DE QUINCEY'S LITERARY CRITICISM

EDITED WITH AN INTRODUCTION

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PREFACE

THE text used for the following extracts is that of the second Edinburgh edition of De Quincey's works, published in fifteen volumes in 1862 and 1863, which is itself a re-issue, with one additional volume, of the first collective edition in fourteen volumes (1853–1860), thirteen volumes of which were published under the supervision of De Quincey himself. The text of the paper 'On the Knocking at the Gate in *Macbeth*', which was re-published posthumously in the fourteenth volume of the first collective edition, and thus never underwent revision at De Quincey's hands, has been corrected by the text of the original publication in the *London Magazine*, October, 1823. The same is true of the extract from the 'Letters to a Young Man whose education has been neglected', originally published in the *London Magazine*, March, 1823.

Materials not included in the Edinburgh edition of 1862–3, which have been drawn upon, are as follows :—

'Notes from the Pocket-Book of an English Opium-Eater'; 'Antagonism' and 'English Dictionaries'. *London Magazine*, November, 1823.

'Sketches of Life and Manners from the Auto-

biography of an English Opium-Eater.' *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine*, August, 1835.

'Recollections of Charles Lamb.' *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine*, June, 1838.

'The English Language.' *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, April, 1839.

'Pope's retort upon Addison.' American edition of De Quincey's writings, vol. xvi, Boston, 1855.

References have been given for every extract to the place of original publication and to Masson's edition of De Quincey's works. A. & C. Black, 1889–1890.

I am indebted to Miss O. M. Myers for her kind help in collating portions of the text, and to Professor de Sélincourt for some useful criticism.

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INTRODUCTION

De Quincey has in our day no reputation as a literary critic. He lives for the world as the English Opium-Eater, for the student as the writer of a rare kind of imaginative prose.

Yet his critical work gives a fuller revelation of his many-sided genius than his more purely imaginative writings, and it has a high intrinsic value in its sincerity, its subtlety, and, to use a word which De Quincey himself applied to the highest function of literature, its *power*.

He was well equipped at the outset for the business of criticism. His subtle intellect was wedded to an imagination lofty and penetrating in a rare degree, and to this natural endowment he had added, by the time that he started upon his desultory career as a critic, an immense store of learning gathered from books, and a very real and intense, if limited experience of life. With all this, his achievement as a critic is disappointing. Every reader of De Quincey is familiar with the element of caprice that is present in his best work. In his imaginative prose-pieces he is apt to tumble his reader without a moment's warning from the heights of impassioned contemplation to the flats of mere commonplace. A consummate

master of stately rhythm, and a reverent and discerning user of words, he will yet, when the whim seizes him, 'have a shy' at his patient reader (to use his own expression) with a jaunty colloquialism or a raw slang phrase. And the subject fares no better than the style,—at one moment receiving serious attention, at another put at the mercy of an unceremonious jest, or carelessly dropped in favour of some more attractive theme.

De Quincey has left a heterogeneous mass of prose, in which passages of profound reflection alternate with pages of rambling, incoherent argument or trivial reminiscence, and pieces of serious and subtle criticism lie bedded in matter whose interest is long since dead, or whose value belongs to a lower plane. Such a writer lends himself pre-eminently to selection. His was a mind which put the whole of its powers and possessions at the disposal of a given theme, and he scattered his good things with a free hand. His articles have been conveniently classified into autobiographical, political, speculative, critical, and so forth, but speculation and criticism are to be looked for in each and all.

The purpose of this volume is to comprise in small compass what is most valuable in his critical writing. Two complete essays are given, those on Pope and on 'The Knocking at the Gate in *Macbeth*', and a third, that on Rhetoric, is complete except for the abridgement of a tedious and technical argument near the beginning. The second part of the book is given up

to passages, disentangled from their context in the various essays and articles of the sixteen volumes of the Edinburgh edition, and grouped under headings.

These fragments of their author's voluminous writings need some kind of introduction.

One of De Quincey's guardians used to say of his refractory young ward that he 'followed his own devil'. He did so in literature no less than in life. He was an eccentric. His genius moved upon an orbit of its own; and he seems as an author to call imperatively for that kind of criticism which Carlyle so warmly advocates. We need to know his merits before we pronounce upon his faults. We need to feel his strength before we deprecate his weakness. We need to understand enough of the elements which went to form his nature, and the influences under which it developed, to be able to see his irregularities and perversities in their right relation to that particular mode of power which he wielded as an author. Now De Quincey's criticism is as much human and individual, as little systematic and formal as his imaginative writing; and we can no better dispense with a knowledge of his personality, of his mental and moral growth, in the one case than in the other.

Commenting, in his reminiscences of his own childhood, on Wordsworth's line,

The Child is father of the Man,

De Quincey declares that 'whatsoever is seen in the

maturest adult blossoming and bearing fruit must have pre-existed by way of germ in the infant'. The child De Quincey of the *Autobiographic Sketches* has the imagination which fathered the Opium-Eater's lofty visions, and deep meditations upon life and death. The same child, discussing with his sister before he was seven years old 'the numbers of intellectual questions which rose up to them in their immense reading', is the embryo critic and metaphysician.

The little students of the De Quincey nursery criticized and condemned with unanswerable arguments a dictum of Mrs. Barbauld's upon the relative value of certain tales in the *Arabian Nights*, so that they were 'in danger of despising the queen of all the Bluestockings for her ill-directed preference'. The shape which these discussions took, and the part which De Quincey himself played in them are significant of the nature and bent of his mature critical faculty. 'From my birth,' he said, 'I was made an intellectual creature, and my life has been, on the whole, the life of a philosopher.' Literature was for him, from childhood, an intellectual pursuit, and its philosophical interest was from the first as potent with him as its emotional appeal. From childhood, he tells us, he had 'meditated profoundly upon the laws and philosophy of diction'; and in the nursery discussions, the kind of question which he most often and most ardently attacked was the why and wherefore of certain effects of the sublime, and the dis-

tinction between various kinds of the sublime, such as the *moral* sublime and what he calls the *dark* sublime.

The natural bent of his mind led him in literature, as in other spheres, to seek always for a philosophical basis for the facts which impressed him. His account of the way in which a certain episode in the story of Aladdin wrought upon his childish mind suggests the trend of his later criticism of literature. The story tells how the Magician, aware of the existence of an enchanted lamp, discovers that it can only be released from its remote hiding-place by the hands of one specially-fated child. In order to find this child, he applies his ear to the earth to listen to the innumerable footsteps tormenting the surface of the globe, and finally, amongst them all, at a distance of six thousand miles, he distinguishes the footsteps of the boy Aladdin, destined to fulfil this special purpose.

'The sublimity which this involved,' says De Quincey, 'was mysterious and unfathomable as regarded any key which I possessed for deciphering its law or origin. Unable to explain my own impressions of Aladdin, I did not the less obstinately persist in believing a sublimity which I could not understand.' This constancy in believing in an impression for which he cannot account, combined with the restless desire to find a reason for the faith that is in him, are eminently characteristic. We owe the illuminating essay on 'The Knocking at the Gate

in *Macbeth* ' to the same mental qualities. He tells us that for many years his understanding could furnish no reason why the knocking at the gate in *Macbeth* should produce any effect. ' In fact my understanding said positively that it could *not* produce any effect. But I knew better : I felt that it did ; and I waited and clung to the problem until further knowledge should enable me to solve it.'

The explanation which he arrived at in the case of the Aladdin story is significant. The sublimity seemed to him to be based upon the idea suggested by the Magician's interpretation of the sounding footsteps, that ' even the articulate or brutal sounds of the globe must be all so many languages and ciphers that somewhere have corresponding keys—have their own grammar and syntax ; and thus that the least things in the universe must be secret mirrors to the greatest'. Nothing is a more constant characteristic of De Quincey's thought than the tendency to regard all facts and phenomena as symbolical or representative, meaningless in themselves except as the outward manifestation of underlying principles. He regards literature as a special manifestation of life, on a plane of its own indeed, but yet of no more significance, apart from the universal forces which underlie both it and life, than are the things of the visible universe. This attitude of mind is at the back of his literary criticism. Through it ' literary or aesthetic questions are brought under the light of philosophic principles. and problems of taste ex-

pand to problems of human nature'. It was because everything that he felt and observed seemed to him of an intense significance, that he used his experience in the first place to build up his philosophy, and in the second place to solve literary problems. There is to be observed a constant process by which his experience of life contributed to his criticism of literature. He meets with an experience in some way arresting. He seeks till he finds the principle which explains the peculiar effect of this experience on his mind. Then, after the law has revealed itself, he is ready to look for it under the phenomena of literature, and to find it working in that sphere as inevitably as in the sphere of life. The 'law of antagonism' is one of these principles, to which he most frequently has recourse in his treatment of literature. Turn to his defence of Milton against the charge of 'pedantry or a too ambitious display of erudition' in treating his primitive theme in *Paradise Lost*. He vindicates Milton's practice as 'the very perfection of poetic science' by a reference to the law of antagonism; and, in order to show how this universal principle underlies the most ordinary forms of human speech, he instances the habit people have of applying the word *amphitheatre* to hills and woods, thereby suggesting by contrast what they would far less effectively suggest by accurate description. The law itself as a living principle of his thought had sprung in early days from his own intense experience. No one can forget the circumstances which permanently

connected De Quincey's childish thoughts of death with the cloudless, glorious days of summer. His restless mind found the reason why death is more profoundly affecting in summer than in other seasons of the year, in the subtle, all-powerful law of antagonism, by which, when the tropical prodigality of life in summer is brought into collision with the sterilities of the grave, each exalts the other into stronger relief. This is only one instance among many, in which conceptions springing from his own early experience have taken a permanent place in his thought.

The experience of childhood was, De Quincey thought, primarily responsible for the extraordinary development of his dreaming faculty, but he recognized that Opium in the second place provided an incalculably strong stimulus. If we would understand the development of his thought, the part played by Opium must equally be reckoned with.

An unfailing feature of his Opium dreams was the never-ending recurrence, in one form or another, of the same image or incident which had once impressed him. The intense significance of single facts, their infinite power of reproducing themselves, and the persistence of a single principle underlying a number of changing forms, was thus burnt in upon his mind. We can see this experience unconsciously translated into his mental habit of hugging certain fundamental principles, and referring to them all the phenomena that interested him in literature and in life ; and his

intellect, whether consciously or not, related the experience to the philosophical principle of 'idem in alio'. He calls this 'the very first principle concerned in any Fine Art', and though it was probably first expounded to him as an aesthetic law by Coleridge, yet it got its hold upon his mind and became a vital principle of his thought through the intensities of his Opium experience.

Another characteristic which found its way out of his dreams into his ordinary mental habits, was the tendency to raise to its highest power anything that particularly arrested him. The well-known effect of Opium in opening out space and time till both seem infinite, and of exalting a fact or image till it becomes a glorified type of the original, must have permanently influenced De Quincey's mental outlook. The heightening of the scenes and incidents of his childhood, which we seem to look at through a strangely transforming mirror in his *Autobiographic Sketches*, has its counterpart in the sphere of literary criticism in his habit of idealizing whatever appealed strongly to his imagination. In his account of his childish sports the pony's mane is called a 'vast jungle', and his brother's talent for mischief a 'divine afflatus'. Writing of Landor, he compares Count Julian to Prometheus, and declares that 'there is in this modern aerolith the same jewelly lustre, the same *non imitabile fulgur*, and the same character of "fracture", for its beaming iridescent grandeur, redoubling under the crush of misery'. His criticism

gains, perhaps, as much as it loses by this mode of exaggeration, which rarely conflicts with truth and more often throws into high light one special aspect of the truth.

Much that on the surface is most striking in De Quincey's composition can be traced in some measure to the influence of Opium. The very unevenness of quality, the alternate dignity and triviality of style, the distressing lapses from intensity and seriousness of thought into mere fooling, are the outcome, how directly we cannot say, of the effects of the drug.

'Opium,' says De Quincey, 'gives and takes away. It defeats the *steady* habit of exertion; but it creates spasms of irregular exertion. It ruins the natural powers of life; but it develops preternatural paroxysms of intermitting power.' He comments again on the difficulty which the Opium-Eater has in 'attempting to hold things steadily together, and to bring them under a comprehensive or unifying act of the judging faculty'. The absence of logical plan, the strange inconsequence and lack of unity which is characteristic of his essays, is to a great extent explained by the permanent effects of Opium upon his mind.

Opium gives and takes away. The greatest of its gifts to De Quincey was the gift to his imagination, the sublime and gorgeous and terrible visions, in which he *saw* infinity, *saw* the last sublimities of pictorial pomp, and realized through the pitiless, haunting experience of dreams, the eternity of suffering. They

made him feel what *King Lear* made him feel, 'the infinity of the world within him.' Who shall say how far De Quincey's sense of the sublime, his imaginative realization of what is meant by the infinite, his special sensibility to splendour of imagery and to all the effects of pomp, were due to the visionary experiences that followed in the train of Opium?

