectures on Christianity" that happened to be respectably written and delivered had prodigious success in my young days, because also they happened to be lectures of a prelate ; three times the ability would not have procured them any attention had they been the lectures of an obscure curate. Yet, on the other hand, it is but justice to say that, if written with three times *less* ability, lawn-sleeves would not have given them buoyancy, but, on the contrary, they would have sunk the bishop irrecoverably ; whilst the curate, favoured by obscurity, would have survived for another chance. So again, and indeed more than so, as to poetry. Lord Carlisle (not of this generation, but the earl of fifty years back) wrote tolerable verses. They were better than Lord Roscommon's,—which, for one hundred and fifty years, the judicious public has allowed the booksellers to incorporate, along with other rubbish of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, into the costly collections of the "British

Poets."[1] And really, if you *will* insist on odious comparisons, they were not much below the verses of an amiable prime minister (John Woburn) known to us all.[2] Yet, because they wanted vital *stamina*, not only they fell, but in falling they caused the earl to reel much more than any commoner would have done. Now, on the other hand, a kinsman of Lord Carlisle — viz. Lord Byron — because he brought dazzling genius and power to the effort, found a vast auxiliary advantage in his peerage and his very ancient descent. On these double wings he soared into a region of public interest far higher than ever he *would* have reached by poetic power alone. Not only all his rubbish—which in quantity is great—passed for jewels, but also what *are* incontestably jewels more gorgeous than the Koh-i-noor, have been, and will be, valued at a far higher rate than if they had been raised from less aristocratic mines. So fatal for mediocrity, so gracious for real power, is any adventitious distinction from birth, from station, or from accidents of brilliant notoriety. In reality, the public, our never-sufficiently-to-be-respected mother, is the most unutterable sycophant that ever the clouds dropped their rheum upon. She is always ready for Jacobinical scoffs at a man for being a lord, if he happens to fail; she is always ready for toadying a lord, if he happens to make a hit. Ah, dear sycophantic old lady! I kiss your sycophantic hands, and wish heartily that I were a duke for your sake!

It would be a mistake to fancy that this tendency to confound real merit and its accidents of position is at all peculiar to us or to our age. Dr. Sacheverell, by embarking his small capital of talent on the spring-tide of a furious political collision between the Whigs and Tories, brought back an ampler return for his little investment than ever did Wickliffe or Luther.[3] Such was his popularity, in the heart of love and the heart of hatred, that he would have been assassinated by the Whigs, on his triumphal progresses through England, had he not been canonised by the Tories. He was a dead man, if he had not been suddenly gilt and lacquered as an idol. Neither is the case peculiar at all to England. Ronge, the *ci-devant* Romish priest (whose name pronounce as you would the English word *wrong*, supposing that it had for a second syllable the final *a* of "sofa"—*i.e. Wronguh*) has been found a wrongheaded man by *all* parties—and in a venial degree is, perhaps, a stupid man; but he moves[1] about with more *eclat* by far than the ablest man in Germany. And, in days of old, the man that burned down a miracle of beauty—viz. the Temple of Ephesus—protesting, with tears in his eyes, that he had no other way of getting himself a name, *has* got it in spite of us all. He's booked for a ride down through all history, whether you and I like it or not. Every pocket-dictionary knows that Erostratus was that scamp.[2] So of Martin, the man that parboiled, or par-roasted, York Minster some twenty years back: that fellow will float down to posterity with the annals of the glorious cathedral; he will

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[1] Wentworth Dillon, Earl of Roscommon, 1633-1684.—M.

[2] Lord John Russell, afterwards Earl Russell, was Prime Minister from 1846 to 1852. Woburn, near Bedford, is the family seat of the Dukes of Bedford,—to which family Lord John Russell belonged.—M.

[3] See *ante*, Vol. X, p. 111.—M.

> "Pursue the triumph and partake the gale,"

whilst the founders and benefactors of the Minster are practically forgotten.[3] These incendiaries, in short, are as well known as Ephesus or York ; but not one of us can tell, without humming and hawing, who it was that rebuilt the Ephesian wonder of the world, or that repaired the time-honoured Minster. Equally in literature : not the weight of service done, or the power exerted, is sometimes considered chiefly, —either of these must be very conspicuous before it will be considered at all,—but the splendour, or the notoriety, or the absurdity, or even the scandalousness, of the circumstances[1] surrounding the author.

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[1] Not at all. He *did* move when this was written; but that was in 1847. He is now as sedentary, or as stationary, as a milestone. [Between 1844 and 1848 a great deal was heard both in Germany and in this country of Johann Ronge, a Silesian priest, who, having broken off from the German Catholic Church on the subject of relics and pilgrimages, headed a religious reform movement in Germany on Protestant or semi-Protestant principles. The new creed numbered at one time as many as 300 congregations in different parts of Germany; but the "Christian Catholic movement," as it was called, dwindled rapidly after 1848,—Ronge's own Protestantism having passed by that time into a kind of Religious Rationalism combined with extreme Political Liberalism. Latterly he resided as a refugee in London.—M.]

[2] The original temple of Artemis or Diana at Ephesus was burnt down by a certain Herostratus on the same night in the year B.C. 356, it is said, in which Alexander the Great was born. Put to the torture, the incendiary declared that he had done the deed to immortalise his name.—M.

[3] York Cathedral was set on fire and partly destroyed in 1829 by a maniac named Jonathan Martin. It suffered from another fire in 1840.—M.

Schlosser must have benefited in some such adventitious way before he ever *could* have risen to his German celebrity. What was it that raised him to his momentary distinction ? Was it something very wicked that he did, or something too clever that he said ? I should rather conjecture that it must have been something inconceivably absurd which he suggested. Any one of the three achievements stands good in Germany for a reputation. But, however it were that Mr. Schlosser first gained his reputation, mark what now follows. On the wings of this equivocal reputation he flies abroad to Paris and London. There he thrives, not by an approving experience or knowledge of his works, but through blind faith in his original German public. And back he flies afterwards to Germany, as if carrying with him new and independent testimonies to his merit, and from two nations that are directly concerned in his violent judgments ; whereas (which is the simple truth) he carries back a careless reverberation of his first German character from those who have far too much to read for declining aid from vicarious criticism when it will spare that effort to themselves. Schlosser has simply had his old passport *viséd* up and down Europe ; fresh passports he has none to show. Thus it is that German critics become audacious and libellous. Kohl, Von Raumer, Dr. Carus, physician to the King of Saxony, by means of introductory letters floating them into circles far above any they had seen in homely Germany, are qualified by our own negligence and indulgence for mounting a European tribunal, from which they pronounce malicious edicts against ourselves. Sentinels presented arms to Von Raumer at Windsor, because he rode in a carriage of Queen Adelaide's ; and Von Raumer immediately conceived himself the Chancellor of all Christendom, keeper of the conscience to universal Europe upon all questions of art, manners, politics, or any conceivable intellectual relations of England. Schlosser meditates the same career.

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[1] Even Pope, with all his natural and reasonable interest in aristocratic society, could not shut his eyes to the fact that a jest in *his* mouth became twice a jest in a lord's. But still he failed to perceive what I am here contending for,—that, if the jest happened to miss fire, through the misfortune of bursting its barrel, the consequences would be far worse for the lord than the commoner. There *is*, you see, a blind sort of compensation.

But have I any right to quote Schlosser's words from an English translation ? I do so only because this happens to be at hand, and the German not. German books are still rare in this country, though more numerous (by one thousand to one) than they were thirty years ago. But I have a special right to rely on the English of Mr. Davidson. "I hold in my hand," as gentlemen so often say at public meetings, "a certificate from Herr Schlosser that to quote Mr. Davidson is to quote *him*." The English translation is one which Mr. Schlosser "*durchgelesen hat, und für deren genauigkeit und richtigkeit er bürgt*" (has read through, and for the accuracy and propriety of which he pledges himself). Mr. Schlosser was so anxious for the spiritual welfare of us poor islanders that he not only read it through, but he has even *aufmerksam durchgelesen* it (read it through wide awake), *und geprüft* (and carefully examined it) ; nay, he has done all this in company with the translator. "Oh, ye Athenians ! how hard do I labour to earn your applause !" And, as the result of such Herculean labours, a second time he makes himself surety for its precision ; "*er bürgt also dafür wie für seine eigne arbeit*" (he guarantees it accordingly as he would his own workmanship). Were it not for this unlimited guarantee, I should have sent for the book to Germany. As it is, I need not wait ; and all complaints on this score I defy,—above all from Herr Schlosser.[1]

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[1] Mr. Schlosser, who speaks English, who has read rather too much English for any good that he has turned it to, and who ought to have a keen eye for the English version of his own book after so much reading and study of it, has, however, overlooked several manifest errors. I

In dealing with an author so desultory as Mr. Schlosser the critic has a right to an *extra* allowance of desultoriness for his own share; so excuse me, reader, for rushing at once into angry business.

On Swift

Of Swift Mr. Schlosser selects for notice three works—the "Drapier's Letters," "Gulliver's Travels," and the "Tale of a Tub." With respect to the first, as it is a necessity of Mr. S. to be for ever wrong in his substratum of facts, he adopts the old erroneous account of Wood's contract as to the copper coinage, and of the imaginary wrong which it inflicted on Ireland. Of all Swift's villainies for the sake of popularity, and still more for the sake of wielding this popularity vindictively, none is so scandalous as this. In any new Life of Swift the case must be stated *de novo.* Even Sir Walter Scott is not impartial; and for the same reason as now forces me to blink it—viz. the difficulty of presenting the details in a readable shape. "Gulliver's Travels" Schlosser strangely considers "spun out to an intolerable

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do not mean to tax Mr. Davidson with general inaccuracy. On the contrary, he seems wary, and in most cases successful as a dealer with the peculiarities of the German. But several cases of error I detect without needing the original: they tell their own story. And one of these I here notice, not only for its own importance, but out of love to Schlosser, and by way of nailing his guarantee to the counter—not altogether as a bad shilling, but as a light one. At p. 5 of vol. ii., in a footnote, which is speaking of Kant, we read of his *attempt to introduce the notion of negative greatness into philosophy. Negative greatness!* What strange bird may *that* be? Is it the *Ornithorhynchus paradoxus?* Mr. Schlosser was not wide awake *there.* The reference is evidently to Kant's essay upon the advantages of introducing into philosophy the algebraic idea of *negative quantities.* It is one of Kant's grandest gleams into hidden truth. Were it only for the merits of this most masterly essay in reconstituting the algebraic meaning of a *negative quantity* (so generally misunderstood as a *negation* of quantity, and which even Sir Isaac Newton misconstrued as regarded its metaphysics), great would have been the service rendered to logic by Kant. But there is a greater. From this little *brochure,* I am satisfied, was derived originally the German regeneration of the Dynamic Philosophy, its expansion through the idea of polarity, indifference, &c. Oh, Mr. Schlosser you had not *geprüft* p. 5 of vol. ii. You skipped the notes.

extent." Many evil things might be said of Gulliver; but not this. The captain is anything but tedious. And, indeed, it becomes a question of mere mensuration, that can be settled in a moment. A year or two since I had in my hands a pocket edition, comprehending all the four parts of the worthy skipper's adventures within a single volume of 420 pages. Some part of the space was also wasted on notes, often very idle. Now, the first part contains *two* separate voyages (Lilliput and Blefescu); the 2d, *one*; the 3d, *five*; and the 4th, *one*: so that, in all, this active navigator, who has enriched geography, I hope, with something of a higher quality than your old muffs that thought much of doubling Cape Horn, here gives us *nine* great voyages of discovery, far more surprising than the pretended discoveries of Sinbad (which are known to be fabulous), averaging *quam proxime* forty-seven 16mo pages each. Oh, you unconscionable German, built round in your own country with circumvallations of impregnable 4tos, oftentimes dark and dull as Avernus—that you will have the face to describe dear excellent Captain Lemuel Gulliver of Redriff, and subsequently of Newark, that "darling of children and men," as tedious! It is exactly because he is *not* tedious, because he does not shoot into German foliosity, that Schlosser finds him "*intolerable*." I have justly transferred to Gulliver's use the words "darling of children and men," originally applied by the poet[1] to the robin-redbreast; for it is remarkable that "Gulliver" and the "Arabian Nights" are amongst the few books where children and men find themselves meeting and jostling each other. This was the case from its first publication, just one hundred and thirty years since. "It was received," says Dr. Johnson, "with such avidity that the "price of the first edition was raised before the second could "be made—it was read by the high and the low, the learned "and the illiterate. Criticism was lost in wonder." Now, on the contrary, Schlosser wonders not at all, but simply criticises; which we could bear, if the criticism were even ingenious. Whereas he utterly misunderstands Swift, and is a malicious calumniator of the captain; who, luckily, roaming in Sherwood Forest, and thinking, often with a sigh, of his little nurse,[1] Glumdalclitch, would trouble himself slightly about what Heidelberg might say in the next century. There is but one example on our earth of a novel received with such indiscriminate applause as "Gulliver"; and *that* was "Don Quixote." Many have been welcomed joyfully by a class—these two by a people. Now, could that have happened had it been characterised by dulness? Of all faults, it could least have had *that*. As to the "Tale of a Tub," Schlosser is in such Cimmerian vapours that no system of bellows could blow open a shaft or tube through which he might gain a glimpse of the English truth and daylight, or we gain a glimpse of Schlosser sitting over his German blackbeer. It is useless talking to such a man on such a subject. I consign him to the attentions of some patriotic Irishman.

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[1] "*By the poet*":—viz. Wordsworth.

Schlosser, however, is right in a graver reflection which he makes upon the prevailing philosophy of Swift—viz. that "all his views were directed towards what was *immediately* beneficial; which is the characteristic of savages." This is undeniable. The meanness of Swift's nature, and his rigid incapacity for dealing with the grandeurs of the human spirit, with religion, with poetry, or even with science when it rose above the mercenary practical, is absolutely appalling. His own *yahoo* is not a more abominable one-sided degradation of humanity than is he himself under this aspect. And, perhaps, it places this incapacity of his in its strongest light when we recur to the fact of his *astonishment* at a religious princess refusing to confer a bishopric upon one that had treated the Trinity, and all the profoundest mysteries of Christianity, not with mere scepticism or casual sneer, but with set pompous merriment and farcical buffoonery. This dignitary of the Church, Dean of the most conspicuous cathedral in Ireland, had, in full canonicals, made himself into a regular mountebank, for the sake of giving fuller effect, by the force of contrast, to the silliest of jests directed against all that was most inalienable from Christianity. Ridiculing such things, could he, in any just sense, be thought a Christian? But, as Schlosser justly remarks, even ridiculing the peculiarities of Luther and Calvin as he *did* ridicule them, Swift could not be thought other than constitutionally incapable of religion. Even a Pagan philosopher, if made to understand the case, would be incapable of scoffing at any *form*, natural or casual, simple or distorted, which might be assumed by the most solemn of problems—problems that rest with the weight of worlds upon the human spirit—

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[1] "*Little nurse*":—The word *Glumdalclitch*, in Brobdingnagian, absolutely *means little nurse*, and nothing else. It may seem odd that the captain should call any nurse of Brobdingnag, however kind to him, by such an epithet as *little*; and the reader may fancy that Sherwood Forest had put it into his head, where Robin Hood always called his right hand man "Little John," not *although*, but expressly *because*, John stood seven feet high in his stockings. But the truth is that Glumdalclitch *was* little; and literally so; she was only nine years old, and (says the captain) "little of her age," being barely forty feet high. She had time to grow certainly; but, as she had so much to do before she could overtake other women, it is probable that she would turn out what, in Westmoreland, they call a *little stiffenger*—very little, if at all, higher than a common English church steeple.

> "Fixed fate, free-will, foreknowledge absolute"—

the destiny of man, or the relations of man to God. Anger, therefore, Swift *might* feel, and he felt it[1] to the end of his most wretched life; but what reasonable ground had a man of sense for *astonishment* that a princess who (according to her knowledge) was sincerely pious should decline to place such a man upon an episcopal throne? This argues, beyond a doubt, that Swift was in that state of constitutional irreligion—irreligion not from intellectual scepticism, but from a vulgar temperament—which imputes to everybody else its own plebeian feelings. People differed, he fancied, not by more and less religion, but by more and less dissimulation. And, therefore, it seemed to him scandalous that a princess who must, of course, in her heart regard (in common with himself) all mysteries as solemn masks and mummeries should pretend, in a case of downright serious business, to pump up, out of dry conventional hoaxes, any solid objection to a man of his shining merit. "*The Trinity*," for instance,—*that* he viewed as the password which the knowing ones gave in answer to the challenge of the sentinel; but, as soon as it had obtained admission for the party within the gates of the camp, it was rightly dismissed to oblivion or to laughter. No case so much illustrates Swift's essential irreligion; since, if he had shared in ordinary human feelings on such subjects, not only he could not have been surprised at his own exclusion from the bench of bishops *after* such ribaldries, but originally he would have abstained from them as inevitable bars to clerical promotion, even upon principles of public decorum.

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[1] See his bitter letters to Lady Suffolk.

As to the *style* of Swift, Mr. Schlosser shows himself without sensibility in his objections, as the hackneyed English reader shows himself without philosophic knowledge of style in his applause. Schlosser thinks the style of Gulliver "somewhat dull." This shows Schlosser's presumption in speaking upon a point where he wanted, first, original delicacy of tact, and, secondly, familiar knowledge of English Gulliver's style is *purposely* touched slightly with that dulness of circumstantiality which besets the excellent, but somewhat dull, race of men,—old sea-captains. Yet it wears only an aerial tint of dulness; the felicity of this colouring in Swift's management is that it never goes the length of actually wearying, but only of giving a comic air of downright Wapping and Rotherhithe verisimilitude. All men grow dull, and ought to be dull, that live under a solemn sense of eternal danger, one inch only of plank (often worm-eaten) between themselves and eternity; and also that see for ever one wilderness of waters—sublime, but (like the wilderness on shore) monotonous. All sublime people, being monotonous, have a tendency to be dull,—and sublime things also. Milton and Æschylus, the sublimest of men, are crossed at times by a shade of dulness. So is Bilidulgerid, so is the Sahara, so is the sea. Dulness is their weak side. But, as to a sea-captain, a regular nor'-nor'-wester and sou'-sou'-easter, he ought to be kicked out of the room if he is *not* dull. It is not "ship-shape," or barely tolerable, that he should be otherwise. Yet, after all, considering what I have stated about Captain Gulliver's nine voyages crowded into one pocket volume, he cannot really have much abused his professional licence for being dull. Indeed, one has to look out an excuse for his being so little dull; which excuse is found in the fact that he had studied three years at a learned university. Captain Gulliver, though a sailor, I would have you to know, was a gownsman of Cambridge: so says Swift, who knew more about the captain than anybody now-a-days.

Now, on the other hand, you, commonplace reader, that (as an old tradition) believe Swift's style to be a model of excellence, hereafter I shall say a word to you, drawn from deeper principles. At present I content myself with these three propositions; which overthrow if you can:—

1. That the merit which justly you ascribe to Swift is *vernacularity*, and nothing better or finer: he never forgets his mother-tongue in exotic forms, unless we may call Irish exotic; for some Hibernicisms he certainly has. This merit, however, is exhibited—not, as *you* fancy, in a graceful artlessness, but in a coarse inartificiality. To be artless, and to be inartificial, are very different things,—as different as being natural and being gross, as different as being simple and being homely.

2. That, whatever, meantime, be the particular sort of excellence, or the value of the excellence, in the style of Swift, he had it in common with multitudes besides of that age. Defoe wrote a style for all the world the same as to kind and degree of excellence, only pure from Hibernicisms. So did every honest skipper (Dampier was something more) who had occasion to record his voyages in this world of storms. So did many a hundred of religious writers. And what wonder should there be in this, when the main qualification for such a style was plain good sense, natural feeling, unpretendingness, some little scholarly practice in putting together the clockwork of sentences so as to avoid mechanical awkwardness of construction, but above all the advantage of a *subject* such in its nature as instinctively to reject ornament, lest it should draw off attention from itself? Such subjects are common; but grand impassioned subjects insist upon a different treatment; and *there* it is that the true difficulties of style commence, and there it is that your worshipful Master Jonathan would have broke down irrecoverably.

3. (Which partly is suggested by the last remark.) That nearly all the blockheads with whom I have at any time had the pleasure of conversing upon the subject of style (and pardon me for saying that men of the most sense are apt, upon two subjects—viz. poetry and style—to talk *most* like

blockheads) have invariably regarded Swift's style not as if *relatively* good (*i.e. given* a proper subject), but as if *absolutely* good—good unconditionally, no matter what the subject. Now, my friend, suppose the case that the Dean had been required to write a pendant for Sir Walter Raleigh's immortal apostrophe to Death, or to many passages that I could select in Sir Thomas Browne's "Religio Medici" and his "Urn-Burial," or to Jeremy Taylor's inaugural sections of his "Holy Living and Dying," do you know what would have happened? Are you aware what sort of ridiculous figure your poor bald Jonathan would have cut? About the same that would be cut by a forlorn scullion from a greasy eating-house at Rotterdam, if suddenly called away in vision to act as seneschal to the festival of Belshazzar the king before a thousand of his lords.[1]

Schlosser, after saying anything right and true (and he really did say the true thing about Swift's *essential* irreligion), usually becomes exhausted, like a boa-constrictor after eating his half-yearly dinner. The boa gathers himself up, it is to be hoped, for a long fit of dyspepsy, in which the horns and hoofs that he has swallowed may chance to avenge the poor goat that owned them. Schlosser, on the other hand, retires into a corner, for the purpose of obstinately talking nonsense, until the gong sounds again for a slight refection of sense. Accordingly, he likens Swift, before he has done with him, to whom? I might safely allow the reader three years for guessing, if the greatest of wagers were depending between us. He likens him to Kotzebue,[2] in the first place. How faithful the resemblance! How exactly Swift reminds you of Count Benyowski in Siberia, and of Mrs. Haller mopping her eyes in the "Stranger"! One really is puzzled to say, according to the negro's distinction, whether Mrs. Haller is more like the Dean of St. Patrick's or the Dean more like Mrs. Haller. Anyhow, the likeness is prodigious, if it is not quite reciprocal. The other *terminus* of the comparison is Wieland.[3] Now, there *is* some shadow of a resemblance there. For Wieland had a touch of the comico-cynical in his nature; and it is notorious that he was often called the German Voltaire, which argues some tiger-monkey grin that traversed his features at intervals. Wieland's malice, however, was far more playful and genial than Swift's; something of this is shown in his romance of "Idris," and oftentimes in his prose. But what the world knows Wieland by is his "Oberon." Now, in this gay, musical romance of Sir Huon and his enchanted horn, with its gleams of voluptuousness, is there a possibility that any suggestion of a scowling face like Swift's should cross the festal scenes?

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[1] Compare *ante*, Vol. I. p. 126, Vol. V, p. 235, Vol. X, p. 164 *et seq.*—M.

[2] Kotzebue, German dramatist, &c., 1761-1819.—M.

[3] Wieland, German poet, 1733-1813.—M.

On Addison

From Swift the scene changes to Addison and Steele. Steele is of less importance; for, though a man of greater intellectual activity[1] than Addison, he had immeasurably less of genius. But, so far as concerns Addison, I am happy to support the character of Schlosser for consistency, by assuring the reader that, of all the monstrosities uttered by man upon Addison, and of all the monstrosities uttered by Schlosser upon man, a thing which he says about Addison is the worst. But this I reserve for a climax ahead. Schlosser really puts his best leg foremost at starting, and one thinks he's going to mend; for he catches a truth—viz. the following—that all the brilliancies of the Queen Anne period (which so many inconsiderate people have called the Augustan age of our literature) "point to this,—that the reading public wished to be entertained, not roused to think; to be gently moved, not deeply excited." Undoubtedly what strikes a man in Addison, or *will* strike him when indicated, is the coyness and timidity, almost the girlish shame, which he betrays in the presence of all the elementary majesties belonging to impassioned or idealised human nature. Like one bred in crowded cities, when first left alone in forests or amongst mountains, he is frightened at their silence, their solitude, their magnitude of form, or their frowning glooms. It has been remarked by others that Addison and his companions never rise to the idea of addressing the "nation" or the "people"; it is always the "town." Even their audience was conceived by *them* under a miniature form. Yet for this they had some excuse in the state of facts. An author would like at this moment to assume that Europe and Asia were listening to him; and, as some few copies of his book do really go to Paris and Naples, some to Calcutta, there is a sort of legal fiction that such an assumption is steadily taking root. Yet, unhappily, that ugly barrier of languages interferes. Schamyl, the Circassian chief, though much of a savage, is not so wanting in taste and discernment as to be backward in reading any book of yours or mine. Doubtless he yearns to read it. But then, you see, that infernal *Tchirkass* language steps between our book, the darling, and *him*, the discerning reader. Now, just such a barrier existed for the "Spectator" in the travelling arrangements of England. The very few old heavies that had begun to creep along three or four main roads depended so much on wind and weather, their chances of foundering were so uncalculated, their periods of revolution were so cometary and uncertain, that no body of scientific observations had yet been collected to warrant a man in risking by *them* a heavy bale of goods; and, on the whole, even for York, Norwich, or Winchester, a consignment of "*Specs*" was not quite a safe spec. Still, I could have told the Spectator, who was anxious to make money, where he might have been sure of a distant sale, though returns would have been slow—viz. at Oxford and Cambridge. We know from Milton that old Hobson delivered his parcels pretty regularly eighty years before 1710. And, one generation before *that*, it is plain, by the interesting (though somewhat Jacobinical) letters of

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[1] "*Activity*":—It is some sign of this, as well as of the more thoroughly English taste in literature which distinguished Steele, that hardly twice throughout the "Spectator" is Shakspere quoted or alluded to by Addison. Even those quotations he had from the theatre, or the breath of popular talk. Generally, if you see a line from Shakspere, it is safe to bet largely that the paper is Steele's,—sometimes, indeed, of casual contributors,—but, almost to a certainty, *not* a paper of Addison's. [But see *ante*, Vol. IV, p. 24, footnote.—M.] Another mark of Steele's superiority in vigour of intellect is that much oftener in *him* than in other contributors strong thoughts came forward; harsh and disproportioned perhaps to the case, and never harmoniously developed with the genial grace of Addison, but original, and pregnant with promise and suggestion.

Joseph Mede,[1] the commenter on the Apocalypse, that news and politics of one kind or other (and scandal of *every* kind) found out for themselves a sort of contraband lungs to breathe through between London and Cambridge ; not quite so regular as the tides of ebb and flood, but better than nothing. If you consigned a packet into the proper hands on the 1st of May, "as sure as death" (to speak *Scotticè*), it would be delivered within sixty miles of the capital before midsummer. Still there were delays ; and these forced a man into carving his world out of London. That excuses the word *town.*

Inexcusable, however, were many other forms of expression in those days which argued cowardly feelings. One would like to see a searching investigation into the state of society in Anne's days—its extreme artificiality, its sheepish reserve upon all the impassioned grandeurs, its shameless outrages upon all the decencies, of human nature. Certain it is that Addison (because everybody) was in that meanest of conditions which blushes at any expression of sympathy with the lovely, the noble, or the impassioned. The wretches were ashamed of their own nature, and perhaps with reason ; for in their own denaturalised hearts they read only a degraded nature. Addison, in particular, shrank from every bold and every profound expression as from an offence against good taste. He durst not for his life have used the word "passion," except in the vulgar sense of an angry paroxysm. He durst as soon have danced a hornpipe on the top of the "Monument" as have talked of a "rapturous emotion." What *would* he have said ? Why, "sentiments that were of a nature to prove agreeable after an unusual rate." In their odious verses, the creatures of that age talk of love as something that "burns" them. You suppose at first that they are discoursing of tallow candles, though you cannot imagine by what impertinence they address *you*, that are no tallow-chandler, upon such painful subjects. And, when they apostrophise the woman of their heart (for you are to understand that they pretend to such an organ), they beseech her to "ease their pain." Can human meanness descend lower? As if the man, being ill from pleurisy, therefore had a right to take a lady for one of the dressers in a hospital, whose duty it would be to fix a burgundy-pitch plaster between his shoulders. Then to read of their Phillises and Strephons, and Chloes and Corydons—names that proclaim the fantasticalness of the life with which they are poetically associated—it throws me into such convulsions of rage that I move to the window, and (without thinking what I am about) throw it up, calling "*Police! Police!*" What's *that* for? What can the police do in the business? Why, certainly nothing. What I meant in my dream was perhaps (but one forgets *what* one meant upon recovering one's temper) that the police should take Strephon and Corydon into custody, whom I fancied at the other end of the room. And really the justifiable fury that arises upon recalling such abominable attempts at bucolic sentiments in such abominable language sometimes transports me into a luxurious vision, sinking back through one hundred and thirty years, in which I see Addison, Phillips (both John and Ambrose), Tickell, Fickell, Budgell and Cudgell, and many others besides, all cudgelled in a round-robin, none claiming precedency of another, none able to shrink from his own dividend, until a voice seems to recall me to milder thoughts, by saying, "But surely, my friend, you could never wish to see Addison cudgelled? Let Strephon and Corydon be cudgelled without end, if the police can show any warrant for doing it. But Addison was a man of great genius." True, he was so. I recollect it suddenly, and will back out of any angry things that I have been misled into saying by Schlosser; who, by the bye, was right, after all, for a wonder.

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[1] "*Letters of Joseph Mede*" :—Published more than thirty years ago by Sir Henry Ellis. [Joseph Mede, 1586-1638, was one of the Fellows of Christ's College, Cambridge, during Milton's residence in that college, and was an industrious collector of news of the day,—receiving weekly parcels from London by Hobson, the Cambridge carrier.—M.]

Now then I will turn my whole fury in vengeance upon Schlosser. And, looking round for a stone to throw at him, I observe this:—Addison could not be so entirely careless of exciting the public to think and feel as Schlosser pretends when he took so much pains to inoculate that public with a sense of the Miltonic grandeur. The "Paradise Lost" had then been published barely forty years,—which was nothing in an age without reviews or any other organs of literary advertisement; and, though no Addison could eventually promote, for the instant he quickened, the circulation. If I recollect, Tonson's accurate revision of the text followed immediately upon Addison's papers. And it is certain that Addison[1] must have diffused the knowledge of Milton upon the Continent, from signs that soon followed. But does not this prove that I myself have been in the wrong as well as Schlosser? No; that's impossible. Schlosser is always in the wrong; but it's the next thing to an impossibility that *I* should be detected in an error: philosophically speaking, it is supposed to involve a contradiction. "But surely I said the very same thing as Schlosser, by assenting to what he said." Maybe I did; but then I have time to make a distinction, because my article is not yet finished. We are only at the beginning; whereas Schlosser can't make any distinction now, because his book is printed, and his list of *errata* (which is shocking, though he does not confess to the thousandth part) is actually published and finished. My distinction is that, though Addison generally hated the impassioned, and shrank from it as from a fearful thing, yet this was when it combined with forms of life and fleshly realities (as in dramatic works), but not when it combined with elder forms of eternal abstractions. Hence he did not read, and did not like, Shakspere; the music was here too rapid and life-like: but he sympathised profoundly with the solemn cathedral-chanting of Milton. An appeal to his sympathies which exacted quick changes in those sympathies he could not meet, but a more stationary key of solemnity he *could*. Indeed, this difference is illustrated daily. A long list can be cited of passages in Shakspere which have been solemnly denounced by many eminent men (all blockheads) as ridiculous: and, if a man *does* find a passage in a tragedy which displeases him, it is sure to seem ludicrous. Witness the indecent exposures of themselves made by Voltaire, La

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[1] It is an idea of many people, and erroneously sanctioned by Wordsworth, that Lord Somers gave a powerful lift to the "Paradise Lost." He was a subscriber to the sixth edition, the first that had plates; but this was some years before the Revolution of 1688, and when he was simply *Mr.* Somers, a barrister, with no effectual power of *literary* patronage. [As to the supposed effect of Addison's papers in the *Spectator* on Milton's fame, see *ante*, Vol. X, p. 409, footnote.—M.]

Harpe, and many billions besides of bilious people. Whereas, of all the shameful people (equally billions and not less bilious) that have presumed to quarrel with Milton, not one has thought him ludicrous, but only dull and somnolent. In "Lear" and in "Hamlet," as in a human face agitated by passion, are many things that tremble on the brink of the ludicrous to an observer endowed with small range of sympathy or intellect. But no man ever found the starry heavens ludicrous, though many find them dull, and prefer, for a near view, a decanter of brandy. So, in the solemn wheelings of the Miltonic movement Addison could find a sincere delight. But the sublimities of earthly misery and of human frenzy were for him a book sealed. Beside all which, Milton renewed the types of Grecian beauty as to *form*, whilst Shakspere, without designing at all to contradict these types, did so in effect by his fidelity to a new nature, radiating from a Gothic centre.

In the midst, however, of much just feeling, which one could only wish a little deeper, in the Addisonian papers on "Paradise Lost," there are some gross blunders of criticism, as there are in Dr. Johnson, and from the self-same cause—an understanding suddenly palsied from defective passion. A feeble capacity of passion must, upon a question of passion, constitute a feeble range of intellect. But, after all, the worst thing uttered by Addison in these papers is not *against* Milton, but meant to be complimentary. Towards enhancing the splendour of the great poem, he tells us that it is a Grecian palace as to amplitude, symmetry, and architectural skill: but, being in the English language, it is to be regarded as if built in brick; whereas, had it been so happy as to be written in Greek, then it would have been a palace built in Parian marble. Indeed! that's smart—"that's handsome, I calculate!" Yet, before a man undertakes to sell his mother-tongue as old pewter trucked against gold, he should be quite sure of his metallurgic skill; because else the gold that he buys may happen to be copper, and the pewter that he sells to be silver. Are you quite sure, my Addison, that you have understood the powers of this language which you toss away so lightly as an old tea-kettle? Is it a ruled case that you have exhausted its resources? Nobody doubts your grace in a certain line of composition; but it is only one line among many, and it is far from being amongst the highest. It is dangerous without examination to sell even old kettles: misers conceal old stockings filled with guineas in old tea-kettles; and we all know that Aladdin's servant, by exchanging an old lamp for a new one, caused an Iliad of calamities: his master's palace jumped from Bagdad to some place on the road to Ashantee; Mrs. Aladdin and the picaninnies were carried off as inside passengers; and Aladdin himself only escaped being lagged for a rogue and a conjurer by a flying jump after his palace. Now, mark the folly of man. Most of the people I am going to mention subscribed generally to the supreme excellence of Milton, but each wished for a little change to be made,—which, and which only, was wanted to perfection. Dr. Johnson, though he pretended to be satisfied with the "Paradise Lost," even in what he regarded as the undress of blank verse, still secretly wished it in rhyme. That's No. 1. Addison, though quite content with it in English, still could have wished it in Greek. That's No. 2. Bentley, though admiring the blind old poet in the highest degree, still observed, smilingly, that after all he *was* blind. He, therefore, Slashing Dick,[1] could have wished that the great man had always been surrounded by honest people; but, as that was not to be, he could have wished that his amanuensis had been hanged; yet, as that also had become impossible, he could wish to do execution upon him in effigy, by sinking, burning, and destroying his handiwork; upon which basis of posthumous justice he proceeded to amputate all the finest passages in the poem. Slashing Dick was No. 3. Payne Knight,[2] who in his own person had rendered services to literature, was a severer man even than Slashing Dick. He professed to look upon the first book of "Paradise Lost" as the finest thing that earth had to show; but, for that very reason, he could have wished, by your leave, to see the other eleven books sawed off, and sent overboard; because, though tolerable perhaps in another situation, they really were a national disgrace when standing behind that unrivalled portico of Book I. There goes No. 4. Then came a fellow, whose name was either not on his title-page or I have forgotten it, that pronounced the poem to be laudable, and full of good materials; but still he could have wished that the materials had been put together in a more workmanlike manner; which kind office he set about himself. He made a general clearance of all lumber; the expression of every thought he entirely recast; and he fitted up the metre with beautiful patent rhymes—not, I believe, out of any consideration for Dr. Johnson's comfort, but on principles of mere abstract decency: as it was, the poem seemed naked, and yet was not ashamed. There went No. 5. *Him* succeeded a droller fellow than any of the rest. A French bookseller had caused a prose French translation to be made of the "Paradise Lost," without particularly noticing its English origin, or at least not in the title-page. Our friend No. 6, getting hold of this as an original French romance, translated it back into English prose, as a satisfactory novel for the season. His little mistake was at length discovered, and communicated to him with shouts of laughter; on which, after considerable kicking and plunging (for a man cannot but turn restive when he finds that he has not only got the wrong sow by the ear, but actually sold the sow to a bookseller), the poor translator was tamed into sulkiness; in which state he observed that he could have wished his own work, being evidently so much superior to the earliest form of the romance, might be admitted by the courtesy of England to take the precedency as the original "Paradise Lost," and to supersede the very rude performance of "Milton, Mr. John." [1]

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[1] *Slashing* was the characteristic epithet by which Pope described Bentley, in allusion, generally, to Bentley's bold style of practice in critical correction, but specially to his furious ravages up and down the "Paradise Lost" on the plea that Milton's amanuensis, whosoever he might be, had taken a base advantage of the great poet's blindness. [See *ante,* Vol. IV, pp. 191-193.—M.]

[2] Richard Payne Knight, writer on Art, 1750-1824.—M.

Schlosser makes the astounding assertion that a compliment of Boileau to Addison,—and a pure compliment of ceremony upon Addison's early Latin verses,—was (*credite posteri!*) the making of Addison in England. Understand, Schlosser, that Addison's Latin verses were never heard of by England until long after his English prose had fixed the public attention upon him; his Latin reputation, so far from being the foundation upon which he built, was a slight reaction from his English[1] reputation: and, secondly, understand that Boileau had at no time any such authority in England as to *make* anybody's reputation; he had first of all to make his own. A sure proof of this is that Boileau's name was first published in London by Prior's burlesque of what the French had called an ode. This gasconading ode celebrated the passage of the Rhine in 1672, and the capture of a famous fortress ("*le fameux fort de Skink*") by Louis XIV, known to London at the time of Prior's parody by the name of "Louis Baboon."[2] *That* was not likely to recommend Master Boileau to any of the allies against the said Baboon, had it ever been heard of out of France. Nor was it likely to make him popular in England that his name was first mentioned amidst shouts of laughter and mockery. It is another argument of the slight notoriety possessed by Boileau in England that no attempt was ever made to translate even his satires, epistles, or "Lutrin," except by booksellers' hacks, and that no such version ever took the slightest root amongst ourselves, spite of Skink, from Addison's day down to our own. Boileau was essentially, and in two senses—viz. both as to mind and as to influence—*un homme borné.*

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[1] "*Milton, Mr. John*":—Dr. Johnson expressed his wrath, in an amusing way, at some bookseller's hack who, when employed to make an index, introduced Milton's name among the M's, and by way of being particularly civil, as "Milton, Mr. John." [See *ante*, Vol. X, p 398.—M.]

Addison's "Blenheim" is poor enough; one might think it a translation from some German original of those times. Gottsched's aunt, or Bodmer's wet-nurse, might have written it. But still no fibs even as to "Blenheim"! His "enemies" did not say this thing against "Blenheim" "aloud," nor his friends that thing against it "softly." And why? Because at the time (1704-5) he had made no particular enemies, nor any particular friends; unless by friends you mean his Whig patrons, and by enemies his creditors.

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[1] In Oxford, where naturally an academic reputation forestalls for any scholarlike student his more national reputation, some of Addison's Latin verses were probably the ground of his first permature notoriety. But in London I believe that Addison was first made known by his "Blenheim" in 1704; most assuredly not by any academic exercise whatever.

[2] "*Louis Baboon*":—As people read nothing in these days that is more than a month old, I am daily admonished that allusions the most obvious to anything in the rear of our own time need explanation. *Louis Baboon* is Swift's allegorico-jocular name for *Louis Bourbon*—*i.e.* Louis XIV.

As to "Cato," Schlosser, as usual, wanders in the shadow of ancient night. The English "people," it seems, so "extravagantly applauded" this wretched drama that you might suppose them to have "altogether changed their nature," and to have forgotten Shakspere. That man must have forgotten Shakspere indeed, and from the *ramollissement* of the brain, who could admire "Cato." "But," says Schlosser, "it was only 'a fashion'; and the English soon repented." The English could not repent of a crime which they had never committed. Cato was not popular for a moment, nor tolerated for a moment, upon any literary ground, or as a work of art. It was an apple of temptation and strife thrown by the goddess of faction between two infuriated parties. "Cato," coming from a man without parliamentary connections, would have dropped lifeless to the ground. The Whigs have always affected a special love and favour for popular counsels: they have never ceased to give themselves the best of characters as regards public freedom. The Tories, as contradistinguished from the Jacobites, knowing that without *their* aid the Revolution could not have been carried, most justly contended that the national liberties had been at least as much indebted to themselves. When, therefore, the Whigs put forth *their* man Cato to mouth speeches about liberty as exclusively *their* pet, and about patriotism and all that sort of thing, saying insultingly to the Tories, "How do you like *that*? Does *that* sting?"—"Sting, indeed!" replied the Tories; "not at all; it's quite refreshing to us that the Whigs have not utterly disowned such sentiments, which, by their public acts, we really thought they *had*." And, accordingly, as the popular anecdote tells us, a Tory leader, Lord Bolingbroke, sent for Booth, who performed Cato, and presented him (*populo spectante*) with fifty guineas "for defending so well the cause of the people against a perpetual dictator." In which words, observe, Lord Bolingbroke at once asserted the cause of his own party, and launched a sarcasm against a great individual opponent—viz. Marlborough. Now, Mr. Schlosser, I have mended your harness: all right ahead: so drive on once more.

But, oh Castor and Pollux, whither—in what direction is it that the man is driving us? Positively, Schlosser, you must stop and let *me* get out. I'll go no further with such a drunken coachman. Many another absurd thing I was going to have noticed, such as his utter perversion of what Mandeville[1] said about Addison (viz. by suppressing one word, and misapprehending all the rest). Such, again, as his point-blank misstatement of Addison's infirmity in his official character; which was *not* that "he could not prepare despatches in a good style," but diametrically the opposite case: that he insisted — so microscopically insisted—on scruples of diction that a serious retardation was threatened to the course of public business. But all these things are as nothing to what Schlosser says elsewhere. He actually describes Addison, on the whole, as a "dull prosaist," and the patron of pedantry! Addison, the man of all that ever lived most hostile even to what was good in pedantry, to its tendencies towards the profound in erudition, to its minute precision and the non-popular,—Addison, the champion of all that is easy, natural, superficial,—Addison a pedant, and a patron of pedantry!

On Pope

Pope, by far the most important writer, English or Continental, of his own age, is treated with more extensive ignorance by Mr. Schlosser than any other, and (excepting Addison) with more ambitious injustice. A false abstract is given, or a false impression, of any one amongst his brilliant works that is noticed at all; and a false sneer, a sneer irrelevant to the case, at any work dismissed by name as unworthy of notice. The three works selected as the gems of Pope's collection are the "Essay on Criticism," the "Rape of the Lock," and the "Essay on Man." On the first, which (with Dr. Johnson's leave) is the feeblest and least interesting of Pope's writings,—being substantially a mere versification, like a metrical multiplication-table, of commonplaces the most mouldy with which criticism has baited its rat-traps,—since nothing is said worth answering, it is sufficient to answer nothing. The "Rape of the Lock" is treated with the same delicate sensibility that we might have looked for in Brennus, if consulted on the picturesque, or in Attila the Hun, if adjured to decide æsthetically between two rival cameos. Attila is said (though no doubt falsely) to have described himself as not properly a man so much as the divine wrath incarnate. This would be fine in a melodrama, with Bengal lights burning on the stage. But, if ever he said such a naughty thing, he forgot to tell us what it was that had made him angry. By what *title* did *he* come into alliance with the divine wrath, which was not likely to consult a savage? And why did his wrath hurry, by forced marches, to the Adriatic? Now, so much do people differ in opinion that, to me, who look at him through a telescope from an eminence fourteen centuries distant, he takes the shape rather of a Mahratta trooper painfully gathering *chout*, or a Scottish cateran levying black-mail, or a decent tax-gatherer with an ink-horn at his button-hole and supported by a select party of constabulary friends. The very natural instinct which Attila always showed for following the trail of the wealthiest footsteps seems to argue a most commercial coolness in the dispensation of his wrath. Mr. Schlosser burns with the wrath of Attila against all aristocracies, and especially that of England. He governs his fury, also, with an Attila discretion in many cases; but not here. Imagine this Hun coming down, sword in hand, upon Pope and his Rosicrucian light troops, levying *chout* upon Sir Plume, and fluttering the dovecot of the Sylphs. Pope's "duty it was," says this demoniac, to "scourge the follies of good society," and also "to break with the aristocracy." No, surely? something short of a total rupture would have satisfied the claims of duty? Possibly; but it would not have satisfied Schlosser. And Pope's guilt consists in having made his poem an idyl or succession of pictures representing the gayer aspects of society as it really was, and supported by a comic interest of the mock-heroic derived from a playful machinery, instead of converting it into a bloody satire. Pope, however, did not shrink from such assaults on the aristocracy, if these made any part of his duties. Such assaults he did actually make four times over, and twice at least[1] too often for his own peace, and perhaps for his credit at this day. It is useless, however, to talk of the poem as a work of art with one who sees none of its exquisite graces, and can imagine his countryman Zachariä equal to a competition with Pope. But this it may be right to add,—that the "Rape of the Lock" was *not* borrowed from the "Lutrin" of Boileau. That was impossible. Neither was it suggested by the "Lutrin." The story in Herodotus of the wars between cranes and pygmies, or the "Batrachomyomachia" (so absurdly ascribed to Homer), was *more* likely, though very unlikely, to have suggested the idea. Both these there is proof that Pope had read: there is none that he had read the "Lutrin"; nor did he read French with ease to himself. The "Lutrin," meantime, is as much below the "Rape of the Lock" in brilliancy of treatment, and in the festive gaiety of its incidents, as it is dissimilar in plan and in the quality of its pictures.

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[1] Bernard Mandeville, philosophical writer, 1670-1733.—M.

The "Essay on Man" is a more thorny subject. When a writer finds himself attacked and defended from all quarters, and on all varieties of principle, he is bewildered. Friends are as dangerous as enemies. He must not defy a bristling enemy, if he cares for repose; he must not disown a zealous defender, though defending him perhaps on a principle potentially ruinous, and making concessions on his own behalf abominable to himself; he must not explain away ugly phrases in one direction, or perhaps he is recanting the very words of his "guide, philosopher, and friend"; he must not explain them away in another direction, or he runs full tilt into the wrath of Mother Church—who will soon bring him to his senses by penance and discipline. Long

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[1] "*Twice at least*":—viz. upon Aaron Hill, and upon the Duke of Chandos. In both cases the aggrieved parties sharpened the edge of the unprovoked assault by the dignity of their own behaviour, by their command of temper, and by their manly disdain of all attempts to retaliate by undervaluing their splendid assailant. Evil is the day for a conscientious man when his sole resource for self-defence lies in a falsehood. And such, unhappily, was Pope's situation. His assaults upon Lady M. W. Montagu, and upon the two Duchesses of Marlborough, stand upon another basis.

Lents, and no lampreys allowed, would soon cauterise the proud flesh of heretical ethics. Pope did wisely,—situated as he was in a decorous nation, and closely connected, upon motives of honourable fidelity under political suffering, with the Roman Catholics,—to say little in his own defence. That defence, and any reversionary cudgelling which it might entail upon the Quixote undertaker, he left—meekly but also slyly, humbly but yet cunningly—to those whom he professed to regard as greater philosophers than himself. All parties found their account in the affair. Pope slept in peace; several pugnacious gentlemen up and down Europe expectorated much fiery wrath in dusting each other's jackets; and Warburton the attorney ultimately earned his bishopric in the service of whitewashing a writer who was aghast at finding himself first trampled on as a deist and then enthroned as a defender of the faith. Meantime, Mr. Schlosser misinterprets Pope's courtesy when he supposes his acknowledgments to Lord Bolingbroke sincere in their whole extent.

Of Pope's "Homer" Schlosser thinks fit to say,—amongst other evil things, which it really *does* deserve (though hardly in comparison with the German hexametrical "Homer" of the ear-splitting Voss),—"that Pope pocketed the subscription of the 'Odyssey,' and left the work to be done by his understrappers." Don't tell fibs, Schlosser. Never do *that* any more. True it is, and disgraceful enough in itself without lying, that Pope (like modern contractors for a railway or a loan) let off to sub-contractors several portions of the undertaking. He was perhaps not illiberal in the terms of his contracts. At least I know of people now-a-days (much better artists) that would execute such contracts, and enter into any penalties for keeping time, at thirty per cent less. But *navvies* and bill-brokers, that are in excess now, then were scarce. Still the affair, though not mercenary, was illiberal in a higher sense of art; and no anecdote shows more pointedly Pope's sense of the mechanic fashion in which his own previous share of the Homeric labour had been executed. It was disgraceful enough, and needs no exaggeration. Let it, therefore, be reported truly. Pope personally translated one-half of the "Odyssey"—a dozen books he turned out of his own oven'; and, if you add the "Batrachomyomachia," his dozen was a baker's dozen. The journeymen did the other twelve; were regularly paid; regularly turned off when the job was out of hand; and never once had to "strike for wages." How much beer was allowed I cannot say. This is the truth of the matter. So no more fibbing, Schlosser, if you please.

But there remains behind all these labours of Pope the "Dunciad"—which is by far his greatest. I shall not, within narrow bounds, enter upon a theme so exacting; for in this instance I should have to fight not against Schlosser only, but against Dr. Johnson, who has thoroughly misrepresented the nature of the "Dunciad," and consequently could not measure its merits. Neither he, nor Schlosser, in fact, ever read more than a few passages of this admirable poem. But the villainy is too great for a brief exposure. One thing only I will notice of Schlosser's misrepresentations. He asserts (not when directly speaking of Pope, but afterwards, under the head of Voltaire) that the French author's trivial and random *Temple de Gout* "shows the superiority in this species of poetry to have been greatly on the side of the Frenchman." Let us hear a reason, though but a Schlosser reason, for this opinion. Know, then, all men whom it concerns, that "the Englishman's satire only hit such people as " would never have been known without his mention of " them, whilst Voltaire selected those who were *still* [mean- " ing even in Voltaire's day] called great, and their respective " schools." Pope's men, it seems, never *had* been famous—Voltaire's might possibly cease to be so, but as yet they had *not* ceased; as yet they commanded interest. Now, mark how I will put three bullets into that plank, riddle it so that the leak shall not be stopped by all the old hats in Heidelberg, and Schlosser will have to swim for his life. First, he is forgetting that, by his own previous confession, Voltaire, not less than Pope, had "immortalised a great many *insignificant* persons"; consequently, had it been any fault to do so, each alike was caught in that fault; and, insignificant as the people might be, if they *could* be "immortalised," then we have Schlosser himself confessing to the possibility that poetic emblazonries might create a secondary interest where originally there had been none: a concession which is abundantly sufficient for the justification of Pope. Secondly, the question of merit does not graduate itself by the object of the archer, but by the style of his archery. Not the choice of victims, but the execution done, is what counts. Even for continued failures it would plead advantageously, much more for continued and brilliant successes, that Pope fired at an object offering no sufficient breadth of mark. Thirdly, it is the grossest of blunders to say that Pope's objects of satire were obscure by comparison with Voltaire's. Grant that the Frenchman's example of a scholar—viz. the French Salmasius—was commandingly impressive. But so was the Englishman's scholar—viz. the English Bentley. Each was absolutely without a rival in his own day. Meantime, the day of Bentley was the very day of Pope. Pope's man had not even *begun* to fade; whereas the day of Salmasius, as respected Voltaire, had gone by for more than half-a-century. As to Dacier, whom Schlosser cites, *which* Dacier? "which king, Bezonian?" The husband was a good[1] scholar; but madame was a poor sneaking fellow, fit only for the usher of a boarding-school. All this, however, argues Schlosser's twofold ignorance — first, of English authors, secondly, of the "Dunciad";—else he would have known that even Dennis, mad John Dennis, was a much cleverer man than most of those alluded to by Voltaire. Cibber, though slightly a coxcomb, was born a brilliant man. Aaron Hill was so lustrous that even Pope's venom (and by Pope's own confession) fell off spontaneously from *him*, like rain from oily plumage, leaving him to "mount far upwards with the swans of Thames"; and, finally, let it not be forgotten, that Samuel Clarke, for one, Burnet of the Charterhouse,[2] for a second, and Sir Isaac Newton, for a third, did not wholly escape Pope's knout. Now, if *that* rather impeaches the equity, and sometimes the judgment, of Pope, at least it contributes to show the groundlessness of Schlosser's objection that the population of the "Dunciad," the characters that filled its stage, were inconsiderable.

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[1] See his edition of "Horace" in nine volumes, from which any man may learn, and be thankful.

[2] "*Burnet of the Charterhouse*":—Let not the reader confound this Burnet with Gilbert Burnet, the Bishop of Salisbury. The latter was a gossiper, a slanderer, and, by the Duchess of Portsmouth's report, so notorious a falsifier of facts that to repeat a story on *his* authority was to insure its scoffing rejection by the whole court. Such was his character in that section of Europe (viz. the Court of Whitehall in the days of Charles II) where he was most familiarly and

On Fox and Burke

It is—or it *would* be, if Mr. Schlosser were himself more interesting—a luxury to pursue his ignorance as to facts, and the craziness of his judgment as to the valuation of minds, throughout his comparison of Burke with Fox. The force of antithesis brings out into a feeble life or meaning what, in its own insulation, had been languishing mortally into nonsense. The darkness of Schlosser's "Burke" becomes *visible* darkness under the glimmering that steals over it from the desperate commonplaces of his "Fox." Fox is painted exactly as he *would* have been painted fifty years ago by any pet subaltern of the Whig Club enjoying free pasture in Devonshire House. The practised reader knows well what is coming. Fox is "formed after the model of the ancients"; Fox is "simple"; Fox is "natural"; Fox is "chaste"; Fox is "forcible." Why, yes, in a sense, Fox is even "forcible": but then, to feel that he was so, you must have *heard* him,—whereas for fifty-and-one years he has been silent. We of 1858, that can only *read* him, hearing Fox described as *forcible*, are disposed to recollect Shakspere's Mr. Feeble amongst Falstaff's recruits, who also is described as *forcible*—viz. as the "most forcible Feeble." And, perhaps, a better description could not be devised for Fox himself: so feeble was he in matter, so forcible in manner; so powerful for instant effect, so impotent for posterity. In the Pythian fury of his gestures, in his screaming voice (for Fox's voice was shrill as a woman's), in his directness of purpose, Fox would now remind you of some demon steam-engine on a

experimentally known. That one of his sermons was burned by the hangman under orders from the House of Commons is the sole consolatory fact in his most worldly career. Would there have been much harm in tying his lordship to the sermon? But the other Burnet, though too early for a sound Cosmogony (*anarchon ara kai ateleutaion to pan*), was amongst the elect of earth by his eloquence.

railroad, some Fire-king or Salmoneus, that had counterfeited Jove's thunderbolts,—hissing, bubbling, snorting, fuming. Demoniac gas, you think, gas from Acheron, must feed that dreadful system of convulsions. But pump out the imaginary gas; and, behold! it is ditch-water. Fox, as Mr. Schlosser rightly thinks, was all of a piece—simple in his manners, simple in his style, simple in his thoughts. No waters in *him* turbid with new crystallisations; everywhere the eye could see to the bottom. No music in *him* dark with Cassandra meanings. Fox, indeed, disturb decent gentlemen by "allusions to all the sciences, from the integral calculus and metaphysics down to navigation!" Fox would have seen you hanged first. Burke, on the other hand, did all that, and other wickedness besides, which fills an 8vo page in Schlosser; and Schlosser crowns his enormities by charging him, the said Burke (p. 99), with "*wearisome tediousness.*" Among my own acquaintances are several old women who think on this point precisely as Schlosser thinks; and they go further, for they even charge Burke with "tedious wearisomeness." Oh, sorrowful woe, and also woeful sorrow, when an Edmund Burke arises, like a *cheeta* or hunting-leopard, coupled in a tiger-chase with a German poodle. To think, in any Christian spirit, of the jungle—barely to contemplate, in a temper of merciful humanity, the incomprehensible cane-thickets, dark and bristly, into which that bloody *cheeta* will drag that unoffending poodle!

But surely the least philosophic of readers, who hates philosophy "worse than toad or asp," must yet be aware that, where new growths are not germinating, it is no sort of praise to be free from the throes of growth. Where expansion is hopeless, it is little glory to have escaped distortion. Nor is it any blame that the rich fermentation of grapes should disturb the transparency of their golden fluids. Fox had nothing new to tell us; nor did he hold a position amongst men that required, or would even have allowed, him to tell anything new. He was helmsman to a party; what he had to do, though seeming to *give* orders, was simply to repeat *their* orders. "Port your helm," said the party; "Port it is," replied the helmsman. But Burke was no steersman; he was the Orpheus that sailed with the Argonauts; he was their *seer*, seeing more in his visions than was always intelligible even to himself; he was their watcher through the starry hours; he was their astrological interpreter. Who complains of a prophet for being a little darker of speech than a post-office directory? or of him that reads the stars for being sometimes perplexed?

Yet, even as to facts, Schlosser is always blundering. Post-office directories would be of no use to *him*, nor link-boys, nor blazing tar-barrels. He wanders in a fog such as sits upon the banks of Cocytus, fancying that Burke in his lifetime was *popular*, perhaps too popular. Of course, it is so natural to be popular by means of "*wearisome tediousness*" that Schlosser, above all people, ought to credit such a tale. Burke has been dead just sixty-one years come next autumn. I remember the time from this accident,—that my own nearest relative stepped, on a golden day of 1797, into that same suite of rooms at Bath (North Parade) from which, three hours before, the great man had been carried out to die at Beaconsfield. It is, therefore, you see, threescore years and one. Now, ever since then his *collective* works have been growing in bulk by the incorporation of juvenile essays (such as his "European Settlements," his "Essay on the Sublime," on "Lord Bolingbroke," &c.), or (as more recently) by the posthumous publication of his MSS.,[1] and yet, ever since then, in spite of growing age and growing bulk, are becoming more in demand. At this time, half-a-century after his last sigh, Burke *is* popular,—a thing, let me tell you,

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[1] "*Of his MSS.*":—And, if all that I have heard be true, much has somebody to answer for that so little has been yet published. The two executors of Burke were Dr. Lawrence of Doctors' Commons, a well-known M.P. in forgotten days, and Windham, a man too like Burke in compass and elasticity of mind ever to be spoken of in connection with forgotten things. Which of them was to blame I know not. But Mr. R. Sharpe, M.P. for I know not what borough, told the following story. Let me pause at this name ———. R., as the reader will rightly suppose, represented the Christian name which his godfathers and his godmothers had indorsed upon him at the baptismal font. Originally this R. had represented *Richard*: but, when Richard had swelled into portly proportions, had become an adult and taken his seat in the House of Commons, the Pagan public of London raised him to the rank of *River*; and thenceforwards R. S. stood for "*River* Sharpe"—this honorary augmentation of old hereditary name being

Schlosser, which never happened before, in island or in continent, amongst Christians or Pagans, to a writer steeped to his lips in *persónal* politics. What a tilth of intellectual lava must that man have interfused amongst the refuse and scoria of such mouldering party rubbish, to force up a new verdure and laughing harvests, annually increasing for new generations! Popular he *is* now, but popular he was not in his own generation. And how could Schlosser have the face to say that he was? Did he never hear the notorious anecdote that at one period Burke obtained the sobriquet of "dinner bell"? And why? Not as one who invited men to a banquet by his gorgeous eloquence, but as one that gave a signal to shoals in the House of Commons for seeking refuge in a *literal* dinner from the oppression of his philosophy. This

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understood to indicate the *ἀπεραντολογια* (or world-without-endingness of his eternal talk); in prophetic anticipation of which the poet Horace is supposed to have composed his two famous lines[1]—

> "Rusticus expectat dum defluat amnis, at ille
> Labitur et labetur in omne volubilis ævum."

This Mr. R. Sharpe, by the way, was a man of multitudinous dodges. He could (and he did, if you look into the parliamentary mirrors of those days) make a very neat speech upon occasion and when time was plentiful: else he was generally hurried by business; for he was a London merchant (in the English sense, observe, not the Scottish),—exporting, therefore, to every latitude in countless longitudes; so that his own mercantile letters exhausted his whole power of franking. This made him wear a selfish expression of countenance to that army of letter-writing ladies in whose eyes the final cause of an M.P. was that he might give franks to his female acquaintances—a matter of some importance when a double letter usually cost you a pretty half-crown; which, and not five shillings, is what the French always mean by an *écu*. Mr. Sharpe was chivalrous, nevertheless, and conceived himself a master in the most insinuating modes of deferential gallantry. But his seat in Parliament cost him exactly a thousand pounds sterling per annum. This sum he had to fetch back by franking,—which lucrative privilege he applied naturally to all the heaviest despatches as, perhaps, in part a scoff of his opponents.[1] Yet there ust have been some foundation for the scoff, since, at an arlier stage of Burke's career, Goldsmith had independently aid that this great orator

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[1] "*Famous lines*":—Of which the following translation was executed, the first line by the late Mr. William Cobbett (who hated Sharpe), and the last by Dryden:—

> "Chaw-bacon loiters till the stream be gone;
> Which flows, and, as it flows, for ever shall flow on."

But naturalists object (to Horace more properly than to Mr. Cobbett) that of all men Chaw-bacon, as a rusticus familiar with all features of the *rus*, is least likely to make such a mistake as that of waiting for a river to run down. A *cit*, a townsman bred and born, is what Horace must have meant.

"Went on refining,
And thought of convincing while *they* thought of *dining*."

blame neither party. It ought not to be expected of any *opular* body that it should be patient of abstractions amongst he intensities of party strife and the immediate necessities of oting. No deliberate body would less have tolerated such hilosophic exorbitations from public business than the *Agora*

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f his own firm. And under such circumstances, where each civility o his fair friends could be put into the scales and weighed in his ounting-house, reasonably he neither stood nor understood any 'nonsense." *Usque ad aras*—*i.e.* so far as the ledger permitted—he vished to conduct himself towards women *en grand seigneur*, or even *n prince*. But to waste a frank upon *their* "nonsense"—a frank hat paid all expenses from the Cornish Scillys northwards to John Groat, Esq., in Caithness—was the high road to bankruptcy. Consequently Mr. Sharpe was less popular than else he might have been, with so abundant a treasure of anecdotes, of gossip, and (amongst select friends) of high-flavoured scandal ———. Him, the said Sharpe, I heard more than once at Wordsworth's say that one or both of the executors had offered to *him* (the River) a huge travelling trunk, perhaps an imperial or a Salisbury boot (equal to the wardrobe of a family) filled with Burke's MSS., on the simple condition of editing them with annotations. An Oxford man, and also the celebrated Mr. Christian Curwen, then member for Cumberland, made, in my hearing, the same report. The Oxford man, in particular, being questioned as to the probable amount of MS., lamented that the gods had not made him an exciseman, with the gift of gauging barrels and other repositories; that he could not speak upon oath to the cubical contents; but this he could say,—that, having stripped up his coat-sleeve, he had endeavoured, by such poor machinery as nature had allowed him, to take the soundings of the trunk, but apparently there were none; with his middle finger he could find no bottom, for it was stopped by a dense stratum of MS.; below which, you know, other strata might lie *ad infinitum*. For anything proved to the contrary, the trunk might be bottomless.

[1] I do not believe that at any time he was so designated, unless playfully and in special coteries. That the young, who were wearied, —that the intensely practical, who distrusted him as a speculator,—that the man of business, *natus rebus agendis*, who viewed him as a trespasser on the disposable time of the House,—should combine intermittingly in giving expression to their feelings is conceivable, or even probable. The rest is exaggeration.

of Athens or the Roman Senate. So far the error was in Burke, not in the House of Commons. Yet also, on the other side, it must be remembered that an intellect like Burke's, combining power and enormous compass, could not, from necessity of nature, abstain from such speculations. For a man to reach a remote posterity, it is sometimes necessary that he should throw his voice over to them in a vast arch: it must sweep a parabola; which, therefore, rises high above the heads of those that stand next to him, and is heard by the bystanders but indistinctly, like bees swarming in the upper air before they settle on the spot fit for hiving.

See, therefore, the immeasurableness of misconception. Of all public men that stand confessedly in the first rank as to splendour of intellect, Burke was the *least* popular at the time when our blind friend Schlosser assumes him to have run off with the lion's share of popularity. Fox, on the other hand, as the leader of Opposition, was at that time a household term of love or reproach from one end of the island to the other. To the very children playing in the streets Pitt and Fox, throughout Burke's generation, were pretty nearly as broad distinctions, and as much a war-cry, as English and French, Roman and Punic. Now, however, all this is altered. As regards the relations between the two Whigs whom Schlosser so steadfastly delighteth to misrepresent,

> "Now is the winter of our discontent
> Made glorious summer"

as respects that intellectual potentate, Edmund Burke,—the man whose true mode of power has never yet been truly investigated; whilst Charles Fox is known only as an echo is known, and, for any real *effect* of intellect upon this generation, for anything but the "whistling of a name," the Fox of 1780-1807 sleeps where the carols of the larks are sleeping that gladdened the spring-tides of those years—sleeps with the roses that glorified the beauty of their summers.[1]

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[1] A man in Fox's situation is sure, whilst living, to draw after him trains of sycophants; and it is the evil necessity of newspapers the most independent that they *must* swell the mob of sycophants. The public compels them to exaggerate the true proportions of such people,

On Junius

Schlosser talks of Junius; who is to him, as to many people, more than entirely the enigma of an enigma, a vapoury likeness of Hermes Trismegistus, or a dark shadow of the mediæval Prester John. Not only are most people unable to solve the enigma, but they have no idea of what it is that they are required to solve. Schlosser is in that predicament. I have to inform Schlosser that there are three separate questions about Junius of which he has evidently never heard, and cannot, therefore, have many chances to spare for settling them. The three questions are these:—A, Who *was* Junius? B, What was it that armed Junius with a power over the public mind so unaccountable at this day. C, Why, having actually exercised such a power, and gained under his mask far more than he ever hoped to gain, did this Junius not come forward *in his own person*, when all the legal danger had long passed away, to claim a distinction that for *him* (among the vainest of men) must have been more precious than his heart's blood? The two questions B and C I have examined in past times[1]; and I

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as we see or hear every hour in our own day. Those who for the moment modify, or *may* modify, the national condition become preposterous idols in the eyes of the gaping public; but with the sad necessity of being too utterly trodden under foot after they are shelved, unless they live in men's memory by something better than speeches in Parliament. Having the usual fate, Fox was complimented, *whilst living*, on his knowledge of Homeric Greek,—which was a jest: he knew neither more nor less of Homer and his Ionic Greek than most English gentlemen of his rank; quite enough, that is, to read the "Iliad" with unaffected pleasure, far too little to revise the text of any ten lines without making himself ridiculous. The excessive slenderness of his general literature, English and French, may be seen in the letters published by his secretary, Trotter. But his fragment of a history, published by Lord Holland at two guineas, and currently sold for two shillings (not two *pence*, or else I have been defrauded of one shilling and tenpence), most of all proclaims the tenuity of his knowledge. He looks upon Malcolm Laing as a huge oracle, and, having read even less than Hume—a thing not very easy—with great *naïveté* cannot guess where Hume picked up his facts. [Fox's *History of the Early Part of the Reign of James the Second* was published in 1808, two years after his death. See *ante*, Vol. IX, p. 389, footnote.—M.]

[1] De Quincey here refers, and he continues to refer for a subsequent page or two, to his discussion of the Junius question in *Tait's*

will not here repeat my conclusions further than to say, with respect to the last, that the reason for the author not claiming his own property was this—because he *dared* not; because for that man who *was* Junius it would have been mere *infamy* to avow himself as Junius; because it would have revealed a crime, and would have published a crime in his own earlier life, for which many a man is transported in our days, and for less than which many a man has been in neighbouring lands hanged, broken on the wheel, burned, gibbeted, or impaled. To say that he watched and listened at his master's keyholes is nothing. It was not keyholes only that he made free with, but keys; he tampered with his master's seals; he committed larcenies—not like a brave man risking his life on the highway,—but petty larcenies, larcenies in a dwelling-house, larcenies under the opportunities of a confidential situation—crimes which formerly, in the days of Junius, our bloody code never pardoned in villains of low degree. Junius was in the situation of Lord Byron's Lara, or—because Lara is a foul plagiarism—of Harriet Lee's Kruitzner. All the world over, *or nearly*, Lara moved in freedom as a nobleman, haughtily and irreproachably. But one spot there was on earth in which he durst not for his life show himself, one spot in which instantly he would be challenged as a criminal—nay, whisper it not, ye forests and rivers! challenged as a vile midnight thief. But this man, because he had money, friends, and talents, instead of going to prison, took himself off for a jaunt to the Continent. From the Continent, in full security, and in possession of the *otium cum dignitate*, he negotiated with the Government whom he had alarmed by publishing the secrets which he had stolen. He succeeded. He sold himself to great advantage. Bought and sold he was; and of course it is understood that, if you buy a knave, and expressly in consideration of his knaveries, you secretly undertake, even without a special contract, not to hang him. "Honour

Magazine for December 1840 in connexion with his reminiscences of the *London Magazine* and of Mr. John Taylor one of the proprietors of that magazine, celebrated as the author of the book of 1818 which was supposed conclusively to identify "Junius" with Sir Philip Francis. See *ante*, Vol. III, pp. 128-143.—M.

bright!" Lord Barrington might certainly have indicted Junius at the Old Bailey, and had a reason for wishing to do so: but George III, who was a party to the negotiation, and all his ministers, would have said, with fits of laughter, "Oh, come now, my lord, you must *not* do that. For, since we have bargained for a price to send him out as a Member of Council to Bengal, you see clearly that we could not possibly hang him *before* we had fulfilled our bargain. Then it is true we might hang him after he comes back; but, since the man (being a clever man) has a fair chance in the interim of rising to be Governor-General, we put it to your candour, Lord Barrington, whether it would be for the public service to hang his Excellency?" In fact, Sir Philip might very probably have been Governor-General, had his vile temper not overmastered him. Had he not quarrelled so viciously with Mr. Hastings, it is ten to one that he might, by playing his cards well, have succeeded him. As it was, after enjoying an enormous salary, he returned to England, not Governor-General certainly, but still in no fear of being hanged. Instead of hanging him, on second thoughts, Government gave him a red riband. He represented a borough in Parliament; he was an authority upon Indian affairs; he was caressed by the Whig party; he sat at good men's tables. He gave for toasts *Joseph Surface* sentiments at dinner-parties—"The man that betrays" (something or other)—"The man that sneaks into" (other men's portfolios, perhaps)—"is" ay, *what* is he? Why, he is perhaps a Knight of the Bath; has a sumptuous mansion in St. James's Square; dies full of years and honour; has a pompous funeral; and fears only some such epitaph as this—"Here lies, in a red riband, the man who built a great prosperity on the basis of an unparalleled knavery." I complain heavily of Mr. Taylor, the very able unmasker of Junius, for blinking the whole questions B and C. He it is that has settled the question A, so that it will never be reopened by a man of sense.[1] A man who doubts, after *really* reading Mr. Taylor's work, is not only a blockhead, but an irreclaimable blockhead. It is true that several men,—among them Lord Brougham, whom Schlosser (though hating him, and kicking him) cites,—still profess, or are *said to profess*, scepticism. But the reason is evident: they have not *read* the book; they have only heard of it. They are unacquainted with the strongest arguments, and even with the nature of the evidence.[1] Lord Brougham, indeed, is generally reputed to have reviewed Mr. Taylor's book. *That* may be; it is probable enough. What I am denying is not at all that Lord Brougham *reviewed* Mr. Taylor, but that Lord Brougham *read* Mr. Taylor. And there is not much wonder in *that*, when we see professed writers on the subject, bulky writers, writers of answers and refutations, dispensing with the whole of Mr. Taylor's book,—single paragraphs of which would have forced them to cancel the sum total of their own. The possibility of scepticism, after really *reading* Mr. Taylor's book, would be the strongest exemplification upon record of Sancho's proverbial reproach that some men "want better bread than is made of wheat"—would be the old case renewed from the scholastic grumblers "that some men do not know when they are answered." They have got their *quietus*, and they still continue to "maunder" on with objections long since disposed of. In fact, it is not too strong a thing to say—and Chief-Justice Dallas *did* say something like it—that, if Mr. Taylor is not right, if Sir Philip Francis is *not* Junius, then was no man ever yet hanged on sufficient evidence. Even confession is no absolute proof. Even confessing to a crime, the man may be mad, or a knavish simulator. Well, at least seeing is believing: if the court sees a man commit an assault, will not *that* suffice? Not at all: ocular delusions on the largest scale are common. What's a court? Lawyers have no better eyes than other people. Their physics are often out of repair; and whole cities have been known to see things that could have no existence. Now, all other evidence is held to be short of this blank seeing or blank confessing. But I am not at all sure of *that*. Circumstantial evidence, that multiplies indefinitely its points of *internexus*, its nodes of intersection, with known admitted facts, is more impressive than any possible direct testimony. If you detect a fellow with a large sheet of lead, that by many (to wit, seventy) salient angles—that by tedious (to wit, sixty-nine) re-entrant angles—fits into and owns its sisterly relationship to all that is left of the lead upon your roof, this tight fit will weigh more with a jury than even if my Lord Chief-Justice should jump into the witness-box, swearing that with judicial eyes he saw the vagabond cutting the lead whilst he himself sat at breakfast, or even than if that very vagabond should protest before this honourable court that he *did* cut the lead, in order that he (the said vagabond) might have hot rolls and coffee as well as my lord, the witness. If Mr. Taylor's body of evidence does *not* hold water, then is there no evidence extant upon any question, judicial or not judicial, that *will*.

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[1] See preceding footnote, pp. 41-42.—M.

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[1] Even in Dr. Francis's "Translation of Select Speeches from Demosthenes," which Lord Brougham would be likely to consult in his own labours on that theme, there may be traced several peculiarities of diction that startle us in Junius. Sir Philip had them from his father, Dr. Francis. And Lord Brougham ought not to have overlooked them. The same thing may be seen, as was pointed out by Mr. Taylor, in the notes to Dr. Francis's translation of "Horace." [The well-known Translation of Horace by the Rev. Philip Francis, afterwards D.D., was published in 1742. He died in 1773.—M.] These points, though not *independently* of conclusive importance, become far more so in combination with others. The reply made to me once by a publisher of some eminence upon this question is remarkable, and worth repeating. "I feel," he said, "the impregnability of the case made out for Sir Philip Francis by Mr. Taylor. But the misfortune is that I have seen so many previous impregnable cases made out for other claimants." Ay, that *would* be unfortunate. But the misfortune for this repartee was that I, for whose use it was intended, not being in the predicament of a *stranger* to the dispute, having seen every page of the pleadings, knew all (except Mr. Taylor's) to be false in their statements of fact; after which, that their arguments should be ingenious or subtle signified nothing.