De Quincey's work as a critic shows the marks of intellectual influences as strong in their own direction as the influence of Opium. Two thinkers and writers, and two only of all whom he came across in his wide intercourse with men and his wide experience of books, had a profound influence upon his critical work. Wordsworth and Coleridge, first through the *Lyrical Ballads*, and afterwards through personal intercourse, had everything to do with shaping his conceptions of literature and the arts. His reading of the *Lyrical Ballads* as a boy of fourteen was, he says, 'the greatest event in the unfolding of his mind.' He found in these poems, at a time when they were abused in high places, 'the ray of a new morning, and an absolute revelation of untrodden worlds teeming with power and beauty, as yet unsuspected amongst men.' For both Wordsworth and Coleridge he conceived an admiration which amounted to religious reverence. The influence of Coleridge upon him was the earliest to wane, but it left a layer of thought which was the basis of his literary theory. The characteristic products of German philosophy in the sphere of literary criticism, such as the principle

of likeness in unlikeness, of the union of opposites, the conception of art as the fulfilment of Nature, were first familiarized in England by Coleridge. All these became a part of De Quincey's theory of literature, and as he despised the German critics and revered Coleridge, it is safe to assume that his debt is here to the latter, rather than to the former. For the rest, the traces of Coleridge's influence are to be found only in some important definitions in idea made possible by terminology, such as are involved in the use of the terms subjective and objective, of the word ' sensuous ', now indispensable in the vocabulary of literary criticism, or the word ' sequacious ', applied with rare felicity to Milton's mode of thought.

The influence of Wordsworth is more far-reaching in its effects than any other that touched De Quincey's work. The marks of it are upon the surface, no less than in the substance of his writings. There is no poet from whom he quotes more constantly or for more varied purposes. He uses Wordsworth for quotation almost as Bunyan uses the Bible, just because the poetry of Wordsworth has become to him a vital part of his spiritual and intellectual experience.

Nothing perhaps is a surer index to a critic's attitude towards his author than his manner of quoting from him. De Quincey declared that ' by too trivial a repetition of splendid passages a serious injury is done to great poets ' ; and he strongly resented Hazlitt's procedure in this respect. As a constant feature of style, the use of quotation is in no critic

more conspicuous than in Hazlitt. No writer ever quoted with such gusto, with such lively and picturesque effect: few with so little regard for the meaning of the words in their original setting. The heightening effect given to a commonplace thought by an apt quotation is ill bought at the expense of altering the bearing, and lowering the poetic value of the original lines. Hazlitt describes in one essay the joys of a period of solitude spent at a seaside watering-place, when he had nothing to do but 'look at the sky or wander by the pebbled sea-shore,

to see the children sporting on the shore,
And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore.'

It is this mode of quotation that De Quincey censures in Hazlitt as a form of dishonesty. His own use of Wordsworth's lines has always the tendency to draw out and develop the mystical significance of thought or image rather than to kill it by a commonplace application. In his essay on Modern Superstition, after defending, in a manner which would have accorded with Wordsworth's views, the more child-like, primitive superstitions with regard to natural phenomena, he ends, 'Such a faith reposes upon the universal signs diffused through Nature, and blends with the mysterious of natural grandeurs wherever found—with the mysterious of the starry heavens, with the mysterious of music, and with that infinite form of the mysterious for man's deepest misgivings,

Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns.'

No detriment is done to the great passage at the heart of the Tintern Abbey poem by such a quotation from it : rather is some further insight opened into the recesses of its meaning. De Quincey will quote from the least inspired of Wordsworth's poems, from *The Matron of Jedburgh*, from *The Danish Boy*, from *Vandracour and Julia*, in a way which shows that he felt in them what Wordsworth felt, the soul of meaning which to us is lost because it did not find fit embodiment in poetic form.

He appreciated Wordsworth's poetry more as Wordsworth would have wished it to be appreciated than did any contemporary critic except Coleridge. The *Matthew* poems, so little understood, as De Quincey says, by the commonplace reader, might be used as the touchstone of a critic's real understanding of Wordsworth. *The Fountain*, for instance, is dismissed by the majority of readers as an extreme example of Wordsworth's ' simplicity ', which to them implies triviality of subject and a childlike inconsequence and baldness in expression. De Quincey calls it ' an exquisite poem ', and ' one of the most spiritual of Wordsworth's sketches '. He gives the same kind of praise to *We are Seven*.

Nothing could be a stronger proof of the profound influence exercised by Wordsworth over his mind than this appreciation of artistic work so far removed in point of style from that which he was most fitted to appreciate. He is never tired of vindicating the elaborate, the rhythmical, the *pompous* in style as

essential to certain modes of thought to which the opposite qualities, the simple and unpretending, would be entirely inadequate. He points out Lamb's deficiency, and Southey's, Addison's and Swift's, in what he calls the loftier qualities of style. His own sympathies are shown clearly enough in his essay on Rhetoric and in his appreciation of Milton. It is the sublime in conception and the stately in expression which call forth the best of his criticism. His appreciation of the passage in the *Prelude* describing the dream of the Magician, which he says reaches the *ne plus ultra* of sublimity, shows how the bias of his mind in this direction led him into enthusiasm for the least Wordsworthian things in Wordsworth. His appreciation of poems like *The Fountain* or *We are Seven* springs from his interest in Wordsworth's thought. He revered Wordsworth above all things for his profound knowledge of the human heart, for his wide learning in the *prima philosophia* of human nature, for his acquaintance with those sublimities of our spiritual being which were to De Quincey as they were to Wordsworth the deepest of realities. And surely it is not fanciful to say that what he appreciated in Wordsworth was fundamentally only another form of the sublime. In the *Arabian Nights*, in the haunting imagery of dreams, he paid honour to the mystical or the *dark* sublime. In Milton he saw the soul of the moral sublime taking upon itself the body of poetry. Wordsworth, for all his simplicity of expression, he hailed in his heart as

the great prophet and revealer of the spiritual sublime.

In the matter of literary theory it is not surprising to find De Quincey's debt to Wordsworth very large. Wordsworth's theory of poetry, as set forth in his Prefaces, influenced in a remarkable degree the views of contemporary critics. Lamb, Hazlitt, even Leigh Hunt, each owed the kernel of his own conception of poetry to Wordsworth. And when De Quincey defines poetry as 'the science of human passion in all its fluxes and refluxes—in its wondrous depths below depths, and its starry altitudes that ascended to the heavens', he is chanting in his own unmistakable tones ideas which Wordsworth had communicated to him. Much of what is permanently valuable in his criticism is the flower and fruit of a seed sown in his mind by Wordsworth. For his famous distinction between the literature of knowledge and the literature of power, he is indebted, according to his own declaration, to conversation with Wordsworth, 'as for most of the sound criticism upon poetry that I have ever met with.'

But the last word remains to be said about Wordsworth's influence on De Quincey's thought. To a man with whom 'metaphysical speculation was a disease', whose bias was entirely towards the intellectual life, Wordsworth's doctrine of the value of the emotions in the attainment of knowledge came as a much-needed corrective and stimulus. Without this teaching De Quincey would perhaps never have

come to assert that ' the mere understanding, however useful and indispensable, is the meanest faculty in the human mind '. By means of it his own unintelligible instincts were justified to his reason, so that he could call the human heart ' an unfathomed deep over which diviner agencies brood than are legible to the intellect ', and could frame the sound critical maxim that ' a feeble capacity for passion must, upon a question of passion, constitute a feeble range of intellect '.

Wordsworth taught De Quincey what he taught Keats, the lesson of the meaning of suffering ; or perhaps it would be truer to say that through him the painful and perplexed thoughts which both gathered from experience were moulded and directed, until they became fit to find expression in philosophy and art. ' Either,' says De Quincey, ' the human being must suffer and struggle as the price of a more searching vision, or his gaze must be shallow and without intellectual revelation.' Keats will be found expressing the same truth in some of the most self-revealing passages of his letters, and he gave it poetic embodiment in *Endymion* and in *Hyperion*. The romantic conception of art is nowhere set forth with greater truth and clearness than in the longer poems of Keats. In *Hyperion* the triumph of the new order of gods, who have mounted through suffering to a higher perfection, over the old, who lived ' calm and unruffled ', and removed from the tumults of passion, symbolizes the victory of the romantic conception of art over the classical. De

Quincey hotly contested the assumption that *Hyperion* was Greek in spirit. 'We should praise it falsely,' he says, '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.' He instances the secret signs of coming woe in the palace of Hyperion as among the 'things that 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'. De Quincey's reflections upon the distinction between the so-called romantic and classical forms of literature lead us to the very centre of his critical position. He himself characteristically founded the distinction upon the fundamental difference between the antique pagan and the modern Christian philosophies of life. He sees the fundamental principle of Christian thought in the conception of sin, in the idea of suffering and in the pervading spiritual sense of the infinite. The pagan mind, he contends, does not contain the very germ of these conceptions. De Quincey himself, though he would have despised the term, was typically a Romantic. The German philosophers of romanticism laid strong stress on the idea that romantic art strives after the infinite, whilst classical art sought no further than to represent the finite. To De Quincey, who thought this philosophical distinction worthless, the 'sensus infiniti' was yet

the strongest and deepest thing in man's nature, and his own best work might well serve to illustrate this very definition of romantic art.

Music, the most romantic of the fine arts, was that which made the strongest appeal to him. He delighted in Beethoven, and the violin was his favourite musical instrument. 'There is an infinity,' he said, 'about the violin.' The element of music in literature was what he had the rare power both to perceive and to produce.

His dictum that 'the object of the fine arts is not pleasure, but the sense of power and the illimitable incarnated as it were in pleasure', marks his romantic standpoint in criticism. In his sense of the all-importance of internal meaning and the comparative unimportance of external form he is a Romantic of the Romantics. He is a mystic, and he sees far more truth and beauty in the representation of death in Christian art by a skull and an hour-glass than in the classical figuring of death as a lovely youth with torch inverted. He thought that in the one case 'the harsh and austere expression pointed to a dark reality, whilst the beautiful Greek adumbration was a veil and a disguise'.

We shall meet with little but disappointment if we seek in De Quincey either for an appreciation of classic art or for the qualities of the classic writer, for balance, for measure, for clear-cut definition and sane judgement. Pre-eminently he is to be regarded as critic and creator of romantic art.

His criticism has, indeed, many of the qualities which mark his imaginative writings. Working upon materials which belong to the literature of power, it has itself the vitalizing force, the heightened mood, the 'moving' faculty, which characterize that literature. When he writes of Milton, we are reminded of Wordsworth's declaration that high poetry, in order to be enjoyed and understood, must call forth and communicate power. De Quincey's criticism of Milton's poetry does more than elucidate the principle: it is itself a vessel for the power called forth and communicated. 'Milton,' he says, 'is not an author amongst authors, not a poet amongst poets, but a power among powers.' And he proceeds to show that the power which Milton wielded is what we moderns call the *sublime*. 'Laying aside the case of the Greek drama, and considering that the Hebrew poetry of Isaiah and Ezekiel, as having the benefit of inspiration, does not lie within the just limits of competition, we may affirm that there is no human composition which can be challenged as constitutionally sublime—sublime equally by its conception and by its execution, or as uniformly sublime from first to last—excepting the *Paradise Lost*. In Milton only, first and last, is the power of the sublime revealed. In Milton only does this great agency blaze and glow as a furnace kept up to a white heat, without suspicion of collapse.'

His account, in the essay on Rhetoric, of the great rhetoricians of the seventeenth century, Jeremy

Taylor and Sir Thomas Browne, is not merely an analysis, but an interpretation of their art in the terms of an artist. Sir Thomas Browne has been well loved and admired, but perhaps no critic has appraised him with so keen an understanding of his art. ' Where but in Sir T. B. shall one hope to find music so Miltonic, an intonation of such solemn chords as are struck in the following opening bar of a passage in the *Urn-Burial*—"Now, since these bones have rested quietly in the grave, under the drums and tramplings of three conquests, &c." What a melodious ascent as of a prelude to some impassioned requiem breathing from the pomps of earth, and from the sanctities of the grave ! What a *fluctus decumanus* of rhetoric ! Time expounded, not by generations or centuries, but by the vast periods of conquests and dynasties ; by cycles of Pharaohs and Ptolemies, Antiochi and Arsacides ! And these vast successions of time distinguished and figured by the uproars which revolve at their inaugurations ; by the drums and tramplings rolling overhead upon the chambers of forgotten dead—the trepidations of time and mortality vexing, at secular intervals, the everlasting sabbaths of the grave ! Show us, O pedant, such another strain from the oratory of Greece or Rome ! For it is not an Οὐ μὰ τοὺς ἐν Μαραθῶνι τεθνηκότας, or any such bravura that will make a fit antiphony to this sublime rapture.'

De Quincey does not approach his subject in the spirit of the scientist dissecting what is dead, but rather as the artist, to whom everything is alive, and

who believes that what is to be understood must first be intensely realized.

Romantic criticism has the defects of its qualities. Its function is to move, not to teach : its object to suggest and not define. Level-headed readers are apt to undervalue its achievements, because it does not interpret by a dry light. It substitutes heightened colouring for clean outline ; and its emotional appeal tends to count for more than its intellectual content.

De Quincey's criticism shows some of these typical faults. In dealing with an author of the non-romantic type, such as Pope, he will infuse into his criticism the ' moving ' power, which springs in reality from his own sense of life and beauty, and not, as he imagines, from the literature that he is criticizing. There is a particular danger in a style such as that which De Quincey wielded. It has in itself, through the rhythm which is its mainspring, a vital force only comparable to that which sustains poetry. Coleridge, in supporting the view that metre implies a special language, declared that the very act of poetic composition implied an unusual state of excitement, that poetry was in itself a passion and required a heightened key of expression. ' The vividness of the descriptions in Donne or Dryden,' he says, ' is as much and as often derived from the force and fervor of the describer, as from the reflections, forms or incidents, which constitute their subject and materials. The wheels take fire from the mere rapidity of their motion.' The rhythm of such

a prose as De Quincey's is, like metre, a stimulus and director of thought; and the rhetorical force, which is another constituent of his style, performs a function somewhat akin to that of poetic passion in controlling the elements of thought and feeling. In the case of poetry the stimulus and the control are inherent and necessary; in the case of prose criticism they sometimes usurp the place which should be held by judgement.