But I blame Mr. Taylor heavily for throwing away the whole argument deducible from B and C,—not as any debt that rested particularly upon *him* to public justice, but as a debt to the integrity of his own book. That book is now a fragment: admirable as regards A; but (by omitting B and C) not sweeping the whole area of the problem. There yet remains, therefore, the dissatisfaction which is always likely to arise—not from the smallest *allegatio falsi*, but from the large *suppressio veri*. B, which, on any other solution than the one I have proposed, is perfectly unintelligible, now becomes plain enough. To imagine a heavy, coarse, hard-working Government seriously affected by such a bauble as *they* would consider performances on the tight-rope of style is mere midsummer madness. "Hold your absurd tongue," would any of the ministers have said to a friend descanting on Junius as a powerful artist of style: "do you dream, dotard, that this baby's rattle is the thing that keeps us from sleeping? Our eyes are fixed on something else: that fellow, whoever he is, knows what he ought *not* to know; he has had his hand in some of our pockets; he's a good locksmith, is that Junius; and, before he reaches Tyburn, who knows what amount of mischief he may do to self and partners?" The rumour that ministers were themselves alarmed (which was the naked truth) travelled downwards; but the *why* did not travel; and the innumerable blockheads of lower circles, not understanding the real cause of fear, sought a false one in the supposed thunderbolts of the rhetoric. Opera-house thunderbolts they were: and strange it is that grave men should fancy newspapers, teeming (as they have always done) with *Publicolas*, with *Catos*, with *Algernon Sidneys*, able by such trivial small-shot to gain a moment's attention from the potentates of Downing Street. Those who have despatches to write, councils to attend, and votes of the Commons to manage, think little of Junius Brutus. A Junius Brutus that dares not sign by his own honest name is presumably skulking from his creditors. A Timoleon who hints at assassination in a newspaper, one may take it for granted, is a manufacturer of begging letters. And it is a conceivable case that a twenty-pound note, enclosed to Timoleon's address through the newspaper office, might go far to soothe that great patriot's feelings, and even to turn aside his avenging dagger. These sort of people were not the sort to frighten a British Ministry. One laughs at the probable conversation between an old hunting squire coming up to comfort the First Lord of the Treasury on the rumour that he was panic-struck. "What, surely, my dear old friend, you're not afraid of Timoleon?"—First Lord. "Yes, I am."—C. Gent. "What, afraid of an anonymous fellow in the papers?"—F. L. "Yes, dreadfully."—C. Gent. "Why, I always understood that these people were a sort of shams—living in Grub Street—or where was it that Pope used to tell us they lived?

Surely you're not afraid of Timoleon, because some people think he's a patriot?"—F. L. "No, not at all; but I am afraid because some people think he's a housebreaker!" In that character only could Timoleon become formidable to a Cabinet Minister; and in some such character must our friend, Junius Brutus, have made himself alarming to government. From the moment that B is properly explained, it throws light upon C. The Government was alarmed—not at such moonshine as patriotism, not at such a soap-bubble as rhetoric, but because treachery was lurking amongst their own households; and, if the thing went on, the consequences might be appalling. But this domestic treachery, which accounts for B, accounts at the same time for C. The very same treachery that frightened its objects at the time by the consequences it might breed would frighten its author afterwards from claiming its literary honours by the remembrances it might awaken. The mysterious disclosures of official secrets, which had once roused so much consternation within a limited circle, and (like the French affair of the diamond necklace[1]) had sunk into neglect only when all clue seemed lost for *perfectly* unravelling it, would revive in all its mystical interest when a discovery came before the public —viz. a claim on the part of Francis to have written the famous letters, which must at the same time point a strong light upon the true origin of the treacherous disclosures made in those letters. Some astonishment had always existed as to Francis, how he rose so suddenly into rank and station: some astonishment had always existed as to Junius, how he should so suddenly have fallen asleep as a writer in the journals. The coincidence of this sudden and unaccountable silence with that sudden and unaccountable Indian appointment of Francis; the extraordinary familiarity of Junius, which had *not altogether escaped notice*, with the secrets of one particular office, viz. the War Office; the sudden recollection, sure to flash upon all who remembered Francis if again he should become revived into suspicion, that he had held a situation of trust in that particular War Office: all these little recollections would begin to take up their places in a connected story: *this* and *that*, laid together, *that* and *this*, spelled into most significant words, would become clear as daylight; and to the keen eyes of still surviving enemies —Horne Tooke, "little Chamier," Ellis,—to the English houses of Fitzroy and Russell, to the Scottish houses of Murray and Wedderburne—the whole progress and catastrophe of the scoundrelism, the perfidy and the profits of the perfidy, would soon become as intelligible as any tale of midnight burglary from without in concert with a wicked butler within that was ever sifted by judge and jury at the Old Bailey, or critically reviewed by Mr. John Ketch at Tyburn.

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[1] For the story of this affair of the Diamond Necklace, see Carlyle's Miscellanies.—M.

Francis was the man. Francis was the wicked butler within, whom Pharaoh ought to have hanged, but whom he clothed in royal apparel, and mounted upon a horse that carried him to a curule chair of honour. So far his burglary prospered. But, as generally happens in such cases, this prosperous crime subsequently became the killing curse of long years to Francis. By a just retribution, the success of Junius, in two senses so monstrously exaggerated—exaggerated by a romantic over-estimate of its intellectual power through an error of the public, not admitted to the secret, and equally exaggerated as to its political power by the government, in the hush-money for its future suppression—became the self-avenger to the successful criminal. This criminal was one who, with a childish eagerness, thirsted for literary distinction above all other distinction, as for the *amreeta* cup of immortality. And, behold! there the brilliant bauble lay, glittering in the sands of a solitude, unclaimed by any man; disputed with him (if he chose to claim it) by nobody; and yet for his life he durst not touch it. Sir Philip stood—he knew that he stood—in the situation of a murderer who has dropped an inestimable jewel upon the murdered body in the death-struggle with his victim. The jewel is his! Nobody will deny it. He may have it for asking. But to ask is—to die; to die the death of a felon. "Oh yes!" would be the answer, "here's your jewel, wrapped up safely in tissue paper. But here's another lot that goes along with it—no bidder can take them apart—viz. a halter, also wrapped up in tissue paper." Francis, in relation to Junius, was in that exact predicament. "You, then, are Junius? You are that famous man who has been missing since 1772? And you can prove it? God bless me! sir, what a long time you've been sleeping: everybody's gone to bed from that generation. But let us have a look at you, before you move off to prison. I like to look at clever men,—particularly men that are *too* clever; and you, my dear sir, are too clever by half. I regard you as the brightest specimen of the swell-mob, and in fact as the very ablest scoundrel that at this hour rests in Europe unhanged!"—Francis died, and made no sign. Peace of mind he had parted with for a peacock's feather; which feather, living or dying, he durst not mount in the plumage of his cap.

POSTSCRIPT[1]

"SCHLOSSER on Literature" was not written with the slight or careless purpose to which the reader will probably attach it. The indirect object was to lodge, in such a broad exemplification of German ignorance, a protest against the habit (prevalent through the last fifty years) of yielding an extravagant precedency to German critics (on Shakspere especially), as if better and more philosophic (because more cloudy) than our own. Here is a man, Schlosser by name, bookmaker by trade, who (though now perhaps forgotten) was accepted by all Germany, one brief decennium back, as a classical surveyor and reporter on the spacious fields of British Literature through a retrospect of a hundred and fifty years. But the Schlegels were surely not so poorly furnished for criticism as Mr. Schlosser! Why, no: in special walks of literature, if they had not arrogantly pretended to all, they were able to support the character of well-read scholars. What they were as philosophers, or at least what Frederick Schlegel was, the reader may learn from Schelling,—who in one summary footnote demolished his pretensions as by a pistol-shot. For real, serviceable exposition of Shakspere's meaning and hidden philosophy I contend that our own domestic critics have contributed much more than Germany, whether North or South, whether Protestant or Catholic. And, in particular, I myself find in Morgan's brief essay on the character of Falstaff more true subtlety of thought than in all the smoky comments of Rhenish or Danubian transcendentalists. Then, as to those innumerable passages which demand a familiarity with English manners, usages, and antiquities, provincial dialects, &c., naturally the very gates of entrance must be generally closed against all but native critics.

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[1] This appeared originally as one of the paragraphs of De Quincey's Preface in 1858 to the volume of his Collective Edition containing his reprint of the Schlosser paper.—M.

THE POETRY OF POPE[1]

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 connexion 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* affect us all. No man escapes the contagion from his contemporary bystanders. And the reader may see further on that, had Pope been merely a satiric poet, he must in these times have laid down much of the splendour 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.

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[1] Appeared as the opening article in the *North British Review* for August 1848 (see *ante*, Vol. IV, pp. 14-15), in the form of a review of "The Works of Alexander Pope, Esquire. By W. Roscoe, Esq. A new edition. In eight vols. London, 1847": reprinted by De Quincey in 1858 in vol. ix of his Collective Edition of his Writings. It was there entitled simply "Alexander Pope"; but, as that title has been already used for the biography of Pope which De Quincey contributed to the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, and which, though not reprinted by himself, has appeared in a previous volume of the present edition, the title "The Poetry of Pope" has been substituted, as more convenient and distinctive.—M.

We mention this particular case as a reason generally for renewing by intervals the examination of great writers, and liberating the verdict of their contemporaries 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 pressing. 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 in fact it is *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 Shakspere'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 coextensive 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.[2] 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

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[1] Charles I., for example, when Prince of Wales, and many others in his father's court, gained their known familiarity with Shakspere 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.

[2] What are called *The Blue Books*,—by which title are understood the folio Reports issued every session of Parliament by committees of the two Houses, and stitched into blue covers,—though often sneered at by the ignorant as so much waste paper, will be acknowledged gratefully by those who have used them diligently as the main well-heads of all accurate information as to the Great Britain of this day. As an immense depository of faithful (*and not superannuated*) statistics, they are indispensable to the honest student. But no man would therefore class the *Blue Books* as literature.

dry light[1]; 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 honourable 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 symbolises 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, viz. 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 movement into another element where earth is forgotten.

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[1] "Heraclitus saith well in one of his enigmas, *Dry light is ever the best.* And certain it is that the light that a man receiveth by counsel from another is drier and purer than that which cometh from his own understanding and judgment; which is ever infused and drenched in his affections and customs."—*Bacon's Essay on Friendship.*—M.

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 co-operation 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, *i.e.* 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 the 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 notional 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: 1st, as regards absolute truth; 2dly, when that combat was 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 for ever 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 plagiarise. 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 separated not by imparity, but by disparity. They are not thought of as unequal under the same standard, but as different in *kind*, and, if otherwise equal, 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, that cannot be reflected in the mirror of copies, that cannot 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 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 endeavoured to illustrate, viz. that all works in this class, as opposed to those in the literature of knowledge, 1st, work by far deeper agencies, and, 2dly, are more permanent; in the strictest sense they are κτηματα ἐς ἀει: 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,[1] 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 modernisations 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 gaiety 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."

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[1] 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.

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 repose of higher faculties, but are continually enlarging and varying their phylacteries. But all literature properly so called—literature κατ' ἐξοχην,—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 for bad or good over human life that cannot be contemplated, when stretching through many generations, without a sentiment allied to awe.[1] 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 forgotten incidents of his childhood.

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[1] 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* neutralises 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.

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 then 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 Shakspere, Spenser, Milton. But this key arises spontaneously in *every* people, and by a necessity as sure as any that moulds the progress of civilisation. 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 conjunction 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 even slightly influenced by French literature. Both of them had a very imperfect acquaintance with the French language. Dryden openly 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 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 systematise was ruin. On the other hand, if this elliptical word *correctness,*—for elliptical it must be until its subject of control is assigned,—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 expressions. 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 for ever 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 Shakspere, in the Bible of King James's reign, and in Milton, there are very few grammatical errors.[1] 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 realise the idea: it simply suggests or hints it. Thus, to give a single illustration:—

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[1] 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—Shakspere 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 Shakspere's grammar is licentious. "The style of Shakspere" (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. Shakspere 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 *'tis* and *'twas*, 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

> "Know, God and Nature only are the same:
> In man the judgment shoots at flying game."[1]

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

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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 honourable 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*, *privado*, *desperado*, and French ones past counting. But, as these retained their foreign forms of structure, they reacted 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.

[1] Pope's *Moral Essays*, Epistle I., lines 95-96.—M.

which he sought relief for himself from half-an-hour's labour, at the price of utter darkness to the reader.

One editor distinguishes amongst the epistles that which Pope addressed to Lord Oxford some years after that minister's fall, as about the most "*correct*, musical, dignified, and affecting" that the poet has left.[1] Now, even as a specimen of vernacular English, it is conspicuously bad: the shocking gallicism, for instance, of "*attend*" for "wait his leisure," in the line "For *him* thou oft hast bid the world attend," would alone degrade the verses.[2] To bid the world attend—is to bid the world listen attentively, or look 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 British nation. 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 finished as exquisitely as a cameo. It is a still worse disfiguration of the very same class,—viz. 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 Harley, Lord Oxford, 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, from descending through six-and-twenty generations of de Veres. Quite as reasonable it would be, in a birthday 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.

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[1] Printed in Pope's Works as "Epistle to Robert, Earl of Oxford and Earl Mortimer." This was the title by which Robert Harley, the Tory statesman of Queen Anne's reign, and the friend and patron of many of the literary men of that time, was promoted to the peerage in 1711. He was afterwards Lord High Treasurer of Great Britain, but was dismissed from office in 1714. On the accession of George I. in that year he was sent to the Tower on political charges. He remained there for two years, was tried and acquitted, and spent the rest of his life in retirement. He died in 1724.—M.

[2] "For him thou oft hast bid the world attend,
Fond to forget the statesman in the friend."—M.

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 connexion 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 consolations 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 who 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 hosannahs 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 Quincy, 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) reunited "for ever in bliss."

The SATIRES of Pope, and,—what under another name *are* satires, viz. 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 or 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 in his satiric mision (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 rancour 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 locomotive-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,[1] 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 humour 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:

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[1] It was *after* his connexion with Warburton that Pope introduced several of his *living* portraits into the Satires.

> "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."[1]

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; no anger or displeasure attends their continual buccaneering expeditions; on the contrary,

> "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:

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[1] The poem quoted from is one of those printed among Wordsworth's "Poems referring to the period of Old Age," and bears the title *The Two Thieves: or the Last Stage of Avarice.* De Quincey, quoting from memory, does not quote quite correctly. In the original the first-quoted couplet runs thus—

> "There are ninety good seasons of fair and foul weather
> Between them, and both go a-pilfering together";

and the other thus—

> "And yet, into whatever sin they may fall,
> This child but half knows it, and that not at all."—M.

> "Each in his turn was both leader and led":

whereas, in the connexion 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 apparently 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 by far are Pope's satiric sketches of women, as carrying the same outrages on good sense to a far greater excess; and, as these expose more brightly the false principles on which he worked, 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 vulgar fictions 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 footnotes 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 (*i.e.* souls) to women. "Most women," he says, "have no character at all"[1]; 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, he had pledged himself to a chase, on 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 Heralds' 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 humour of the poet, angry or laughing, is 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 merits of the description.

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[1] 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, 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."

"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 rancour 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 in act 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 12th 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—oh, 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?

Next comes the case of Narcissa:—

> "'Odious! in *woollen*?[1] 'Twould 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 the 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 one 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: viz. 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 total 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 *Philomede* 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. *Philomede*, by the way, represents the second Duchess of Marlborough,[1] 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 simulated 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 illustrious, 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[2] or so to have been that true and faithful friend which, as contemporaries, we *might* have been.

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[1] This refers to the Act of Parliament, then recent, for burying corpses in woollen; which greatly disturbed the fashionable costume in coffins *comme il faut*.

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[1] The sons of the Duke having died in early youth, the title and estates were so settled as to descend through this daughter, who married the Earl of Sunderland. In consequence of this arrangement, *Spencer*, the name of Lord Sunderland, displaced, until lately, 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.

[2] The Duchess died in the same year as Pope, viz. just in time by a few months to miss the Rebellion of 1745 and the second Pretender;

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 vapours 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 was, 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.[1] 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*: viz. Pope, and subsequently, next in the succession to *him*, Horace Walpole. Pope suffered more from his own libellous assault upon *Atossa*, through a calumny against himself 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 pocketing of a bribe 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 pub-

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spectacles which for little reasons (vindictive or otherwise) both of them would have enjoyed until the spring of 1746, when their hour of hope passed away for ever. [Sarah Jennings, Duchess of Marlborough, 1660-1744.—M.]

[1] The book referred to seems to be "An Account of the Conduct of the Dowager Duchess of Marlborough from her first coming to Court to the year 1710," privately printed in 1742. Bibliographical authorities ascribe it to Nathaniel Hooke, author of *Roman History*. In 1788 there appeared in Edinburgh, under the editorship of Lord Hailes, a small volume entitled "The Opinions of Sarah, Duchess Dowager of Marlborough, published from her original MSS."—M.

lished. 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 nothing at all 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 favour 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 colourable 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 characterises 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 neutralises 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 recognised for such, may (numerically speaking) amount to nothing at all when compared with the absolutely infinite influxes of feeling or combinations 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 or 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 complex, 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 in time 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, as the morning laughs at old age and wrinkles. But a harp, though a world in itself, is but a narrow world in comparison with the world of a human heart.

Now these thoughts, tinctured subtly with the perfume and colouring of human affections, make up the sum of what merits κατ’ ἐξοχην 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 tendency to the thought; and this must become such, must become a governing element, through the quality of the ideas 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),—viz. 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; *a 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 acting *in spite of* her religion, viz. 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 recognised 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 co-extensive 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, nor 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! they whisper; 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[1] 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 not 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.

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[1] 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.

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.[1] 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,—an unfathomed 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 position. 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, supposing 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 too certainly 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 labour, 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.

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[1] The meaning is that Pope's Christianity is shown by his intimacy with the writings of the Anglo-Catholic poet Richard Crashaw (died 1650), and by the nature of some of his own poems,—such as his *Eloisa to Abelard*, his *Messiah: a Sacred Eclogue*, and his verses entitled *The Dying Christian to his Soul.* These last were avowedly a Christian adaptation of some celebrated Latin lines of the Emperor Hadrian.—M.

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 coloured 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 theorising faculty would have shrunk as from the labour 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,—viz. 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, — viz. *to justify the ways of God to man*; 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 organisation.

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 encumbrances of metre, and perhaps of rhyme? But these he will find the very least of his encumbrances. 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 of the two 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* by Dyer,[1] 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 leaves the old essential distinction of poetry (viz. its sympathy with the genial motions of man's heart) to override all accidents of special variation, and shows that the essence of poetry never *can* be set aside by its casual modifications,—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 milkmaids 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.

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[1] *Cyder*, by John Philips (1676-1708), was published in 1708; *The Fleece*, by John Dyer (1700-1758), in 1757.—M.

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.[1] This game was not in the first edition of the poem, but was an afterthought of Pope's, laboured 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?[1] 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. 1st, 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. 2dly, 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.

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[1] The passage occupies lines 25-100 of the Third Canto of *The Rape of the Lock*.—M.

Now, in treating a subject so vast as that which Pope chose for his Essay, viz. 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 choose.

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[1] Marco Girolamo Vida, of Cremona (1490-1566), author of a Latin poem on the Game of Chess, and of other Latin poems; of one of which, *The Christiad*, Milton says, in his juvenile poem on The Passion,—

"Loud o'er the rest Cremona's trump doth sound."—M.

Besides, in treating the ordinary themes proper for what is called didactic poetry—say, for instance, that it were the art of rearing silkworms 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 prosper 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 principal 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 realisation 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 sometimes 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 interest 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 labours 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[1]; 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 honourable esteem with which all lovers of exquisite intellectual brilliancy must wish to surround the name and memory of POPE.

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[1] 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.

POSTSCRIPT[1]

THE traditional errors affecting Literature, which it is something even to indicate, are these :—

First,—The inadequate distinction made (together with its consequences) between the Literature of Power, on the one hand, and the Literature of Knowledge, on the other.

Secondly,—The unreality of that critical canon prevailing through the last 150 years, which has referred the party of Dryden and Pope to an imaginary *French* School.[2]

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[1] What is now properly printed as a "Postscript" to the paper on Pope's Poetry appeared originally as part of De Quincey's "Preface" in 1858 to the volume of his Collective Edition of his Writings which contained his reprint of the paper.—M.

[2] "In the interest" (to use a slang phrase just now coming into currency) of enlightened patriotism, and, secondly, in the interest of truth, an Englishman must rejoice upon seeing such a ridiculous pretension reduced to its own windy value; but not, thirdly, in the interest of Pope. For, if ever man deserved to suffer by an injurious falsehood, it was surely that man who had piloted and opened a channel for such a falsehood by a forerunning falsehood of his own; and that man was Pope. He, upon the meanest and shallowest of temptations, viz. simply to bring a celebrated Latin passage within easy reach of a plausible English parody, wrote, printed, and published, the very wildest, grossest, most extravagant fiction that ever the mythologists of Fairyland have coined, or ancient nurse has chanted to believing infants. Credulity is among the simple graces of infancy: and if we, the littérateurs of earth, could revolve into that happy stage of life, we should find a pure delight in Pope's version of the Horatian Epistle which contains the passage beginning

> "Græcia capta ferum victorem cepit, et artes
> Intulit agresti Latio :"

[*i.e.* Greece, being made captive, in *her* turn made captive her savage conqueror, and thus introduced the arts into uncultured Latium.]

Thirdly,—The poverty of conception, which has sought the characteristic distinction of Pope in some supposed quality of *correctness*.

Fourthly,—The illogical and contradictory idea of what is called *Didactic* Poetry. This teaching (or didactic) function is generally understood to constitute the characteristic and differential distinction of didactic poetry; and that idea has sometimes misled the critic, but still more has misdirected the poet. Upon attentive reflection it will be seen that the function of teaching is not the *power* in such poetry, but the *resistance* to be overcome; that it is not *by* teaching that didactic poetry moves, but *in spite of teaching*.

Pope, on reading this, was struck with a lively impression of the effect likely to be attained by running a parallel to the ancient case as between Greece matched against Rome, and the modern case as between France matched against England. One section of such a parallel was really provided by prosaic history. No need for romance in this stage of the parallel. Rome had conquered Greece: doubt there could be none that England had conquered France, and had seated two of her kings on the French throne. So far all was sound and weather-proof. Now, if it could but be added that France, like Greece, had been found by her conqueror equipped with a full-blown literature, which the illiterate victor had carried back to his own home, in that case, how beautiful a rehearsal of the fifteenth century *after* Christ lay hid in the second and third centuries *before* Christ! Unhappily, no syllable of all this could be found in history, even when written by Frenchmen. But Pope, resolute that he would not be baulked of his showy parallel by any scoundrel of a truth-seeker, recollected in time—that what he could not find he might forge. And thus arose the monstrous fiction of a French literature antecedent to Agincourt (1415), and a literature *which served as a model to England!* It is pleasant to consider upon what English poet's fame this fable would chiefly have operated injuriously. Retributive would have been the punishment to Pope, if it had been argued by a Frenchman—"How can this man pretend to evade the charge of belonging to a French school, who himself derived all English literature from a supposed French literature at the very opening of the fifteenth century—a period which we French regard as entirely barbarous? But observe—according to the candid Pope, the barbarism of France sufficed for the culture of England!"

LORD CARLISLE ON POPE[1]

LORD CARLISLE'S recent lecture upon Pope, addressed to an audience of artisans, drew the public attention first of all upon himself. *That* was inevitable. No man can depart conspicuously from the usages or the apparent sympathies of his own class, under whatsoever motive, but that of necessity he will awaken for the *immediate* and the first result of his act an emotion of curiosity. But all curiosity is allied to the comic, and is not an ennobling emotion, either for him who feels it, or for him who is its object. A second, however, and more thoughtful consideration of such an act may redeem it from this vulgarising taint of oddity. Reflection may satisfy us, as in the present case it *did* satisfy those persons who were best acquainted with Lord Carlisle's public character, that this eccentric step had been adopted, not in ostentation, with any view to its eccentricity, but *in spite of* its eccentricity, and from impulses of large prospective benignity that would not suffer itself to be defeated by the chances of immediate misconstruction.

Whether advantageous, therefore, to Lord Carlisle, or disadvantageous (and in that case, I believe, most unjust), the first impressions derived from this remarkable lecture pointed themselves exclusively to the person of the lecturer—to his general qualifications for such a task, and to his possible motives for undertaking it. Nobody inquired *what* it was that the noble Lord had been discussing, so great was every man's astonishment that before such an audience any noble Lord should have condescended to discuss anything at all. But gradually all wonder subsides, *de jure*, in nine days; and, after this collapse of the primary interest, there was leisure for a secondary interest to gather about the *subject* of the patrician lecture. Had it any cryptical meaning? Coming from a man so closely connected with the Government, could it be open to any hieroglyphic or ulterior interpretations, intelligible to Whigs and significant to ministerial partisans? Finally, this secondary interest has usurped upon what originally had been a purely personal interest. POPE! What novelty was there, still open to even literary gleaners, about *him*, a man that had been in his grave for 106 years? What *could* there remain to say on such a theme? And what was it, in fact, that Lord Carlisle *had* said to his Yorkshire audience?

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[1] From *Tait's Magazine* for April, May, June, and July 1851: reprinted by De Quincey in 1859 in vol. xiii of his Collective Edition. —M.

There was, therefore, a double aspect in the public interest: one looking to the rank of the lecturer, one to the singularity of his theme. There was the curiosity that connected itself with the assumption of a troublesome duty in the service of the lowest ranks by a volunteer from the highest; and, secondly, there was another curiosity connecting itself with the choice of a subject that had no special reference to this particular generation, and seemed to have no special adaptation to the intellectual capacities of a working audience.

This double aspect of the public surprise suggests a double question. The volunteer assumption by a nobleman of this particular office in this particular service may, in the eyes of some people, bear a philosophic value, as though it indicated some changes going on beneath the surface of society in the relations of our English aristocracy to our English labouring body. On the other hand, it will be regarded by multitudes as the casual caprice of an individual,—a caprice of vanity by those who do not know Lord Carlisle's personal qualities, a caprice of patriotic benevolence by those who do. According to the construction of the case as thus indicated, oscillating between a question of profound revolution moving subterraneously amongst us and a purely personal question, such a discussion would ascend to the philosophic level, or sink to the level of gossip. The other direction of the public surprise points to a question that will interest a far greater body of thinkers. Whatever judgment may be formed on the general fact that a nobleman of ancient descent has thought fit to come forward as a lecturer to the humblest of his countrymen upon subjects detached from politics, there will yet remain a call for a second judgment upon the fitness of the particular subject selected for a lecture under such remarkable circumstances. The two questions are entirely disconnected. It is in the latter,—viz. the character and pretensions of Pope as selected by Lord Carlisle for such an inaugural experiment,—that I myself feel much interest. Universally it must have been felt as an objection that such a selection had no special adaptation to the age or to the audience. I say this with no wish to undervalue the lecture, which I understand to have been ably composed, nor the services of the lecturer, whose motives and public character, in common with most of his countrymen, I admire. I speak of it at all only as a public opportunity suddenly laid open for drawing attention to the true pretensions of Pope, as the most brilliant writer of his own class in European literature; or, at least, of drawing attention to some characteristics in the most popular section of Pope's works which hitherto have lurked unnoticed.

This is my object, and none that can be supposed personal to Lord Carlisle. Pope, as the subject of the lecture, and not the earlier question as to the propriety of any lecture at all under the circumstances recited, furnishes my *thesis*—that thesis on which the reader will understand me to speak with decision; not with the decision of arrogance, but with that which rightfully belongs to a faithful study of the author. The editors of Pope are not all equally careless; but all *are* careless, and under the shelter of this carelessness the most deep-seated vices of Pope's moral and satirical sketches have escaped detection, or at least have escaped exposure. These, and the other errors traditionally connected with the rank and valuation of Pope as a classic, are what I profess to speak of deliberately and firmly. Meantime, to the extent of a few sentences, I will take the liberty of suggesting, rather than delivering, an opinion upon the other question, —viz. the prudence in a man holding Lord Carlisle's rank of lecturing at all to any public audience. But on this part of the subject I beg to be understood as speaking doubtfully, conjecturally, and without a sufficient basis of facts.

The late Dr. Arnold of Rugby, notoriously a man of great ingenuity, possessing also prodigious fertility of thought, and armed with the rare advantage of being almost demoniacally in earnest, was, however (in some sort of balance to these splendid gifts), tainted to excess with the scrofula of impracticable crotchets. That was the opinion secretly held about him by most of his nearest friends; and it is notorious that he scarcely ever published a pamphlet or contribution to a journal in which he did not contrive to offend all parties, both friendly and hostile, by some ebullition of this capricious character. He hated, for instance, the High Church, with a hatred more than theological; and *that* would have recommended him to the favourable consideration of many thousands of persons in this realm, the same who have been secretly foremost in the recent outbreak of fanaticism against the Roman Catholics; but unfortunately it happened that, although not hating the Low Church (the self-styled Evangelicals), he despised them so profoundly as to make all alliance between them impossible. He hated also many individuals; but, not to do him any injustice, most (or perhaps all) of these were people that had been long dead; and amongst them, by the way, was Livy the historian,—whom I distinguish by name, as furnishing, perhaps, the liveliest illustration of the whimsical and all but lunatic excess to which these personal hatreds were sometimes pushed. For it is a fact that, when the course of an Italian tour had brought him unavoidably to the birthplace of Livy, Dr. Arnold felicitated himself upon having borne the air of that city,—in fact, upon having survived such a collision with the local remembrances of the poor historian,—very much in those terms which Mr. Governor Holwell might have used on finding himself "pretty bobbish" on the morning after the memorable night in the Black Hole of Calcutta: he could hardly believe that he still lived.[1] And yet, how had the eloquent historian trespassed on his patience and his weak powers of toleration? Livy was certainly not very learned in the archæologies of his own country; where all men had gone astray, *he* went astray. And in geography, as regarded the Italian movements of Hannibal, he erred with his eyes open. But these were no objects of Livy's ambition: what he aspired to do was to tell the story, "the tale divine," of Roman energy and perseverance; and *he so* told it that no man, as regards the mere artifices of narration, would ever have presumed to tell it after him. I cite this particular case as illustrating the furnace-heat of Dr. Arnold's antipathies, unless where some consideration of kindness and Christian charity interposed to temper his fury. This check naturally offered itself only with regard to individuals; and therefore, in dealing with institutions, he acknowledged no check at all, but gave full swing to the licence of his wrath. Amongst our own institutions, that one which he seems most profoundly to have hated was our nobility,—or, speaking more generally, our aristocracy. Some deadly aboriginal schism he seems to have imagined between this order and the democratic orders,—some predestined feud, as between the head of the serpent and the heel of man. Accordingly, as one of the means most clamorously invoked by our social position for averting some dreadful convulsion constantly brooding over England, he insists upon a closer approximation between our highest classes and our lowest. Especially, he seems to think that the peasantry needed to be conciliated by more familiar intercourse, or more open expressions of interest in their concerns, and by domiciliary visits not offered in too oppressive a spirit of condescension. But the close observer of our social condition will differ with Dr. Arnold at starting as to the facts. The ancient territorial nobility are not those who offend by *hauteur*. On the contrary, a spirit of parental kindness marks the intercourse of the old authentic aristocracy with their dependants, and especially with the two classes of peasants on their own estates and their domestic servants.[1] Those who *really* offend on this point are the *nouveaux riches*—the *parvenus*. And yet it would be great injustice to say that even these offend habitually. No laws of classification are so false as those which originate in human scurrility. Aldermen, until very lately, were by an old traditional scurrility so proverbially classed as gluttons and cormorants, hovering over dinner-tables, with no other characteristics whatever, or openings to any redeeming qualities, that men became as seriously perplexed in our days at meeting an eloquent, enlightened, and accomplished alderman, as they would have been by an introduction to a benevolent cut-throat, or a patriotic incendiary. The same thing happened in ancient days. Quite as obstinate as any modern prejudice against a London alderman was the old Attic prejudice against the natives of Bœotia. Originally it had grown up under two causes: 1st, the animosities incident to neighbourhood too close; 2dly, the difference of bodily constitution consequent upon a radically different descent. The blood was different, and by a wider and elder difference than that between Celtic and Teutonic. The garrulous Athenian despised the hesitating (but for that reason more reflecting) Bœotian; and this feeling was carried so far that at last it provoked satire itself to turn round with scorn upon the very prejudice which the spirit of satire had originally kindled. Disgusted with this arrogant assumption of disgust, the Roman satirist reminded the scorners that men not inferior to the greatest of their own had been bred, or might be bred, amongst those whom they scorned:—

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[1] A similar instance of a craze beyond the bounds of perfect physical sanity may be found in Dr. Arnold's nervous paroxysm of horror on hearing St. Paul placed on a level with St. John the Evangelist.

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[1] And, by the way, as to servants, a great man may offend in two ways: either by treating his servants himself superciliously; or, secondly, which is quite reconcilable with the most paternal behaviour

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on his own part, by suffering them to treat the public superciliously. Accordingly, all novelists who happen to have no acquaintance with the realities of life as it now exists,—especially, therefore, rustic novelists,—describe the servants of noblemen as "insolent and pampered menials." But, on the contrary, at no houses whatever are persons of doubtful appearance and anomalous costume sure of more respectful attention than at those of the great feudal aristocracy. At a merchant's or a banker's house it is odds but the porter or the footman will govern himself in his behaviour by his own private construction of the case which (as to foreigners) is pretty sure to be wrong. But in London, at a nobleman's door, the servants show, by the readiness of their civilities to all such questionable comers, that they have taken their lesson from a higher source than their own inexperience or unlearned fancies.

"Summos posse viros, et magna exempla daturos,
Vervecum in patriâ crassoque sub aëre nasci."

Now, if there is any similar alienation between our lowest classes and our highest, such as Dr. Arnold imagined to exist in England, at least it does not assume any such character of disgust, nor clothe itself in similar expressions of scorn. Practical jealousy, so far as it exists at all, lies between classes much less widely separated. The master manufacturer is sometimes jealous of those amongst his ministerial agents who tread too nearly upon his own traces; he is jealous sometimes of their advances in domestic refinement, he is jealous of their aspirations after a higher education. And, on *their* part, the workmen are apt to regard their masters as having an ultimate interest violently conflicting with their own. In these *strata* of society there really *are* symptoms of mutual distrust and hostility. Capital and the aristocracy of wealth is a standing object of suspicion, of fear, and therefore of angry irritation, to the working-classes. But, as to the aristocracy of rank and high birth, either it is little known to those classes, as happens in the most populous hives of our manufacturing industry, and is regarded, therefore, with no positive feeling of any kind, or else, as in the more exclusively agricultural and pastoral districts, is looked up to by the peasantry with blind feelings of reverence as amongst the immemorial monuments of the past —involved in one common mist of antiquity with the rivers and the hills of the district, with the cathedrals and their own ancestors. A half-religious sentiment of reverence for an old time-out-of-mind family associated with some antique residence, hall, or abbey, or castle, is a well-known affection of the rural mind in England; and, if in one half it points to an infirmity not far off from legendary superstition, in the other half it wears the grace of chivalry and legendary romance. And malignant scoff, therefore, against the peerage of England,—such as calling the House of Lords a Hospital of Incurables,—has always been a town-bred scurrility, not only never adopted by the simple rural labourer, but not even known to him or distinctly intelligible supposing it were.

If, therefore, there are great convulsions lying in wait for the framework of our English society; if, and more in

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sorrow than in hope, some vast attempt may be anticipated for re-casting the whole of our social organisation; and if it is probable that this attempt will commence in the blind wrath of maddened or despairing labour: still there is no ground for thinking, with Dr. Arnold, that this wrath, however blind (unless treacherously misled), would apply itself primarily to the destruction of our old landed aristocracy. It would often find itself grievously in error and self-baffled, even when following its first headlong impulses of revenge; but these are the impulses that it *would* follow, and none of these would primarily point in an aristocratic direction. Suppose, however, that the probabilities were different, and that a policy of conciliation were become peculiarly needful to the aristocracy—which is what Dr. Arnold supposes—in that case might not the course indicated by Lord Carlisle, viz. advancing upon a new line of *intellectual* communication with the labouring classes, be the surest mode of retrieving their affections, as most likely to flatter their self-esteem in its noblest aspirations?

One swallow, it is true, cannot make a summer; and others of the aristocracy must repeat the experiment of Lord Carlisle before any ground can be won for the interests of the order. Even in Lord Carlisle, it might be added, the experiment, if it were not followed up, would not count for more than a caprice. But, on the other hand, think as we may of the probable results, in reference to the *purposes* of its author we ought to regard it as a sufficient justification that *thus* the ice has been broken, that *thus* a beginning has been made, and *thus* a sanction established under which no man, if otherwise free to enter upon such a path, needs ever again to find an obstacle in rank the highest or in blood the most ancient. He is authorised by a Howard; and, though doubts must still linger about the propriety of such a course when estimated as a means to a specific end, yet for itself, in reference to the prudery of social decorum, we may now pronounce that to lecture without fee or reward before any audience whatever is henceforth privileged by authentic precedent, and, unless adulterated with political partisanship, is consecrated by its own noble purposes.

Still, if it be urged that these noble purposes are not

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ratified and sealed by a solitary experiment, I should answer that undoubtedly Lord Carlisle has placed himself under a silent obligation to renew his generous effort, or, in the event of his failing to do so, will have made himself a debtor to public censure, as one who has planned what he has not been strong enough to accomplish, and has founded a staircase or a portico to a temple yet in the clouds. *Had* he the ulterior purposes assumed? Then, by deserting or neglecting them, he puts on record the instability of his own will. Had he *not* these ulterior purposes? Then, and in that confession, vanishes into vapour the whole dignity of his bold pretensions as the navigator who first doubled the Cape of Storms [1] into an untried sea.

But against a man dealing presumably with a noble purpose we should reckon nobly. Mean jealousies have no place in circumstances where, as yet, no meanness had been exhibited. The exaction would be too severe upon Lord Carlisle if, by one act of kindness, he had pledged himself to a thousand, and if, because once his graciousness had been conspicuous, he were held bound over, in all time coming, to the unintermitting energies of a missionary amongst pagans. The labouring men of Yorkshire have not the clamorous necessities of pagans; and *therefore* Lord Carlisle has not assumed the duties of a working missionary. When, by personally coming forward to lecture, he inaugurated a new era of intellectual prospects for the sons of toil, implicitly he promised that he would himself, from time to time, come forward to co-operate with a movement that had owed its birth to his own summons and impulse. But, if he cannot honourably release himself from engagements voluntarily assumed, on the other hand he cannot justly be loaded with the responsibility of a continued participation in the details of the work which he has set in motion. By sympathy with the liberal purposes of an intellectual movement he gives to that movement its initial impulse. Henceforward it suffices if at intervals he continues to it such expressions of the same sympathy as may sustain its original activity, or at least may sustain the credit of his own consistency. It cannot be expected that any person in the circumstances of Lord Carlisle should continue even intermittingly to lecture. It is enough if, by any other modes of encouragement, or by inciting others to follow the precedent which he has set, he continues to express an unabated interest in the great cause of intellectual progress amongst poor men.

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[1] "Cape of Storms": which should *prima facie* be the Cape of Terrors. But it bears a deep allegoric sense to the bold wrestler with such terrors that in English, and at length to all the world, this Cape of Terrors has transfigured itself into the Cape of *Good Hope*.

A doubt may be raised, meantime, whether Literature is the proper channel into which the intellectual energies of the poor should be directed. For the affirmative it may be urged that the interest in Literature is universal, whilst the interest in Science is exceedingly limited. On the other hand, it may truly be retorted that the scientific interest may be artificially extended by culture, and that these two great advantages would in that case arise: 1. That the apparatus of means and instruments is much smaller in the one case than the other; 2. That Science opens into a *progression* of growing interest, whereas Literature, having no determined order of advance, and offering no regular succession of stages to the student, does not with the same certainty secure a self-maintaining growth of pleasurable excitement. Some remedy, however, will be applied to this last evil if a regular plan of *study* should ever be devised for Literature; and perhaps that may be found not impossible.

But now, coming to the second question,—namely, this question, *If any lecture at all, why upon Pope?*—we may see reason to think that Lord Carlisle was in error. To make a choice which is not altogether the best will not of necessity argue an error; because much must be allowed to constitutional differences of judgment or of sensibility, which may be all equally right as against any philosophic attempts to prove any one of them wrong. And a lecturer who is possibly aware of not having made the choice which was absolutely best may defend himself upon the ground that accidental advantages of a personal kind, such as previous familiarity with the subject, or pre-conformity of taste to the characteristic qualities of the author selected, may have qualified him to lecture on that theme with more effect and with more benefit than upon a theme confessedly higher but less tractable for himself with his own peculiar preparations. Here, however, the case is different. What might be no error *per se* becomes one if the special circumstances of the situation show it to have rested upon a deep misconception. Given the audience which Lord Carlisle had before him,—the audience which he anticipated, and which he proposed to himself as the modulating law for the quality and style of his lecture,—that same choice becomes a profound error which, for a different audience, more refined or miscellaneous, would have been no error at all. I do not fear that I shall offend Lord Carlisle, so upright as he has always shown himself, so manly, and so faithful to his own views of truth, by repeating firmly that such a choice in such a situation argues a deep misconception of the true intellectual agencies by which Pope acts as a power in literature, and of the moral relations to general human sensibilities or *universal* nature which such agencies involve. My belief is that, if a prize had been offered for a bad and malappropriate subject, none worse could have been suggested,—unless, perhaps, it had been the letters of Madame de Sevigné, or the fables of La Fontaine; in both of which cases the delicacies and subtle felicities of treatment are even more microscopic, more shy, and more inapprehensible without a special training and culture, than in Pope. And in this point they all agree, with no great difference amongst the three,—that the sort of culture which forms the previous condition for enjoying them (a *conditio sine qua non*) is not of a kind to be won from study. Even of *that* a mechanic artisan, whose daily bread depends upon his labour, cannot have had much. But the dedication of a life to books would here avail but little. What is needed must be the sort of culture won from complex social intercourse; and of this the labouring artisan can have had none at all. Even the higher ranks, during those stages of society when social meetings are difficult, are rare, and consequently have their whole intellectual opportunities exhausted in forms and elaborate ceremonials, are not able to develop what may be called the social sense,—that living, trembling sensibility to the expressions and the electric changes of human thought and feeling,—so infinite as they are potentially, and as they will show themselves to be when the intercourse is free, is sudden, is spontaneous, and therefore has not leisure to be false, amongst all varieties of combination as to sex, age, rank, position, and personal accomplishments. Up to the time of James I., society amongst ourselves wore a picturesque and even a scenical exterior; but the inner life and its pulsations had not then been revealed. Great passions were required to stir the freezing waters; so that certain kinds of comedy, in which such passions are inappropriate, could not then exist. And partly to this cause it was amongst the early Romans, united with the almost Asiatic seclusion from social meetings of female influence or in any virtual sense even of female presence, that we must ascribe the meagreness of the true social interest, and of the dialogue, exhibited by Plautus. Two separate frosts, during a century otherwise so full of movement as the sixteenth in England, repressed and killed all germinations of free intellectual or social intercourse amongst ourselves. One was the national reserve; and this was strengthened by concurring with a national temperament which is not phlegmatic (as is so falsely alleged), but melancholic, and for that reason, if there had been no other, antimercurial. But the main cause of this reserve lay in the infrequency of visits consequent upon the difficulties of local movement. The other frost lay at *that* time in the Spanish stateliness and the rigour of our social ceremonies. Our social meetings of this period, even for purposes of pleasure, were true *solemnities.* With usages of politeness that laid a weight of silence and delay upon every movement of a convivial company, rapid motion of thought or fancy became *physically* impossible. Not until, first, our *capital* city had prodigiously expanded; not until, secondly, our representative system had so unfolded its tendencies as to bring *politics* within the lawful privilege of ordinary conversation; not until, thirdly, the expansions of *commerce* had forced us into the continual necessity of talking with strangers; fourthly, not until all these changes, gradually breaking up the repulsion which separated our ungarrulous nation, had been ratified by continual improvements applied to the construction of *roads* and the arts of *locomotion*: could it be said that such a state of social intercourse existed as would naturally prompt the mind to seek food for its own intellectual activity in contemplating the phenomena of that intercourse. The primary aspects and the rapid changes of such an object could not arise until the object itself arose. Satire, which follows social intercourse as a shadow follows a body, was chained up till then. In Marston and in Donne (a man yet unappreciated) satire first began to respire freely, but applying itself too much, as in the great dramatists contemporary with Shakspere, to the exterior play of society. Under Charles II in the hands of Dryden, and under Anne in those of Pope, the larger and more intellectual sweep of satire showed that social activities were now approaching to their culmination. Now, at length, it became evident that a new mode of pleasure had been ripened, and that a great instinct of the intellect had opened for itself an appropriate channel. No longer were social parties the old heraldic solemnities enjoined by red letters in the almanac, in which the chief objects were to discharge some arrear of ceremonious debt, or to ventilate old velvets, or to *apricate* and refresh old gouty systems and old traditions of feudal ostentation, which both alike suffered and grew smoke-dried under too rigorous a seclusion. By a great transmigration, festal assemblages had assumed their proper station, and had unfolded their capacities as true auxiliaries to the same general functions of intellect—otherwise expressing themselves and feeding themselves through literature, through the fine arts, and through scenic representations. A new world of pleasures had opened itself, offering new subjects of activity to the intellect, but also presupposing a new discipline and experience for enjoying them.

Precisely at this point starts off what I presume to think the great error of Lord Carlisle. He postulates, as if it were a mere gift of inevitable instinct, what too certainly is the gift, and the tardy gift, of training; which training, again, is not to be won from efforts of study, but is in the nature of a slow deposition—or sediment as it were—from a constant, perhaps at the moment an unconscious, experience. Apparently the error is twofold: first, an oversight, in which it is probable that, without altogether overlooking the truth, Lord Carlisle allowed to it a very insufficient emphasis; but, secondly, a positive misconception of a broad character. The oversight is probably his own, and originating in a general habit of too large and liberal concession; but the misconception I suspect that he owes to another.

First, concerning the first. It is evidently assumed, in the adoption of Pope for his subject, that mechanic artists, as a body, are capable of appreciating Pope. I deny it; and in this I offer them no affront. If they cannot enjoy, or if often they cannot so much as understand, Pope, on the other hand they can both enjoy and understand a far greater poet. It is no insult, but, on the contrary, it is often a secret compliment to the simplicity and the *breadth* of a man's intellectual nature, that he cannot enter into the artificial, the tortuous, the conventional. Many a rude mind has comprehended to the full both Milton in his elementary grandeur and Shakspere in his impassioned depths, that could not have even dimly guessed at the meaning of a situation in comedy where the comic rested upon arbitrary rules and conventional proprieties. In all satiric sketches of society, even where the direct object may happen to have a catholic intelligibility, there is much amongst the allusions that surround and invest it which no man will ever understand that has not personally mixed in society, or understand without very disproportional commentaries; and even in that case he will not enjoy it. This is true of such compositions as a class; but Pope, in reference to this difficulty, is disadvantageously distinguished even amongst his order. Dryden, for instance, is far larger and more capacious in his satire, and in all the genial parts would approach the level of universal sympathies; whereas Pope, besides that the basis of his ridicule is continually too narrow, local, and casual, is rank to utter corruption with a disease far deeper than false refinement or conventionalism. Pardon me, reader, if I use a coarse word and a malignant word, which I should abhor to use unless where, as in this case, I seek to rouse the vigilance of the inattentive by the apparent intemperance of the language. Pope, in too many instances, for the sake of some momentary and farcical effect, deliberately assumes the licence of a *liar*. Not only he adopts the language of moral indignation where we know that it could not possibly have existed, seeing that the story to which this pretended indignation is attached was to Pope's knowledge a pure fabrication, but he also cites, as weighty evidences in the *forum* of morality, anecdotes which he had gravely transplanted from a jest-book.[1] Upon this, however, the most painful feature amongst Pope's literary habits, I will not dwell, as I shall immediately have occasion to notice it again. I notice it at all only for its too certain effect in limiting the sympathy with Pope's satiric and moral writings. Absolute truth and simplicity are demanded by all of us as preconditions to any sympathy with moral expressions of anger or intolerance. In all conventionalism there is a philosophic falsehood; and *that* would be more than sufficient to repel all general sympathy with Pope from the mind of the labouring man, apart from the effect of direct falsification applied to facts, or of fantastic extravagance applied to opinions. Of this bar to the popularity of Pope it cannot be supposed that Lord Carlisle was unaware. Doubtless he knew it, but did not allow it the weight which in practice it would be found to deserve. Yet why? Suppose that the unpopular tendency in Pope's writings were of a nature to be surmounted—upon a sufficient motive arising, suppose it not absolutely impossible to bring Pope within the toleration of working men, upon whom, however, all that is bad would tell fearfully, and most of Pope's peculiar brilliancy would absolutely go for nothing—this notwithstanding, suppose the point established that by huge efforts, by coaxing and flattering, and *invita Minerva*, the working-man might at length be *converted* to Pope; yet, finally, when all was over, what object, what commensurate end, could be alleged in justification of so much preternatural effort? You have got your man into harness; that is true, and in a sullen fashion he pulls at his burden. But, after all, why not have yoked him according to his own original inclinations, and suffered him to pull where he would pull cheerfully? You have quelled a natural resistance, but clearly with so much loss of power to all parties as was spent upon the resistance; and with what final gain to any party?

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[1] "I give and I bequeathe, old Euclio said," and the ridiculous story of the dying epicure insisting upon having his luxurious dish brought back to his death-bed (for why not? since, at any rate, eating or not eating, he was doomed to die), are amongst the lowest rubbish of jest-books, having done duty for the Christian and the Pagan worlds through a course of eighteen centuries. Not to linger upon the nursery silliness that could swallow the legend of epicureanism surviving up to the very brink of the grave, and when even the hypocrisy of *medical* hope had ceased to flatter, what a cruel memento of the infirmity charged upon himself was Pope preparing whilst he intended nothing worse than a falsehood! He meant only to tell a lie; naturally, perhaps, saying to himself—What's one lie more or less? And, behold, if his friends are to be believed, he was unconsciously writing a sort of hieroglyphic epitaph for his own tombstone. Dr. Johnson's taste for petty gossip was so keen that I distrust all his anecdotes. That Pope killed himself by potted lampreys, which he had dressed with his own hands, I greatly doubt; but, if anything inclines me to believe it, chiefly it is the fury of his invectives against epicures and gluttons. What most of all he attacked as a moralist was the particular vice which most of all besieged him.

The answer to this lies in the second of the errors which I have imputed to Lord Carlisle. The first error was perhaps no more than an undervaluation of the truth. The second, if I divine it rightly, rests upon a total misconception, viz. the attribution to Pope of some special authority as a moral teacher. And this, if it were really true, would go far to justify Lord Carlisle in his attempt to fix the attention of literary students amongst the working-classes upon the writings of Pope. Rightly he would judge that some leading classic must furnish the central object for the general studies. Each man would have his own separate favourites; but it would be well that the whole community of students should also have some *common* point of interest and discussion. Pope, for such a purpose, has some real advantages. He is far enough from our own times to stand aloof from the corroding controversies of the age; he is near enough to speak in a diction but slightly differing from our own. He is sparkling with wit and brilliant good sense, and his poems are all separately short. But, if Lord Carlisle count it for his main advantage that he is by distinction a *moral* poet,—and this I must suppose in order to find any solution whatever for the eagerness to press him upon the attention of our most numerous classes,—where is it that this idea has originated? I suspect that it is derived originally from a distinguished man of genius in the last generation, viz. Lord Byron. Amongst the guardians of Lord Byron one was the late Lord Carlisle; and Lord Byron was, besides, connected by blood with the House of Howard; so that there were natural reasons why a man of such extraordinary intellectual splendour should easily obtain a profound influence over the present Earl of Carlisle. And the prejudice, which I suppose to have been first planted by Lord Byron, would readily strengthen itself by the general cast of Pope's topics and pretensions. He writes with a showy air of disparaging riches, of doing homage to private worth, of honouring patriotism, and so on through all the commonplaces of creditable morality. But in the midst of this surface display, and in defiance of his ostentatious pretensions, Pope is *not* in any deep or sincere sense a moral thinker; and in his own heart there was a misgiving, not to be silenced, that he was not.

Yet this is strange. Surely Lord Carlisle, a man of ability and experience, might have credit given him for power to form a right judgment on such a question as that: *power* undoubtedly, if he had ever been led to use his power,—that is, to make up his opinion in *resistance* to the popular impression. But to this very probably he never had any motive; and the reason why I presume to set up my individual opinion in this case against that of the multitude is because I know experimentally that, until a man has a sincere interest in such a question, and sets himself diligently to examine and collate the facts, he will pretty certainly have no right to give any verdict on the case.

What made Lord Byron undertake the patronage of Pope? It was, as usually happened with *him*, a motive of hostility to some contemporaries. He wished to write up Pope by way of writing down others. But, whatever were the motive, we may judge of the style in which he carried out his intentions by the following well-known *mot*. Having mentioned the poets, he compares them with the moralists,—"the moralists," these are his words, "the moralists, their betters." How, or in what sense that would satisfy even a lampooner, are moralists as a class the "betters" in a collation with poets as a class? It is pretty clear at starting that, *in order* to be a moralist of the first rank,—that is, to carry a great moral truth with heart-shaking force into the mind,—a moralist must begin by becoming a poet. For instance, "to justify the ways of God to man." *That* is a grand moral doctrine ; but to utter the doctrine authentically, and with power, a man must write a "Paradise Lost." The order of precedency, therefore, between poets and moralists as laid down by Lord Byron is very soon inverted by a slight effort of reflection.

But, without exacting from a man so self-willed as Lord Byron (and at that moment in a great passion) any philosophic rigour, it may be worth while, so far as the case concerns Pope, to ponder for one moment upon this invidious comparison, and to expose the fallacy which it conceals. By the term *moralist* we indicate two kinds of thinkers, differing as much in quality as a chestnut horse from a horse chestnut, and in rank as a Roman proconsul from the nautical consul's first clerk at a seaport. A clerical moralist in a pulpit, reading a sermon, is a moralist in the sense of one who applies the rules of a known ethical system, viz. that system which is contained in the New Testament, to the ordinary cases of human action. Such a man pretends to no originality ; it would be criminal in him to do so ; or, if he seeks for novelty in any shape and degree, it is exclusively in the quality of his illustrations. But there is another use of the word *moralist*, which indicates an intellectual architect of the first class. A Grecian moralist was one who published a new *theory* of morals ; that is, he assumed some new central principle, from which he endeavoured, with more or less success, to derive all the virtues and vices, and thus introduced new relations amongst the keys or elementary gamut of our moral nature.[1] For example, the Peripatetic system of morality, that of Aristotle, had for its fundamental principle that all vices formed one or other of two polar extremes, one pole being in excess, the other in defect; and that the corresponding virtue lay on an equatorial line between these two poles. Here, because the new principle became a law of coercion for the entire system, since it must be carried out harmoniously with regard to every element that could move a question, the difficulties were great, and hardly to be met by mere artifices of ingenuity. The legislative principle needed to be profound and comprehensive; and a moralist in this sense, the founder of an ethical system, really looked something like a creative philosopher.

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[1] Upon this principle I doubt not that we should interpret the sayings attributed to the seven wise men of Greece. If we regard them as insulated aphorisms, they strike us all as mere impertinences ; for by what right is some one prudential admonition separately illuminated and left as a solemn legacy to all posterity in slight of others equally cogent ? For instance, *Meden agan*—nothing in excess—is a maxim not to be neglected, but still not entitled to the exclusive homage which is implied in its present acceptation. The mistake, meantime, I believe to be, not in the Grecian pleiad of sages, but in ourselves, who have falsely apprehended them. The man, for instance (Bias was it, or who ?), that left me this old saw about excess, did not mean to bias me in favour of that one moral caution ; this would have argued a craze in favour of one element amongst many.

But, valued upon that scale, Pope is nobody; or in Newmarket language, if ranked against Chrysippus, or Plato, or Aristotle, or Epicurus, he would be found "nowhere." He is reduced, therefore, at one blow to the level of a pulpit moralist, or mere applier of moral laws to human actions. And in a function so exceedingly humble, philosophically considered, how could he pretend to precedency in respect of anybody, unless it were the amen clerk, or the sexton?

In reality, however, the case is worse. If a man did really bring all human actions under the light of any moral system whatever, provided that he *could* do so sternly, justly, and without favour this way or that, he would perform an exemplary service such as no man ever *has* performed. And this is what we mean by casuistry, which is the application of a moral principle to the *cases* arising in human life. A *case* means a generic class of human acts, but differentiated in the way that law cases are. For we see that every case in the law courts conforms in the major part to the generic class; but always, or nearly always, it presents some one differential feature peculiar to itself; and the question about it

What he meant was to indicate the *radix* out of which his particular system was expanded. It was the key-note out of which, under the laws of thorough-bass, were generated the whole chord and its affinities. Whilst the whole evolution of the system was in lively remembrance, there needed no more than this shorthand memento for recalling it. But now, when the lapse of time has left the little maxim stranded on a shore of wrecks, naturally it happens that what was in old days the keystone of an arch has come to be compounded with its superfluous rubbish.

always is, Whether the differential feature is sufficient to take it out of the universal rule, or whether, in fact, it ought not to disturb the incidence of the legal rule? This is what we mean by casuistry. All law in its practical processes is a mode of casuistry. And it is clear that any practical ethics, ethics applied to the realities of life, ought to take the professed shape of casuistry. We do not evade the thing by evading the name. But, because casuistry, under that name, has been chiefly cultivated by the Roman Catholic Church, we Protestants, with our ridiculous prudery, find a stumbling-block in the very name. This, however, is the only service that *can* be rendered to morality among us. And nothing approaching to this has been attempted by Pope.[1]

What is it, then, that he *has* attempted? Certainly he imagines himself to have done something or other in behalf of moral philosophy. For in a well-known couplet he informs us—

> "That not in Fancy's maze he linger'd long,
> But stoop'd to Truth, and *moralised* his song."

Upon these lines a lady once made to me this very acute and significant remark :—The particular direction, she said, in which Pope fancied that he came upon Truth showed pretty clearly what sort of truth it was that he searched after. Had he represented Fancy, as often is done, soaring aloft amongst the clouds, then, because Truth must be held to lie in the opposite direction, there might have been pleaded a necessity for *descending* upon Truth, like one who is looking for mushrooms. But, as Fancy, by good luck, is simply described as roaming about amongst labyrinths, which are always constructed upon dead levels, he had left it free for himself to soar after Truth into the clouds. But *that* was a mode of truth which Pope cared little for; if *she* chose to go gallivanting amongst the clouds, Pope, for *his* part, was the last person to follow her. Neither was he the man to go down into a well in search of her. Truth was not liable to wet feet, but Pope *was*. And he had no such ardour for Truth as would ever lead him to forget that wells were damp, and bronchitis alarming to a man of his constitution.

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[1] This paragraph repeats an idea which occurs in several parts of De Quincey's writings, and which is treated at large in his paper entitled *Casuistry*, given *ante*, Vol. VIII.—M.

Whatever service Pope may have meditated to the philosophy of morals, he has certainly performed none. The direct contributions which he offered to this philosophy in his "Essay on Man" are not of a nature to satisfy any party; because at present the whole system may be read into different, and sometimes into opposite, meanings, according to the quality of the integrations supplied for filling up the chasms in the chain of the development. The sort of service, however, expected from Pope in such a field, falls in better with the style of his satires and moral epistles than of a work professedly metaphysical. Here, however, most eminently it is that the falseness and hypocrisy which besieged his satirical career have made themselves manifest; and the dilemma for any working man who should apply himself to these sections of Pope's writings is precisely this:—Reading them with the slight and languid attention which belongs to ordinary reading, he will make no particular discoveries of Pope's hollowness and infidelities to the truth, whether as to things or persons; but in such a case neither will he reap any benefit. On the other hand, if he so far carry out Lord Carlisle's advice as to enter upon the study of Pope in the spirit of an earnest student, and so as really to possess himself of the key to Pope's inner mind, he will rise from his labours not so much in any spirit of gratitude for enlarged and humanising views of man, as in a spirit of cynical disgust at finding that such views can be so easily counterfeited, and so often virtually betrayed.

Whom shall we pronounce a fit writer to be laid before an auditory of working men, as a model of what is just in composition—fit either for conciliating their regard to literature at first or afterwards for sustaining it? The qualifications for such a writer are apparently these two · first, that he should deal chiefly with the elder and elementary affections of man, and under those relations which concern man's grandest capacities; secondly, that he should treat his subject with solemnity, and not with sneer—with earnestness, as one under a prophet's burden of impassioned truth, and not with the levity of a girl hunting a chance-started caprice. I admire Pope in the very highest degree; but I admire him as a pyrotechnic artist for producing brilliant and evanescent effects out of elements that have hardly a moment's life within them. There is a flash and a startling explosion; then there is a dazzling coruscation, all purple and gold;. the eye aches under the suddenness of a display that, springing like a burning arrow out of darkness, rushes back into darkness with arrowy speed, and in a moment all is over. Like festal shows, or the hurrying music of such shows—

> "It *was*, and it is not."

Untruly, therefore, was it ever fancied of Pope, that he belonged by his classification to the family of the Drydens. Dryden had within him a principle of continuity which was not satisfied without lingering upon his own thoughts, brooding over them, and oftentimes pursuing them through their unlinkings with the *sequaciousness* (pardon a Coleridgian word) that belongs to some process of creative nature, such as the unfolding of a flower. But Pope was all jets and tongues of flame; all showers of scintillation and sparkle. Dryden followed, genially, an impulse of his healthy nature. Pope obeyed, spasmodically, an overmastering febrile paroxysm. Even in these constitutional differences between the two are written and are legible the corresponding necessities of "utter falsehood in Pope, and of loyalty to truth in Dryden." Strange it is to recall this one striking fact,—that, if once in his life Dryden might reasonably have been suspected of falsehood, it was in the capital matter of religion. He *ratted* from his Protestant faith, and according to the literal origin of that figure he *ratted*; for he abjured it as rats abjure a ship in which their instinct of divination has deciphered a destiny of ruin, and at the very moment when Popery wore the promise of a triumph that might, at any rate, have lasted his time. Dryden was a Papist by apostasy, and perhaps, not to speak uncharitably, upon some bias from self-interest. Pope, on the other hand, was a Papist by birth, and by a tie of honour; and he resisted all temptations to desert his afflicted faith,—which temptations lay in bribes of great magnitude prospectively, and in persecutions for the present that were painfully humiliating. How base a timeserver does Dryden appear on the one side!—on the other, how much of a martyr should we be disposed to pronounce Pope! And yet, for all that, such is the overruling force of a nature originally sincere, the apostate Dryden wore upon his brow the grace of sincerity, whilst the pseudo-martyr Pope, in the midst of actual fidelity to his Church, was at his heart a traitor—in the very oath of his allegiance to his spiritual mistress had a lie upon his lips, scoffed at her whilst kneeling in homage to her pretensions, and secretly forswore her doctrines whilst suffering insults in her service.

The differences as to truth and falsehood lay exactly where, by all the external symptoms, they ought *not* to have lain. But the reason for this anomaly was, that to Dryden sincerity had been a perpetual necessity of his intellectual nature, whilst Pope, distracted by his own activities of mind, living in an irreligious generation, and beset by infidel friends, had early lost his anchorage of traditional belief; and yet, upon an honourable scruple of fidelity to the suffering Church of his fathers, he sought often to dissemble the fact of his own scepticism, which yet often he thirsted ostentatiously to parade. Through a motive of truthfulness he became false. And in this particular instance he would, at any rate, have become false, whatever had been the native constitution of his mind. It was a mere impossibility to reconcile any real allegiance to his Church with his known irreverence to Religion. But upon far more subjects than this Pope was habitually false in the quality of his thoughts, always insincere, never by any accident in earnest, and consequently many times caught in ruinous self-contradiction. Is that the sort of writer to furnish an advantageous study for the precious leisure, precious as rubies, of the toil-worn artisan?

The root and the pledge of this falseness in Pope lay in a disease of his mind, which he (like the Roman poet Horace) mistook for a feature of preternatural strength; and this disease was the incapacity of self-determination towards any paramount or abiding *principles*. Horace, in a well-known passage, had congratulated himself upon this disease as upon a trophy of philosophic emancipation :—

"Nullius addictus jurare in verba magistri,
Quo me cunque rapit tempestas deferor hospes":

which words Pope thus translates, and applies to himself in his English adaptation of this epistle:—

"But ask not to what doctors I apply—
Sworn to no master, of no sect am I.
As drives the storm, at any door I knock;
And house with Montaigne now, or now with Locke."

That is, neither one poet nor the other having, as regarded philosophy, any internal principle of gravitation or determining impulse to draw him in one direction rather than another, he was left to the random control of momentary taste, accident, or caprice; and this indetermination of pure, unballasted levity both Pope and Horace mistook for a special privilege of philosophic strength. Others, it seems, were chained and coerced by certain fixed aspects of truth, and their efforts were overruled accordingly in one uniform line of direction. But *they*, the two brilliant poets,[1] fluttered on

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[1] "*The two brilliant poets.*" As regards Horace, it is scarcely worth while to direct the reader's attention upon the inconsistency of this imaginary defiance to philosophic authority with his profession elsewhere of allegiance to Epicurus; for, had it even been possible to direct the poet's own attention upon it, the same spirit of frank simplicity which has converted his very cowardice, his unmitigated cowardice (*relicta non bene parmula*), into one of those amiable and winning frailties which, once having come to know it, on no account could we consent to forgo, would have reconciled us all by some inimitable picturesqueness of candour to inconsistency the most shocking as to the fulfilment of some great moral obligation; just as from the brute restiveness of a word (Equotuticum), that positively would not come into the harness of hexameter verse, he has extracted a gay laughing *alias* (viz. "*versu quod dicere non est*"); a pleasantry which is nowhere so well paralleled as by Southey's on the name of Admiral Tchitchagoff:—

"A name which you all must know very well,
Which nobody can speak, and nobody can spell."

Vain would it be to fasten any blame upon a poet armed with such heaven-born playfulness that upon a verbal defect he raises a triumph of art, and upon a personal defect raises a perpetual memento of smiling and affectionate forgiveness. We "condone" his cowardice, to use the language of Doctors' Commons, many times over, before we know whether he would have cared for our condonation; and protest our unanimous belief that, if he did run away from battle, he ran no butterfly-wings to the right and to the left, obeying no guidance but that of some instant and fugitive sensibility to some momentary phasis of beauty. In this dream of drunken eclecticism, and in the original possibility of such an eclecticism, lay the ground of that enormous falsehood which Pope practised from youth to age. An eclectic philosopher already, in the very title which he assumes, proclaims his self-complacency in the large liberty of error purchased by the renunciation of all controlling principles. Having

faster than a gentleman ought to run. In fact, his character would have wanted its amiable unity had he *not* been a coward, or had he *not* been a rake. Vain were it to level reproaches at *him*, for whom all reproaches become only occasions of further and surplus honour. But, in fact, for any serious purposes of Horace, philosophy was not wanted. Some slight pretence of that kind served to throw a shade of pensiveness over his convivial revels, and thus to rescue them from the taint of plebeian grossness. So far, and no farther, a slight colouring of philosophy was needed for his moral musings. But Pope's case is different. The moral breathings of Horace are natural exhalations rising spontaneously from the heart under the ordinary gleams of chance and change in the human things that lay around him. But Pope is more ambitious. He is not content with *borrowing* from philosophy the grace of a passing sanction or countersign, but undertakes to *lend* her a systematic coherency of development, and sometimes even a fundamental basis. In his "Essay on Man," his morals connect themselves with metaphysics. The metaphysics had been gathered together in his chance eclectic rambles amongst books of philosophy, such as Montaigne, Charron, and latterly amongst the fossil rubbish and *débris* of Bayle's Dictionary. Much also had been suggested to his piercing intellect in conversation, especially with Lord Bolingbroke; but not so exclusively by any means with *him* as the calumniators of Pope would have us suppose. Adopt he did from all quarters, but Pope was not the man servilely to beg or to steal. It was indispensable to his own comfort that he should at least understand the meaning of what he took from others, though seldom indeed he understood its wider relations, or pursued its ultimate consequences. Hence came anguish and horror upon Pope in his latter days, such as rarely can have visited any but the death-bed of some memorable criminal. To have rejected the *verba magistri* might seem well; it might look promising, as all *real* freedom is promising, for the interests of truth; but he forgot that, in rejecting the master, he had also rejected the doctrine—the guiding principle—the unity of direction secured for the inquirer by the master's particular system with its deep internal cohesion. Coming upon his own distracted choice of principles from opposite angles and lines of direction, he found that what once and under one aspect had seemed to him a guiding light, and one of the buoys for narrowing the uncertainties of a difficult navigation, absolsevered the towing-line which connected him with any external force of guiding and compulsory truth, he is free to go astray in any one of ten thousand false radiations from the true centre of rest. By his own choice he is wandering in a forest all but pathless,

> "Ubi passim
> Palantes error recto de tramite pellit";

and a forest not of sixty days' journey, like that old Hercynian forest of Cæsar's time, but a forest which sixty genera-

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utely under another aspect, differently approached and differently associated, did the treacherous office of a *spanselled* horse, as in past days upon the Cornish and the south Irish coast it was employed—expressly for showing false signals, and leading right amongst breakers. That *hortus siccus* of pet notions, which had won Pope's fancy in their insulated and separate existence, when brought together as parts and elements of the same system in the elaborate and haughty "Essay on Man," absolutely refused to cohere. No doctoring, no darning, could disguise their essential inter-repulsion. Dismal rents, chasms, hiatuses, gaped and grinned in a theory whose very office and arrogant pretension had been to harmonise the dislocated face of nature, and to do *that* in the way of justification for God which God had forgotten to do for himself. How if an enemy should come, and fill up these ugly chasms with some poisonous fungus of a nature to spread the dry rot through the main timbers of the vessel? And, in fact, such an enemy *did* come. This enemy spread dismay through Pope's heart. Pope found himself suddenly shown up as an anti-social monster, as an incendiary, as a disorganiser of man's most aspiring hopes. "O heavens! what is to be done? what *can* be done?" he cried out. "When I wrote that passage, which now seems so wicked, certainly I meant something very good; or, if I didn't, at any rate I meant to mean it." The case was singular; if no friend of the author could offer a decent account of its meaning, to a certainty the author could *not*. Luckily, however, there are two ways of filling up chasms; and Warburton, who had reasons best known to himself for cultivating Pope's favour, besides considerable practice during his youth in a special pleader's office, took the desperate case in hand. He caulked the chasms with philosophic oakum, he "payed" them with dialectic pitch, he sheathed them with copper and brass by means of audacious dogmatism and insolent quibbles, until the enemy seemed to have been silenced, and the vessel righted so far as to float. The result, however, as a permanent result, was this—that the demurs which had once been raised (however feebly pressed) against the poem, considered in the light of a system compatible with religion, settled upon it permanently as a sullen cloud of suspicion that a century has not availed to dissipate.

tions have not availed to traverse or familiarise in any one direction.

For Horace, as I have endeavoured to explain in the note, the apology is so much the readier as his intrusions into this province of philosophy are slighter, more careless, and more indirect. But Pope's are wilful, premeditated, with malice aforethought; and his falsehoods wear a more malignant air, because they frequently concern truth speculative, and are therefore presumably more deliberate in their origin, and more influential in the result. It is precisely this part of Pope's errors that would prove most perplexing to the unlearned student. Beyond a doubt the "Essay on Man" would, in virtue of its subject, prove the most attractive to a labouring man of all Pope's writings, as most of all promising a glimpse into a world of permanence and of mysterious grandeur, and having an interest, therefore, transcendent to any that could be derived from the fleeting aspects of manners or social conventionalisms, though illuminated and vivified by satire. *Here* would be the most advantageous and *remunerative* station to take for one who should undertake a formal exposure of Pope's hollow-heartedness; that is, it would most commensurately reward the pains and difficulties of such an investigation. But it would be too long a task for this situation, and it would be too polemic. It would move through a jungle of controversies. For, to quote a remark which I once made myself in print, the "Essay on Man" in one point resembles some doubtful inscriptions in ancient forms of Oriental languages, which, being made up elliptically of mere consonants, can be read into very different senses according to the different sets of vowels which the particular reader may choose to interpolate.[1] According to the choice of the interpreter, it may be read into a loyal or a treasonable meaning. Instead of this I prefer, as more amusing, as less elaborate, and as briefer, to expose a few of Pope's *personal* falsehoods, and falsehoods as to the notorieties of *fact*. Truth speculative drives its roots oftentimes into depths so dark that the falsifications to which it is liable, though detected, cannot always be exposed to the light of day; the result is known, but not therefore seen. Truth personal, on the other hand, may be easily made to confront its falsifier, not with refutation only, but with the visible *shame* of refutation. Such shame would settle upon *every* page of Pope's satires and moral epistles, oftentimes upon every couplet, if any censor, armed with an adequate knowledge of the facts, were to prosecute the inquest. And the general impression from such an inquest would be that Pope never delineated a character, nor uttered a sentiment, nor breathed an aspiration, which he would not willingly have recast, have retracted, have abjured or trampled under foot with the curses assigned to heresy, if by such an act he could have added a hue of brilliancy to his colouring or a new depth to his shadows. There is nothing he would not have sacrificed, not the most solemn of his opinions nor the most pathetic memorial from his personal experiences, in return for a sufficient consideration,—which consideration meant always with *him* poetic effect. It is not, as too commonly is believed, that he was reckless of other people's feelings; so far from *that*, he had a morbid *facility* in his kindness; and in cases where he had no reason to suspect any lurking hostility he showed even a paralytic benignity. But, simply and constitutionally, he was incapable of a sincere thought or a sincere emotion. Nothing that ever he uttered, were it even a prayer to God, but he had a fancy for reading it backwards. And he was evermore false, not as loving or preferring falsehood, but as one who could not in his heart perceive much real difference between what people affected to call falsehood and what they affected to call truth. Volumes might be filled with illustrations: I content myself with three or four.

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[1] See *ante*, p. 94.—M.

I. Pope felt *intellectually* that it was philosophic, and also that it wore an air of nobility, *not* to despise poverty. *Morally*, however, he felt inversely: nature and the accidents of his life had made it his necessity to despise nothing so heartily. If in any one sentiment he ever was absolutely sincere, if there can be cited one insulated case upon which he found it difficult to play the hypocrite, it was in the case of that intense scorn with which he regarded poverty, and all the painful circumstances that form the equipage of poverty. To look at a pale, dejected fellow-creature creeping along the highway, and to have reason for thinking that he has not tasted food since yesterday—what a pang would such a sight, accompanied by such a thought, inflict upon many a million of benign human hearts! But in Pope, left to his spontaneous nature, such a sight and such a thought would have moved only fits of laughter. Not that he would have refused the poor creature a shilling, but still he would have laughed. For hunger, and cold, and poverty, appeared to *him* only in the light of drolleries, and too generally of scoundrelisms. Still he was aware that some caution was requisite in giving public expression to such feelings. Accordingly, when he came forward in gala-dress as a philosopher, he assumed the serene air of one upon whom all such idle distinctions as rich and poor were literally thrown away. But watch him: follow his steps for a few minutes, and the deep realities of his nature will unmask themselves. For example, in the first book of the "Dunciad" he has occasion to mention Dennis,—

> "And all the mighty mad in Dennis raged."

Upon this line (the 106th) of the text he hangs a note, in the course of which he quotes a few sentences about Dennis from Theobald. One of these begins thus: "Did we really know how much this poor man suffers by being contradicted," &c.; upon which Pope thinks proper to intercalate the following pathetic parenthesis in italics: "*I wish that reflection on* POVERTY *had been spared.*" How amiable! how pretty! Could Joseph Surface have more dexterously *improved* the occasion: "The man that disparages poverty is a man that——" &c. It is manifest, however, at a glance, that this virtuous indignation is altogether misplaced; for "*poor*" in the quotation from Theobald has no reference whatever to *poverty* as the antithesis to *wealth*. What a pity that a whole phial of such excellent scenical morality should thus have been uncorked and poured out upon the wrong man and the wrong occasion! Really this unhappy blunder extorts from me as many tears of laughter as ever poverty extorted from Pope. Meantime, reader, watch what follows. Wounded so deeply in his feelings by this constrained homage to poverty, Pope finds himself unable to re-settle the equilibrium in his nervous system until he has taken out his revenge by an extra kicking administered to some old mendicant or vagrant lying in a ditch.