There is, for instance, something meretricious in the peroration of De Quincey's account of Pope as a great poet. 'Our obligations to him arise chiefly on this ground—that, having already, in the persons of earlier poets, carried off the palm in all the grander trials of intellectual strength, for the majesty of the epopee and the impassioned vehemence of the tragic drama, to Pope we owe it that we can now claim an equal pre-eminence in the sportive and aerial graces of the mock heroic and satiric muse; that in *The Dunciad* we possess a peculiar form of Satire in which (according to a plan unattempted by any other nation) we see alternately her festive smile and her gloomiest scowl; that the grave good sense of the nation has here found its brightest mirror; and, finally, that through Pope the cycle of our poetry is perfected and made orbicular,—that from that day we might claim the laurel equally, whether for dignity or grace.' The key is pitched too high. No one can allow that, in any strict sense of the words, Satire's 'gloomiest scowl' is to be seen in Pope's *Dunciad*.

The whole must be taken as rhetoric, not as criticism.

Yet, when all is said, a passage such as that in which De Quincey invokes his experience of *King Lear* to show what he means by the literature of power, is sufficient vindication of the criticism that does its work by moving rather than by teaching. 'When, in *King Lear*, the height, and depth, and breadth of human passion is revealed to us, and, for the purposes of a sublime antagonism, is revealed in the weakness of an old man's nature, and in one night two worlds of storm are brought face to face—the human world, and the world of physical nature—mirrors of each other, semichoral antiphonies, strophe and antistrophe heaving with rival convulsions, and with the double darkness of night and madness,—when I am thus suddenly startled into a feeling of the infinity of the world within me, is this power, or what may I call it?'

And he is saved from the worst faults of romantic criticism by the twofold constitution of his mind. He was by nature, by habit, and by intellectual training, a metaphysician as well as an artist, and his interest in the philosophical basis of literature gives his criticism an intellectual value, which can be appreciated quite apart from its imaginative or emotional quality.

His definitions of such things as rhetoric, style, the *sublime* in art, often show a fine intellectual subtlety, and they are always stimulating to thought.

If they are sometimes one-sided and not permanently satisfactory, they will yet be found in almost every case to have their roots in the truth.

His reflections upon the theory of literature are penetrating and suggestive. Their value is apt to be overlooked because they often rest upon ideas which in our day have become commonplaces. We do not now need to be told that literature is a fine art and must be criticized as such, nor that books are of two kinds, those that communicate knowledge and those that communicate power. Yet in De Quincey's day these ideas were by no means commonly understood or accepted, and it is his distinction to have set forth with clearness and force a theory which Coleridge only vaguely implied, and Wordsworth never elaborated in writing. Again, with regard to the function of language he saw as clearly as either Wordsworth or Coleridge, and explained, as neither was at pains to explain, the true relation between form and content. 'Language,' he said, repeating a remark of Wordsworth's, 'is the *incarnation* of thought.' He is the first of English critics to support consistently, both in precept and in practice, the theory that in literature, as in all the arts, substance and form are inseparable.

These reflections upon the form and functions of literature rest upon the organic conception of art then lately elucidated by the German critics. In his outlook upon literature in general De Quincey takes a still more modern and distinctively scientific point of view. Regarding literary productions as

living organisms, he believed that each must be judged on its own merits, in its own kind, and in relation to its own special conditions, and must not be compared with other organisms without a full recognition of their differing forms and functions. He lays it down as a general critical maxim that 'every species of composition is to be tried by its own laws'. And he does not mean by this what the eighteenth-century critics meant when they followed out the same precept—that poems must be classified and criticized according to their kinds—Epic, Drama, Satire, and so forth. Addison, in criticizing the *Ballad of Chevy-Chase*, compared it with the *Aeneid*, because both fell within the category of the Epic. De Quincey did not pigeon-hole literary products after this fashion. From his point of view no pagan literature could ever be put in the same category with Christian literature: a great flood of moral ideas separated them. In discriminating between different species of composition, he had more regard to the well-spring of thought which fed each product, and the moral atmosphere which enfolded it, than to the form in which it happened to be expressed. In his view each literary product was a growth, and its development was affected by the intellectual conditions of the age to which it belonged, just as a plant is affected by soil and climate. Characteristically he resented the manner in which Homer is commended in comparison with modern poets for his healthy freedom from personal feeling. How could such a

thing, he asks, be present in his poetry? '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.'

He believed, further, that it was impossible to understand the constitution of a literary product without a knowledge of its origin. Thus he starts his reflections upon *style* by an investigation into the origin of prose. And, in seeking to explain the character of the Greek Drama, he penetrates into its origin, and shows how external conditions and primitive functions have influenced its development. He had the habit of regarding literature in its relation to history, seeking in actual social conditions for the explanation of literary forms. The standpoint with regard to literature, which Professor Courthope in our day maintains with a rigid consistency, is fitfully adopted by De Quincey. Wherever he has occasion to review periods of literature, he is sensible of main tendencies and of underlying forces. He traces out, for instance, with great penetration, the course of development which carried our literature from the period of Shakespeare to the period of Pope, and on from the period of Pope to the period of Wordsworth. He sees clearly the necessary sequence of creation and criticism in the development of literature.

It is, on the whole, in the theoretical rather than in the practical sphere that De Quincey excels as a

critic. His appreciation of a book or a poet has not commonly, as Lamb's had, a high intrinsic merit. When we grasp the reason *why* he admired or censured, we come at the marrow of his criticism. His literary valuations have the interest and the untrustworthiness that we recognize in the judgements of men whose sensibilities are lively enough to touch their prejudices with passion, and whose intellects are keen enough to turn their passions into principles. Such men judge fairly of individuals only when the objects of their criticism appeal with equal strength to intellect and feeling. De Quincey's appreciations of Milton or of the great rhetoricians are successful, because these subjects call forth the full powers of his intellect and imagination. His judgements upon such authors as Pope or Landor are one-sided and not thoroughly sound, because these authors do not, as far as he is concerned, make the twofold strong appeal to thought and feeling; and the result is that he gives us rhetoric instead of eloquence, and a restless, inappropriate application of principles from the outside instead of a revelation of principles lying within. Or, where a personal prejudice affects his attitude towards an author, the union between thought and feeling is again dissolved. His estimate of Wordsworth's poetry is partial and misleading, because it was written when personal relations had given rise to a bitterness which has brought about this disunion. His criticism upon the *Excursion*, a poem which he greatly admired, resolves itself into a species of irritable

fault-finding, and illustrates the characteristic manner in which exasperated feeling will lead him to give free rein to his understanding, whilst he holds his imagination in abeyance.

The work represented in the pages which follow is certainly valuable rather as a criticism of principle than as a criticism of appreciation. Yet it is not quite fairly described by such a statement. De Quincey's character is one that defies definition, for it never ceases to contradict itself. Truth will be found, on the other hand, in the statement that the essential merit of his criticism is to be found in its exquisite sensibility to the minutiae of literary art. He had a fine ear for the music of verse, and his excellent defence of Milton's versification is based not on principle, (which is nowhere applied more disastrously by critics than in the sphere of metre), but on his own well-trained instincts. The critic who can give us a sound definition of the function of literature has no more claim, perhaps, on our gratitude than the critic whose instinct for the subtler qualities of style has lifted out of obscurity a line of such haunting beauty as Wordsworth's

Sole-sitting by the shores of old romance.

His criticism has always the quality of the unexpected. There seems no aspect of literary things which does not at one time or another claim his interest, and bring upon itself the searching light of his understanding. Who but De Quincey among the

critics of his age would have noticed the minute idiosyncrasies of Milton's spelling, and explained the method underlying them?

Yet, to reckon his achievement, we may take more general ground. His greatness has foundations which are wide and deep. The best of his criticism of appreciation is excellent; the worst holds some golden grains to compensate for much chaff. The body of his criticism of principle has a sound basis in what is with him a living sense as well as a philosophical conception of art as a form of life. He looks at literature from the standpoint of the philosopher, the psychologist, the man of science; yet he also looks at it from the point of view of the poet, who is a man as other men, differing only from other men in that he is endowed with more lively sensibilities.

December, 1908.

LITERARY CRITICISM

RHETORIC [1]

ERRATA.

P. 149, l. 4 from bottom, *for* men *read* other men.
P. 155, l. 19, *for* objects *read* object.

we shall find that it fluctuates between two different conceptions, according to one of which it is an art of ostentatious ornament, and according to the other an art of sophistry. A man is held to play the rhetorician, when he treats a subject with more than usual gaiety of ornament ; and perhaps we may add, as an essential element in the idea, with *conscious* ornament. This is one view of rhetoric ; and under this what it accomplishes is not so much to persuade as to delight ; not so much to win the assent, as to stimulate the attention and captivate the taste. And even this purpose is attached to something separable and accidental in the *manner*.

But the other idea of rhetoric lays its foundation in something essential to the *matter*. This is that rhetoric of which Milton spoke, as able 'to dash

[1] Suggested as an excursive review by Whately's *Elements of Rhetoric*. *Blackwood's Magazine*, Dec. 1828. Masson, x. 81.

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No art cultivated by man has suffered more in the revolutions of taste and opinion than the art of rhetoric. There was a time when, by an undue extension of this term, it designated the whole cycle of accomplishments which prepared a man for public affairs. From that height it has descended to a level with the arts of alchemy and astrology, as holding out promises which consist in a mixed degree of impostures wherever its pretensions happened to be weighty, and of trifles wherever they happened to be true. If we look into the prevailing theory of rhetoric, under which it meets with so degrading an estimate, we shall find that it fluctuates between two different conceptions, according to one of which it is an art of ostentatious ornament, and according to the other an art of sophistry. A man is held to play the rhetorician, when he treats a subject with more than usual gaiety of ornament ; and perhaps we may add, as an essential element in the idea, with *conscious* ornament. This is one view of rhetoric ; and under this what it accomplishes is not so much to persuade as to delight ; not so much to win the assent, as to stimulate the attention and captivate the taste. And even this purpose is attached to something separable and accidental in the *manner*.

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maturest counsels, and to make the worse appear the better reason'. Now it is clear that *argument* of some quality or other must be taken as the principle of this rhetoric ; for those must be immature counsels indeed that could be dashed by mere embellishments of manner, or by artifices of diction and arrangement.

Here then we have in popular use two separate ideas of rhetoric, one of which is occupied with the general end of the fine arts ; that is to say, intellectual pleasure. The other applies itself more specifically to a definite purpose of utility, viz. fraud.

Such is the popular idea of rhetoric, which wants both unity and precision. If we seek these from the formal teachers of rhetoric, our embarrassment is not much relieved. All of them agree that rhetoric may be defined *the art of persuasion.* But if we inquire what *is* persuasion, we find them vague and indefinite or even contradictory. To waive a thousand of others, Dr. Whately, in the work before us, insists upon the *conviction* of the understanding as 'an essential part of persuasion' ; and, on the other hand, the author of the *Philosophy of Rhetoric* is equally satisfied that there is no persuasion without an appeal to the *passions.* Here are two views. We, for our parts, have a third which excludes both : where conviction begins, the field of rhetoric ends ; that is our opinion : and, as to the passions, we contend that they are not within the province of rhetoric but of eloquence.

In this view of rhetoric and its functions we coincide with Aristotle ; as indeed originally we took it up on a suggestion derived from him. . . .

Whatsoever is certain, or matter of fixed science, can be no subject for the rhetorician : where it is possible for the understanding to be convinced, no field is open for rhetorical persuasion. Absolute

certainty and fixed science transcend opinion, and exclude the probable. The province of rhetoric, whether meant for an influence upon the actions, or simply upon the belief, lies amongst that vast field of cases where there is a *pro* and a *con*, with the chance of right and wrong, true and false, distributed in varying proportions between them. There is also an immense range of truths, where there are no chances at all concerned, but the affirmative and the negative are both true ; as, for example, the goodness of human nature and its wickedness ; the happiness of human life and its misery ; the charms of knowledge, and its hollowness ; the fragility of human prosperity, in the eye of religious meditation, and its security, as estimated by worldly confidence and youthful hope. In all such cases the rhetorician exhibits his art by giving an impulse to one side, and by withdrawing the mind so steadily from all thoughts or images which support the other, as to leave it practically under the possession of a one-sided estimate.

Upon this theory, what relation to rhetoric shall we assign to style and the ornamental arts of composition ? In some respect they seem liable to the same objection as that which Aristotle has urged against appeals to the passions ; both are extra-essential, or ἔξω τοῦ πράγματος ; they are subjective arts, not objective ; that is, they do not affect the thing which is to be surveyed, but the eye of him who is to survey. Yet, at a banquet, the epicure holds himself not more obliged to the cook for the venison, than to the physician who braces his stomach to enjoy. And any arts which conciliate regard to the speaker, indirectly promote the effect of his arguments. On this account, and because (under the severest limitation of rhetoric) they are in many cases indispensable to the perfect interpretation of the thoughts, we may admit arts of

style and ornamental composition as the ministerial part of rhetoric. But with regard to the passions, as contended for by Dr. Campbell, it is a sufficient answer that they are already preoccupied by what is called *Eloquence.*

Coleridge, as we have often heard, is in the habit of drawing the line with much philosophical beauty between rhetoric and eloquence. On this topic we were never so fortunate as to hear him : but if we are here called upon for a distinction, we shall satisfy our immediate purpose by a very plain and brief one. By Eloquence, we understand the overflow of powerful feelings upon occasions fitted to excite them. But Rhetoric is the art of aggrandizing and bringing out into strong relief, by means of various and striking thoughts, some aspect of truth which of itself is supported by no spontaneous feelings, and therefore rests upon artificial aids.

Greece, as may well be imagined, was the birthplace of Rhetoric ; to which of the Fine Arts was it not ? and here, in one sense of the word Rhetoric, the art had its consummation : for the theory, or *ars docens*, was taught with a fullness and an accuracy by the Grecian masters not afterwards approached. In particular, it was so taught by Aristotle, whose system we are disposed to agree with Dr. Whately in pronouncing the best, as regards the primary purpose of a teacher ; though otherwise, for elegance and as a practical model in the art he was expounding, neither Aristotle, nor any less austere among the Greek rhetoricians, has any pretensions to measure himself with Quintilian. In reality, for a triumph over the difficulties of the subject, and as a lesson on the possibility of imparting grace to the treatment of scholastic topics, naturally as intractable as that of Grammar or Prosody, there is no such *chef-d'œuvre* to

this hour in any literature, as the Institutions of Quintilian. Laying this one case out of the comparison, however, the Greek superiority was indisputable.

Yet how is it to be explained, that with these advantages on the side of the Greek rhetoric as an *ars docens*, rhetoric as a practical art (the *ars utens*) never made any advances amongst the Greeks to the brilliancy which it attained in Rome? Up to a certain period, and throughout the palmy state of the Greek republics, we may account for it thus: Rhetoric, in its finest and most absolute burnish, may be called an *eloquentia umbratica;* that is, it aims at an elaborate form of beauty, which shrinks from the strife of business, and could neither arise nor make itself felt in a tumultuous assembly. Certain features, it is well known, and peculiar styles of countenance, which are impressive in a drawing-room, become ineffective on a public stage. The fine tooling and delicate tracery of the cabinet artist is lost upon a building of colossal proportions. Extemporaneousness, again, a favourable circumstance to impassioned eloquence, is death to Rhetoric. Two characteristics indeed there were, of a Greek popular assembly, which must have operated fatally on the rhetorician—its fervour, in the first place; and, secondly, the coarseness of a real interest. All great rhetoricians in selecting their subject have shunned the determinate cases of real life: and even in the single instance of a deviation from the rule—that of the author (whoever he be) of the Declamations attributed to Quintilian—the cases are shaped with so romantic a generality, and so slightly circumstantiated, as to allow him all the benefit of pure abstractions.

We can readily understand, therefore, why the fervid oratory of the Athenian assemblies, and the

intense reality of its interest, should stifle the growth of rhetoric : the smoke, tarnish, and demoniac glare of Vesuvius easily eclipse the pallid coruscations of the aurora borealis. And in fact, amongst the greater orators of Greece, there is not a solitary gleam of rhetoric : Isocrates may have a little, being (to say the truth) neither orator nor rhetorician in any eminent sense ; Demosthenes has none. But when those great thunders had subsided which reached 'to Macedon and Artaxerxes' throne', when the 'fierce democracy' itself had perished, and Greece had fallen under the common circumstances of the Roman empire, how came it that Greek rhetoric did not blossom concurrently with Roman ? Vegetate it did ; and a rank crop of weeds grew up under the name of Rhetoric, down to the times of the Emperor Julian and his friend Libanius (both of whom, by the way, were as worthless writers as have ever abused the Greek language). But this part of Greek literature is a desert with no oasis. The fact is, if it were required to assign the two bodies of writers who have exhibited the human understanding in the most abject poverty, and whose works by no possibility emit a casual scintillation of wit, fancy, just thinking, or good writing, we should certainly fix upon Greek rhetoricians and Italian critics. Amongst the whole mass there is not a page, that any judicious friend to literature would wish to reprieve from destruction. And in both cases we apprehend that the possibility of so much inanity is due in part to the quality of the two languages. The diffuseness and loose structure of Greek style unfit it for the closeness, condensation, and τὸ ἀγχίστροφον of rhetoric ; the melodious beauty of the mere sounds, which both in the Italian and in the Greek are combined with much majesty, dwells upon the ear so delightfully, that in no other language

is it so easy as in these two to write with little or no meaning, and to flow along through a whole wilderness of inanity, without particularly rousing the reader's disgust.

In the literature of Rome it is that we find the true El Dorado of rhetoric, as we might expect from the sinewy compactness of the language. Livy, and, above all preceding writers, Ovid, display the greatest powers of rhetoric in forms of composition, which were not particularly adapted to favour that talent. The contest of Ajax and Ulysses for the arms of Achilles, in one of the latter books of the *Metamorphoses* is a *chef-d'œuvre* of rhetoric, considering its metrical form ; for metre, and especially the flowing heroic hexameter, is no advantage to the rhetorician.[1] The two Plinys, Lucan (though again under the disadvantage of verse), Petronius Arbiter, and Quintilian, but above all, the Senecas (for a Spanish cross appears to improve the quality of the rhetorician), have left a body of rhetorical composition such as no modern nation has rivalled. Even the most brilliant of these writers, however, were occasionally surpassed in particular *bravuras* of rhetoric by several of the Latin fathers, particularly Tertullian, Arnobius, St. Austin, and a writer whose name we cannot at this moment recall. In fact, a little African blood operated as genially in this respect as Spanish, whilst an Asiatic cross was inevitably fatal, by prompting a diffusion and inflation of style radically hostile to the condensation of keen, arrowy, rhetoric. Partly from this

[1] This, added to the style and quality of his poems, makes it the more remarkable that Virgil should have been deemed a rhetorician. Yet so it was. Walsh notices, in the Life of Virgil which he furnished for his friend Dryden's Translation, that ' his (Virgil's) rhetoric was in such general esteem, that lectures were read upon it in the reign of Tiberius, and the subject of declamations taken out of him.

cause, and partly because they wrote in an unfavourable language, the Greek fathers are, one and all, Birmingham rhetoricians. Even Gregory Nazianzen is so, with submission to Messieurs of the Port Royal and other bigoted critics who have pronounced him at the very top of the tree among the fine writers of antiquity. Undoubtedly he has a turgid style of mouthy grandiloquence (though often the merest bombast); but for polished rhetoric he is singularly unfitted, by inflated habits of thinking, by loitering diffuseness, and a dreadful trick of calling names. The spirit of personal invective is peculiarly adverse to the coolness of rhetoric. As to Chrysostom and Basil, with less of pomp and swagger than Gregory, they have not at all more of rhetorical burnish and compression. Upon the whole, looking back through the dazzling files of the ancient rhetoricians, we are disposed to rank the Senecas and Tertullian as the leaders of the band; for St. Austin, in his Confessions, and wherever he becomes peculiarly interesting, is apt to be impassioned and fervent in a degree which makes him break out of the proper pace of rhetoric. He is matched to trot, and is continually breaking into a gallop. Indeed, his Confessions have in parts, particularly in those which relate to the death of his young friend and his own frenzy of grief, all that real passion which is only imagined in the Confessions of Rousseau, under a preconception derived from his known character and unhappy life. By the time of the Emperor Justinian (say A.D. 530), or in the interval between that time and the era of Mahomet (A.D. 620), which interval we regard as the common *crepusculum* between ancient and modern history, all rhetoric (as the professional pretension of a class) seems to have finally expired.

In the literature of modern Europe, rhetoric has

been cultivated with success. But this remark applies only with any force to a period which is now long past ; and it is probable, upon various considerations, that such another period will never revolve. The rhetorician's art in its glory and power has silently faded away before the stern tendencies of the age ; and if, by any peculiarity of taste or strong determination of the intellect, a rhetorician, *en grand costume*, were again to appear amongst us, it is certain that he would have no better welcome than a stare of surprise as a posture-maker or balancer, not more elevated in the general estimate, but far less amusing, than the acrobat, or funambulist, or equestrian gymnast. No ; the age of rhetoric like that of chivalry has passed amongst forgotten things ; and the rhetorician can have no more chance for returning, than the rhapsodist of early Greece or the troubadour of romance. So multiplied are the modes of intellectual enjoyment in modern times, that the choice is absolutely distracted ; and in a boundless theatre of pleasures, to be had at little or no cost of intellectual activity, it would be marvellous indeed if any considerable audience could be found for an exhibition which presupposes a state of tense exertion on the part both of auditor and performer. To hang upon one's own thoughts as an object of conscious interest, to play with them, to watch and pursue them through a maze of inversions, evolutions, and harlequin changes, implies a condition of society either like that in the monastic ages, forced to introvert its energies from mere defect of books (whence arose the scholastic metaphysics, admirable for its subtlety, but famishing the mind, whilst it sharpened its edge in one exclusive direction) ; or, if it implies no absolute starvation of intellect, as in the case of the Roman rhetoric, which arose upon a considerable (though not very various)

literature, it proclaims at least a quiescent state of the public mind, unoccupied with daily novelties, and at leisure from the agitations of eternal change.

Growing out of the same condition of society, there is another cause at work which will for ever prevent the resurrection of rhetoric, viz. the necessities of public business, its vast extent, complexity, fullness of details, and consequent vulgarity, as compared with that of the ancients. The very same cause, by the way, furnishes an answer to the question moved by Hume, in one of his essays, with regard to the declension of eloquence in our deliberative assemblies. Eloquence, or at least that which is senatorial and forensic, has languished under the same changes of society which have proved fatal to rhetoric. The political economy of the ancient republics, and their commerce, were simple and unelaborate ; the system of their public services, both martial and civil, was arranged on the most naked and manageable principles ; for we must not confound the perplexity in our modern explanations of these things with a perplexity in the things themselves. The foundation of these differences was in the differences of domestic life. Personal wants being few, both from climate and from habit, and, in the great majority of the citizens, limited almost to the pure necessities of nature ; hence arose, for the mass of the population, the possibility of surrendering themselves, much more than with us, either to the one paramount business of the state, war, or to a state of Indian idleness. Rome, in particular, during the ages of her growing luxury, must be regarded as a nation supported by other nations ; by largesses, in effect ; that is to say, by the plunder of conquest. Living, therefore, upon foreign alms, or upon corn purchased by the product of tribute or of spoils, a nation could readily

dispense with that expansive development of her internal resources, upon which modern Europe has been forced by the more equal distribution of power amongst the civilized world.

The changes, which have followed in the functions of our popular assemblies, correspond to the great revolution here described. Suppose yourself an ancient Athenian, at some customary display of Athenian oratory, what will be the topics? Peace or war, vengeance for public wrongs, or mercy to prostrate submission, national honour and national gratitude, glory and shame, and every aspect of open appeal to the primal sensibilities of man. On the other hand, enter an English Parliament, having the most of a popular character in its constitution and practice that is anywhere to be found in the Christendom of this day, and the subject of debate will probably be a road-bill, a bill for enabling a coal-gas company to assume certain privileges against a competitor in oil-gas, a bill for disfranchizing a corrupt borough, or perhaps some technical point of form in the Exchequer Bills' bill. So much is the face of public business vulgarized by details. The same spirit of differences extends to forensic eloquence. Grecian and Roman pleadings are occupied with questions of elementary justice, large and diffusive, apprehensible even to the uninstructed, and connecting themselves at every step with powerful and tempestuous feelings. In British trials, on the contrary, the field is foreclosed against any interest of so elevating a nature, because the rights and wrongs of the case are almost inevitably absorbed to an unlearned eye by the technicalities of the law, or by the intricacy of the facts.

But this is not always the case; doubtless not; subjects for eloquence, and therefore eloquence, will

sometimes arise in our senate and our courts of justice. And in one respect our British displays are more advantageously circumstanced than the ancient, being more conspicuously brought forward into effect by their contrast to the ordinary course of business.

> Therefore are feasts so solemn and so rare,
> Since seldom coming, in the long year set,
> Like stones of worth they thinly placed are,
> Or captain jewels in the carcanet.[1]

But still the objection of Hume remains unimpeached as to the fact that eloquence is a rarer growth of modern than of ancient civil polity, even in those countries which have the advantage of free institutions. Now why is this? The letter of this objection is sustained, but substantially it is disarmed, so far as its purpose was to argue any declension on the part of Christian nations, by this explanation of ours, which traces the impoverished condition of civil eloquence to the complexity of public business.

But eloquence in one form or other is immortal, and will never perish so long as there are human hearts moving under the agitations of hope and fear, love and passionate hatred. And, in particular to us of the modern world, as an endless source of indemnification for what we have lost in the simplicity of our social systems, we have received a new dowry of eloquence, and *that* of the highest order, in the sanctities of our religion, a field unknown to antiquity, for the pagan religions did not produce much poetry, and of oratory none at all.