At line 106 comes the flourish about Dennis's poverty. Just nine lines ahead, keeping close as a policeman upon the heels of a thief, you come up with Pope in the very act of maltreating Cibber, upon no motive or pretence whatever, small or great, but that he (the said Cibber) was guilty of poverty. Pope had detected him—and this is Pope's own account of the assault—in an overt act of poverty. He deposes, as if it were an ample justification of his own violence, that Cibber had been caught in the very act—not of supping meanly, coarsely, vulgarly, as upon tripe, for instance, or other offal—but absolutely in the act of not supping at all!

> "Swearing and *supperless* the hero sate."

Here one is irresistibly reminded of the old story about the cat who was transformed into a princess; she played the *rôle* with admirable decorum, until one day a mouse ran across the floor of the royal saloon, when immediately the old instinct and the hereditary hatred proved too much for the artificial nature, and her highness vanished over a six-barred gate in a furious mouse-chase. Pope, treading in the steps of this model, fancies himself reconciled to poverty. Poverty, however, suddenly presents herself, not as a high poetic abstraction, but in that one of her many shapes which to Pope had always seemed the most comic as well as the most hateful. Instantly Pope's ancient malice is rekindled; and in line 115 we find him assaulting that very calamity under one name which under another, at line 106, he had treated with an ostentatious superfluity of indulgence.

II. I have already noticed that some of Pope's most pointed examples, which he presents to you as drawn from his own experience of life, are in fact due to jest-books; and some (offered as facts) are pure coinages of his own brain. When he makes his miser at the last gasp so tenacious of the worldly rights then slipping from his grasp as that he refuses to resign a particular manor, Pope forgot that even a jest-book must govern its jokes by some regard to the realities of life, and that amongst these realities is the very nature and operation of a will. A miser is not, therefore, a fool; and he knows that no possible testamentary abdication of an estate disturbs his own absolute command over it so long as he lives, or bars his power of revoking the bequest. The moral instruction is in this case so poor that no reader cares much upon what sort of foundation the story itself rests. For such a story a lie may be a decent basis. True; but not so senseless a lie. If the old miser was delirious, there is an end of his responsibilities; and nobody has a right to draw upon *him* for moral lessons or warnings. If he was *not* delirious, the case could not have happened. Modelled in the same spirit are all Pope's pretended portraitures of women; and, the more they ought to have been true, as professing to be studies from life, the more atrociously they are false, and false in the transcendent sense of being impossible. Heaps of contradiction, or of revolting extravagance, do not verify themselves to our loathing incredulity because the artist chooses to come forward with his arms a-kimbo, saying angrily, "But I tell you, sir, these are *not* fancy-pieces! These ladies whom I have here lampooned are familiarly known to me; they are my particular friends. I see them every day in the undress of confiding friendship. They betray all their foibles to me in the certainty that I shall take no advantage of their candour; and will you, coming a century later, presume to dispute the fidelity or the value of my contemporary portraits?" Yes, and upon these two grounds: first (as to the fidelity), that the pretended portraits are delineations of impossible people; and, secondly (as to the value), that, if after all they could be sworn to as copies faithful to the originals, not the less are they to be repelled as abnormal, and so far beyond the intelligibilities of nature as practically to mean nothing, neither teaching nor warning. The two Duchesses of Marlborough, for instance, Sarah and Henrietta, mother and daughter, are atrocious caricatures, constructed on the principle of catching at a momentary stare or grin, by means of anarchy in the features imputed, and truculent antithesis in the expression. Who does not feel that these are the fierce pasquinades, and the coarse pasquinades, of some malignant electioneering contest? Is there a line that breathes the simplicity and single-heartedness of truth? Equal disgust settles upon every word that Pope ever wrote against Lady Mary W. Montagu. Having once come to hate her rancorously, and finding his hatred envenomed by the consciousness that Lady Mary had long ceased to care two straws for all the malice of all the wits in Christendom, Pope laboured at his own spite, filing it and burnishing it as a hand-polisher works at the blade of a scimitar. For years he had forgotten to ask after the realities of nature as they existed in Lady Mary, and considered only what had the best chance of stinging her profoundly. He looked out for a "raw" into which he might lay the lash; not seeking it in the real woman, but generally in the nature and sensibilities of abstract woman. Whatever seemed to disfigure the idea of womanhood, *that*, by reiterated touches, he worked into his portraits of Lady Mary; and at length, no doubt, he had altogether obliterated from his own remembrance the true features of her own whom he so much detested. On this class of Pope's satiric sketches I do not, however, wish to linger, having heretofore examined some of the more prominent cases with close attention.[1]

The previous section on Pope has been taxed with exaggeration. This charge comes from a London weekly journal (*The Leader*) distinguished by its ability, by its hardihood of speculation, by its comprehensive candour, but, in *my* eyes, still more advantageously distinguished by its deep sincerity.[2] Such qualities give a special value to the courtesies of that journal; and I in particular, as a literary man, have to thank it for repeated instances of kindness the most indulgent, on any occasion which has brought up the mention of my name. Such qualities of necessity give a corresponding value to its censures; and, accordingly, as a point of duty, I directed my attention immediately to *this* censure. Whatever was still unprinted I reviewed; and whatever struck me as open to objection I removed. And, if the result after all has been that I do not altogether concur in the criticism of *The Leader*, the reason is because, as upon re-examination it strikes me, in the worst cases Pope has not left room for exaggeration. I do not see any actual exaggeration, simply because I do not see that any exaggeration is possible. But, though I thus found myself unable sincerely to make the sacrifice of my own opinion, another sacrifice of a different kind I *have* made,—viz. that of half my paper. I cancelled one half, viz. that half which was occupied with cases in Pope of disingenuousness, and perhaps of moral falsehood or collusion with other people's falsehood, but not of falsehood atrociously literal and conscious; meaning thus to diminish by one half the penance of those who do not like to see Pope assaulted, although forced by uneasiness to watch the assault—a feeling with which I heartily sympathise; and meaning, on the other hand, in justification of myself, to throw the reader's attention more effectively, because more exclusively, upon such cases of frantic and moonstruck falsehood as could allow no room for suspense or mitigation of judgment. Of these I have selected two,—one relating to the Duke of Buckingham, and the other to the history and derivation of English Literature. Generally, I believe that to a just appreciation of Pope's falseness, levity, and self-contradiction it is almost essential that a reader should have studied him with the purpose of becoming his editor. This at one time was my own purpose[1]; and thus it was that I became acquainted with qualities prevailing in Pope which, in the midst of my great admiration for him, would have made such a purpose difficult of execution. For in the relation between author and editor any harshness of reproach on the part of the latter, or any expression of alienation and imperfect sympathy, seems unbecoming in one who has spontaneously assumed the office of a *patronus* to a *client*, and are uniformly painful to the reader. On this account it is that the late Mr. Roscoe figures amongst all editors of Pope as by far the most agreeable. He has a just tenderness for the memory and merits of the great writer whom he undertakes to edit; this feeling keeps his annotations clear from the petulance of Joseph Warton and the malice of Bowles; whilst, not having happened to see Pope's errors in the same light as myself, he suffers from no conflict between his natural indulgence to intellectual splendour and his conscientious reverence for truth.

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[1] See *ante*, pp. 73-79.—M.

[2] *The Leader*, a London weekly paper in high reputation for some time between 1850 and 1860. The literary editor was George Henry Lewes; and among the political writers were Thornton Hunt and E. S. Pigott. In the Rev. Mr. Jacox's Recollections of Visit to De Quincey at Lasswade in 1852, —*i.e.* the year after the present paper was written,—this passage occurs:—"One of the periodicals of the day which he seemed to read with great zest was *The Leader*; of the editor of which, Mr. G. H. Lewes, he spoke with inquiring eagerness" (quoted in Mr. Page's *Life of De Quincey*, i. 392).—M.

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[1] An interesting autobiographic particular.—M.

But, if the reader is shocked with Pope's false reading of phenomena where not the circumstances so much as the construction of the circumstances may be challenged, what must he think of those cases in which downright facts, and incidents the most notorious, have been outrageously falsified only in obedience to a vulgar craving for effect in the dramatic situations, or by way of pointing a moral for the stimulation of torpid sensibilities? Take, for instance, the death of the second Villiers, Duke of Buckingham—a story which, in Pope's version of it, has travelled into a popularity that may be called national; and yet the whole is one tissue of falsehoods, and of falsehoods that must have been known for such by Pope not less than to most of his contemporary readers. Suppose them *not* known, and the whole must have wanted all natural interest. For this interest lay in the Duke's character, in his superb accomplishments and natural advantages, in his fine person, in his vast wealth, and in the admirable versatility of his intellectual powers, which made him alternately the idol and the terror of all circles that he approached, which caused Lord Clarendon to tremble with impotent malice in his chancellor's robes, and Dryden to shiver with panic under his laureate crowns. Now, wherever these features of the case were *not* known, the story was no more than any ordinary death arising out of a fox-chase. But those to whom they *were* known must, at the same time, have known the audacious falsehood which disfigures the story in Pope's way of telling it. *Without* the personal interest the incidents were nothing; and *with* that interest at starting Pope's romance must have defeated itself by its fabulous colouring. Let me recall to the reader the principal lines in this famous description:—

"In the worst inn's worst room, with mat half hung,
The floors of plaister and the walls of dung,
On once a flock-bed, but repaired with straw,
With tape-tied curtains never meant to draw,
The George and Garter dangling from that bed
Where tawdry yellow strove with dirty red,
Great Villiers lies! Alas! how changed from him,
That life of pleasure, and that soul of whim,
Gallant and gay, in Cliveden's proud alcove,
The bower of wanton Shrewsbury and love! . . .
There, victor of his health, of fortune, friends,
And fame, this lord of useless thousands ends."

Without stopping to examine these famous lines as to thought and expression (both of which are scandalously vicious), what I wish the reader to remark is, the one pervading falsehood which connects them. Wherefore this minute and purely fanciful description of the roadside *cabaret*, with its bedroom and bed? Wherefore this impertinent and also fraudulent circumstantiality? It is, as Pope would tell you, for the sake of impressing with more vivacity the abject poverty to which the Duke's follies had brought him. The wretched bed, for instance, is meant to be the exponent of the empty purse which could purchase no better. And, for fear that you might miss this construction of the passage, Pope himself tells you, in a prose note, that the Duke died "in a remote inn in Yorkshire, *reduced to the utmost misery*." Being engaged in the business of dying, it could hardly be expected that the Duke should be particularly happy. But what Pope means you to understand by "misery" is *poverty*; the prose note simply reiterates the words "victor of *fortune*" in the text. Now, had the truth been really so, what moral would such a story exemplify beyond the vulgar one of pecuniary improvidence? And yet surely this was not the cause of the Duke's being thrown from his horse. Meantime, Pope well knew that the whole was a ridiculous fable. The Duke had the misfortune to be fatally injured in a fox-chase. In such an extremity, naturally, his servants carry him into the house nearest at hand, which happens to be an alehouse —not "the worst," since there was no other; nor was it possible that to a man of his distinction, once the lord-lieutenant of that very East Riding, any room would be offered worse than the very best that contained a bed. In these dreadful circumstances, it is not easy to measure the levity which can linger upon the description of such exquisite impertinences as the housewifely defects of the walls, the curtains, the flock-bed, &c. But Pope was at his wit's end for a striking falsehood. He needed for a momentary effect some tale of a great lord, once fabulously rich, who had not left himself the price of a halter or of a pauper's bed. And thus, for the sake of extorting a stare of wonderment from a mob of gaping readers, he did not scruple to give birth and currency to the grossest of legendary fables. The Duke's death happened a few months before Pope's birth. But the last of the Villiers family that wore a ducal coronet was far too memorable a person to have died under the cloud of obscurity which Pope's representation presumes. He was the most interesting person of the Alcibiades class[1] that perhaps

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[1] "*The most interesting person of the Alcibiades class*":—But it is thoroughly characteristic of Pope that the one solitary trait in the Duke's career which interested *him* was the fact that a man so familiar with voluptuous splendour should have died on a flock-bed patched with straw. How advantageously does Dryden come forward on this occasion! *He*, as Mr. Bayes, had some bitter wrongs to avenge; and he was left at liberty to execute this revenge after his own heart, for he survived the Duke by a dozen years. Yet he took no revenge at all. *He*, with natural goodness and magnanimity, declined to kick the dead lion. And in the memorable lines, all alive and trembling with impassioned insight into the demoniac versatility of the Duke's character, how generously does he forbear every expression of scorn, and cover the man's frailties with a mantle of comprehensive apology,—and, in fact, the true apology,—by gathering them together, one and all, as the united results of some secret nympholepsy, or some sacred Pythian inspiration:—

> "Blest madman! that could every hour employ
> In something new to wish or to enjoy;
>
> . . . . .
>
> Now all for rhyming, wenching, fiddling, drinking;
> Beside ten thousand freaks that died in thinking!"

Strangely enough, the only Duke of Buckingham that interested Pope was not the Villiers that so profoundly interested Dryden and his own generation, but in every sense a mock Duke of Buckingham, a pantomimic duke, that is known only for having built a palace as fine as gilt gingerbread, and for having built a pauper poem. Some time after the death of the Villiers duke, and the consequent extinction of the title, Sheffield, Lord Mulgrave, obtained a patent creating him, not Duke of Buckingham, but, by a pawnbroker's dodge devised ever existed; and Pope's mendacious story found acceptance only amongst an after-generation unacquainted with the realities of the case. There was not so much as a popular rumour to countenance Pope. The story was a pure,

between himself and his attorney, Duke of Buckingham*shire*; the ostensible reason for which, as alleged by himself, was that he apprehended some lurking claim to the old title that might come forward to his own confusion at a future time, and in that case he was ready with this demur: "You mistake, I am not *ham*, but ham*shire*." Such was *his* account of the matter. Mine is different: I tell the reason thus:—He had known the Villiers of old; he knew well how that lubricated gladiator had defied all the powers of Chancery and the Privy Council, for months after months, once to get a "grip" of him, or a hank over him. It was the old familiar case of trying to catch a pig (but in this instance a wild boar of the forest) whose tail had been soaped. (See *Lord Clarendon*: not his History but his Life.) What the Birmingham duke therefore really feared was that the worst room, the tawdry curtains, the flock-bed, &c., were all a pyramid of lies; that the Villiers had *not* been thrown; had probably *not* died at all; but was only "trying it on," in readiness for a great demonstration against himself; and that, in case the title of Buckingham were ever finally given away, the Villiers would be heard clattering on horseback up the grand staircase of the new-built Buckingham House, like the marble statue in "Don Juan," with a double commission against the false duke and the Government as joint-traders in stolen goods. But, if Pope were callous to the splendour of the true Buckingham, what was it that drew him to the false one? Pope must have been well aware that, amongst all the poetic triflers of the day, there was not one more ripe for the "Dunciad." Like the jaws of the hungry grave (*Acherontis avari*), the "Dunciad" yawned for him, whilst yet only in dim conception as a remote possibility. He was, besides, the most vainglorious of men; and, being anxious above all things to connect himself with the blood-royal, he had conceived the presumptuous thought of wooing Queen Anne (then the unmarried Princess Anne). Being rejected, of course, rather than have no connexion at all with royalty, he transferred his courtship to a young lady born on the wrong side of the blanket,—namely, the daughter of James II by Miss Sedley. Her he married, and they reigned together in great pomp over Buckingham House. But how should this have attracted Pope? The fact, I fear, is that Pope admired him, in spite of his verses, as a man rich and prosperous. One morning, in some of his own verses he lodged a compliment to the Duke as a poet and critic; immediately the Duke was down upon him with an answering salute of twenty-one guns; and ever afterwards they were friends. But I repeat that, in Pope's own judgment, nine out of ten who found their way into that great *menagerie* of the "Dunciad" had not by half so well established their right of entrance as the Duke.

gratuitous invention of his own. Even at the time of his death, the Duke of Buckingham was generally reputed to have sixty thousand per annum, and chiefly from land; an income at that period absolutely without precedent or parallel in Europe. In this there might be some exaggeration, as usually there *is* in such cases. But the "Fairfax Papers" have recently made it manifest that Pope's tale was the wildest of fictions. The Duke of Buckingham had, to some extent, suffered from his loyalty to the Crown, though apparently sheltered from the main fury of the storm by the interest of his Presbyterian father-in-law, Lord Fairfax[1]; and in his own person he had at one time been carelessly profuse. But all this was nothing. The sting of Pope's story requires him to have been a pauper; and yet—O heaven and incredulous earth!—a pauper hunting upon blood-horses, in a star and garter. The plain, historical truth, meanwhile, survives, that this pauper was simply the richest man in Christendom; and that, except Aladdin of the Arabian Nights, there never had been a richer. And thus collapses the whole fable, like a soap-bubble.

2. Yet even this specimen of Pope's propensity to falsehood is far from being the worst. Here were facts scandalously distorted. Falsehoods they were; but, if it had pleased God, they might have been truths. Next, however, comes a fiction so maniacally gross, so incoherent, and so rife with internal contradictions, as to involve its own exposure, literally shrinking from its own intelligible enunciation,

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[1] George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, had been married, on the 15th of September 1657, at Bolton Percy in Yorkshire, when he was thirty years of age, to Mary Fairfax, only child and heiress of the Presbyterian Lord Fairfax, who had been commander-in-chief of the Parliamentary Army in the Civil War, with Cromwell as his Lieutenant-General, from 1645 till after the King's death and the establishment of the English Commonwealth. The Duke had come over from the Continent on purpose,—having for some years previously been in exile, with other Royalists, round the late King's son, afterwards Charles II; and the marriage of so conspicuous a Royalist exile with the daughter of the retired ex-General of the Parliament, happening as it did at the very climax of Cromwell's Protectorate, had occasioned much remark at the moment, and some angry correspondence between Cromwell himself and his old superior in command.—M.

burrowing in sentences kept aloof from the text, and calling upon footnotes to cover it. The case will speak for itself. Pope had undertaken to translate the well-known epistle of Horace to Augustus Cæsar; not literally, but upon the principle of adapting it to a modern and English treatment of its topics. Cæsar, upon this system, becomes George the Second—a very strange sort of Cæsar; and Pope is supposed to have been laughing at him: which may be the colour that Pope gave to the travesty amongst his private circle; otherwise there is nothing in the expressions to sustain such a construction. Rome, with a little more propriety, masquerades as England, and France as Greece, or, more strictly, as Athens. Now, by such a transformation, already from the very beginning Pope was preparing for himself a dire necessity of falsehood. And he must have known it. Once launched upon such a course, he became pledged and committed to all the difficulties which it might impose. Desperate necessities would arise, from which nothing but desperate lying and hard swearing could extricate him. The impossibility of carrying through the parallel by means of *genuine* correspondences threw him for his sole resource upon such as were extravagantly spurious; and apparently he had made up his mind to cut his way through the ice, though all the truths that ever were embattled against Baron Munchausen should oppose his advance. Accordingly, about the middle of the epistle, a dilemma occurs from which no escape or deliverance is possible, except by an almighty falsehood. Take the leap Pope must, or else he must turn back when half-way through. Horace had occasion to observe that, after Rome had made a conquest of Greece by force of arms, captive Greece retaliated upon her conqueror by another kind of victory,—namely, by that of arts[1]:—

> "Græcia capta ferum victorem cepit, et artes
> Intulit agresti Latio."

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[1] Even this is open to demur. The Roman Literature during the main Punic War with Hannibal, though unavoidably reached by some slight influence from the literature of Greece, was rich in native power and raciness. Left to itself, and less disturbed by direct imitation applied to foreign models, the Roman Literature would probably have taken a wider compass, and fulfilled a nobler destiny.

Now, in the corresponding case (as Pope had arranged it) between England and France, the parallel certainly held good as far as the military conquest. England, it was undeniable, had conquered France in that sense, as completely as ever Rome had conquered Greece or Macedon. Two English kings had seated themselves in succession upon the throne of France; one virtually, one formally. So far all was tight, and held water. Nothing could disturb *that* part of the case. But next came the retaliatory conquest by means of arts and letters. How was this to be dealt with? What shadow or dream of a correspondency could be made out *there*? What impudence could face *that*? Already, in Pope's ears, sounded the trumpet of recall; and Pope mused a little: but "No," he said in effect; I will *not* turn back. Why should I? It is but one astounding falsehood that is wanted to set me free." I will venture to say that Mendez Pinto, the Portuguese liar, that Sir John Mandeville, the traveller, that Baron Munchausen, the most philosophic of bold adventurers into the back settlements of lying, never soared into such an aërial bounce, never cleared such a rasper of a fence, as did Pope on this occasion. He boldly took it upon his honour and credit that our English armies, in the times of Agincourt and the Regent Bedford, found in France a real, full-grown French literature, packed it up in their baggage-wagons, and brought it home to England. The passage from Horace, part of which has been cited above, stands thus in the translation of Pope:—

> "We conquer'd France, but felt our captive's charms:
> Her Arts victorious triumph'd o'er our Arms;
> Britain to soft refinements less a foe,
> Wit grew polite, and numbers learn'd to flow."

Ten years, then, before Joan of Arc's execution,[1] viz. about 1420 (if we are to believe Pope), or even fifteen years, France had a great domestic literature; and this unknown literature has actually furnished a basis to our own. Let us understand clearly what it is that Pope means to assert. For it is no easy matter to do *that* where a man dodges behind text and notes, and shuffles between verse and prose, mystifying the reader, and designing to do so. Under the torture of cross-examination let us force Pope to explain what literature *that* is which, having glorified France, became the venerable mother of a fine English literature in an early stage of the fifteenth century. The reader, perhaps, fancies that possibly Pope may have expressed himself erroneously only from being a little hurried or a little confused. Not at all. I know my man better, perhaps, than the reader does; and I know that he is trying to hoax us. He is not confused himself, but is bent upon confusing *us*; and I am bent upon preventing him. And, therefore, again I ask sternly, What literature is this which, very early in the fifteenth century, as early as Agincourt, we English found prospering in France, and which, for the benefit of the English intellect, such men as Ancient Pistol, Nym, Bardolph, Fluellen, Captain Macmorris, Jamy, and other well-known *literati* in the army of Henry V, transplanted (or, "as the wise it call," *conveyed*) to England? Agincourt was fought in 1415, exactly four centuries before Waterloo. That was the beginning of our domination in France; and soon after the middle of that same fifteenth century, viz. about 1452, our domination was at an end. During that interval, therefore, it must have been, then or not at all, that this great intellectual revolution worked by France upon England was begun and completed. Naturally, at this point, the most submissive and sycophantish of Pope's friends would feel moved by the devil of curiosity, if not absolutely by the devil of suspicion, humbly to ask for a name or two, just as a specimen, from this great host of Anglo-Gallic wits. Pope felt (and groaned as he felt) that so reasonable a demand could not be evaded. "This comes of telling lies," must have been his bitter reflection: "one lie makes a necessity for another." However, he reflected that this second lie need not be introduced into the text, where it would have the fatal effect of blowing up the whole bubble: it might be hidden away in a footnote. Not one person in twenty would read it, and he that *did* might easily suppose the note to be some unauthorised impertinence of a foolish commentator.[1] Secretly, therefore, silently, stealthily, so as to draw as little attention as possible, Pope introduced into a note his wicked little brazen solution of his own wicked and brazen conundrum. France, such was the proposition, had worked a miracle upon English ground; as if with some magician's rod, she had called up spawn innumerable of authors, lyric, epic, dramatic, pastoral, each after *his* kind. But by *whom* had France moved in this creation as the chief demiurgus? By whom, Mr. Pope? Name, name, Mr Pope! "Ay," we must suppose the unhappy man to reply, "that's the very question which I was going to answer, if you wouldn't be so violent." "Well, answer it, then. Take your own time, but answer; for we don't mean to be put off without some kind of answer." "Listen, then," said Pope, "and I'll whisper it into your ear; for it's a sort of secret." Now, think, reader, of a *secret* upon a matter like this, which (if true at all) must be known to the antipodes. However, let us have the secret. "The secret," replied Pope, "is, that some time in the reign of Charles the Second—*when* I won't be positive, but I'm sure it was after the Restoration—three gentlemen wrote an eighteenpenny pamphlet." "Good! And what were the gentlemen's names?" "One was Edmund Waller, the poet; one was Mr. Godolphin; and the other was Lord Dorset." "This trinity of wits, then, you say, Mr. Pope, produced a mountain, price eighteenpence, and this mountain produced a mouse." "Oh no! it was just the other way. They produced a mouse, price eighteenpence, and this mouse produced a mountain,—viz. the total English Literature." O day and night, but this is wondrous strange! The total English Literature—not the tottle only, but the tottle of the whole,[2] like an oak and the masts of some great amiral, that once slept in an acorn—absolutely lying hid in an eighteenpenny pamphlet! And what, now, might this pamphlet be about? Was it about the curing of bacon, or the sublimer art of sowing moonshine broadcast? It was, says Pope, if you *must* know everything, a translation from the French. And judiciously chosen; for it was the *worst* (and surely everybody must think it proper to keep back the *best* until the English had earned a right to such luxuries by showing a proper sense of their value),—the *worst* it was, and by very much the worst, of all Corneille's dramas; and its name was "Pompey." Pompey, was it? And so, then, from Pompey's loins we, the whole army of English *littérateurs,* grubs and eagles, are lineally descended. So says Pope. So he *must* say, in obedience to his own line of argument. And, this being the case, one would be glad to have a look at Pompey. It is hard upon us *literati*, that are the children of Pompey, not to have a look at the author of our existence. But our chance of such a look is small indeed. For Pompey, you are to understand, reader, never advanced so far as to a second edition. That was a poor return on the part of England for Pompey's services. And my too sceptical mind at one time inclined to doubt even Pompey's *first* edition; which was wrong, and could have occurred only to a lover of paradoxes. For Warton (not Tom, but Joe) had actually seen Pompey, and records his opinion of him, which happened to be this, —that Pompey was "pitiful enough." These are Joe's own words. Still, I do not see that one witness establishes a fact of this magnitude. A shade of doubt, therefore, continues to linger over Pompey's very existence; and the upshot is that Pompey (not the great, but confessedly) the doubtful, eighteen-penny Pompey, but, in any case, Pompey "the Pitiful," is the great overriding and tutelary power under whose inspiration and inaugurating impulse our English Literature has blossomed and ripened, root, stem, and branch, through the life-struggles of five centuries, into its present colossal proportions.

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[1] "*Joan of Arc's execution*":—viz. not by any English, but virtually by a French tribunal, as *now*, at last, is satisfactorily established, by the recent publication, at Paris, of the judicial process itself in its full official records. [See *ante*, Vol. V, p. 388, footnote. —M.]

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[1] The notes are *now* (*i.e.* in all modern editions) assigned to their separate authors; though not always in a way to prevent doubts. For instance, Roscoe's notes, except that they are always distinguished by kindness and good sense, are indicated only by the *absence* of any distinguishing signature. But in the early editions great carelessness prevailed as to this point, and sometimes, intentional dissimulation.

[2] A once popular caricature of Joseph Hume's pronunciation of a favourite phrase of his.—M.

Here pause, reader, and look back upon the separate reticulations, so as if possible to connect them in this huge network of hideous extravagance; where, as elsewhere, it happens that one villainy hides another, and that the mere depth of the umbrage spread by fraudulent mystifications is the very cause which conceals the extent of those mystifications. Contemplated in a languid mood, or without original interest in the subject, that enormity of falsehood fails to strike which, under circumstances personally interesting, would seem absolutely incredible. The outrage upon the intellect actually obscures and withdraws from notice the outrage upon the facts. And, inversely, the affronts to historical accuracy obscure the affronts to good sense. Look steadily for a moment at the three points in the array of impeachments :—

1. In the Red-rose invasion of France, Pope assumes, as a matter of notoriety, that the English invading force went from a land of semi-barbarism to a land of literature and refinement: the simple fact being so conspicuously the other way that, whilst France had then no literature at all,[1] consequently *could* have nothing to give (there being no book extensively diffused in the France of that period except the *De Imitatione Christi*[2]), England, on the other hand, had so bright a jewel to offer that to this hour the whole of Christendom has not matched it or approached it. Even at present, in the case so often supposed, that a man were *marooned*, that is, confined (as regarded his residence) to one desert island, and marooned also as to books,—confined I mean (as regarded his reading) to one sole book,—his choice (if he read English) would probably oscillate between Shakspere and Chaucer's Canterbury Tales. Now, the Canterbury Tales had been finished about thirty-five years before Agin-

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[1] De Quincey seems here to ignore, or perhaps never to have sufficiently heard of, the enormous bulk of the *Trouvère Literature* of Northern France, both in verse and in prose, from the eleventh century onwards,—not to speak of the contemporary abundance of *Troubadour Literature* in what is now Southern France.—M.

[2] Which was probably not of French origin. Thomas à-Kempis, Gerson, and others, have had the credit of it; but the point is still doubtful. When I say that it was *extensively* diffused, naturally I mean so far as was possible before the invention of printing. One generation after Agincourt this invention was beginning to move; after which—that is, in two generations—the multiplication of the *De Imitatione* as regards copies, and even as regards separate editions and separate translations, ran beyond all power of registration. It is one amongst the wonders of the world; and the reason I have formerly explained [*ante*, Vol. I, pp. 5-6, and Vol. V, pp. 409-410.—M.] Froissart belongs to the Courts of England and of Burgundy much more than to that of France.

court; so exquisitely false even in this point is Pope's account. Against the *nothing* of beggarly France was even then to be set a work which in its class *has* not been rivalled, and probably *will* not be rivalled, on our planet.

2. In this comparison of the France and England then existing, historically Pope betrays an ignorance which is humiliating. He speaks of France as if that name of course covered the same states and provinces that it now covers. But take away from the France of this day the parts then possessed by Burgundy; take away Alsace, and Lorraine, and Franche Comté; take away the alien territories adjacent to Spain and Navarre; take away Avignon, &c.; take away the extensive duchy of Brittany, &c.; and what remains of that which constituted the France of Pope's day? But even that which *did* remain had no cohesion or unity as regarded any expanded sentiment of nationality, or the possibilities of a common literature. The moral anachronisms of Pope in this case are absolutely frightful, and the physical anachronisms of Pope also; for the simple want of roads, by intercepting all peaceful and pleasurable intercourse, must have intercepted all growth of nationality, unless when a rare community of selfish interest happened to arise, as when the whole was threatened with conquest or with famine through foreign aggression upon a part.

3. That particular section of the French Literature through which Pope pretends to think (for think he does *not*) that France absolutely created our own was the Drama. Eighteenpenny Pompey belongs to this section. Now, most unhappily, these two broad facts are emblazoned beyond all power of impudence to darken them. The fact is our English Drama was closing, or actually *had* closed, just about the time when the French was opening. Shakspere notoriously died in 1616, when Corneille[1] was yet a child of ten, and the last of Shakspere's great contemporary dramatists died, according to my remembrance, in 1636; and in 1635, one year earlier, was first performed the first

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[1] Hardi, it is scarcely necessary to mention; as he never became a *power* even in France, and *out* of France was quite unknown. He coincided in point of time, I believe, most nearly with Francis Beaumont. [Alexander Hardi, French Dramatist, about 1560-1630.—M.]

successful French tragedy (the "Medea" of Corneille). About seven or eight years after *that*, the Puritans officially suppressed the English Drama by suppressing the theatres. At the opening of the Parliamentary war the elder (that is, the immortal) English Drama had finished its career. But Racine, the chief pillar of the French, did not begin until Cromwell was dead and gone and Charles II was restored. So here we have the Æsopian fable of the lamb troubling the waters for the wolf, who stood nearer *confessedly* to the fountain of the stream; or, in the Greek proverb, *ano potamon.* The other fact is that, as no section whatever of the French Literature has ever availed to influence, or in the slightest degree to modify our own, it happens that the dramatic section in particular, which Pope insists on as the galvanizing force operating upon our fathers, has been in the most signal repulsion to our own. All the other sections have been simply inert and neutral; but the drama has ever been in murderous antagonism to every principle and agency by which our own lives and moves.[1] And, to make this outrage upon truth and sense even more outrageous, Pope had not the excuse of those effeminate critics, sometimes found amongst ourselves, who recognise no special divinity in our own drama; *that* would have been one great crime the more, but it would have been one inconsistency the less. For Pope had been amongst the earliest editors of Shakspere: he had written a memorable preface to this edition. The edition, it is true, was shocking; and, if the preface even was disfigured by concessions to a feeble system of dramatic criticism, rhetorically it was brilliant with the expression of a genuine enthusiasm as to Shakspere, and a true sympathy with his colossal power.

4. Yet even this may not be the worst. Even below this

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[1] Italian, Spanish, and finally German poetry have in succession exercised some slight influence, more or less, over our English poetry. But I have formerly endeavoured to show that it is something worse than a mere historical blunder,—that, in fact, it involves a gross misconception and a confusion in the understanding,—to suppose that there ever has been what has been called a *French School* in our literature, unless it is supposed that the unimpassioned understanding, or the understanding speaking in a minor key of passion, is a French invention. [See *ante*, pp. 60-62.—M.]

deep perhaps there opens a lower deep. I submit that, when a man is asked for a specimen of the Agincourt French literature, he cannot safely produce a specimen from a literature 250 years younger without some risk of facing a writ *de lunatico inquirendo.* Pompey the Pitiful (or if the reader is vexed at hearing him so called, let us call him, with Lord Biron in "Love's Labour's Lost," "more than great, great Pompey, Pompey the Huge") was not published, even in France, until about two centuries and a quarter had elapsed from Agincourt. But, as respects England, eighteenpenny Pompey was not yet revealed; the fulness of time for his *avatar* amongst us did not arrive until something like 260 years had winged their flight from Agincourt. And yet Pope's doctrine had been that, in the conquest of France, we English first met with the Prometheus that introduced us to the knowledge of fire and intellectual arts. Is not this ghastly? Elsewhere, indeed, Pope skulks away from his own doctrine, and talks of "*correctness*" as the particular grace for which we were indebted to France. But this will not do. In his own "Art of Criticism," about verse 715, he describes "us brave Britons" as incorrigibly rebellious in that particular. We *have* no correctness, it seems, nor ever had; and therefore, except upon Sir Richard Blackmore's principle of stealing a suit of clothes "from a naked Pict," it is hard to see how we need to thank France for that which, as to us, has no existence. Then, again, Pope acquiesced at other times in an opinion of his early friends that not Pompey, but himself, was the predestined patriarch of "correctness." Walsh, who was a sublime old blockhead, suggested to Pope that "correctness" was the only tight-rope upon which a fresh literary performer in England could henceforth dance with any advantage of novelty; all other tight-ropes and slack-ropes of every description having been preoccupied by elder funambulists. Both Walsh and Pope forgot even once to ask themselves what it was that they meant by "correctness"; an idea that, in its application to France, Akenside afterwards sternly ridiculed. Neither of the two *literati* stopped to consider whether it was correctness in thought, or metrical correctness, or correctness in syntax and idiom; as to all of which, in comparison with other poets, Pope is conspicuously deficient. But no matter what they meant, or if they meant nothing at all. Unmeaning, or in any case inconsistent, as this talk about "correctness" may be, we cannot allow Pope *so* to escape from his own hyperbolical absurdities. It was not by a little pruning or weeding that France, according to his original proposition, had bettered our native literature: it was by a genial incubation, by acts of vital creation. She upon our crab-tree cudgel of Agincourt had engrafted her own peaches and apricots; our sterile thorn France had inoculated with roses. English Literature was the Eve that, in the shape of a rib, had been abstracted from the side of the slumbering Pompey—of unconscious Pompey the Huge. And all at the small charge of eighteenpence! O heavens, to think of *that*! By any possibility that the cost, the total "damage," of our English Literature should have been eighteenpence! that a shilling should be actually coming to us out of half-a-crown!

"Tantæ molis erat Romanam condere gentem."

POSTSCRIPT[1]

The Paper on Lord Carlisle's *Pope Lecture*,—which lecture. I believe, was read before an audience of working men,—met with the singular fortune of an aggressive and angry notice: this notice came from an anonymous writer using the signature of *Peregrine*.[2] As the points selected for assault were not matters of opinion, but of massy, immoveable facts, I found it difficult to understand how any critic, who should hold it among his duties to read previously all that he attacked and all that he defended, could have found his road open to this movement. At the moment of publication, I caught but a gleam of the writer's drift; and, according to my standing rule, I adjourn all notice of criticisms, sound or not sound, until some day or some month of leisure, with sufficient opportunities for research, may allow me to do the fullest justice to my opponent. Of such controversies lurking in arrear I have now one or two maturing for trial at a convenient time; and I have only to hope that the plaintiff or defendant in error may persist in living until my answer can reach him. Some of these, I think, have waited already for twenty-five or thirty years. Peregrine is therefore in luck this morning, since he will within three minutes have *his* answer, for which he cannot possibly have waited more than a trifle beyond nine years: for my own article, *fons et origo* of the whole feud, was first published (I understand) in 1850.

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[1] What is here printed properly as a "Postscript" appeared as a "Preface" in 1859 to the volume of De Quincey's Collected Writings (vol. xiii), which contained his paper on Lord Carlisle on Pope.—M.

[2] The notice appeared in *Tait's Magazine* for August 1851, the month after the paper of De Quincey's which is reviewed had been concluded in the same magazine. It was entitled "Lord Carlisle, Pope, and Mr. De Quincey: By Peregrine," but was dated "Temple, April 20, 1851," as if written immediately after "Peregrine" had read the first portion of the paper in *Tait* of that month.—M.

The two[1] charges, which my brief paper alleged against Pope, as grievous impeachments of all pretension to honour and veracity, were founded,—

1. On his unprincipled attempt to weave out of the closing life and out of the death of an illustrious contemporary[2] a ridiculous romance that goes astray upon every feature which regards truth, or justice to the memory of the dead.

2. On his puerile attempt to father upon the English Literature an origin which it is needless to call non-historic or fabulous, if examined as a pretended fact, since even as a dream it could find no proper place except amongst fairy tales.

The object of Pope was, if it may be allowed to borrow a modern slang phrase from the street, to "take a rise" out of the Duke as a derelict abandoned to *moralists*,—this order of Poets, Lord Byron's pretended leaders among poets, having (it seems) a plenary dispensation from any restraints of truth. Pope's idea was that,—if he could be winked at in representing the great landed proprietor[1] as a pauper in the last stage of penniless destitution, — if he could be allowed to substitute *sub silentio* a supposed charitable shelter from the weather by some pitying Christian brother for the true version of the case, viz. the hospitable reception by a tenant of his landlord under a sudden local surprise of illness,—if these harlequin changes could be effected, and if the tenant's house could be quietly metamorphosed into such a hovel as all Ireland is not able to show,—with these allowances it would be possible to emblazon such a picture of ruinous improvidence and maniacal dissipation as would glorify harlequin, and would secure all over England to Pope's picture the reputation of the most impressive amongst —pantomimes.

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[1] "*Two* charges":—No doubt, as occasions opened upon me, other charges would be incidentally noticed: but the two here singled out,—viz. that connected with the Duke of Buckingham, and that connected with the Literature of England,—were those two without which the others would not have been held as calling for any special attention.

[2] *Contemporary*:—The last Villiers of that house might be fairly considered such in relation to Pope. He died in that memorable year (1688) which witnessed the birth of Pope. But the impression which this Villiers had produced amongst the men of his own age, by the splendour of his natural endowments, both intellectual and physical, was too deep to have faded away suddenly. And it should be remembered that, if the Duke in particular had been reputed to have abused enormous advantages (though most of this rests upon hearsay and gossiping exaggerations), both he and his brother Lord Francis Villiers had made at one period large sacrifices at the command of that duty to the throne which they had been trained to think paramount among all public duties. Lord Francis, even when a boy of eighteen, had prodigally surrendered his life on the field of battle rather than give up his sword to one whom he regarded as a traitor.

Meantime, to the least reflecting amongst readers there would occur the remembrance of a Latin maxim which has arrested, and for two or three centuries seriously perplexed, the freedom of the pen with regard to persons having the rank and privileges of the dead: viz. the maxim of *De mortuis nil nisi bonum.* This adage, in the process of experience, was found entirely at war with the mere necessities of history, of biography, and, above all, the necessities of human sincerity in acts of daily intercourse. The call for a revisal of this erring maxim became loud and peremptory; and people fancied that at length they had reached the central truth when the maxim assumed the new and more humble form of *De mortuis nil nisi verum.* But very soon this form also was abandoned; for, if the right to insist upon truth in all comments upon themselves were made special to the dead, then what became of us—that extensive class of men that had not the advantage of being dead? Logically it was idle to speak of truth as a right even of the living, if by this new variety of the maxim, *nil nisi verum*, you had sharply limited the right to those who were in the

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[1] In order to direct into a proper channel the inquiry as to the Duke of Buckingham's pretended pauperism, I referred to the *Fairfax Papers*, just then published: which reference Peregrine strangely misconstrued as pointing to two little volumes, one of which was a record of the Duke's life by a cadet of the Fairfax family, the other being a little series of personal memoranda drawn up by Lord Fairfax himself, viz. by the last (or better to distinguish him) the historical Lord Fairfax, who commanded in chief at the decisive battle of Naseby in Northamptonshire, fought on some day a little before midsummer of the year 1645. The object of this little memorial is altogether misstated by Hartley Coleridge in his *Worthies of Yorkshire*. He supposes the stern old Parliamentary general to have been trying his hand at a specimen of *autobiography*,—which word certainly never entered an English ear until at least 150 years after Fairfax and Naseby. The real object of the little memorial (or appeal to posterity) was this :—Lord Fairfax, strangely enough for a lord, was a Presbyterian, and a Presbyterian surrounded by great leading officers far abler, more sagacious, and a thousand times more energetic than himself,—Cromwell, Ireton, &c.,—who were *not* Presbyterians, but virulent haters of Presbyterians, being intense Independents. Down to Naseby, this religious schism had led to no great practical results : but every year the schism was ploughing deeper into the management of political affairs ; every year the simple-minded and upright Fairfax found it more difficult to trim the balance between his conscience and the requisitions of his military allies. He drew up this plain little statement, therefore, as a brief key to the whole series of his acts whilst standing under this *conflict* of influences. And, at last, when

it was resolved to send a military expedition against Scotland, Lord Fairfax came to a resolution that he had now reached the ultimate limit of his passive acquiescences. Fight against the Scots, whom he regarded as his brothers under religious ties, he would not. This refusal on the part of Fairfax necessarily opened the way for the first time to Cromwell as an absolute autocrat. Cromwell was appointed to the supreme command thus laid open; and at the decisive battle of Dunbar Cromwell it was that presided. But what connexion, the impatient reader asks, exists between the house of Villiers and the more ancient house of Fairfax? Simply this, that the sole daughter, indeed the sole child, of the Naseby Lord Fairfax, many years subsequently, was united in marriage to Villiers, the last Duke of Buckingham, and the particular object of Pope's falsifications.[1] Now, it is obvious that the Duchess, with her large settlements, rights of jointure, &c., must be directly or indirectly interested in the true condition and distribution of the vast Villiers estates. Consequently the most natural avenue through which access to information upon this point could hopefully be sought was *The Fairfax Papers*, which happened very seasonably about that period to be published. I, for *my* part, being no further interested in the inquiry than as regarded the pretended pauperism of the Duke, was satisfied with a brief extract made by a friend, bearing on this single point. And this was sufficient, since it left no opening for doubt upon the extravagant fictions of Pope. But he who may be interested in any further prosecution of the inquiry will now understand what are *not* the books referred to as authorities, and what (so far as I know) really *are*.

[1] See *ante*, p. 135, footnote.—M.

grave. Nevertheless, no difficulty in harmonizing the pretensions of the dead and the living ever was allowed to unsettle the old faith that a peculiar tenderness of reverence and forbearance is due to those who lie helplessly at our feet, and can look for either truth or justice simply to the humanized condition of our nobler sensibilities.

The brutal and unprincipled outrage of Pope upon the slumbering Villiers,—in which all the success that *could* have been anticipated lay in the dragging into broad daylight of a poor fellow-creature's imputed frailties, forcing them upwards "from their dread abode," and from that awful twilight of sad reminiscences to the foul theatrical glare of pantomimic exhibition,—must in any case have failed by its excess; and by miscalculation of times and seasons it failed even more than was probable. When the verses were published and dispersed over England, it was found that the age which owned an interest in the Duke of Buckingham had passed away: the acquaintances, friends or foes, whose faces would have

> "Kindled, like a fire new-stirred,"

at the sound of the magical name *Villiers,* had by this time ranged on the scale of years all the way upward from 100 to 150. At the time when this particular series of verses first began to win a school popularity amongst the young ladies of England (viz. from 1775 or thereabouts to the French Revolution) the name of the Buckingham family was becoming a distant and feeble echo for the ear of England. From Villiers, the Buckingham peerage in a new line was transmigrating to the Grenvilles. Had Pope's little personal *Idyll* therefore, when varnished and framed, been less revoltingly extravagant than it was, still the interest of satire had already faded from features alike and colours. To the multitude, the case read but as a variety of *The Prodigal Son.* Pope saddened over his own defeated malice. Villiers being at last a mere shadowy name, the man, his character and his history were alike ciphers for the public ear; *locus standi* there no longer was for satiric passion. Pope's malice, in fact, had by mere lapse of time confounded itself. For all its expected effects the malice was extinct.

But the malicious purpose and plan still survive under the attesting record of Pope's own sign and seal.

Peregrine meantime views Pope as exercising none but the most notorious and admitted rights in dealing with Buckingham, or with any other deceased man, after any fashion suggested by his own malice, or by the clamorous call for impressive effects. But this doctrine is less singular than the argument by which he supports it. He contends that the right of a poet to disfigure and dishonour the memory of a deceased contemporary by groundless libels and lampoons is of the same nature, and is held by the same tenure, as the right of a Fabulist to introduce brutes, or even inanimate objects, in the act of conversing and reasoning with each other; and that I, in denying most indignantly the alleged privilege of the libeller to intrude upon the sanctity of the grave by the foul scandals and falsehoods of private enmity, am precisely adopting the old crotchet of Rousseau on the danger of suffering children to read such fables. It is natural that *Peregrine* should recall Cowper's playful lines upon this occasion,

> "I shall not ask Jean Jacques Rousseau
> If birds confabulate or no,"

since, in fact, Cowper it was through whom this caprice of Rousseau ever became known in England; for in the unventilated pages of its originator it would have lurked undisturbed down to this hour of June 1859. But it marks the excessive carelessness and inattention of *Peregrine* (faults that tell powerfully for mischief in cases like the present) that he goes on to quote some further lines from the same poet, which suddenly betray a kind of ignorance such as can be explained only out of Cowper's morbid timidity and the feminine horror with which he shrank from the coarse or the violent in his intercourse with men. The lines, as I now remember them, are these—

> "But even a child that knows no better
> Than to interpret by the *letter*
> A story of a Cock and Bull
> Must have a most uncommon skull."

These lines are forced by the mere logic of their position, which is that of reply to Rousseau, into a meaning entirely at war with their notorious vernacular acceptation. "A story of a Cock and Bull" does not mean in England, as Cowper imagines, a story in which a cock audibly converses with a respondent bull, but has come conventionally to be understood as a story of which no man can make head or tail, and from which no rational drift or purpose can be disentangled.[1]

But all else which I had arraigned in Pope, as wanting in truth and good sense, faded into a bagatelle by the side of the fables which he had propounded as a reasonable hypothesis on the origin of our English Literature. Pope, who never at any period of his life had a vestige of patriotism, would have sacrificed without compunction all possible trophies, intellectual or martial, of our national grandeur. He was never indisposed for such a service. But what gave him a sudden and decisive impulse in that direction was the particular task in which he had just then engaged himself. He had undertaken a poetic version of that Epistle to Augustus Cæsar in which Horace traces the relations, alternately martial and intellectual, that connected Greece and Rome. It was a case of splendid retaliation. Rome, rude and uncultured, had led captive by her arms the polished race of Greeks. But immediately Greece had powerfully reacted upon her conqueror, and might be said in her turn, by arts, by literature, and civilisation, to have conquered *him*. Such was the picture of Horace. Pope had undertaken an adaptation to French and English circumstances of this Horatian epistle. He had pledged himself to reproduce in his translation such a parallelism between England and France as should seem a mere echo to the case of instant retaliation recorded by the Roman poet. France had undeniably been conquered by England; so far, all was waterproof; but, to complete the parallelism, it was necessary that France should, in some intellectual way, have effected a deep compensating reagency upon England. But *what* reagency? Was it by fine arts, was it by mechanic arts, or how? No; it was (replies Pope) by literature. Pope does not explain whether the particular conquest of France which he starts from is that of Agincourt (1415), or that of Créci and Poictiers, some two or three generations earlier. But the impossibility in which Pope has entangled himself is the same for either case. There was no literature for the English to carry off, so that France could not have retaliated in the way supposed; and before the invention of printing, when literature, whether Provençal, Aragonese, Italian, Breton, &c., chiefly embodied itself in music, no literature could offer a portable subject of transfer. But it is idle to waste a word on such a web of moonshine. France, having no literature for herself, could certainly give none to England. Of all this, when it was too late, Pope became painfully aware; and, in his despair, he took the course of altogether shifting his reader's position.

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[1] One must suppose that originally the eternal feud between France and England had formed the basis of the case; since the two *dramatis personæ*, our old obstinate friend Bull on the one side, and Chanticleer on the other—so brisk, so full of quarrel, of pugnacity, and of gallantry to his obsequious *harem*—could not have been selected as representatives of the alternate national interests without a distinct consciousness of the two national *arenas* concerned in this symbolization. Bull, as a symbol, is not so classically rooted as the Cock. For it cannot be traced higher than Swift, &c., and was never adopted or owned by the English people; so that it is a case of insufferable impertinence in Mr. Kossuth to speak of us under such a mere casual and unauthorised nickname. [Refers probably to some speech of the Hungarian ex-Governor Kossuth in England after his arrival there as a refugee in 1851, or in the course of his visit to America early in 1852.—M.] But the Cock, *Gallus Gallinaceus*, has always been the symbol chosen and consecrated by the Franco-Gallic people as their true adequate heraldic cognizance. An Englishman pauses in wonder. For undoubtedly the Cock embodies some favourable features of the French character and the French demeanour, but (as a keener spirit of discrimination would suggest) viewed under an angle of mockery and exaggeration. The bluster, the arrogance, the tendency to gasconade, are all there; there also is the indomitable courage; for amongst all breathing creatures there is hardly one (unless the bull-dog) more victorious over the passion of fear than the game cock. But still men generally would not relish a mirror held up even to their noblest qualities if this were done under a concurrent attempt to throw cross lights of ridicule upon the total *ensemble* of their characters.

The policy of Pope was to withdraw his reader's eye, as rapidly as possible, from the revolting paradox about Créci or Agincourt. And this purpose was so far attained by the sudden shifting of the ground from an era of French barbarism[1] to the polished period of Louis XIV. It might not be *true* of 1670, any more than of 1415, that England owed the least fraction of her intellectual development to the influence of French models. But, if not really more true as a fact, it was a thousand times more plausible as a possibility. The main purpose, therefore, of Pope, in this sudden leap over seven or ten generations, was answered. The reader no longer recoiled in disgust and alienation when assured by Pope that Corneille, of whose uncongenial dramas not so much as one edition had ever been issued from an English press, might have raised or corrected the taste of some English generation. If such a case never had occurred, at least there was no shocking incongruity in supposing that it might have occurred in an age when books, both French and English, were largely multiplied. So far,—that is in a chronological sense,—Corneille met the momentary purpose of Pope, as well as any other of that period; otherwise, there could not have been a more unfortunate selection. Even in France, Corneille had but a ten years' reign; for Racine completely superseded him, even after the time when the French theatres had diffused a distinct knowledge of the discriminating characteristics between the two dramatists. Racine met the national taste genially by making the passion of love as indispensable an element in a scenical picture of life as the French make it in the actual movements of life. Corneille, with his more masculine ideal of tragedy, was soon dethroned by Racine. Nor did he ever recover even a gleam of his original rank until Voltaire, early in the eighteenth century, revived his fame, though not his popularity, by his advantageous criticisms on the separate merits of each poet. But, if in France the loss of his stage rank soon clouded the splendours of Corneille, everywhere else he was entirely unknown. No name could have been cited by Pope less capable of stamping a durable impression upon the English mind. In reality, one decisive outstanding fact puts an end to all romances of this nature. It is this:—If doubtfully you except Montaigne and Charron, as meditative writers much read by the more thoughtful among our men of the world, and Pascal, as a sort of pet with our religious ascetics, there never was any French author who established himself as even a limited favourite in England. Not one has achieved the lowest level of what can be called *popularity* amongst ourselves. If we except selections made by French teachers for mere purposes of convenience in relation to their pupils, I believe that no French classic has ever been reprinted in England. Students, therefore, of French Literature, as any considerable body of *literati*, cannot at any time have existed among us. And thus not only are we entitled to dismiss the falsifications of Pope on this theme as unworthy of serious attention, but also—which cuts deeper—we are entitled to treat as an imbecile conceit the pretence that there ever was amongst us in any age what is called *a French School* in any one department of literature.

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[1] "*Barbarism*":—We must not confound the comparative bright dawnings and promises of Aragon, of Provence, of Italy, of Brittany, &c., with the infantine pretensions of France, properly and strictly so called. [See *ante*, p. 141, footnote.—M.]

LESSING[1]

For the last fifty years, or perhaps we may say from the beginning of the present century, there has been a growing interest amongst us in the German Literature. This interest has followed a direction which upon the whole cannot be regarded as happy, having settled almost exclusively on the poets,—in whom, as a class, it may be boldly said that the originality and the strength of the German mind are *not* revealed. For these we must look to the Prose Authors,—who in general have neither written under the constraint of foreign models, nor sought to manifest their emancipation from that constraint by the monstrous or the blank affectations of caprice.

From the German prose-writers, therefore, of the classical rank, I purpose to present the English reader with a specimen or more; in selecting which I shall guide myself by this law: that, on the one hand, any such specimen shall be fitted for a general, and not a merely German, interest; and, on the other hand, that it shall express the characteristic power of the author. I begin with Lessing, as the restorer and modern father of the German Literature.

Lessing was born in January 1729, and died in February 1781. He may be said, therefore, to have begun his career precisely at the middle of the last century. At this time the German Literature was sunk in meanness and barbarism. Leibnitz, who might have exalted the national mind, had been dead little more than forty years: but he had no right to expect any peculiar influence over the German intellect, not having written at all in the German language; and Wolf, who *had*, was too much of a merely scholastic writer, and had besides too little that was properly his own, except his systematic method, to impress any deep sense of excellence, strictly national, upon the popular mind. Wanting all domestic models, and having no excitement from the events of that age, or the encouragement of the native princes, the German Literature had fallen into a state of pitiable torpor, and exhibited, in the hands of Gottsched and his followers, a base travesty of Parisian levity, from which all spirit had evaporated, and alloyed in its transfusion with the quintessence of German coarseness. Against the French influence some stand had been made by Bodmer, but with little effect that could have reached a second generation. The intention was praiseworthy; but there was in Bodmer and his immediate party a radical want of original power.

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[1] Appeared in *Blackwood's Magazine* for November 1826 and January 1827, and is the first recorded contribution by De Quincey to that periodical. It was reprinted by De Quincey in 1859 in vol. xiii of his Collective Edition. The introductory sketch of Lessing generally, and the translation from Lessing's "Laocoon" with notes, formed originally one long consecutive paper. The introductory sketch is here given by itself,—the annotated translation from the "Laocoon" to follow separately.—M.

Such was the inheritance to which Lessing succeeded. And, though it is difficult in any great intellectual revolution to measure the ratio of each individual contribution, still there can be no hesitation in ascribing to Lessing personally by far the largest share in awakening the frozen activities of the German mind; both because this effect followed so immediately in the wake of his earliest exertions, and because the direction which he impressed upon those exertions was *a priori* so well adapted to that effect. What he did was to apply philosophy—by which I would be understood to mean, in a large sense, the science of grounds and principles—to literature and the fine arts; an idea which expresses accurately what the Grecians meant by criticism. Lessing, who had in all things a Grecian eye, here also realised the Grecian ideal. He became the founder of criticism for Germany; and by the very idea of criticism, under this extension of it, he secured the combined advantages of a popular and a scientific interest. The English reader will make a tolerably just estimate of Lessing's rank in German Literature, if he classes him, as to *degree* of influence, with Dr. Johnson. Lessing and Dr. Johnson presided over the literatures of their several countries precisely at the same period; and it is a remarkable proof, by the way, of the imperfect literary organisation of Europe at that time that neither ever heard of the other. In the *kind* of their influence there was, however, little resemblance between the two, as indeed there was little in common between them as to the composition of their minds or their attainments, more than that both were well-built scholars, and both excelled in the application of a vigorous logic,—Lessing to art, Dr. Johnson to the opinions or prejudices of life, and both of them to literature. A more accurate parallel as to the *kind* of his pretensions lies between Lessing and Lord Shaftesbury.[1] Each had the same sensibility to the excellencies of art, and applied it especially to the antique, insomuch that he who reads Lord Shaftesbury's Judgment of Hercules might suppose himself to be reading the Laocoon of Lessing; and not there only, but scattered over the works of Lord Shaftesbury, are many just views, or undeveloped glimpses of truth, on the principles of art. Both had a strong bias to religious scepticism; which for Lessing, who fell upon times when a general ferment of opinions began to unsettle the human mind, and amongst a people who are always indulgent to that sort of licence, had no bad consequence; but which for Lord Shaftesbury, at home at least, has gradually had the effect of degrading him below the rank which he once held, and ought still to hold, in the literature of the country. Both were elegant writers, with a high standard of excellence in the art of composition, and careful that their own style should be wrought up to that ideal. In one point the parallel might be expected to fail. The age of Lord Shaftesbury was not the age of learning in his rank. Latin, as we know from Bishop Burnet and others, was then thought sufficient for the aristocracy of England; but Lord Shaftesbury had been educated in the house of his grandfather, the Chancellor, and had been taught both Greek and Latin by a peculiar method, which gave him an unusual command of both literatures. Either this accomplishment, however, from the pleasurable sense of power which it gave, or else the original constitution of Lord Shaftesbury's mind, had one unfortunate result for the comprehensiveness of his taste, by carrying it too exclusively to the classical models of antiquity. There exist passages in his writings which show that Milton, and even Shakspere, by mere blank power of passion, or absolute weight of thought, had sometimes coerced and awed him into sympathy; but he revolted from the *form* in which their conceptions were clothed. No one had ever suggested in that day that the modern or Christian poetry, and the poetry of the antique, had each its separate law and character. Either, tried by the standard of the other, of necessity appeared to be imperfect; and, as Lord Shaftesbury thought it a matter of course to try the modern by the ancient, he became unjust [1] in a puerile degree to the magnificent literature of his own country. He was in fact what in German is called *einseitig*, or one-sided,—right in one respect, but, from the limitation of his view, wrong in every other. Here is a second ground of this noble author's present unpopularity; his own injustice to others has recoiled in the same shape upon himself. Far different in this respect from Lord Shaftesbury's, wiser and more comprehensive, was the taste of Lessing; and here the parallel between them fails. Yet Lessing might have had some colour of reason for despising modern literature. That of his own country, at the time when he commenced his career, presented little but ruins from a forgotten age, and rubbish from his own; and, as to the French, in that department of it which is made the national glory, Lessing hated it "with an intolerant scorn"; and "it was his great right to do so"; for precisely in that department it raised itself into hostility with all other modern literature, and into presumptuous rivalry with the Grecian; and these were pretensions of which nobody knew the hollowness[1] so entirely as Lessing. But, with all this undeniable food for his cynical humour,—a humour by the way which he had in common with Lord Shaftesbury,—Lessing was too noble himself to refuse his sympathy to the really noble, in whatsoever form embodied. His acquaintance with the European literature was extensive; and this had taught him that, whilst one literature (as the French) might, under a poor outside mimicry of the antique, conceal the deadliest hostility to its vital purposes, another (as the English) might virtually coincide with it in the supreme principles of nature to which both appeal, though pursuing its common end under a different law of art. The English and the Grecian theatre differ as species and species in nature; the French and the Grecian as a true and a monstrous birth in the same species.

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[1] It is a striking proof of the ignorance in which most of us were content to live as regards the *history* of our very complex literature that thirty years ago a most distinguished literary journal did solemnly confound our great English Chancellor, that Wild Orson of a man [1621-1683—M.], with Shaftesbury, author of *The Characteristics*, his *grandson* [1671-1713—M.].

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[1] Precisely the same blunder was made by Winkelmann with respect to Virgil, and was exposed (as the reader will find at the beginning of the Laocoon) by Lessing. Tried by the statue, the poem appeared to be wrong, as the statue might if tried by the poem; but Lessing, by suggesting that poetry and sculpture might have their several laws and principles, has exposed the fallacy and justified Virgil.

From this mention of the English theatre it will be inferred that Lessing had paid some attention to our literature. He had; nor was there anything valuable in European literature to which he had not. In fact his reading was too extensive; since in some degree, as he himself complains in one of his letters, it had hurt the spring and elasticity of his thoughts. Frederick Schlegel, in the introduction which he has prefixed to a little selection, in three volumes, from the works of Lessing (*Lessings Geist aus seinen Schriften*) on this subject, gives us a slight sketch of his studies, which, as it illustrates one or two other particulars insisted on in the comparison between him and Lord Shaftesbury, I will here extract.

"Through all the periods of Lessing's life, we have occa-
" sion to notice in him the spirit of a Polyhistor, and a lively
" curiosity about everything possessing, in the remotest way,
" any relation to literature, though it were but in that class
" of subjects which are interesting to the regular literator or

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[1] On this subject see the *Dramaturgie* of Lessing, occasional glances in the Laocoon, &c. The hostility of the French theatre to the English and Spanish was obvious; but Lessing was the first that detected its virtual hostility to the Grecian.

" blackletter bibliomane simply because they once *have* been " interesting. We notice also with pleasure the traces which " are now and then apparent of the peculiar and anxious " attention which he paid to the German language, and an " intimacy with its ancient monuments which even now is " rare, and in those days was much rarer. At an early stage " of his career he had written a large commentary on the " *Heldenbuch*, which, it is greatly to be lamented, has been " lost; and later in life, and under the pressure of very " different engagements, the epic romances of the *Saint Graal* " and of the *Round Table* furnished him with favourite subjects of research. In short, the mind of Lessing was not " cribbed and cabined within the narrow sphere of others " amongst the learned, who are critics only in Latin and " Greek, but in every other literature wholly at a loss. " Lessing, on the contrary, handled every subject in a critical " spirit,—philosophy and theology not less than poetry and " antiquities. Classical themes he treated with the popular " grace and elegance which are usually restricted to discussions about the modern literature; and that again he " examined with a rigour and precision which formerly were " deemed unnecessary, except in the investigation of the " antique. He studied, as I have said, the old domestic " literature, and yet was sufficiently acquainted with the " foreign literature of later growth—the English, for instance, up to the period of the French School,[1] and next to " that the Italian and Spanish—to point out the path accurately into which a student should strike, and to direct the " choice of his studies. Comprehensive, however, as was the " range of his research, the criticism which he built upon it " is thoroughly popular in its style, and universally applicable. When a philologist of prodigious compass, like Sir " William Jones, pursues the web of languages through the " chain of their affinities up to their origin; when a Wolf " (Schlegel means Wolf the commentator on Homer, &c.), " through the labyrinth of prejudice, doubt, and misconstruction of facts obscured or overcharged, and the dis-

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[1] The *French School* (meaning an Anglo-French School in England, which is a pure childish chimera). [See *ante*, pp. 60-62, and pp. 96-97.—M.]

" guises or absolute falsifications of time, clears his road to " the source and true genesis of Grecian art in its oldest " monuments; in the nature of things it is impossible that " more than a few can take part in such investigations. Nor " is it necessary there should. Enough if every age produce " two or three critics of this esoteric class, with here and there " a reader to understand them. But the more popular " spirit of Lessing's criticism finds its proper field within the " circle of the universally intelligible; a spirit of investiga- " tion so free and liberal, everywhere struggling after just " ideas of art, everywhere rigorous and uncompromising, yet " at the same time so ductile and quick in sympathy, ought " to be diffused over the whole surface of literature; for " literature presents nothing so great, nor anything so appa- " rently trivial, to which it is not applicable.

"For Germany, above all, this were devoutly to be wished. " We are a learned people—that praise is denied us by no- " body; and, if we neglect to lay a foundation for our " literature—a literature as yet but in expectancy and rever- " sion—by the substratum of a learned spirit of criticism on " the model of Lessing's, it will not be long, I fear, before " we shall lose the small stock of what is excellent that we " have hitherto accumulated."

I have fixed upon the *Laocoon*, as the best fitted for my purpose of any specimen that could have been chosen from the voluminous works of Lessing. It is perhaps the most characteristic of his mind; and it has this advantage for the general reader,—that, whilst the subject is one of popular interest, no great demand is made upon him for continuous attention,—every section, though connected with the rest, being tolerably complete in itself, and separately intelligible. By the quality also of its arguments, and of the principles unfolded, the Laocoon is sufficiently fitted for popularity; for, whilst they are all strikingly acute, they presume no previous knowledge in the reader of the kind which he is there seeking. In the works of Lessing, as a whole, there is one defect which has often been complained of, viz. that his philosophy is fragmentary, too much restrained to particular applications, and incapable of combination or perfect synthesis: another feature, by the way, in Lessing which connects him with Lord Shaftesbury; for *his* philosophy also is scattered and disjointed, delivered by fits and starts, and with many a vast hiatus. Both of them, in fact, had a leaning to a sceptical (that is, a negative) philosophy, rather than a positive philosophy of construction. Meantime, this particular defect is less felt in the Laocoon than elsewhere; and for this reason Schlegel has remarked (or rather Kant, for it is his remark originally) that merely to clear up the boundaries of the different species, which might seem a negative service, yields the greatest positive uses for the development of each species in its whole individualities. Now, this is done in the Laocoon; and it will be shown in the notes that some errors which have arisen in England would at once have been forestalled by the principles of this essay.

LAOCOON[1]

An Essay on the Fine Arts and their Limits. From the German of Lessing. With Notes by the Translator.

SECTION I

WHAT is the most prominent characteristic of the Grecian masterpieces in painting and in sculpture?

It will be found, according to Winkelmann, in majestic composure of attitude, and expression. "As the ocean," says he, "in its lower strata remains for ever at rest, let its

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[1] As has been explained, *ante*, p. 156, footnote, this annotated translation from Lessing's treatise appeared originally as a substantive part, and much the larger part, of De Quincey's paper on Lessing generally in *Blackwood* for November 1826 and January 1827. In vol. xiii of De Quincey's Collective Edition it was reprinted, as here, immediately after the preceding introductory article on Lessing himself.—The *Laocoon*, one of the most celebrated of Lessing's writings, was first published in Germany in 1766, with the title "*Laocoon: oder, über die Grenzen der Malerei und Poesie*" ("Laocoon: or, On the Limits of Painting and Poetry"). The significance of the title will be best explained by the following summary by Dr. Leonhard Schmitz, in Smith's Dictionary of Greek and Roman Mythology and Biography, of the story of the Trojan hero and priest Laocoon in the post-Homeric legends:—"As "the Greeks were unable to take Troy by force, they pretended to "sail home, leaving behind the wooden horse. While the Trojans "were assembled around the horse, deliberating whether they should "draw it into the city or destroy it, Laocoon hastened to them from "the city, and loudly cautioned them against the danger which it "might bring upon them. While saying this, he thrust his lance "into the side of the horse. The Trojans, however, resolved to draw "it into the city, and rejoiced at the peace which they thought they "had gained at last, with sacrifices and feasting. In the meantime

" surface be as agitated as it may, even so the expression in " the figures of the Greeks, under the uttermost tumult of " passion, indicates a profound tranquillity of soul. Such a " tranquillity is shadowed forth in the face of the Laocoon,

" Sinon, who had been taken prisoner, was brought before the " Trojans; and by his cunning treachery he contrived to remove every " suspicion from himself and the wooden horse. When he had " finished his speech, and Laocoon was preparing to sacrifice a bull to " Poseidon, suddenly two fearful serpents were seen swimming towards the Trojan coast from Tenedos. They rushed towards " Laocoon, who, while all the people took to flight, remained with his " two sons standing by the altar of the god. The serpents first entwined the two boys, and then the father, who went to the assistance of his children; and all three were killed. The serpents then " hastened to the Acropolis of Troy, and disappeared behind the " shield of Tritonis. . . . The sublime story of the death of Laocoon " was a fine subject for epic and lyric as well as tragic poets, and was " therefore frequently treated by ancient poets, such as Bacchylides, " Sophocles, Euphorion, Lysimachus, the pseudo-Peisander, Virgil, " Petronius, Quintus Smyrnæus, and others. But Laocoon is equally " celebrated in the history of ancient art as in that of ancient poetry; " and a magnificent statuary group representing the father with his " two sons entwined by the two serpents is still extant. It was " discovered in 1506, in the time of Pope Julius II, at Rome, in the " Sette Sale, on the side of the Esquiline hill; and the Pope, who " knew how to appreciate its value, purchased it from the proprietor " of the ground where it was found for an annual pension, which he " granted to him and his family. This group excited the greatest " admiration from the moment it was discovered, and may be seen at " Rome in the Vatican. Good casts of it exist in all the museums of " Europe. Pliny, who calls it the masterpiece of all art, says that it " adorned the palace of the Emperor Titus, and that it is the work of " the Rhodian artists Agesander, Polydorus, and Athenodorus. He " further states that the whole group consists of one block of marble; " but a more accurate observation shows that it consists of five pieces." —Along with this famous representation, in a masterpiece of ancient sculpture, of the dying agonies of Laocoon and his young sons in the coils of the two serpents,—a representation pretty familiar by woodcuts even to those who have never seen a cast,—Lessing had in view the representation of the same subject, by the poet's diverse art, in Virgil's Second Æneid. The supposed narrator is Æneas; and this is the passage in Dryden's version:—

"Laocoon, Neptune's priest by lot that year,
With solemn pomp then sacrificed a steer;
When, dreadful to behold! from sea we spied
Two serpents, ranked abreast, the seas divide,
And smoothly sweep along the swelling tide.

"though in extremities of suffering. And not merely in the "face. Every muscle is instinct with anguish; torture is "made palpable to the spectator in the dire contractions "below the bust; yet this suffering does not express itself "by any frenzy in the countenance, or distraction in the "attitude. No hideous shriek is uttered, as in the poetic "Laocoon of Virgil; the opening of the mouth is not enough "to allow of this, nor in fact of any louder voice, as Sadolet "notices, than the stifled sigh of anguish. Through the "whole structure of the figure bodily pain and grandeur of "soul are distributed in equal measure, and are balanced "into a noble antagonism with each other. Laocoon suffers, "but he suffers like the Philoctetes of Sophocles. His misery "pierces our hearts; but the presiding sentiment after all is

> Their flowing crests above the waves they show,
> Their bellies seem to burn the seas below;
> Their speckled tails advance to steer their course,
> And on the sounding shore the flying billows force.
> And now the strand, and now the plain, they held;
> Their ardent eyes with bloody streaks were filled;
> Their nimble tongues they brandished as they came,
> And licked their hissing jaws that sputtered flame.
> We fled amazed: their destined way they take,
> And to Laocoon and his children make;
> And first around the tender boys they wind,
> Then with their sharpened fangs their limbs and bodies grind.
> The wretched father, running to their aid
> With pious haste but vain, they next invade:
> Twice round his waist their winding volumes rolled,
> And twice about his gasping throat they fold;
> The priest thus doubly choked, their crests divide,
> And, towering o'er his head, in triumph ride.
> With both his hands he labours at the knots;
> His holy fillets the blue venom blots:
> His roaring fills the flitting air around:
> Thus, when an ox receives a glancing wound,
> He breaks the bands, the fatal altar flies,
> And with loud bellowings breaks the yielding skies.
> Their tasks performed, the serpents quit their prey,
> And to the tower of Pallas make their way:
> Couched at her feet they lie, protected there
> By her large buckler and protended spear."

Lessing, taking for his main text these two representations of the same subject, one in classical statuary and the other in classical poetry, but ranging about for other illustrations of ancient art of all kinds, made "a wish that we could support the situation of so miserable "a being with the fortitude of so noble a one."

This remark of Winkelmann's, as to the fundamental part of it,—that the suffering does not impress itself on the face of Laocoon with that frantic agitation which might have been looked for from its violence,—is perfectly just. And it is indisputable that in this very point, in which a half-judge would pronounce the artist to have fallen below nature, and to have missed the true pathos of bodily pain, lies in fact the triumph of his wisdom. Thus far I assent; and it is simply as to the grounds which Winkelmann assigns for this wisdom of the artist, and as to the universality of the rule which he would derive from these grounds, that I venture to disagree with him. Undoubtedly I was staggered at first by the oblique censure of Virgil, and by the comparison with Philoctetes. From this point I will start, and will deliver my thoughts in the order of their actual development.[1]

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it the purpose of his treatise to investigate and explain the principles of art generally, and in especial the essential differences between poetry on the one hand and painting and sculpture on the other, and between painting and sculpture compared by themselves. The treatise was, and is, one of superlative excellence, propounding deeper and more acute maxims in the theory of poetry and in art criticism generally than had ever been advanced before; and De Quincey's translation from it for *Blackwood* in 1826-27,—apparently the first adequate presentation of its doctrines in English,—was nothing less than a public service. It is, however, not a Translation *of* the Treatise, but only a Translation *from* the Treatise, including but thirteen sections of the total twenty-nine of the original, and rendering even these in a certain free fashion of De Quincey's own. There have been four complete translations of the Treatise since,—one by Mr. Ross in 1836, another by Mr. Beasley in 1859, a third (American) by Miss Fotheringham in 1874, and the fourth and last and most perfectly equipped, also in 1874, by the Right Hon. Sir Robert Phillimore, D.C.L. In this last due reference is made to "Mr. de Quincey's eloquent paraphrase of a part of the Laocoon," and considerable use is made of De Quincey's "notes," with respectful recognition of their originality and value.—M.

[1] Winckelmann (1717-1768) was Lessing's most celebrated predecessor among the Germans as a writer on Ancient Art; and the work to which Lessing refers was Winckelmann's essay "On the Imitation of the Greeks in Painting and Statuary," published at Leipsic in 1756. The "Sadolet" whom Winckelmann cites in the passage quoted by Lessing was an Italian cardinal and writer (1477-1547).—M.

SECTION II

"Laocoon suffers; but he suffers like the Philoctetes of Sophocles." And how is *that*? Strange that the character of his suffering should have impressed us so differently. The complaints, outcries, and savage execrations with which the torments of Philoctetes had filled the camp and disturbed the sanctity of the sacrifices, rang with no less hideous clamour through the desert island; and these, indeed, it was that had banished him to that solitude. Dread accents of rage, of anguish, of despair! which the Athenian theatre re-echoed in the mimic representation of the poet. It has been remarked that the third act of this drama is shorter than the rest. And why? Because, say the critics, little stress was laid by the ancients upon the equalisation of the acts. This I admit; but I should prefer any other instance in support of it to the one before us. For the truth is that the interrupted expressions of pain in this act of the Philoctetes, the abrupt ejaculation of ἀ, ἀ, ὠ, μοι, μοι, ἀταται, &c., with which it is crowded, must have demanded in the stage declamation a prolonged volume of emphasis and of cadences very different from those which belong to continuous recitation: and hence, when represented, doubtless this act would fill as long a space of time as the rest. Measured by the eye upon paper, it has a shortness which it could not have had to an audience.