On the other hand, that cause, which, operating upon eloquence, has but extinguished it under a single direction, to rhetoric has been unconditionally

[1] Shakespeare, *Sonnet* 52.

fatal. Eloquence is not banished from the public business of this country as useless, but as difficult, and as not spontaneously arising from topics such as generally furnish the staple of debate. But rhetoric, if attempted on a formal scale, would be summarily exploded as pure foppery and trifling with time. Falstaff, on the field of battle, presenting his bottle of sack for a pistol, or Polonius with his quibbles, could not appear a more unseasonable *plaisanteur* than a rhetorician alighting from the clouds upon a public assembly in Great Britain met for the dispatch of business.

Under these malign aspects of the modern structure of society, a structure to which the whole world will be moulded as it becomes civilized, there can be no room for any revival of rhetoric in public speaking ; and from the same and other causes, acting upon the standard of public taste, quite as little room in written composition. In spite, however, of the tendencies to this consummation, which have been long ripening, it is a fact, that, next after Rome, England is the country in which rhetoric prospered most, at a time when science was unborn as a popular interest, and the commercial activities of after-times were yet sleeping in their rudiments. This was in the period from the latter end of the sixteenth to the middle of the seventeenth century ; and, though the English rhetoric was less rigorously true to its own ideal than the Roman, and often modulated into a higher key of impassioned eloquence, yet unquestionably in some of its qualities it remains a monument of the finest rhetorical powers.

Omitting Sir Philip Sidney, and omitting his friend, Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke (in whose prose there are some bursts of pathetic eloquence, as there is of rhetoric in his verse, though too often harsh and

cloudy), the first very eminent rhetorician in the English literature is Donne. Dr. Johnson inconsiderately classes him in company with Cowley, &c., under the title of *Metaphysical* Poets : metaphysical they were not ; *Rhetorical* would have been a more accurate designation. In saying *that*, however, we must remind our readers that we revert to the original use of the word *Rhetoric*, as laying the principal stress upon the management of the thoughts, and only a secondary one upon the ornaments of style. Few writers have shown a more extraordinary compass of powers than Donne ; for he combined what no other man has ever done—the last sublimation of dialectical subtlety and address with the most impassioned majesty. Massy diamonds compose the very substance of his poem on the Metempsychosis, thoughts and descriptions which have the fervent and gloomy sublimity of Ezekiel or Aeschylus, whilst a diamond dust of rhetorical brilliancies is strewed over the whole of his occasional verses and his prose. No criticism was ever more unhappy than that of Dr. Johnson's, which denounces all this artificial display as so much perversion of taste. There cannot be a falser thought than this ; for, upon that principle, a whole class of compositions might be vicious by conforming to its own ideal. The artifice and machinery of rhetoric furnishes in its degree as legitimate a basis for intellectual pleasure as any other ; that the pleasure is of an inferior order, can no more attaint the idea or model of the composition, than it can impeach the excellence of an epigram that is not a tragedy. Every species of composition is to be tried by its own laws ; and if Dr. Johnson had urged explicitly (what was evidently moving in his thoughts), that a metrical structure, by holding forth the promise of poetry, defrauds the mind of its just

expectations, he would have said what is notoriously false. Metre is open to any form of composition, provided it will aid the expression of the thoughts ; and the only sound objection to it is, that it has *not* done so. Weak criticism, indeed, is that which condemns a copy of verses under the ideal of poetry, when the mere substitution of another name and classification suffices to evade the sentence, and to reinstate the composition in its rights as rhetoric. It may be very true that the age of Donne gave too much encouragement to his particular vein of composition ; that, however, argues no depravity of taste, but a taste erring only in being too limited and exclusive.

The next writers of distinction, who came forward as rhetoricians, were Burton in his *Anatomy of Melancholy*, and Milton in many of his prose works. They labour under opposite defects : Burton is too quaint, fantastic, and disjointed. Milton too slow, solemn, and continuous. In the one we see the flutter of a parachute; in the other the stately and voluminous gyrations of an ascending balloon. Agile movement, and a certain degree of fancifulness, are indispensable to rhetoric. But Burton is not so much fanciful as capricious ; his motion is not the motion of freedom, but of lawlessness ; he does not dance, but caper. Milton, on the other hand, *polonaises* with a grand Castilian air, in paces too sequacious and processional ; even in his passages of merriment, and when stung into a quicker motion by personal disdain for an unworthy antagonist, his thoughts and his imagery still appear to move to the music of the organ.

In some measure it is a consequence of these peculiarities, and so far it is the more a duty to allow for them, that the rhetoric of Milton though wanting in animation is unusually superb in its colouring ; its

very monotony is derived from the sublime unity of the presiding impulse; and hence, it sometimes ascends into eloquence of the highest kind, and sometimes even into the raptures of lyric poetry. The main thing, indeed, wanting to Milton, was to have fallen upon happier subjects: for, with the exception of the 'Areopagitica', there is not one of his prose works upon a theme of universal interest, or perhaps fitted to be the ground-work of a rhetorical display.

But, as it has happened to Milton sometimes to give us poetry for rhetoric, in one instance he has unfortunately given us rhetoric for poetry: this occurs in the *Paradise Lost*, where the debates of the fallen angels are carried on by a degrading process of gladiatorial rhetoric. Nay, even the councils of God, though not debated to and fro, are, however, expounded rhetorically. This is astonishing; for no one was better aware than Milton [1] of the distinction between the *discursive* and *intuitive* acts of the mind, as apprehended by the old metaphysicians, and the incompatibility of the former with any but a limitary intellect. This indeed was familiar to all the writers of his day: but, as Mr. Gifford has shown, by a most idle note upon a passage in Massinger, that it is a distinction which has now perished (except indeed in Germany), we shall recall it to the reader's attention. An *intuition* is any knowledge whatsoever, sensuous or intellectual, which is apprehended *immediately*: a notion, on the other hand, or product of the discursive faculty, is any knowledge whatsoever which is apprehended *mediately*. All reasoning is carried on discursively; that is, *discurrendo*,—by running about to the right and the left, laying the separate

[1] See the Fifth Book of the *Paradise Lost*, and passages in his prose writings.

notices together, and thence mediately deriving some third apprehension. Now this process, however grand a characteristic of the human species as distinguished from the brute, is degrading to any suprahuman intelligence, divine or angelic, by arguing limitation. God must not proceed by steps and the fragmentary knowledge of accretion; in which case, at starting he has all the intermediate notices as so many bars between himself and the conclusion, and even at the penultimate or antepenultimate act he is still short of the truth. God must *see*; he must *intuit*, so to speak; and all truth must reach him simultaneously, first and last, without succession of time or partition of acts: just as light, before that theory had been refuted by the Satellites of Jupiter, was held not to be propagated in time, but to be here and there at one and the same indivisible instant. Paley, from mere rudeness of metaphysical skill, has talked of the *judgement* and the *judiciousness* of God: but this is profaneness, and a language unworthily applied even to an angelic being. To judge, that is, to subsume one proposition under another,—to be judicious, that is, to collate the means with the end, are acts impossible in the Divine nature, and not to be ascribed, even under the licence of a figure, to any being which transcends the limitations of humanity. Many other instances there are in which Milton is taxed with having too grossly sensualized his supernatural agents; some of which, however, the necessities of the action may excuse; and at the worst they are readily submitted to as having an intelligible purpose—that of bringing so mysterious a thing as a spiritual nature or agency within the limits of the representable. But the intellectual degradation fixed on his spiritual beings by the rhetorical debates is purely gratuitous, neither resulting from the course of

the action nor at all promoting it. Making allowances, however, for the original error in the conception, it must be granted that the execution is in the best style : the mere logic of the debate, indeed, is not better managed that it would have been by the House of Commons. But the colours of style are grave and suitable to afflicted angels. In the *Paradise Regained*, this is still more conspicuously true : the oratory there, on the part of Satan in the Wilderness, is no longer of a rhetorical cast, but in the grandest style of impassioned eloquence that can be imagined as the fit expression for the movements of an angelic despair ; and in particular the speech, on being first challenged by our Saviour, beginning,

'Tis true, I *am* that spirit unfortunate,

is not excelled in sublimity by any passage in the poem.

Milton, however, was not destined to gather the *spolia opima* of English rhetoric : two contemporaries of his own, and whose literary course pretty nearly coincided with his own in point of time, surmounted all competition, and in that amphitheatre became the Protagonistae. These were Jeremy Taylor and Sir Thomas Browne ; who, if not absolutely the foremost in the accomplishments of art, were undoubtedly the richest, the most dazzling, and, with reference to their matter, the most captivating of all rhetoricians. In them first, and perhaps (if we except occasional passages in the German John Paul Richter) in them only, are the two opposite forces of eloquent passion and rhetorical fancy brought into an exquisite equilibrium, approaching, receding—attracting, repelling —blending, separating—chasing and chased, as in a fugue, and again lost in a delightful interfusion, so as to create a middle species of composition, more various

and stimulating to the understanding than pure eloquence, more gratifying to the affections than naked rhetoric. Under this one circumstance of coincidence, in other respects their minds were of the most opposite temperament: Sir Thomas Browne, deep, tranquil, and majestic as Milton, silently premeditating and 'disclosing his golden couplets', as under some genial instinct of incubation: Jeremy Taylor, restless, fervid, aspiring, scattering abroad a prodigality of life, not unfolding but creating, with the energy and the 'myriad-mindedness' of Shakespeare. Where, but in Sir T. B., shall one hope to find music so Miltonic, an intonation of such solemn chords as are struck in the following opening bar of a passage in the Urn-burial—'Now, since these bones have rested quietly in the grave, under the drums and tramplings of three conquests,' &c. What a melodious ascent as of a prelude to some impassioned requiem breathing from the pomps of earth, and from the sanctities of the grave! What a *fluctus decumanus* of rhetoric! Time expounded, not by generations or centuries, but by the vast periods of conquests and dynasties; by cycles of Pharaohs and Ptolemies, Antiochi and Arsacides! And these vast successions of time distinguished and figured by the uproars which revolve at their inaugurations; by the drums and tramplings rolling overhead upon the chambers of forgotten dead —the trepidations of time and mortality vexing, at secular intervals, the everlasting sabbaths of the grave! Show us, O pedant, such another strain from the oratory of Greece or Rome! For it is not an Οὐ μὰ τοὺς ἐν Μαραθῶνι τεθνηκότας, or any such bravura, that will make a fit antiphony to this sublime rapture. We will not, however, attempt a descant upon the merits of Sir T. Browne, after the admirable one by Coleridge: and as to Jeremy Taylor, we would as

readily undertake to put a belt about the ocean as to characterize him adequately within the space at our command. It will please the reader better that he should characterize himself, however imperfectly, by a few specimens selected from some of his rarest works ; a method which will, at the same time, have the collateral advantage of illustrating an important truth in reference to this florid or Corinthian order of rhetoric, which we shall have occasion to notice a little further on :—

'It was observed by a Spanish confessor, that in persons not very religious, the confessions which they made upon their deathbeds, were the coldest, the most imperfect, and with less contrition than all which he had observed them to make in many years before. For, so the canes of Egypt, when they newly arise from their bed of mud, and slime of Nilus, start up into an equal and continual length, and uninterrupted but with few knots, and are strong and beauteous, with great distances and intervals ; but, when they are grown to their full length, they lessen into the point of a pyramid, and multiply their knots and joints, interrupting the fineness and smoothness of its body. So are the steps and declensions of him that does not grow in grace. At first, when he springs up from his impurity by the waters of baptism and repentance, he grows straight and strong, and suffers but few interruptions of piety ; and his constant courses of religion are but rarely intermitted, till they ascend up to a full age, or towards the ends of their life ; then they are weak, and their devotions often intermitted, and their breaks are frequent, and they seek excuses, and labour for dispensations, and love God and religion less and less, till their old age, instead of a crown of their virtue and perseverance, ends in levity and unprofitable courses, light and

useless as the tufted feathers upon the cane, every wind can play with it and abuse it, but no man can make it useful.'

'If we consider the price that the Son of God paid for the redemption of a soul, we shall better estimate of it, than from the weak discourses of our imperfect and unlearned philosophy. Not the spoil of rich provinces—not the estimate of kingdoms—not the price of Cleopatra's draught—not anything that was corruptible or perishing; for that which could not one minute retard the term of its own natural dissolution, could not be a price for the redemption of one perishing soul. When God *made* a soul, it was only *faciamus hominem ad imaginem nostram*; he spake the word, and it was done. But when man had lost his soul, which the spirit of God had breathed into him, it was not so soon *recovered*. It is like the resurrection, which hath troubled the faith of many, who are more apt to believe that God made a man from nothing, than that he can return a man from dust and corruption. But for this resurrection of the soul, for the re-implacing of the Divine image, for the re-entitling it to the kingdoms of grace and glory, God did a greater work than the creation; He was fain to contract Divinity to a span; to send a person to die for us, who of himself could not die, and was constrained to use rare and mysterious arts to make him capable of dying: He prepared a person instrumental to his purpose, by sending his Son from his own bosom —a person both God and man, an enigma to all nations and to all sciences; one that ruled over all the angels, that walked on the pavements of heaven, whose feet were clothed with stars; whose understanding is larger than that infinite space which we imagine in the uncircumscribed distance beyond the first orb of

heaven ; a person to whom felicity was as essential as life to God. This was the only person that was designed in the eternal decrees, to pay the price of a soul ; less than this person could not do it. Nothing less than an infinite excellence could satisfy for a soul lost to infinite ages ; who was to bear the load of an infinite anger from the provocation of an eternal God. And yet, if it be possible that Infinite can receive degrees, this is but one-half of the abyss, and I think the lesser.'