Crying is the natural expression of bodily pain. The Homeric warriors, gods or men, fell to the ground when wounded, not seldom with loud outcries. Venus, on finding her skin raised by the point of a spear, utters a loud shriek; and that this is not meant by the poet as any expression of the effeminacy appropriate to her in the character of goddess of pleasure, but as the universal tribute to the claims of suffering nature, appears from this,—that the iron-hearted Mars, when pierced by the lance of Diomed, shrieks as hideously as ten thousand men in distraction, so that both armies are thrown into consternation.

Much as Homer may otherwise have exalted the heroic standard, yet invariably in cases of bodily pain, or of insulted honour, when the question is about the expression of these feelings, whether by crying, by tears, or by abusive words, his heroes remain faithful to their merely human nature. In their actions they are beings of a higher order ; in their feelings very men. We[1] Europeans, I am well aware, with our modern refinement and decorum, are better skilled in the government of our eyes and our tongue. Passive courage has with us displaced the courage of action which characterised the raw ages of the early world. And this distinction we inherit even from our rude ancestors. Obstinately to dissemble pain and to stifle its expression—to face the stroke of death with steadfast eye—to expire laughing amidst the pangs of adders' poison, and to disdain all lamentations for the loss of the dearest friend,—these are the characteristics of the old Northern heroism.

Not so with the Grecian ! *He* gave a loose to the expression of his pain or his grief, and felt ashamed for none of his human infirmities ; with this one restriction, however, that they were never allowed to interfere with him in the path of honour, or in the fulfilment of his duties,—a triumph over his nature for which he was indebted entirely to moral principle, whereas in the barbarian it arose from the mere callousness of uncultivated sensibility. On this subject there is a characteristic trait in a passage of the Iliad, which I am surprised that the critics have overlooked. The hostile armies, having agreed to an armistice, are occupied in burning their dead,—a ceremony which, on both sides, is conducted not without tears. Priam, however, forbids his Trojans to weep. Now, why is it that Agamemnon does not issue a similar order to the Greeks? The poet would here intimate to us that it is only the cultivated Greek that can reconcile the martial character with the tenderness of grief, whereas the uncultured Trojan, to attain the distinctions of a warrior, must first of all stifle his human affection.

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[1] Lessing is here upon untenable ground. The ancient and modern world are not under a different law in this respect ; still less are we Europeans, as Lessing may be understood to mean, opposed to the rest of the world, and to the great rule of nature, in our mode of feeling on this matter. Goth, Scythian, American Indian, have all alike placed the point of honour in the suppression of any feeling whatsoever of a purely personal or selfish nature, as physical suffering must necessarily be. It is the Greeks who are the exceptions, not we ; and even amongst them not all (*e.g.* the Spartans), nor in every age. As to the Homeric Greeks they are downright children. The case of the funeral lamentation, however, is not in point ; for this is a case of the *social* affections, to the expression of which it is true that nations are more or less indulgent as they are more or less cultivated.—*Tr.*

It is remarkable that amongst the few tragedies which have come down to us from the Grecian theatre there are two [1] which found no small part of the distress upon the bodily sufferings of the hero—the Philoctetes already noticed, and the dying Hercules: him also (in his Trachiniæ) Sophocles represents as weeping, wailing, and shrieking. There is even a Laocoon amongst the lost tragedies of Sophocles; and, though it is impossible, from the slight notices of this drama in the old *literators*, to come to any conclusion about the way in which it was treated, still I am persuaded that Laocoon cannot have been portrayed as more stoical than Hercules or Philoctetes. Stoicism in every form is undramatic; and our sympathy with suffering is always commensurate with the expression of it in the object of the interest.

And now comes my inference. If it be true that audible crying and shrieking, as an expression of bodily pain, is not incompatible (on the ancient Greek notion) with grandeur of soul,—in that case, Winkelmann cannot possibly be right in supposing such a grandeur in the sculptor's conception of the Laocoon to have stood in the way of the natural expression of the agony which invests the situation; and we are now to seek for some other reason why in this instance he has departed from his rival the poet, who has not scrupled deliberately to express this trait of the situation.

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[1] Every reader will recollect a third, the Prometheus of Æschylus. That Lessing should have omitted this cannot be regarded as an oversight, but rather as the act of a special pleader, who felt that it would stand in the way of his theory. It must not be objected that Prometheus is the hero of a mysterious mythus, with a proportionate exaltation of the human character; for so was Hercules. Undoubtedly it must be granted that the enduring and (so to speak) monumental suffering of Prometheus demanded, on principles of proportion, a Titanic stability of fortitude, having no relation to time and the transitory agitations of passion: so that even Sophocles might, upon a suggestion of good taste, *invita Minerva*, have treated this subject differently. But, after all, the main ground of difference between the two poets lies in this, that Æschylus had a profound sympathy with the grandeurs of nature and of human nature, which Sophocles had not. Now, between two extremes (as in the management of this case they were), it is not open to Lessing to assume either as the representative Grecian mind.—*Tr.*

SECTION III

There is a story which ascribes to the passion of love the first essays in the fine arts: this story, no matter whether a fable or a genuine tradition, is so far true in a philosophic sense that undoubtedly this passion was the presiding influence under which the great masters composed, and which, in respect to the art of painting in particular, dictated the Grecian theory of its purpose and limits. For the wise Greek confined it within the narrowest bounds and refused to paint anything but the Beautiful, and not that even when it belonged to a lower order: beauty less than absolute never except by accident furnished an object to the Grecian artist; at most, it might furnish him a casual study or an amusement. It was the ambition of the Grecian painter that his works should enchant by the mere perfection of the object which they presented, apart from his own workmanship; and his pride was too elevated to stoop to gratify the humble taste for a likeness skilfully caught, or to draw attention to himself by the sense of a difficulty overcome.

"Who would choose to paint thee," says an old epigrammatist, addressing a very deformed man; — "who would choose to paint thee, whom no man would choose to look at?" But many a modern artist would say—"No matter how deformed you may be, I will paint you. Grant that no man would willingly look at you,—what of that? Every man will gladly look at my picture, not indeed as exhibiting your person, but as exhibiting my art in reflecting so faithful an image of an object so disgusting."

Meantime it cannot be denied that this propensity to an ostentatious display of address and sleight of hand, unennobled by any value in the object, has too deep a foundation in our nature to remain wholly inert under any condition of the public taste; and, accordingly, even Greece produced her Pauson, who exercised his art exclusively upon the defects of the human form, through all its varieties of disproportion or distortion, and her Pyreicus, who painted such subjects as the ass, the whole tribe of culinary vegetables, dirty workshops, &c., with all the zeal of a Flemish artist. But these painters suffered the penalty due to this degradation of their art,—the first in squalid poverty, and both in the public disrespect.

Even the civil power itself was thought in Greece to be not unworthily employed in confining the artist within his proper sphere; and a Theban law, as is well known, punished the representation of deformity. We laugh when we hear of this; but we laugh unwisely. Undoubtedly the laws have no pretensions to any control over the motions of science; for the object of science is truth; and *that* is indispensable.[1] But the object of the fine arts is pleasure, which is *not* indispensable. And therefore it must depend altogether upon the choice of the lawgiver to determine what kind of pleasure shall be allowed, and of each several kind what proportion. That class of the arts, in particular, which deals with forms, besides its inevitable influences upon the national character, is capable of leading to one result which demands the special regard of the laws. The female imagination, impressed by the daily spectacle of grace and power displayed in the ideal beauty of pictures and statues, would gradually exalt the standard of the national form. Whereas with us moderns the maternal imagination seems never to receive any effectual impressions but in the direction of the monstrous.

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[1] It is hardly possible to crowd together into one sentence a greater amount of error, or error of a more dangerous quality. First, the right of the State to interfere with the Fine Arts is asserted upon the ground that they can be dispensed with, *i.e.* that they are of no important use; which ground is abandoned in the next sentence, where important influences upon the national condition are ascribed to one class of the Fine Arts, and more than this can hardly be involved in the character of "*indispensable*" as attached to the sciences. Secondly, apart from this contradiction, the following dilemma arises:—The Fine Arts have, or have not, important results for human happiness. In the first case, it is dangerous to concede a right of interference with them to the State (that is, a right to cripple or defeat them); in the second case, it is vexatious. The sole pretence, indeed, for such a claim, viz. that it cannot interfere with any important interests, because the arts are noways essential to the general welfare, carries with it a confession that any interference would be frivolous and impertinent. The moment that such an act can be shown to be safe, it will also appear to be without use or motive. Thirdly, unless the government are to *mis*direct the arts, it will be reduced to the following alternatives: either its members must dedicate themselves to that particular study,—in which case they abandon their own appropriate functions; or

And hence I derive a notion which enables me to detect a latent truth in some old stories which have hitherto passed for fables. Six ladies of antiquity, viz. the mothers of Aristomenes, of Aristodamas, of Alexander the Great, of Scipio, of Augustus, and the Emperor Galerius, all had the same dream during pregnancy, the main circumstance of which was that they had an adulterous commerce with a serpent. Now, undoubtedly, there must have been some reason why the fancy in these cases had uniformly settled upon a serpent; and I explain it thus:—The serpent was a symbol of divinity; and the beautiful statues or pictures of a Bacchus, an Apollo, a Mercury, a Hercules, were rarely without this symbol. And thus it naturally happened that the fancy of these ladies, having banqueted in the day-time on the marvellous perfections of the youthful God, reproduced in the confusion of dreams this symbolic image as an associated circumstance.

they must surrender themselves to the guidance of a body of artists—in which case, besides the indecorum of making the State a tool for private intrigues, it is not in fact the government which prescribes rules to the arts, but one faction of artists through the government prescribing rules to another. Fourthly, it is not true that Science is in any other or higher sense "indispensable" than the Arts: the fact is that the gifts of Science would be a most dangerous possession for any nation which was not guided in the use of them by a moral culture derived from manners, institutions, and the arts. Fifthly, the fundamental error lies in affirming the final objects of the Fine Arts to be pleasure. Every man, however, would shrink from describing Æschylus or Phidias, Milton or Michael Angelo, as working for a common end with a tumbler or a rope-dancer. "No!" he would say, "the pleasure from the Fine Arts is ennobling, which the other is not." Precisely so: and hence it appears that not pleasure, but the sense of power and the illimitable incarnated as it were in pleasure, is the true object of the Fine Arts, and their final purpose therefore, as truly as that of Science and much more directly, the exaltation of our human nature; which, being the very highest conceivable purpose of man, is least of all a fit subject for the caprices or experiments of the scoundrel magistrate.—*Tr.*

But this by the way. What I wished to insist on is—that amongst the ancients Beauty was the presiding law of those arts which are occupied with Form. And, this once established, it follows that to the supreme object of Beauty every collateral object in these arts must be sacrificed at once where it cannot be brought into reconciliation, and must in any case be subordinated.

Let me pause a moment to explain myself. There are certain modes of passion, and degrees of passion, which cannot express themselves on the countenance but by hideously disfiguring it, and which throw the whole person into such constrained attitudes that all the beautiful lines which define its outline in a state of repose utterly vanish. Now, from these passions the ancient artists either abstained altogether or depressed them to a lower key, in which they might be so modulated as not to disturb the general beauty. Frenzy and despair, for instance, were not allowed to disfigure their pure creations. Anger they lowered into severity. By the poet, indeed, Jupiter might be exhibited in wrath and launching the thunderbolt; but the artist tranquillised this stormy passion into a majestic austerity. Anguish, in like manner, was tempered into sorrow.

But, suppose such temperaments to be impracticable from the circumstances, how did the artist deliver himself from his embarrassment so as to express a due submission to the general law of his art (that is to say, the beautiful), and yet at the same time to meet the necessities of the particular case? We have a lesson upon this point from Timanthes. He, in his celebrated picture of the Sacrifice of Iphigenia, had depicted the several bystanders, each with his appropriate expression of sympathy through the whole scale of grief; but, coming at last to the father, whose features should naturally have exhibited the passion in its extremity, what did he do? He threw a veil over his face. The story is well known; and many fine things have been said upon it. One critic thinks that the painter had exhausted his whole physiognomy of woe, and despaired of throwing a crowning expression into the countenance of the father. This solution is founded therefore on the *number* of the bystanders, and the consequent extent of the scale. But another is of opinion that, apart from that consideration, and supposing no comparison at all, paternal grief is absolutely and *per se* inexpressible, and that this is what the painter designed to intimate. For my part I see no such thing. I do not admit the inexpressibility of paternal grief,—neither in its degree (according to the first opinion), nor in its kind (according to the second). I deny the supposed impossibility of adequately representing it, whether it respects the aptitudes of the arts to allow of this, or the resources of the artist for effecting it. So far from *that*, exactly as any passion grows intense, the traits of the countenance which correspond to it will deepen in emphasis and characteristic meaning ; and just in that degree will the artist find the deepest passion easiest to express. The true solution is that Timanthes is here paying homage to the limits which the Graces had prescribed to his art. *That* grief which belonged to Agamemnon as a father could not (he was aware) express itself but by distortions of countenance that must be in the highest degree repulsive. Up to a certain point the expression could coexist with dignity and beauty ; and so far he carried it. Beyond this the expression became shocking in proportion as it was true to nature. Wholly to have omitted the paternal grief, or to have depressed its tone, would have been the painter's choice, had either been left free to him by the plan of his composition : not being so, what remained for him but to throw a veil over that which could not be expressed by the art of painting in consistency with its own end ? In short, the veiling of Agamemnon is a sacrifice on the part of the painter to the principle of beauty, and is not to be interpreted as a dexterous evasion of the artist's difficulties for the sake of achieving indirectly an expression beyond the powers of the art itself to have reached, but, on the contrary, as an example of submission to the primary law of the art,—which law is Beauty.

Now then, let all this be applied to the Laocoon, and the reason which I am investigating will be apparent. The artist was straining after the highest possible beauty,—which, however, could not be reconciled with the circumstances of bodily pain exhibited in any form of degrading violence. This therefore it became necessary to moderate : shrieking was to be tamed into sighing; not, however, as though shrieking betrayed an ignoble soul, but because it convulsed and distorted the features. For conceive the mouth of the Laocoon to be opened so as to utter a shriek, and in a moment what a transfiguration! A countenance which had commanded our sympathy by the union of beauty and suffering which it embodied is suddenly become hateful to us from the disgust associated with the blank aspect of pain unexalted by some mode of bodily perfection in the sufferer. Indeed, setting aside the hideous distortion which it impresses on the other parts of the face, a wide opening of the mouth is in itself a blot upon the harmonies of a painting, and in sculpture is such a descent into bathos as must always be in the last degree revolting. Accordingly, no artist, even in the decay of the arts, has ever figured the most uncultured of barbarians, though in the moment of mortal panic with the victor's sword at his throat, as shrieking open-mouthed.

Let me add that this depression of extreme bodily anguish to a lower tone of feeling is unquestionably countenanced by several ancient works of art. The Hercules in the poisoned shirt, from the hand of an anonymous old master, was not modelled upon the Hercules of the Trachiniæ[1]; he was exhibited rather in gloom than in distraction; whereas in the drama of Sophocles he utters shrieks so piercing that they are reverberated from the Locrian rocks and the promontories of Eubœa. The Philoctetes also of Pythagoras Leontinus is described as communicating a sympathetic pain to the spectator,—an effect which would assuredly have been defeated by the slightest trace of the horrific.

SECTION IV

But Art, it will be said, in modern ages, has released itself from the narrow limits of the antique. Its imitations now are coextensive with the sphere of visible nature, of which the Beautiful forms but a small part. Truth and Expression, it is alleged, now constitute its supreme law; and, as Nature is herself for ever sacrificing beauty to higher purposes, the artist also must now pursue it in submission to what is become the general and determining principle of his art. Enough that by Truth and Expression the hideous of nature is transformed into the beautiful of art.

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[1] The *Trachinian Women* composed the chorus which Sophocles brought forward in his dreadful tragedy on the dying Hercules. So that subsequently *The Trachiniæ* became the current name for this tragedy. *Dreadful*, I call it, because the semi-deity of Hercules did not (like that of Prometheus) protect him from Death. Hence the entire scenical movement, under the Death-Shirt of Nessus the Centaur, is felt to be the Apocalypse of Hard Dying in its last recesses.

Suppose now that, leaving these notions for the present uncontested, we were to look out for some principle quite independent of *their* truth and falsehood (which principle, therefore, it is free for us to use without thereby begging the question), and suppose that, starting from this principle, we could derive from it the two following canons of judgment: viz. that in the teeth of those objections (no matter whether otherwise true or false) the artist is bound:—

First, to prescribe certain limits to himself in expressing passion, and thus to acknowledge some law paramount even to the expression.

Secondly, never to select the expression from what may be called the *acme* or transcendent point of the action.

I think, then, that such a principle as we are in search of will be found in one circumstance, to which the imitations of Art are necessarily tied by its more physical conditions, and *that* is its punctual restriction to a single instant of time; which restriction alone seems to me quite sufficient to yield us the two canons above mentioned.

Every process of Nature unfolds itself through a succession of phenomena. Now, if it be granted of the artist generally that of all this moving series he can arrest as it were but so much as fills one instant of time, and, with regard to the painter in particular, that even this insulated moment he can exhibit only under one single aspect or phasis, it then becomes evident that, in the selection of this single instant and of this single aspect, too much care cannot be taken that each shall be in the highest possible degree pregnant in its meaning,—that is, shall yield the utmost range to the activities of the imagination. But in the whole evolution of a passion there is no one stage which has less of this advantage than its highest. Beyond it there is nothing:

and to present the last extremity to the eye is in effect to put fetters on the fancy, and, by denying it all possibility of rising above the sensible impression of the picture or statue, to throw its activities forcibly upon the weaker images which lie below that impression. Let Laocoon sigh, and the imagination may hear him shriek; but, if he shrieks, the imagination will not be able to advance one step higher or lower without placing him in a more endurable, and therefore less interesting, situation. It must then represent him either in his earliest sigh, or resting from his agony in death.

So much for the second canon. Next, as respects the other, since Art confers upon the moment which it selects the steadfastness of eternity, it must never undertake to express anything which is essentially evanescent.[1] All appearances in nature which bear the character to our understanding of

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[1] "*Essentially evanescent*":—The reader must lay especial stress on the word *essentially*, because else Lessing will be chargeable with a capital error. For it is in the very antagonism between the transitory reality and the non-transitory image of it reproduced by Painting or Sculpture that *one* main attraction of those arts is concealed. The shows of Nature, which we feel and know to be moving, unstable, and transitory, are by these arts arrested in a single moment of their passage, and frozen as it were into a motionless immortality. This truth has been admirably drawn into light, and finely illustrated, by Mr. Wordsworth in a sonnet on the Art of Landscape-Painting [printed in Wordsworth's Poems under the title "Upon the Sight of a Beautiful Picture"—M.]; in which he insists upon it as the great secret of its power that it bestows upon

"One brief moment caught from fleeting time
The appropriate calm of blest Eternity."

Now, in this there might seem at first glance to be some opposition between Mr. Wordsworth and Lessing; but all the illustrations of the sonnet show that there is not. For the case is this:—In the succession of parts which make up any appearance in nature, either these parts simply repeat each other (as in the case of a man walking, a river flowing, &c.), or they unfold themselves through a cycle, in which each step effaces the preceding (as in the case of a gun exploding, where the flash is swallowed up by the smoke, the smoke effaced by its own dispersion, &c.) Now, the illustrations in Mr. Wordsworth's poem are all of the former class: as the party of travellers just entering the wood, but not permitted, by the good, considerate painter, absolutely to enter the wood, where they must be eternally hidden from us; so again with regard to the little boat,—if allowed to unmoor sudden birth and sudden extinction, and which by their very essence are fluxionary, become unnatural when fixed and petrified, as it were, into the unchanging forms of art, and, no matter whether otherwise agreeable or terrific, inevitably

and go out a-fishing, it might be lying hid for hours under the restless glory of the sun, but now we all see it

"For ever anchored in its rocky bed";

and so on; where the continuous self-repeating nature of the impression, together with its indefinite duration, predisposes the mind to contemplate it under a form of unity, one mode of which exists in the eternal *Now* of the painter and the sculptor. But in successions of the other class, where the parts are not fluent, as in a line, but angular, as it were, to each other, not homogeneous, but heterogeneous, not continuous but abrupt, the evanescence is *essential*; both because each part really *has*, in general, but a momentary existence, and still more because, all the parts being unlike, each is imperfect as a representative image of the whole process; whereas in trains which repeat each other the whole exists virtually in each part, and therefore reciprocally each part will be a perfect expression of the whole. Now, whatever is essentially imperfect, and waiting, as it were, for its complement, is thereby essentially evanescent, as it is only by vanishing that it makes room for this complement. Whilst objecting, therefore, to appearances *essentially* evanescent as subjects for the artist, Lessing is by implication suggesting the same class from which Mr. Wordsworth has drawn his illustrations.

Spite of the length to which this note has run, I will trespass on the reader's patience for one moment longer, whilst I point his attention to two laws of taste, applied to the composition of epitaphs (in Mr. Wordsworth's Essay on that subject), as resting on the same general principle which Lessing is unfolding in the next. They are these: *first*, that all fanciful thoughts, and *secondly* that all thoughts of unsubdued, gloomy, and unhopeful grief, are not less severely excluded from the Epitaph by just taste than by Christian feeling. For the very nature of the material in which such inscriptions are recorded, stone or marble, and the laborious process by which they are chiselled out, both point to a character of duration with which everything slight, frail, or evanescent, is out of harmony. Now, a fanciful thought, however tender, has, by its very definition, this defect. For, being of necessity taken from a partial and oblique station (since, if it coincided with the central or absolute station of the reason, it would cease to be fanciful), such a thought can, at most, include but a side-glimpse of the truth: the mind submits to it for a moment, but immediately hurries on to some other thought, under the feeling that the flash and sudden gleam of colourable truth, being as frail as the resemblances in clouds, would, like *them*, unmould and "dislimn" itself (to use a Shakspearian word) under too steady and continued attention. As to the other class of thoughts, which express the become weaker and weaker in the impression the oftener they are contemplated. Pain violent enough to extort shrieks either soon remits, or else destroys the suffering subject. Here, then, is a reason why the sculptor could not have represented Laocoon as shrieking, even though it had been possible for him to do so without disturbing the beauty, or though in *his* art it had been allowable to neglect it.

This canon was understood and acted on by Timomachus, who, amongst the ancient painters, seems most to have delighted in subjects of intense passion. Two of his most

agitations of inconsolable grief, no doubt, they are sufficiently condemned, even in point of taste, by the very character of the place where epitaphs are usually recorded; for this, being dedicated to Christian hopes, should, in all consistency, impress a law of Christian resignation upon the memorials within its precincts; else why inscribe them *there*? But, apart from this objection, such thoughts are also condemned, on the principle of Lessing, as too evanescent. In the hands of a dramatic poet they are of great use; for there it is no blame to them that they are evanescent, since they make parts, or steps, in a natural process the *whole* of which is given, and are effaced either by more tranquil sentiments, or by the catastrophe, so that no attempt is there made to give permanence to the evanescent. But in an Epitaph, from its monumental character, we look for an expression of feeling which is fitted to be acquiesced in as final. Now, upon general principles of human nature, we know that the turbulence of rebellious grief cannot be a final, or other than a transitory, state of mind; and, if it were otherwise in any particular case, we should be too much shocked to survey it with a pleasurable sympathy.

This is the place for introducing a most apposite illustration, which is the more interesting for having been a ground-work for much controversy. Sir Brooke Boothby, a Derbyshire baronet, more than fifty years ago, lost a very lovely daughter, from eight to eleven years old. He and Lady Boothby were alike inconsolable for their loss; but such consolation as might be possible they endeavoured to draw from a memorial figure of their daughter executed in statuary marble; and Sir Brooke, who was a man of letters, not without considerable talent, briefly recorded the nature of their loss and its infinite extent in the following English inscription:—

Upon this frail vessel the wretched Parents
Embarked the entire burthen of their hopes;
And the *wreck—was total!*

With the sentiment here expressed, and expressed in a Christian church, many people quarrelled; amongst whom was Wordsworth. Others, standing in the same circumstances of hopeless grief, justified the whole.—*Tr.*

celebrated pictures were the Ajax in Distraction, and the Medea. But, from the description which has come down to us of these pictures, it is evident that he has admirably combined an attention to both the canons laid down,—having selected that point of the action in each case which rather suggested than represented its crisis or extremity, and that particular form of expression for the situation with which the sense of evanescence was not too powerfully connected to make us revolt from the prolongation of it by art. The Medea was exhibited, not in the very act of murdering her children, but a few moments before, whilst the struggle was yet fervent between maternal love and jealousy. The issue is foreseen; already, by anticipation, we shudder at the image of the mother mastered by her murderous fury; and our imagination transports us far beyond any effect that could have been derived from the actual exhibition of this awful moment. And so little do we feel any offence at the eternity conferred by Art on the indecision of Medea that on the contrary the mind submits to it gladly, and with a wish that the conflict had in reality been eternal, or so long, however, that time might have been allowed for reflection, and for the victorious reflux of maternal tenderness. This treatment of the subject has obtained for Timomachus the warmest applause, and a great pre-eminence over a brother painter, who had in these points departed from his discretion. This artist had been injudicious enough to exhibit Medea in the very transports of her murderous frenzy; and thus upon a thing as fugitive as a delirious dream had conferred a monumental duration,—which is shocking and revolting to nature. A Greek poet, accordingly, when censuring his conduct in these particulars, with just feeling apostrophises the principal figure in this way—"Ha! Medea, is then thy thirst after thy children's blood unquenchable? Doth there rise up for ever another Jason and another Creusa, to sting thee into madness? If so," he adds, in indignation, "cursed be thou, even in the painter's mimicry!"

The management of the Ajax we may collect from the account of Philostratus. He was not represented in the height of his paroxysm, slaughtering the rams and the he-goats which he mistakes for his enemies; but in the state of exhaustion which succeeded to these feats, revisited by reason, and meditating self-destruction. And this in strict meaning *is* the distracted Ajax; not that he is so now, but because we see his distraction expounded by its effects, and the enormity of it measured by the acuteness of his shame. The fury of the storm appears best after it is over, expressing itself by the wrecks and the ruins it has caused.

SECTION V

I have argued that the sculptor, in setting limits to the expression of pain in the Laocoon, proceeded upon principle. On looking over the reasons by which this has been maintained, I find that they all resolve themselves into the peculiar constitution of his art, and its original and natural necessities. This being the case, it is scarcely possible that any one of these arguments should be applicable to the art of Poetry.

Without stopping to examine how far the poet can succeed in representing personal beauty, thus much is indisputable—that, since the whole immeasurable field of perfection in every mode is open to his art, that particular manifestation, or (to speak learnedly) that incarnation of the perfect which is called Beauty, can never be more than one amongst many resources (and those the slightest) by which he has it in his power to engage our interest for his characters. Least of all is it necessary in any single trait of description, not expressly designed for the sight, that the poet should address himself to that sense. When Virgil's Laocoon shrieks, who thinks of the wide opening of the mouth that takes place in that act, and of its ugliness? Enough that the expression "*Clamores horrendos ad sidera tollit*" is a grand trait for the ear, be it what it may for the sight. And he that looks for a beautiful image in this place has wholly missed the true effect designed by the poet.

In the next place, nothing obliges the poet (like the painter) to concentrate his picture into one punctual instant of time. Any action whatsoever he is at liberty to take up from its origin, and to conduct it through every stage to the conclusion. Each one of these stages, which would cost the painter a separate picture, is despatched by *him* in a single trait of description; and, supposing this trait, separately considered, to be offensive, yet, by skilful position in respect to what precedes and follows, it may be so *medicated* (as it were) by the preparation of the one, and the reaction of the other, as to merge its peculiar and separate effect in the general impression.

Virgil, therefore, may be justified for departing from the sculptor in his treatment of the Laocoon. But Virgil is a narrative poet: how far, then, will the benefit of *his* justification extend to the dramatic poet? It is one thing to tell us of a shriek, and another thing actually to reproduce the shriek in a mimic representation: and possibly it may be the duty of Drama, as a sort of living art of Painting by means of actors, to bind itself more severely than other kinds of poetry to the laws of that art. In the representation of the theatre it will be urged that we no longer *fancy* that we are seeing and hearing a shrieking Philoctetes; we do actually see and hear him; and, the nearer to the truth of nature that the mimetic art of the actor is in this instance carried, so much the more sensibly should our eyes and ears be offended,—for it is undeniable that they are so, in the realities of nature, by all violent expressions of pain. Bodily pain above all is, in general, ill adapted to call forth the sympathy which is given to other modes of suffering. It presents to our imagination too little of distinct features for the mere sight of it to impress us with a proportionate feeling. *Prima facie*, therefore, it is not absolutely impossible that Sophocles, in representing his suffering heroes as weeping and wailing, may have violated a law of decorum, not arbitrary or fantastic, but grounded in the very nature of human emotions. The bystanders, it is clear, cannot possibly take as much interest in their sufferings as this clamorous uproar of ejaculation seems to call for. They will, therefore, appear to us, the spectators, comparatively cold; and yet we cannot possibly regard their sympathy as other than the fit measure for our own. Add to this, that the actor can with great difficulty, if at all, carry the expression of pain to the necessary point of illusion.

How plausible, how irrefragable, would many an objection drawn from theory appear, had not genius succeeded in demonstrating its falsehood by mere blank argument of fact. None of the considerations alleged seems to be without some foundation; yet, for all that, the Philoctetes remains a *chef-d'œuvre* of the stage. The truth is that one part of the objections glances wide of Sophocles; and, with respect to the other, simply by managing the subject so as to throw it out of the level of their range, the poet has achieved beauties which the timid connoisseur, in the absence of such a model, could never have imagined to be possible.

Marvellously, indeed, has the poet succeeded in strengthening and exalting the idea of bodily pain. First of all, he selected for the ground of his interest a wound rather than an internal malady, however painful, as judging the former to be susceptible of a more impressive representation.[1] On this principle the internal fire which consumes Meleager, in fatal sympathy with the brand which his mother throws into the fire as a sacrifice to her sisterly wrath, would be less adapted to the illusions of the scene than a wound. Secondly, the wound of Philoctetes was a judgment from Heaven. A poison in which was more than a natural malignity gnawed within the wound for ever; intervals there were none, except as regarded the extreme paroxysms;

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[1] This is surely a very questionable position. To many persons the sickness of Orestes, exhibited with so much pathetic effect by Euripides, will appear better adapted to scenical purposes than any wound whatsoever. But *that* sickness, it will be said, was not a natural sickness; it was exalted by its connection with the dark powers who had inflicted it, and the awful nature of the guilt which had provoked it. True; but the wound of Philoctetes was also of a supernatural character, and ennobled by the wild grandeur of the Lernæan poison, independently of the poet's art; so that the comparison is not an unfair one. On the other hand, with respect to the case of Meleager, referred to in the next sentence, any comparison between that and the case of Philoctetes would be an unfair one, if it were not in fact nugatory; for the combustion of Meleager was to the full as much a wound as a constitutional disease. But, waiving this, the true reason why we should be little affected by a scenical Meleager is that the supernatural in this instance rests upon the basis of magic—a basis as aërial and as little appealing to the profundities of our nature as the supernatural of a fairy tale. Hence, if we are to take it, with Lessing, as a representative case of constitutional disease against wounds, it will be most unfair to oppose it to that of Philoc-

these had their stated periods, after which the miserable man regularly sank into a comatose sleep, in which nature rested from her agonies to restore him strength for treading the same round of torment again.

Dreadful, however, as were the bodily sufferings of his hero, Sophocles was sensible that these alone were not sufficient to sustain any remarkable degree of pity. With pain, therefore, he connected other evils; and these also taken separately might not have been particularly moving; but, connected as they were, they lent to the bodily torments a sad and touching interest, which again was reflected back upon themselves. These evils consist in hunger, in the inclemency of a raw ungenial climate, in utter solitude, in the want of any *συντροφον ὀμμα* (*i.e.* any household sympathising eye), together with the naked and calamitous condition of life to which a human being is exposed under circumstances of such perfect destitution. When the Chorus is reflecting on the miserable condition of Philoctetes, the helpless solitude of it is the circumstance to which they direct their chief regard. In every word of this we recognise the social Grecian. For, represent a man as oppressed by the most painful and incurable complaint, but at the same time as surrounded by affectionate friends who suffer him to

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tetes, in which, as a divine judgment inflicted through a physical agency, the supernatural rests upon the deep realities of our nature; for the notion of a "judgment" is common to all religions. In this respect, again, the Orestes is the fair counterpart of the Philoctetes as to the *quality* of the interest,—so that, if it be equal or superior in the *degree*, the remark of Lessing is groundless. By the way, of both the Orestes and the Philoctetes, as compared with the unsubstantial Meleager, it may be remarked that their power over the affections is held by a double tenure,—grounded equally in the natural and the supernatural. They rest in part upon the religious sense, and therefore on the truths of the reason and the conscience, in which the "dark foundations" of our nature are laid,—upon shadowy, therefore, but still the sublimest of all, realities. Yet, if this basis were removed, there still remains a sufficient one in the physical facts of the two cases. The gnawing of a serpent's venom, sickness, solitude, and the sense of deep injury, are adequate to sustain the passion of the Philoctetes; and the most irreligious man who totally rejects the supernatural must yet (as a mere psychological truth) admit the power of a wounded conscience to produce the frenzy, the convulsions, and the phantoms which besiege the couch of Orestes.—*Tr.*

want for no alleviation of his sufferings, and fail in no offices of consolation,—undoubtedly we grant him our sympathy, but not of a deep or an enduring character. Figure him, on the other hand, under the double calamity of sickness and of solitude; figure him mastered as by a demoniacal possession, incapable of giving help to himself through disease, incapable of receiving it through his situation; imagine him throwing out his complaints upon the desert air, expostulating with the very rocks and the sea, and pouring forth his wild litanies of anguish to the heavens, we then behold our human nature under the uttermost burden of wretchedness that it can support; we clasp our hands over the poor suffering creature; and, if ever an image crosses our fancy of ourselves as standing in the same situation, we dismiss it with a shuddering horror.

Oh, that Frenchman! who had no sense to perceive all this, nor heart to comprehend it, or, if he had, was little enough to sacrifice to the beggarly taste of his nation everything that constitutes the passion of the situation! Chataubrun,[1] at one stroke, dissolves the whole interest by placing Philoctetes (*risum teneatis?*) in human society. He introduces upon the desolate island a certain princess, the daughter of Philoctetes; and not alone neither, for she has her duenna along with her,—a sort of thing of which I am at a loss to know whether it were designed for the service of the princess or of the poet. Sophocles was aware that no compassion is stronger than that which is blended with images of despair: this it is which we feel for the situation of Philoctetes; and precisely this it is which the Greek poet carries to the uttermost limit, when he represents him as robbed of his bow, the sole stay and staff of his miserable existence. But the Frenchman knows a surer way to our heart: he alarms us with the prospect that Neoptolemus will be obliged to depart without his princess. This is what the Parisian critics call triumphing over the Ancients; and one of them proposed as a title for this very play of Chataubrun's, in relation to the supposed meagreness of interest in the treatment of Sophocles, *La Difficulté Vaincue.*

Next, after this general *coup-d'œil,* carry your eye to the particular scenes in which Philoctetes is no longer the afflicted Solitary, but has hopes soon to quit his savage wilderness, and to repossess his kingdom; in which scenes, therefore, his whole misery is reduced to the agony of his wound. At this point of the action he moans, shrieks, and suffers the most appalling convulsions. And precisely against these scenes it is that the objection of violated decorum is levelled. All passions and affections, it is said, become offensive when expressed with too much violence. Nothing is so fallacious as prescribing general laws to our feelings, which lie in so subtle and intricate a web that even the most vigilant analysis can rarely succeed in taking up a single thread clear of the rest, or pursuing it through all the cross threads which arise to perplex it. And, suppose it could, to what purpose? In nature there exists no such insulation of feeling; with every single feeling there arise simultaneously thousands of others, the very slightest of which is sufficient to disturb the unity of the fundamental one, to modify, or utterly to change its character; so that exceptions accumulate upon exceptions; and the pretended universal law shrinks at last into a mere experimental deduction from a few individual cases. We despise, say the objectors, any man from whom bodily pain extorts a shriek. Ay, but not always; not for the first time, nor if we see that the sufferer strains every nerve to stifle the expression of his pain; not if we know him otherwise to be a man of firmness; still less if we witness evidences of his firmness in the very midst of his sufferings, and observe that, although pain may have extorted a shriek, it has extorted nothing else from him, but that on the contrary he submits to the prolongation of his pain rather than renounce one iota of his resolutions, even where such a concession would promise him the termination of his misery. Now, all this is found in Philoctetes. Amongst the ancient Greeks moral grandeur consisted no less in persevering love of friends than in imperishable hatred of enemies. This grandeur Philoctetes maintains under all his torments. Pain has not so withered his human sympathies but that he has still some tears for the calamities of his ancient friends. Neither has pain so unnerved him as that, to escape from *that*, he will forgive his enemies, or lend himself to their self-interested purposes. And this was the man, this rock of granite, that the Athenians, forsooth, were to despise, because the billows that could not shatter him yet drew from him some sounds that testified his "huge affliction and dismay"! I must confess that I find little to my taste in the philosophy of Cicero; scarcely anywhere indeed, but least of all in that part of it which he parades in the second book of his Tusculan Disputations on the endurance of pain. One would suppose that his purpose had been to form a gladiator, so zealously does he play the rhetorician against the external manifestations of pain. "The poets," says he, "make us effeminate; for they introduce the bravest men weeping." Weeping? and why not? a theatre, I hope, is no arena. To the professed gladiator, sold or condemned to the Circus, it might be no more than becoming to act and to suffer with decorous apathy. He was trained, as to his first duty, to suppress all sound of lamentation, and every spasm of pain. For his wounds and his death were to furnish a spectacle of pleasure to the spectators; and thus it became the business of art to conceal all sensibility to pain and danger. The slightest expression of feeling might have awakened compassion; and that, frequently repeated, would soon have put an end to those cold-blooded exhibitions. But the pity which was banished from the exhibitions of the arena on the tragic stage was the sole end proposed; and this difference of purpose prescribed a corresponding difference of demeanour in the performers. The heroes of the stage were bound to show feeling; it was their duty to express pain, and to display the naked workings of nature. Any constraint or discipline of disguise would at once repel sympathy; and a cold expression of wonderment is the most that could be given to a prize-fighter in the cothurnus. Such a title, in fact, and no higher, belongs to all the persons in the drama of Seneca; and it is my firm conviction that the gladiatorial shows were the main cause of the indifferent success which the Romans had in tragedy.[1]

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[1] Chateaubrun, French dramatist, 1686-1775.—M.

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[1] This *was* a very sagacious remark the first time it was uttered; but with its novelty has faded away its ingenuity; and it may be doubted whether it is even true in the large extent to which Lessing carries it. No doubt the taste of the amphitheatre would confirm and

The spectators in the bloody amphitheatre acquired a distorted taste in nature; a Ctesias, perhaps, but not a Sophocles, might have cultivated his art in that school. Once familiar with these artificial death-scenes of the arena, the genius of tragedy must have descended into fustian and rhodomontade. Now, just as little as such bombast could inspire genuine heroism is effeminacy to be charged upon the lamentations of Philoctetes. These lamentations express him as a man: his actions express him as a hero. Both together compose the human hero, not effeminate on the one hand, not callous or brutal on the other, but this or that in appearance accordingly as he is determined by duty and principle, or by the impulses of his human nature. Philoctetes, in short, in reference to heroism, is the very ideal of what wisdom can suggest, or the powers of imitative art can realise.

Not content, however, with this general philosophic sanction to his hero's sensibility, Sophocles has taken pains to forestall every objection to which by possibility it could have been liable. For, notwithstanding we do not of necessity despise him who expresses his pain by shrieks, still it is undeniable that we do not feel compassion for him in that degree which shrieks may seem to claim. How then ought those to bear themselves who are brought into connexion with Philoctetes? Ought they to wear the semblance of deep emotion? That would be contrary to nature. Ought they to manifest the coldness and the alien eye which are common in such cases? That would be shocking to the spectators, from the harsh line of separation between two unharmonised states of feeling, and the consequent loss of unity in the impression. Here then is a dilemma; but this, as was said before, Sophocles has contrived to meet. And how? Simply through the separate interest collateral to the main one which occupies the subordinate characters: not

strengthen a spurious taste in tragedy. But it is probable that originally both were effects from a common cause, viz. the composition of the Roman mind. For the whole history and literature of the Romans make it evident that of all nations they had the highest ideal for the grandeur of the human will in resisting passion, but the very lowest ideal for the grandeur of human passion in conflict with itself. Hence the overpowering suspicion of a Greek origin for the Atys of Catullus.—*Tr.* [See *ante*, Vol. X, p. 57.—M.]

being neutral parties, but preoccupied by their own objects, it implies no want of feeling that they cannot give an undivided attention to the lamentations of Philoctetes; and thus the spectator's attention is drawn off from the disproportion between their sympathy and the shrieking of Philoctetes to the counterbalancing interest for themselves of their own plan and the changes it undergoes,—changes that are entirely due to the force of sympathy, whether weak or strong. Neoptolemus and the Chorus have practised a deceit upon the unhappy Philoctetes: they are witnesses to the despair into which this deceit is likely to plunge him; and just at this moment he falls into one of his dreadful convulsions. If this spectacle calls forth no remarkable external expression of their sympathy, it compels them, however, to reflection,—to respect for the rights of human calamity, and to forbearance from all aggravation of it by treachery. This is what the spectator looks for; and the noble-minded Neoptolemus does not disappoint him. A Philoctetes, according to the Ciceronian conception, in full self-possession and master over his own pains, would have upheld Neoptolemus in his dissimulation; but a Philoctetes whose sufferings transcend disguise, indispensable as that might seem to the purpose of intercepting any sentiment of repentance in the mind of Neoptolemus with regard to the promise he had given of taking him off the island,—a Philoctetes, in short, who is all nature recalls Neoptolemus also to *his* nature. This revolution of mind in the young prince is of admirable effect, and the more touching, as it is brought about by no change in the situation of the parties, but by pure human sensibility. In the French Philoctetes, however, the "fine eyes" of beauty have their share in this revolution: "*De mes déguisemens que penseroit Sophie?*" says the son of Achilles. *What would Sophia think?* Faugh!

The very same artist-like contrivance of combining with the compassion due to the audible expression of pain another and counterbalancing interest of a more selfish nature in the bystanders has been employed by Sophocles in his Trachiniæ. The suffering of Hercules is not one which tends to exhaustion; on the contrary, it acts by irritation, and drives him into a frenzy-fit, in which he pants after revenge. Lichas he has already sacrificed to his fury, by dashing him to pieces against the rocks. The Chorus, therefore, composed of women, are naturally possessed by fear and consternation. This, and the agitation of suspense about the fate of Hercules —Will some god come to his assistance? or will he sink under his agonies?—constitute the proper and presiding interest, which is but partially relieved by the other interest of compassion. No sooner is the suspense at an end, and the issue determined by the oracle, than Hercules recovers his composure; at which point admiration of his final intrepidity swallows up all other feelings.

In comparing the suffering Hercules, however, with the suffering Philoctetes, we are not to forget that the first is a demigod, and the other no more than a man. A being entirely human has no reason to be ashamed of his lamentations; but a demigod must naturally feel humiliated that the mortal in his composition could so far triumph over the immortal as to extort tears from him and feminine complaints. We moderns profess to believe in no demigods; nevertheless, we demand of the pettiest hero that he should act and feel like a being of that order.

As to the objection that no actor could carry the shrieks and spasms of pain to the necessary point of illusion, it is one which I will not presume to determine one way or the other. If it should appear that this is really impossible to our own actors, I should then be obliged to plead the perfection of the declamatory art among the ancients, and of the subsidiary aids in its mechanic apparatus,—a perfection of which at this day we retain no sort of idea.[1]

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[1] In this section, amongst other instances of skill in the Philoctetes, Lessing insists upon the means used for exalting the wound; but *there* the merit is confined to a judicious selection from the existing traditions. A far better illustration of Lessing's meaning was once suggested to me from the Othello. The wretched La Harpe, it is well known, complains of the *handkerchief* as irretrievably mean. In the hands of a La Harpe we cannot doubt that it would have proved so. But Shakspere has so ennobled it by the wild grandeur of its history,—

"That handkerchief
Did an Egyptian to my mother give," &c.—

that we can no more regard it as M. la Harpe's *mouchoir* than the shattered banner of a veteran regiment as an old rag.—*Tr.*

Section VI

There have been critics who made no scruple of referring the Laocoon to the period of the Emperors,—*i.e.* to a Post-Virgilian age; not meaning to deny, however, that it was a work of Grecian art. This opinion they founded, no doubt, upon the resemblance between the group of the sculptor and the description of the poet, which was too close and circumstantial to be thought pure matter of accident; and, in a question of original conception, they took it for granted that all the presumptions were on the side of the poet. Apparently, they forgot that, without supposing either to have borrowed from the other, a third case is conceivable, viz. that both were indebted to a common model of some older period.

Waiving this question, however, I will suppose the artist to have imitated the poet, as a convenient assumption for exhibiting, in the deviations by the imitator from his model, the characteristic differences of their several arts.

The father and his two sons are represented, by both sculptor and poet, as linked into one intricate nodus by the voluminous folds of the snakes,—an idea which is indisputably very happy and picturesque. In the distribution of these folds it will be observed that Virgil has been careful to leave the arms at liberty, in order to allow full activity to the hands. In this the artist could not but follow him, for nothing gives more life and expression than the motion of the hands; and in a state of passion, above all, the most speaking countenance without their aid would become unimpressive. Arms glued to the side by the limbs of the snakes would have petrified the whole life and animation of the group. But, beyond this single circumstance of disengaging the arms, there is no other in the poet's management of the folds which the artist could have adopted with advantage. In the Virgilian Laocoon the snakes are wound twice about his waist, twice about his throat, and surmount his head with their crests. This picture fills the imagination: the noblest parts are stifled by pressure, and the venom is carried straight to the face. Nevertheless, it was no picture for the artist. The object for him was to exhibit the effects of the poison and the pain on the body; to do which it was necessary that he should expose the person freely to view, and without allowing of any external pressure that could affect the free play of the agitated nerves or the labouring muscles. Folds as complete as those in the Virgilian picture would have concealed the whole body; and that peculiar contraction of the abdomen, so expressive of bodily anguish, must have been invisible. Any parts that might have still remained. exposed above and below the folds or between them, necessarily bearing marks of protrusion and tumor, would have indicated not so much the pains within as the external pressure. The folds about the throat, by increasing greatly the volume of that part, would have had the further disadvantage of disturbing that pyramidal tendency to a point, so agreeable to the eye, under the present arrangement of the group; whilst the pointed snaky crests, towering abruptly into the air from a basis so disproportionately broad, would have harshly broken up the present symmetrical contraction of the proportions. The ancient sculptors saw at a glance that a change of plan was in this instance prescribed by their art; and they transferred the folds from the body and throat to the legs and the feet. So arranged, they caused no constriction or concealment that could interfere with the expression; on the contrary, they suggested the ideas of flight impeded and of immobility,—ideas which reconcile the mind to that perpetuation of a momentary state which it belongs to this art to present.

I know not how it has happened that the critics have failed to notice this difference between the statue and the poem. A second difference, which all of them *have* noticed (though not so much to praise as to excuse it), respects the costume. Virgil's Laocoon is in his priestly attire; but in the sculptor's group he and both of his sons appear naked. Some people have discovered a gross absurdity in this representation of a royal priest presiding naked at a sacrifice. And the answer, made very gravely by the connoisseurs, has been, that unquestionably it is a great offence against costume, but that it was unavoidable,—the artist not having it in his power to give his figures a becoming attire. Heavy folds, say they, have a bad effect in sculpture: of two evils, the artist has chosen the least, and has preferred to trespass upon the very truth of the reality, rather than to violate the primal law of his art in the drapery. The objection would have been regarded by the ancient artists as ludicrous in a degree which would have acquitted them of any obligation to answer it. For, suppose that the texture of drapery were as much within the imitative powers of sculpture as of painting, would *that* prove that the sculptor had unnecessarily departed in this particular from his poetic model? Drapery in the poet's hands is no drapery; for it conceals nothing. Let Virgil robe his Laocoon, or unrobe him, the effect is all one; for our imagination looks through all disguises. Invest the forehead with the pontifical diadem: in the poet's hands this takes nothing from the effect; nay, it strengthens the impression of the calamity, by exhibiting the very symbol of his priestly office, which everywhere else commanded homage and veneration, steeped in the unhallowed venom of the reptile. But this subordinate effect would, in the sculptor's hands, have interfered with the main one. A diadem, or fillet, would have partially concealed the forehead; and in the forehead is seated the main expression.[1] As, therefore, in the circumstance of the shriek, he had sacrificed the expression to the beauty, so here the artist sacrificed the costume to the expression. Universally, indeed, costume was slighted by the ancients; for with their art under its highest law, which is Beauty, they felt that costume of any form was irreconcilable. Necessity it was that invented clothes; and what has art to do with necessity?[2] But drapery also has its appropriate beauty! Granted; but of what rank as compared with the beauty of the human form? And who, that could reach the highest effects of art, would content himself with the inferior? I suspect that the most perfect master

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[1] As regards the expression of intense bodily torment, possibly this may be admitted; certainly in any greater latitude it is untrue.—*Tr.*

[2] Here is a singular specimen of logic:—Necessity invented clothes; and therefore art can have nothing to do with drapery. On the same principle, art would have nothing to do with architecture. What is the minor proposition by which Lessing would connect his conclusion with his major? Manifestly this,—that it belongs to the very idea of a fine art, as distinguished from a mechanic art, to afford the utmost range to the *free* activities of the creative faculty; so that, for instance, it would obliterate this idea if it were to pursue any end to which the understanding could point out *necessarily* the means and shortest course. This is what the understanding does with regard to a purpose of utility in a mechanic art: the means are here given, and virtually pre-exist in the end, and are unfolded by the understanding,

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gradually and tentatively as respects the individual artist, but with the severest necessity as respects the object; so that, if ever the artist may seem to have any freedom, it is only so long as he mistakes his course. Such is the ellipsis of Lessing,—which, however, is of no avail to his conclusion. Necessity invented dress, and to a certain extent the same necessity continues to preside over it; a necessity, derived from climate and circumstances, dictates a certain texture of the dress; a necessity, derived from the human form and limbs, dictates a certain arrangement and a corresponding adaptation. But thus far dress is within the province of a *mechanic* art. Afterwards, and perhaps in a very genial climate *not* afterwards but originally, dress is cultivated as an end *per se*, both directly for its beauty, and as a means of suggesting many pleasing ideas of rank, power, youth, sex, or profession. Cultivated for this end, the study of drapery is a *fine* art; and a draped statue is a work not in one but in two departments of art. Neither is it true that the sense of necessity and absolute limitation is banished from the idea of a fine art. On the contrary, this sense is indispensable as a means of resisting (and, therefore, realising) the sense of freedom; the freedom of a fine art is found not in the absence of restraint, but in the conflict with it. The beauty of dancing, for instance, as to one part of it, lies in the conflict between the freedom of the motion and the law of equilibrium, which is constantly threatened by it; sometimes also in the intricacy of the figure, which is constantly tending to swerve from a law which it constantly obeys; and sometimes in the mutual reference of two corresponding dancers, or a centripetal reference of the whole, where the *launch*, as it were, of the motion and passion of the music seems likely to impress a centrifugal tendency. Moreover, it is as inconsiderate in Lessing to suggest any opposition between the beauty of drapery and the beauty of the human form as between the sun and the clouds, which may obscure, but may also reflect its lustre. They are not *so* in opposition but that they may coalesce to a common effect; and the fact is that in nature neither the grace nor the majesty of the human figure is capable of being fully drawn out *except* by drapery. In part this may be owing to the fact that we are too little familiar with the undraped figure to be able so readily in that state to judge of its proportions, its attitude or its motion; and partly to the great power of drapery under the law of association. But in a still greater degree it is due to the original adaptation, neither accidental nor derivative, of drapery to the human figure; which is founded in some measure on its power of repeating the flowing outlines of the human figure in another and more fluent material; whence arises the pleasure, subtlest of all in nature, and the most extensively diffused, of similitude in dissimilitude. That drapery is not essential in sculpture, and that of drapery, by that very accomplishment, points to his own deficiencies.

SECTION VII

My assumption that the poetic Laocoon was the original creation tends in no respect to the disparagement of the sculptor; say rather that it places in the strongest light the wisdom which presided over his imitation. He followed another indeed, but not blindly, or so as ever to be led astray by him in the minutest trifle. True, he had a model; yet, as this model was to be translated out of one art into another,

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the highest effects of sculpture are in fact produced without it, is in some measure dependent on this very law of the interfusion of the similar and the dissimilar; for, in order that any effect should be felt as the *idem in altero*, it is necessary that each should be distinctly perceived; whereas, in sculptural drapery, from the absence of shading and of colouring, the "alterum" is not sufficiently perceived *as* an "alterum." There is another and transcendent reason for the ill effects of sculptural drapery, into which the former reason merges. For why *does* sculpture reject colouring; and why is it that just taste has always approved of the sightless eyes in statues? Manifestly, on the general and presiding law which determines the distinctions of the statuesque from the picturesque. The characteristic aim of painting is reality and life; of sculpture, ideality and duration. Painting is sensuous and concrete; sculpture abstract and imaginative. The *existere* and the *esse* of the metaphysicians express the two modes of being which they severally embody. Hence perhaps it is that Jesus Christ has been perpetually painted and but rarely sculptured; for in this mysterious incarnation, this entrance of Deity within the shade of time and passion, we must recollect that the divine is the true nature of Christ, and the human his superinduced nature; consequently it is to his human nature, as in this case the preternatural, that our attention is called. Life, therefore, or being in time,—which is here the uppermost idea, — fits the conception of a Christ to painting. But, if the case had been reversed, and a nature originally human were supposed to have projected itself into eternity, and in some unspeakable way to have united itself with the Deity, the divine nature would, in this synthesis of two natures, have been the preternatural or superinduced, and the human nature the ground. Such a conception would be adapted to sculpture; and some such conception is in fact embodied in the sublime head of Memnon in the British Museum, in which are united the expressions of ineffable benignity with infinite duration. But, to return from this illustration, if the sense of the enduring and the essential be thus predominant in sculpture, it then becomes plain why a thing so accidental and so frail as drapery should tend to disturb its highest effects.—*Tr.*

room enough was left him for originality of thought to be manifested in his deviations from his archetype ; and this originality is, in fact, such as to place him in the same rank, as to *degree* of merit, with the poet whom he imitated.

It appears, then, that, admirable as the picture is in the management of Virgil, there are traits in it, notwithstanding, incapable of being transferred to the purposes of the sculptor. The notion, therefore, that a good poetic description must also furnish a good picture in the painter's sense, and that a poet has only so far succeeded in his delineation as an artist can follow him, admits of great limitation : a limitation, by the way, which might have been presumed, even in default of any positive examples, simply from a consideration of the wider compass of poetry, and the peculiar nature of its images ; for these, being less essentially sensuous than in the other arts, can co-exist, without loss of their separate effects, in greater number and variety than the objects themselves, or their natural signs, can do within the narrow limits of space and time.

That poetry is the art of greatest comprehension ; that effects are within its power unattainable to painting ; and that a poet may often have good reasons to prefer the non-picturesque to the picturesque : these are truths which seem to have been but little contemplated ; and, accordingly, upon the slightest differences detected between the ancient poets and artists, criticism has been confounded. The elder poets, for example, generally invest Bacchus with horns. Strange, then, says Spence, that horns are so rarely found on his statues. The horns of Bacchus, however, were no natural horns, like those of fawns and satyrs ; they were simply a frontal ornament, assumed or laid aside at pleasure. He could appear, therefore, unhorned, and did so when he chose to reveal himself in his virgin beauty. Now, it was precisely under that aspect that the artist wished to present him ; and hence his obligation to dismiss all adjuncts that might disturb that impression. Such an adjunct were the horns attached to the diadem. Such an adjunct was the diadem itself, which concealed the beautiful forehead, and on that account is found upon the statues as rarely as the horns, although not less frequently attributed by the poets to Bacchus as its inventor. To the poet both horns and diadem were simply a source of beautiful allusions to the acts and character of the god: the artist, on the contrary, found them hindrances in his way, that interposed between the display of beauties greater than themselves. And, if my notion be true, that Bacchus was surnamed Διμορφος, in reference to a power of manifesting himself in a beautiful or a dreadful form, nothing can be more natural than that, of two modes of figuring him, the artist should adopt *that* which best corresponded with the purposes of his own art.

Statius and Valerius Flaccus have both described Venus, under the passion of anger, with features so shockingly disfigured by that passion that we should be apt to take her for one of the Furies rather than for the Goddess of Love. Now, without any view to the defence of these particular passages, I shall here make one general observation on the principle which they involve. The gods, and other supernatural creations of the artist and of the poet, are not entirely under the same law of art. To the artist they are no more than impersonated abstractions, and, that they may be understood and recognised for what they are, must always retain the same symbolic characteristics. Treated by the poet, on the contrary, they are substantial concrete persons,[1] who, besides their universal attributes, may bring forward, as occasion presents, other qualities and affections, that, for the moment, supersede and throw into the shade their abstract character. Venus, for example, to the sculptor, is the mere principle of the sexual love; she must, therefore, be clothed with the retiring beauty and the gracious charms that fascinate us in beloved objects. These characteristics belong to the abstract conception ; and the least deviation from this ideal would dissolve the representative image. Suppose, for instance, that her beauty were figured, not coy and retreating, but majestic, here we should have at once a Juno, no matter what were the artist's design. Give to the charms a less gracious and more commanding air, and *ipso facto* we shall have a Minerva. A wrathful Venus, therefore, to the sculptor, is a nugatory conception ; for love, *as* love, can neither be wrathful nor vindictive. With the poet the case is otherwise : to him, also, Venus is the impersonated principle of love, but then something beside: she is not merely the impersonated principle, but also the incarnate principle, for she is the *goddess* of love,—that is, a living creature, with her own separate individuality superadded to her abstract character, and consequently no less capable of abhorrence than of desire.

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[1] "*Treated by the poet, on the contrary, they are concrete persons,*" &c.—The subject of allegory, and its proper treatment in the arts, is too extensive and too profound to be touched upon in a note. Yet one difficulty, which perplexes many readers (and in proportion as they are thoughtful readers) of allegoric fables, &c., may here be noticed, because it is met by this distinction of Lessing. In such fables the course of the action carries the different persons into the necessity of doing and suffering many things extra-essential to their allegorical character. Thus, for example, Charity is brought by the conduct of the story into the various accidents and situations of a traveller; Hope is represented as the object of sexual love, &c. And, in all such cases, the allegoric character is for the moment suspended in obedience to the necessities of the story. But in this there is no error. For allegoric characters, treated according to the rigour of

True it is that in complex groups the artist enjoys the same privilege with the poet of introducing Venus or any other divinity as a real existence, and clothed with functions extra-essential to the idea which she represents. But, if extra-essential, they must at least never be contradictory to that idea,—not to tie them down to the severe rule, which some would impose, of deviating from the strictly essential attributes no farther than to their immediate consequences. Let us take the case of Venus delivering the Vulcanian armour to her son Æneas. Here the act is of that kind which, though extra-essential to the abstract character of a

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this objection, would be volatilised into mere impersonated abstractions,—which is not designed. They are meant to occupy a midway station between the absolute realities of human life and the pure abstractions of the logical understanding. Accordingly they are represented not as mere impersonated principles, but as incarnate principles. The office and acts of a concrete being are therefore rightly attributed to them, with this restriction, however,—that no function of the concrete nature must ever be allowed to obscure or to contradict the abstraction impersonated, but simply to help forward the action by which that abstraction is to reveal itself. There is no farther departure, therefore, in this mode of treating allegory from the naked form of mere fleshless personification than is essential to its poetic effect.—*Tr.*

Venus, may yet bend to the sculptor's purposes ; for there is nothing here to prevent him from giving to his Venus all the grace and beauty which belong to her as the Goddess of Love. But take the case of the same Venus avenging her insulted authority upon the men of Lemnos, where she is exhibited descending upon a gloomy cloud in dilated proportions, with cheeks inflamed, hair dishevelled, a black robe thrown loosely about her, and a torch grasped in her hand : this clearly is no phasis under which she could be contemplated by the artist, there being no room here for any traits by which he could suggest her universal character. But to the poet such an attitude and action are not ill adapted : since he has it in his power to place in direct juxtaposition to this attitude of fury another more appropriate to the goddess, and carrying into the very heart of the transitory passion a sense of the calm and immortal beauty which it has for a moment been permitted to disturb.

In short, the poet has an exclusive privilege of painting by negative traits, and of so blending these with the positive as to melt two opposite forms of revelation into unity. On this side stands a Venus, in the radiance and glory of her charms, her tresses confined by golden clasps, and her azure robe floating around her ; on that stands a goddess,—another, and yet the same : stripped of her cestus ; armed—but with far other flames, and with more terrific shafts, and accompanied by kindred furies. These are two opposite exhibitions of one and the same power : the artist can exhibit but one of these ; the poet can exhibit both in direct succession. Shall the weakness of the one become a law for the strength of the other ? If Painting be the sister of Poetry, let her not be an envious sister ; nor let the younger deny to the elder any ornaments whatsoever simply because they are unsuitable to herself.

SECTION VIII

In these comparisons of the artist and the poet a principal regard must be directed to this question—Whether each were in equal circumstances of liberty, so as to be able to aim at the highest effects in his art, without external constraint.

Such a constraint existed to the artist, not unfrequently, in the national religion. A work destined to religious uses in the public worship could not always aim at that pure form of excellence which might have been realised under a single and undivided attention to the pleasure of the spectator. Superstition had loaded the gods with images addressed to the sense; and thus it happened that the most beautiful amongst the gods were not always worshipped under their most beautiful forms.

Another mode of constraint existed in the internal difficulties and limitations of art. The personified abstractions of the poet were sufficiently characterised by the names and the sort of actions attributed to them. But to the artist these means of explaining himself were denied. By way of interpretation to *his* personifications, he was reduced to the necessity of connecting with them certain sensuous images or emblems. These images, being understood in a sense different from their direct literal import, gave to the personifications which they accompanied the rank and title of *Allegoric* figures. A woman, for instance, with a bridle in her hand, or a woman leaning against a pillar, are in the arts allegoric personages,—that is, impersonated abstractions expounded by emblems. But the corresponding creations of Poetry, viz. Temperance and Constancy, are simply impersonated abstractions and not allegorisations. This mode of expressing moral functions by sensuous images was a product of the necessity which beset the artist. But why should the poet, who knows nothing of this necessity, adopt the artist's expedient for meeting it? The resources of Art, however meritorious for following the steps of Poetry, are in themselves no absolute perfections. When the artist symbolises a figure by some sensuous image, he exalts this figure to the rank of a living being; but the poet, by adopting such auxiliary exponents, degrades what was already a living being to the rank of a puppet.

There is, however, amongst the attributes by which the artist characterises his abstractions, one class which is both more capable and more deserving of being transferred to a poetic use: I mean those exponents which, strictly considered, are not allegoric, but simply express the instruments appropriate to the functions of the impersonated ideas considered as living agents. The bridle in the hand of Temperance, or the pillar against which Constancy is leaning, are purely allegoric, and therefore of no poetic application. On the other hand, the balance which is carried by Justice is but imperfectly allegoric, because the right use of the balance is *literally* one function of Justice. And the lyre or flute in the hand of a Muse, the spear in the hand of Mars, or the hammer and tongs in the hand of Vulcan, are not allegoric at all, but mere instruments for producing the effects which we ascribe to those beings. Of this last class are those attributes which the ancient poets sometimes interweave with their descriptions, and which, by way of distinguishing them from such as are properly allegoric, I would propose to call the poetic attributes. The poetic attributes are to be interpreted literally; but the allegoric on principles of analogy.

Section IX

What strikes us in the artist, as the distinguishing point of excellence, is the execution,—the invention, in *his* case, holding but the second place in our regard. But in the poet this is reversed; and we make light of his faculty for executing, compared with his power of original conception. Take the Laocoon, for instance: here the tortuous involution of the father and his sons into one group is an original thought; and, had Virgil derived this from the sculptor, the weightier part of his merit would have vanished. On the other hand, suppose the artist to have been indebted in this point to the poet, and, therefore, confessedly to have forgone all claim to invention, he would still have had room enough for the display of merit the most splendid, and of a kind the most appropriate to his art,—to express a passion in marble being far more difficult than by the instrument of words.

With this readiness, however, to dispense with the faculty of invention in the artist, it is natural that there should have arisen on his part a corresponding indifference to that sort of pretension. Sensible that it was hopeless for him to found any part of his distinction upon originality in the conception, he was willing to adopt ideas from any quarter, no matter whether old or new, and to throw the stress of his efforts upon the execution. Accordingly, he confined himself within the compass of a few popular subjects, and applied whatever inventive power he had to the modification of the familiar, and the recombination of old materials. And this in fact is the meaning of the word *invention* when attributed to painting in the professed treatises on that art: invention applied not to the entire subject, but to the individual parts, or to their connexion with each other: that sort of invention, in short, which Horace recommended to the tragic poet. Certainly the poet has a great advantage who treats a known story. Thousands of petty details, which would else be requisite to put the reader in possession of the incidents and characters, are thus dispensed with; and, the more rapidly his audience are made to comprehend the situation, the more readily will the appropriate interest arise. Now, if this be advantageous to the poet, *a fortiori* it will be so to the painter. A subject comprehensible at a glance in the purpose and meaning of its whole composition is indispensable to the full effects of his art. For the final result depends much upon the first impression; and, if *that* be broken and retarded by a tedious process of question and investigation, the whole strength and liveliness of our emotions is intercepted and frost-bound.

Now, laying together both considerations — first, that novelty of subject is the very last merit which we look for in a painting, and, secondly, that the very absence of this quality facilitates the impression which it aims at—I think that we are under no necessity of ascribing the deficiency of invention in this art to a motive of indolent self-accommodation in the painter, to his ignorance, or to the mechanical difficulties of his art, as absorbing his whole zeal and attention; but, on the contrary, that it will appear to have a deep foundation in the principles of the art; and that what at first sight might have been thought to limit the compass and energy of its effects is in fact to be applauded as a wise abstinence on the part of the artist. Undoubtedly in one respect he might have found a better field for his art than has in fact been chosen since the time of Raphael; for Homer, and not Ovid, should have been the painter's manual. But this I say on a consideration of the superior grandeur which belongs to the Homeric subjects, and with no prejudice to the principle here maintained,—that absolute novelty of story and situation is so far a defect in painting, and hostile to its highest purpose.

This principle is one which did not escape Aristotle. It is recorded that he advised Protogenes to paint subjects from the life of Alexander,—an advice which, unfortunately for himself, that painter did not adopt. However, the rationale of it is evident: the acts of Alexander were at that time the subject of general conversation; and it did not require the sagacity of an Aristotle to foresee that they could never become obscure, or lose their interest and meaning with posterity.

SECTION X

In poetry (for example, in the Homeric poetry) we find exhibited two classes of acts and agents: the visible and the invisible. This is a distinction which painting is incapable of expressing. Everything expressible in this art must be essentially within the field of the visible. Let me take an instance:—The gods are divided against each other upon the fate of Troy; and this division of interest at length comes to issue in personal combat. Now, this combat, in the poet's representation of it, goes on out of sight; which circumstance of invisibility allows free latitude to the imagination for figuring the acts and persons of the gods upon any possible scale of superhuman proportions. But painting is tied to the conditions of a visible scene, in which there will always be some parts so necessarily determined by the fixed standards of nature as to furnish a scale for measuring the supernatural agents. This scale, when brought into immediate juxtaposition with an order of proportions adjusted to so very different a standard, translates what was grand and idealised in the indefinite exhibition of poetry into the monstrous and extravagant under the material delineations of art.

Minerva, for instance, being assaulted by Mars, steps back, and snatches up a huge stone from the ground. Now, I ask what ought to be the stature of a goddess who raises and hurls with ease a stone simply to roll which into the station it occupies had required the force not of one man, but of several men united in some primæval age,—considering also that these early patriarchs are described by Nestor as far superior in power to the heroes of the Iliad, and those again described by Homer as having double the strength of his own generation? For the painter there arises here this manifest dilemma: either the stature of the goddess must, or it must not, be proportioned to the size of the stone. Suppose the first case, and the whole marvellous of the act vanishes. A man three times greater than myself must naturally be able to throw a stone three times heavier. Suppose the other case, and we revolt from the manifest incongruity between the weight and the power, which, being made palpable to the sense in a picture, cannot be surmounted by a cold act of reflection upon the superhuman nature of the agent, as involving superhuman strength. Whenever we see effects of unusual magnitude, on principles of proportion we look for adequate organs in the agent. Mars, again, when prostrated by this enormous stone, covers seven acres of ground. Now, it is impossible that the painter should represent him under these prodigious dimensions. But, if not, he ceases to be the Homeric Mars, and is, in fact, noways distinguished from any ordinary warrior.

It was the opinion of Longinus that, if the Homeric men are idealised into gods, the gods, on the other hand, are sometimes degraded into men. This tendency to degradation in the poet, which in him is no more than a tendency, painting carries into perfect development. Size, strength, speed, which Homer always attributes in higher measure to his gods than to the most eminent of his heroes, painting must of necessity lower to the common standard of human nature: Jupiter and Agamemnon, Apollo and Achilles, Ajax and Mars, are to the painter beings of one and the same order, whom he has no means of distinguishing except by mere conventional characteristics. However, though irrepresentable by painting, these superhuman dimensions lie within the field of sculpture; and I am satisfied that the general mode of delineating the gods which prevails in the ancient statues, no less than the colossal scale of their proportions, was originally derived from Homer.

SECTION XI

Agreeably to this view of the case, if it is very possible that a poem should be rich in materials for the painter, and yet not in itself picturesque, as, on the other hand, highly picturesque, and yet unproductive for the painter, there is an end at once to the conceit which would measure the merits of the poet by the degree in which he adapts himself to the purposes of the artist.[1] The source of this error lies in a verbal ambiguity. A picture in the poet's sense is not necessarily that which can be translated into the material picture of the artist. Every trait, no matter whether visual or not, by which the poet makes his object sensuously apprehensible, and so brightens it to the consciousness that we have a livelier sense of that object than of the poet's words, may be denominated a picture, inasmuch as it carries us nearer to that degree of illusion which it is the obvious and characteristic end of painting to effect. Pictures in this poetic sense, as here explained, the ancients called Φαντασιαι; and it were to be wished that this name had been adopted in modern criticism. So denominated, they would not readily have bent to the restraints of material painting: whereas with the name of *pictures* there was at once connected an ambiguity which became a ready source of misapprehension.

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[1] A slight attention to this and other passages of Lessing would have exposed the hollowness of a notion brought forward by Dr. Darwin with respect to the essential idea of poetry. He first directly insisted on a fancy (*theory* one cannot call it) that nothing was strictly poetic, or however not poetic *κατ᾽ ἐξοχην*, except what presented a visual image. One of his own illustrations was Pope's line,

"Or Kennet swift, for silver eels renown'd";

which, according to the Doctor, was translated into poetry by reading

"Or Kennet swift, where silver graylings play."

This notion has, in fact, in every age, been acted upon more or less consciously by writers in verse, and still governs much of the criticism which is delivered on poetry: though it was first formally propounded by Dr. Darwin. Possibly even the Doctor himself would have been disabused of his conceit, if he had been recalled by this and other passages in Lessing to the fact that so far from being eminently, or (as he would have it) exclusively, the matter of poetry, the picturesque is in many instances incapable of a poetic treatment. Even Lessing is too palpably infected by the error which he combats,—the poetic being too frequently in his meaning nothing more than that which is clothed in a form of sensuous apprehensibility. The fact is that no mere description, however visual and picturesque, is in any instance poetic *per se*, or except in and through the passion which presides. Among our own writers of eminent genius who have too often submitted, if not sacrificed, the passion to picturesque beauty, one of the principal is Mr. Landor, especially in his *Gebir*. But this subject will be farther illustrated elsewhere.—*Tr.*

Now, first of all, it is evident that the poet can carry to the necessary degree of illusion the representation of other objects than of visual ones. And here arises a distinction which at once cuts off from the painter's use a whole world of descriptive imagery which is open to the poet. However, I will confine myself to visual imagery, which is common to them both. Whence is it then, I ask, that even within this field there is not a little which the painter must forgo as unfitted for his purposes? The reason is this:—The very signs or language by which painting accomplishes its imitations can be connected only in space. Hence it arises that this art is obliged to abstain from all images of which the different parts are in the successional connexion of time: on which account progressive actions, *as* such, are irrepresentable by painting: and it is thus restricted in its imitations either to co-existing actions, of which the parts are collateral to each other, or to material objects which can be so treated by means of attitude and position as to suggest an action which they cannot directly express. But I will endeavour to unfold all this in connexion with its ultimate grounds.

The language of painting consists in lines and colours, which exist in space; the language of poetry in articulate sounds, which exist in time. Now, if it is undeniable that between the sign and the thing signified there must be reciprocal relations and a subjection to a common law, it follows that co-existing signs can express none but co-existing objects, or those of which the parts are in co-existence; and that successional signs can express none but successional objects, or those of which the parts are in succession. Co-existing objects are called bodies: consequently bodies, with their visible properties, compose the proper objects of painting. Successional objects, or of which the parts are in succession, we call actions: consequently actions compose the proper object of poetry.

But all bodies exist in time as well as in space. They endure; and in every moment of this successional existence they may present different phenomena, and stand variously related to the surrounding objects. Each of these shifting phases and momentary states of relation is derived from that which preceded, and furnishes the ground for another which succeeds; on which account even that single aspect of an object to which painting is restricted may be regarded as the centre of this successive series: and thus far it is in the power even of painting to express actions, but only indirectly through the phenomenal state of bodies, and by way of suggestion from the known succession of those states. Actions, on the other hand, have no separable or independent existence, but are the adjuncts of living beings; and, in so far as these beings are material beings, poetry may be said also to describe bodily forms,—not directly, however, but only by way of suggestion whilst describing the motions or successive changes and actions which imply them.

Painting, being in all its combinations subject to the law of co-existence, can apply to its use only one single instant of the action; on which account it is bound to select that one from the whole succession which is the most pregnant, and which points least ambiguously to what precedes and follows.

Poetry, again, tied to the law of succession, can avail itself of but one property in any material object, and must therefore select *that* one which presents the most sensuous impression of the object, regard being had to the particular relation under which the poet's purpose requires that it should be contemplated. From this principle is derived the critical injunction of simplicity in the choice of picturesque epithets, and of abstinence in the delineation of material objects.

SECTION XII

In all this dry deduction of my principles I should place but little confidence if I had not found them confirmed by the practice of Homer; or rather I should say, if it were not from this very practice of Homer that I had originally derived them. It is upon these principles only that the grand style of Grecian poetry, in its severest models, can be determinately explained; and upon these principles only that it would be possible to place in its right light the very opposite style of many modern poets, who maintain a foolish contest with the painter in a point where all competition with him, by the very nature of the case, is hopeless.

I observe that Homer paints nothing but progressive actions,—that is to say, actions in their motions and succession of stages: fixed bodies, therefore, or individual things he paints only phenomenally, or through their participation in these fluent actions expressed in corresponding changes. What wonder then that the painter finds little or no materials for his own art in the direct descriptions of Homer, these being always tied to the successions of time, and that, on the other hand, he finds his chief harvest not there where the poet has expressly designed a description, but where the mere course of the narration has conveyed into one group a number of beautiful figures, in fine attitudes and in an interesting situation, although, agreeably to my principles, they are the precise cases on which the poet will have put forth the least descriptive power, as being a composition of fixed forms brought together under the law of co-existence in space.