' It was a strange variety of natural efficacies, that manna should corrupt in twenty-four hours, if gathered upon Wednesday or Thursday, and that it should last till forty-eight hours, if gathered upon the even of the Sabbath ; and that it should last many hundreds of years when placed in the sanctuary by the ministry of the high priest. But so it was in the Jews' religion ; and manna pleased every palate, and it filled all appetites ; and the same measure was a different proportion, it was much, and it was little ; as if nature, that it might serve religion, had been taught some measures of infinity, which is everywhere and nowhere, filling all things, and circumscribed with nothing, measured by one omer, and doing the work of two ; like the crowns of kings, fitting the brows of Nimrod and the most mighty warrior, and yet not too large for the temples of an infant prince.'

' His mercies are more than we can tell, and they are more than we can feel : for all the world, in the abyss of the Divine mercies, is like a man diving into the bottom of the sea, over whose head the waters run insensibly and unperceived, and yet the weight is vast, and the sum of them is immeasurable : and

the man is not pressed with the burden, nor confounded with numbers : and no observation is able to recount, no sense sufficient to perceive, no memory large enough to retain, no understanding great enough to apprehend this infinity.'

These passages are not cited with so vain a purpose as that of furnishing a sea-line for measuring the ' soundless deeps ' of Jeremy Taylor, but to illustrate that one remarkable characteristic of his style, which we have already noticed, viz. the everlasting strife and fluctuation between his rhetoric and his eloquence, which maintain their alternations with a force and inevitable recurrence, like the systole and diastole, the contraction and expansion, of some living organ. For this characteristic he was indebted in mixed proportions to his own peculiar style of understanding, and the nature of his subject. Where the understanding is not active and teeming, but possessed and filled by a few vast ideas (which was the case of Milton), there the funds of a varied rhetoric are wanting. On the other hand, where the understanding is all alive with the subtilty of distinctions, and nourished (as Jeremy Taylor's was) by casuistical divinity, the variety and opulence of the rhetoric is apt to be oppressive. But this tendency, in the case of Taylor, was happily checked and balanced by the commanding passion, intensity, and solemnity of his exalted theme, which gave a final unity to the tumultuous motions of his intellect. The only very obvious defects of Taylor were in the mechanical part of his art, in the mere *technique* ; he writes like one who never revises, nor tries the effect upon his ear of his periods as musical wholes ; and in the syntax and connexion of the parts seems to have been habitually careless of slight blemishes.

Jeremy Taylor[1] died in a few years after the Restoration. Sir Thomas Browne, though at that

[1] In retracing the history of English rhetoric, it may strike the reader that we have made some capital omissions. But in these he will find we have been governed by sufficient reasons. Shakespeare is no doubt a rhetorician, *majorum gentium*; but he is so much more, that scarcely an instance is to be found of his rhetoric which does not pass by fits into a higher element of eloquence or poetry. The first and the last acts, for instance, of the *Two Noble Kinsmen*, which, in point of composition, is perhaps the most superb work in the language, and beyond all doubt from the loom of Shakespeare, would have been the most gorgeous rhetoric, had they not happened to be something far better. The supplications of the widowed Queens to Theseus, the invocations of their tutelar divinities by Palamon and Arcite, the death of Arcite, &c., are finished in a more elaborate style of excellence than any other almost of Shakespeare's most felicitous scenes. In their first intention, they were perhaps merely rhetorical; but the furnace of composition has transmuted their substance. Indeed, specimens of mere rhetoric would be better sought in some of the other great dramatists, who are under a less fatal necessity of turning everything they touch into the pure gold of poetry. Two other writers, with great original capacities for rhetoric, we have omitted in our list from separate considerations: we mean Sir Walter Raleigh and Lord Bacon. The first will hardly have been missed by the general reader; for his finest passages are dispersed through the body of his bulky history, and are touched with a sadness too pathetic, and of too personal a growth, to fulfil the conditions of a gay rhetoric as an art rejoicing in its own energies. With regard to Lord Bacon, the case is different. He had great advantages for rhetoric, being figurative and sensuous (as great thinkers must always be), and having no feelings too profound, or of a nature to disturb the balance of a pleasurable activity; but yet, if we except a few letters, and parts of a few speeches, he never comes forward as a rhetorician. The reason is, that being always in quest of absolute truth, he contemplates all subjects—not through the rhetorical fancy, which is most excited by mere seeming resemblances, and such as can only sustain themselves under a single phasis, but through the philosophic fancy, or that which rests upon real analogies. Another unfavourable circumstance, arising in fact out of the plethoric fullness of Lord B.'s mind, is the shorthand style of his composition, in which the connexions are seldom fully developed. It was the lively *mot* of a great modern poet, speaking of Lord B.'s Essays, 'that they are not plants, but seeds; not oaks, but acorns.'

time nearly thirty years removed from the first surreptitious edition of his *Religio Medici*, lingered a little longer. But, when both were gone, it may be truly affirmed that the great oracles of rhetoric were finally silenced. South and Barrow, indeed, were brilliant dialecticians in different styles; but after Tillotson with his meagre intellect, his low key of feeling, and the smug and scanty draperies of his style, had announced a new era, English divinity ceased to be the racy vineyard that it had been in ages of ferment and struggle. Like the soil of Sicily (*vide* Sir H. Davy's *Agricultural Chemistry*), it was exhausted for ever by the tilth and rank fertility of its golden youth.

Since then great passions and high thinking have either disappeared from literature altogether, or thrown themselves into poetic forms which, with the privilege of a masquerade, are allowed to assume the spirit of past ages, and to speak in a key unknown to the general literature. At all events, no pulpit oratory of a rhetorical cast, for upwards of a century, has been able to support itself when stripped of the aids of voice and action. Robert Hall and Edward Irving when printed exhibit only the spasms of weakness. Nor do we remember one memorable burst of rhetoric in the pulpit eloquence of the last one hundred and fifty years, with the exception of a fine oath ejaculated by a dissenting minister of Cambridge, who, when appealing for the confirmation of his words to the grandeur of man's nature, swore,—By this and by the other, and at length, 'By the Iliad, by the Odyssey'—as the climax, in a long bead-roll of *speciosa miracula*, which he had apostrophized as monuments of human power. As to Foster, he has been prevented from preaching by a complaint affecting the throat; but, judging from the quality

of his celebrated Essays, he could never have figured as a truly splendid rhetorician ; for the imagery and ornamental parts of his Essays have evidently not grown up in the loom, and concurrently with the texture of the thoughts, but have been separately added afterwards, as so much embroidery or fringe.

Politics, meantime, however inferior in any shape to religion, as an ally of real eloquence, might yet, either when barbed by an interest of intense personality, or on the very opposite footing of an interest *not* personal but comprehensively national, have irritated the growth of rhetoric such as the spirit of the times allowed. In one conspicuous instance it did so ; but generally it had little effect, as a cursory glance over the two last centuries will show.

In the reign of James I the House of Commons first became the theatre of struggles truly national. The relations of the people and the crown were then brought to issue, and under shifting names, continued *sub judice* from that time to 1688 ; and from that time, in fact, a corresponding interest was directed to the proceedings of Parliament. But it was not until 1642 that any free communication was made of what passed in debate. During the whole of the Civil War, the speeches of the leading members upon all great questions were freely published in occasional pamphlets. Naturally they were very much compressed ; but enough survives to show that from the agitations of the times and the religious gravity of the House, no rhetoric was sought or would have been tolerated. In the reign of Charles II, judging from such records as we have of the most critical debates (that preserved by Locke, for instance, through the assistance of his patron Lord Shaftesbury), the general tone and standard of Parliamentary eloquence had taken pretty nearly its present form

and level. The religious gravity had then given way ; and the pedantic tone, stiffness, and formality of punctual divisions, had been abandoned for the freedom of polite conversation. It was not, however, until the reign of Queen Anne that the qualities and style of parliamentary eloquence were submitted to public judgement ; this was on occasion of the trial of Dr. Sacheverel, which was managed by members of the House of Commons. The Whigs, however, of that era had no distinguished speakers. On the Tory side, St. John (Lord Bolingbroke) was the most accomplished person in the House. His style may be easily collected from his writings, which have all the air of having been dictated without premeditation ; and the effect of so much showy and fluent declamation, combined with the graces of his manner and person, may be inferred from the deep impression which they seem to have left upon Lord Chesterfield, himself so accomplished a judge, and so familiar with the highest efforts of the next age in Pulteney and Lord Chatham. With two exceptions, indeed, to be noticed presently, Lord Bolingbroke came the nearest of all parliamentary orators who have been particularly recorded, to the ideal of a fine rhetorician. It was no disadvantage to him that he was shallow, being so luminous and transparent ; and the splendour of his periodic diction, with his fine delivery, compensated his defect in imagery. Sir Robert Walpole was another Lord Londonderry ; like him, an excellent statesman, and a first-rate leader of the House of Commons, but in other respects a plain unpretending man ; and like Lord Londonderry, he had the reputation of a blockhead with all eminent blockheads, and of a man of talents with those who were themselves truly such. ‘ When I was very young,’ says Burke, ‘ a general fashion told me I was

to admire some of the writings against that minister ; a little more maturity taught me as much to despise them.' Lord Mansfield, 'the fluent Murray,' was, or would have been, but for the counteraction of law, another Bolingbroke. 'How sweet an Ovid was in Murray lost!' says Pope; and, if the comparison were suggested with any thoughtful propriety, it ascribes to Lord Mansfield the talents of a first-rate rhetorician. Lord Chatham had no rhetoric at all, any more than Charles Fox of the next generation : both were too fervent, too Demosthenic, and threw themselves too ardently upon the graces of nature. Mr. Pitt came nearer to the idea of a rhetorician, in so far as he seemed to have more artifice ; but this was only in the sonorous rotundity of his periods, which were cast in a monotonous mould, for in other respects he would have been keenly alive to the ridicule of rhetoric in a First Lord of the Treasury.

All these persons, whatever might be their other differences, agreed in this, that they were no jugglers, but really *were* that which they appeared to be, and never struggled for distinctions which did not naturally belong to them. But next upon the roll comes forward an absolute *charlatan* ; a *charlatan* the most accomplished that can ever have figured upon so intellectual a stage. This was Sheridan, a mocking-bird through the entire scale, from the highest to the lowest note of the gamut ; in fact, to borrow a coarse word, the mere impersonation of humbug. Even as a wit, he has been long known to be a wholesale plagiarist ; and the exposures of his kind biographer, Mr. Moore, exhibit him in that line as the most hide-bound and sterile of performers, lying perdu through a whole evening for a natural opportunity, or by miserable stratagem creating an artificial one, for exploding some poor starveling jest ; and in fact

sacrificing to this petty ambition, in a degree never before heard of, the ease and dignity of his life. But it is in the character of a rhetorical orator that he, and his friends on his behalf, have put forward the hollowest pretensions. In the course of the Hastings trial, upon the concerns of paralytic *Begums*, and mouldering queens—hags that, if ever actually existing, were no more to us and our British sympathies, than we to Hecuba—did Mr. Sheridan make his capital exhibition. The real value of his speech was never at any time misappreciated by the judicious; for his attempts at the grand, the pathetic, and the sentimental, had been continually in the same tone of falsetto and horrible fustian. Burke, however, who was the most double-minded person in the world, cloaked his contempt in hyperbolical flattery; and all the unhappy people who have since written lives of Burke adopt the whole for gospel truth. Exactly in the same vein of tumid inanity, is the speech which Mr. Sheridan puts into the mouth of Rolla the Peruvian. This the reader may chance to have heard upon the stage; or, in default of that good luck, we present him with the following fragrant twaddle from one of the Begummiads, which has been enshrined in the praises (si quid sua carmina possunt) of many worthy critics; the subject is *Filial Piety*. 'Filial piety,' Mr. Sheridan said, 'it was impossible by words to describe, but description by words was unnecessary. It was that duty which they all felt and understood, and which required not the powers of language to explain. It was in truth more properly to be called a *principle* than a duty. It required not the aid of memory; it needed not the exercise of the understanding; it awaited not the slow deliberations of reason; it flowed spontaneously from the fountain of our feelings; it was involuntary in our natures; it

was a quality of our being, innate and coeval with life, which, though afterwards cherished as a passion, was independent of our mental powers; it was earlier than all intelligence in our souls; it displayed itself in the earliest impulses of the heart, and was an emotion of fondness that returned in smiles of gratitude the affectionate solicitudes, the tender anxieties, the endearing attentions experienced before memory began, but which were not less dear for not being remembered. It was the sacrament of nature in our hearts, by which the union of the parent and child was seated and rendered perfect in the community of love; and which, strengthening and ripening with life, acquired vigour from the understanding, and was most lively and active when most wanted.' Now, we put it to any candid reader whether the above Birmingham ware might not be vastly improved by one slight alteration, viz. omitting the two first words, and reading it as a conundrum. Considered as rhetoric, it is evidently fitted 'to make a horse sick'; but, as a conundrum in the *Lady's Magazine*, we contend that it would have great success.

How it aggravates the disgust with which these paste-diamonds are now viewed, to remember that they were paraded in the presence of Edmund Burke; nay—*credite posteri!*—in jealous rivalry of his genuine and priceless jewels. Irresistibly, one is reminded of the dancing efforts of Lady Blarney and Miss Carolina Wilhelmina Skeggs, against the native grace of the Vicar of Wakefield's family:—'The ladies of the town strove hard to be equally easy, but without success. *They swam, sprawled, languished, and frisked*; but all would not do. The gazers, indeed, owned that it was fine; but neighbour Flamborough observed, that Miss Livy's feet seemed as

pat to the music as its echo.' Of Goldsmith it was said, in his epitaph,—*Nil tetigit quod non ornavit* : of the Drury Lane rhetorician it might be said with equal truth,—*Nil tetigit quod non fuco adulteravit.* But avaunt, Birmingham ! let us speak of a great man.

All hail to Edmund Burke, the supreme writer of his century, the man of the largest and finest understanding ! Upon that word, *understanding*, we lay a stress : for oh ! ye immortal donkeys, who have written ' about him and about him ', with what an obstinate stupidity have ye brayed away for one third of a century about that which ye are pleased to call his ' fancy '. Fancy in your throats, ye miserable twaddlers ! as if Edmund Burke were the man to play with his fancy, for the purpose of separable ornament. He was a man of fancy in no other sense than as Lord Bacon was so, and Jeremy Taylor, and as all large and discursive thinkers are and must be : that is to say, the fancy which he had in common with all mankind, and very probably in no eminent degree, in him was urged into unusual activity under the necessities of his capacious understanding. His great and peculiar distinction was that he viewed all objects of the understanding under more relations than other men, and under more complex relations. According to the multiplicity of these relations, a man is said to have a *large* understanding ; according to their subtilty, a *fine* one ; and in an angelic understanding, all things would appear to be related to all. Now, to apprehend and detect more relations, or to pursue them steadily, is a process absolutely impossible without the intervention of physical analogies. To say, therefore, that a man is a great thinker, or a fine thinker, is but another expression for saying that he has a *schematizing* (or, to use a plainer but less

accurate expression, a figurative) understanding. In that sense, and for that purpose, Burke is figurative: but understood, as he *has* been understood by the long-eared race of his critics, not as thinking in and by his figures, but as deliberately laying them on by way of enamel or after-ornament,—not as *incarnating*, but simply as *dressing* his thoughts in imagery,—so understood, he is not the Burke of reality, but a poor fictitious Burke, modelled after the poverty of conception which belongs to his critics.

It is true, however, that in some rare cases Burke *did* indulge himself in a pure rhetorician's use of fancy; consciously and profusely lavishing his ornaments for mere purposes of effect. Such a case occurs for instance in that admirable picture of the degradation of Europe, where he represents the different crowned heads as bidding against each other at Basle for the favour and countenance of Regicide. Others of the same kind there are in his ever memorable letter on the Duke of Bedford's attack upon him in the House of Lords: and one of these we shall here cite, disregarding its greater chance for being already familiar to the reader, upon two considerations; first, that it has all the appearance of being finished with the most studied regard to effect; and secondly, for an interesting anecdote connected with it which we have never seen in print, but for which we have better authority than could be produced perhaps for most of those which are. The anecdote is, that Burke conversing with Dr. Lawrence and another gentleman on the *literary* value of his own writings, declared that the particular passage in the entire range of his works which had cost him the most labour, and upon which, as tried by a certain canon of his own, his labour seemed to himself to have been the most successful, was the following :—

After an introductory paragraph which may be thus abridged,—' The Crown has considered *me* after long service. The Crown has paid the Duke of Bedford by advance. He has had a long credit for any service which he may perform hereafter. He is secure, and long may he be secure in his advance, whether he performs any services or not. His grants are engrafted on the public law of Europe, covered with the awful hoar of innumerable ages. They are guarded by the sacred rule of prescription. The learned professors of the *rights of man*, however, regard prescription not as a title to bar all other claim, but as a bar against the professor and proprietor. They hold an immemorial possession to be no more than an aggravated injustice.' Then follows the passage in question :—

' Such are *their* ideas ; such *their* religion ; and such *their* law. But as to *our* country and *our* race, as long as the well-compacted structure of our Church and State, the sanctuary, the holy of holies of that ancient law, defended by reverence, defended by power, a fortress at once and a temple (*Templum in modum arcis* [1]), shall stand inviolate on the brow of the British Sion ; as long as the British monarchy, not more limited than fenced by the orders of the State, shall, like the proud Keep of Windsor, rising in the majesty of proportion, and girt with the double belt of its kindred and coeval towers, as long as this awful structure shall oversee and guard the subjected land, so long the mounds and dykes of the low fat Bedford level [2] will have nothing to fear from all the pickaxes of all the levellers of France. As long as our sovereign lord the king, and his faithful subjects the lords and commons of this realm, the triple cord

[1] Tacitus of the Temple of Jerusalem.
[2] *Bedford level*, a rich tract of land so called in Bedfordshire.

which no man can break ; the solemn sworn constitutional frank-pledge of this nation ; the firm guarantees of each other's being and each other's rights ; the joint and several securities, each in its place and order for every kind and every quality of property and of dignity,—as long as these endure so long the Duke of Bedford is safe, and we are all safe together ; the high from the blights of envy and the spoliation of rapacity ; the low from the iron hand of oppression and the insolent spurn of contempt. Amen ! and so be it : and so it will be,

> Dum domus Aeneae Capitoli immobile saxum
> Accolet ; imperiumque pater Romanus habebit.

This was the sounding passage which Burke alleged as the *chef-d'œuvre* of his rhetoric ; and the argument upon which he justified his choice is specious if not convincing. He laid it down as a maxim of composition, that every passage in a rhetorical performance which was brought forward prominently, and relied upon as a *key* (to use the language of war) in sustaining the main position of the writer, ought to involve a thought, an image, and a sentiment ; and such a synthesis he found in the passage which we have quoted. This criticism, over and above the pleasure which it always gives to hear a great man's opinion of himself, is valuable as showing that Burke, because negligent of trivial inaccuracies, was not at all the less anxious about the larger proprieties and decorums (for this passage, confessedly so laboured, has several instances of slovenliness in trifles) ; and that in the midst of his apparent hurry he carried out a jealous vigilance upon what he wrote, and the eye of a person practised in artificial effects.

An ally of Burke's upon East Indian politics, ought to have a few words of notice, not so much for any

power that he actually had as a rhetorician, but because he is sometimes reputed such. This was Sir Philip Francis, who, under his early disguise of Junius, had such a success as no writer of libels ever will have again. It is our private opinion that this success rested upon a great delusion which has never been exposed. The general belief is, that Junius was read for his elegance ; we believe no such thing. The pen of an angel would not, upon such a theme as personal politics, have upheld the interest attached to Junius, had there been no other cause in co-operation. Language, after all, is a limited instrument ; and it must be remembered that Junius, by the extreme narrowness of his range, which went entirely upon matters of fact and personal interests, still further limited the compass of that limited instrument. For it is only in the expression and management of general ideas, that any room arises for conspicuous elegance. The real truth is this : the interest in Junius travelled downwards ; he was read in the lower ranks, because in London it speedily became known that he was read with peculiar interest in the highest. This was already a marvel ; for newspaper patriots, under the signatures of Publicola, Brutus, and so forth, had become a jest and a by-word to the real practical statesman ; and any man at leisure to write for so disinterested a purpose as ' his country's good ', was presumed of course to write in a garret. But here for the first time a pretended patriot, a Junius Brutus, was read even by statesmen, and read with agitation. Is any man simple enough to believe that such a contagion could extend to cabinet ministers and official persons overladen with public business, on so feeble an excitement as a little reputation in the art of constructing sentences with elegance ; an elegance which, after all, excluded

eloquence and every other *positive* quality of excellence? That this can have been believed, shows the readiness with which men swallow marvels. The real secret was this: Junius was read with the profoundest interest by members of the cabinet, who would not have paid half-a-crown for all the wit and elegance of this world, simply because it was most evident that some traitor was amongst them; and that either directly by one of themselves, or through some abuse of his confidence by a servant, the secrets of office were betrayed. The circumstances of this breach of trust are now fully known; and it is readily understood why letters, which were the channel for those perfidies, should interest the ministry of that day in the deepest degree. The existence of such an interest, but not its cause, had immediately become known; it descended, as might be expected, amongst all classes; once excited, it seemed to be justified by the real merits of the letters; which merit again, illustrated by its effects, appeared a thousand times greater than it was; and, finally, this interest was heightened and sustained by the mystery which invested the author. How much that mystery availed in keeping alive the public interest in Junius, is clear from this fact, that since the detection of Junius as Sir Philip Francis, the Letters have suddenly declined in popularity, and are no longer the saleable article which once they were.

In fact, upon any other principle, the continued triumph of Junius, and his establishment as a classical author, is a standing enigma. One talent, undoubtedly, he had in a rare perfection—the talent of sarcasm. He stung like a scorpion. But, besides that such a talent has a narrow application, an interest of personality cannot be other than fugitive, take what direction it may; and malignity cannot embalm itself

in materials that are themselves perishable. Such were the materials of Junius. His vaunted elegance was, in a great measure, the gift of his subject; general terseness, short sentences, and a careful avoiding of all awkward construction—these were his advantages. And from these he would have been dislodged by a higher subject, or one that would have forced him out into a wider compass of thought. Rhetorician he was none, though he has often been treated as such; for, without sentiment, without imagery, without generalization, how should it be possible for rhetoric to subsist? It is an absolute fact, that Junius has not one principle, aphorism, or remark of a general nature in his whole armory; not in a solitary instance did his barren understanding ascend to an abstraction or general idea, but lingered for ever in the dust and rubbish of individuality, amongst the tangible realities of things and persons. Hence, the peculiar absurdity of that hypothesis which discovered Junius in the person of Burke. The opposition was here too pointedly ludicrous between Burke, who exalted the merest personal themes into the dignity of philosophic speculations, and Junius, in whose hands the very loftiest dwindled into questions of person and party.

Last of the family of rhetoricians, and in a form of rhetoric as florid as the age could bear, came Mr. Canning. 'Sufficit,' says a Roman author, 'in una civitate esse unum rhetorem.' But, if more were in his age unnecessary, in ours they would have been intolerable. Three or four Mr. Cannings would have been found a nuisance; indeed, the very admiration which crowned his great displays, manifested of itself the unsuitableness of his style to the atmosphere of public affairs; for it was of that kind which is offered to a young lady rising from a brilliant performance

on the pianoforte. Something, undoubtedly, there was of too juvenile an air, too gaudy a flutter of plumage, in Mr. Canning's more solemn exhibitions; but much indulgence was reasonably extended to a man, who in his class was so complete. He was formed for winning a favourable attention by every species of popular fascination; to the eye he recommended himself almost as much as the Bolingbroke of a century before; his voice, and his management of it, were no less pleasing; and upon him, as upon St. John, the air of a gentleman sat with a native grace. Scholarship and literature, as far as they belong to the accomplishments of a gentleman, he too brought forward in the most graceful manner; and, above all, there was an impression of honour, generosity, and candour, stamped upon his manner, agreeable rather to his original character, than to the wrench which it had received from an ambition resting too much on mere personal merits. What a pity that this 'gay creature of the elements' had not taken his place contentedly, where nature had assigned it, as one of the ornamental performers of the time! His station was with the lilies of the field, which toil not, neither do they spin. He should have thrown himself upon the admiring sympathies of the world as the most dazzling of rhetorical artists, rather than have challenged their angry passions in a vulgar scuffle for power. In that case he would have been alive at this hour; he would have had a perpetuity of that admiration which to him was as the breath of his nostrils; and would not, by forcing the character of rhetorician into an incongruous alliance with that of trading politician, have run the risk of making both ridiculous.

In thus running over the modern history of rhetoric, we have confined ourselves to the literature of Eng-

land : the rhetoric of the Continent would demand a separate notice, and chiefly on account of the French pulpit orators. For, laying *them* aside, we are not aware of any distinct body of rhetoric—properly so called—in modern literature. Four continental languages may be said to have a literature regularly mounted in all departments, viz. the French, Italian, Spanish, and German ; but each of these has stood under separate disadvantages for the cultivation of an ornamented rhetoric. In France, whatever rhetoric they have (for Montaigne, though lively, is too gossiping for a rhetorician), arose in the age of Louis XIV ; since which time, the very same development of science and public business operated there as in England to stifle the rhetorical impulses, and all those analogous tendencies in arts and in manners which support it. Generally it may be assumed that rhetoric will not survive the age of the ceremonious in manners and the gorgeous in costume. An unconscious sympathy binds together the various forms of the elaborate and the fanciful, under every manifestation. Hence it is that the national convulsions by which modern France has been shaken, produced orators ; Mirabeau, Isnard, the Abbé Maury, but no rhetoricians. Florian, Chateaubriand, and others, who have written the most florid prose that the modern taste can bear, are elegant sentimentalists, sometimes maudlin and semi-poetic, sometimes even eloquent, but never rhetorical. There is no eddying about their own thoughts ; no motion of fancy self-sustained from its own activities ; no flux and reflux of thought, half meditative, half capricious ; but strains of feeling, genuine or not, supported at every step from the excitement of independent external objects.