If in any case Homer so far deviates from his general practice as to describe a stationary individual form, he despatches it with a single trait. A ship he will describe sometimes as the black ship, sometimes as the hollow ship, sometimes as the swift ship, or at the most as the well-rowed black ship. Further than this he will not descend into the detail of description. But, on the other hand, the ship, as a thing participating in action, under the accidents of leaving harbour, pursuing its voyage, making the land, he pursues into a circumstantiality of description which the painter could not transfer to his canvas in less than five or six separate pictures.

Even where circumstances compel Homer to detain the eye longer upon some individual form, still, however, he produces no picture which the painter could follow with his pencil: by various artifices he contrives to lead the object through a succession of stages in every one of which it puts on a different aspect; whilst the painter must wait for its final stage, in order there to exhibit, as finished and mature, what, under the hands of the poet, we saw running through its various stages of birth and growth. For instance, if Homer wishes to exhibit the car of Juno, the whole is placed before us in its parts,—the wheels, the axletree, the seat, the pole, the reins, and traces, not so much formed and previously co-existing, as growing up in succession under the hands of Hebe. Upon the wheels only the poet has detained us beyond his custom, to exhibit the eight iron spokes, the golden fellies, the studs of iron, and the silver nave: on all the rest he has bestowed but a single trait.

Again, when the dress of Agamemnon is to be described, the whole is brought before us article by article; but how? Another poet, with the same purpose before him, would have described each part separately, down to the minutest fringe; but Homer introduces us to the King in the act of dressing himself; and thus, without making the narrative pause for the description, in the very growth and succession of this action (the action of dressing), we see displayed before us the dress itself in all its parts,—the soft tunic or shirt, the ample robe, the beautiful buskins, the sword, and finally the regal sceptre.

This very sceptre also, which is characterised simply by the epithets of paternal and imperishable, in what way does Homer convey to us an impression of its ideal grandeur? Instead of a formal description, he gives us its history: first as in the act of growing up under the divine workmanship of Vulcan; next, as it glittered in the hands of Jupiter; then as the credential distinction of Mercury, as the truncheon of the martial Pelops, and as the pastoral staff of the pacific Atreus. Such is the artifice by which Homer contrives to keep an individual object before the eye when his purpose requires it; and in this way, without descending to a frigid description of its several parts, he succeeds in connecting a deeper impression with it than a painter could have done by the most elaborate picture. The same skill is exhibited with regard to the sceptre of Achilles and the bow of Pandarus;

in both of which cases the description moves through the stages of a narrative, and the material images, under the inanimate law of co-existence, are thrown into the shifting circumstances of a succession which advances concurrently with the advancing verses of the poet.

SECTION XIII

It will be objected, however, to the doctrine of the last Section, that the signs which poetry employs (that is, words) are not merely a successional, but also a conventional or arbitrary, order of signs, and, in this latter character at least, well fitted to express the order of co-existences in space no less than the order of successions in time; and, as a most illustrious and decisive example of this from Homer himself, the shield of Achilles will be alleged,—that famous shield which Homer has described with so much punctual circumstantiality, in reference to its substance, form, and embellishments, through upwards of a hundred magnificent verses, that a modern artist would find no difficulty in reproducing it as a faithful and accurate drawing.[1]

To this objection my answer is that I have already answered it. Homer describes the shield not as a thing finished and complete, but in the stages of its growth. Here again he has adopted the artifice of throwing an order of coexistence into an order of succession, and thus converted the inert description of a fixed material object into the living picture of an action. It is not the shield that we see, but the divine artist in the act and process of making it. He advances with hammer and tongs to the anvil; forges the plates out of the rude unwrought metal; and immediately the figures, which are to decorate it, start forward in relief, each after each under the touches of his creative hand. At last the work is finished, and we survey it with astonishment, but with the enlightened and acquiescing astonishment of an eye-witness to its formation.

Far different is the case with Virgil's shield.[2] Either the

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[1] In the Iliad, Book XVIII, lines 478-607.—M.

[2] The shield given to Æneas by Venus, as described in the Æneid, Book VIII, lines 626-728.—M.

Roman poet was in this instance insensible to the refined art of his model; or else the peculiar nature of his own embellishments might strike him as incompatible with the same evolution through the actual process of construction. The emblazonments of *his* shield are prophetic: now prophecy, *as* prophecy,[1] and in the very act of delivery, demands an obscurity of language with which the definite names of persons would not harmonise. Yet, on these very names it was that to Virgil, a courtier and a patriot, the main merit of the purpose rested; and thus it became necessary that this course of sculptural prophecy should be exhibited, not as growing up beneath the hands of Vulcan, but as interpreted and looked back upon by the poet, and therefore as a work already existing and complete. Such is our excuse for Virgil's management,—which, however, does not remedy its bad effect. The preparations are the same in both poets for the labours of Vulcan. But in Virgil, no sooner are we introduced to the god and his Cyclopean agents than the curtain is dropped, and we are transported to quite another scene, in which Venus appears with the armour already complete. She rests it against an oak; and, after the hero has sufficiently admired, handled, and tried it, the description commences in due form; yet, as it is not Æneas who delivers this description (for he is unacquainted with the interpretation of the shield), nor Venus, but the poet speaking in his own person, it follows that the action of the poem is here obliged to stand still. In short, as no one person of the poem takes any part in this description, and as it is a matter of indifference with regard to anything which follows whether the ornaments of the shield had been the actual ones or any other, the shield of Æneas must be pronounced to be a pure mechanic interpolation, contrived with no other view than that of flattering the Roman pride. The shield of Achilles, on the contrary, is a spontaneous growth of the poem. A shield was at any rate to be made; and from the hands of a god even implements of use should not be turned off destitute of beauty. The shield, therefore, must have ornaments. But the point of difficulty was to exhibit these ornaments indirectly, and as if incidentally to the main purpose; and this could only be effected by the very course which Homer has adopted, of making them arise as parts of the very substance of the shield in the act of its construction. Virgil, on the contrary, must be supposed to have created the shield for the sake of its ornaments, since he thinks proper to bestow an express description upon these ornaments, not as accessary parts necessarily involved in the forging of the shield itself, but separately and on their own account.

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[1] By "prophecy *as* prophecy" Lessing means prophecy in the meaning and from the station of the prophet, not as retrospectively contemplated by the interpreter.—*Tr.*

So much for the illustration of the argument. As to the argument itself, that the signs employed by poetry, being conventional, are as well fitted to express the order of co-existence as that of succession, undoubtedly this is true, but it is a property which belongs to language generally, and not as it is especially restricted to the purposes of poetry. The prosaist is satisfied if he impresses clear and distinct ideas; but the poet is required to impress them with the strength and vivacity of realities. He must describe with the force of painting; and now let us see how far the co-existing parts of material objects are adapted to that sort of description.

How is it that we attain to a clear representation of an object in space? First of all, we regard the separate parts of it individually; next, the connexion of these parts; and, finally, the whole. These three operations our senses execute with such wonderful rapidity that they melt into an apparent unity. Now, this unity it is not within the power of a poet to attain; the mind is so much retarded by the separate parts of a consecutive description that it cannot reproduce them with speed enough to connect them into a single representative impression of the whole. Hence the poetical illusion vanishes. Where the purpose does not demand this illusion, as in the case of a prose writer, who is describing merely to the understanding, pictures of objects under a law of co-existence are perfectly admissible. The didactic poet, even *as* such, is not excluded from this use; for, wherever he is strictly didactic, he is in fact no poet. Thus, for example, Virgil, in his Georgics, describes a cow fitted for the purpose of breeding. In doing this, he runs through the series of characteristics which distinguish such a cow, manifestly with the plain prosaic purpose of rectifying our practical judgments in this matter ; as to the power of the mind to combine this series of separate notices into the unity of picture, *that* was a question which, with *his* purpose, he was perfectly justified in neglecting.

POSTSCRIPT ON DIDACTIC POETRY[1]

In the three last sentences there is a false thought, unworthy of Lessing's acuteness. The vulgar conception of didactic poetry is that the adjunct *didactic* expresses the primary function (or, in logical phrase, the *difference*) of that class of poetry; as though the business were, first of all, to teach something, and, secondly, to convert this into poetry by some process of embellishment. But such a conception contains a *contradictio in adjecto*, and is in effect equivalent to demanding of a species that it shall forgo, or falsify, the distinctions which belong to it in virtue of its genus. As a term of convenience, *didactic* may serve to discriminate one class of poetry; but didactic it cannot be in philosophic rigour without ceasing to be poetry. Indirectly it is true that a poet in the highest departments of his art may, and often does, communicate mere knowledge, but never as a direct purpose, unless by forgetting his proper duty. Even as an epic poet, for instance, Virgil may convey a sketch of the Mediterranean Chorography, and Milton of the Syrian Pantheism; but every reader perceives that the first arises purely in obedience to the necessities of the narrative, and that the other is introduced as an occasion of magnificent display, and no more addressed to a didactic purpose than the Homeric Catalogue of Ships, which gave the meagre hint for it, was designed as a statistical document, or than the ceremonial pomps and emblazonments of a coronation, &c., are designed to teach the knowledge of heraldry. This is self-evident; but the case is exactly the same in didactic poetry, with this single difference,—that the occasions for poetic display are there derived, uniformly and upon principle, from cases admitting of a didactic treatment, which, in the two instances just noticed, furnished the occasion only by accident. The object is to wrestle with the difficulties of the case by treating a subject naturally didactic in a manner and for a purpose *not* didactic; this is accomplished by such a selection from circumstances otherwise merely technical, and addressed to the unexcited understanding, as may bend to the purposes of a Fine Art: a branch of knowledge is thrown through that particular evolution which serves to draw forth the circumstances of beautiful form, feeling, incident, or any other interest, which in some shape, and in some degree, attach themselves to the dullest exercises of mere lucrative industry. In the course of this evolution it is true that some of the knowledge proper to the subject is also communicated; but this is collateral to the main purpose, which is to win the beauty of art from a subject in itself unpromising or repulsive; and, therefore, the final object of a didactic poet is accomplished not *by* the didactic aspects of his poem, but directly *in spite of* them; the knowledge which emerges in such a poem exists not for itself, but as an indirect occasion for the beauty, and also as a foil or a counter-agent for strengthening its expression,—as a shadow by which the lights are brightened and realised.

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[1] This "Postscript" was annexed to the original paper as it appeared in *Blackwood's Magazine*.—M.

Suppose a game at cards—whist, l'hombre, or quadrille—to be carried through its principal circumstances and stages, as in the Rape of the Lock and elsewhere: nobody is so absurd as to imagine that in this case the poet had designed to teach the game; on the contrary, he has manifestly presupposed that knowledge in his reader as essential to the judicious apprehension of his description. With what purpose, then, has he introduced this incident, where no necessity obliged him, and for what is it that we admire its execution? Purely as a trial of skill in playing the game with grace and beauty. A game at cards is a mimicry of a battle, with the same interests, in a lower key. The peculiar beauty, therefore, of such a description lies in the judicious selection of the principal crises and situations incident to the particular game in its most general movement. To be played with skill and grace, it must evolve itself through the great circumstances of danger, suspense, and sudden surprise, of fortune shifting to this side and that, and finally of irrevocable *peripeteia*, which contain the philosophic abstract of such scenes as to the interest which they excite. Meantime the mere instruments by which the contest is conducted, the cards themselves, by their gay colouring, and the antique *prescriptiveness* of the figures (which in the midst of real arbitrariness has created an artificial semblance of law and necessity, such as reconciles us to the drawing upon China cups, Egyptian and Etruscan ornaments, &c.), throw an air of brilliancy upon the game which assists the final impression.

Now, here in miniature we have the law and *exemplar* of didactic poetry. And in any case where the poet has understood his art it is in this spirit that he has proceeded. Suppose, for instance, that he selects as the basis of this interest the life, duties, and occupations of a shepherd, and that, instead of merely and professedly describing them, he chooses to exhibit them under the fiction of teaching them. Here, undoubtedly, he has a little changed the form of his poem; but that he has made no change in the substance of his duties, nor has at all assumed the real functions of a teacher, is evident from this:—Pastoral life varies greatly in its aspect, according to the climate in which it is pursued; but, whether in its Sicilian mode, which tends to the beautiful, or in our sterner northern mode, which tends to the sublime, it is, like all other varieties of human employment, of a mixed texture, and disfigured by many degrading circumstances. These it is the business of the poet to clear away, or to purify at least, by not pressing the attention on their details. But, if his purpose and his duties had been really didactic, all reserve or artist-like management of this kind would have been a great defect, by mutilating the full communication of the knowledge sought. The spirit in which he proceeds is that of selection and abstraction: he has taken his subject as a means of suggesting, of justifying, and of binding into unity, by their reference to a common ground, a great variety of interesting scenes, situations, incidents, or emotions. Wheresoever the circumstances of the reality lead naturally into exhibitions on which it is pleasant to be detained, he pursues them. But, where the facts and details are of such a nature as to put forth no manifestations of beauty or of power, and, consequently, are adapted to no mode of pleasurable sympathy, it is his duty to evade by some delicate address, or resolutely to suppress them; which it would not be if the presiding purpose were a didactic one.

What may have misled Lessing on this point is the fact that subjects are sometimes chosen, and lawfully chosen, for didactic poems, which are not adapted to pleasurable sympathies in any mode, but in a great outline to a sympathy[1] of disgust. Beauty, however, exists everywhere to the eye which is capable of detecting it; and it is our right, and duty indeed, to adapt ourselves to this ordinance of nature, by pursuing and unveiling it even under a cloud of deformity. The *Syphilis* of Fracastorius, or Armstrong's *Art of Health*,[2] I do not particularly allude to; because in neither case is the subject treated with sufficient grace or sufficient mastery over its difficulties. But suppose the case of some common household occupation, as the washing of clothes, for example. No class of human labours is at a lower point of degradation, or surveyed with more disdain by the aspiring dignity of the human mind, than these domestic ones, and for two reasons: first, because they exercise none but the meanest powers; and, secondly, from their origin and purpose, as ministering to our basest necessities. Yet I am persuaded that the external aspect of this employment, with no more variety than it presents in the different parts of this island, might be so treated as to unfold a series of very interesting scenes, without digressing at all from the direct circumstances of the art (if art it can be called), whilst the comic interest, which would invest the whole as proceeding from a poet, would at once disarm the inherent meanness in the subject of all power to affect us unpleasurably.[1]

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[1] The word *sympathy* has been so much contracted in its meaning by a conversational use that it becomes necessary to remind the reader that this is *not* a false application of it.

[2] Hieronymus Fracastorius of Verona, physician and poet, 1483-1553; Dr. John Armstrong, 1709-1779.—M.

Now, Virgil, in his ideal of a cow, and the description of her meritorious points, is nearly upon as low ground as any that is here suggested. And this it is which has misled Lessing. Treating a mean subject, Virgil must (he concludes) have adapted his description to some purpose of utility; for, if his purpose had been beauty, why lavish his power upon so poor an occasion, since the course of his subject did not in this instance oblige him to any detail? But, if this construction of the case were a just one, and that Virgil really *had* framed his descriptions merely as a guide to the practical judgment, this passage would certainly deserve to be transferred from its present station in the Georgics to the Grazier's Pocket-book, as being (what Lessing in effect represents it to be) a plain *bona fide* account of a Smithfield prize cow. But, though the object here described is one which is seldom regarded in any other light than that of utility, and, on that account, is of necessity a mean one,[2] yet the question still remains, In what spirit, and for what purpose, Virgil has described this mean object? For meanness and deformity even, as was said before, have their modes of beauty. Now, there are four reasons which might justify Virgil in his description, and not one of them having any reference to the plain prosaic purpose which Lessing ascribes to him. He may have described the cow :—

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[1] Mrs. Barbauld, sixty years ago, gave us a very pleasing sketch on this subject in her "Washing-Day"; but she has narrowed the interest by selecting amongst the circumstances the picturesque ones, to the exclusion of all those which approach to the beautiful, and also by the character of the incidents, such as the cheerless reception of the visitor; for, as the truth of such an incident belongs only to the lower and less elegant modes of life, it is not fitted for a general sympathy.

[2] This, for two reasons: 1*st*, because whatever is useful, and merely useful, is essentially definite, being bounded and restricted by the end to which it is adapted; it cannot transcend that end, and therefore can never in the least degree partake of the illimitable; 2*d*, because it is always viewed in a relation of inferiority to something beyond itself. To be useful is to be ministerial to some end; now, the end does not exist for the sake of the means but the means for the sake of the end. Hence, therefore, one reason why a wild animal is so much more admired than the same animal domesticated. The wild animal is useless, or viewed as such; but, on that very account, he is an end to himself, whilst the tame one is merely an instrument or means for the ends of others. The wild turkey of America is a respectable bird, but the "tame villatic fowl" of the same species in England is an object of general contempt.

I. As a *difficult* and intractable subject, by way of a *bravura*, or passage of execution. To describe well is not easy ; and, in one class of didactic poems, of which there are several, both in Latin, English, and French,—viz. those which treat of the mechanic parts of the critical art,—the chief stress of the merit is thrown upon the skill with which thoughts not naturally susceptible of elegance, or even of a metrical expression, are modulated into the proper key for the style and ornaments of verse. This is not a very elevated form of the poetic art, and too much like rope-dancing. But to aim humbly is better than to aim awry, as Virgil would have done if interpreted under Lessing's idea of didactic poetry.

II. As a *familiar* subject. Such subjects, even though positively disgusting, have a fascinating interest when reproduced by the painter or the poet,—upon what principle has possibly not been sufficiently explained. Even transient notices of objects and actions which are too indifferent to the mind to be more than half consciously perceived become highly interesting when detained and reanimated, and the full light of the consciousness thrown powerfully upon them, by a picturesque description. A street in London, with its usual furniture of causeway, gutter, lamp-posts, &c., is viewed with little interest, but, exhibited in a scene at Drury Lane, according to the style of its execution, becomes very impressive. As to Lessing's objection about the difficulty of collecting the successive parts of a description into the unity of a co-existence, that difficulty does not exist to those who are familiar with the subject of the description, and at any rate is not peculiar to this case.

III. As an *ideal.* Virgil's cow is an ideal in her class. Now, every ideal, or *maximum perfectionis* (as the old metaphysicians called it), in natural objects, necessarily expresses the dark power of nature which is at the root of all things under one of its infinite manifestations in the most impressive way ; that which elsewhere exists by parts and fractions dispersed amongst the species and in tendency here exists as a whole and in consummation. A Pandora, who should be furnished for all the functions of her nature in a luxury of perfection, even though it were possible that the ideal beauty should be disjoined from this ideal organisation, would be regarded with the deepest interest. Such a Pandora in *her* species, or an approximation to one, is the cow of Virgil; and he is warranted by this consideration in describing her without the meanness of a didactic purpose.

IV. As a *beautiful* object. In those objects which are referred wholly to a purpose of utility, as a kitchen garden for instance, utility becomes the law of their beauty. With regard to the cow in particular, which is referred to no variety of purposes, as the horse or the dog, the external structure will express more absolutely and unequivocally the degree in which the purposes of her species are accomplished; and her beauty will be a more determinate subject for the judgment than where the animal structure is referred to a multitude of separate ends incapable of co-existing. Describing in this view, however, it will be said that Virgil presupposes in his reader some knowledge of the subject; for the description will be a dead letter to him unless it awakens and brightens some previous notices of his own. I answer that, with regard to all the common and familiar appearances of nature, a poet is entitled to postulate some knowledge in his readers; and the fact is that he has not postulated so much as Shakspere in his fine description of the hounds of Theseus in the *Midsummer Night's Dream*, or of the horse of Arcite[1]; and Shakspere, it will not be pretended, had any didactic purpose in those passages.

This is my correction applied to the common idea of didactic poetry; and I have thought it right to connect it with the error of so distinguished a critic as Lessing. If he is right in his construction of Virgil's purpose, that would prove only that, in this instance, Virgil was wrong.

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[1] In the *Two Noble Kinsmen*. The first act has been often and justly attributed to Shakspere; but the last act is no less indisputably his, and in his very finest style.

GOETHE

AS REFLECTED IN HIS NOVEL OF WILHELM MEISTER [1]

To be an eidoloclast is not a pleasant office, because an invidious one. Whenever that can be effected, therefore, it is prudent to devolve the odium of such an office upon the idol himself. Let the object of the false worship always, if possible, be made his own eidoloclast. As respects *Wilhelm Meister*, this *is* possible: and so far, therefore, as Goethe's pretensions are founded on that novel, Goethe shall be his own eidoloclast. For our own parts, we shall do no more

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[1] In the *London Magazine* for August 1824,—which number of the magazine contained the last portion but one of Carlyle's *Life and Writings of Schiller* (broken up by him for anonymous piecemeal publication in that magazine with a view to its subsequent publication in book form),—there appeared the first part of a review by De Quincey of Carlyle's *Translation of Goethe's Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, then just published in three volumes, and also anonymously, by Messrs. Oliver and Boyd of Edinburgh. The review was continued in the September number of the magazine,—in which number Carlyle's Biography of Schiller was brought to a close. The review originally, therefore, consisted of two parts. In 1859, however, when De Quincey reprinted it in vol. xiii of the Collective Edition of his Writings (the last volume which he saw through the press completely himself), he suppressed the first part altogether, and reproduced the second part only, making some slight modifications in the text even of that part. The reason for this may have partly been that De Quincey,—having come to know a good deal more of Goethe generally than he did in 1824, and having indeed, in his Biography of Goethe contributed to the *Encyclopædia Britannica* (see *ante*, Vol. IV, pp. 395-421), put forth an estimate of Goethe which, though still much under the proper mark, was at all events far higher than that contained in his magazine paper on "Wilhelm Meister" in 1824,—felt in 1859 that the magazine paper of 1824 was out of date as a whole, and that at least the first part of it, where the depreciation of Goethe generally was most rampant, must be withdrawn. There was, however, another reason. The same first part had contained, in addition to its reckless depreciation of Goethe himself, an especially severe, and

indeed savage, criticism of the anonymous translator of Goethe's novel for the manner in which he had executed *his* task. Now, in the interim the anonymous translator had come to be known as Thomas Carlyle; and during the first years of Carlyle's married life, at Edinburgh from 1826 to 1828, and afterwards at Craigenputtock from 1828 to 1834, De Quincey and he had been in close and very friendly relations with each other, both personally and by correspondence (see *ante*, Vol. IV, pp. 6, 7, and see also Carlyle's *Reminiscences*, vol. ii, pp. 151-153 of Mr. Norton's edition); and, though these relations had become fainter, or had all but ceased, after Carlyle's removal to London in 1834, the Carlyle of 1859 was not a man against whom, for readers anywhere over the world, De Quincey could feel it either becoming or safe to resuscitate severities written in 1824. On both these grounds, therefore,—the change of his estimate of Goethe, and his changed relations to Carlyle,—he judged it best to suppress entirely in 1859 the first part of his paper of 1824, and to republish only the second part. In this second part, though there were some continued carpings at Carlyle's translation of the *Meister*, these might pass as but incidental, and, though there was quite enough also of reiterated depreciation of Goethe, it was of a kind less requiring to be retracted, inasmuch as it was directed mainly and specially against what De Quincey still regarded, and many others agreed with him in regarding, as the gross immoralities and other unpardonable faults of *one* of Goethe's productions.—De Quincey himself having deliberately suppressed the First Part of his Goethe paper of 1824, we have no right to reproduce it textually in this edition of De Quincey's Collected Writings; and the following brief abstract of it will suffice for the gratification of whatever amount of public interest may be still legitimately claimed for it as a fact in De Quincey's biography and an old literary curiosity:—
I. THE GENERAL DEPRECIATION OF GOETHE.—Here is a string of the sentences in which this is expressed most strongly:—"Not the base-"ness of Egyptian superstition, not Titania under enchantment, not "Caliban in drunkenness, ever shaped to themselves an idol more "weak or hollow than modern Germany has set up for its worship "in the person of Goethe. . . . The ultimate point we aim at is not "to quarrel with the particular book which has been the accidental "occasion of bringing Goethe before us: a bad book more or less is "of no great importance; our mark is Goethe himself; and not even "Goethe on his own account and separate from his coterie of "admirers, but Goethe proposed as a model, as a fit subject for "admiration, sympathy, and philosophic homage,—in the language "of the present translator, as 'the first of European minds,' 'the "richest, most gifted of living minds.' For the last seven years or "so a feeble but persevering effort has been made by *proneurs* of

than suggest a few principles of judgment, and recall the hasty reader to his own more honourable thoughts for the purpose of giving an occasional impulse and direction to his feelings on the passages we may happen to quote—which passages, the very passages of Goethe, will be their own sufficient review, and Mr. Goethe's best exposure. We need not waste time in deprecating unreasonable prepossessions; for,

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"Goethe in this country to raise what the newspapers call a 'sensation' in his behalf,—as yet, however, without effect. On the one hand, the reader was staggered by the enormity of the *muchtsprüche* (the despotic and almighty puffs, as we might in this case translate the word) which were brought over from Germany; and, though some might be disgusted, more perhaps were awed by these attempts to bully them into admiration. On the other hand, the mere dulness of the works which were translated and analysed as Goethe's triumphantly repelled the contagion before it could spread. . . . At this particular moment we think that the struggle between terror on the one hand (terror of being thought to want taste and sensibility) and the acute sense of the ludicrous on the other will receive an impulse in the latter direction from the appearance in English of *Wilhelm Meister*. . . . No other of Goethe's works is likely to be more revolting to English good sense: the whole *prestige* of his name must now totter. A blow or two from a few vigorous understandings, well planted and adequately published to the world, combined with the overpowering abominations of the work itself, will set in movement this yet torpid body of feeling, determine the current of popular opinion (so far as any *popular* opinion can be possible) on the question of Mr. Goethe, and for ever dissolve the puny fabric of baby-houses which we are now audaciously summoned to plant 'fast by the oracles of God' as fit neighbours to the divine temples of Milton and of Shakspere." — II. CRITICISM OF THE ANONYMOUS TRANSLATOR.—One or two mistranslations from the German are pointed out; but the main charge is that the English diction of the translation is not good or classical English, but is "overrun" with *provincialisms*, *vulgarisms*, and *barbarisms*. The charge is insisted on at some length, and is sustained by the production of examples. In illustration of the *provincialisms* (detected at once as in this case *Scotticisms*) the instances produced are these:—"Open up" for "open"; "in place of" for "instead of"; "inquire at a man" for "inquire of"; "backing a letter" for "addressing a letter"; "break up a letter" for "open a letter." These are all; nor are the cited *vulgarisms*, as distinguished from the *Scotticisms*, more numerous. They are these:—"Wage" for "wages"; "licking his lips"; "discussing oysters"; "doxies" for "girls"; "thrash" for "beat." Of *barbarisms* (by which seem to be meant archaisms or general violences of idiom) the examples cited are these:—"Philina tripped *signing* downstairs," where except amongst his clannish coterie of partisans in London (collectively not enough to fill the boudoir of a blue-stocking), there *are* no such prepossessions. Some, indeed, of that coterie have on occasion of our former article pushed their partisanship to the extent of forgetting the language of gentlemen. This at least has been reported to us.[1] We are sorry for *them*; not angry on our own account, nor much

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"signing" is used for "beckoning" or "making signs"; "His Excellence" for "His Excellency"; "the child laid *the* right hand on her breast, *the* left on her brow," where "the" should be "her"; "'What fellow is that in the corner,' said the Count, looking at a *subject* who had not yet been presented to him"; "youthhood"; "giving a man leave" for "dismissing" him; "to be at one with me" for "to be reconciled with me"; and "want" used wrongly in its old sense of "to be without,"—as in the Scotticism "I cannot want it" for "I cannot do without it." Hardly on such a small array of detected slips as this could De Quincey, but for his prepossession then against Goethe and all that connected itself with Goethe, have founded so sweeping an assertion as that "these instances are sufficient to illustrate the coarseness of diction which disfigure the English translation, and which must have arisen from want of sufficient intercourse with society." That is his summing-up, however—modified only by these words of redeeming praise at the close:—"Strange as it may appear, the verses which are scattered through the volumes, and which should naturally be the most difficult part of the task, have all the ease of original compositions, and appear to us executed with very considerable delicacy and elegance. Of a writer who has shown his power to do well when it was so difficult to do well we have the more right to complain that he has *not* done well in a case where it was comparatively easy."—How magnanimously Carlyle took this criticism of his book, annoying though it must have been at the time, and calculated even to do him damage at the beginning of his literary career, may be seen from the passage in Vol. IV *ante*, and the passage in Carlyle's *Reminiscences*, already referred to. If the reader will also turn to Vol. III *ante*, pp. 174-5 and footnote, and to Vol. IV *ante*, p. 416 and footnote, he will see how anxious De Quincey had been to retract the criticism so far as he could, and to make the *amende honorable* to Carlyle on account of it.—M.

[1] This is a rather interesting piece of information. De Quincey's audacious attack on Goethe in the preceding part of his paper on *Wilhelm Meister* (see last footnote) had provoked much anger and reclamation, it appears, in London circles. Carlyle, it is worth noting, was on his first visit to London about this time. He had gone to London in June 1824, immediately after the publication of his *Meister*; and, though he was away for a while on excursions to Birmingham and Paris, he was mainly in London till February 1825, near to Edward Irving, and forming acquaintances among Irving's

surprised. They are to a certain degree excusably irritable from the consciousness of being unsupported and unsteadied by general sympathy. Sectarians are allowably ferocious. However, we shall reply only by recalling a little anecdote of John Henderson,[1] in the spirit of which we mean to act. Upon one occasion, when he was disputing at a dinner party, his opponent being pressed by some argument too strong for his logic or his temper, replied by throwing a glass of wine in his face; upon which Henderson, with the dignity of a scholar who felt too justly how much this boyish petulance had disgraced his antagonist to be in any danger of imitating it, coolly wiped his face, and said,—"This, sir, is a digression: now, if you please, for the argument."[2]

And now, if you please, for *our* argument. What shall that be? How shall we conduct it? As far as is possible, the translator of Wilhelm Meister would deny us the benefit of *any* argument: for thus plaintively he seeks to forestall us (Preface xii), "Every man's judgment is, *in this free country*,

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friends of the *London Magazine* connexion. De Quincey was possibly at Grasmere when he wrote his Goethe paper; but he went and came between Grasmere and London, and was almost certainly in London at all events before Carlyle had left.—M.

[1] The two authorities for all authentic information about J. Henderson are,—1. The Funeral Sermon of Mr. Agutter; 2. A Memoir of him by Mr. Cottle of Bristol, inserted in Mr. Cottle's Poems. We know not whether we learned the anecdote from these sources, or in conversation with Mr. Cottle many years ago. Meantime, to check any wandering conceit that Henderson may be a mere local notoriety, let me inform the reader that he is the man whom Samuel Johnson and Burke went to visit at Bristol upon the mere fame of his attainments, and then in scriptural language pronounced that "*the half had not been told them.*" [Boswell, speaking of a visit to Oxford by Dr. Johnson and himself in June 1784, says that among those they met was "Mr. John Henderson, student of Pembroke College, celebrated for his wonderful acquirements in alchemy, judicial astrology, and other abstruse and curious learning," and appends this note, "See an account of him in a sermon by the Rev. Mr. Agutter."—M.]

[2] One objection only we have heard to our last article from any person *not* a partisan of Goethe: being plausible, and coming from a man of talents, we reply to it. "Surely," says he, "it cannot be any fault of Goethe's that he is *old.*" Certainly not: no fault at all, but a circumstance of monstrous aggravation connected with one particular fault of Wilhelm Meister, &c.

"a lamp to himself" (*Free* country! why, we hope there is no despotism so absolute, no not in Turkey, nor Algiers, where a man may not publish his opinion of Wilhelm Meister!); "and many, it is to be feared, will insist on judging *Meister* "by the common rule, and, what is worse, condemning it, let "Schlegel bawl as loudly as he pleases."[1] This puts us in mind of a diverting story in the memoirs of an old Cavalier, published by Sir Walter Scott. At the close of the Parliamentary War he was undergoing some examination (about passports, as we recollect) by the Mayor of Hull; upon which occasion the mayor, who was a fierce fanatic, said to him some such words as these: "Now, Captain, you know that God has judged between you and us, and has given us the victory, praise be unto his name! and yet you see how kindly the Parliament treats you. But, if the victory had gone the other way, and you of the malignant party had stood in our shoes, I suppose now, Captain, you would have evil-entreated us; would have put all manner of affronts upon us,—kicked us peradventure, pulled our noses, called us sons of w—s." "You're in the right on't, sir," was the reply of the bluff captain, to the great indignation of the Mayor, and infinite fun of the good-natured aldermen. So also, when the translator tells us that it is to be feared that many will condemn *Wilhelm Meister* in spite of Schlegel's vociferation, we reply, "You're in the right on't, sir": they will do so; and Schlegel is not the man, neither William nor Frederick, to frighten them from doing so. We have extracted this passage, however, for the sake of pointing the reader's eye to one word in it: "many will judge it by the common *rule*." What rule is *that*? The translator well knows that there *is* no rule,—no rule which can stand in the way of fair and impartial criticism,—and that he is conjuring up a bugbear which has no existence. In the single cases of epic and dramatic poetry (but in these only as regards the mechanism of the fable) certain rules have undoubtedly obtained an authority which may prejudice the cause of a writer; not so much, however, by corrupting sound criticism as by occupying its place. But with regard to a novel there is no rule which has obtained any "*prescription*" (to speak the language of civil law) but the golden rule of good sense and just feeling; and the translator well knows that in such a case, if a man were disposed to shelter his own want of argument under the authority of some "common rule," he can find no such rule to plead. How do men generally criticise a novel? Just as they examine the acts and conduct, moral or prudential, of their neighbours. And how is that? Is it by quoting the Nicomachean Ethics of Aristotle? Do they proceed as the French Consul did when the Dey of Tunis informed him that he meant to cut off his head? Upon which

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[1] What follows in Carlyle's Preface is a quotation from Schlegel praising Goethe's novel immensely.—M.

> "The Consul quoted Wickefort
> And Puffendorf and Grotius,
> And proved from Vattel
> Exceedingly well
> Such a deed would be quite atrocious."

No: they never trouble Puffendorf and Grotius, but try the case "proprio marte," appealing only to their own judgments and their own feelings. This is wise, they say, and that is foolish; this is indecorous, and that is inconsistent; this argues a bad motive, and that leads to a bad consequence. Or, if the novel be German, this is indictably indecent. In this way they judge of actions, in this way of a novel; and in this way we shall judge of *Wilhelm Meister*, and cannot allow that our criticism shall be forestalled by any pretence that we are opposing mechanic rules, which do not and cannot exist, to the natural and spontaneous movements of the unprejudiced judgment.

"Scribendi recte SAPERE est principium et fons"—Good sense is the principle and fountain of all just composition. This is orthodox doctrine all over the world, or ought to be. Next, we presume that in all latitudes and under every meridian a poet stands amenable to criticism for the quality of his sentiments and the passions he attributes to his heroes, heroines, and "pattern people." That the general current of feeling should be deeper than that of ordinary life, nobler, and purer,—is surely no unreasonable postulate: else wherefore is he a poet? Now, within a short compass there is no better test by which we can try the style and tone of a poet's feelings than his ideal of the female character as expressed in his heroines. For this purpose we will have a general turn-out and field-day for Mr. Goethe's ladies. They shall all parade before the reader. This, while it answers our end, will provide for *his* amusement. Such a display will be sufficient for the style of sentiment: as to the good sense, *that* will be adequately put on record by every part of our analysis.

Now, therefore, turn out, ye belles of Germany! turn out before London on this fine 26th of August 1824. *Place aux dames!* Let us have a grand procession to the temple of Paphos with its hundred altars: and Mr. Goethe, nearly 50 years old at the date of *Wilhelm Meister*, shall be the high-priest; and we will exhibit him surrounded by all "his young Corinthian laity."[1] Here, then, reader, is Mr. Goethe's

Gallery of Female Portraits

Mariana.—No. 1 is Mariana, a young actress. With her the novel opens: and her situation is this. She is connected in the tenderest style of clandestine attachment with Wilhelm Meister, the hero. Matters have gone so far that she—how shall we express it? Oh! the German *phrase* is that—she "carries a pledge of love beneath her bosom." Well, suppose she does: what's that to us,—us and the reader? Why, nothing, we allow, unless she asks us to advance money on the *pledge*. The reader is yet but in the vestibule of the tale: he is naturally willing to be pleased, and indisposed to churlish constructions. Undoubtedly he is sorry: wishes it had been otherwise; but he is human himself; and he recollects the old excuse which will be pleaded on this frail planet of ours for thousands of years after we are all in our graves—that they were both young, and that she was artless and beautiful. And finally he forgives them; and, if at the end of the third volume, when they must necessarily be a good deal older, he finds them still as much attached to each other as when their hearts were young, he would feel it presumption in himself to remember the case as a transgression. But what is this? Hardly have we gone a few pages further before we find that—about one month before this lady had surrendered her person to the hero—she had granted all she could grant to one Mr. Norberg, a merchant and a vile sensualist. True, says the book, but *that* was for money; she had no money; and how could she do without money? Whereas now, on the contrary, in Wilhelm's case it could not be for money; for why? he had none; *ergo*, it was for love—pure love. Besides, she was vexed that she had ever encouraged Norberg, after she came to be acquainted with Wilhelm. Vexed! but did she resolve to break with Norberg? Once or twice she treated him harshly, it is true: but hear her latest cabinet council on this matter with her old infamous attendant (p. 65, i.): "I have no choice, continued Mariana; do you decide for me! Cast me away to this side, or to that; mark only one thing. I think I carry in my bosom a pledge that ought to unite me with him (*i.e.* Wilhelm) more closely. Consider and determine: whom shall I forsake? whom shall I follow?" After a short silence, Barbara exclaimed: "Strange that youth should still be for extremes." By extremes Barbara means keeping only one; her way of avoiding extremes is to keep both. But hear the hag: "To my view nothing would be easier than for us to combine both the profit and enjoyment. Do you love the one, let the other pay for it: all we have to mind is being sharp enough to keep the two from meeting." Certainly, that would be awkward: and now what is Mariana's answer? "Do as you please; I can imagine nothing, but I will follow." Bab schemes, and Poll executes. The council rises with the following suggestion from the hag:—"Who knows what circumstances may arise to help us? If Norberg would arrive even now, when Wilhelm is away! who can hinder you from thinking of the one in the arms of the other? I wish you a son and good fortune with him: he will have a rich father." Adopting this advice, the lady receives Wilhelm dressed in the clothes furnished by Norberg. She is, however, found out by Wilhelm, who forsakes her; and in the end she dies. Her death is announced in the high German style to Wilhelm: old Bab places a bottle of champagne and three glasses on the table. Then the scene proceeds thus: "Wilhelm knew

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[1] "*Young Corinthian laity*": Milton, Apol. for Smectymnuus.

" not what to say, when the crone in fact *let go* the cork, and " filled the three glasses to the brim. Drink!" cried she, having emptied at a draught her foaming glass. "Drink ere " the spirit of it pass! This third glass shall froth away " untasted to the memory of my unhappy Mariana. How " red were her lips when she last drank your health! Ah! " and now for ever pale and cold!" At the next Pitt or Fox dinner this suggestion may perhaps be attended to. Mr. Pitt of course will have a bottle of good old port set for him; for he drank no champagne. As Kotzebue hastened from Germany to the Palais Royal of Paris for consolation on the death of his wife, so does Wilhelm on reading his sweetheart's farewell letters abscond in a transport of grief to —— a coffeehouse, where he disputes upon the stage and acting in general. We are rather sorry for this young creature after all: she has some ingenuous feelings; and she is decidedly the second best person in the novel. The child which she leaves behind is fathered by old Bab (drunk perhaps) upon every man she meets; and she absolutely extorts money from one or other person on account of three different fathers. If she meets the reader, she'll father it upon *him*. In the hands, now, of a skilful artist this surviving memorial of the frail Mariana might have been turned to some account: by Mr. Goethe it is used only as a handle for covering his hero with irresistible ridicule. He doubts whether he is the father of the child, and goes about asking people in effect, "Do you think I can be the father? Really now, on your honour, has he a look of me?" That Mariana's conduct had given him little reason to confide in anything she could say except upon her death-bed, we admit; and, as to old Bab's assurances, they clearly were open to that objection of the logicians—that they proved nothing by proving a little too much. But can any gravity stand the ridicule of a father's sitting down to examine his child's features by his own? and that he, who would not believe the dying and heart-broken mother, is finally relieved from his doubts (p. 120, iii) by two old buffoons, who simply assure him that the child is his, and thus pretend to an authority transcending that of the mother herself? But pass to

No. 2, *Philina.*—This lady is a sort of amalgam of Doll

Tear-sheet and the Wife of Bath,—as much of a termagant as the first, and as frank-hearted as the second. Mr. Goethe's account of the matter (p. 172, i.) is that "her chief enjoyment lay in loving one class of men and being loved by them." In all particulars but the good ones she resembles poor Mariana: like her she is an actress; like her she has her "pledge"; and, like Mariana's, this pledge is open to doubts of the learned on the question of its paternity; for, like her, she is not content with one lover,—*not* however, like her, content with two, for she has nearer to two dozen. She plays off the battery of her charms upon every man she meets with: the carnage is naturally great; so that we had half a mind to draw up a list of the killed and wounded. But we must hurry onwards. What becomes of her the reader never learns. Among her lovers, who in general keep her, is one whom she keeps,—for he is her footman;—a "fair-haired boy" of family. Him she kicks out of her service in vol. the first, p. 174, ostensibly because he will not lay the cloth; but in fact because he has no more money, as appears by p. 228, vol. ii, where she takes him back on his having "cozened from his friends a fresh supply"; and to him she finally awards her "pledge," and we think she does right. For he is a fine young lad—this Frederick; and we like him much: he is generous, and not suspicious as "our friend" Wilhelm; and he is *par parenthèse* a great fool, who is willing to pass for such,—which the graver fools of the novel are not; they being all "philosophers." Thus pleasantly does this believing man report the case to the infidel Wilhelm: "Tis a foolish business that I must be "raised at last to the paternal dignity; but she asserts, and "the time agrees. At first, that cursed visit which she paid "you after Hamlet gave me qualms. The pretty flesh-"and-blood spirit of that night, if you do not know it, was "Philina. This story was in truth a hard dower for me; "but, if we cannot be contented with such things, we should "not be in love. Fatherhood at any rate depends entirely "upon conviction; I am convinced, and so I am a father." But time presses: so adieu! most philanthropic Philina, thou lover of all *man*kind!

No. 3 is *Mrs. Melina.*—She also is an actress with a "pledge," and so forth. But she marries the father, Herr Melina, and we are inclined to hope that all will now be well. And certainly, as far as page so and so, the reader or ourselves, if summoned by Mrs. Melina on any trial affecting her reputation, would be most happy to say that, whatever little circumstances might have come to our knowledge which as gentlemen we could not possibly use to the prejudice of a lady, we yet fully believe her to be as irreproachable as that lady who only of all King Arthur's court had the qualification of chastity for wearing the magic girdle; and yet it shrank a little,[1] until she made a blushing confession that smoothed its wrinkles. This would be our evidence up perhaps to the end of vol. i.; yet afterwards it comes out that she "sighed" for Mr. Meister, and that, if she sighed in vain, it was no fault of hers.

The manners of these good people are pretty much on a level with their characters: our impression is that all are drunk together,—men, women, and children. Women are seen lying on the sofa "in no very elegant position"; the children knock their heads against the table: one plays the harp, one the triangle, another the tambourine; some sing canons; another "whistles in the manner of a nightingale"; another "gives a symphony *pianissimo* upon the Jew's harp"; and last of all comes an ingenious person who well deserves to be imported by Covent Garden for the improvement of the incantations of Der Freischütz: "by way of "termination, Serlo (the manager) gave a firework, or what "resembled one; for he could imitate the sound of crackers, "rockets, and firewheels, with his mouth, in a style of nearly "inconceivable correctness. You had only to shut your eyes, "and the deception was complete." After the lyrical confusion of these Dutch concerts "it follows of course that men and women fling their glasses into the street, the men fling the punch-bowl at each other's heads, and a storm succeeds which the watch (Neptune and his Tritons)"[2] are called in to appease. Even from personal uncleanliness Mr. Goethe thinks it possible to derive a grace. "The white négligée" of Philina, because it was "not superstitiously clean," is said to have given her "a frank and domestic air." But the highest scene of this nature is the bedroom of Mariana: it passes all belief; "Combs, soap, towels, *with the traces of* " *their use*, were not concealed. Music, portions of plays, and " pairs of shoes, washes and Italian flowers, pincushions, hair " skewers, rouge-pots and ribbons, books and straw-hats— " all were united by a common element, powder and dust." This is the room into which she introduces her lover; and this is by no means the worst part of the description: the last sentence is too bad for quotation, and appears to have been the joint product of Dean Swift and a German Sentimentalist.

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[1] See the ballad somewhere in Percy's *Reliques*.

[2] See the admirable description in Mr. Lamb's Dramatic Specimens. The situation is this:—A number of people carousing in an upper room of a tavern become so thoroughly drunk as to fancy themselves in a ship far out at sea; and their own unsteady footing in "walking

Well, but these people are not people of condition. Come we then to two women of rank; and first for

The Countess, who shall be No. 4 in the Goethian gallery. Wilhelm Meister has come within her husband's castle-gates attached to a company of strolling players; and, if any slight distinctions are made in his favour, they are tributes to his personal merits, and not at all to any such pretensions as could place him on a level with a woman of quality. In general he is treated as his companions; who seem to be viewed at a *tertium quod* between footmen and dogs. Indeed, the dogs have the advantage; for no doubt the dogs of a German "Graf" have substantial kennels: whereas Wilhelm

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the deck" they conclude to be the natural effect from the tumbling billows of the angry ocean, which in fact is gathering rapidly into every sign of a coming storm. One man in his anxiety therefore climbs a bed-post, which he takes for the mast-head, and reports the most awful appearances ahead. By his advice they fall to lightening the ship: out of the windows they throw overboard beds, tables, chairs, the good landlady's crockery, bottles, glasses, &c., working in agonies of haste for dear life. By this time the uproar and hurly-burly has reached the ears of the police, who come in a body up-stairs; but the drunkards, conceiving them to be sea-gods—Neptune, Triton, &c.—begin to worship them. What accounts for this intrusion of *Pagan* adorations is this: viz. that originally the admirable scene was derived from a Greek comic sketch, though transplanted into the English drama with so much of life-like effect as really to seem a native of English growth.

and his party, on presenting themselves at the inhabited castle of the Count, are dismissed with mockery and insults to an old dilapidated building which is not weather-proof, and, though invited guests, are inhospitably left without refreshments, fire, or candles, in the midst of storm, rain, and darkness. In some points they are raised to a level with the dogs; for, as a man will now and then toss a bone to a favourite pointer, so does a guest of the Count's who patronises merit "contrive to send over many an odd bottle of champagne to the actors." In others they even think themselves far above the dogs: for "many times, particularly after dinner, the whole company were called out before the noble guests,—an honour which the artists regarded as the most flattering in the world": but others question the inference, observing "that on these very occasions the servants and huntsmen were ordered to bring in a multitude of hounds, and to lead strings of horses about the court of the castle." Such is the rank which Mr. Meister holds in her ladyship's establishment: and note that he has hardly been in her presence more than once; on which occasion he is summoned to read to her, but not allowed to proceed, and finally dismissed with the present of a "waistcoat." Such being the position of our waistcoateer in regard to the Countess, which we have sketched with a careful selection of circumstances, let the reader now say what he thinks of the following *scena*—and of the "pure soul" (p. 300, i.) of that noble matron who is joint performer in it. Wilhelm has been summoned again to read before the ladies, merely because they "felt the time rather tedious" whilst waiting for company, and is perhaps anticipating a pair of trousers to match his waistcoat. Being "ordered" by the ladies to read, he reads; but his weak mind is so overwhelmed by the splendid dress of the Countess that he reads very ill. Bad reading is not a thing to be stood; and, accordingly, on different pretexts, the other ladies retire, and he is left alone with the Countess. She has presented him *not* with a pair of trousers, as we falsely predicted, but with a diamond ring: he has knelt down to thank her, and has seized her left hand. Then the *scena* proceeds thus: "He kissed her hand, and "meant to rise; but, as in dreams some strange thing fades

" and changes into something stranger, so, without knowing " how it happened, he found the Countess in his arms; her " lips were resting upon his, and their warm mutual kisses " were yielding them that blessedness which mortals sip from " the topmost sparkling foam on the freshly poured cup of " love. Her head lay upon his shoulder; the disordered " ringlets and ruffles were forgotten. She had thrown her " arm around him: he clasped her with vivacity, and pressed " her again and again to his breast. O that such a moment " could but last for ever! And *woe to envious fate* that " shortened even this brief moment to our friends!" Well done, Mr. Goethe! It well befits that he who thinks it rational to bully fate should think it laudable and symptomatic of a "pure soul" to act as this German matron acts with this itinerant player. It is true that she tears herself away "with a shriek"; but the shriek, as we discover long afterwards, proceeds not from any pangs of conscience but from pangs of body,—Wilhelm having pressed too closely against a miniature of her husband which hung at her bosom. There is another *scena* of a still worse description prepared for the Countess,[1] but interrupted by the sudden return of the Count, for which we have no room, and in which the next lady on the roll plays a part for which decorum has no name. This lady is

The Baroness; and she is the friend and companion of the Countess. Whilst the latter was dallying with "our friend," "the Baroness, in the meantime, had selected La-" ertes, who, being a spirited and lively young man, pleased " her very much, and who, woman-hater as he was, felt " unwilling to refuse a passing adventure." Laertes, be it observed—this condescending gentleman who is for once disposed to relax his general rule of conduct in favour of the Baroness—is also a strolling player, and, being such, is of course a sharer in the general indignities thrown upon the theatrical company. In the present case his "passing adventure" was unpleasantly disturbed by a satirical remark of the lady's husband, who was aware of his intentions; for

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[1] It is afterwards related to her; and the passage which describes the effect upon her mind (p. 317, vol. i.) is about the most infamous in any book.

Laertes "happening once to celebrate her praises, and give "her the preference to every other of her sex, the Baron with "a grin replied: 'I see how matters stand: our fair friend "(meaning by *our fair friend* his own wife) has got a fresh "inmate for her stalls. Every stranger thinks he is the "first whom this manner has *concerned*: but he is grievously "mistaken; for all of us, at one time or another, have been "trotted round this course. Man, youth, or boy, be he "who he like, each must devote himself to her service for a "season; must hang about her; and toil and long to gain "her favour."' (P. 284, i.) After this discovery, "Laertes felt heartily ashamed that vanity should have again misled him to think *well*, even in the smallest degree, of any woman whatsoever." That the Baroness wished to intrigue with himself was so far a reason with him for "thinking well" of HER: but that she could ever have thought anybody else worthy of this honour restores him to his amiable abhorrence of her sex; and forthwith "he forsook the Baroness entirely." By the way, how Laertes came by his hatred of women, and the abominable history of his "double wounds," the reader must look for in Mr. Goethe: in German novels such things may be tolerated, as also in English brothels; and it may be sought for in either place; but for us, *nous autres Anglois*,—

"Non licet esse tam disertis
Qui musas colimus severiores."

Forsaken by Laertes, the Baroness looks about for a substitute; and, finding no better, she takes up with one Mr. Jarno. And who is Mr. Jarno? What part does *he* play in this play? He is an old gentleman, who has the honour to be also a major and a philosopher; and he plays the parts of bore, of ninny, and also (but not with equal success) of Socrates. Him then, this Major Socrates, for want of some Alcibiades, the Baroness condescends to "trot," as the Baroness phrases it; and trotting him we shall leave her. For what she does in her own person the reader will not be disposed to apply any very respectful names to her: but one thing there is which she attempts to do for her friend the Countess (as Goethe acknowledges at p. 306, i.) which entitles her to a still worse name: a name not in our vocabulary; but it will be found in that of Mr. Goethe, who applies it (but very superfluously) to old Barbara.

Theresa.—This lady is thus described by Mr. Jarno: "Fraülein Theresa (*i.e.* in French English, *Mees Terése*) is a "lady such as you will rarely see. She puts many a man to "shame: I may say she is a genuine Amazon, while others are "but pretty counterfeits, that wander up and down the world "in that ambiguous dress." Yes, an Amazon she is—not destined we hope to propagate the race in England—although, by the way, not *the* Amazon[1]: however, she is far better entitled to the name, for in putting men to shame she is not exceeded by any lady in the novel. Her first introduction to "our friend" is a fair specimen of Amazonian *bienséance.* The reader must understand that Wilhelm has just arrived at her house as an invited guest; has never seen her before; and that both the lady and himself are young unmarried persons. "She *entered Wilhelm's room*, "inquiring if he wanted anything. 'Pardon me,' said she, "for having lodged you in a chamber which the smell of "paint still renders disagreeable: my little dwelling is but "just made ready: you are handselling this room, which is "appointed for my guests. In other points you have many "things to pardon. My cook has run away, and a serving-"man has bruised his hand. I *might* (might?) be forced to "manage all myself; and, if it *were* so (*were* so?), we must "just[2] put up with it. One is plagued with nobody so "much as with one's servants: not one of them will serve "you, scarcely even serve himself.' She said a good deal "more on different matters: in general she seemed to like "to speak." This the reader will find no difficulty in allowing; for, in answer to the very first words that Wilhelm utters, she proposes to tell him her whole history in a confidential way. Listen to her: thus speaks the Amazonian

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[1] By which title, for no reason upon earth (since she neither amputates one of her breasts, nor in any other point affects the Amazon) is constantly designated a fair incognita in a riding-habit, whom Wilhelm had once seen, and having seen had of course fallen in love with, not being at the time in love with more than three other persons.

[2] "Just," in this use of it, is a Hyperboreanism, and still intelligible in some provinces. [Another Scotticism in Carlyle's translation, to be added to the list in footnote *ante*, p. 224.—M.]

Fraülein (p. 39, iii). "Let us get entirely acquainted as "speedily as possible. The history of every person paints "his character. I will tell you what my life has been: do "you too place a little trust in me; and let us be united "even when distance parts us." Such is the sentimental overture; after which the reader will not be surprised to learn that in the evening Wilhelm's chamber-door opens, and in steps with a bow a "handsome hunter boy,"—viz. Fraülein Theresa in boy's clothes. "Come along!" says she; "and they went accordingly." (P. 43.) As they walked, "among some general remarks" Theresa asked him the following question—not general, but "*London particular*:" "*Are you free?*" (meaning free to make proposals to any woman he met). "I think I am," said he; "and yet I do not wish it." By which he meant that he thought Mariana was dead, but (kind creature) "did not wish" her to be dead. "Good!" said she; "that indicates a complicated story: you also will have something to relate." Conversing thus, they ascended the height, and placed themselves beside a lofty oak. "Here," said she, "beneath this German tree will I disclose to you the history of a German maiden: listen to me patiently" (p. 44): that is, we suppose, with a German patience. But English patience will not tolerate what follows. We have already seen something of Mr. Goethe; else could it be credited that the most obtuse of old libertines could put into the mouth of a young unmarried woman, designed for a model of propriety and good sense, as fit matter for her very earliest communication with a young man, the secret history of her own mother's[1] adulterous intrigues? Adultery, by way of displaying her virgin modesty: her mother's adultery in testimony of her filial piety! So it is, however: and with a single "alas! that I should have to say so of my mother" (p. 44) given to the regrets and the delicacies of the case, this intrepid Amazon proceeds to tell how her father was "a wealthy noble," "a tender father, and an upright friend; an excellent *economist*," who had "but one fault"; and what was *that*? "he was too compliant to a wife whose nature was the opposite of his." Then she goes on to say how this wife could not endure women—no, not her own daughter even—and therefore surrounded herself with men, who joined her in acting plays on a private stage: how "it was easy to perceive that," even amongst the men, "she did not look on all alike": how she, the daughter, "gave sharper heed"; made sundry discoveries; "held her tongue, however," until the servants, whom she "was used to watch like a falcon" (p. 47, iii), presuming upon the mother's conduct, began to "despise the father's regulations"; upon which she discovered all to that person; who answered, however, with a *smile*, "Good girl! I know it all; be quiet, bear it patiently,"—which doctrine she disapproved: how at length her mother's extravagance "occasioned many a *conference* between her parents: but 'for a long time the evil was not helped, until at last the *passions* of her mother brought the business to a head."' "Her first gallant," it seems ("first" by the way—in what sense? In order of time, or of favour?) "became unfaithful in a glaring manner": upon which her conduct took so capricious an air that some sort of arrangement was made in virtue of which she consented, for "a considerable sum" of money, to travel for the benefit of her passions to the south of France. And so the tale proceeds: for what end, let us ask Mr. Goethe, which could not have been as well answered by any other of ten thousand expedients as by this monstrous outrage upon filial affection, virgin modesty, or (to put it on the lowest ground) upon mere sexual pride; which alone in any place on this earth except "under a German tree" would surely have been sufficient to restrain a female from such an exposure of female frailty? Indeed, if we come to that, for what end that needed to be answered at all? Notice this, reader; for the fair inference is—that all this volunteer exposure of her mother's depravity, delivered by a young "German maiden" dressed in men's clothes to a strolling player whom she had never seen or heard of before, is introduced as an episode that needs no other justification than its own inherent attractions.

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[1] It is true that in the end the person in question turns out *not* to be her mother: but as yet Theresa has no suspicion of such a discovery.

We are disposed to have done with this young lady. Yet there is one circumstance about her which to our English notions appears so truly comic that before we dismiss her we shall advert to it. Many years ago there was a *crim. con.* case brought into the English courts in the course of which the love-letters of the noble marquis, heir to a dukedom, were produced, read, and of course published in all the newspapers. The matter, the "subject matter" (as grave men say), of such epistles can generally be guessed at even by persons not destined to set the Thames on fire. How great then was the astonishment and diversion of the public on finding that the staple article in these tender communications was the price of oats at Oxford! We were at Oxford during the time, and well remember the astonishment of the Corn-market on finding that any part of their proceedings,—that an unexceptionable price-current of Oxon grain,—could by possibility have found its way into the billets-doux of an enamoured patrician. "Feed oats, 40s.; potato oats, same as per last: tick beans looking up." Undoubtedly, "*Oats is riz*" cannot be denied to be a just and laudable communication to and from certain quarters, especially grooms and ostlers; but it struck the English public as *not* the appropriate basis for a lover's correspondence. From this opinion however Mr. Goethe evidently dissents: for the whole sentiment of Theresa's character and situation is built upon the solid base of tare and tret, alligation, rebate, and "such branches of learning." All this she had probably learned from her father, who (as we know) was a great "economist," and in the household of a neighbouring lady whom she had "assisted in *struggling* with her steward and domestics" (masters and servants, by the way, appear to be viewed by Goethe as necessary belligerents). Economy at all events is the basis of her amatory correspondence: "our conversation, says she (speaking of her lover), always in the end grew economical" (p. 58), and from household economy her lover drew her on by tender and seductive insinuations to political economy. Sentimental creatures! what a delicate transition from "tallow" and "raw hides" to the "bullion question," "circulating medium," and the "Exchequer Bills bill." The Malthusian view of population, we suppose, would be rather an unwelcome topic; not, however, on the score of delicacy, as the reader will see by the following account from the economic lady herself of the way in which she contrived to introduce herself in an economic phasis to her economic lover. It surpasses the Oxford price-current.

"The greatest service which I did my benefactress was in bringing into order the extensive forests which belonged to her. In this precious property matters still went on according to the old routine: without regularity, without plan; no end to theft and fraud. Many hills were standing bare; an equal growth was nowhere to be found but in the oldest cuttings. I personally visited the whole of them with an experienced forester. I got the woods correctly measured: I set men to hew, to sow [not *sew,* reader: don't mistake Theresa], to sow, to plant. That I might mount more readily on horseback, and also walk on foot with less obstruction, I had a suit of men's clothes made for me: I was in many places, I was feared in all. . . .

"Hearing that our young friends with Lothario were purposing to have another hunt, it came into my head for the first time in my life to make a figure, or, that I may not do myself injustice, to pass in the eyes of this noble gentleman for what I was. I put on my man's clothes, took my gun upon my shoulder, and went forward with our hunters, to await the party on our marches. They came: Lothario did not know me: a nephew of the lady's introduced me to him as a clever forester; joked about my youth, and carried on his jesting in my praise, until at last Lothario recognised me. The nephew seconded my project, as if we had concocted it together [concocted! what a word!] He circumstantially and gratefully described what I had done for the estates of his aunt, and consequently for himself."

Now, at this point, laying all things together—the male attire, the gun, the forest, and the ominous name of the lover—we are afraid that the reader is looking to hear of something not quite correct; that in short he is anticipating some

"Speluncam Dido dux et Trojanus eandem
Deveniunt."

O fie! reader. How *can* you have such reprehensible thoughts? Nothing of the kind: No, no: we are happy to contradict such scandal, and to assure the public that nothing took place but what was perfectly "accurate" and as it should be. The whole went off in a blaze of Political Economy, which we doubt not would have had even Mr. Ricardo's approbation. The following is Mr. Goethe's report, which may be looked upon as official:—

"Lothario listened with attention; he talked with me; inquired concerning all particulars of the estates and district. I submitted certain projects of improvements to him, which he sanctioned; telling me of similar examples, and strengthening my arguments by the connexion which he gave them. My satisfaction grew more perfect every moment. From that day he showed a true respect for me, a fine trust in me: in company he usually spoke to me; asked for my opinion; and appeared to be persuaded that, in household matters, nothing was unknown to me. His sympathy excited me extremely: even when the conversation was of general finance and political economy, he used to lead me to take a part in it."

We are loath to part with this most amusing Theresa: she is a political economist, and so are we; naturally therefore we love her. We recite one more anecdote about her, and so leave the reader *con la bocca dolce.* The reader has heard of the proud but poor Gascon who was overheard calling to his son at night—"Chevalier, as-tu donné au cochon à manger?" Some such little household meditation furnishes the sentiment with which Theresa clenches one of her tenderest scenes. She has been confiding her history, her woes, and her despondency, to "our friend;" and had indeed "as the sun went down" (milking time) "*both* her fine eyes," we need not say, "filled with tears." Such is the scene; and thus it is wound up: "Theresa spoke not: she laid "her hand upon her new friend's hands; he kissed it with "emotion; she dried her tears and rose. 'Let us return, "'and see that *all is right,*' said she." All right! all right behind! *Chevalier, as-tu donné au cochon à manger?*

Aurelia.—This lady is not, like Theresa, a "German maiden"; for, indeed, she is not a maiden at all; neither has she a "German tree" to stand under: but, for all that, she is quite as well disposed to tell her German story in a German way. Let her speak for herself. "My friend," says she to "our friend,"[1] it is but a few minutes since we "saw each other first, and already you are going to become "my confidant" (p. 78). Not as though he has offered to be so: nothing of the sort: but she is resolved he shall be so. What determinate kindness! What resolute liberality! For this time, however, her liberality is balked; for in bounces the philanthropic Philina, interrupts Aurelia, and, upon that lady's leaving the room, tells her story *for* her in the following elegant (though not quite accurate) terms. "Pretty things are going on here, just of the sort I like. "Aurelia has had a hapless love-affair with some nobleman, "who seems to be a very stately person, one that I myself "could like to see some day. He has left her a memorial, "or I much mistake. There is a boy running over the "house, of three years old or *thereby* [*i.e.* thereabouts]; the "papa must be a very pretty fellow. Commonly I cannot "suffer children, but this brat quite delights me. I have "calculated Aurelia's business. The death of her husband, "the new acquaintance, the child's age, all things agree. "But now her spark has gone his ways; for a year she has "not seen a glimpse of him. She is beside herself and inconsolable for this. The more fool she!" From Aurelia she passes to Aurelia's brother: and, though it is digressing a little, we must communicate her little memoir of this gentleman's "passions"; for naturally he has his passions as well as other people: every gentleman has a right to his passions,—say, a couple of passions, or "thereby," to use the translator's phrase; but Mr. Serlo, the gentleman in question, is really unreasonable, as the muster-roll will show: the reader will be so good as to keep count. "Her brother," proceeds the frank-hearted Philina, "has a dancing girl among "his troop with whom he stands on pretty terms [*one*]; an "actress to whom he is betrothed [*two*]; in the town some "other women whom he courts [women, observe, accusative "plural; that must at least make *three*, *four*, *five*]; I, too, "am on his list [*six*]. The more fool he! Of the rest thou "shalt hear to-morrow." Verily, this Mr. Serlo has laid in a pretty fair winter's provision for his "passions"! The loving speaker concludes with informing Wilhelm that she, Philina, has for her part fallen in love with himself,—begs him, however, to fall in love with Aurelia, because in that case "the "chase would be worth beholding. She (that is, Aurelia) "pursues her faithless swain, thou her, I thee, her brother "me." Certainly an ingenious design for a reel of eight even in merry England; but what would it be then in Germany, where each man might (as we know by Wilhelm, &c.) pursue all the four women at once, and be pursued by as many of the four as thought fit? Our English brains whirl at the thought of the cycles and epicycles, the vortices, the osculating curves, they would describe: what a practical commentary on the doctrine of combinations and permutations! What a lesson to English bell-ringers on the art of ringing changes! what "triple bobs" and "bob majors" would result! What a kaleidoscope to look into! O ye deities that preside over men's sides, protect all Christian ones from the siege of inextinguishable laughter which threatens them at this spectacle of eight heavy high-German lovers engaged in this amorous "barley-break"![1]

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[1] "*Our friend*" is the general designation throughout the novel of the hero.

To recover our gravity, let us return to Aurelia's story which she tells herself to Wilhelm. Not having, like Theresa, any family adulteries to record in the lineal, she seeks them in the collateral, branches; and instead of her mother's intrigues recites her aunt's, who "resigned herself headlong to every impulse." There is a description of this lady's paramours retiring from her society which it is absolutely impossible to quote. Quitting her aunt's intrigues, she comes to one of her own. But we have had too much of such matter; and of this we shall notice only one circumstance of horrible aggravation,—viz. the particular situation in which it commenced. This we state in the words of the translation: "My husband grew sick, his strength was "visibly decaying; anxiety for him interrupted my general "indifference. *It was at this time* that I formed an acquaint-"ance [viz. with Lothario] which opened up a new life for "me,—a new and *quicker* one, for it will soon be done." One other part of this lady's conduct merits notice for its exquisite *Germanity*: most strikingly and *cuttingly* it shows what difference a few score leagues will make in the moral quality of actions: that which in Germany is but the characteristic act of a high-minded sentimentalist would in England bring the party within the cutting and maiming act. The case is this:—Mr. Meister, at the close of her story, volunteers a vow, for no reason that we can see but that he may have the pleasure of breaking it; which he does. "Accept a vow," says he, as if it had been a peach. "I accept it, said she, and made a movement with her right "hand, as if meaning to take hold of his, but instantly she "darted into her pocket, pulled out her dagger as quick as "lightning, and scored with the edge and point of it across his "hand. He hastily drew back his arm [Meister, German "Meister even, does not like this]; but the blood was "already running down. One must mark you men rather "sharply, if one means you to take heed, cried she. . . . "She ran to her drawer; brought lint, with other apparatus; "stanched the blood; and viewed the wound attentively. "*It went across the palm, close under the thumb, dividing the* "*life-lines, and running towards the little finger.* She bound "it up in silence with a significant reflective look."

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[1] "*Barley-break*": see any poet of 1600-1640,—Sir J. Suckling, for instance. [In Nuttall's Dictionary the word is spelt *barley-brake*, and is defined as "an ancient rustic game played round stacks of grain"—*i.e.* a kind of romp. Shirley has the word as a verb,—"Let's barley-break."—M.]

Mignon.—The situation or character, one or both, of this young person is relied upon by all the admirers of Goethe as the most brilliant achievement of his poetic powers. We, on our part, are no less ready to take our stand on this as the most unequivocal evidence of depraved taste and defective sensibility. The reader might in this instance judge for himself with very little waste of time, if he were to mark the margin of those paragraphs in which the name of Mignon occurs, and to read them detached from all the rest. An odd way, we admit, of examining a work of any art if it were really composed on just principles of art; and the inference is pretty plain where such an insulation is possible, —which in the case of Mignon it is. The translator, indeed, is bound to think *not*: for, with a peculiar infelicity of judgment, natural enough to a critic who writes in the character of a eulogist, he says of this person that "her history runs like a thread of gold through the tissue of the narrative, connecting with the heart much that were else addressed only to the head." But a glittering metaphor is always suspicious in criticism: in this case it should naturally imply that Mignon in some way or other modifies the action and actors of the piece. Now, it is certain that never was there a character in drama or in novel on which any stress was laid which so little influenced the movement of the story. Nothing is either hastened or retarded by Mignon: she neither acts nor is acted upon: and we challenge the critic to point to any incident or situation of interest which would not remain uninjured though Mignon were wholly removed from the story. So removeable a person can hardly be a connecting thread of gold; unless, indeed, under the notion of a thread which everywhere betrays, by difference of colour or substance, its refusal to blend with the surrounding tissue,—a notion which is far from the meaning of the critic. But, without dwelling on this objection,—the relation of Mignon to the other characters and the series of the incidents is none at all; but, waiving this,—let us examine her character and her situation each for itself, and not as any part of a novel. The character in this case, if Mignon can be said to have one, arises out of the situation. And what is that? For the information of the reader, we shall state it as accurately as possible. First of all, Mignon is the offspring of an incestuous connexion between a brother and sister. Here let us pause one moment to point the reader's attention to Mr. Goethe, who is now at his old tricks,—never relying on the grand high-road sensibilities of human nature, but always travelling into bypaths of unnatural or unhallowed interest. Suicide, adultery, incest, monstrous situations, or manifestations of supernatural power, are the stimulants to which he constantly resorts in order to rouse his own feelings, originally feeble, and, long before the date of this work, grown torpid from artificial excitement. In the case before us what purpose is answered by the use of an expedient the very name of which is terrific and appalling to men of all nations, habits, and religions? What comes of it? What use, what result, can be pleaded to justify the tampering with such tremendous agencies? The father of Mignon, it may be answered, goes mad. He does; but is a madness such as his a justifying occasion for such an adjuration? is this a *dignus vindice nodus*?—a madness which is mere senile dotage and fatuity, pure childish imbecility, without passion, without dignity, and characterised by no one feeling but such as is base and selfish, viz. a clinging to life and an inexplicable *dread of little boys*! A state so mean might surely have arisen from some cause less awful; and we must add that a state so capriciously and fantastically conceived, so little arising out of any determinate case of passion, or capable of expressing any case of passion as its natural language, is to be justified only by a downright affidavit to the facts, and is not a proper object for the contemplation of a poet. Madhouses doubtless furnish many cases of fatuity no less eccentric and to all appearance arbitrary: as facts, as known realities, they do not on this account cease to be affecting; but as poetic creations, which must include their own law, they become unintelligible and monstrous. Besides, we are conceding too much to Mr. Goethe: the fatuity of the old man is nowhere connected with the unhappy circumstances of his previous life; on the whole it seems to be the product of mere constitutional weakness of brain, or probably is a liver case; for he is put under the care of a mad-doctor, and, by the help chiefly of a *course of newspapers*, he begins to recover; and finally he recovers altogether by one of the oddest prescriptions in the world. He puts a glassful of laudanum into a "firm, little, ground-glass phial": of this, however, he never drinks, but simply keeps it in his pocket; and the consciousness that he carries suicide in his waistcoat pocket reconciles him to life, and puts the finishing hand to the "recovery of his reason" (p. 274). With such a pocket companion about him, the reader would swear now that this old gentleman, if he must absolutely commit suicide for the good of the novel, will die by laudanum. Why else have we so circumstantial an account of the "ground-glass phial," drawn up as if by some great auctioneer—Christie or Squibb—for some great catalogue ("No. so and so, one firm, little, ground-glass phial"). But no: he who is born to be hanged will never be drowned; and the latter end of the old half-wit is as follows:—Being discharged as cured (or incurable), he one day enters a nobleman's house, where by the way he had no sort of introduction; in this house, as it happens, Wilhelm Meister is a visitor, and has some difficulty in recognising his former friend, "an *old* harper with a long beard," in a *young* gentleman who is practising as a dandy in an early stage. Goethe has an irresistible propensity to freeze his own attempts at the pathetic by a blighting air of the ludicrous. Accordingly, in the present case he introduces his man of woe as "cleanly and genteelly dressed"; "beard vanished,[1] hair dressed with some attention to the mode, and in his countenance the *look of age no longer to be seen.*" This last item certainly is as wondrous as Mr. Coleridge's *reading fly* ; and we suspect that the old Æson who had thus recovered his juvenility deceived himself when he fancied that he carried his laudanum as a mere *reversionary* friend who held a sinecure in his waistcoat pocket,—that in fact he must have drunk of it "pretty considerably." Be that as it may, at his first *début* he behaves decently; rather dull he is, perhaps, but rational, "cleanly," polite, and (we are happy to state) able to face any little boy, the most determined that ever carried pop-gun. But such heroism could not be expected to last for ever; soon after he finds a MS. which contains an account of his own life; and upon reading it he prepares for suicide. And let *us* prepare also, as short-hand writers to a genuine GERMAN SUICIDE! In such a case, now, if the novel were an English novel,—supposing, for instance, of our composition, who are English reviewers, or of our readers' composition (who are probably English readers),—if then we were reduced to the painful necessity of inflicting capital punishment upon one or two of our characters (as surely in our own novel, where all the people are our own creatures, we have the clearest right to put all of them to death),—matters, we say, being come to that pass that we were called on to make an example of a mutineer or two, and it were fully agreed that the thing must be,—we should cause them to take their laudanum, or their rifle bullet, as the case might be, and die "*sans phrase*,"—die (as our friend "the dramatist" says),

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[1] "*Vanished*": or should we read perhaps *varnished*?

> "Die nobly, die like demigods."

Not so our German: he takes the matter more coolly, and dies transcendentally,—"by cold gradation and well-balanced form." First of all, he became convinced that it was now "impossible for him to live": that is, the idea struck him in the way of a theory: it was a new idea, a German idea, and he was pleased with it. Next he considered that, as he designed to part this life "se offendendo," argal, if the water would not come to him, he must look out for the water; so he pulls out the "ground-glass phial" and pours out his laudanum into a glass of "almond milk." Almond milk! Was there ever such a German blunder! But to proceed: having mixed his potion, a potion unknown to all the pharmacopœias in Christendom, "he raised it to his mouth; but he shuddered when it reached his lips; he set it down untasted; went out to walk once more across the garden," &c. (p. 284). O fie, fie! Mr. Mignonette![1] this is sad work,—"walking across the garden," and "shuddering," and "doing nothing," as Macmorris (*Henry V*) says, "when by Chrish there is work to be done and throats to be cut." He returns from the garden, and is balked in his purpose by a scene too ludicrous to mention amongst such tender and affecting matter; and thus for one day he gets a reprieve. Now, this is what we call false mercy: well knowing that his man was to die, why should Mr. G. keep him lingering in this absurd way? Such a line of conduct shall have no countenance in any novel that we may write. Once let a man of ours be condemned; and, if he won't drink off his laudanum, then (as Bernardine says, *Measure for Measure*) we will "beat out his brains with billets," but he shall die that same day, without further trouble to ourselves or our readers. Now, on the contrary, Mr. Mignonette takes three days in dying: within which term we are bold to say that any reasonable man would have been sat upon by the coroner, buried, unburied by the resurrection-man, and demonstrated upon by the anatomical Professor. Well, to proceed with this long concern of Mr. Mignonette's suicide, which travels as slowly as a Chancery suit or as the York coach in Charles II's reign (note: this coach took fourteen days between York and London: *vide* Eden's *State of the Poor*),—To proceed, we say,—on the second day, Mr. Mignonette cut his own throat with his own razor; and *that*, you will say, was doing something towards the object we all have in view. It was; at least it might seem so; but there's no trusting to appearances; it's not every man that will die because his throat is cut: a Cambridge man of this day[1] (*Diary of an Invalid*) saw a man at Rome who, or whose head rather, continued to express various sentiments through his eyes after he (or his head) had been entirely amputated from him (or his body). By the way, this man might have some little headache perhaps, but he must have been charmingly free from indigestion. But this is digressing. To return to Mr. Mignonette:—In conversing with a friend upon his case, we took a bet that, for all his throat was cut, he would talk again, and talk very well too. Our friend conceived the thing to be impossible; but he knew nothing of German. "It can*not* be," said he, "for when the larynx—" "Ay, bless your heart!" we interrupted him, "but in this case the larynx of the party was a German larynx." However, to go on with Mr. Mignonette's suicide. His throat is cut; and still, as Macmorris would be confounded to hear, "by Chrish there is nothing done": for a doctor mends it again (p. 283), and at p. 284 we win our bet; for he talks as well as ever he did in his life; only we are concerned to say that his fear of little boys returns. But still he talks down to the very last line of p. 284; in which line, by the way, is the very last word he is known to have uttered; and that is "glass"; not, however, that well-known unexceptionable "firm little ground-glass phial," but another which had less right to his dying recollections. Now then, having heard the "last word of dying Mignonette," the reader fondly conceives that certainly Mignonette is dead. *Mit nichten*, as they say in Germany, by no means: Mignonette is *not* dead, nor like to be for one day; nor perhaps would he have been dead at this moment if he had not been a *German* Mignonette; being so, however, the whole benefit of a German throat is defeated. His throat is mended by the surgeon; but, having once conceived a German theory that it was impossible for him to live, although he is so composed as to relate his own theory and the incident which caused it, he undoes all that the doctor has done, tears away the bandages, and bleeds to death. This event is ascertained on the morning after he had uttered his last word, "glass"; the brittle glass of Mignonette's life is at length broken past even a German skill to repair it: and Mignonette is dead,—dead as a door nail, we believe; though we have still some doubts whether he will not again be mended and reappear in some future novel,—our reason for which is not merely his extreme tenacity of life, which is like that of a tortoise, but also because we observe that, though he is said to be dead, he is not buried. Nor does anybody take any further notice of him or ever mention his name; but all about him fall to marrying and giving in marriage; and a few pages wind up the whole novel in a grand *bravura* of kissing and catch-match-making. We have Mr. Goethe's word for it, however, that Mignonette is dead; and he ought to know. But, be that as it may, nothing is so remarkable as the extreme length of time which it took to do the trick: not until "the third rosy-fingered morn appears" (to speak Homerically) is the suicide accomplished; three days it took to kill this old young man, this flower, this Mignonette,—which we take to be, if not the boldest, the longest suicide on record. And so much for Mr. Mignonette; and so much for a German suicide.[1]

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[1] His name is *not* Mignonette, Mr. Goethe will say. No: in fact he has no name: but he is father to Mignon; and therefore, in default of a better name, we cannot see why we should not be at liberty to call him Mignonette.

> "Si tibi Mistyllus coquus . . . vocatur,
> Dicetur quare non *T' ara t' alla* mihi?"

Not having a Martial at hand, we must leave a little gap in the first line to be filled up by those who have: *Æmiliane* is perhaps the word. [The missing word *is* "Æmiliane": Martial, Epigr. I. 51.—M.] The names in Wilhelm Meister are of themselves worthy of notice, as furnishing a sufficient evidence of Goethe's capriciousness and fantastic search after oddity. Most of the Germans, for no possible reason, have Italian names ending in *o* and *a* (the Italians on the other hand have not); of one Italian name (*Jarno*) Goethe himself says that "nobody knows what to make of it." Our own theory is that it comes by syncope from Jargono. [In the original in the *London Magazine* the note was prolonged thus:—"All readers ought to be acquainted with Mr. Pinkerton's proposal for improving the English Language, which he delivered under his assumed name of Robert Heron (*Letters of Literature*): his idea was that it should be Italianised by adding an *o* or an *a* to the ends of particular words; and accordingly one of his specimens begins—"*On the toppo of the rocko*"; which in the vulgar is *On the top of the rock.* Hence, therefore, by Pinkerton, we clearly have *Jargono*; and then, as we have said before, by syncope we gain *Jarno.* But Goethe, we understand, vehemently "reclaims."—To this whim of Pinkerton's De Quincey recurred in another, and much later, paper.—M.]

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[1] Matthews, a man of extraordinary intellectual promise, and a special friend of Lord Byron's. He defrauded all the expectations of his friends by dying prematurely. The reader will do well, however, to look into his *Diary*. ["The Diary of an Invalid: being the Journal of a Tour in Portugal, Italy, Switzerland, and France, 1817-19. London, 1820." De Quincey's note is an addition in 1859.—M.]

HISTORY OF MR. MEISTER'S "AFFAIRS OF THE HEART"

First we find him "in love" (oh! dishonoured phrase!) with Mariana; rapturously in love, if the word of Mr. Goethe were a sufficient guarantee. Not so, however. An author may assert what he will of his own creatures; and as long as he does not himself contradict it by the sentiments, wishes, or conduct which he attributes to them, we are to take his word for it; but no longer. We, who cannot condescend to call by the name of "love" the fancies for a pretty face which vanish before a week's absence or before a face somewhat prettier, still less the appetites of a selfish voluptuary, know what to think of Wilhelm's passion, its depth, and its purity, when we find (p. 211, i.) "the current of his spirits and ideas" stopped by "the spasm of a sharp jealousy." Jealousy about whom? Mariana? No, but Philina. And by whom excited? By the "boy" Frederick. His jealousy was no light one; it was "a fierce jealousy" (p. 221, i.); it caused him "a general discomfort, such as he had never felt in his life before" (p. 211, i.); and, had not decency restrained him, he could have "crushed in pieces all the people round him" (p. 221, i.) Such a jealousy with regard to Philina is incompatible, we presume, with any real fervour of love for Mariana: we are now therefore at liberty to infer that Mariana is dethroned, and that Philina reigneth in her stead. Next he is "in love" with the Countess; and Philina seldom appears to him as an object of any other feelings than those of contempt. Fourthly, at p. 45, ii, he falls desperately in love with "the Amazon," *i.e.* a young lady mounted on a grey courser, and wrapped up in "a man's white greatcoat." His love for this *incognita* holds on throughout the work like the standing bass, but not so as to prevent a running accompaniment, in the treble, of various other "passions." And these passions not merely succeed each other with rapidity, but are often all upon him at once. At p. 64, ii, "the recollection of the amiable Countess is to Wilhelm infinitely sweet; but anon the figure of the noble Amazon would step between"; and two pages further on he is indulging in day-dreams that "perhaps Mariana might appear," or, "above all, the beauty whom he worshipped" *i.e.* the Amazon). Here, therefore, there is a sort of glee for three voices between the Countess, Mariana, and the Amazon. Fifthly, he is in love with Theresa, the other Amazon. And this love is no joke; for at p. 134, iii, meditating upon "her great virtues" (and, we will add, her political economy) he writes a letter offering her his hand; and at this time (what time? why, post time to be sure) "his resolution was so firm and the business was of such importance" that, lest Major Socrates should intercept his letter, he carries it himself to the office. But, sixthly, see what the resolutions of men are! In the very next chapter, and when time has advanced only by ten pages (but unfortunately after the letter-bags were made up), Wilhelm finds himself furiously in love with a friend of Theresa's; not that he has seen her since post-time, but he has been reminded of her. This lady is Natalia, and turns out to be "the Amazon." No sooner has he a prospect of seeing her than "all the glories of the sky," he vows, "are as nothing to the moment which he looks for." In the next page (145) this moment arrives; Wilhelm reaches the house where she lives; on entering, "finds it the most *earnest* and (as he almost felt) the holiest place which he had ever trod"; on going up stairs to the drawing-room is obliged to kneel down "to get a moment's breathing time"; can scarcely raise himself again; and, upon actual introduction to the divinity, "falls upon his knee, seizes her hand, and kisses it with unbounded rapture." What's to be done now, Mr. Meister? Pity you had not known this the night before, or had intrusted your letter to Socrates, or had seen some verses we could have sent you from England—

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[1] Mignonette has taken so long in killing that we have no room for Mignon in the gallery; but, as she is easily detached from the novel, we hope to present her on some other opportunity as a cabinet picture.

"'Tis good to be merry and wise,
'Tis good to be honest and true:
'Tis good to be off with the old love
Before you be on with the new."

Matters begin to look black, especially as Theresa accepts his offer, and (as though Satan himself had a plot against him) in consequence of that very visit to Natalia which made him pray that she would not. "I hope you will be grateful," says the new love: "for she (viz. the old love) asked me for "advice; and, as it happened that you were here just then, "I was enabled to destroy the few scruples which my friend "still entertained." Here's delectable news. A man receives a letter from a lady who has had "her scruples"—accepting him nevertheless, but begging permission "at times to bestow a cordial thought upon her former friend" (Lothario, to wit): in return for which she "will press his child (by a former mother) to her heart." Such a letter he receives from one Amazon, "when with terror he discovers in his heart most vivid traces of an inclination" for another Amazon. A man can't marry two Amazons. Well, thank Heaven! it's no scrape of ours. A German wit has brought us all into it; and a German *dénouement* shall help us all out. *Le voici!* There are two Amazons, the reader knows. Good: now one of these is *ci-devant* sweetheart to Lothario, the other his sister. What may prevent therefore that Meister shall have the sister, and Lothario (according to Horace's arrangement with Lydia) his old sweetheart? Nothing but this sweetheart's impatience, who (p. 184, iii) "dreads that she shall lose *him*" (Meister) "and not regain Lothario"; *i.e.* between two chairs, &c.; and, as Meister will not come to her, though she insists upon it in letter after letter, she comes to Meister, —determined to "hold him fast" (p. 184, iii). O Amazon of little faith! put your trust in Mr. Goethe, and he will deliver you! This he does by a *coup de théâtre*. That lady whose passions had carried her into the south of France had bestowed some of her favours upon Lothario: but she is reputed the mother of Theresa; and hence had arisen the separation between Theresa and Lothario. This maternal person, however, is suddenly discovered NOT to be the mother of Theresa: the road is thus opened to a general winding-up of the whole concern; and the novel, as we said before, hastens to its close amid a grand *bravura* of kissing and catch-match-making. In the general row even old Major Socrates catches a wife, and a young one[1] too,—though probably enough, we fear, a Xantippe.

Thus we have made Mr. von Goethe's novel speak for itself. And, whatever impression it may leave on the reader's mind, let it be charged upon the composer. If that impression is one of entire disgust, let it not be forgotten that it belongs exclusively to Mr. Goethe. The music is his: we have but arranged the concert, and led in the orchestra. Even thus qualified, however, the task is not to us an agreeable one. Our practice is to turn away our eyes from whatsoever we are compelled to loathe or to disdain, and to leave all that dishonours human nature to travel on its natural road to shame and oblivion. If in this instance we depart from that maxim, it is in consideration of the rank which the author has obtained elsewhere, and through his partisans is struggling for in this country. Without the passport of an eminent name *Wilhelm Meister* is a safe book; but, backed in that way, the dullest books are floated into popularity (thousands echoing their praise who are not aware of the matter they contain), and thus even such books become influential and are brought within the remark of Cicero (*De Leg.* lib. 3) on the mischief done by profligate men of rank: "*Quod non solum vitia concipiunt, sed ea infundunt in civitatem; neque solum obsunt quia ipsi corrumpuntur, sed quia corrumpunt, plusque exemplo quam peccato nocent.*"[2]

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[1] This young lady we overlooked in the general muster. Her name is Lydia; and her little history is that she had first of all set her cap at Lothario and succeeded in bringing him to her feet; secondly, had been pushed aside to make room for Theresa; thirdly, had forced herself into Lothario's house and bedroom under the pretext of nursing him when wounded; but, fourthly, had been fairly ejected from both house and bedroom by a stratagem in which "our friend," in the character of toad-eater, takes a most ungentlemanly part.

[2] "Because they not only conceive vicious things, but infuse them into the community; nor do they do harm only by being corrupted themselves, but because they corrupt others, and injure more by example than by evil deed."—It is but fair to De Quincey, in view of any discredit that may now attach to him for his low estimate in 1824 of the celebrated novel of the great Goethe, and his grossly irreverent criticism of it, to mention that Carlyle himself, while engaged in

translating the novel, was not without similar misgivings about it in some particulars. In a letter of the 18th of September 1823 to Miss Welsh (afterwards Mrs. Carlyle), dated from Kinnaird House in Perthshire, where he was residing with the Bullers as tutor to young Charles Buller, he wrote: "Meanwhile I go on with Goethe's *Wilhelm* "*Meister*: a book which I love not, which I am sure will never sell, "but which I am determined to print and finish. There are touches "of the highest, most ethereal, genius in it; but diluted with floods "of insipidity, which even *I* would not have written for the world." Again, writing from the same place, on the 23d of the same September, to his friend Mr. James Johnston, he says: "I am busily engaged every "night in translating Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*: a task which I have "undertaken formally and must proceed with, though it suits me little. "There is poetry in the book, and prose, prose for ever. When I "read of players and libidinous actresses and their sorry pasteboard "apparatus for beautifying and enlivening the 'Moral World,' I "render it into grammatical English,—with a feeling mild and charitable as that of a starving hyæna. The book is to be printed in "Winter or Spring. No mortal will ever buy a copy of it. *N'importe.* "I have engaged with it to keep the fiend from preying on my vitals, "and with that sole view I go along with it. Goethe is the greatest "genius that has lived for a century, and the greatest ass that has "lived for three. I could sometimes fall down and worship him: at "other times I could kick him out of the room." Again, from London, on the 25th of June 1824, when the Translation was actually out, he wrote to his brother Alexander: "Did you get *Meister*, and "how do you *dis*like it? For really it is a most mixed performance, "and, though intellectually good, much of it is morally bad." It thus appears that, to the very eve of the publication of the book, and even after it was published, Carlyle had his qualms respecting it. True, he had suppressed these in his printed Preface, dwelling there rather on the higher merits of the novel, though even there admitting, "The hero is a milksop, whom, with all his gifts, it takes an effort to "avoid despising." True, he resented De Quincey's review of the book, calling it, in a letter dated 22d January 1825, "a very vulgar and brutish review," and declaring of Goethe's novel in spite of all reviewers that it was "a book containing traces of a higher, far higher, spirit, altogether more *genius*," than any other book of his own time; to which, in another letter, of the 31st of the same month, there is this addition: "Various quacks, for instance, have exclaimed against the "*immorality* of *Meister*; and the person whom it delighted above all "others of my acquaintances was Mrs. Strachey, exactly the most "religious, pure, and true-minded person among the whole number." All this notwithstanding, and though Carlyle naturally retained through his whole life an affection for the novel he had been the first to translate into English, and continued to include it in that more fully formed admiration of Goethe which possessed him after Goethe and he had come into personal relations by correspondence, it may yet be doubted whether Carlyle's respect for this earlier of Goethe's two "Meister" novels,—the *Lehrjahre* or *Apprenticeship*, first published by Goethe in 1795,—was ever so high and cordial as that which he felt for its sequel, the *Wanderjahre* or *Travels*, not published by Goethe, even in its first and comparatively short form, till long afterwards. This, in its first form, was translated by Carlyle for insertion into his "Specimens of German Romance," published in 1827; but the translations of the *Lehrjahre* and the *Wanderjahre* were afterwards put together by Carlyle, and are now printed connectedly in the collective editions of his works. He was especially fond of referring to the *Wanderjahre* for its Goethean doctrine of "The Three Reverences."—The extracts in this note are from "Early Letters of Thomas Carlyle: edited by Charles Eliot Norton: London, 1886."—M.

JOHN PAUL FREDERICK RICHTER[1]

GRASMERE, OCT. 18, 1821.

MY DEAR F.—You ask me to direct you generally in your choice of German authors; secondly, and especially, among those authors to name my favourite. In such an ocean as German Literature your first request is of too wide a compass for a letter; and I am not sorry that, by leaving it untouched, and reserving it for some future conversation, I shall add one *moment* (in the language of dynamics) to the attractions of friendship and the local attractions of my residence, —insufficient, as it seems, of themselves, to draw you so far northwards from London. Come, therefore, dear F., bring thy ugly countenance to the Lakes; and I will engraft such German youth and vigour on thy English trunk that henceforwards thou shalt bear excellent fruit. I suppose, F., you know that the golden pippin is now almost, if not quite, extinct in England: and why? Clearly from want of some exotic, but congenial, inoculation. So it is with the literatures of whatsoever land: unless crossed by some other of different breed, they all tend to superannuation. Thence comes it that the French literature is now in the last stage of phthisis, dotage, palsy, or whatever image will best express the most abject state of senile—(senile? no! of anile)—imbecility. Its constitution, as you well know, was in its best days marrowless and without nerve,—its youth without hope, and its manhood without dignity. For it is remarkable that to the French people only, of all nations that have any literature at all, has it been, or can it be justly, objected, that they have "no paramount book,"—none, that is to say, which stands out as a monument adequately representative of the intellectual power of a whole nation, none which has attested its own power by influencing the modes of thinking, acting, educating, through a long tract of centuries. They have no book on which the national mind has adequately acted,—none which has reacted, for any great end, upon the national mind. We English have mighty authors,—almost, I might say, almighty authors,—in whom (to speak by a scholastic term) the national mind is contained *eminenter*; that is, virtually contained in its principles: and, reciprocally, these abstracts of the English mind continue, in spite of many counteracting forces, to mould and modulate the national tone of thought: I do not say *directly*, for you will object that they are not sufficiently studied; but indirectly, inasmuch as the hundreds in every generation who influence their contemporary millions have themselves derived an original influence from these books. The planet Jupiter, according to the speculations of a great German philosopher, is just now coming into a habitable condition: its primeval man is, perhaps, now in his Paradise: the history, the poetry, the woes of Jupiter, are now in their cradle. Suppose, then, that this Jovian man were allowed to come down upon our Earth, to take an inquest among us, and to call us, nation by nation, to a solemn audit on the question of our intellectual efforts and triumphs. What could the Earth say for herself? For our parts, we should take him into Westminster Abbey; and, standing upon the ancestral dust of England, we should present him with two volumes: one containing *Hamlet*, *Lear*, and *Othello*; the other containing *Paradise Lost.* This, we should say, this is what we have achieved: these are our Pyramids. But what could France present him? and where? Why, her best offering must be presented in a *boudoir*: the impudence even of a Frenchman would not dare to connect the sanctities of religious feeling with any book in his language: the wildest vanity could not pretend to show the correlate of *Paradise Lost.* To speak in a language suitable to a Jovian visitor, — that is, in the language of astronomy,—*our* books would appear to him as two heavenly bodies of the first magnitude, whose *period*, the cycle and the revolution of whose orbit, were too vast to be calculated; whilst the very best of France could be regarded as no more than satellites, fitted to move about some central body of insignificant size. Now, whence comes this poverty of the French Literature? Manifestly hence,—that it is too intensely steeped in French manners to admit of any influences from without: it has rejected all alliance with exotic literature; and, like some royal families, or like a particular valley in this county, from intermarrying too exclusively in their own narrow circle, it is now on its last legs, and will soon go out like a farthing rushlight.

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[1] Appeared originally in the *London Magazine* for December 1821,—the first of De Quincey's contributions to that periodical in succession to his "Confessions of an English Opium-Eater": reprinted in 1860, in the last and posthumous volume of his own Collective Edition of his writings. In that reprint there was omitted the following, which stood prefixed to the article in the Magazine, by way of whimsical introductory motto, immediately under the title:—"Virum, ex hodiernis transrhenanis, quem ego prae caeteris stupeo, et qui locum principis in Litteris Germanicis merĕtur jure: de quo spero quod *mihi* gratias agetis, utpote nomen ejus, hactenus inauditum per nostras Athenas, nunc palam apud vos proferenti,—libros vero speciosissimi argumenti in usum vernaculi lectoris civitati posthac donaturo. Quod si me fefellerit opinio quam de illo habeo, sciatis nusquam gentium reperiri inter Teutonicos scriptores qui possit penitus approbari.—*Trebell. Pollio* (*inter Historiæ Augustæ Scriptores: Is. Casauboni, Par.* 1603, 4*to*, *p.* 274): *ex editione Grasmeriensi.*" ("A man, among our Transrhenane contemporaries, whom I am amazed by more than by any of the rest, and who rightly deserves the place of a chief in German Literature: with respect to whom I hope that you will give *me* thanks, as being the person who now brings forward openly among you his name, hitherto unheard of through our Athens, and who is indeed hereafter to present the community with some of his finest books for the use of the vernacular reader. If, however, the opinion I have of him should be wrong, be sure that nowhere among Teutonic writers is one to be found that can be approved of thoroughly.—*Trebellius Pollio in Isaac Casaubon's Writers of the Augustan History Paris* 1603, *quarto*, *p.* 274: *from the Grasmere Edition.*")—M.

Having this horrid example before our eyes, what should we English do? Why, evidently, we should cultivate an intercourse with that literature of Europe which has most of a juvenile constitution. Now *that* is beyond all doubt the German. I do not so much insist on the present excellence of the German literature (though, poetry apart, the *current* literature of Germany appears to me by much the best in Europe): what weighs most with me is the promise and assurance of future excellence held out by the originality and masculine strength of thought which has moulded the German mind since the time of Kant. Whatever be thought of the existing authors, it is clear that a mighty power has been at work in the German mind since the French Revolution, which happily coincided in point of time with the influence of Kant's great work.[1] Change of any kind was good for Germany. One truth was clear,—Whatever was, was bad. And the evidence of this appears on the face of the literature. Before 1789 good authors were rare in Germany: since then they are so numerous that in any sketch of their literature all individual notice becomes impossible; you must confine yourself to favourite authors, or notice them by classes. And this leads me to your question—Who is *my* favourite author? My answer is that I have three favourites; and those are Kant, Schiller, and John Paul Richter. But, setting Kant aside, as hardly belonging to the *literature* in the true meaning of that word, I have, you see, two. In what respect there is any affinity between them I will notice before I conclude. For the present, I shall observe only that, in the case of Schiller, I love his works chiefly because I venerate the memory of the man, whereas in the case of Richter my veneration and affection for the man is founded wholly on my knowledge of his works.

This distinction will point out Richter as the most eligible *author* for your present purpose. In point of originality, indeed, there cannot arise a question between the pretensions of Richter and those of any other German author whatsoever. He is no man's representative but his own; nor do I think he will ever have a successsor. Of *his* style of writing it may be said, with an emphatic and almost exclusive propriety, that except when it proceeds in a spirit of perfect freedom it cannot exist,—unless moving from an impulse self-derived, it cannot move at all. What, then, *is* his style of writing? What are its general characteristics? These I will endeavour to describe with sufficient circumstantiality to meet your present wants: premising only that I call him frequently *John Paul*, without adding his surname, both because all Germany gives him that appellation as an expression of affection for his person, and because he has himself sometimes assumed it in the title-pages of his works.

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[1] The *Critik der Reinen Vernunft* was published about five years before the French Revolution, but lay unnoticed in the publisher's warehouse for four or five years.

First. — The characteristic distinction of Paul Richter amongst German authors,—I will venture to add, amongst modern authors generally,—is the two-headed power which he possesses over the pathetic and the humorous; or, rather, let me say at once, what I have often felt to be true, and could (I think) at a fitting opportunity prove to be so, this power is *not* two-headed, but a one-headed Janus with two faces. The pathetic and the humorous are but different phases of the same orb; they assist each other, melt indiscernibly into each other, and often shine each through each like layers of coloured crystals placed one behind another. Take as an illustration Mrs. Quickly's account of Falstaff's death. Here there were three things to be accomplished. First, the death of a human being was to be described,—of necessity, therefore, to be described pathetically; for, death being one of those events which call up the pure generalities of human nature, and remove to the background all individualities, whether of life or character, the mind would not in any case endure to have it treated with levity,—so that, if any circumstances of humour are introduced by the poetic painter, they must be such as will blend and fall into harmony with the ruling passion of the scene: and, by the way,—combining it with the fact, that humorous circumstances often *have* been introduced into death-bed scenes, both actual and imaginary,—this remark of itself yields a proof that there *is* a humour which is in alliance with pathos. How else could we have borne the jests of Sir Thomas More after his condemnation,—which, *as* jests, would have been unseasonable from anybody else; but, being felt in him to have a root in his character, they take the dignity of humorous traits, and do in fact deepen the pathos. So, again, mere *naïveté*, or archness, when it is felt to flow out of the cheerfulness of resignation, becomes humorous, and at the same time becomes pathetic: as, for instance, Lady Jane Grey's remark on the scaffold—"I have but a little neck," &c. But to return. The death of Falstaff, as the death of a man, was, in the first place, to be described with pathos, and, if with humour, no otherwise than as the one could be reconciled with the other. But, 2d, it was the death not only of a man, but also of a Falstaff; and we could not but require that the description should revive the image and features of so memorable a character: if not, why describe it at all? The understanding would as little bear to forget that it was the death-bed of a Falstaff as the heart and affections to forget that it was the death-bed of a fellow-creature. Lastly, the description is given, not by the poet speaking in his own universal language, but by Mrs. Quickly—a character as individually portrayed, and as well known to us, as the subject of her description.—Let me recapitulate: 1st, it was to be pathetic, as relating to a man; 2d, humorous as relating to Falstaff; 3d, humorous in another style, as coming from Mrs. Quickly. These were difficulties rather greater than those of levelling hills, filling up valleys, and arranging trees in picturesque groups: yet Capability Brown[1] was allowed to exclaim, on surveying a conquest of his in this walk of art—"Ay! none but your Browns and your G— Almighties can do such things as these." Much more then might this irreverent speech be indulged to the gratitude of our veneration for Shakspere on witnessing such triumphs of *his* art. The simple words, "*and a' babbled of green fields,*" I should imagine, must have been read by many a thousand with tears and smiles at the same instant,—I mean, connecting them with a previous knowledge of Falstaff and of Mrs. Quickly.[2] Such, then, being demonstrably the possibility of blending, or fusing, as it were, the elements of pathos and of humour, and composing out of their union a third metal *sui generis* (as Corinthian brass, you know, is said to have been the product of all other metals, from the confluence of melted statues, &c., at the burning of Corinth),—I cannot but consider John Paul Richter as by far the most eminent artist in that way since the time of Shakspere. What! you will say, greater than Sterne? I answer "*Yes*, to my thinking"; and I could give some arguments and illustrations in support of this judgment. But I am not anxious to establish my own preference as founded on anything of better authority than my idiosyncrasy, or more permanent, if you choose to think so, than my own caprice.

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[1] Launcelot Brown, a celebrated landscape gardener (1715-1783), had the nickname of *Capability Brown.*—M.

[2] This famous description by Mrs. Quickly of the death of Falstaff occurs in *Henry V*, Act II, Scene 3.—"A' made a finer end and "went away an it had been any Christom child; a' parted even "just between twelve and one, even at the turning of the tide: for, "after I saw him fumble with the sheets and play with flowers and "smile upon his fingers' ends, I knew there was but one way; for his "nose was as sharp as a pen, and a' babbled of green fields."—The last six words, "*and a' babbled of green fields,*" do not occur at all in the quarto editions of the play; and in the first and second folios the words are "*and a Table of greene fields,*"—an unintelligible reading, which has greatly perplexed modern editors. Pope accounted for it by supposing that in one of the old stage copies of the play there had

Second.—Judge as you will on this last point,—that is, on the comparative pretensions of Sterne and Richter to the *spolia opima* in the fields of pathos and of humour,—yet in one pretension he not only leaves Sterne at an infinite distance in the rear, but really, for my part, I cease to ask who it is that he leaves behind him, for I begin to think with myself who it is that he approaches. If a man could reach Venus or Mercury, we should not say he has advanced to a great distance from the earth,—we should say, he is very near to the sun. So also, if in anything a man approaches Shakspere, or does but remind us of him, all other honours are swallowed up in that: a relation of inferiority to him is a more enviable distinction than all degrees of superiority to others, the rear of *his* splendours a more eminent post than the supreme station in the van of all others. I have already mentioned one *quality* of excellence, viz. the interpenetration[1] of the humorous and the pathetic, common in Shak-

been at this point a marginal stage direction for the bringing in of a table (said table to be one of Greenfield's, the property-man of the theatre!), and that the stage-direction had been nonsensically welded into the printed text. He therefore rejected the words altogether. Others, however, refused Pope's explanation,—evidently a very forced one,—and supposed a misprint of some words actually in the original. Hence several proposed emendations,—"*upon a table of green fells*," "*on a table of green frieze*," &c. &c. To Theobald belongs the credit of having suggested the reading now generally adopted, "*and a' babbled of green fields*,"—one of the happiest emendations ever proposed, though some think "*talked*" more likely to have been the word than "*babbled*."—M.

[1] "*Interpenetration*":—This word is from the mint of Mr. Coleridge; and, as it seems to me a very "laudable" word (as surgeons say of *pus*), I mean to patronise it, and beg to recommend it to my

spere and John Paul; but this, apart from its *quantity* or degree, implies no more of a participation in Shaksperian excellence than the possession of wit, judgment, good sense, &c., which, in some degree or other, must be common to all authors of any merit at all. Thus far I have already said that I would not contest the point of precedence with the admirers of Sterne; but, in the claim I now advance for Richter, which respects a question of *degree*, I cannot allow of any competition at all from that quarter. What, then, is it that I claim? Briefly, an activity of understanding so restless and indefatigable that all attempts to illustrate or express it adequately by images borrowed from the natural world,—from the motions of beasts, birds, insects, &c., from the leaps of tigers or leopards, from the gamboling and tumbling of kittens, the antics of monkeys, or the running of antelopes and ostriches, &c.,—are baffled, confounded, and made ridiculous by the enormous and overmastering superiority of impression left by the thing illustrated. The rapid but uniform motions of the heavenly bodies serve well enough to typify the grand and continuous motions of the Miltonic mind. But the wild, giddy, fantastic, capricious, incalculable, springing, vaulting, tumbling, dancing, waltzing, caprioling, *pirouetting*, sky-rocketing of the chamois, the harlequin, the Vestris, the storm-loving raven—the raven? no, the lark (for often he ascends "singing up to heaven's gates," but like the lark he dwells upon the earth), —in short, of the Proteus, the Ariel, the Mercury, the monster, John Paul,—can be compared to nothing in heaven or earth, or the waters under the earth, except to the motions of the same faculty as existing in Shakspere. Perhaps meteorology may hereafter furnish us with some adequate analogon or adumbration of its multitudinous activity: *hereafter*, observe; for, as to lightning, or anything we know at present, it pants after them "in vain," in company with

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friends and the public in general. By the way, the public, of whose stupidity I have often reason to complain, does not seem to understand it. The prefix *inter* has the force of the French *entre* in such words as *s'entrelacer*: *reciprocal* penetration is the meaning,—as if a black colour should enter a crimson one, yet not keep itself distinct, but, being in turn pervaded by the crimson, each should diffuse itself through the other.

that pursy old gentleman, Time, as painted by Dr. Johnson.[1] To say the truth, John Paul's intellect,— his faculty of catching at a glance all the relations of objects, both the grand, the lovely, the ludicrous, and the fantastic,—is painfully and almost morbidly active: there is no respite, no repose allowed; no, not for a moment, in some of his works, —not whilst you can say *Jack Robinson.* And, by the way, a sort of namesake of this Mr. Robinson, viz. Jack-o'-the-lantern, comes as near to a semblance of John Paul as anybody I know. Shakspere himself has given us some account of Jack; and I assure you that the same account will serve for Jack Paul Richter. One of his books (*Vorschule der Aesthetik*) is absolutely so surcharged with quicksilver that I expect to see it leap off the table as often as it is laid there; and therefore, to prevent accidents, I usually load it with the works of our good friend — —, Esq. and F.R.S. In fact, so exuberant is this perilous gas of wit in John Paul that, if his works do not explode, at any rate I think John Paul himself will blow up one of these days. It must be dangerous to bring a candle too near him: many persons, especially half-pay officers, have lately "gone off" by inconsiderately blowing out their bed-candle.[2] They were loaded with a different sort of spirit, it is true: but I am sure there can be none more inflammable than that of John Paul!

To be serious, however, and to return from chasing this

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[1] "And panting Time toiled after him in vain."
So that, according to the Doctor, Shakspere performed a match against Time; and, being backed by Nature, it seems he won it.

[2] Of which the most tremendous case I have met with was this; and, as I greatly desire to believe so good a story, I should be more easy in mind if I knew that anybody else had ever believed it. In the year 1818, an Irishman, and a great lover of whisky, persisted obstinately, though often warned of his error, in attempting to blow out a candle: the candle, however, blew out the Irishman, and the following result was sworn to before the coroner:—The Irishman shot off like a Congreve rocket, passed with the velocity of a twenty-four pounder through I know not how many storeys, ascended to the "highest heaven of invention";—viz. to the garrets where slept a tailor and his wife. Feather-beds, which stop cannon-balls, gave way before the Irishman's skull: he passed like a gimlet through two mattresses, a feather-bed, &c., and stood grinning at the tailor and his wife, without his legs, however,—which he had left behind him in the second floor.

Will-o'-the-wisp, there cannot be a more valuable endowment to a writer of inordinate sensibility than this inordinate agility of the understanding. The active faculty balances the passive; and without such a balance there is great risk of falling into a sickly tone of maudlin sentimentality,—from which Sterne cannot be pronounced wholly free, and still less a later author of pathetic tales whose name I omit. By the way, I must observe that it is this fiery, meteoric scintillating, coruscating power of John Paul which is the true foundation of his frequent obscurity. You will find that he is reputed the most difficult of all German authors; and many Germans are so little aware of the true derivation of this difficulty that it has often been said to me, as an Englishman, "What! can *you* read John Paul?"—meaning to say, Can you read such difficult German? Doubtless, in some small proportion, the mere language and style are responsible for his difficulty; and, in a sense somewhat different, applying it to a mastery over the language in which he writes, the expression of Quintilian in respect to the student of Cicero may be transferred to the student of John Paul: "Ille se profecisse sciat cui Cicero valde placebit": he may rest assured that he has made a competent progress in the German language who can read Paul Richter. Indeed he is a sort of *proof* author in this respect: a man who can "*construe*" him cannot be stopped by any difficulties purely verbal. But, after all, these verbal obscurities are but the necessary result and product of his style of thinking. The nimbleness of his transitions often makes him elliptical: the vast expansion and discursiveness in his range of notice and observation carries him into every department and nook of human life, of science, of art, and of literature; whence comes a proportionably extensive vocabulary, and a prodigious compass of idiomatic phraseology; and, finally, the fineness and evanescent brilliancy of his oblique glances and surface-skimmering allusions often fling but half a meaning on the mind, and one is puzzled to make out its complement. *Hence* it is,—that is to say, from his mode of presenting things, his lyrical style of connexion, and the prodigious fund of knowledge on which he draws for his illustrations and his images,—that his obscurity arises. And these are causes which must affect his own countrymen no less than foreigners. Further than as these causes must occasionally produce a corresponding difficulty of diction, I know of no reason why an Englishman should be thought specially concerned in his obscurity, or less able to find his way through it than any German. But just the same mistake is commonly made about Lycophron: he is represented as the most difficult of all Greek authors. Meantime, as far as language is concerned, he is one of the easiest. Some peculiar words he has, I acknowledge; but it is not single words that constitute verbal obscurity,—it is the construction, synthesis, composition, arrangement, and involution of words, which only can obstruct the reader. Now, in these parts of style Lycophron is remarkably lucid. Where, then, lies his reputed darkness? Purely in this,—that, by way of colouring the style with the sullen views of prophetic vision, Cassandra is made to describe all those on whom the fates of Troy hinged by enigmatic periphrases, oftentimes drawn from the most obscure incidents in their lives[1]: just as if I should describe Cromwell by the expression "*unfortunate tamer of horses*" because he once nearly broke his neck in Hyde Park when driving four-in-hand, or should describe a noble lord of the last century as "*the roaster of men*" because, when a member of the Hell-fire Club, he actually tied a poor man to the spit, and, having spitted him, proceeded to roast him.[2]

Third.—You will naturally collect, from the account here given of John Paul's activity of understanding and fancy, that, over and above his humour, he must have an overflowing opulence of wit. In fact he has. On this earth of ours, —I know nothing about the books in Jupiter, where Kant has proved that the authors will be far abler than any poor Terræ Filius such as Shakspere or Milton, but on this poor earth of ours,—I am acquainted with no book of such unintermitting and brilliant wit as his *Vorschule der Aesthetik*; it glitters like the stars on a frosty night, or like the stars on Count ——'s coat, or like the *ἀνήριθμον γέλασμα*, the multitudinous laughing, of the ocean under the glancing lights of sunbeams, or like a *feu-de-joie* of fireworks. In fact, John Paul's works are the galaxy of the German literary firmament. I defy a man to lay his hand on that sentence which is not vital and ebullient with wit. What *is* wit? We are told that it is the perception of resemblances; whilst the perception of differences, we are requested to believe, is reserved for another faculty. Very profound distinctions, no doubt; but very senseless for all that. I shall not here attempt a definition of wit: but I will just mention what I conceive to be one of the distinctions between wit and humour: viz. that, whilst wit is a purely intellectual thing, into every act of the humorous mood there is an influx of the *moral* nature: rays, direct or refracted, from the will and the affections, from the disposition and the temperament, enter into all humour; and thence it is that humour is of a diffusive quality, pervading an entire course of thoughts, whilst wit—because it has no existence apart from certain logical relations of a thought which are definitely assignable and can be counted even—is always punctually concentrated within the circle of a few words. On this account I would not advise you to read those of John Paul's works which are the wittiest, but those which are more distinguished for their humour. You will thus see more of the man. In a future letter I will send you a list of the whole, distributed into classes.

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[1] About Lycophron see *ante*, Vol. X, p. 214, footnote.—M.

[2] "*Proceeded* to roast him,—yes; but did he roast him?" Really I can't say. Some people like their mutton underdone; and Lord —— might like his *man* underdone. All I know of the sequel is that the sun expressed no horror at this Thyestean cookery,—which might be because he had set two hours before; but the Sun newspaper *did*, when it rose some nights after (as it always does) at six o'clock in the evening.

Fourthly and *finally*.—Let me tell you what it is that has fixed John Paul in my esteem and affection. Did you ever look into that sickening heap of abortions—the Ireland forgeries?[1] In one of these (Deed of Trust to John Hemynges) he makes Shakspere say, as his reason for having assigned to a friend such and such duties usually confided to lawyers, that he had "founde muche wickednesse amongste those of the lawe." On this Mr. Malone, whose indignation was justly roused to see Shakspere's name borrowed to countenance such loathsome and stupid vulgarity, expresses himself with much feeling[1]; and I confess that, for my part, that passage alone, without the innumerable marks of grossest forgery which stare upon one in every word, would have been quite sufficient to expose the whole as a base and most childish imposture. For, so far was Shakspere from any capability of leaving behind him a malignant libel on a whole body of learned men that, among all writers of every age, he stands forward as the one who looked most benignantly, and with the most fraternal eye, upon all the ways of men, however weak or foolish. From every sort of vice and infirmity he drew nutriment for his philosophic mind. It is to the honour of John Paul that in this, as in other respects, he constantly reminds one of Shakspere. Everywhere a spirit of kindness prevails: his satire is everywhere playful, delicate, and clad in smiles,—never bitter, scornful, or malignant. But this is not all. I could produce many passages from Shakspere which show that, if his anger was ever roused, it was against the abuses of the time,—not mere political abuses, but those that had a deeper root, and dishonoured human nature. Here again the resemblance holds in John Paul; and this is the point in which I said that I would notice a bond of affinity between him and Schiller. Both were intolerant haters of ignoble things, though placable towards the ignoble men. Both yearned, according to their different temperaments, for a happier state of things,—I mean, for human nature generally, and, in a political sense, for Germany. To his latest years, Schiller, when suffering under bodily decay and anguish, was an earnest contender for whatever promised to elevate human nature, and bore emphatic witness against the evils of the time.[2] John Paul, who still lives, is of a gentler nature; but his aspirations tend to the same point, though expressed in a milder and more hopeful spirit. With all this, however, they give a rare lesson on the *manner* of conducting such a cause; for you will nowhere find that they take any indecent liberties of a personal sort with those princes whose governments they most abhorred. Though safe enough from their vengeance, they never forgot, in their indignation as patriots and as philosophers, the respect due to the rank of others, or to themselves as scholars and the favourites of their country. Some other modern authors of Germany *may* be great writers; but Frederick Schiller and John Paul Richter I shall always view with the feelings due to great men.

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[1] These forgeries by William Henry Ireland,—consisting of a confession of faith and other documents alleged to be in Shakspere's handwriting, with letters of his to Anne Hathaway and others, one entire new drama, &c.—made a great stir about the year 1796, when first exhibited and published. Ireland was then a young man of nineteen years of age, clerk in a lawyer's office in London. The imposture was exposed almost immediately by Malone and others. Ireland lived till 1835.—M.

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[1] *Inquiry*, &c., p. 279. [*Enquiry into the authenticity of certain miscellaneous papers and legal instruments attributed to Shakspeare*, &c., 1796.—M.]

[2] Goethe has lately (*Morphologie*, p. 108, *Zweyter Heft*) recurred to his conversations with Schiller in a way which places himself in rather an unfavourable contrast.

For the present, my dear F., farewell, and believe me to be most faithfully yours,

GRASMERIENSIS TEUTONIZANS.[1]

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[1] GRASMERIENSIS TEUTONIZANS may be translated "The German Student at Grasmere." The closing words of the letter, with this signature, were omitted in the reprint of the paper in 1860; as was also the following paragraph of postscript under the signature:—"P.S.—You will observe in my motto from Trebellius Pollio [*ante*, "p. 259] that I announce an intention of translating a few *Analecta* "*Paulina* into English. Two specimens chosen at random from the "*Flegel-jahre* I subjoin. They are adopted hastily and translated "hastily, and can do little towards exhibiting in its full proportions "a mind so various as that of John Paul. In my next letter I will "send you a better selection, and executed in a style of translation "more corresponding to the merits of my brilliant original. Once "again, however, let me remind you of the extraordinary difficulties "which beset the task,—difficulties of apprehending the sense in many "cases, difficulties of expression in all. But why need I say this to "you, who in six weeks will be able to judge for yourself upon all "points connected with German Literature, and to unite with me and "others in furnishing an anthology in our own language better "reflecting by absolute specimens the characteristics of the most "eminent German writers than all mere evolutions of style and manner "could ever do? Every man shall take his own favourite: mine, in "any case, is to be Paul Richter. But I talk too much: so '*manum* "*de tabula.*'"—M.

ANALECTS FROM RICHTER[1]

THE HAPPY LIFE OF A PARISH PRIEST IN SWEDEN

SWEDEN apart, the condition of a parish priest is in itself sufficiently happy; in Sweden, then, much more so. There he enjoys summer and winter pure and unalloyed by any tedious interruptions. A Swedish spring, which is always a late one, is no repetition in a lower key of the harshness of winter, but anticipates, and is a prelibation of, perfect summer—laden with blossoms—radiant with the lily and the rose; insomuch that a Swedish summer night represents implicitly one half of Italy, and a winter night one half of the world beside.

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[1] As explained in last footnote, the first two of the following "Analects" were appended to the preceding article on Richter as it appeared in the *London Magazine* for December 1821. The promise of a continuation of the "Analects" was not immediately fulfilled, and seemed for a time forgotten. A whole year, indeed, elapsed before De Quincey resumed his contributorship to the *London Magazine* in any form. But in April 1823, after he *had* resumed it, there appeared, in the shape of a footnote to his little paper on Herder,—which footnote he suppressed in his reprint of that paper in his Collective Edition, so that it will not be found in the Herder paper as given *ante* Vol. IV, pp. 380-394,—the following interesting intimation:—"Let me take this opportunity of mentioning that, in a hasty "sketch of John Paul which I drew up for the *London Magazine*, "December 1821, I did him great injustice; for, working, unfortu- "nately, at a pace of almost furious speed, I was obliged to content "myself with such specimens as I had at hand; and, with respect to "one of these (*The Swedish Priest*), I sent to the press a translation "executed in part twelve years ago [*i.e.* in 1811], when I was less "intimately acquainted with the German: the consequence is that, "on lately revising it, I perceived one mistake in the sense. A more "important oversight was that I forgot to prefix an explanation "apprising the reader that the whole portrait of the Swedish Parish "Priest is supposed to come from a boy; which explanation would at "once have converted into a *characteristic* grace that air of romantic "sentiment which otherwise seems childish. John Paul is a sealed "author to all but those who are adepts in the German language, manners, "customs, and even local usages, and fifty times more difficult to trans- "late than any metrical writer whatsoever. Hereafter, and under more "favourable circumstances, I will communicate, through the *London*

I will begin with winter, and I will suppose it to be Christmas. The priest, whom we shall imagine to be a German, and summoned from the southern climate of Germany upon presentation to the church of a Swedish hamlet lying in a high polar latitude, rises in cheerfulness about seven o'clock in the morning, and till half-past nine he burns his lamp. At nine o'clock the stars are still shining, and the unclouded moon even yet longer. This prolongation of star-light into the forenoon is to him delightful; for he is a German, and has a sense of something marvellous in a starry forenoon. Methinks I behold the priest and his flock moving towards the church with lanterns: the lights dispersed amongst the crowd connect the congregation into the appearance of some domestic group or larger household, and carry the priest back to his childish years during the winter season and Christmas matins, when every hand bore its candle. Arrived at the pulpit, he declares to his audience the plain truth, word for word, as it stands

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"*Magazine*, a better selection from this most original of all German "writers, executed in the most finished style that I can command."—In conformity with these last words, there did appear, in the number of the magazine for February 1824, a continuation of the specimens from Richter, under the title "Analects from John Paul Richter: by the Author of the Confessions of an English Opium-Eater," consisting of twenty-one very short excerpts offered as characteristic. There followed, in March 1824, the longer piece from Richter entitled *Dream upon the Universe*, and there the series stopped. Altogether, therefore, De Quincey's "Analects from Richter," longer and shorter, were twenty-four in number. Only nineteen of these were reprinted in 1860 in the posthumous volume of De Quincey's Collective Edition of his Writings,—the longest of all (that entitled *The House of Weeping*), and four of the very short scraps, having been omitted. As this was clearly by inadvertence in making up that posthumous volume, the series has had here to be re-edited. The missing pieces are restored; the order of the original succession of the pieces in the magazine has been reverted to; and to several of the scraps left without title by De Quincey a title is prefixed within brackets.—As De Quincey claimed so emphatically the distinction of having been the first to introduce Jean Paul to the British public, it may be mentioned that he did precede Carlyle by several years in this service, though Carlyle's contributions to it were more extensive, more important, and more effective. Carlyle's *Specimens of German Romance*, containing his translation of Richter's "Schmelzle's Journey" and his "Quintus Fixlein," with the paper on Richter introducing them, appeared in 1827; his *Edinburgh Review* essay on Richter appeared in June of the same year, and his second essay on Richter in the *Foreign Review* for January 1830; and his translation of Richter's Review of Madame de Stäel's *Allemagne* appeared in *Fraser's Magazine* for February and May 1830.—M.

in the Gospel: in the presence of God all intellectual pretensions are called upon to be silent, the very reason ceases to be reasonable, nor is anything reasonable in the sight of God but a sincere and upright heart. . . .

Just as he and his flock are issuing from the church the bright Christmas sun ascends above the horizon, and shoots his beams upon their faces. The old men, who are numerous in Sweden, are all tinged with the colours of youth by the rosy morning lustre; and the priest, as he looks away from them to mother earth lying in the sleep of winter, and to the churchyard, where the flowers and the men are all in their graves together, might secretly exclaim with the poet—"Upon the dead mother, in peace and utter gloom, are reposing the dead children. After a time, uprises the everlasting sun; and the mother starts up at the summons of the heavenly dawn with a resurrection of her ancient bloom. And her children? Yes: but they must wait a while."

At home he is awaited by a warm study, and a "long-levelled rule" of sunlight upon the book-clad wall.

The afternoon he spends delightfully; for, having before him such a perfect flower-stand of pleasures, he scarcely knows where he should settle. Supposing it to be Christmas day, he preaches again: he preaches on a subject which calls up images of the beauteous eastern land, or of eternity.—By this time, twilight and gloom prevailed through the church: only a couple of wax-lights upon the altar throw wondrous and mighty shadows through the aisles: the angel that hangs down from the roof above the baptismal font is awoke into a solemn life by the shadows and the rays, and seems almost in the act of ascension: through the windows the stars or the moon are beginning to peer: aloft, in the pulpit, which is now hid in gloom, the priest is inflamed and possessed by the sacred burden of glad tidings which he is announcing: he is lost and insensible to all besides; and from amidst the darkness which surrounds him he pours down his thunders, with tears and agitation, reasoning of future worlds, and of the heaven of heavens, and whatsoever else can most powerfully shake the heart and the affections.

Descending from his pulpit in these holy fervours, he now, perhaps, takes a walk: it is about four o'clock; and he walks beneath a sky lit up by the shifting northern lights, that to his eye appear but an Aurora striking upwards from the eternal morning of the south, or as a forest composed of saintly thickets, like the fiery bushes of Moses, that are round the throne of God.

Thus if it be the afternoon of Christmas-day; but, if it be any other afternoon, visitors, perhaps, come and bring their well-bred, grown-up daughters. Like the fashionable world in London, he dines at sunset; that is to say, like the *un*-fashionable world of London, he dines at two o'clock; and he drinks coffee by moonlight; and the parsonage-house becomes an enchanted palace of pleasure, gleaming with twilight, starlight, and moonlight. Or, perhaps he goes over to the schoolmaster, who is teaching his afternoon school: there, by the candle-light, he gathers round his knees all the scholars, as if—being the children of his spiritual children—they must therefore be his own grandchildren ; and with delightful words he wins their attention, and pours knowledge into their docile hearts.

All these pleasures failing, he may pace up and down in his library, —already, by three o'clock, gloomy with twilight, but fitfully enlivened by a glowing fire, and steadily by the bright moonlight ; and he needs do no more than taste at every turn of his walk a little orange marmalade to call up images of beautiful Italy, and its gardens, and orange groves, before all his five senses, and, as it were, to the very tip of his tongue. Looking at the moon, he will not fail to recollect that the very same silver disc hangs at the very same moment between the branches of the laurels in Italy. It will delight him to consider that the Æolian harp, and the lark, and indeed music of all kinds, and the stars, and children, are just the same in hot climates and in cold. And, when the post-boy, that rides in with news from Italy, winds his horn through the hamlet, and with a few simple notes raises up on the frozen window of his study a vision of flowery realms ; and when he plays with treasured leaves of roses and of lilies from some departed summer, or with plumes of a bird of paradise, the memorial of some distant friend ; when, further, his heart is moved by the magnificent sounds of Lady-day, Salad-season, Cherry-time, Trinity-Sundays, the Rose of June, &c.: how can he fail to forget that he is in Sweden by the time that his lamp is brought in ! and then, indeed, he will be somewhat disconcerted to recognise his study in what had now shaped itself to his fancy as a room in some foreign land. However, if he would pursue this airy creation, he need but light at his lamp a wax-candle end to gain a glimpse through the whole evening into that world of fashion and splendour from which he purchased the said wax-candle end. For I should suppose that at the court of Stockholm, as elsewhere, there must be candle-ends to be bought of the state-footmen.

But now, after the lapse of half-a-year, all at once there strikes upon his heart something more beautiful than Italy, where the sun sets so much earlier in summer-time than it does at our Swedish hamlet : and what is *that* ? It is the longest day, with the rich freight it carries in its bosom, and leading by the hand the early dawn blushing with rosy light, and melodious with the carolling of larks at one o'clock in the morning. Before two,—that is, at sunrise,—the elegant party that we mentioned last winter arrive in gay clothing at the parsonage ; for they are bound on a little excursion of pleasure in company with the priest. At two o'clock they are in motion ; at which time all the flowers are glittering, and the forests are gleaming with the mighty light. The warm sun threatens them with no storm nor thunder showers ; for both are rare in Sweden. The priest, in common with the rest of the company, is attired in the costume of Sweden : he wears his short jacket with a broad scarf, his short cloak above that, his round hat with floating plumes, and shoes tied with bright ribbons ; like the rest of the men, he resembles a Spanish knight, or a Provençal, or other man of the south,—more especially when he and his gay company are seen flying through the lofty foliage luxuriant with blossom that within so short a period of weeks has shot forth from the garden plots and the naked boughs.

That a longest day like this, bearing such a cornucopia of sunshine, of cloudless ether, of buds and bells, of blossoms and of leisure, should pass away more rapidly than the shortest—is not difficult to suppose. As early as eight o'clock in the evening the party breaks up. The sun is now burning more gently over the half-closed sleepy flowers; about nine he has mitigated his rays, and is beheld bathing as it were naked in the blue depths of heaven; about ten, at which hour the company reassemble at the parsonage, the priest is deeply moved, for throughout the hamlet, though the tepid sun, now sunk to the horizon, is still shedding a sullen glow upon the cottages and the window-panes, everything reposes in profoundest silence and sleep: the birds even are all slumbering in the golden summits of the woods; and at last the solitary sun himself sets, like a moon, amidst the universal quiet of nature. To our priest, walking in his romantic dress, it seems as though rosy-coloured realms were laid open, in which fairies and spirits range; and he would scarcely feel an emotion of wonder if, in this hour of golden vision, his brother, who ran away in childhood, should suddenly present himself as one alighting from some blooming heaven of enchantment.

The priest will not allow his company to depart: he detains them in the parsonage garden, where, says he, every one that chooses may slumber away in beautiful bowers the brief, warm hours until the reappearance of the sun. This proposal is generally adopted, and the garden is occupied: many a lovely pair are making believe to sleep, but, in fact, are holding each other by the hand. The happy priest walks up and down through the parterres. Coolness comes, and a few stars. His night-violets and gillyflowers open and breathe out their powerful odours. To the north, from the eternal morning of the pole, exhales as it were a golden dawn. The priest thinks of the village of his childhood far away in Germany; he thinks of the life of man, his hopes, and his aspirations; and he is calm and at peace with himself. Then all at once starts up the morning sun in his freshness. Some there are in the garden who would fain confound it with the evening sun, and close their eyes again; but the larks betray all, and awaken every sleeper from bower to bower.

Then again begin pleasure and morning in their pomp of radiance; and almost I could persuade myself to delineate the course of this day also, though it differs from its predecessor hardly by so much as the leaf of a rose-bud.

LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT—THE HOUSE OF WEEPING

Since the day when the town of Haslau first became the seat of a court, no man could remember that any one event in its annals (always excepting the birth of the hereditary prince) had been looked for with so anxious a curiosity as the opening of the last will and testament left by Van der Kabel. This Van der Kabel might be styled the Haslau Crœsus; and his whole life might be termed, according to the pleasure of the wits, one long festival of God-sends, or a daily washing of golden sands, nightly impregnated by golden showers of Danaë.

Seven distant surviving relatives of seven distant relatives deceased of the said Van der Kabel entertained some little hopes of a place amongst his legatees, grounded upon an assurance which he had made "that upon his oath he would not fail to *remember them* in his will." These hopes, however, were but faint and weakly; for they could not repose any extraordinary confidence in his good faith—not only because, in all cases, he conducted his affairs in a disinterested spirit, and with a perverse obstinacy of moral principle, whereas his seven relatives were mere novices and young beginners in the trade of morality,—but also because, in all these moral extravagances of his (so distressing to the feelings of the sincere rascal), he thought proper to be very satirical, and had his heart so full of odd caprices, tricks, and snares for unsuspicious scoundrels, that (as they all said) no man who was but raw in the art of virtue could deal with him, or place any reliance upon his intentions. Indeed the covert laughter which played about his temples, and the falsetto tones of his sneering voice, somewhat weakened the advantageous impression which was made by the noble composition of his face, and by a pair of large hands, from which were daily dropping favours little and great, benefit-nights, Christmas-boxes, and new-year's gifts: for this reason it was that, by the whole flock of birds who sought shelter in his boughs, and who fed and built their nests on him, as on any wild service-tree, he was, notwithstanding, reputed a secret magazine of springes; and they were scarce able to find eyes for the visible berries which fed them, in their scrutiny after the supposed gossamer snares.

In the interval between two apoplectic fits he had drawn up his will, and had deposited it with the magistrate. When he was just at the point of death he transferred to the seven presumptive heirs the certificate of this deposit; and even then said, in his old tone—how far it was from his expectation that by any such anticipation of his approaching decease he could at all depress the spirits of men so steady and sedate, whom, for his own part, he would much rather regard in the light of laughing than of weeping heirs: to which remark one only of the whole number, namely Mr. Harprecht, inspector of police, replied as a cool ironist to a bitter one—"that the total amount of concern and of *interest* which might severally belong to them in such a loss was not (they were sincerely sorry it was not) in their own power to determine."

At length the time is come when the seven heirs have made their appearance at the town-hall, with their certificate of deposit—*videlicet*: the ecclesiastical councillor Glantz; Harprecht, the inspector of police; Neupeter, the court agent; the court fiscal, Knoll; Pasvogel, the bookseller; the reader of the morning lecture, Flacks; and Monsieur Flitte, from Alsace. Solemnly, and in due form, they demanded of the magistrate the schedule of effects consigned to him by the late Kabel, and the opening of his will. The principal executor of this will was Mr. Mayor himself: the sub-executors were the rest of the town-council. Thereupon, without delay, the schedule and the will were fetched from the register office of the council to the council-chamber: both were exhibited in rotation to the members of the council and the heirs, in order that they might see the privy seal of the town impressed upon them: the registry of consignment, indorsed upon the schedule, was read aloud to the seven heirs by the town-clerk: and by that registry it was notified to them that the deceased had actually consigned the schedule to the magistrate, and entrusted it to the corporation chest, and that on the day of consignment he was still of sound mind:—finally, the seven seals, which he had himself affixed to the instrument, were found unbroken. These preliminaries gone through, it was now (but not until a brief registry of all these forms had been drawn up by the town-clerk) lawful, in God's name, that the will should be opened and read aloud by Mr. Mayor, word for word, as follows:—

"I, Van der Kabel, on this 7th of May 179–, being in my house, at Haslau, situate in Dog Street, deliver and make known this for my last will, and without many millions of words, notwithstanding I have been both a German notary and a Dutch schoolmaster. Howsoever I may disgrace my old professions by this parsimony of words, I believe myself to be so far at home in the art and calling of a notary that I am competent to act for myself as a testator in due form, and as a regular devisor of property.

"It is a custom with testators to premise the moving causes of their wills. These, in my case, as in most others, are regard for my happy departure, and for the disposal of the succession to my property—which, by the way, is the object of a tender passion in various quarters. To say anything about my funeral, and all that, would be absurd and stupid. This, and what shape my remains shall take, let the eternal sun settle above, not in any gloomy winter, but in some of his most verdant springs.

"As to those charitable foundations, and memorial institutions of benevolence, about which notaries are so much occupied, in my case I appoint as follows: to three thousand of my poor townsmen, of every class, I assign just the same number of florins, which sum I will that, on the anniversary of my death, they shall spend jovially in feasting upon the town common, where they are previously to pitch their camp, unless the military camp of his Serene Highness be already pitched there in preparation for the reviews: and, when the gala is ended, I would have them cut up the tents into clothes. Item, to all the schoolmasters in our principality I bequeath one golden Augustus. Item, to the Jews of this place I bequeath my pew in the high church.—As I would wish that my will should be divided into clauses, this is to be considered the first.

"CLAUSE II

"Amongst the important offices of a will, it is universally agreed to be one, that from amongst the presumptive and presumptuous expectants it should name those who are, and those who are not, to succeed to the inheritance; that it should create heirs, and should destroy them. In conformity to this notion, I give and bequeath to Mr. Glantz, the councillor for ecclesiastical affairs; as also to Mr. Knoll, the exchequer officer; likewise to Mr. Peter Neupeter, the court-agent; item to Mr. Harprecht, director of police; furthermore to Mr. Flacks, the morning lecturer; in like manner to the court bookseller, Mr. Pasvogel; and finally to Monsieur Flitte,——nothing: not so much because they have no just claims upon me—standing as they do in the remotest possible degree of consanguinity; nor again, because they are, for the most part, themselves rich enough to leave handsome inheritances; as because I am assured, indeed I have it from their own lips, that they entertain a far stronger regard for my insignificant person than for my splendid property; my body, therefore, or as large a share of it as they can get, I bequeath to them."

At this point, seven faces, like those of the seven sleepers, gradually elongated into preternatural extent. The ecclesiastical councillor, a young man, but already famous throughout Germany for his sermons printed or preached, was especially aggrieved by such offensive personality: Monsieur Flitte rapped out a curse that rattled even in the ears of magistracy: the chin of Flacks, the morning lecturer, gravitated downwards into the dimensions of a patriarchal beard: and the town council could distinguish an assortment of audible reproaches to the memory of Mr. Kabel, such as prig, rascal, profane wretch, &c. But the Mayor motioned with his hand; and immediately the Fiscal and the Bookseller recomposed their features and set their faces like so many traps, with springs and triggers all at full cock, that they might catch every syllable; and then, with a gravity that cost him some efforts, his worship read on as follows:—

"CLAUSE III

"Excepting always, and be it excepted, my present house in Dog Street: which house, by virtue of this third clause, is to descend and to pass in full property, just as it now stands, to that one of my seven relatives above-mentioned who shall, within the space of one half hour (to be computed from the reciting of this clause), shed, to the memory of me his departed kinsman, sooner than the other six competitors, one, or, if possible, a couple of tears, in the presence of a respectable magistrate, who is to make a protocol thereof. Should, however, *all remain dry*, in that case, the house must lapse to the heir general,—whom I shall proceed to name."

Here Mr. Mayor closed the will: doubtless, he observed, the condition annexed to the bequest was an unusual one, but yet in no respect contrary to law: to him that wept the first the court was bound to adjudge the house: and then, placing his watch on the session table, the pointers of which indicated that it was now just half past eleven, he calmly sat down—that he might duly witness, in his official character of executor, assisted by the whole court of aldermen, who should be the first to produce the requisite tear or tears on behalf of the testator.

That, since the terraqueous globe has moved or existed, there can ever have met a more lugubrious congress, or one more out of temper and enraged, than this of Seven United Provinces, as it were, all dry and all confederated for the purpose of weeping,—I suppose no impartial judge will believe. At first some invaluable minutes were lost in pure confusion of mind, in astonishment, and in peals of laughter: the congress found itself too suddenly translated into the condition of the dog to which, in the very moment of his keenest assault upon some object of his appetites, the fiend cried out—Halt! whereupon, standing up, as he was, on his hind legs, his teeth grinning, and snarling with the fury of desire, he halted and remained petrified: —from the graspings of hope, however distant, to the necessity o weeping for a wager, the congress found the transition too abrupt and harsh.

One thing was evident to all—that for a shower that was to come down at such a full gallop, for a baptism of the eyes to be performed at such a hunting pace, it was vain to think of raising up any pure water of grief: no hydraulics could effect this: yet in twenty-six minutes (four unfortunately were already gone), in one way or other, perhaps, some business might be done.

"Was there ever such a cursed act," said the merchant Neupeter, "such a piece of buffoonery enjoined by any man of sense and discretion? For my part, I can't understand what the d—l it means." However, he understood thus much, that a house was by possibility floating in his purse upon a tear: and *that* was enough to cause a violent irritation in his lachrymal glands.

Knoll, the fiscal, was screwing up, twisting, and distorting his features pretty much in the style of a poor artisan on Saturday night, whom some fellow-workman is bar*ber*-ously razoring and scraping by the light of a cobler's candle: furious was his wrath at this abuse and profanation of the title *Last Will and Testament*: and at one time, poor soul! he was near enough to tears—of vexation.

The wily bookseller, Pasvogel, without loss of time, sate down quietly to business: he ran through a cursory retrospect of all the works any ways moving or affecting that he had himself either published or sold on commission;—took a flying survey of the Pathetic in general: and in this way of going to work he had fair expectations that in the end he should brew something or other: as yet, however, he looked very much like a dog who is slowly licking off an emetic which the Parisian surgeon Demet has administered by smearing it on his nose: time,—gentlemen, time was required for the operation.

Monsieur Flitte, from Alsace, fairly danced up and down the Sessions-chamber: with bursts of laughter he surveyed the rueful faces around him: he confessed that he was not the richest among them; but, for the whole city of Strasburg and Alsace to boot, he was not the man that could or would weep on such a merry occasion. He went on with his unseasonable laughter and indecent mirth, until Harprecht, the police inspector, looked at him very significantly, and said—that perhaps Monsieur flattered himself that he might by means of laughter squeeze or express the tears required from the well-known Meibomian-glands, the caruncula, &c., and might thus piratically provide himself with surreptitious rain[1]; but, in that case, he must remind him that he could no more win the day with any such secretions than he could carry to account a course of sneezes or wilfully blowing his nose; a channel into which it was well known that very many tears, far more than were now wanted, flowed out of the eyes through the nasal duct; more indeed, by a good deal, than were ever known to flow downwards to the bottom of most pews at a funeral sermon. Monsieur Flitte of Alsace, however, protested that he was laughing out of pure fun, and for his own amusement, and, upon his honour, with no *ulterior views*.

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[1] In the original, the word is Fenster-schweiss, window-sweat; *i.e.* (as the translator understands the passage) Monsieur Flitte was suspected of a design to swindle the company, by exhibiting his

The inspector, on his side, being pretty well acquainted with the hopeless condition of his own dephlegmatised heart, endeavoured to force into his eyes something that might meet the occasion by staring with them wide open and in a state of rigid expansion.

The morning lecturer Flacks looked like a Jew beggar mounted on a stallion which is running away with him: meantime, what by domestic tribulations, what by those he witnessed at his own lecture, his heart was furnished with such a promising bank of heavy-laden clouds that he could easily have delivered upon the spot the main quantity of water required, had it not been for the house which floated on the top of the storm; and which, just as all was ready, came driving in with the tide, too gay and gladsome a spectacle not to banish his gloom, and thus fairly dammed up the waters.

The ecclesiastical councillor,—who had become acquainted with his own nature by his long experience in preaching funeral sermons, and sermons on the new year, and knew full well that he was himself always the first person, and frequently the last, to be affected by the pathos of his own eloquence,—now rose with dignified solemnity, on seeing himself and the others hanging so long by the dry rope, and addressed the chamber:—No man, he said, who had read his printed works could fail to know that he carried a heart about him as well as other people; and a heart, he would add, that had occasion to repress such holy testimonies of its tenderness as tears, lest he should thereby draw too heavily on the sympathies and the purses of his fellow-men, rather than elaborately to provoke them by stimulants for any secondary views, or to serve an indirect purpose of his own: "this heart," said he, "has already shed tears (but they were shed secretly), for Kabel was my friend": and, so saying, he paused for a moment and looked about him.

With pleasure he observed that all were still sitting as dry as corks: indeed, at this particular moment, when he himself by interrupting their several water-works had made them furiously angry, it might as well have been expected that crocodiles, fallow-deer, elephants, witches, or ravens, should weep for Van der Kabel as his presumptive heirs. Among them all, Flacks was the only one who continued to make way: he kept steadily before his mind the following little

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two windows streaming with spurious moisture, such as hoar frost produces on the windows when melted by the heat of the room, rather than with that genuine and unadulterated rain which Mr. Kabel demanded.

extempore assortment of objects :—Van der Kabel's good and beneficent acts ; the old petticoats, so worn and tattered, and the grey hair, of his female congregation at morning service ; Lazarus with his dogs ; his own long coffin ; innumerable decapitations ; the Sorrows of Werter ; a miniature field of battle ; and, finally, himself and his own melancholy condition at this moment, itself enough to melt any heart, condemned as he was in the bloom of youth, by the second clause of Van der Kabel's will, to tribulation, and tears, and struggles :—Well done, Flacks ! Three strokes more with the pump-handle, and the water is pumped up—and the house along with it.

Meantime Glantz, the ecclesiastical councillor, proceeded in his pathetic harangue ! — "Oh, Kabel, my Kabel," he ejaculated, and almost wept with joy at the near approach of his tears, "the time shall come that by the side of thy loving breast, covered with earth, mine also shall lie mouldering and in cor—"

"Cor-*ruption*," he would have said: but Flacks, starting up in trouble, and with eyes at that moment overflowing, threw a hasty glance around him, and said,—"With submission, gentlemen, to the best of my belief I am weeping" ; then, sitting down, with great satisfaction he allowed the tears to stream down his face ; that done, he soon recovered his cheerfulness and his *aridity*. Glantz, the councillor, thus saw the prize fished away before his eyes,—those very eyes which he had already brought into an *Accessit*,[1] or inchoate state of humidity : this vexed him : and his mortification was the greater on thinking of his own pathetic exertions, and the abortive appetite for the prize which he had thus uttered in words as ineffectual as his own sermons : and, at this moment, he was ready to weep for spite—and "to weep the more because he wept in vain." As to Flacks, a protocol was immediately drawn up of his watery compliance with the will of Van der Kabel : and the messuage in Dog Street was knocked down to him for ever. The Mayor adjudged it to the poor devil with all his heart : indeed, this was the first occasion ever known in the principality of Haslau on which the tears of a schoolmaster and a curate had converted themselves—not into mere amber that encloses only a worthless insect, like the tears of the Heliades, but, like those of the goddess Freia, into heavy gold. Glantz congratulated Flacks very warmly ; and observed, with a smiling air, that possibly he had himself lent him a helping hand by his pathetic address. As to the others, the separation between them and Flacks was too palpable, in the mortifying distinction of *wet* and *dry*, to allow of any cordiality between them ; and they stood aloof therefore : but they staid to hear the rest of the will, which they now awaited in a state of anxious agitation.

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[1] To the English reader it may be necessary to explain that in the Continental Universities, &c., when a succession of prizes is offered, graduated according to the degrees of merit, the elliptical formula of "*Accessit*" denotes the second prize : and hence, where only a single prize is offered, the second degree of merit may properly be expressed by the term here used.

Complaint of the Bird in a Darkened Cage

"Ah!" said the imprisoned bird, "how unhappy were I in my eternal night but for those melodious tones which sometimes make their way to me like beams of light from afar, and cheer my gloomy day. But I will myself repeat these heavenly melodies like an echo, until I have stamped them in my heart; and then I shall be able to bring comfort to myself in my darkness!" Thus spoke the little warbler; and soon had learned the sweet airs that were sung to it with voice and instrument. That done, the curtain was raised; for the darkness had been purposely contrived to assist in its instruction. O man! how often dost thou complain of overshadowing grief and of darkness resting upon thy days! And yet what cause for complaint, unless indeed thou hast failed to learn wisdom from suffering? For is not the whole sum of human life a veiling and an obscuring of the immortal spirit of man? Then first when the fleshly curtain falls away may it soar upwards into a region of happier melodies!

On the Death of Young Children

Ephemera die all at sunset, and no insect of this class has ever sported in the beams of the morning sun.[1] Happier are ye, little human ephemera! Ye played only in the ascending beams, and in the early dawn, and in the eastern light; ye drank only of the prelibations of life, hovered for a little space over a world of freshness and of blossoms, and fell asleep in innocence before yet the morning dew was exhaled!

The Prophetic Dew-Drops

A delicate child, pale and prematurely wise, was complaining on a hot morning that the poor dew-drops had been too hastily snatched away, and not allowed to glitter on the flowers like other happier dew-drops[2] that live the whole night through, and sparkle in the moonlight and through the morning onwards to noon-day. "The sun," said the child, "has chased them away with his heat, or swallowed them in his wrath." Soon after came rain and a rainbow; whereupon his father pointed upwards. "See," said he, "there stand thy dew-drops gloriously re-set, a glittering jewellery, in the heavens; and the clownish foot tramples on them no more. By this, my child, thou art taught that what withers upon earth blooms again in heaven." Thus the father spoke, and knew not that he spoke prefiguring words; for soon after the delicate child, with the morning brightness of his early wisdom, was exhaled like a dew-drop into heaven.

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[1] Some classes of ephemeral insects are born about five o'clock in the afternoon, and die before midnight, supposing them to live to old age.

[2] If the dew is evaporated immediately upon the sun-rising, rain and storm follow in the afternoon; but, if it stays and glitters for a long time after sunrise, the day continues fair.

ON DEATH

We should all think of death as a less hideous object if it simply untenanted our bodies of a spirit without corrupting them; secondly, if the grief which we experience at the spectacle of our friends' graves were not by some confusion of the mind blended with the image of our own; thirdly, if we had not in this life seated ourselves in a warm domestic nest, which we are unwilling to quit for the cold blue regions of the unfathomable heavens; finally, if death were denied to us. Once in dreams I saw a human being of heavenly intellectual faculties, and his aspirations were heavenly; but he was chained (methought) eternally to the earth. The immortal old man had five great wounds in his happiness—five worms that gnawed for ever at his heart. He was unhappy in spring-time, because *that* is a season of hope, and rich with phantoms of far happier days than any which this aceldama of earth can realize. He was unhappy at the sound of music, which dilates the heart of man into its whole capacity for the infinite, and he cried aloud—"Away, away! Thou speakest of things which throughout my endless life I have found not, and shall not find!" He was unhappy at the remembrance of earthly affections and dissevered hearts; for love is a plant which may bud in this life, but it must flourish in another. He was unhappy under the glorious spectacle of the starry host, and ejaculated for ever in his heart—"So then, I am parted from you to all eternity by an impassable abyss: the great universe of suns is above, below, and round about me; but I am chained to a little ball of dust and ashes." He was unhappy before the great ideas of Virtue, of Truth, and of God, because he knew how feeble are the approximations to them which a son of earth can make. But this was a dream. God be thanked that in reality there is no such craving and asking eye directed upwards to heaven to which death will not one day bring an answer!

IMAGINATION UNTAMED BY THE COARSER REALITIES OF LIFE

Happy is every actor in the guilty drama of life to whom the higher illusion within supplies or conceals the external illusion,—to whom, in the tumult of his part and its intellectual interest, the bungling landscapes of the stage have the bloom and reality of nature, and whom the loud parting and shocking of the scenes disturb not in his dream!

SATIRICAL NOTICE OF REVIEWERS

In Suabia, in Saxony, in Pomerania, are towns in which are stationed a strange sort of officers,—valuers of authors' flesh, something like our old market-lookers in this town.[1] They are commonly called tasters (or *Prægustatores*), because they eat a mouthful of every book beforehand, and tell the people whether its flavour be good. We authors, in spite, call them *reviewers*; but I believe an action of defamation would lie against us for such bad words. The tasters write no books themselves; consequently they have the more time to look over and tax those of other people. Or, if they do sometimes write books, they are bad ones: which again is very advantageous to them; for who can understand the theory of badness in other people's books so well as those who have learned it by practice in their own? They are reputed the guardians of literature and the literati for the same reason that St. Nepomuk is the patron saint of bridges and of all who pass over them,—viz. because he himself once lost his life from a bridge.

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[1] "*Market-lookers*" is a provincial term (I know not whether used in London) for the public officers who examine the quality of the provisions exposed for sale. By *this town* I suppose John Paul to mean Bayreuth, the place of his residence.

FEMALE TONGUES

Hippel, the author of the book "Upon Marriage," says—"A woman that does not talk must be a stupid woman." But Hippel is an author whose opinions it is more safe to admire than to adopt. The most intelligent women are often silent amongst women; and again the most stupid and the most silent are often neither one nor the other except amongst men. In general the current remark upon men is valid also with respect to women—that those for the most part are the greatest thinkers who are the least talkers; as frogs cease to croak when *light* is brought to the water edge. However, in fact, the disproportionate talking of women arises out of the sedentariness of their labours. Sedentary artisans, as tailors, shoemakers, weavers, have this habit, as well as hypochondriacal tendencies, in common with women. Apes do not talk, as savages say, that they may not be set to work; but women often talk double their share even *because* they work.

FORGIVENESS

Nothing is more moving to man than the spectacle of reconciliation. Our weaknesses are thus indemnified and are not too costly—being the price we pay for the hour of forgiveness; and the archangel who has never felt anger has reason to envy the man who subdues it. When thou forgivest, the man who has pierced thy heart stands to thee in the relation of the sea-worm that perforates the shell of the mussel, which straightway closes the wound with a pearl.

[NAMELESS HEROES]

The graves of the best of men, of the noblest martyrs, are, like the graves of the Herrnhuters (the Moravian Brethren), level and undistinguishable from the universal earth; and, if the earth could give up her secrets, our whole globe would appear a Westminster Abbey laid flat. Ah! what a multitude of tears, what myriads of bloody drops have been shed in secrecy about the three corner trees of earth—the tree of life, the tree of knowledge, and the tree of freedom—shed, but never reckoned! It is only great periods of calamity that reveal to us our great men, as comets are revealed by total eclipses of the sun. Not merely upon the field of battle, but also upon the consecrated soil of virtue, and upon the classic ground of truth, thousands of *nameless* heroes must fall and struggle to build up the footstool from which History surveys the *one* hero whose name is embalmed,—bleeding, conquering, and resplendent. The grandest of heroic deeds are those which are performed within four walls and in domestic privacy. And, because History records only the self-sacrifices of the male sex, and because she dips her pen only in blood, therefore is it that in the eyes of the Unseen Spirit of the World our annals appear doubtless far more beautiful and noble than in our own.

The Grandeur of Man in his Littleness

Man upon this earth would be vanity and hollowness, dust and ashes, vapour and a bubble, were it not that he felt himself to be so. That it is possible for him to harbour such a feeling,—*this*, by implying a comparison of himself with something higher in himself, *this* is it which makes him the immortal creature that he is.

Night

The earth is every day overspread with the veil of night for the same reason as the cages of birds are darkened—viz. that we may the more readily apprehend the higher harmonies of thought in the hush and quiet of darkness. Thoughts which day turns into smoke and mist stand about us in the night as lights and flames: even as the column which fluctuates above the crater of Vesuvius in the daytime appears a pillar of cloud but by night a pillar of fire.

The Stars

Look up, and behold the eternal fields of light that lie round about the throne of God. Had no star ever appeared in the heavens, to man there would have been no heavens; and he would have laid himself down to his last sleep, in a spirit of anguish, as upon a gloomy earth vaulted over by a material arch, solid and impervious.

Martyrdom

To die for truth is not to die for one's country, but to die for the world. Truth, like the *Venus de Medici*, will pass down in thirty fragments to posterity: but posterity will collect and recompose them into a goddess. Then also thy temple, O eternal Truth! that now stands half below the earth, made hollow by the sepulchres of its witnesses, will raise itself in the total majesty of its proportions, and will stand in monumental granite; and every pillar on which it rests will be fixed in the grave of a martyr.

The Quarrels of Friends

Why is it that the most fervent love becomes more fervent by brief interruption and reconciliation? and why must a storm agitate our affections before they can raise the highest rainbow of peace? Ah! for this reason it is,—because all passions feel their object to be as eternal as themselves, and no love can admit the feeling that the beloved object should die. And under this feeling of imperishableness it is that we hard fields of ice shock together so harshly whilst all the while under the sunbeams of a little space of seventy years we are rapidly dissolving.

Dreaming

But for dreams, that lay mosaic worlds tesselated with flowers and jewels before the blind sleeper, and surround the recumbent living with the figures of the dead in the upright attitude of life, the time would be too long before we are allowed to rejoin our brothers, parents, friends: every year we should become more and more painfully sensible of the desolation made around us by death, if sleep—the ante-chamber of the grave—were not hung by dreams with the busts of those who live in the other world.

Two Divisions of Philosophic Minds

There are two very different classes of philosophical heads; which, since Kant has introduced into philosophy the idea of positive and negative quantities, I shall willingly classify by means of that distinction. The *positive* intellect is, like the poet, in conjunction with the outer world, the father of an inner world, and, like the poet also, holds up a transforming mirror in which the entangled and distorted members as they are seen in our actual experience enter into new combinations which compose a fair and luminous world. The hypothesis of Idealism (*i.e.* the Fichtean system), the Monads and the Pre-established Harmony of Leibnitz, and Spinozism, are all births of a genial moment, and not the wooden carving of logical toil. Such men therefore as Leibnitz, Plato, Herder, &c., I call positive intellects, because they seek and yield the positive, and because their inner world, having raised itself higher out of the water than in others, thereby overlooks a larger prospect of island and continents. A negative head, on the other hand, discovers by its acuteness not any positive truths, but the negative (*i.e.* the errors) of other people. Such an intellect, as for example Bayle, one of the greatest of that class, appraises the funds of others, rather than brings any fresh funds of his own. In lieu of the obscure ideas which he finds he gives us clear ones; but in this there is no positive accession to our knowledge, for all that the clear idea contains in development exists already by implication in the obscure idea. Negative intellects of every age are unanimous in their abhorrence of everything positive. Impulse, feeling, instinct, everything in short which is incomprehensible, they can endure just once—that is, at the summit of their chain of arguments, as a sort of hook on which they may hang them, but never afterwards.

DIGNITY OF MAN IN SELF-SACRIFICE

That for which man offers up his blood or his property must be more valuable than they. A good man does not fight with half the courage for his own life that he shows in the protection of another's. The mother who will hazard nothing for herself will hazard all in defence of her child:—in short, only for the nobility within us, only for virtue, will man open his veins and offer up his spirit. But this nobility, this virtue, presents different phases. With the Christian Martyr it is faith; with the Savage it is honour; with the Republican it is liberty.

FANCY

Fancy can lay only the past and the future under her copying paper, and every actual presence of the object sets limits to her power: just as water distilled from roses, according to the old naturalists, lost its power exactly at the periodical blooming of the rose.

[INNATE FEELING AND ACQUISITION]

The older, the more tranquil and pious, a man is, so much the more holy does he esteem all that is *innate*,—that is, *feeling* and *power*; whereas in the estimate of the multitude whatsoever is *self-acquired*, the ability of practice and science, in general has an undue pre-eminence; for the latter is universally appreciated, and therefore even by those who have it not, but the former not at all. In the twilight and the moonshine the fixed stars, which are suns, retire and veil themselves in obscurity, whilst the planets, which are simply earths, preserve their borrowed light unobscured. The elder races of men, amongst whom man *was* more though he had not yet *become* so much, had a childlike feeling of sympathy with all the gifts of the Infinite,—for example, with strength, beauty, and good fortune; and even the *involuntary* had a sanctity in their eyes, and was to them a prophecy and a revelation: hence the value they ascribed, and the art of interpretation they applied, to the speeches of children, of madmen, of drunkards, and of dreamers.

[USE OF OPPOSITES]

As the blind man knows not light, and through that ignorance also of necessity knows not darkness, so likewise, but for disinterestedness, we should know nothing of selfishness, but for slavery nothing of freedom. There are perhaps in this world many things which remain obscure to us for want of alternating with their opposites.

[DEAFNESS]

Derham remarks in his Physico-Theology that the deaf hear best in the midst of noise, as, for instance, during the ringing of bells, &c. This must be the reason, I suppose, that the thundering of drums, cannons, &c., accompanies the entrance into cities of princes and ministers, who are generally rather deaf, in order that they may the better hear the petitions and complaints of the people.

DREAM UPON THE UNIVERSE

I had been reading an excellent dissertation of Krüger's upon the old vulgar error which regards the space from one earth and sun to another as empty. Our sun, together with all its planets, fills only the 31,419,460,000,000,000th part of the whole space between itself and the next solar body. Gracious Heavens! thought I, in what an unfathomable abyss of emptiness were this universe swallowed up and lost, if all were void and utter vacuity except the few shining points of dust which we call a planetary system! To conceive of our earthly ocean as the abode of death and essentially incapable of life, and of its populous islands as being no greater than snail-shells, would be a far less error in proportion to the compass of our planet than that which attributes emptiness to the great mundane spaces; and the error would be far less if the marine animals were to ascribe life and fulness exclusively to the sea, and to regard the atmospheric ocean above them as empty and untenanted. According to Herschel, the most remote of the galaxies which the telescope discovers lie at such a distance from us that their light, which reaches us at this day, must have set out on its journey two millions of years ago; and thus by optical laws it is possible that whole squadrons of the starry hosts may be now reaching us with their beams which have themselves perished ages ago. Upon this scale of computation for the dimensions of the world, what heights and depths and breadths must there be in this universe—in comparison of which the positive universe would be itself a nihility, were it crossed, pierced, and belted about by so illimitable a wilderness of nothing! But is it possible that any man can for a moment overlook those vast forces which must pervade these imaginary deserts with eternal surges of flux and reflux to make the very paths to those distant starry coasts voyageable to our eyes? Can you lock up in a sun or in its planets their reciprocal forces of attraction? Does not the light stream through the immeasurable spaces between our earth and the nebula which is furthest removed from us? And in this stream of light there is as ample an existence of the positive, and as much a home for the abode of a spiritual world, as there is a dwelling-place for thy own spirit in the substance of the brain. To these and similar reflections succeeded the following dream:—

Methought my body sank down in ruins, and my inner form stepped out apparelled in light; and by my side there stood another form which resembled my own, except that it did not shine like mine, but lightened unceasingly. "Two thoughts," said the Form, "are the wings with which I move: the thought of *Here*, and the thought of *There*. And, behold! I am yonder,"—pointing to a distant world. "Come, then, and wait on me with thy thoughts and with thy flight, that I may show to thee the Universe under a veil." And I flew along with the Form. In a moment our Earth fell back, behind our consuming flight, into an abyss of distance; a faint gleam only was reflected from the summits of the Cordilleras, and a few moments more reduced the sun to a little star; and soon there remained nothing visible of our system except a comet, which was travelling from our sun with angelic speed in the direction of Sirius. Our flight now carried us so rapidly through the flocks of solar bodies—flocks past counting, unless to their heavenly Shepherd—that scarcely could they expand themselves before us into the magnitude of moons before they sank behind us into pale nebular gleams; and their planetary earths could not reveal themselves for a moment to the transcendent rapidity of our course. At length Sirius and all the brotherhood of our constellations and the galaxy of our heavens stood far below our feet as a little nebula amongst other yet more distant nebulæ. Thus we flew on through the starry wildernesses: one heaven after another unfurled its immeasurable banners before us, and then rolled up behind us: galaxy behind galaxy towered up into solemn altitudes before which the spirit shuddered; and they stood in long array through which the Infinite Being might pass in progress. Sometimes the Form that lightened would outfly my weary thoughts; and then it would be seen far off before me like a coruscation amongst the stars—till suddenly I thought again to myself the thought of *There*, and then I was at its side. But, as we were thus swallowed up by one abyss of stars after another, and the heavens above our eyes were not emptier, neither were the heavens below them fuller,—and as suns without intermission fell into the solar ocean like waterspouts of a storm which fall into the ocean of waters,—then at length the human heart within me was overburdened and weary, and yearned after some narrow cell or quiet oratory in this metropolitan cathedral of the Universe. And I said to the Form at my side, "O Spirit! has then this Universe no end?" And the Form answered and said, "Lo! it has no beginning."

Suddenly, however, the heavens above us appeared to be emptied, and not a star was seen to twinkle in the mighty abyss,—no gleam of light to break the unity of the infinite darkness. The starry hosts behind us had all contracted into an obscure nebula; and at length *that* also had vanished. And I thought to myself, "At last the Universe has ended": and I trembled at the thought of the illimitable dungeon of pure, pure darkness which here began to imprison the Creation. I shuddered at the dead sea of nothing, in whose unfathomable zone of blackness the jewel of the glittering universe seemed to be set and buried for ever; and through the night in which we moved I saw the Form,—which still lightened as before, but left all around it unilluminated. Then the Form said to me in my anguish

—"O creature of little faith! Look up! the most ancient light is coming!" I looked; and in a moment came a twilight—in the twinkling of an eye a galaxy—and then with a choral burst rushed in all the company of stars. For centuries grey with age, for millennia hoary with antiquity, had the starry light been on its road to us; and at length out of heights inaccessible to thought it had reached us. Now then, as through some renovated century, we flew through new cycles of heavens. At length again came a starless interval; and far longer it endured before the beams of a starry host again had reached us.

As we thus advanced for ever through an interchange of nights and solar heavens, and as the interval grew still longer and longer before the last heaven we had quitted contracted to a point, all at once we issued suddenly from the middle of thickest night into an Aurora Borealis, the herald of an expiring world, and we found throughout this cycle of solar systems that a day of judgment had indeed arrived. The suns had sickened, and the planets were heaving—rocking, yawning in convulsions; the subterraneous waters of the great deeps were breaking up, and lightnings that were ten diameters of a world in length ran along, from east to west, from zenith to nadir; and here and there, where a sun should have been, we saw instead through the misty vapour a gloomy, ashy, leaden corpse of a solar body, that sucked in flames from the perishing world, but gave out neither light nor heat; and, as I saw, through a vista which had no end, mountain towering above mountain, and piled up with what seemed glittering snow from the conflict of solar and planetary bodies, then my spirit bent under the load of the Universe, and I said to the Form, "Rest, rest; and lead me no farther: I am too solitary in the creation itself, and in its deserts yet more so; the full world is great, but the empty world is greater, and with the Universe increase its Zaarahs."

Then the Form touched me like the flowing of a breath, and spoke more gently than before:—"In the presence of God there is no emptiness: above, below, between, and round about the stars, in the darkness and in the light, dwelleth the true and very Universe, the sum and fountain of all that is. But thy spirit can bear only earthly images of the unearthly: now then I cleanse thy sight with euphrasy; look forth, and behold the images." Immediately my eyes were opened; and I looked, and I saw as it were an interminable sea of light—sea immeasurable, sea unfathomable, sea without a shore. All spaces between all heavens were filled with happiest light, and there was a thundering of floods, and there were seas above the seas and seas below the seas; and I saw all the trackless regions that we had voyaged over; and my eye comprehended the farthest and the nearest; and darkness had become light, and the light darkness: for the deserts and wastes of the creation were now filled with the sea of light, and in this sea the suns floated like ash-grey blossoms and the planets like black grains of seed. Then my heart comprehended that immortality dwelled in the spaces between the worlds, and death only amongst the worlds. Upon all the suns there walked upright shadows in the form of men; but they were glorified when they quitted these perishable worlds and when they sank into the sea of light; and the murky planets, I perceived, were but cradles for the infant spirits of the Universe of Light. In the Zaarahs of the Creation I saw, I heard, I felt the glittering, the echoing, the breathing, of life and creative power. The suns were but as spinning-wheels, the planets no more than weavers' shuttles, in relation to the infinite web which composes the veil of Isis,[1]—which veil is hung over the whole creation, and lengthens as any finite being attempts to raise it. And in sight of this immeasurability of life no sadness could endure, but only joy that knew no limit, and happy prayers.

But in the midst of this great Vision of the Universe the Form that lightened eternally had become invisible, or had vanished to its home in the unseen world of spirits. I was left alone in the centre of a universe of life, and I yearned after some sympathizing being. Suddenly from the starry depths there came floating through the ocean of light a planetary body; and upon it there stood a woman whose face was as the face of a Madonna; and by her side there stood a Child; whose countenance varied not, neither was it magnified as he drew nearer. This Child was a King, for I saw that he had a crown upon his head: but the crown was a crown of thorns. Then also I perceived that the planetary body was our unhappy Earth; and, as the Earth drew near, this Child who had come forth from the starry deeps to comfort me threw upon me a look of gentlest pity and of unutterable love, so that in my heart I had a sudden rapture of joy such as passes all understanding; and I awoke in the tumult of my happiness.

I awoke; but my happiness survived my dreams, and I exclaimed —Oh! how beautiful is Death, seeing that we die in a world of life and of creation without end! and I blessed God for my life upon Earth, but much more for the life in those unseen depths of the Universe which are emptied of all but the Supreme Reality, and where no earthly life nor perishable hope can enter.

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[1] On this antique mode of symbolizing the mysterious Nature which is at the heart of all things and connects all things into one whole, possibly the reader may feel not unwilling to concur with Kant's remark at page 197 of his *Critik der Urtheilskraft*: "Perhaps "in all human composition there is no passage of greater sublimity, "nor amongst all sublime thoughts any which has been more sub- "limely expressed, than that which occurs in the inscription upon the "temple of Isis (the Great Mother, Nature): *I am whatsoever is,* "*whatsoever has been, whatsoever shall be; and the veil which is over* "*my countenance no mortal hand has ever raised.*"

ON WORDSWORTH'S POETRY[1]

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.[2] The one labour 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, so long as you rest only on grounds which, in sincerity, you believe to be true, and speak 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 only by confidence, or by unsuspecting carelessness. Sometimes the disclosure would cause quarrels between parties now at peace. Sometimes it would inflict pain, such as you could not feel any right to inflict, upon people not directly but collaterally interested in the exposure. 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 close personal connexions with distinguished men 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 connexions 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, or in any degree standing upon intellectual pretensions, such men will hate; you, if you are dull, they will despise. Gaze, therefore, on the splendour of such idols as a passing stranger. Look for a moment as one sharing in the idolatry; but pass on before the splendour has been sullied by human frailty, or before your own generous admiration has been confounded with offerings of weeds, or with the homage of the sycophantic.[1]

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[1] From *Tait's Magazine* for September 1845—at which date Wordsworth was still alive: reprinted by De Quincey in 1857,—*i.e.* seven years after Wordsworth's death,—in vol. vi of his Collected Writings.—M.

[2] The meaning probably is that De Quincey had never before 1845 undertaken a critical essay of a formal kind on the *whole* of the writings of any author.—M.

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[1] One recollects here especially that portion of De Quincey's Autobiographic Sketches which has been printed *ante*, Vol. III, pp. 197-206, under the title "Gradual Estrangement from Wordsworth." It had appeared in *Tait* for October 1840,—*i.e.* five years before the present paper.—M.

Safer, then, it is to scrutinise 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[1]; 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 favourable 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 all readers 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, and confessedly, 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 novelty besides as to the quality of the diction. But, in the meantime, this novelty, 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 men") 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 — one falser in its grounds, or more ruinous in its tendency—than that given by a modern Rector[1] of the Glasgow University to the students—viz. that they should cultivate the Saxon part of our language rather than 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 *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 silkworms) 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 sentiment 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 or hinges of connexion and transition will be Anglo-Saxon.

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[1] William Wordsworth had, on the death of Southey, accepted the Laureateship [in 1843.—M.]

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[1] "*Modern Rector*":—viz. Lord Brougham. [He was elected to the Lord Rectorship of Glasgow University in 1825 in succession to Sir James Mackintosh, his opponent on the occasion being Sir Walter Scott. His address to the students on his installation for his term of office was published at the time.—M.]

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 had 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 (as they fancied) 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 diction 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 received for "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 correction of the kind presumed by the Wordsworth theory. 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 true question when put in another shape, since in this shape it opens into a very troublesome dilemma. Spenser, Shakspere, the Bible of 1611, and Milton—how say you, William Wordsworth—are these sound 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* sound, then, indeed, you open a fearful range to your own artillery, but in a war greater than you could, by possibility, 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 case, if they also are faulty, you undertake an *onus* of hostility so vast that you will be found fighting against stars.

It is clear, therefore, that Wordsworth thus far erred, and caused needless embarrassment, equally to the attack and to the defence, by not assigning the names of the parties offending 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 which, the bad and the good, should have been extensively illustrated; and until that were done the whole dispute was an aerial subtlety, 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?* (What! treat a matter so weighty in a style so slight and slipshod?) The truth is that at this day, after a lapse of forty-seven years and much discussion, the whole question moved by Wordsworth is still a *res integra* (a case untouched). 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 is still in arrear: it 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 favoured 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 sympathising powerfully with the martial spirit. Other poets, favourites of Mr. Hazlitt, have never struck a solitary note from this Tyrtæan lyre; and who blames them? Surely, if every man breathing 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 and endless 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 splendours 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—viz. that the mind of an infant cannot admit the idea of death, cannot comprehend it, 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 connexion with the reflex shadows of the grave; and, if she herself has *not*, the reader *has*, and through this very child, the gloom of that contemplation obliquely irradiated, as raised in relief upon his imagination even by *her*. That same infant, which subjectively could not tolerate death, being by the reader contemplated objectively, flashes upon us the tenderest images of death. Death and its sunny antipole are forced into connexion. I remember, again, to have heard a man complain that in a little poem of Wordsworth's having for its very subject the universal diffusion (and the gratuitous diffusion) of joy[1]—

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[1] See the exquisite poems, so little understood by the commonplace reader, of the "Two April Mornings," and the "Fountain." [The three poems entitled *Matthew*, *The Two April Mornings*, and *The Fountain*, are all of date 1799.—M.]

> " 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—

> " 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." [2]

Undeniably there is (and without ground for complaint there is) even here, where the spirit of gaiety 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 dancing men and maidens who for that transitory hour are the true, but, alas ! the fugitive 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 noonday Pan seems to brood. Out of suffering there is evoked the image of peace. Out of the cruel leap, and the agonising race through thirteen hours—out of the anguish in the perishing brute, and the headlong courage of his final despair,

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[1] The poem is of date 1806, and is entitled *Stray Pleasures*.—M.

[2] 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.

> "Not unobserved by sympathy divine"—

out of the ruined lodge and the forgotten mansion, bowers that are trodden under foot, and pleasure-houses that are dust—the poet calls up a vision of *palingenesis* (or restorative resurrection); 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 even now 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 of 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's 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 to a subtle purpose of creation, 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. It must not be forgotten that a wedding is pre-eminently that sort of festival which swamps all individuality of sentiment or character. The *epithalamia* of Edmund Spenser are the most impassioned that exist; but nobody reads them.

But 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 if 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 for the sorrow of a shepherd at eighty parting for ever 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, being successful through one generation, afterwards is unsuccessful for ever.

But from this theme, as 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."[1] 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 (parted from her by mere stress of poverty), 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, natural in its kind, but preternatural in its degree.

There is a story somewhere told of a man who complained, and his friends also 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 rainy or vapoury weather. But, said his friend, had you no advice for this strange affection? Oh 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—viz. 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—not into the horse marines, too unsettled in their head-quarters, but into our British Army. There is something, even on the husband's part, in this enlistment to which the reader can hardly extend his indulgence. 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 staid 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 to his obvious duty. He found so luxurious a pleasure in contemplating a pathetic *phthisis* of heart in the abandoned wife that the one obvious word of counsel in her particular distress, which dotage could not have overlooked, he suppresses. And yet this one word 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,"[1] 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—viz. 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 particular detachment which had enlisted him. This *must* have been in the neighbourhood. Here he would have obtained all the particulars. That same night he might 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 her 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 could it have survived a single interview with the rector, the curate, or the parish-clerk, with the schoolmaster, the doctor, the attorney, the innkeeper, or the exciseman.

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[1] First published in 1814.—M.

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[1] "*Dirty half-hundred*":—By an old military jest, which probably had at first some foundation in fact, the 50th regiment of foot has been so styled for above a century.

But, apart from the vicious mechanism of the incidents, the story is far more objectionable by the doubtful quality of the leading character from which it derives its pathos. Had any one of us the readers discharged the duties of coroner in her neighbourhood, 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 case has been circumstantially reported by the poet), died of neglect,—not originating in direct cruelty, but in 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[1] 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 thoughtless and vagrant 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.[2] But this solution of the case (the soothing into sleep) 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 connexion with the "Excursion." Such an amputation 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 connexion 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.

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[1] "*The Wanderer*" (as should be explained to the reader) is the technical designation of the presiding philosopher in Wordsworth's "Excursion."

[2] "*Dalby's carminative*":—This, and another similar remedy, called Godfrey's cordial, both owing their main agencies to opium, have through generations been the chief resource of poor mothers when embarrassed in their daily labours by fretful infants. Fine ladies have no such difficulty to face, and are apt to forget that there is any such apology to plead.

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, to judge by the description), amongst the homely household of a yeoman; he has 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 labour, 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, even by this great vision, 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, coloured 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 own earlier stages. 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 reascent, quite on a level with the aspirations of his 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, in the very inverse order, his bankruptcy in hope it was 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 tonic medicines or 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 commensurate with 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, first, through his own domestic calamities predisposing him to *gloomy* views of human nature, and, secondly, through the overclouding of his high-toned expectations from the French Revolution; which overclouding 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 realising 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 injure his temper without bettering his hopes.

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 splendour of the coming summer, we 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. This mighty event was the explosion of a prodigious volcano, which scattered its lava over every kingdom of every continent, silently manuring them for social struggles; this lava is gradually fertilising all soils in all countries; 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 ominous undulations already breaking against the steps of that golden throne which stretches from St. Petersburg to Astrakan; tremble at the hurricanes which have long been mustering about the pavilions of the Ottoman Padishah. All these are long swells setting in from original impulses and fermentations of the French Revolution. Even as regards France herself, that which gave the mortal offence to the sympathies of Wordsworth's "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 career. Even to a frail sweetheart you would grant more indulgence than to be off in a pet because some momentary cloud arose between you. The Reign of Terror was a mere fleeting and transitional phasis. The Napoleon dynasty was nothing more. Even that very Napoleon scourge which was supposed by many to have consummated and superseded the Revolution has itself passed away upon the wind—has itself been superseded—leaving no wreck, relic, or record behind, except precisely those changes which it worked, *not in its character of 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; once again, after two thousand years of serfdom, man walks with his head erect; bastiles are no more; every cottage is searched by the golden light of law; and the privileges of religious conscience have been guaranteed and consecrated for ever and ever.

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, gentlemen blockheads, it *has* succeeded ; it is far beyond the reach of ruinous reactions ; 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 *a parte ante* ; and, meantime, they themselves are very much more liable to that charge *a 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 rashly. And this error they will not themselves fail to acknowledge, as soon as they awaken to the truth that the French Revolution did not close on the 18th Brumaire 1799,—at which time it suffered eclipse but not final eclipse, at which time it entered a cloud but not the cloud of death, at which time its vital movement was arrested by a military traitor,—but that this Revolution is still mining under ground, like the ghost in Hamlet, through every quarter of the globe.[1]

In paying so much attention to the "Excursion" (of which, in any more extended notice, the two books entitled "The Churchyard amongst the Mountains" would have

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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 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. The Revolution, and the resistance to the Revolution, were the two powers that quickened each the other for ultimate good. 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 neutralised, 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 had been fitted to stifle.

claimed the profoundest attention), I yield less to my 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 of the particular volume 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 with any vital 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 does not ascend uniformly, or even keep one steady level, but trespasses, as if by forgetfulness or chance, into topics yielding a very humble 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 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 controlling 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 as regards the succession of the incidents; and, when the next movement *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 asserting and denying, giving and taking, butting, rebutting, and "surrebutting"; and this would confer an interlocutory or *amœbean* 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 swordplay, 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 very often he *cannot* cut it short. Disquisitions, in a certain key, can no more turn round within the compass of 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 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 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, therefore, driven into discussions that would not have been chosen by his own taste, but dictated by the logic of the question, and by the impossibility of evading any one branch of a subject which is essential to the integrity of the speculation simply because it is irreconcilable with poetic brilliancy of treatment.

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 pretensions 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. I speak of that truth which strengthens into solemnity an impression very feebly acknowledged previously, or truth which suddenly unveils a connexion between objects hitherto 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, with respect to 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 downright revelations of the telescope, or the absolute 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 subconsciousness. And in questions of the mere understanding we see the same fact illustrated. The author who wins notice the most is not he that perplexes men by truths drawn from fountains of absolute novelty,—truths as yet unsunned, and from that cause obscure,—but he that awakens into illuminated consciousness ancient 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 magical strength of truth in his saying of 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, harmonising, 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 flood, the stars—a spectacle as old
As the beginning of the heavens and earth." [1]

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 noonday, 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 daylight belongs alike to north and south. Accordingly, I remember one notice of it in Hesiod,—a case where the clouds exhibited

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[1] From Wordsworth's Sonnet beginning "Hail, Twilight."—M.

> "The beauteous semblance of a flock at rest."

Another there is, a thousand years later, in Lucan: amongst the portents which that poet notices as prefiguring the dreadful convulsions destined to shake the earth at Pharsalia, I remember 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 vapoury appearances; in "Hamlet" and elsewhere occur gleams of such allusions; but I remember no distinct sketch of such an appearance before that in the "Antony and Cleopatra" of Shakspere, beginning,

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

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[1] But then, says the reader, why was 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 II'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. Shakspere, in his journeys 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 skirmishing of the Aurora. And yet, for want of a word to fix and identify the gorgeous phenomenon, how could he introduce it as an image, or even as the subject of an allusion, in his writings?

Subsequently to Shakspere, 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, the gentle *flibustier,*[1] and some few professional naturalists, he first and he last 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 a confusion that distinguishes nothing; *their* error is from without. Pope, again, and many who live in towns,[2] 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 silkworm; and through his commerce with nature did he live and breathe. Hence it was—viz. from the *truth* of his love—that his knowledge grew; whilst most others, being merely hypocrites in their love, have turned out merely sciolists 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 indorsed upon the draperies of the storm in the fourth book of the "Excursion"—that scene again witnessed upon the passage of the Hamilton Hills in Yorkshire—the 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,

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[1] *Flibustier*, the ordinary French term for a buccaneer in the last forty years of the seventeenth century, is supposed to be a Spanish or French mispronunciation of the word *freebooter*.

[2] 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 sympathise with his feelings. Under any other circumstances familiarity does but realise the adage, and "breeds contempt." The great despisers of rural scenery, its fixed and permanent undervaluers, are rustics.

> "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 vapoury are the glories of man, even as the visionary parodies of those glories are frail, even as the scenical copies 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 labours 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 sympathise 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 reciprocally 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, on some crimson morning, and what will you see? Every man, every horse, every dog, glorying in the plenitude 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 is 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 the case, and yearned for an expression of the case, when 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 to the man"), have even passed into the popular heart, 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 impossible; *that* is at war with elementary 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 spiritual and shadowy foundations 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 narrow, too illiberal, and too exclusive. Both these poets manifested the quality of their strength in 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[1] 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 byword of scorn. Since then, and more than once, senates have rung with acclamations to the echo of his name. Now, at this moment, whilst 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 only now clearing the clouds that gathered about its rising. Meditative poetry is perhaps that province of literature which will ultimately maintain most power amongst the generations which are coming; but in this department, at least, there is little competition to be apprehended by Wordsworth from anything that has appeared since the death of Shakspere.

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[1] Written in 1845.

POSTSCRIPT IN 1857

[WHAT follows is part of De Quincey's "Preface" in 1857 to vol. vi of the Collective Edition of his Writings,—which volume contained, as the present does, the articles on Wordsworth's Poetry, on Shelley, and on Keats, but associated there for the nonce (as was almost always the case in the making up of the successive volumes of De Quincey's own edition) with whatever other papers, however heterogeneous, it was easiest to get rid of at the same time. The Preface to the volume, accordingly, consisted of paragraphs having reference to the component papers severally and individually. The following is the portion relating to the Wordsworth paper.—M.]

Three out of the six papers here accidentally brought together—viz. that on Shelley, on Wordsworth, and on Keats—the reader is requested to regard as slight impromptus written under the disadvantage, but therefore under the privilege, of unpremeditated composition. The circumstances of the case, so far from demanding a comprehensive view of the subject, were such as peremptorily to exclude it; and it became requisite, for a momentary purpose, out of many dazzling aspects crowning such themes, to fix the attention exclusively upon one or two. [Here follow some sentences respecting the article on Keats, which will be given in their proper place in connexion with that article.—M.] With regard to Wordsworth, what I chiefly regret is that I could not, under the circumstances of the case, obtain room for pursuing further the great question (first moved controversially by Wordsworth) of *Poetic Diction.* It is remarkable enough, as illustrating the vapoury character of all that philosophy which Coleridge and Wordsworth professed to hold in common, that, after twenty years of close ostensible agreement, it turned out, when accident led them to a printed utterance of their several views, that not one vestige of true and virtual harmony existed to unite them. Between *Fancy*, for instance, and *Imagination* they both agreed that a distinction, deep, practical, and vitally operative, had slept unnoticed for ages,—that first of all, in an early stage of this revolutionary nineteenth century, that distinction was descried upon the psychological field of vision by Wordsworth or by Coleridge. But naturally the accurate demanded to know—by which. And to this no answer could ever be obtained. Finally, however, it transpired that any answer would be nugatory; since, on coming to distinct explanations upon the subject in print, the two authorities flatly, and through the whole gamut of illustrative cases, contradicted each other. Precisely the same (or, at least, precisely an equal) agreement had originally existed between the two philosophic poets on the laws and quality of *Poetic Diction*; and there again, after many years of supposed pacific harmony, all at once precisely the same unfathomable chasm of chaotic schism opened between them. Chaos, however, is the natural prologue to Creation; and, although neither Coleridge nor Wordsworth has left anything written upon this subject which does not tend seemingly to a barren result, nevertheless there is still fermenting an unsatisfied doubt upon the question of the true and the false in poetic diction which dates from the days of Euripides. What were the views of Euripides can now be gathered only from his practice; but from that (which was not unobserved by Valckenaer) I infer that he was secretly governed by the same feelings on this subject as Wordsworth. But between the two poets there was this difference: Euripides was perhaps in a state of *unconscious* sympathy with the views subsequently held by Wordsworth,[1]—so that, except by his practice, he could not promote these views; but Wordsworth held them consciously and earnestly, and purely from Sybaritish indolence failed to illustrate them. Even Coleridge, though indulgent enough to such an infirmity, was a little scandalized at the excess of this morbid affection in Wordsworth. The old original illustrations,—two, three, or perhaps three-and-a-quarter, cited from Gray and Prior,—these, and absolutely not enlarged through a fifty years' additional experience, were all that Wordsworth put forward to the end of his life.[1] Any decent increase of exertion would have easily added a crop of five thousand further cases. This excess of *inertia*,—this (what the ancients would have called) *sacred* laziness,—operating upon a favoured theory, is in itself a not uninteresting spectacle for a contemplative man. But a still stranger subject for cynical contemplation is that after all (as hereafter I believe it possible to show) Wordsworth has failed to establish his theory, not simply through morbid excess of holy idleness, but also through entire misconception of his own meaning and blind aberration from the road on which he fancied himself moving.

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[1] That Euripides, consciously or not, had a secret craving for the natural and life-like in diction is noticed by Valckenaer in his great dissertation on the *Phœnissæ*.

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[1] The reference is to those illustrations of false "poetic diction," selected from English poets of the eighteenth century, which had sufficed for Wordsworth in those Prose Prefaces and Notes, explaining his own principles of poetry, which had formed so notable a part of some successive editions of his poems from 1800 onwards, and which are now usually printed as an Appendix to Collected Editions of his Poetical Works. De Quincey's complaint,—not an unfair one,—is that, though Wordsworth lived till 1850, he never increased, as he might have done so easily, the original small stock of specimens which had served him in 1800 or thereabouts.—M.

NOTES ON GILFILLAN'S LITERARY PORTRAITS[1]

WILLIAM GODWIN

[1756-1836]

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 ;

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[1] From *Tait's Magazine* for November and December 1845 and January and April 1846 : reprinted by De Quincey in a distributed fashion in his Collective Edition,—the portions relating to Godwin, Foster, and Hazlitt not appearing till vol. xii of that edition (published in 1859), while those relating to Shelley and Keats had appeared as separate articles in vol. vi (published in 1857).—The Rev. George Gilfillan of Dundee (1813-1878), a man of much literary enthusiasm, author of not a few very popular books, and an indefatigable writer for periodicals, knew De Quincey personally, by visits to him in Edinburgh, and latterly by association with him in contributorship to the same Edinburgh periodicals,—first to *Tait's Magazine*, and afterwards to *Hogg's Instructor* and *Titan*. He may be remembered, in fact, as one of De Quincey's junior *collaborateurs* in the magazine industry of Edinburgh during the last twenty years of De Quincey's life. Among his earliest and best-known publications were three volumes of his collected magazine papers, consisting of sketches and criticisms of contemporary or recent literary celebrities,—the first in 1845 under the title of *A Gallery of Literary Portraits*, the second in 1850 under the title *Second Gallery of Literary Portraits*, and the third in 1854 under the title *Third Gallery of Literary Portraits*. It was the first of these that occasioned the present series of " Notes " from De Quincey's pen in the columns of *Tait*. He probably wanted to oblige Mr. Tait, who was the publisher of Mr. Gilfillan's volume, and at the same time to do a kindness to Mr. Gilfillan as the author. One observes now, at all events, that among the sketches of celebrities in Mr. Gilfillan's volume was one of De Quincey himself. The opening sentence of this sketch was as follows :—" Conceive a little, pale-faced, woe-begone, and

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" (p. 15) 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 ragged 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

"attenuated man, with short indescribables, no coat, check shirt, and "neckcloth twisted with a wisp of straw, opening the door of his room "in ——— Street, advancing towards you with a hurried movement and "half-recognising glance, saluting you in low and hesitating tones, ask-"ing you to be seated, and, after he has taken a seat opposite you, but "without looking you in the face, beginning to pour into your willing ear "a stream of learning and wisdom as long as you are content to listen "or to lend him the slightest cue." De Quincey was probably too well accustomed to this style of familiarity in the description of his personal appearance to mind it much; and the rest of Mr. Gilfillan's sketch, though with some interspersed criticisms, made ample amends. It was an eloquent and affectionate expression of Mr. Gilfillan's immense admiration of the singular genius of De Quincey. It was not for De Quincey, of course, to notice this particular sketch while reviewing Mr. Gilfillan's book; nor, in fact, did he review the book, in any sense, as a whole. It was sufficient for his kindly purpose to select a few of the many portraits of celebrities included in Mr. Gilfillan's "Gallery,"—about thirty altogether,—and review these. The portraits selected for comment were those of Godwin, Foster, Hazlitt, Shelley, and Keats, respecting each of which De Quincey had something to say in addition to what Mr. Gilfillan had said, or in difference from him.—Although, as we have said, De Quincey dispersed the five sketches when he reprinted them in his Collective Edition, it is best now to keep them together, as originally. They are suggested "Notes" rather than substantive articles; and the reference in each is avowedly to Mr. Gilfillan's book.—M.

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 monomachist 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 re-cast, but absolutely a travesty of the first; nay, it is all but a palinode.[1] 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*.[2] 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 high-minded and delicate honour, 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 neighbours 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 our 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 must himself 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 a murder. Caleb, meantime, wastes no labour 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?[1] 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 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.[2]

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[1] The first edition of Godwin's *Enquiry concerning Political Justice* was in 1793, in two quarto volumes; the second in 1795, in two volumes octavo. There was a third edition in 1797, and a fourth in 1798.—M.

[2] *Things as they Are; or, The Adventures of Caleb Williams:* first published in 1794.—M.

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 farther, 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 "reunion" 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 this 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.

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[1] "*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.

[2] Henry Glassford Bell, 1803-1874.

Such is the fable of *Caleb Williams*; upon which, by the way, is built, I think, Colman's drama of *The Iron Chest*.[1] 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 *littérateur* 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, *a 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 neighbour 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.

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[1] This play, by George Colman the younger, was produced in 1796.—M.

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 sparse- " ness is its strength : the flash comes sudden as the lightning. " No preparatory flourish or preliminary sound ; no sheets " of useless splendour : each figure is a fork of fire, which " strikes, and needs no second blow. Nay, often his images " are singularly commonplace, 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 idealised, 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 is 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."[1]

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 Wollstonecraft for his wife, Mrs. Shelley for his daughter, and the immortal Shelley as his son-in-law.

JOHN FOSTER

[1770-1843]

Mr. Gilfillan perhaps overrates the power of this essayist, and the hold which he has upon the public mind.[2] 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. 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 favour him as a brother, and also as one whose credit will react upon their common sect. And this favour, 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.

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[1] "*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.

[2] The best-known of Foster's writings was, and still is, his *Essays, in a Series of Letters*, published originally in 1805, when he was minister to a Baptist congregation at Frome in Somersetshire. The Essays were four in number, with these titles: "On a Man's Writing Memoirs of Himself"; "On Decision of Character"; "On the Application of the Epithet Romantic"; "On some of the Causes by which Evangelical Religion has been rendered less acceptable to persons of Cultivated Taste." These thoughtful Essays, and other later writings from the same pen, were in higher reputation about fifty years ago than they are perhaps at present.—M.

To this accident of social position, and to his connexion with the *Eclectic Review*, Mr. Foster owed his first advantageous presentation before the public.[1] 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 unfavourably, 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[1]; 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:—1*st*, That the novelty or weight of the thinking was hardly sufficient to account for the sudden popularity without some *extra* influence at work; and, 2*dly*, That the contrast was remarkable between the uncoloured style of his general diction and the brilliant felicity of occasional images embroidered upon the sober ground of his text. The splendour 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 ballrooms.

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[1] The *Eclectic Review*, started in 1805, was for about sixty years thenceforward an important literary organ of English Evangelical Dissent. Robert Hall and James Montgomery were among its chief contributors; but the most active of all from 1805 to 1843 seems to have been Foster. A selection of his papers in the *Eclectic* was published in the year after his death.—M.

Subsequently I remarked two other features of difference in his manner, neither of which has been overlooked by Mr. Gilfillan: viz., 1*st*, The unsocial gloom of his eye, travelling over all things with dissatisfaction; 2*d* (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 favourable 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, he 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,[1] 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 cognisance 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 for ever 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.

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[1] For the titles of the four Essays see *ante*, p. 335, footnote.—M.

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[1] Henry Hunt, 1773-1835.—M.

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 for ever neutralise 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 purposes 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 "savoury," 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 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

[1778-1830]

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 connexion 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 connexion! 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 from this sheltering harbour 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 connexion with a sect,—*i.e.* 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,[1]—who told me, in illustration of the dark sinister gloom which sate for ever 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 Moor 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 militare*, by the following trait,—that, if it 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 masquing, 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.

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[1] Probably Charles Lamb. See *ante*, Vol. III, pp. 79-83, and Vol. V, p. 232.—M.

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 for ever 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 Lincoln's-Inn-Fields, the treacherous young woman met her more favoured 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.*[1] 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 at 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 sympathise, or *who* might sneer. Pity was no demand of his; laughter was no wrong: the sole necessity for *him* was to empty his overburdened 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,[2] 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. Hazlitt myself; and those occasions, or all but one, were some time subsequent to the case of female treachery which I have here described.[3] 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 or 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 rumours, if they took a direction favourable 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 accessory 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 dishonour 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's; 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 honour! 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's. 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,[1] could a son 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.[1] 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 godsend to his avarice or a shipwreck to his ambition—whether he was more thankful for the money gained, or angry for the honour 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 crossing, had he not a kind of estate in London?

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[1] The book, the proper title of which is *Liber Amoris*, or *The New Pygmalion*, was published in 1823. See *ante*, Vol. III, pp. 79-83, where this story of Hazlitt's frenzied passion has already been told by De Quincey in the course of his "Recollections of Charles Lamb."—M.

[2] Hazlitt's *Life of Napoleon* was published in four volumes in 1828-30.—M.

[3] The time was between 1821, when De Quincey's connexion with the *London Magazine* had begun by the publication there of his Opium-Eating Confessions, and 1825, when that connexion had ceased. It was during those years that people were anxious to meet "the Opium-Eater" in any of his occasional visits to London.—M.

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[1] "*Son of England*":—*i.e.* 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

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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, viz. 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 *granddaughter* of England. But all these ladies collectively would be called, on the French principle, the Children of England.

[1] The obstinacy of the early Quakers in keeping on their hats even in Courts of Law was a constant cause of squabble between them and the Judges.—M.

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 neutralise them one and all. No honour 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 gracious 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.[1] Mr. Gilfillan says that "he proved "more popular than was expected by those who knew his

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[1] For a more elaborate criticism of Hazlitt's literary style see *ante*, Vol. V, pp. 230-238.—M.

" 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.[1] 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 unavoidably, having heard Coleridge talk on this theme, must have approached it with a mind largely preoccupied 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's generosity; for in this particular volume it is that Hazlitt makes a pointed assault, in sneering terms, and very unnecessarily, upon Sir James as a lecturer at Lincoln's Inn.[1]

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[1] The most complete Bibliography of Hazlitt, I believe, is that privately printed in 1868 by Mr. Alexander Ireland in a volume entitled *List of the Writings of William Hazlitt and Leigh Hunt, chronologically arranged; with notes, descriptive, critical, and explanatory.*" No one has done so much as Mr. Ireland to maintain, or indeed to resuscitate, the memory of Hazlitt; and probably the best and fullest information of all kinds now easily accessible about Hazlitt is that which will be found in Mr. Ireland's recent publication (1889) entitled "*William Hazlitt, Essayist and Critic: Selections from his Writings; with a Memoir, Biographical and Critical.*"—M.

The other little work unnoticed by Mr. Gilfillan is an examination (but under what title I cannot say) of Lindley Murray's English Grammar.[2] 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 continually 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.

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[1] The book of Hazlitt's here referred to was his first publication, having appeared in 1805 with the title "*An Essay on the Principles of Human Action: being an argument in favour of the Natural Disinterestedness of the Human Mind.*" Mr. Ireland, in his Bibliography of Hazlitt mentioned in last footnote, quotes Sir James Mackintosh's opinion of the book, as summed up in the phrase "A work of great ability," and quotes also the following words from Hazlitt himself,—"The only thing I ever piqued myself upon was the writing the Essay on the Principles of Human Action." The Essay, Mr. Ireland also tells us, was reprinted in 1836, six years after Hazlitt's death, with corrections which the author had left in MS., and with the addition of another essay "On Abstract Ideas."—M.

[2] *A New and Improved Grammar of the English Tongue: for the Use of Schools.* 1810.—This is the abbreviated title. The full title, with notices of the book, is given by Mr. Ireland in his Hazlitt Bibliography."—M.

"Strange stories," says Mr. Gilfillan, "are told about his "[Hazlitt's] latter days, and his deathbed." 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 cir-"cumstances, 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 por-"traiture 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!*

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

[1792-1822]

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 profound respect, on the one hand, due to his exalted powers, and yet without offence, on the other, 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 would have proved transitory; but in feelings the holiest which brood over human interests 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 co-extensive and co-enduring 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—viz. 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?"

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[1] *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 (as the French word *transiger* still does) where each of two conflicting parties conceded something of what originally he had claimed as the rigour of his right, and *transactio* was the technical

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 honour. And, were this even otherwise, the objection would be nothing to Christians, who, recognising the Deity in Christ, recognise 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"), calls this "a fiendish idea": and I acknowledge that to myself, in one

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 most useful coinage; but generally to re-endow 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 life 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.

part of my boyhood, it *did* seem a refinement of malice. My subtilising 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 simply as the result of it — an undesigned result; 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.[1]

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—

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[1] 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 harmonise with the spirit of Christian morals. [The New Testament passage referred to is *Romans* xii. 19-20, "Avenge not yourselves, beloved, but give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance belongeth unto me; I will recompense, saith the Lord. But if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him to drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head." The general meaning of the passage,—which is an almost exact quotation of the Old Testament passage, *Proverbs* xxvi. 21-22,—clearly is "For *that* is the best mode of revenge"; but what is the meaning *within* this meaning? The interpretation which finds "a fiendish idea" in the words must be "For in so doing, in refraining from vengeance yourself, you ensure a more terrific vengeance from Him to whom vengeance belongs." Very properly, however, De Quincey thinks this interpretation strained, and seeks another. He does not precisely explain that other; but it seems to have been some form of the interpretation, now pretty generally accepted, which makes "thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head" a metaphor for "thou shalt burn him with remorse, and so melt him down."—M.]

> "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. The 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 the 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 re-illumined
> 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, makes 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 proselytising atheist. But in those days he was 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 fancies himself called upon to defy and to hate both, in so far as they have 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 expostulations 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. Once having scented the gales of what he thought perfect freedom, he had a constant vision of a manger and a halter in the rear of all such caressing tempters from the lawless desert. His feud with Christianity was a craze derived from some early wrench of 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:—"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 probably 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 Antichristian 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 a 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. Oh 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. 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 grey; 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 somewhere about five-and-twenty colleges and 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 of 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 connexions 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 Shakspere, is not eccentricity so much as painful discourtesy[1]; 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 labouring 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 was almost sublime,—Shelley could not but have honoured 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," illustrates 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

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[1] The story is that once, when Shelley and a friend of his were

travelling in a stage-coach where the only other inside passenger was a timid-looking old lady, Shelley, after a good deal of preliminary wild talk of a kind likely to alarm the old lady, suddenly completed her horror by squatting down between the seats and addressing his friend with the words of Richard II in Shakespeare's play:—

> "For God's sake, let us sit upon the ground
> And tell sad stories of the death of kings."—M.

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 default 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,[1] stood related to 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 the later descendent 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.

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[1] "*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.

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 for ever; he would behold his first wife, whom once he had loved passionately, through calamities arising from himself called away to an early and a tragic death. The peace after which his heart panted for ever, 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 trumpet 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 schoolroom, 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 tyrannise
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 linkëd armour 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 walked 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.

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[1] "*Of Custom*":—This alludes to a theory of Shelley's on the subject of marriage as a vicious institution, and an attempt to realise 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

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 labours as a missionary in the service of Atheism. 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: viz. that he was rather tall, slender, and presenting the air of an elegant 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, however, 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 neighbourhood; for his family, already estranged from him, were now thoroughly

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 apologised 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.

irritated by what they regarded as a *mésalliance*, 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 Ullswater, and other estates of greater extent in the same two counties[1]; 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 neighbourly 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 for ever. 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, according to that friend's intention, for the sake of bringing them within his own 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. "Oh 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 honours 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.

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[1] "*Two counties*":—The frontier line between Westmoreland and Cumberland traverses obliquely the lake of Ullswater, so that the banks on *each* side lie partly in both counties.

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 neighbour; for, as men living on the coast of Mayo or Galway are apt to consider the dwellers on the seabord of North America in the light of next-door neighbours, 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 neighbours. Some neighbourly advantages I might certainly have placed at Shelley's disposal: Grasmere, for instance, itself, which tempted at that time[1] by a beauty that had not *then* 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.

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[1] "*At that time!*"—the reader will say who happens to be aware of the mighty barriers which engirdle Grasmere: viz. Fairfield, Arthur's Chair, Seat Sandal, Steil Fell, &c. (the lowest above two thousand, the higher 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

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

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 splendour above all 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 natural cathedral of Grasmere, I have since considered Grasmere itself a ruin of its former self.

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 the worst of 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 gravestone 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 bedside 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. Nonconformity of tastes might easily arise 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 organisation, to eternal restlessness and irritability of nerves, if not absolutely at times to lunacy.

About three years after this tragical 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. They lived up and down in Northern Italy, and, I believe, happily. On Monday, July 8, 1822, being then in his twenty-ninth year, Shelley 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 Spezzia 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. Trelawny, well known at that time for his connexion 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 all 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 therefore burned by the seaside, on funeral pyres, with the classic rites of paganism, four English gentlemen being present: Capt. Shenly of the navy, Mr. Leigh Hunt, Lord Byron, and Mr. Trelawny. A circumstance is added by Mr. Gilfillan which previous accounts do not mention—viz. 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, "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. Trelawny and Mr. Hunt: partly on the consideration that three-and-twenty years (now in 1857 five-and-thirty) 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 the "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 "for ever. And in that skiff was Alastor![1] 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 counsels 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."[2]

These words are Mr. Gilfillan's, and possibly pursue the scrutiny too far. Conscious, indeed, that it tends beyond the limits of charity, Mr. Gilfillan recalls himself from this attempt to fathom the unfathomable. But undoubtedly the temptation is great, in minds not 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—

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[1] "*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.

[2] 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. Trelawny, 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.

> "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.[1]

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!*[2] 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,

[1] See "The Seven against Thebes" of Æschylus.

[2] *Such when thou art, would to God thou wert ours.*

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. Far from it! Indeed, he has retreated so entirely from the most shocking feature of the story—viz. 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 local traditions and 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 Thelka, 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 depth 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 immortalised 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, and from the midst of them looks out "the eternal child,"[1] 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.

JOHN KEATS

[1795-1821]

Mr. Gilfillan, in his "Gallery of Literary Portraits," 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 *ness*—one of the *ties* being "poverty"; which disease is at least not among 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 endeavour 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. 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 rhetorician, he found himself on the brink of insolvency.

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[1] "*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."

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 neighbour, 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 "flotsam" and "jetsam" 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 half-a-pound of sugar 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 (quality as regards the difficulties in the process of composition), the difference in amount of labour 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 labour 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 all 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 origin, 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] 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 from philtres administered to him by some enamoured woman. But this kind of morbid *afflatus* did not deliver itself into words and metre by lingering oscillations and through processes of stealthy growth: it threw itself forward, and precipitated its own utterance, with the headlong movement of a cataract. It was an *œstrus*, a rapture, the bounding of a mænad, 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 labour are absolutely incommensurable. In Horace the labour was *directly* as the power, in Lucretius *inversely* as the power. Whatsoever in Horace was best had been obtained by *most* labour; whatsoever in Lucretius was best by *least*. In Horace, the exquisite skill co-operated 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 through mere precipitation of volume and headlong fury.

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[1] There is one peculiarity about Lucretius which, even in the absence of all anecdotes to that effect, would have led an observing

Another paradox of Mr. Gilfillan's under this head is that he classes Dr. Johnson as indolent; and it is the more start-

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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 re-establish 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: first, the occasional pause in his raving tone enforced by the interruption of an episode; secondly, 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.

ling 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 labour from his scrofulous habit of body[1] 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 labour, 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 bookshelves from such as you will consider active." George III, in a compliment as happily turned as any one of those ascribed to 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 the 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."

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[1] "*Habit of body*": but much more from mismanagement of his body. Dr. Johnson tampered with medical studies, and fancied himself learned enough in such studies 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, once having 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 endeavouring 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 Clinton 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.

Upon other points in this discussion there is some room to differ from 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 thousand 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 advanced) that no distinction in the case is tenable for a moment but this: viz. that genius is that mode of intellectual power which moves in alliance with the *genial* nature—*i.e.* 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 of breathing that represents the *total* nature of man, and therefore his enjoying and suffering nature, as well as his knowing and distinguishing nature; 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[1] 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, because involving some degree of error—viz. 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 rumour circulated by an inveterate gossip,"—meaning Horace Walpole. But gossips usually go upon some foundation, broad or narrow; and, until the rumour 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 stepson, Lord Warwick, to witness the peaceful death of a Christian with so rich a story as this,—that he, the said Christian, which is really not improbable, "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 bedside, 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 on Lord Byron's way of putting the case, there is no doubt that latterly Addison gave way to habits of intemperance. He had married a woman of rank, the Countess of Warwick,—a woman by general report not amiable, but at any rate of trying and uneasy temper.[1] From this cause he suffered considerably, but also (and probably much more) from dyspepsy and *tædium vitæ.* He did not walk one mile a-day, and he ought to have walked ten. 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—viz. in Holland House, the well-known residence of the Fox family, consequently for generations the hospitable rendezvous of the Whigs; and there it was,—in this famous mansion (where, as Jack Cade observes, the very stones survive to this day as witnesses of the fact),—that his intemperance was finished. 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 *ambulacrum*, the Right Honourable Joseph placed, or caused to be placed, two tumblers, not of water slightly coloured with brandy, but of brandy slightly diluted with water, and those, the said tumblers, 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 attentions between the two poles, arctic and antarctic, 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 my unworthy self. But so much I have always understood, —that in the gallery of Holland House the ex-Secretary of State caught a decided hiccup, which right honourable hiccup 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 furnished a model to Christians of extra piety, 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; secondly, that painfully limited Addison's free agency; and, thirdly, that provoked insults to his memory, since it pointed a censorious eye upon those things viewed as the acts of a demure pretender to extra devotion which would else have passed without notice as the most venial of frailties in an unsanctimonious layman.

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[1] 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) "savours 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. 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 a forged 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.

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[1] There is a well-known old Irish ballad, repeatedly cited by Maria Edgeworth, which opens thus :—

"There was a young man in Ballinacrasy
That took him a wife to make him unasy."

Such to the letter was the life-catastrophe of Addison.

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,[1] 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." But I ask, 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 appeal could have addressed itself. Besides, and partly from the same cause, even as objects, the human feelings and affections were too grossly and imperfectly distinguished; had not reached even the infancy of that stage in which the passions begin their processes 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, belonging to 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 (it might be alleged) 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.

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[1] For the same reason I refrain from discussing the pretensions of Savage. Mr. Gilfillan gives us to understand that not from want of materials, 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 a searching police, he would have lost the chance which he earned of being hanged,[2] by being long previously transported to the Plantations. How can Mr. Gilfillan allow himself, in a case of this nature, to speak of "universal impression" (if it had even 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 in all these thousands has anything like a reason to offer?

[2] Savage had actually received sentence of death for murder perpetrated in a tavern brawl. The royal clemency interposed most critically to save him from the scaffold, but under an impression utterly without foundation as to his maternal persecutions. Not he by his mother, but his pretended mother by him, was systematically persecuted for years, as a means of extorting money. Suppose his pretensions true, would a person of any manliness have sought to win his daily bread from the terrors of her whom he claimed as his mother?

But these topics, so various and so fruitful, I touch only because I find them 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 colouring, offers little to win attention; for he was not the victim of any systematic malignity, as has been represented. He met, as I have the best reason to believe, with unusual kindness from his liberal publishers, Messrs. Taylor & Hessey.[1] He met with unusual severity from a cynical reviewer,—the late Mr. Gifford, then editor of the "Quarterly Review."[2] The story ran that this article of Mr. Gifford's had killed Keats; upon which, with natural astonishment, Lord Byron thus commented, in the eleventh canto of "Don Juan":—

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[1] Keats's first publication was in March 1817, when a volume of poems was brought out for him by Messrs. Ollier; his *Endymion, a Poetic Romance*, appeared in 1818; his *Lamia, Isabella, The Eve of St. Agnes, and other Poems* (the fragment of *Hyperion* included) in 1820.—M.

[2] Gifford's famous, or infamous, article on *Endymion* (a mere scrag of four pages) appeared in the *Quarterly Review* in April 1818.—M.

"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:
'Tis strange the mind, that very fiery particle,[1]
Should let itself be snuffed out by an article."

Strange, indeed! and the friends who honour Keats's 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 endless 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 innumerable people profess for music, or most poets for external nature. For these things Keats fancied that he cared, but in reality, from all I can learn, he cared next to nothing. 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 vapoury sentiment, and of fantastic effeminacy, seemed to me combined in Keats's "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's bloody crimson. Naturally I was discouraged at the moment 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" trespasses so strongly against good sense and just feeling that, in order to secure its pardon, we need the whole weight of the imperishable "Hyperion"; which, as Mr. Gilfillan truly says, "is the greatest of poetical torsos." The first belongs essentially to the vilest collections of waxwork filigree or gilt gingerbread. The other presents the majesty, the austere beauty, and the simplicity of a Grecian temple enriched with Grecian sculpture.[1]

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[1] "*Fiery particle*":—Lord Byron is loosely translating the expression of Horace—*divinæ particula auræ*.

We have in this country a word—viz. the word *folly*—which has a technical appropriation to the case of fantastic buildings. Any building is called a "folly"[2] which mimics purposes incapable of being realised, and makes a promise to the eye which it cannot keep to the experience. The most impressive illustration of that idea which modern times have seen was, undoubtedly, the ice-palace of the Empress Elizabeth—[3]

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[1] "Seems actually inspired by the Titans: it is as sublime as Æschylus" was Byron's estimate of the *Hyperion.*—M.

[2] "*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.

[3] 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,

"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-labourers. 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 since thawed back into water ; and the poet who described it best—viz. Cowper—is perhaps but little 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 apostrophising 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.

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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 already regarded favourably 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 to whom I may refer as having noticed the story is Captain Colville Frankland of the navy.

> 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 wavy 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.
> 'Twas transient in its nature, as in show
> 'Twas 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 the solemn creation of a frailty so elaborate. Yet still there was some proportion observed: the saloons were limited in number, though *not* limited in splendour. 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 enigmas 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* realisation 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 which, next after the flag of his country and its spotless honour, should be holy 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.[1] But Keats was an

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[1] Bergmann, the German traveller, in his account of his long rambles and residence amongst the Kalmucks [see *ante*, Vol. VII, pp. 8-10—M], 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 honour 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 farther than the eighth milestone. What he could repeat by heart was little more than a mile and a half; and, indeed, *that* was found

Englishman, Keats had the honour to speak the language of Chaucer, Shakspere, 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 prosody, 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.[1]

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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 Kalmuckish 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 not at all to please one's wife, but to frighten one's enemy.

[1] The following apologetic sentences for this most inadequate appreciation of Keats occur in De Quincey's Preface in 1857 to the volume of his Collected Writings containing the article (see *ante*, p. 323):—"In the case of Keats there is something which (after a lapse "of several years) I could wish unsaid, or said more gently. It is the "denunciation, much too harsh, and disproportioned to the offence, "of Keats's licentiousness in the treatment of his mother-tongue: to "which venerable mother-tongue Keats certainly *did* approach with "too little reverence, and with a false notion of his rights over it as a "material servile to his caprices. But the tone of complaint on my "part was too vehement and unmeasured,—though still (as I request "the reader to observe) not uttered until Keats had been dead for "many years, and had notoriously left no representatives interested in "his literary pretensions,—which, besides, are able to protect them-"selves."—M.

NOTES ON WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR[1]

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" 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 from the medical advisers of insurance offices before having our lives insured: fellows that examine one with stethoscopes, that pinch one, that actually punch one in the

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[1] In 1846, when Savage Landor was in the seventy-second year of his age, and residing at Bath, there was brought out, under his own charge, but with the assistance of his friend Mr. John Forster, a collective edition of all his writings up to that date. "It contained," says Mr. Sidney Colvin in his monograph on Landor in the *English Men of Letters* series, "the whole mass of Landor's work compressed into two "tall volumes in royal octavo, with the text printed in double columns: "an unattractive and inconvenient arrangement." Even in that shape, however, admirers of the literary veteran were glad to possess what they could then regard as the definitive edition of the whole of him,—all his fifty years of verse-production, from his earliest *Poems* of 1795 and his *Gebir* of 1798 onwards, and the entire body of his prose revised and corrected, and with the advantage that the famous *Imaginary Conversations* which formed so large a part of it were enlarged by the addition of a "Third Series" to the previously published "First Series" of 1824-28 and "Second Series" of 1829. Among those to whom the book was thus welcome was De Quincey in Edinburgh,—Landor's junior by ten years, but an admirer of his from of old. Accordingly, with the new edition for his text, De Quincey resolved to write of Landor more at large and more particularly than he had till then had an opportunity of doing. *Notes on Savage Landor; by Thomas de Quincey* was the title of a paper of his which appeared, in two instalments, in *Tait's Magazine* for January and February 1847,—a footnote indicating that the occasion of the paper was the new two-volume edition of Landor's works just brought out

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by Moxon. But De Quincey had more to say of Landor than he could bring within the limits of one paper; and two more articles followed immediately in the same magazine,—one in March 1847 with the title *Orthographic Mutineers: with a Special Reference to the Works of Walter Savage Landor*, and the other in April 1847 with the title *Milton versus Southey and Landor*.—It is one of the many instances of provokingly bad effects from the haphazard order in which De Quincey tumbled out his papers for the make-up of his Collective Edition in 1853-60 that the three papers on Landor thus written and published consecutively in 1847, and forming together a kind of whole, were separated and dispersed in that edition. The first was reprinted in 1858 in vol. ix of the Collective Edition; the third in 1859, in vol. xii; and the second not till 1860, in vol. xiv. In the present volume this blunder is rectified, and the three papers are reproduced together, and in their original and proper order.—The character of the first paper, which we are now more particularly introducing, is sufficiently described by its title. It is not so much a connected review of Landor all in all as a series of "Notes" on this and that portion of Landor's writings to which De Quincey was drawn by recollected liking, present admiration, or independent interest in the subject-matter.—M.

[1] "*Southey affirmed*":—viz. in the Letters of Espriella, an imaginary Spaniard, on a visit to England about the year 1810. ["Letters from England, by Don Manuel Alvarez Espriella, translated from the Spanish. 1807."—M.]

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 not in this mistake have recognised 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 coloured 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,[1] 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" (*traduit*) in French, and also "overset" (*oversat*) 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.[2] 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

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[1] "*Too much wealth*":—Mr. Landor, who *should* know best, speaks of himself (once at least) as "poor"; but *that* is all nonsense. I have known several people with annual incomes bordering on £20,000 who spoke of themselves, and seemed seriously to think themselves, unhappy "paupers." Lady Hester Stanhope, with £2700 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 *maloky*) 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?"

[2] Surely below the truth!—M.

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, viz. 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 voluptuous; 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, though of a separate kind, 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 villainies 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 for ever 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.[1]

This, however, is true only of Mr. Landor's prose works. His first work was a poem, viz. *Gebir*;[2] 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 *published*,—*i.e.* nominally made *public*, whereas 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 two 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," viz. Southey, mortification would have led me willingly to resign altogether in *his* favour. Shall I make the reader acquainted with the story of Gebir?

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[1] "*From Hegel*":—I am not prepared with an affidavit that no man ever read the late 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. [Whether true or not of Hegel in 1847, sixteen years after his death, this statement has ceased to be true now. Dr. Hutchison Stirling, Professor Caird, and others, have expounded Hegel's doctrines abundantly, and with such effect that there is now a strong Scoto-Hegelian School of Philosophy in Britain, if not also an Anglo-Hegelian.—M.]

[2] Published anonymously in 1798, when Landor was twenty-three years of age; but not his *first* publication. It had been preceded in 1795 by a small volume entitled *The Poems of Walter Savage Landor*, copies of which are now extremely rare, as it was speedily withdrawn from sale. So Mr. Sidney Colvin informs us in his Monograph on Landor.—M.

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 honour 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 wrongdoers, and he weighs anchor in search of Mr. Pitt's "indemnity for the past," though not much regarding that right honourable 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. But, considered as a woman, Dalica is about as bad a one as even Egypt could furnish. She is a thorough gipsy,—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 best known 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 pike-staff if it happens to be 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 two princes, is given by Charoba to her lover,—her lover, but as yet not recognised 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 grey 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 for ever. 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 scène* is good, but, from want of painstaking, 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 Gebir 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 pre-existing 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 recognise:—

> "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 fear'd the gods?"

To which Aroar answers—

> "Gebir! he fear'd the demons, not the gods,
> Though them, indeed, his daily face adored;
> And was no warrior; yet the thousand lives
> Squander'd 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 those 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 why 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 of the reader rested everywhere upon festal processions, upon the storied 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 [1]:—

GEBIR ON REPAIRING TO HIS FIRST INTERVIEW WITH CHAROBA.

"But Gebir, when he heard of her approach,
Laid by his orbèd 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 o'er the rocks
Shower'd on the lonely Latmian; on his brow
Sorrow there was, but there was nought severe."

"And the long moonbeam on the hard wet sand
Lay like a jasper column half up-rear'd."

"The king, who sat before his tent, descried
The dust rise redden'd from the setting sun." [2]

Now let us pass to the Imaginary Dialogues:—

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[1] Valerius Flaccus, Roman poet, author of *Argonautica*, an unfinished epic on the Argonautic Expedition, died about A.D. 88.—M.

[2] The following, from Mr. Sidney Colvin's Monograph on Landor, may be read with interest here:—"*Gebir* appeared just at the mid-" point of time between the complaint of Blake concerning the truancy " of the Muses from England,

"The languid strings do scarcely move;
"The sound is forced, the notes are few

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 [1] and 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 of Dahra, thirty,”

“ and the thanksgiving of Keats—

“ Fine sounds are floating wild
“ About the earth.

“ Of the ‘fine sounds’ that heralded to modern ears the revival of English Poetry, *Gebir* will always remain for students one of the most distinctive. The *Lyrical Ballads*, the joint venture of Coleridge and Wordsworth, which appeared in the same year as *Gebir*, began with the *Ancient Mariner*, a work of even more vivid and haunting, if also more unearthly, imagery, and ended with the *Lines written on Revisiting Tintern Abbey*, which conveyed the first notes of a far deeper spiritual message. But nowhere in the works of Wordsworth or Coleridge do we find anything resembling Landor's peculiar qualities of haughty splendour and massive concentration. . . . Considering the reception given twenty years afterwards to the poetry of Keats and Shelley, it is no wonder that *Gebir* was neglected. The poem found indeed one admirer, and that was Southey, who read it with enthusiasm, recommended it in speech and writing to his friends, Cobbe, William Taylor, Grosvenor Bedford, the Hebers, and in the year following its publication (1799) called public attention to it in the pages of the *Critical Review*. Another distinguished admirer, of some years later date, was De Quincey; who was accustomed to profess, although Landor scouted the profession, that he also had for some time ‘conceited himself’ to be the sole purchaser and appreciator of *Gebir*.”—M.

[1] Ten or a dozen years ago, when this was written, the atrocity of *Dahra* was familiar to the readers of newspapers: it is now forgotten; and therefore I retrace it briefly. The French in Algiers, upon occasion of some *razzia* against a party of Arabs, hunted them into the cave or caves of Dahra, and, upon the refusal of the Arabs to surrender, filled up the mouth of their retreat with combustibles, and eventually roasted alive the whole party—men, women, and children. The Maréchal St. Arnaud, who subsequently died in supreme command of the French army before Sebastopol [1854], was *said* to have been concerned as a principal in this atrocity. Meantime the Arabs are not rightfully or specially any objects of legitimate sympathy in such a case; for they are quite capable of similar cruelties under any movement of religious fanaticism.

says the glory-hunting Marshal, "and thirty only, are alive; "and of these thirty there are four only who are capable of "labour, 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 for ever.

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, addresses the Arab by the following assortment of names—"Thief, assassin, traitor! blind greybeard! 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 grey beard is from God; my blind- "ness 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? Greybeard? 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[1] of courts in the desert; he does not so much "do himself the honour 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 *picnic* 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 for ever—one mass "of charcoal; the breasts that gave life, the lips that re-"ceived it: all, all, save only where two arms, in colour "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 civilisation,—quarrel of that sort, once arising, does not go to sleep again until it is righted for ever. 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, will not be extinguished for ever,"—even so the atrocities of these hybrid campaigns between baffled civilisation on the one side and barbarism on the other, provoked into frenzy, will, like the horrors of the middle passage amongst the children of Africa, rising again from the Atlantic 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.

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[1] *Wale* (Germanicè *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 neighbours duly to get drunk once (and no more) every 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 together into a peat-moss, and both were together 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 this most conclusive reply—"Hout! laird, there's nae wale o' wigs in a peat-moss."

> "Their moans
> The vales redoubled to the hills, and *they*
> To heaven."[1]

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 clamours 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 permanently exterminating these evils.

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[1] Milton, in uttering his grief (but also his hopes growing out of this grief) upon a similar tragedy, viz. the massacre of the Protestant women and children by "the bloody Piedmontese."

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 Philip Sidney's, drawn from the practice of archery, by attempting more than we can possibly accomplish, we shall yet reach farther 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: viz., 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 honourable 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 honour. I have elsewhere examined, as a question in casuistry, the frivolous pretences for this infamous carnage[1]; 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 aide-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:—In 1799, and the two following years, when most it had become important to search the character and acts of Napoleon, no European writer, with the solitary exception of Sir Robert Wilson, no section of the press, cared much to insist upon this, by so many degrees the worst deed of modern[1] 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, not at all less treacherous than the worst of Asiatic murders; and yet this Christian atrocity 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 and odd 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!

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[1] *Ante*, Vol. VIII, pp. 315-318.—M.

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[1] "*Modern military life*":—By modern I mean since the opening of the Thirty Years' War by the battle of Prague in the year 1618. 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. According 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 Shakspere's *Henry V*) it was *my* business to fix his ransom: the general had no business to interfere with that. Mind that distinction, reader. Tilly might forgo a parchment right that was his own; but how if it belonged to his hungry army? Magdeburg, therefore, had

MELANCHTHON 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

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 howling 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 [*The Life of Gustavus Adolphus*, by the Rev. Walter Harte, published 1759.—M.] 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 boars, 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.

are degrading. In the dialogue between Melanchthon and Calvin it is clear that the former represents Mr. L. himself, and is not at all the Melanchthon 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 an 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 Melanchthon 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. Melanchthon 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 Melanchthon, 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; 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 Melanchthon's profound theory[1] 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 Melanchthon 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.[2] 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 civilisation 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.

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[1] "*Melanchthon's profound theory*":—That the reader may not suppose me misrepresenting Mr. L., I subjoin his words, p. 224, vol. i.:—"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 [we find] 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."

[2] "*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 for Melan*chthon* would be a hybrid monster—neither fish, flesh, nor good red-herring.

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: viz.—"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 villainies 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 Cambridge 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,[1] 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.[2] It would have taken three witches, and three broomsticks 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. "Oh 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*.[1] 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,[2] 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:—

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[1] See *ante*, Vol. II, p. 266.—M.

[2] Porson was born 1759, and died 1808; Wordsworth was born 1770, and died 1850.—M.

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[1] *The Rolliad* was the name for a series of Whig political satires by various writers, begun in a London newspaper about 1784, and which afterwards passed through many editions in collected book-form. The first satire was on a Colonel Rolle,—whence the general name; and among the other subjects of satire were Pitt, Dundas, Lord Thurlow, and several literary celebrities of the day.—It was in 1769 that Mr. Banks (afterwards Sir Joseph Banks, and President of the Royal Society) spent four months in Otaheite in the capacity of naturalist to the South Pacific expedition under Captain Cook. He acquired great influence over the natives; and his connexion with the Island was remembered, and was made a subject of jest, so long as he lived. He died in 1820.—M.

[2] 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

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 neighbourhood of St. James's; 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

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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 burden 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 his Italian he had the advantage probably very much of Mr. Landor himself: at least, he wrote it with more fluency and compass; and even his metrical efforts in that language were admired by Italians. [About Mathias see *ante*, Vol. VI, p. 112, and Vol. X, pp. 45-46, n.—M.]

> 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: "Pianoforte 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. Clermont, with the twofold 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 meek professor consented. Mrs. Clermont 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 friend," said Mrs. Clermont 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, viz. 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*[1] 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 looks 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.

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[1] "*Susurrus*":—The reader who has had any experience of stable usages will know that grooms always keep up a *hissing* accompaniment whilst currycombing a horse, as paviours do a groaning.

Now, in comparison of an Orson like this man of Yverdun—this great Swiss reformer, who might, perhaps, have bred a pet variety of typhus fever for his own separate use—what signify Porson's 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 half-pence—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, viz. 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 honouring 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 reacts painfully upon the grandeurs of the antique scriptural diction, by recalling into *colloquial* use many consecrated words which thus lose their cathedral 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 revolt 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 recoil 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 then her Majesty contrived to walk, or could be supposed 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 specifically 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 villainy 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 tacks; 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 chimera; 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 honour 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 *disparate*—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 favour 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 cognisance 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 in 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 reaction, amongst her oligarchy of immense estates (which condition of things it was that forced on the great *sine qua 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 (in Irish phrase) "with a strong back"—not so much piquing himself on Aristotelian syllogisms that came within *Barbara* 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 subordinate hands. The consular name, and the name of 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[1] 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 *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 power 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.

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[1] Herod the Great, and his father Antipater, owed the favour of Rome, and, finally, the throne of Judea, to the seasonable election which they made between Rome and Persia, but not made without some doubts, as between forces hardly yet brought to a satisfactory equation.

Of the proudest Speaker that England ever saw, viz. 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 waggoner 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 honourable 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"[1] 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-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 waggoner, 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 shan'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 honour had been hitherto purely titular, accompanied by some *auctoritas* in the Roman sense (not always honour, for Cicero was an Imperator on account of Cilician exploits which he himself 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 outside 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—*i.e.* 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 *paludamentum*, of this supreme martial robe, 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.

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[1] *i.e.* Shaft-horse.—See Shakspere's *Love's Labour's Lost.*

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, viz. "Rex Regum." Romans *gave* the title; they stooped not to accept it.[1] Even Mark Antony, in the all-magnificent description of him by Shakspere'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 reaped in glory that transcended the glory of earth, but it was not therefore sown in dishonour.

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, ἐπομπευς; before *him* the children of Europe and Asia, of Africa and the Islands, rode as *dorypheroi*; *his somatophulakes*, or bodyguards, were princes; and *his* empire, when burning out in Byzantium, furnished from its very ruins the models for our western honours 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,[1] 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 honour 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, one thousand 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 objects of this great *Sacks-on* exodus.

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[1] "*Stooped not to accept it*":—The notion that Julias 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; for *white* in olden days was as much the regal colour 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 Diocletian had approximated the aulic pomps to eastern models, the terms *Autocrator*, *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 *Imperatorial* (viz. *Basileus* and *Basilikos*) to a Grecian ear expressed *Rex* and *Regalis*.

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[1] See the story *ante*, Vol. II, pp. 435-437.—M.

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.

COUNT JULIAN

Let me now draw the reader's attention to *Count Julian*, a great conception of Mr. Landor's.[1]

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

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[1] Landor's *Count Julian*, a tragedy, was first published in 1812.—M.

Troy, above Marathon, above Thermopylæ, and are such passions as could not have existed under Paganism, in some respects they condescend and pre-conform to the stage. The characters are all different, all marked, all in *position*; by which, never assuming fixed attitudes as to purpose and interest, the passions are deliriously complex, and the situations 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 equal 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 wrapt 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 bystanders,—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 quell'd
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: viz. if the magnificent line—

"Beyond the arrows, shouts, and views of men"

were transferred to the secondary object, the eagle, and placed after what is *now* the last line, it would give a fuller rhythmus 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 a 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.

> "'Tis not my solace that 'tis[1] *his* desire :
> Of all who pass us in life's drear descent
> We grieve the most for those who *wish'd* 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.

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[1] "'*Tis*" :—Scotchmen and Irishmen (for a reason which it may be elsewhere worth while explaining) make the same mistake of supposing '*tis* and '*twas* admissible in prose : which is shocking to an English ear, for since an early part of the last century 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 '*tis* in this line,—will he permit me to say ?—is dreadful. He is wide-awake to such blemishes in other men of all nations. He blazes away all day long against the trespasses of that class, like a man in spring protecting corn-fields against birds. 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.

> "Sed fugit interea, fugit irreparabile 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 aërolith 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 colour and the coruscation are the same when splintered by violence; the tones of the rocky[1] 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 "burnt 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 eternity of abysmal sorrow. Did Mr. Landor *consciously* cherish this Æschylean ideal in composing "Count Julian"? I know not: there it is!

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[1] "*Rocky harp*":—There are now known other cases, beside the

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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. —See some Travels, I forget whose, in the neighbourhood of Mount Sinai and its circumjacencies.

ORTHOGRAPHIC MUTINEERS[1]

WITH A SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE WORKS OF WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR

As we are all of us crazy when the wind sits in some particular quarter, let not Mr. Landor be angry with me for suggesting that he is outrageously crazy upon the one solitary subject of spelling. It occurs to me, as a plausible solution of his fury upon this point, that perhaps in his earliest school-days, when it is understood that he was exceedingly pugnacious, he may have detested spelling, and (like Roberte the Deville[2]) have found it more satisfactory for all parties that, when the presumptuous schoolmaster differed from him on the spelling of a word, the question between them should be settled by a stand-up fight. Both parties would have the victory at times; and, if, according to Pope's expression, "justice ruled the ball," the schoolmaster (who is always a villain) would be floored three times out of four,—no great matter whether wrong or not upon the immediate point of spelling discussed. It is in this way, viz. from the irregular adjudications upon litigated spelling which must have arisen under such a mode of investigating the matter, that we account for Mr. Landor's being sometimes in the right, but too often (with regard to long words) egregiously in the wrong. As he grew stronger and taller, he would be coming more and more amongst polysyllables, and more and more would be getting the upper hand of the schoolmaster; so that at length he would have it all his own way: one round would decide the turn-up; and thenceforwards his spelling would become frightful. Now, I myself detested spelling as much as all people ought to do,—except Continental compositors, who have extra fees for doctoring the lame spelling of ladies and gentlemen. But, unhappily, I had no power to thump the schoolmaster into a conviction of his own absurdities; which, however, I greatly desired to do. Still, my nature, powerless at that time for any active recusancy, was strong for passive resistance; and *that* is the hardest to conquer. I took one lesson of this infernal art, and then declined ever to take a second; and, in fact, I never *did*. Well I remember that unique morning's experience. It was the first page of Entick's Dictionary[1] that I had to get by heart—a sweet sentimental task; and not, as may be fancied, the spelling only, but the horrid attempts of this depraved Entick to explain the supposed meaning of words that probably had none: many of these, it is my belief, Entick himself forged. Among the strange, grim-looking words to whose acquaintance I was introduced on that unhappy morning were *abalienate* and *ablaqueation*,—most respectable words, I am fully persuaded, but so exceedingly retired in their habits that I never once had the honour of meeting either of them in any book, pamphlet, journal, whether in prose or numerous verse, though haunting such society myself all my life. I also formed the acquaintance at that time of the word *abacus*,—which, as a Latin word, I have often used, but as an English one I really never had occasion to spell until this very moment. Yet, after all, what harm comes of such obstinate recusancy against orthography? I was an "occasional conformist"; I conformed for one morning, and never more. But, for all that, I spell as well as my neighbours; and I can spell *ablaqueation* besides, which I suspect that some of them can *not*.

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[1] This, the second of De Quincey's three papers on Landor occasioned by the two-volume Collective Edition of Landor's works in 1846, appeared in *Tait's Magazine* for March 1847, and was reprinted in 1860 in the fourteenth (posthumous) volume of De Quincey's Collective Writings. See footnote, *ante*, pp. 394-395.—M.

[2] "*Roberte the Deville*":—See the old metrical romance of that name. It belongs to the fourteenth century, and was printed some thirty years ago, with wood engravings of the illuminations. Roberte, however, took the liberty of murdering *his* schoolmaster. But could he well do less, being a reigning Duke's son, and after the rebellious schoolmaster had said—

> "*Sir, ye bee too bolde:*
> *And therewith tooke a rodde hym for to chaste.*"?

Upon which the meek Robin, without using any bad language as the schoolmaster had done, simply took out a long dagger "*hym for to chaste*"; which he did effectually. The schoolmaster gave no bad language after that.

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[1] The Rev. John Entick, schoolmaster, author of a Spelling Dictionary and other compilations, 1713-1773.—M.

My own spelling, therefore, went right, because I was left to nature, with strict neutrality on the part of the authorities. Mr. Landor's too often went wrong, because he was thrown into a perverse channel by his continued triumphs over the prostrate schoolmaster. To toss up, as it were, for the spelling of a word, by the best of nine rounds, inevitably left the impression that chance governed all; and this accounts for the extreme capriciousness of Landor.

It is a work for a separate dictionary in quarto to record *all* the proposed revolutions in spelling through which our English blood, either at home or in America, has thrown off, at times, the surplus energy that consumed it. I conceive this to be a sort of cutaneous affection, like nettlerash, or ringworm, through which the patient gains relief for his own nervous distraction, whilst, in fact, he does no harm to anybody: for usually he forgets his own reforms, and, if *he* should not, everybody else *does*. Not to travel back into the seventeenth century, and the noble army of shorthand writers who have all made war upon orthography for secret purposes of their own, even in the last century and in the present what a list of eminent rebels against the spelling-book might be called up to answer for their wickedness at the Bar of the Old Bailey, if anybody would be kind enough to make it a felony! Cowper, for instance, too modest and too pensive to raise upon any subject an open standard of rebellion, yet, in quiet Olney, made a small *émeute* as to the word "Grecian." Everybody else was content with one "*e*"; but he, recollecting the cornucopia of *e*s which Providence had thought fit to empty upon the mother word *Greece*, deemed it shocking to disinherit the poor child of its hereditary wealth, and wrote it, therefore, *Greecian* throughout his Homer. Such a modest reform the sternest old Tory could not find in his heart to denounce. But some contagion must have collected about this word *Greece*; for the next man who had much occasion to use it,—viz. Mitford,[1] who wrote that "History of Greece" so eccentric and so eccentrically praised by Lord Byron,—absolutely took to spelling like a heathen, slashed right and left against decent old English words, until, in fact, the whole of Entick's Dictionary (*ablaqueation* and all) was ready to swear the peace against him. Mitford, in course of time, slept with his fathers,—his grave, I trust, not haunted by the injured words whom he had tomahawked; and at this present moment the Bishop of St. David's reigneth in his stead.[1] His Lordship, bound over to episcopal decorum, has hitherto been sparing in his assaults upon pure old English words; but one may trace the insurrectionary taint, passing down from Cowper through the word *Grecian*, in many of his Anglo-Hellenic forms. For instance, he insists on our saying—not *Heracleidæ* and *Pelopidæ*, as we all used to do,—but *Heracleids* and *Pelopides*. A list of my Lord's barbarities, in many other cases, upon unprotected words, poor shivering aliens that fall into his power when thrown upon the coast of his diocese, I had: *had*, I say; for, alas! *fuit Ilium*.

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[1] Mitford, who was the brother of a man better known than himself to the public eye, viz. Lord Redesdale, may be considered a very unfortunate author. His work upon Greece, which Lord Byron celebrated for its "wrath and its partiality," really had those merits: choleric it was in excess, and as entirely partial, as nearly perfect in its injustice, as human infirmity would allow. Nothing is truly perfect in this shocking world; absolute injustice, alas! the perfection of wrong, must not be looked for until we reach some high Platonic form of polity. Then shall we revel and bask in a vertical sun of iniquity. Meantime I *will* say that, to satisfy all bilious and unreasonable men, a better historian of Greece than Mitford could not be fancied. And yet, at the very moment when he was stepping into his harvest of popularity, down comes one of those omnivorous Germans that, by reading everything and a trifle besides, contrive to throw really learned men,—and perhaps better thinkers than themselves,—into the shade. Ottfried Müller, with other archæologists and travellers into Hellas, gave new aspects to the very purposes of Grecian History. Do you hear, reader?—not new answers, but new questions. And Mitford, that was gradually displacing the unlearned Gillies, &c., was himself displaced by those who intrigued with Germany. His other work on "The Harmony of Language," though one of the many that attempted, and the few that accomplished, the distinction between accent and quantity, or learnedly appreciated the metrical science of Milton, was yet, in my hearing, pronounced utterly unintelligible by the best *practical* commentator on Milton, viz. the best reproducer of his exquisite effects in blank verse that any generation since Milton has been able to show. Mr. Mitford was one of the many accomplished scholars that are ill used. Had he possessed the splendid powers of Landor, he would have raised a clatter on the armour of modern society such as Samson threatened to the giant Harapha. For in many respects he resembled Landor: he had much of his learning; he had the same extensive access to books and influential circles in great cities, the same gloomy disdain of popular falsehoods or commonplaces, and the same disposition to run a-muck against all nations, languages, and spelling-books. [William Mitford, 1744-1827. His *History of Greece* appeared in successive volumes between 1784 and 1810.—M.]

Yet, really, one is ashamed to linger on cases so mild as those,—coming, as one does, in the order of atrocity, to Elphinston, to Noah Webster, a Yankee,—which word means, not an American, but that separate order of Americans growing in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, or Connecticut, in fact a New Englander,[2]—and to the rabid Ritson.[3] Noah would naturally have reduced us all to an antediluvian simplicity. Shem, Ham, and Japhet probably separated in consequence of perverse varieties in spelling,—so that orthographical unity might seem to him one condition for preventing national schisms. But, as to the rabid Ritson, who can describe his vagaries? What great arithmetician can furnish an index to his absurdities, or what great decipherer furnish a key to the principles of these absurdities? In his very title-pages,—nay, in the most obstinate of ancient technicalities,—he showed his cloven foot to the astonished reader. Some of his many works were printed in *Pall-Mall*; now, as the world is pleased to pronounce that word *Pel-Mel*, thus and no otherwise (said Ritson) it shall be spelled for ever. Whereas, on the contrary, some men would have said: The spelling is well enough, it is the public pronunciation which is wrong. This ought to be *Paul-Maul*; or perhaps—agreeably to the sound which we give to the *a* in such words as *what*, *quantity*, *want*—still better, and with more gallantry, *Poll-Moll.* The word *Mr.*, again, in Ritson's reformation, must have astonished the Post-office. He insisted that this cabalistical-looking form, which might as reasonably be translated into *monster*, was a direct fraud on the national language, quite as bad as clipping the Queen's coinage. How, then, *should* it be written? Reader! reader! that you will ask such a question! *mister*, of course; and mind that you put no capital *m*; unless, indeed, you are speaking of some great gun, some mister of misters, such as Mr. Pitt of old, or perhaps a reformer of spelling. The plural, again, of such words as *romance*, *age*, *horse*, he wrote *romanceës*, *ageës*, *horseës*; and upon the following equitable consideration,—that, inasmuch as the *e* final in the singular is mute,—that is, by a general vote of the nation has been allowed to retire upon a superannuation allowance,—it is abominable to call it back upon active service, like the modern Chelsea pensioners, as must be done if it is to bear the whole weight of a separate syllable like *ces.* Consequently, if the nation and Parliament mean to keep faith, they are bound to hire a stout young *e* to run in the traces with the old original *e*, taking the whole work off his aged shoulders. Volumes would not suffice to exhaust the madness of Ritson upon this subject. And there was this peculiarity in his madness, over and above its clamorous ferocity,—that, being no classical scholar (a meagre self-taught Latinist and no Grecian at all), though profound as a black-letter scholar, he cared not one straw for ethnographic relations of words, nor for unity of analogy, which are the principles that generally have governed reformers of spelling. He was an attorney, and moved constantly under the *monomaniac* idea that an action lay on behalf of misused letters, mutes, liquids, vowels, and diphthongs, against somebody or other (John Doe, was it, or Richard Roe?) for trespass on any rights of theirs which an attorney might trace, and of course for any direct outrage upon their persons. Yet no man was more systematically an offender in both ways than himself,—tying up one leg of a quadruped word and forcing it to run upon three, cutting off noses and ears if he fancied that equity required it, and living in eternal hot water with a language which he pretended eternally to protect.

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[1] Dr. Connop Thirlwall, born 1797, became Bishop of St. David's 1840, died 1875. His *History of Greece*, originally published in *Lardner's Cyclopædia* in eight volumes, assumed its final form in 1855, just before the completion of Grote's rival *History of Greece* in twelve volumes, the first two of which had been published in 1846.—M.

[2] "*In fact a New Englander*":—This explanation, upon a matter familiar to the well-informed, it is proper to repeat occasionally, because we English exceedingly perplex and confound the Americans by calling, for instance, a Virginian or a Kentuck by the name of Yankee, whilst that term was originally introduced as antithetic to these more southern States.

[3] James Elphinston, author of *English Orthography*, 1721-1809; Noah Webster, American philologist, 1758-1843; Joseph Ritson, antiquary, 1752-1803.—M.

And yet all these fellows were nothing in comparison of Mr. Pinkerton.[1] The most of these men did but ruin the national *spelling*; but Pinkerton—the monster Pinkerton—proposed a revolution which would have left us nothing to spell. It is almost incredible,—if a book regularly printed and published, bought and sold, did not remain to attest the fact,—that this horrid barbarian seriously proposed, as a glorious discovery for refining our language, the following plan:—All people were content with the compass of the English language: its range of expression was equal to anything; but, unfortunately, as compared with the sweet orchestral languages of the south—Spanish the stately, and Italian the lovely—it wanted rhythmus and melody. Clearly, then, the one supplementary grace which it remained for modern art to give is that every one should add at discretion *o* and *a*, *ino* and *ano*, to the end of English words. The language, in its old days, should be taught *struttare struttissimamente.* As a specimen, Mr. Pinkerton favoured us with his own version of a famous passage in Addison, viz. "The Vision of Mirza,"—the passage which begins thus, "As I sat on the top of a rock," being translated into "As I satto on the toppino of a rocko," &c. But *luckilissime* this *proposalio* of the *absurdissimo Pinkertonio* was not *adoptado* by *anybodyini whateverano.*[1]

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[1] Pinkerton published one of his earliest volumes under this title—"Rimes, by Mr. Pinkerton," not having the fear of Ritson before his eyes. And, for once, we have to thank Ritson for his remark that the form Mr. might just as well be read *Monster*. Pinkerton in this point was a perfect monster. As to the word *Rimes*, instead of *Rhymes*, he had something to stand upon: the Greek *rhythmos* was certainly the remote fountain, but the proximate fountain must have been the Italian *rima*. [John Pinkerton, 1758-1826, his various crotchets and his extreme pugnacity notwithstanding, was a man of strong abilities and much learning, whose labours in Scottish History and Scottish Literary Antiquities deserve most respectful recollection.—M.]

Mr. Landor is more learned, and probably more consistent in his assaults upon the established spelling, than most of these elder reformers. But *that* does not make him either learned enough or consistent enough. He never ascends into Anglo-Saxon, or the many cognate languages of the Teutonic family,—which is indispensable to a searching inquest upon our language; he does not put forward in this direction even the slender qualifications of Horne Tooke. But Greek and Latin are quite unequal, when disjoined from the elder wheels in our etymological system, to the working of the total machinery of the English language. Mr. Landor proceeds upon no fixed principles in his changes. Sometimes it is on the principle of internal analogy with its roots; sometimes on the principle of euphony, or of metrical convenience. Even within such principles he is not uniform. All well-built English scholars, for instance, know that the word *feälty* cannot be made into a dissyllable: trisyllabic it ever was[2] with the elder poets—Spenser, Milton, &c.; and so it is amongst all the modern poets who have taken any pains with their English studies: *e.g.*

> "The eagle, lord of land and sea,
> Stooped down to pay him fe-al-ty."

It is dreadful to hear a man say *feel-ty* in any case; but here it is luckily impossible. Now, Mr. Landor generally is correct, and trisects the word; but once at least he bisects it. I complain, besides, that Mr. Landor, in urging the authority of Milton for orthographic innovations, does not always distinguish as to Milton's motives. It is true, as he contends, that in some instances Milton reformed the spelling in obedience to the Italian precedent: and certainly without blame; as in *sovran*, *sdeign*,—which ought not to be printed (as it is) with an elision before the *s*, as if short for disdain; but in other instances Milton's motive had no reference to etymology. Sometimes it was this:—In Milton's day the modern use of italics was nearly unknown. Everybody is aware that in our authorized version of the Bible, published in Milton's infancy, italics are never once used for the purpose of emphasis, but exclusively to indicate such words or auxiliary forms as, though implied and *virtually* present in the original, are not textually expressed, but must be so in English, from the different genius of the language.[1] Now, this want of a proper technical resource amongst the compositors of the age for indicating a peculiar stress upon a word evidently drove Milton into some perplexity for a compensatory contrivance. It was unusually requisite for *him*, with his elaborate metrical system and his divine ear, to have an art for throwing attention upon his accents, and upon his muffling of accents. When, for instance, he wishes to direct a bright jet of emphasis upon the possessive pronoun *their*, he writes it as we now write it. But, when he wishes to take off the accent, he writes it *thir*.[2] Like Ritson, he writes *therefor* and *wherefor* without the final *e*; not regarding the analogy, but singly the metrical quantity: for it was shocking to his classical feeling that a sound so short to the ear should be represented to the eye by so long a combination as *fore*,—and the more so because uneducated people did then, and do now, often equilibrate the accent between the two syllables, or rather make the *quantity* long in both syllables, whilst giving an overbalance of the *accent* to the last. The *Paradise Lost*, being printed during Milton's blindness, did not receive the full and consistent benefit of his spelling reforms,—which (as I have contended) certainly arose partly in the imperfections of typography in that era; but such changes as had happened most to impress his ear with a sense of their importance he took a special trouble, even under all the disadvantages of his darkness, to have rigorously adopted. He must have astonished the compositors, though not quite so much as the tiger-cat Ritson or the Mr. (viz. monster) Pinkerton—each after *his* kind—astonished *their* compositors.

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[1] This most extravagant of all experiments on language is brought forward in the "*Letters of Literature*, by Robert Heron" [1785.—M.]. But Robert Heron is a *pseudonyme* for John Pinkerton; and I have been told that Pinkerton's motive for assuming it was because *Heron* had been the maiden name of his mother. Poor lady, she would have stared to find herself, in old age, transformed into Mistressina Heronilla. What most amuses one in pursuing the steps of such an attempt at refinement is its reception by "Jack" in the navy. [See previous allusion to Pinkerton's spelling crotchet, p. 250 n.—M.]

[2] "*It ever was*"—and, of course, being (as there is no need to tell Mr. Landor) a form obtained by contraction from *fidelitas.*

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[1] Of this a ludicrous illustration is mentioned by the writer once known to the public as *Trinity Jones*. Some young clergyman, unacquainted with the technical use of italics by the original compositors of James the First's Bible, on coming to 1 Kings xiii. 27, "And he," (viz. the old prophet of Bethel), "spake to his sons, saying, Saddle me the ass. And they saddled *him*";—(where the italic *him* simply meant that this word was involved, but not expressed, in the original),—read it, "And they saddled HIM," as though these undutiful sons, instead of saddling the donkey, had saddled the old prophet. In fact, the old gentleman's directions are not quite without an opening for a filial misconception, if the reader examines them as closely as I examine words.

[2] He uses this and similar artifices, in fact, as the damper in a modern pianoforte, for modifying the swell of the intonation.

But the caprice of Mr. Landor is shown most of all upon Greek names. *Nous autres* say "Aristotle," and are quite content with it until we migrate into some extra-superfine world; but this title will not do for *him*: "Aristoteles" it must be. And why so? Because, answers the Landor, if once I consent to say Aristotle, then I am pledged to go the whole hog; and perhaps the next man I meet is Empedocles,—whom in that case, I must call Empedocle. Well, do so. *Call* him Empedocle; it will not break his back, which seems broad enough. But, now, mark the contradictions in which Mr. Landor is soon landed. He says, as everybody says, Terence and not Terentius, Horace and not Horatius; but he must leave off such horrid practices, because he dares not call Lucretius by the analogous name of Lucrece, since *that* would be putting a she instead of a he; nor Propertius by the name of Properce, because *that* would be speaking French instead of English. Next, he says, and continually he says, Virgil for Virgilius. But, on that principle he ought to say Valer for Valerius; and yet again he ought *not*; because, as he says Tully and not Tull for Tullius, so also he is bound in Christian equity to say Valery for Valer; but he cannot say either Valer or Valery. So here we are in a mess. Thirdly, I charge him with saying Ovid for Ovidius; which *I* do, which everybody does, but which *he* must not do: for, if he means to persist in *that*, then, upon his own argument from analogy, he must call Didius Julianus by the shocking name of *Did*,—which is the same thing as Tit, since T is D soft. Did was a very great man indeed, and for a very short time indeed. Probably Did was the only man that ever bade for an empire, and no mistake, at a public auction. Think of Did's bidding for the Roman empire: nay, think also of Did's having the lot actually knocked down to him, and of Did's going home to dinner with the lot in his pocket. It makes one perspire to think that, if the reader or myself had been living at that time, and had been prompted by some whim within us to bid against him—he or I should actually have come down to posterity by the abominable name of Anti-Did. All of us in England say Livy when speaking of the great historian, not Livius. Yet Livius Andronicus it would be impossible to indulge with that brotherly name of Livy. Marcus Antonius is called—not by Shakspere only, but by all the world—Mark Antony; but who is it that ever called Marcus Brutus by the affectionate name of Mark Brute? "Keep your distance," we say to that very doubtful brute, "and expect no pet names from us." Finally, apply the principle of abbreviation involved in the names Pliny, Livy, Tully, all substituting *y* for *ius*, to Marius,—that grimmest of grim visions that rises up to us from the phantasmagoria of Roman history. Figure to yourself, reader, that truculent face, trenched and scarred with hostile swords, carrying thunder in its ominous eyebrows, and frightening armies a mile off with its scowl, being saluted by the tenderest of feminine names as "My Mary."

Not only, therefore, is Mr. Landor inconsistent in these innovations, but the innovations themselves, supposing them all harmonized and established, would but plough up the landmarks of old hereditary feelings. We learn oftentimes, by a man's bearing a good-natured sobriquet amongst his comrades, that he is a kind-hearted, social creature, popular with them all! And it is an illustration of the same tendency that the scale of popularity for the classical authors amongst our fathers is registered tolerably well, in a gross general way, by the difference between having and *not* having a familiar name. If we except the first Cæsar, the mighty Caius Julius,—who was too majestic to invite familiarity, though too gracious to have repelled it,—there is no author whom our forefathers loved but has won a sort of Christian name in the land. Homer, and Hesiod, and Pindar, we all say; we cancel the alien *us*; but we never say Theocrit for Theocritus. Anacreon remains rigidly Grecian marble; but *that* is only because his name is not of a plastic form—else everybody loves the sad old fellow. The same bar to familiarity existed in the names of the tragic poets, except perhaps for Æschylus; who, however, like Cæsar, is too awful for a caressing name. But Roman names were, generally, more flexible. Livy and Sallust have ever been favourites with men: Livy with everybody; Sallust in a degree that may be called extravagant, with many celebrated Frenchmen,—as the President des Brosses, and in our own days with M. Lerminier, a most eloquent and original writer (*Etudes Historiques*), and, two centuries ago, with the greatest of men, John Milton, in a degree that seems to me absolutely mysterious.[1] These writers are baptized into our society—have gained a settlement in our parish: when you call a man Jack, and not Mr. John, it's plain you like him. But, as to the gloomy Tacitus, our fathers liked him not. He was too vinegar a fellow for them: nothing hearty or genial about him; he thought ill of everybody; and we all suspect that, for those times, he was perhaps the worst of the bunch himself. Accordingly, this Tacitus, because he remained so perfectly tacit for our jolly old forefathers' ears, never slipped into the name Tacit for their mouths, nor ever will, I predict, for the mouths of posterity. Coming to the Roman poets, I must grant that three great ones, viz. Lucretius, Statius, and Valerius Flaccus, have not been complimented with the freedom of our city, as they should have been, in a gold box. I regret, also, the ill fortune, in this respect, of Catullus: if he was really the author of that grand headlong dithyrambic, the Atys, he certainly ought to have been ennobled by the title of Catull. Looking to very much of his writings, much more I regret the case of Plautus: and I am sure that, if her Majesty would warrant his bearing the name and arms of *Plaut* in all time coming, it would gratify many of us. As to the rest, or those that anybody cares about—Horace, Virgil, Ovid, Lucan, Martial, Claudian,—all have been raised to the peerage. Ovid was the great poetic favourite of Milton; and not without a philosophic ground: his festal gaiety, and the brilliant velocity of his *aurora borealis* intellect, forming a deep natural equipoise to the mighty gloom and solemn planetary movement in the mind of the other,—like the wedding of male and female counterparts. Ovid was, therefore, rightly Milton's favourite. But the favourite of all the world is Horace. Were there ten peerages, were there three blue ribbons, vacant, he ought to have them all.

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[1] Nothing proves to me more interestingly the intimacy of De Quincey with Milton's writings than this reference to Milton's extraordinary admiration of Sallust; for the admiration is expressed in two of Milton's Latin *Epistolæ Familiares*,—a portion of his writings seldom looked into. A certain young foreigner, Mr. Henry de Brass, having written to Milton to consult him as to his opinions on Historians and Historical Literature, Milton, then in his forty-ninth year and totally blind, dictated in his house in Westminster, on the 15th of September 1657, a long Latin reply, of which here are two translated sentences:—"In the matter of Sallust, which you refer to "me, I will say freely, since you wish me to tell plainly what I do "think, that I prefer Sallust to any other Latin historian; which was "also the almost uniform opinion of the Ancients. Your favourite "Tacitus has his merits; but the greatest of them, in my judgment, "is that he imitated Sallust with all his might." There is a good deal more about Sallust in the same letter; and in a subsequent letter to the same correspondent, of date 16th December 1657, he recurs to the subject thus:—"Respecting Sallust I would venture to "make the same assertion to you as Quintilian made respecting "Cicero,—that a man may know himself no mean proficient in the "business of History who enjoys his Sallust."—M.

Besides, if Mr. Landor could issue decrees, and even harmonize his decrees for reforming our Anglo-Grecian spelling—decrees which no Council of Trent could execute without first rebuilding the Holy Office of the Inquisition—still there would be little accomplished. The names of all Continental Europe are often in confusion, from different causes, when Anglicised: German names are rarely spelled rightly by the *laity* of our isle; Polish and Hungarian never. Many foreign towns have in England what botanists would call *trivial* names: Leghorn, for instance, Florence, Madrid, Lisbon, Vienna, Munich, Antwerp, Brussels, the Hague,—all unintelligible names to the savage Continental native. Then, if Mr. Landor reads as much of Anglo-Indian books as I do, he must be aware that, for many years back, they have all been at sixes and sevens; so that now most Hindoo words are in masquerade, and we shall soon require *English* pundits in Leadenhall Street.[1] How does he like, for instance, *Sipahee* the modern form for *Sepoy?* or *Tepheen* for *Tiffin?* At this rate of metamorphosis, absorbing even the consecrated names of social meals, we shall soon cease to understand what that *disjune* was which his sacred Majesty graciously accepted at Tillietudlem.[2] But even elder forms of oriental speech are as little harmonized in Christendom. A few leagues of travelling make the Hebrew unintelligible to us; and the Bible becomes a Delphic mystery to Englishmen amongst the countrymen of Luther. Solomon is there called Salamo; Samson is called Simson, though probably he never published an edition of Euclid.[3] Nay, even in this native isle of ours, you may be at cross purposes on the Bible with your own brother. I am, myself, next-door neighbour to Westmoreland, being a Lancashire man; and, one day, I was talking with a Westmoreland farmer, whom, of course, I ought to have understood very well; but I had no chance with him: for I could not make out who that *No* was concerning *whom* or concerning *which* he persisted in talking. It seemed to me, from the context, that *No* must be a man, and by no means a chair; but so very negative a name, you perceive, furnished no positive hints for solving the problem. I said as much to the farmer, who stared in stupefaction. "What," cried he, "did a far-larn'd man, like you, fresh from Oxford, never hear of *No*, an old gentleman that should have been drowned, but was *not*, when all his folk were drowned?" "Never, so help me Jupiter," was my reply: "never heard of him to this hour, any more than of *Yes*, an old gentleman that should have been hanged, but was *not*, when all his folk were hanged. *Populous No*—I had read of in the Prophets; but that was *not* an old gentleman." It turned out that the farmer and all his compatriots in bonny Martindale had been taught at the parish school to rob the patriarch Noah of one clear moiety appertaining in fee simple to that ancient name. But afterwards I found that the farmer was not so entirely absurd as he had seemed. The Septuagint, indeed, is clearly against him; for *there*, as plain as a pike-staff, the farmer might have read Νωε. But, on the other hand, Pope, not quite so great a scholar as he was a poet, yet still a fair one, *always* made Noah into a monosyllable; and that seems to argue an old English usage; though I really believe Pope's reason for adhering to such an absurdity was with a prospective view to the rhymes *blow*, or *row*, or *stow* (an important idea to the Ark), which struck him as *likely* words in case of any call for writing about Noah.

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[1] The reasons for this anarchy in the naturalization of Eastern words are to be sought in three causes:—1. In national rivalships. French travellers in India, like Jacquemont, &c., as they will not adopt our English First Meridian, will not, of course, adopt our English spelling. In one of Paul Richter's novels a man assumes the First Meridian to lie generally, not through Greenwich, but through his own skull, and always through his own study. I have myself long suspected the Magnetic Pole to lie under a friend's wine-cellar, from the vibrating movement which I have remarked constantly going on in his cluster of keys towards that particular point. Really, the French, like Sir Anthony Absolute, must "get an atmosphere of their own," such is their hatred to holding anything in common with us. 2. They are to be sought in local *Indian* differences of pronunciation. 3. In the variety of our own British population—soldiers, missionaries, merchants, who are unlearned or half-learned—scholars, really learned, but often fantastically learned, and lastly (as you may swear) young ladies—anxious, above all things, to mystify us outside barbarians.

[2] In *Old Mortality*.—M.

[3] Robert Simson, editor of Euclid, 1687-1768.—M.

The long and the short of it is that the whole world lies in heresy or schism on the subject of orthography. All climates alike groan under heterography. It is absolutely of no use to begin with one's own grandmother in such labours of reformation. It is toil thrown away, and as nearly a hopeless task as the proverb insinuates that it is to attempt a reformation in that old lady's mode of eating eggs. She laughs at one. She has a vain conceit that she is able, out of her own proper resources, to do both, viz. the spelling and the eating of the eggs. And all that remains for philosophers, like Mr. Landor and myself, is to turn away in sorrow rather than in anger, dropping a silent tear for the poor old lady's infatuation.[1]

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[1] Landor never abandoned his efforts after a reformed English orthography. Speaking of the contents of his *Last Fruit from an Old Tree*, published in 1853,—*i.e.* six years after the date of the present

paper of De Quincey—Mr. Sidney Colvin describes a long imaginary conversation in the volume between Landor himself and Archdeacon Hare as "the ripest and most interesting of that class which began thirty years before with the first dialogue of Johnson and Horne Tooke," and adds, "The discussion turns almost entirely on technical "points of English literature and the English language. In it, among "other things, Landor resumes, defends, and illustrates those princi-"ples of spelling which he had founded long ago on analogy and the "study of the Early English writers, and which he had insisted on "actually putting into practice, to the distraction of his printers, in "a large proportion of his published writings."—M.

MILTON *VERSUS* SOUTHEY AND LANDOR[1]

THIS conversation is doubly interesting: interesting by its subject, interesting by its interlocutors; for the subject is Milton, whilst the interlocutors are *Southey* and *Landor*.[2] If a British gentleman, when taking his pleasure in his well-armed yacht, descries, in some foreign waters, a noble vessel from the Thames or the Clyde riding peaceably at anchor, and soon after two smart-looking clippers with rakish masts bearing down upon her in company, he slackens sail: his suspicions are slightly raised; they have not shown their teeth as yet, and perhaps all is right; but there can be no harm in looking a little closer; and, assuredly, if he finds any mischief in the wind against his countryman, he will show *his* teeth also, and, please the wind, will take up such a position as to rake both of these pirates by turns. The two dialogists are introduced walking out after breakfast, "each his Milton in his pocket"; and says Southey, "Let us collect all the graver faults we can lay our hands upon without a too minute and troublesome research";—just so; there would be danger in *that*; help might put off from shore;—"not," says he, "in the spirit of Johnson, but in our own." Johnson, we may suppose, is some old ruffian well known upon that coast; and "*faults*" may be a flash term for what the Americans call "notions." A part of the cargo it clearly is; and one is not surprised to hear Landor, whilst assenting to the general plan of attack, suggesting in a whisper, "that they should abase their eyes in reverence to so great a man, without absolutely closing them"; which I take to mean that, without trusting entirely to their boarders, or absolutely closing their ports, they should depress their guns and fire down into the hold, in respect of the vessel attacked standing so high out of the water. After such plain speaking, nobody can wonder much at the junior pirate (Landor) muttering, "It will be difficult for us always to refrain." Of course it will: *refraining* was no part of the business, I should fancy, taught by that same buccaneer, Johnson. There is mischief, you see, reader, singing in the air,—"miching malhecho,"[1]—and it is our business to watch it.

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[1] This, the third of De Quincey's three papers on Landor on the occasion of the two-volume Collective Edition of Landor's Works in 1846, appeared in *Tait's Magazine* for April 1847, and was reprinted by De Quincey in 1859 in vol. xii of his Collected Writings. See foot-note, *ante*, pp. 394-395.—M.

[2] The conversation here specially referred to as the text of the paper seems to be that now printed in the third series of Landor's "Imaginary Conversations" in vol. iv, pp. 427-476, of the complete eight-volume (1876) edition of Landor's works. The title of the conversation is "*Southey and Landor*"; but there immediately follows (pp. 476-528) a "Second Conversation" between the same two supposed interlocutors, also on the subject of Milton.—M.

But, before coming to the main attack, I must suffer myself to be detained for a few moments by what Mr. L. premises upon the "moral" of any great fable, and the relation which it bears, or *should* bear, to the solution of such a fable. Philosophic criticism is so far improved that at this day few people who have reflected at all upon such subjects but are agreed as to one point: viz. that in metaphysical language the moral of an epos or a drama should be *immanent*, not *transient*,—or, otherwise, that it should be vitally distributed through the whole organisation of the tree, not gathered or secreted into a sort of red berry or *racemus* pendent at the end of its boughs. This view Mr. Landor himself takes, as a general view; but, strange to say, by some Landorian perverseness, where there occurs a memorable exception to this rule (as in the *Paradise Lost*), in that case he insists upon the rule in its rigour—the rule, and nothing *but* the rule. Where, on the contrary, the rule does really and obviously take effect (as in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*), there he insists upon an exceptional case. There *is* a moral, in *his* opinion, hanging like a tassel of gold bullion from the *Iliad*;—and what is it? Something so fantastic that I decline to repeat it. As well might he have said that the moral of *Othello* was—"*Try Warren's Blacking!*" There is no moral, little or big, foul or fair, to the *Iliad*. Up to the 17th Book, the moral might seem dimly to be this—"Gentlemen, keep the peace: you see what comes of quarrelling." But *there* this moral ceases;—there is now a break of gauge: the narrow gauge takes place after this; whilst up to this point, the broad gauge—viz. the wrath of Achilles, growing out of his turn-up with Agamemnon—had carried us smoothly along without need to shift our luggage. There is no more quarrelling after Book XVII; how then can there be any more moral from quarrelling? If you insist on *my* telling *you* what is the moral of the *Iliad*, I insist upon *your* telling *me* what is the moral of a rattlesnake, or the moral of a Niagara. I suppose the moral is—that you must get out of their way if you mean to moralise much longer. The going-up (or anabasis) of the Greeks against Troy, was a *fact*, and a pretty dense fact, and, by accident, the very first in which all Greece had a common interest. It was a joint-stock concern—a representative expedition—whereas previously there had been none; for even the Argonautic expedition, which is rather of the darkest, implied no confederation except amongst individuals. How could it? For the Argo is supposed to have measured only twenty-seven tons: how she would have been classed at Lloyd's is hard to say, but certainly not as A 1. There was no state-cabin; everybody, demigods and all, pigged in the steerage, amongst beans and bacon. Greece was naturally proud of having crossed the herring-pond, small as it was, in search of an entrenched enemy; proud also of having licked him "into almighty smash": this was sufficient; or, if an impertinent moralist sought for something more, doubtless the moral must have lain in the booty. A peach is the moral of a peach, and moral enough; but, if a man *will* have something better—a moral within a moral—why, there is the peach-stone, and its kernel, out of which he may make ratafia, which seems to be the ultimate morality that *can* be extracted from a peach. Mr. Archdeacon Williams, indeed, of the Edinburgh Academy, has published an *octavo* opinion upon the case, which asserts that the moral of the Trojan War was (to borrow a phrase from children) *tit for tat*.[1] It was a case of retaliation for crimes against Hellas committed by Troy in an earlier generation. It may be so; Nemesis knows best. But this moral, if it concerns the total expedition to the Troad, cannot concern the *Iliad*, which does not take up matters from so early a period, nor go on to the final catastrophe of Ilium.

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[1] "Marry, this is miching malhecho; it means mischief," Hamlet explains to Ophelia (iii. 2) in answer to her question what the dumb-show of the players means; and the phrase is interpreted by the commentators as "sneaking mischief"—*miching* being the participle of an old English verb "*to miche*," *i.e.* to lurk or play the truant, and *malhecho* the Spanish "*Malhecho*," or personified "Iniquity" of Spanish plays.—M.

Now, as to the *Paradise Lost*, it happens that there is—whether there ought to be or not—a pure golden moral, distinctly announced, separately contemplated, and the very weightiest ever uttered by man or realised by fable. It is a moral rather for the drama of a world than for a human poem. And this moral is made the more prominent and memorable by the grandeur of its annunciation. The jewel is not more splendid in itself than in its setting. Excepting the well-known passage on Athenian Oratory in the *Paradise Regained*, there is none even in Milton where the metrical pomp is made so effectually to aid the pomp of the sentiment. Hearken to the way in which a roll of dactyles is made to settle, like the swell of the advancing tide, into the long thunder of billows breaking for leagues against the shore,—

> "That to the height of this great argument
> I may assert eternal Providence."

Hear what a motion, what a tumult, is given by the dactylic close to each of these introductory lines! And how massily is the whole locked up into the peace of heaven, as the aërial arch of a viaduct is locked up into tranquil stability by its keystone, through this deep spondaic close,

> "And justify the ways of God to man."

That is the moral of the Miltonic epos, and as much grander than any other moral *formally* illustrated by poets as heaven is higher than earth.

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[1] About Archdeacon Williams see *ante*, Vol. VI, p. 142.—M.

But the most singular moral which Mr. Landor anywhere discovers is in his own poem of *Gebir*. Whether he still adheres to it does not appear from the present edition. But I remember distinctly, in the original edition, a Preface (now withdrawn) in which he made his acknowledgments to some book read at a Welsh inn for the outline of the story; and as to the moral, he declared it to be an exposition of that most mysterious offence, *Over-colonization.* Much I mused, in my youthful simplicity, upon this criminal novelty. What might it be? Could I, by mistake, have committed it myself? Was it a felony, or a misdemeanour?—liable to transportation, or only to fine and imprisonment? Neither in the Decemviral Tables, nor in the Code of Justinian, nor the maritime Code of Oleron, nor in the Canon Law, nor the Code Napoleon, nor our own Statutes at Large, nor in Jeremy Bentham, nor in Jeremy Diddler, had I read of such a crime as a possibility. Undoubtedly the vermin, locally called *Squatters*,[1] both in the wilds of America and Australia, who preoccupy other men's estates, have latterly illustrated the logical possibility of such an offence; but they were quite unknown at the era of Gebir. Even Dalica, who knew as much wickedness as most people, would have stared at this unheard-of villainy, and have asked, as eagerly as *I* did —"What is it now? Let's have a shy at it in Egypt." I, indeed, knew a case, but Dalica did *not*, of shocking over-colonisation. It was the case, which even yet occurs on out-of-the-way roads, where a man, unjustly big, mounts into the inside of a stage-coach already sufficiently crowded. In streets and squares, where men could give him a wide berth, they had tolerated the iniquity of his person; but now, in a chamber

[1] "*Squatters*":—They are a sort of self-elected warming-pans. What we in England mean by the political term "*warming-pans*" are men who occupy, by consent, some official place, or Parliamentary seat, until the proper claimant is old enough in law to assume his rights. When the true man comes to bed, the warming-pan respectfully turns out. But these ultramarine warming-pans *wouldn't* turn out. They showed fight, and wouldn't hear of the true man, even as a bed-fellow. It is a remarkable illustration of the rapidity with which words submit to new and contradictory modifications, that a *squatter*, who is a violent intruder upon other men's rights, consequently a scoundrel, in America, ranks in Australia as a virtuous citizen, and a pioneer of colonisation.

so confined, the length and breadth of his wickedness shines revealed to every eye. And, if the coach should upset, which it would not be the less likely to do for having *him* on board, somebody or other (perhaps myself) must lie beneath this monster, like Enceladus under Mount Etna, calling upon Jove to come quickly with a thunderbolt and destroy both man and mountain, both *succubus* and *incubus*, if no other relief offered. Meantime, the only case of over-colonisation notorious to all Europe is that which some German traveller (Riedesel, I think) has reported so eagerly, in ridicule of our supposed English credulity: viz. the case of the foreign swindler who advertised that he would get into a quart bottle, filled Drury Lane theatre by his fraudulent promise, pocketed the admission-money, and decamped, protesting (in his adieus to the spectators) that "it lacerated his heart to disappoint so many noble islanders, but that on his next visit he would make full reparation by getting into a vinegar cruet." Now, here certainly was a case of over-colonisation, not perpetrated, but meditated. Yet, when one examines this case, the crime consisted by no means in doing it, but in *not* doing it. The foreign contractor would have been probably a very unhappy man had he fulfilled his contract by over-colonising the bottle; but he would have been decidedly a more virtuous man. He would have redeemed his pledge; and, if he had even died in the bottle, we should have honoured him as a "*vir bonus cum mala fortuna compositus*,"—as a man of honour matched in single duel with calamity, and also as the best of conjurers. Over-colonisation, therefore, except in the one case of the stage-coach, is apparently no crime; and the offence of King Gebir therefore, in my eyes, remains a mystery to this day.

What next solicits notice is in the nature of a digression: it is a kind of parenthesis on Wordsworth.

"*Landor.*—When it was a matter of wonder how Keats, " who was ignorant of Greek, could have written his " 'Hyperion,' Shelley, whom envy never touched, gave " as a reason—'because he *was* a Greek.' Wordsworth, " being asked his opinion of the same poem, called it " scoffingly 'a pretty piece of paganism'; yet he him" self, in the best verses he ever wrote—and beautiful ones "they are—reverts to the powerful influence of the 'pagan "creed.'"

Here are nine lines exactly in the original type. Now, nine tailors are ranked, by great masters of algebra, as = one man: such is the received equation; or, as it is expressed with more liveliness in an old English drama by a man who meets and quarrels with eighteen tailors—"Come, hang it! I'll fight you *both*." But, whatever be the algebraic ratio of tailors to men, it is clear that nine Landorian lines are not always equal to the delivery of one accurate truth, or to a successful conflict with three or four signal errors. First, Shelley's reason, if it ever was assigned, is irrelevant as regards any question that must have been intended. It could not have been meant to ask—Why was the "Hyperion" so Grecian in its spirit? for it is anything but Grecian. We should praise it falsely to call it so; for the feeble, though elegant, mythology of Greece was incapable of breeding anything so deep as the mysterious portents that in the "Hyperion" run before and accompany the passing away of divine immemorial dynasties. Nothing can be more impressive than the picture of Saturn in his palsy of affliction, and of the mighty goddess his granddaughter, who touches the shoulder of the collapsing god—nothing more awful than the secret signs of coming woe in the palace of Hyperion. These things grew from darker creeds than Greece had ever known since the elder traditions of Prometheus—creeds that sent down their sounding plummets into far deeper wells within the human spirit. What had been meant by the question proposed to Shelley was no doubt—how so young a man as Keats, not having had the advantage of a regular classical education, could have been so much at home in the details of the *elder* mythology? Tooke's *Pantheon* might have been obtained by favour of any English schoolboy, and Dumoustier's *Lettres à Emilie sur la Mythologie* by favour of very many young ladies; but these, according to my recollection of them, would hardly have sufficed. Spence's *Polymetis*,[1] however, might have been had by favour of any good library; and the *Bibliotheca* of Apollodorus, who is the cock of the walk on this subject, might have been read by favour of a Latin translation, supposing Keats really unequal to the easy Greek text. There is no wonder in the case; nor, if there had been, would Shelley's kind remark have solved it. The *treatment* of the facts must in any case have been due to Keats's genius, so as to be the same whether he had studied Greek or not: the *facts*, apart from the treatment, must in any case have been had from a book. Secondly,—Let Mr. Landor rely upon it that Wordsworth never said the thing ascribed to him here as any formal judgment, or what Scottish law would call *deliverance*, upon the *Hyperion*.[1] As to what he might have said incidentally and collaterally, the meaning of words is so entirely affected by their position in a conversation—what followed, what went before—that five words dislocated from their context never would be received as evidence in the Queen's Bench. The court which of all others least strictly weighs its rules of evidence is the female tea-table; yet even that tribunal would require the deponent to strengthen his evidence, if he had only five detached words to produce. Wordsworth is a very proud man, as he has good reason to be; and perhaps it was I myself who once said in print of him that it is not the correct way of speaking to say that Wordsworth is as proud as Lucifer, but, inversely, to say of Lucifer that some people have conceived him to be as proud as Wordsworth.[2] But, if proud, Wordsworth is not ostentatious, is not anxious for display, and least of all is he capable of descending to envy. Who or what is it that *he* should be envious of? Does anybody suppose that Wordsworth would be jealous of Archimedes if he now walked upon earth, or Michael Angelo, or Milton? Nature does not repeat herself. Be assured she will never make a second Wordsworth. Any of us would be jealous of his own duplicate; and, if I had a

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[1] Joseph Spence's "Polymetis, or An Enquiry concerning the Agreement between the Works of the Roman Poets and the Remains of the Ancient Artists," was published in 1747. Apollodorus, author of the *Bibliotheca*, an account of the Greek mythology, was an Athenian grammarian, *circa* B.C. 140.—M.

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[1] Another version of the story, and the likelier, is that it was on hearing Keats's Hymn to Pan in the *Endymion* read to him by Keats himself at Haydon's house that Wordsworth delivered himself of the opinion, "a pretty piece of Paganism."—M.

[2] See *ante*, Vol. III, p. 204.—M.

doppel-ganger who went about personating me, copying me, and pirating me, philosopher as I am I might (if the Court of Chancery would not grant an injunction against him) be so far carried away by jealousy as to attempt the crime of murder upon his carcase; and no great matter as regards HIM. But it would be a sad thing for *me* to find myself hanged; and for what, I beseech you? for murdering a sham, that was either nobody at all, or oneself repeated once too often. But, if you show to Wordsworth a man as great as himself, still that great man will not be much *like* Wordsworth—the great man will not be Wordsworth's *doppel-ganger*. If not *impar* (as you say), he will be *dispar*; and why, then, should Wordsworth be jealous of him, unless he is jealous of the sun, and of Abd el Kader, and of Mr. Waghorn—all of whom carry off a great deal of any spare admiration which Europe has to dispose of. But suddenly it strikes me that we are all proud, every man of us; and I daresay with some reason for it, "be the same more or less." For I never came to know any man in my whole life intimately who could not do something or other better than anybody else. The only man amongst us that is thoroughly free from pride, that you may at all seasons rely on as a pattern of humility, is the pickpocket. That man is so admirable in his temper, and so used to pocketing anything whatever which Providence sends in his way, that he will even pocket a kicking, or anything in that line of favours which you are pleased to bestow. The smallest donations are by him thankfully received, provided only that you, whilst half-blind with anger in kicking him round a figure of eight, like a dexterous skater, will but allow *him* (which is no more than fair) to have a second "shy" at your pretty Indian pocket-handkerchief, so as to convince you, on cooler reflection, that he does not *always* miss. Thirdly,—Mr. Landor leaves it doubtful what verses those are of Wordsworth's which celebrate the power "of the Pagan creed"; whether that sonnet in which Wordsworth wishes to exchange for glimpses of human life, *then and in those circumstances* "forlorn," the sight

> "Of Proteus coming from the sea,
> And hear old Triton wind his wreathèd horn,"—

whether this, or the passage on the Greek mythology in "The Excursion."[1] Whichever he means, I am the last man to deny that it is beautiful, and especially if he means the latter. But it is no presumption to deny firmly Mr. Landor's assertion that these are "the best verses Wordsworth ever wrote." Bless the man!

"There are a thousand such elsewhere,
As worthy of your wonder":—

elsewhere, I mean, in Wordsworth's poems. In reality it is *impossible* that these should be the best; for, even if, in the executive part, they were so,—which is not the case,—the very nature of the thought, of the feeling, and of the relation, which binds it to the general theme, and the nature of that theme itself, forbid the possibility of merits so high. The whole movement of the feeling is fanciful: it neither appeals to what is deepest in human sensibilities, nor is meant to do so. The result, indeed, serves only to show Mr. Landor's slender acquaintance with Wordsworth. And, what is worse than being slenderly acquainted, he is erroneously acquainted even with these two short breathings from the Wordsworthian shell. He mistakes the logic. Wordsworth does not celebrate any power at all in Paganism. Old Triton indeed! He's little better, in respect of the terrific, than a mail-coach guard,—nor half as good, if you allow the guard his official seat, a coal-black night, lamps blazing back upon his royal scarlet, and his blunderbuss correctly slung. Triton would not stay, I engage, for a second look at the old Portsmouth or Bristol mail, as once I knew it. But, alas! better things than ever stood on Triton's pins are now as little able to stand up for themselves, or to startle the silent fields in darkness with the sudden flash of their glory—gone before it had fully come—as Triton is to play the Freyschütz chorus on his humbug of a horn. But the logic of

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[1] The lines of the sonnet are misquoted. They are—

"Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea,
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathèd horn."

The passage on the Greek Mythology in the *Excursion* is in Book IV and begins—

"The lively Grecian, in a land of hills."—M.

Wordsworth is this: not that the Greek mythology is potent; on the contrary, that it is weaker than cowslip tea, and would not agitate the nerves of a hen-sparrow; but that, weak as it is—nay, by means of that very weakness—it does but the better serve to measure the weakness of something which *he* thinks yet weaker—viz. the death-like torpor of London society in 1808, benumbed by conventional apathy and worldliness—

"Heavy as frost, and deep almost as life."

This seems a digression from Milton, who is properly the subject of this colloquy. But, luckily, it is not one of *my* sins. Mr. Landor is lord within the house of his own book; he pays all accounts whatever; and readers that have either a bill, or bill of exceptions, to tender against the concern, must draw upon *him*. To Milton he returns upon a very dangerous topic indeed—viz. the structure of his blank verse. I know of none that is so trying to a wary man's nerves. You might as well tax Mozart with harshness in the divinest passages of *Don Giovanni* as Milton with any such offence against metrical science. Be assured it is yourself that do not read with understanding, not Milton that by possibility can be found deaf to the demands of perfect harmony. You are tempted, after walking round a line threescore times, to exclaim at last—"Well, if the Fiend himself should rise up before me at this very moment, in this very study of mine, and say that no screw was loose in that line, then would I reply—Sir, with submission, you are ——." "What?" suppose the Fiend suddenly to demand in thunder, "What am I?" "Horribly wrong," you wish exceedingly to say; but, recollecting that some people are choleric in argument, you confine yourself to the polite answer—"that, with deference to his better education, you conceive him to lie";—that's a bad word to drop your voice upon in talking with a fiend, and you hasten to add—"under a slight, *very* slight mistake." Ay, you might venture on that opinion even with a fiend. But how if an angel should undertake the case? And angelic was the ear of Milton. Many are the *prima facie* anomalous lines in Milton; many are the suspicious lines, which in many a book I have seen many a critic peering into, with eyes made up for mischief, yet with a misgiving that all was not quite safe, very much like an old raven looking down a marrow-bone. In fact, such is the metrical skill of the man, and such the perfection of his metrical sensibility, that, on any attempt to take liberties with a passage of his, you feel as when coming, in a forest, upon what seems a dead lion: perhaps he may *not* be dead, but only sleeping; nay, perhaps he may *not* be sleeping, but only shamming. And you have a jealousy as to Milton, even in the most flagrant case of almost palpable error, that, after all, there may be a plot in it. You may be put down with shame by some man reading the line otherwise, reading it with a different emphasis, a different cæsura, or perhaps a different suspension of the voice, so as to bring out a new and self-justifying effect. It must be added that, in reviewing Milton's metre, it is quite necessary to have such books as *Nares's English Orthoepy* (*in a late edition*), and others of that class lying on the table; because the accentuation of Milton's age was, in many words, entirely different from ours. And Mr. Landor is not free from some suspicion of inattention as to this point. Over and above this accentual difference, the practice of our elder dramatists in the resolution of the final *tion* (which now is uniformly pronounced *shon*), will be found exceedingly important to the appreciation of a writer's verse. *Contribution*, which now is necessarily pronounced as a word of four syllables, would then, in verse, have five, being read into *con-tri-bu-ce-on.*[1] Many readers will recollect another word which for years brought John Kemble into hot water with the pit of Drury Lane. It was the plural of the word *ache*. This is generally made a dissyllable by the Elizabethan dramatists; it occurs in the *Tempest*. Prospero says—

> "I'll fill thy bones with aches."

What follows, which I do not remember *literatim*, is such metrically as to *require* two syllables for *aches.* But how then was this to be pronounced? Kemble thought *akies* would sound ludicrous, *aitches* therefore he called it; and always the pit howled like a famished *menagerie*, as they did also when he chose (and he constantly chose) to pronounce *beard* like *bird.*[1] Many of these niceties must be known before a critic can ever allow *himself* to believe that he is right in *obelising*, or in marking with so much as a ? any verse whatever of Milton's. And there are some of these niceties, I am satisfied, not even yet fully investigated.

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[1] This is a most important *caveat*: many thousands of exquisite lines in the days of Elizabeth, James, Charles, down even to 1658 (last of Cromwell), are ruined by readers untrained to the elder dissyllabic (not monosyllabic) treatment of the *tion*.

It is, however, to be borne in mind, after all allowances and provisional reservations have been made, that Bentley's hypothesis (injudiciously as it was managed by that great scholar) has really a truth of fact to stand upon. Not only must Milton have composed his three greatest poems, the two *Paradises* and the *Samson*, in a state of blindness, but subsequently, in the correction of the proofs, he must have suffered still more from this conflict with darkness, and consequently from this dependence upon careless readers. This is Bentley's *case*: as lawyers say, "My lord, that is my case." It is possible enough to *write* correctly in the dark, as I myself often do when losing or missing my lucifers,—which, like some elder lucifers, are always rebelliously straying into places where they *can* have no business; but it is quite impossible to *correct a proof* in the dark. At least, if there *is* such an art, it must be a section of the black art. Bentley gained from Pope that admirable epithet of *slashing* ("*the ribalds—from slashing Bentley down to piddling Theobalds*," *i.e. Tibbalds*, as it was pronounced) altogether from his edition of the *Paradise Lost*. This the doctor founded on his own hypothesis as to the advantage taken of Milton's blindness; and corresponding was the havoc which he made of the text. In fact, on the really just allegation that Milton must have used the services of an amanuensis, and the plausible one that this amanuensis, being often weary of his task, would be likely to neglect punctilious accuracy, and the most improbable allegation that this weary person would also be very conceited, and a scoundrel, and would add much rubbish of his own, Bentley resigned himself luxuriously, without the whisper of a scruple, to his own sense of what was or was not poetic,—which sense happened to be that of the adder for music. The deaf adder heareth not though the musician charm ever so wisely. No scholarship,—which so far beyond other men Bentley had,—could gain him the imaginative sensibility which, in a degree so far beyond average men, he wanted. Consequently, the world never before beheld such a scene of massacre as his *Paradise Lost* exhibited. He laid himself down to his work of extermination like the brawniest of reapers going in steadily with his sickle, coat stripped off and shirt sleeves tucked up, to deal with an acre of barley. One duty, and no other, rested upon *his* conscience; one voice he heard—Slash away, and hew down the rotten growths of this abominable amanuensis. The carnage was like that after a pitched battle. The very finest passages in every book of the poem were marked by italics as dedicated to fire and slaughter. "Slashing Dick" went through the whole forest like a woodman marking with white paint the giant trees that must all come down in a month or so. And one naturally reverts to a passage in the poem itself, where God the Father is supposed to say to his Filial Assessor on the heavenly throne, when marking the desolating progress of Sin and Death—

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[1] There are exactly three occurrences of the plural noun *aches* in the blank verse of Shakespeare's Plays: viz.

> "Fill all thy bones with aches, make thee war."
> *Tempest*, i. 2.
> "Aches contract and starve your supple joints!"
> *Tim. of Ath.*, i. 1.
> "Then fears of hostile strokes, their aches, losses."
> *Tim. of Ath.*, v. 1.

In each of these cases, it will be seen, *aches* must be pronounced dissyllabically, but whether soft as *aitches* or hard as *aikès* does not appear. That the noun in the singular, however, must have had our present hard pronunciation in Shakespeare's time seems all but proved by one of the more frequent occurrences of the singular noun in Shakespeare's text. Take the passage in *Meas. for Meas.*, iii. 1—

> "The weariest and most loathèd worldly life
> That age, ache, penury and imprisonment
> Can lay on nature."

Can any one suppose that the words *age, ache* here were pronounced *age, aitch*?—M.

> "See with what havoc these fell dogs advance
> To ravage this fair world."

But still this inhuman extravagance of Bentley in following out his hypothesis does not exonerate *us* from bearing in mind so much truth as that hypothesis really must have had from the pitiable difficulties of the great poet's situation.[1]

My own opinion, therefore, upon the line, for instance, from *Paradise Regained* which Mr. Landor appears to have indicated for the reader's amazement, viz :—

"As well might recommend
Such solitude before choicest society,"[2]

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[1] De Quincey has in several places already (*e.g. ante*, Vol. IV, pp. 191-193) dwelt on Bentley's extraordinary performance in his edition of *Paradise Lost*, and generally with the use of the epithet "Slashing Dick" as suggested by Pope for Bentley in that connexion. Here, however, is a less known epigram of Pope's, occasioned by seeing some sheets of Bentley's edition of Milton's *Paradise Lost* :—

"Did Milton's prose, O Charles, thy death defend ?
A furious foe unconscious proves a friend.
On Milton's verse does Bentley comment ? Know
A weak officious friend becomes a foe.
While he but sought his Author's fame to further,
The murderous critic has avenged thy murder !"—M.

[2] Mr. Craik, who is a great authority on such subjects, favoured me some ten or twelve years ago with a letter on this line. He viewed it as a variety more or less irregular, but regular as regarded its model, of the dramatic or scenical verse—privileged to the extent of an extra syllable, but sometimes stretching its privilege a little further. [De Quincey's correspondent in this matter was the excellent and sagacious George L. Craik, author of *The Pursuit of Knowledge under Difficulties*, *The Romance of the Peerage*, *The English of Shakespeare*, *History of English Literature and the English Language*, and not a few other valuable books. Born in 1798 in Fifeshire, Mr. Craik resided chiefly in London till 1849, when he was appointed Professor of English History and Literature in Queen's College, Belfast. He held that post till his death in 1866.—In the present question between Craik and De Quincey there can be little doubt that Craik's opinion was the more correct. Besides the special line in dispute (*Par. Reg.*, i. 302), here are three Miltonic lines on the same model—

"For solitude sometimes is best society."
P. L., ix. 249.

"As if she would her children should be riotous."
Comus, 763.

"Private respects must yield, with grave authority."
S. A., 868.

In each of these lines also there are twelve syllables ; and it can hardly be supposed that they are mere inadvertences or slips of is that it escaped revision from some accident calling off the ear of Milton whilst in the act of having the proof read to him. Mr. Landor silently prints it in italics, without assigning his objection; but, of course, that objection must be that the line has one foot too much. It is an Alexandrine, such as Dryden scattered so profusely without asking himself why, but which Milton never tolerates except in the choruses of the *Samson.*

> "*Not difficult, if thou hearken to me*"—

is one of the lines which Mr. Landor thinks that "no authority will reconcile" to our ears. I think otherwise. The cæsura is meant to fall not with the comma after *difficult*, but after *thou*; and there is a most effective and grand suspension intended. It is Satan who speaks—Satan in the wilderness; and he marks, as he wishes to mark, the tremendous opposition of attitude between the two parties to the temptation.

> "Not difficult if *thou*——"

there let the reader pause, as if pulling up suddenly four horses in harness, and throwing them on their haunches—not difficult if thou (in some mysterious sense the Son of God); and then, as with a burst of thunder, again giving the reins to your *quadriga*,

> "——hearken to me"[1]:

that is, to me, that am the Prince of the Air, and able to perform all my promises for those that hearken to my temptations.

Two lines are cited under the same ban of irreconcilability to our ears, but on a very different plea. The first of these lines is—

Milton's ear. The only question perhaps is whether they are to be regarded as blank lines extended voluntarily by two supernumerary weak syllables, or as intentionally inserted Alexandrines; and the former is the likelier hypothesis. The last of the quoted lines, it ought to be remarked, does not occur in one of the choruses or lyrical parts of the *Samson Agonistes* (where Milton absolved himself from ordinary metrical rule), but in one of the regular dramatic speeches. —M.]

[1] *Par. Reg.*, ii. 428.—M.

"*Launcelot, or Pellias, or Pellenore*"[1];

the other—

"*Quintius, Fabricius, Curius, Regulus.*"

The reader will readily suppose that both are objected to as "roll-calls of proper names." Now, it is very true that nothing is more offensive to the mind than the practice of mechanically packing into metrical successions, as if packing a portmanteau, names without meaning or significance to the feelings. No man ever carried that atrocity so far as Boileau,—a fact of which Mr. Landor is well aware; and slight is the sanction or excuse that can be drawn from *him.* But it must not be forgotten that Virgil, so scrupulous in finish of composition, committed this fault. I remember a passage ending—

"—— Noëmonaque Prytanimque";

but, having no Virgil within reach, I cannot at this moment quote it accurately.[2] Homer, with more excuse, however, from the rudeness of his age, is a deadly offender in this way. But the cases from Milton are very different. Milton was incapable of the Homeric or Virgilian blemish. The objection to such rolling musketry of names is that, unless interspersed with epithets, or broken into irregular groups by brief circumstances of parentage, country, or romantic incident, they stand audaciously perking up their heads like lots in a catalogue, arrow-headed palisades, or young larches in a nursery-ground, all occupying the same space, all drawn up in line, all mere iterations of each other. But in

"*Quintius, Fabricius, Curius, Regulus,*"[3]

though certainly not a good line *when insulated* (better, however, in its connexion with the entire succession of which it forms part), the apology is that the massy weight of the separate characters enables them to stand like granite pillars or pyramids, proud of their self-supporting independency. The great names are designedly left standing in solitary grandeur, like obelisks in a wilderness that have survived all coëval buildings.

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[1] *Par. Reg.*, ii. 361.—M.

[2] The complete line (*Æneid*, ix. 767) is "Alcandrumque Haliumque Noëmonaque Prytanimque."—M.

[3] *Par. Reg.*, ii. 446.—M.

Mr. Landor makes one correction, by a simple improvement in the punctuation, which has a very fine effect. Rarely has so large a result been distributed through a sentence by so slight a change. It is in the *Samson.* Samson says, speaking of himself (as elsewhere) with that profound pathos which to all hearts recalls Milton's own situation in the days of his old age when he was composing that drama—

> "Ask for this great deliverer now, and find him
> *Eyeless in Gaza at the mill with slaves.*"[1]

Thus it is usually printed,—that is, without a comma in the latter line; but, says Landor, "there ought to be commas after *eyeless,* after *Gaza,* after *mill.*" And why? because thus "the grief of Samson is aggravated at every member of the sentence." He (like Milton) was—1. blind, 2. in a city of triumphant enemies, 3. working for daily bread, 4. herding with slaves,—Samson literally, and Milton with those whom politically he regarded as such.

Mr. Landor is perfectly wrong, I must take the liberty of saying, when he demurs to the line in *Paradise Regained*:

> "*From that placid aspéct and meek regard,*"[2]

on the ground that "*meek regard* conveys no new idea to *placid aspéct.*" But the difference is as between Christ regarding and Christ *being* regarded: *aspéct* is the countenance of Christ when passive to the gaze of others; *regard* is the same countenance in active contemplation of those others whom he loves or pities. The *placid aspéct* expresses, therefore, the divine rest; the *meek regard* expresses the radiation of the divine benignity: the one is the self-absorption of the total Godhead, the other the eternal emanation of the Filial Godhead.

By what ingenuity, says Landor, can we erect into a verse—

> "*In the bosom of bliss, and light of light*"?[3]

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[1] *Sams. Ag.*, 41.—M.

[2] *Par. Reg.*, iii. 217.—M.

[3] *Par. Reg.*, iv. 597.—M.

Now, really, it is by my watch exactly three minutes too late for *him* to make that objection. The court cannot receive it now; for the line just this moment cited, the ink being hardly yet dry, is of the same identical structure. The usual iambic flow is disturbed in both lines by the very same ripple,—viz. a trochee in the second foot, *placid* in the one line, *bosom* in the other. They are a sort of *snags*, such as lie in the current of the Mississippi. *There* they do nothing but mischief. Here, when the lines are read in their entire *nexus*, the disturbance stretches forwards and backwards with good effect on the music. Besides, if it did *not*, one is willing to take a *snag* from Milton, but one does not altogether like being *snagged* by the Mississippi. One sees no particular reason for bearing it, if one only knew how to be revenged on a river.

But of these metrical skirmishes, though full of importance to the impassioned text of a great poet (for mysterious is the life that connects all modes of passion with rhythmus), let us suppose the casual reader to have had enough. And now, at closing, for the sake of change, let us treat him to a harlequin trick upon another theme. Did the reader ever happen to see a sheriff's officer arresting an honest gentleman who was doing no manner of harm to gentle or simple, and immediately afterwards a second sheriff's officer arresting the first,—by which means that second officer merits for himself a place in history; for at one and the same moment he liberates a deserving creature (since the arrested officer cannot possibly bag his prisoner) and he also avenges the insult put upon that worthy man? Perhaps the reader did *not* ever see such a sight; and, growing personal, he asks *me*, in return, if *I* ever saw it. To say the truth, I never *did*, except once, in a too-flattering dream; and, though I applauded so loudly as even to waken myself, and shouted "*encore*," yet all went for nothing; and I am still waiting for that splendid exemplification of retributive justice. But why? Why should it be a spectacle so uncommon? For surely those official arresters of men must want arresting at times as well as better people. At least, however, *en attendant*, one may luxuriate in the vision of such a thing; and the reader shall now see such a vision rehearsed. He shall see Mr. Landor arresting Milton—Milton of all men!—for a flaw in his

Roman erudition; and then he shall see me instantly stepping up, tapping Mr. Landor on the shoulder, and saying, "Officer, you're wanted"; whilst to Milton I say, touching my hat, "Now, sir, be off; run for your life, whilst I hold this man in custody lest he should fasten on you again."

What Milton had said, speaking of the "*watchful* cherubim," was—

"Four faces each
Had, *like a double Janus*"[1];

upon which Southey—but of course Landor, ventriloquising through Southey—says, "Better left this to the imagination: double Januses are queer figures." Not at all. On the contrary, they became so common that finally there were no other. Rome, in her days of childhood, contented herself with a two-faced Janus; but, about the time of the first or second Cæsar, a very ancient statue of Janus was exhumed which had four faces. Ever afterwards this sacred resurgent statue became the model for any possible Janus that could show himself in good company. The *quadrifrons Janus* was now the orthodox Janus; and it would have been as much a sacrilege to rob him of any single face as to rob a king's statue[2] of its horse. One thing may recall this to Mr. Landor's memory. I think it was Nero, but certainly it was one of the first six Cæsars,[3] that built or that finished a magnificent temple to Janus; and each face was so managed as to point down an avenue leading to a separate market-place. Now, that there were *four* market-places I will make oath before any justice of the peace. One was called the *Forum Julium*, one the *Forum Augustum*, a third the *Forum Transitorium*: what the fourth was called is best known to itself, for really I forget.[4] But, if anybody says that perhaps it was called the

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[1] *Par. Lost*, xi. 128-129.—M.

[2] "*A king's statue*":—Till very lately the etiquette of Europe was that none but royal persons could have equestrian statues. Lord Hopetoun, the reader will object, is allowed to have a horse, in St. Andrew Square, Edinburgh. True, but observe that he is not allowed to mount him. The first person, so far as I remember, that, not being royal, has in our island seated himself comfortably in the saddle is the Duke of Wellington.

[3] It was Vespasian.—M.

[4] It was called *Forum Trajani*, or the Forum of Trajan, and was the last constructed of the four.—M.

Forum Landorium, I am not the man to object; for few names have deserved such an honour more, whether from those that then looked forward into futurity with one face, or from our posterity that will look back into the vanishing past with another.[1]

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[1] De Quincey's three articles on Landor in *Tait's Magazine* for January, February, March, and April, 1847, so respectful on the whole, though with criticism and even banter interblended, seem to have given much pleasure to the "unsubduable old Roman," as Carlyle called Landor, in his retirement at Bath. At all events, they brought Landor and De Quincey into friendly personal relations.—After writing them, De Quincey had removed to Glasgow for one of his temporary residences there; and on the 8th of September 1847, just after his recovery from a kind of fever which had troubled him for a week or two, he is found (in one of the family-letters published in 1877 in Mr. Page's Life of De Quincey) writing as follows:—"At the " beginning of my fever I received a present which gave me real " pleasure. It was from Walter Savage Landor: his last publication, " —a volume comprehending all his Latin poems that he wishes " to own,—and very prettily bound in odorous Russian leather. " There is no author from whom I *could* have been more gratified by " such a mark of attention." The volume must have been Landor's collected *Poemata et Inscriptiones*, separately published by Moxon in 1847. It is again mentioned in a letter of 19th September, thus:— " During my illness, having no books but Mr. Landor's Latin Poems, " which reached me at its beginning, I read them at times with great " interest. It is a pity that so many fine breathings of tenderness and " beauty should perish, like the melodies of the regal Danish boy, " because warbled in a forgotten tongue." But the gift of Landor's book was not the sole gratification at the same time from the same quarter. It chanced that, as at that very time De Quincey's three daughters were on a visit to Bath, he had direct reports from them of special courtesies to them on Landor's part. The incident is mentioned in several of De Quincey's own letters, but is best described by Mrs. Baird Smith in the affectionate Recollections of her Father which she permitted to be printed in 1877 in Mr. Page's Biography (vol. i. pp. 359-366).—"Often, when we were away from home, we met " with unexpected attentions, simply and solely, we believe, on our " father's account, from those who had met him or had become " interested in his works. One of the most memorable cases of this " kind was our meeting Mr. W. S. Landor in Bath in 1847, when we " were paying our first visit to our father's relatives in the South. My " sisters and I were then with our aunt at Weston; and Mr. Landor, " having heard that we were there, called to invite us to his house. " We found him delightful company, as did my aunt. She was fond " of gardening, and had a very fine garden, which Mr. Landor " particularly admired; and this led to an expression so characteristic " that I risk a slight digression in order to record it. On his noticing

"some fine trees, my aunt remarked that they were not so beautiful "as they *were*, as they had recently been lopped. On this Mr. "Landor immediately said 'Ah! I would not lop a tree; if I had to "cut a branch, I would cut it down to the ground. If I needed to "have my finger cut off, I would cut off my whole arm!' lifting up "that member decisively as he spoke. Landor was then living in "St. James's Square, and we visited him there." Many as are the stories told of Landor's characteristic habit of outrageous hyperbolism in momentary expression about anything whatsoever,—immortalized by Dickens in his kindly caricature of Landor as the Mr. Boythorn of *Bleak House*,—I know of none that can beat this perfectly authentic story by Mrs. Baird Smith.—The "unsubduable old Roman," though ten years De Quincey's senior, outlived De Quincey five years. He was back in Italy, an old man of nearly eighty-five years, in compulsory and strangely clouded exile, in that December of 1859 in which De Quincey died in Edinburgh at the age of seventy-four; and he did not die till September 1864, when he was in his ninetieth year. His pen had been busy enough since the publication of that collective edition of his works in 1846, supposed then to be definitive, which De Quincey had reviewed; and now it is not to that edition that one must go for the whole of Landor but to *The Works and Life of Walter Savage Landor* published in 1876 in eight large volumes, the first volume consisting of the Life (a reissue of Mr. Forster's of 1869) and the other seven of the Works.—M.

END OF VOL. XI

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