With respect to the German literature, the case is very peculiar. A chapter upon German rhetoric

would be in the same ludicrous predicament as Van Troil's chapter on the snakes of Iceland, which delivers its business in one summary sentence, announcing that snakes in Iceland—there are none. Rhetoric, in fact, or any form of ornamented prose, could not possibly arise in a literature, in which prose itself had no proper existence till within these seventy years. Lessing was the first German who wrote prose with elegance ; and even at this day, a decent prose style is the rarest of accomplishments in Germany. We doubt, indeed, whether any German has written prose with grace, unless he had lived abroad (like Jacobi, who composed indifferently in French and German) or had at least cultivated a very long acquaintance with English and French models. Frederick Schlegel was led by his comprehensive knowledge of other literatures to observe this singular defect in that of his own country. Even he, however, must have fixed his standard very low, when he could praise, as elsewhere he does, the style of Kant. Certainly in any literature where good models of prose existed, Kant would be deemed a monster of vicious diction, so far as regards the construction of his sentences. He does not, it is true, write in the hybrid dialect, which prevailed up to the time of our George the First, when every other word was Latin with a German inflexion; but he has in perfection that obtuseness which renders a German taste insensible to all beauty in the balancing and structure of periods, and to the art by which a succession of periods modify each other. Every German regards a sentence in the light of a package, and a package not for the mail-coach but for the waggon, into which his privilege is to crowd as much as he possibly can. Having framed a sentence, therefore, he next proceeds to *pack* it, which is effected partly by unwieldy tails and codicils, but chiefly by

enormous parenthetic involutions. All qualifications, limitations, exceptions, illustrations, are stuffed and violently rammed into the bowels of the principal proposition. That all this equipage of accessories is not so arranged as to assist its own orderly development, no more occurs to a German as any fault, than that in a package of shawls or of carpets the colours and patterns are not fully displayed. To him it is sufficient that they are *there*. And Mr. Kant, when he has succeeded in packing up a sentence which covers three close-printed octavo pages, stops to draw his breath with the air of one who looks back upon some brilliant and meritorious performance. Under these disadvantages it may be presumed that German rhetoric is a nonentity; but these disadvantages would not have arisen had there been a German bar or a German senate with any public existence. In the absence of all forensic and senatorial eloquence, no standard of good prose style—nay, which is more important, no example of ambition directed to such an object—has been at any time held up to the public mind in Germany; and the pulpit style has been always either rustically negligent, or bristling with pedantry.

These disadvantages with regard to public models of civil eloquence have in part affected the Italians; the few good prose writers of Italy have been historians; and it is observable that no writers exist in the department of what are called *Moral Essayists*, a class which, with us and the French, were the last depositaries of the rhetorical faculty when depressed to its lowest key. Two other circumstances may be noticed as unfavourable to an Italian rhetoric: one, to which we have adverted before, in the language itself, which is too loitering for the agile motion and the τὸ ἀγχίστροφον of rhetoric; and the other in the

constitution of the national mind, which is not reflective nor remarkably fanciful, the two qualities most indispensable to rhetoric. As a proof of the little turn for reflection which there is in the Italian mind, we may remind the reader that they have no meditative or philosophic poetry,[1] such as that of our Young, Cowper, Wordsworth, &c.; a class of poetry which existed very early indeed in the English literature (e.g. Sir T. Davies, Lord Brooke, Henry More, &c.), and which in some shape has arisen at some stage of almost every European literature.

Of the Spanish rhetoric, *a priori*, we should have augured well; but the rhetoric of their pulpit in past times, which is all that we know of it, is vicious and unnatural; whilst, on the other hand, for eloquence profound and heartfelt, measuring it by those heart-stirring proclamations issued in all quarters of Spain during 1808–9, the national capacity must be presumed to be of the very highest order.

We are thus thrown back upon the French pulpit orators as the only considerable body of modern rhetoricians out of our own language. No writers are more uniformly praised; none are more entirely neglected. This is one of those numerous hypocrisies so common in matters of taste, where the critic is always ready with his good word as the readiest way of getting rid of the subject. To blame might be hazardous; for blame demands reasons; but praise enjoys a ready dispensation from all reasons and from all discrimination. Superstition, however, as it is under which the French rhetoricians hold their reputation, we have no thought of attempting any

[1] The nearest approach to reflective poetry which we ourselves remember in Italian literature, lies amongst the works of Salvator Rosa (the great painter)—where, however, it assumes too much the character of satire.

disturbance to it in so slight and incidental a notice as this. Let critics by all means continue to invest them with every kind of imaginary splendour. Meantime let us suggest, as a judicious caution, that French rhetoric should be praised with a reference only to its own narrow standard; for it would be a most unfortunate trial of its pretensions to bring so meagre a style of composition into a close comparison with the gorgeous opulence of the English rhetoric of the same century. Under such a comparison two capital points of weakness would force themselves upon the least observant of critics; first, the defect of striking imagery; and secondly, the slenderness of the thoughts. The rhetorical manner is supported in the French writers chiefly by an abundance of *ohs* and *ahs*; by interrogatories, apostrophes, and startling exclamations; all which are mere mechanical devices for raising the style; but in the substance of the composition, apart from its dress, there is nothing properly rhetorical. The leading thoughts in all pulpit eloquence being derived from religion, and in fact the common inheritance of human nature, if they cannot be novel, for that very reason cannot be undignified; but for the same reason they are apt to become unaffecting and trite unless varied and individualized by new infusions of thought and feeling. The smooth monotony of the leading religious topics, as managed by the French orators, receives under the treatment of Jeremy Taylor at each turn of the sentence a new flexure, or what may be called a separate *articulation*;[1] old thoughts

[1] We may take the opportunity of noticing what it is that constitutes the peculiar and characterizing circumstance in Burke's manner of composition. It is this; that under his treatment every truth, be it what it may, every thesis of a sentence, *grows* in the very act of unfolding it. Take any sentence you please

are surveyed from novel stations and under various angles ; and a field absolutely exhausted throws up eternally fresh verdure under the fructifying lava of burning imagery. *Human life*, for example, *is short ; human happiness is frail* ; how trite, how obvious a thesis ! Yet in the beginning of the *Holy Dying*, upon that simplest of themes how magnificent a descant ! Variations the most original upon a ground the most universal, and a sense of novelty diffused over truths coeval with human life ! Finally, it may be remarked of the imagery in the French rhetoric that it is thinly sown, commonplace, deficient in splendour, and above all merely ornamental ; that is to say, it does no more than echo and repeat what is already said in the thought which it is brought to illustrate ; whereas in Jeremy Taylor and in Burke, it will be found usually to extend and amplify the thought, or to fortify it by some indirect argument of its truth. Thus for instance in the passage above quoted from Taylor, upon the insensibility of man to the continual mercies of God, at first view the mind is staggered by the apparent impossibility that so infinite a reality, and of so continual a recurrence, should escape our notice ; but the illustrative image,

from Dr. Johnson, suppose, and it will be found to contain a thought, good or bad, fully preconceived. Whereas in Burke, whatever may have been the preconception, it receives a new determination or inflexion at every clause of the sentence. Some collateral adjunct of the main proposition, some temperament or restraint, some oblique glance at its remote affinities, will invariably be found to attend the progress of his sentences, like the spray from a waterfall, or the scintillations from the iron under the blacksmith's hammer. Hence whilst a writer of Dr. Johnson's class seems only to look back upon his thoughts, Burke looks forward, and does in fact advance and change his own station concurrently with the advance of the sentences. This peculiarity is no doubt in some degree due to the habit of extempore speaking, but not to that only.

drawn from the case of a man standing at the bottom of the ocean, and yet insensible to that world of waters above him, from the uniformity and equality of its pressure, flashes upon us with a sense of something equally marvellous in a case which we know to be a physical fact. We are thus reconciled to the proposition by the same image which illustrates it.

In a single mechanical quality of good writing, that is in the structure of their sentences, the French rhetoricians, in common with French writers generally of that age, are superior to ours. This is what in common parlance is expressed (though inaccurately) by the word *style*, and is the subject of the third part of the work before us. Dr. Whately, however, somewhat disappoints us by his mode of treating it. He alleges, indeed, with some plausibility, that his subject bound him to consider style no further than as it was related to the purpose of persuasion. But besides that it is impossible to treat it with effect in that mutilated section, even within the limits assumed we are not able to trace any outline of the law or system by which Dr. Whately has been governed in the choice of his topics ; we find many very acute remarks delivered, but all in a desultory way, which leave the reader no means of judging how much of the ground has been surveyed and how much omitted. We regret also that he has not addressed himself more specifically to the question of English style, a subject which has not yet received the comprehensive discussion which it merits. In the age of our great rhetoricians, it is remarkable that the English language had never been made an object of conscious attention. No man seems to have reflected that there was a wrong and a right in the choice of words, in the choice of phrases, in the mechanism of sentences,

or even in the grammar. Men wrote eloquently because they wrote feelingly; they wrote idiomatically, because they wrote naturally and without affectation; but if a false or acephalous structure of sentence, if a barbarous idiom or an exotic word happened to present itself, no writer of the seventeenth century seems to have had any such scrupulous sense of the dignity belonging to his own language as should make it a duty to reject it or worth his while to remodel a line. The fact is that verbal criticism had not as yet been very extensively applied even to the classical languages; the Scaligers, Casaubon, and Salmasius, were much more critics on things than critics philologically. However, even in that age the French writers were more attentive to the cultivation of their mother tongue than any other people. It is justly remarked by Schlegel, that the most worthless writers amongst the French as to matter generally take pains with their diction; or perhaps it is more true to say, that with equal pains in their language it is more easy to write well than in one of greater compass. It is also true that the French are indebted for their greater purity from foreign idioms, to their much more limited acquaintance with foreign literature. Still with every deduction from the merit the fact is as we have said; and it is apparent not only by innumerable evidences in the *concrete*, but by the superiority of all their *abstract* auxiliaries in the art of writing. We English even at this day have no learned grammar of our language; nay, we have allowed the blundering attempt in that department of an imbecile stranger (Lindley Murray) to supersede the learned (however imperfect) works of our own Wallis, Lowth, &c.; we have also no sufficient dictionary; and we have no work at all, sufficient or insufficient, on the phrases and idiomatic niceties of

our language, corresponding to the works of Vaugelas and others for the French.

Hence an anomaly, not found perhaps in any literature but ours, that the most eminent English writers do not write their mother tongue without continual violations of propriety. With the single exception of William Wordsworth, who has paid an honourable attention to the purity and accuracy of his English, we believe that there is not one celebrated author of this day who has written two pages consecutively, without some flagrant impropriety in the grammar (such as the eternal confusion of the preterite with the past participle, confusion of verbs transitive with intransitive, &c.), or some violation more or less of the vernacular idiom. If this last sort of blemish does not occur so frequently in modern books, the reason is that since Dr. Johnson's time the freshness of the idiomatic style has been too frequently abandoned for the lifeless mechanism of a style purely bookish and artificial.

The practical judgements of Dr. Whately are such as will seldom be disputed. Dr. Johnson for his triads and his antithetic balances, he taxes more than once with a plethoric and tautologic tympany of sentence; and in the following passage with a very happy illustration: 'Sentences which might have been expressed as simple ones are expanded into complex ones by the addition of clauses which add little or nothing to the sense; and which have been compared to the false handles and key-holes with which furniture is decorated, that serve no other purpose than to *correspond to the real ones.* Much of Dr. Johnson's writing is chargeable with this fault.'

We recollect a little biographic sketch of Dr. Johnson, published immediately after his death, in which, amongst other instances of desperate tautology, the

author quotes the well-known lines from the Doctor's imitation of Juvenal—

> Let observation, with extensive view,
> Survey mankind from China to Peru ;

and contends with some reason that this is saying in effect,—'*Let observation with extensive observation observe mankind extensively.*[1] Certainly Dr. Johnson was the most faulty writer in this kind of inanity that ever has played tricks with language.[1] On the other hand, Burke was the least so ; and we are petrified to find him described by Dr. Whately as a writer 'qui variare cupit rem prodigialiter unam', and as on that account offensive to good taste. The understanding of Burke was even morbidly impatient of tautology ; progress and motion, everlasting motion, was a mere necessity of his intellect. We will venture to offer a king's ransom for one unequivocal case of tautology from the whole circle of Burke's writings. The *principium indiscernibilium*, upon which Leibnitz affirmed the impossibility of finding any two leaves of a tree that should be mere duplicates of each other, in what we might call the *palmistry* of their natural markings, may be applied to Burke as safely as to nature ; no two propositions, we are satisfied, can be found in *him*, which do not contain a larger variety than is requisite to their sharp discrimination.

[1] The following illustration, however, from Dr. Johnson's critique on Prior's *Solomon*, is far from a happy one : 'He had infused into it much knowledge and much thought ; had often *polished* it to *elegance*, *dignified* it with *splendour*, and sometimes *heightened* it to *sublimity* ; he perceived in it many excellences, and did not perceive that it wanted that, without which all others are of small avail, the power of *engaging attention* and *alluring curiosity*.' The parts marked in italics are those to which Dr. Whately would object as tautologic. Yet this objection can hardly be sustained ; the ideas are all sufficiently discriminated ; the fault is, that they are applied to no real corresponding differences in Prior.

Speaking of the advantages for energy and effect in the licence of arrangement open to the ancient languages, especially to the Latin, Dr. Whately cites the following sentence from the opening of the 4th Book of Q. Curtius :—*Darius tanti modo exercitus rex, qui, triumphantis magis quam dimicantis more, curru sublimis inierat proelium,—per loca, quae prope immensis agminibus compleverat, jam inania, et ingenti solitudine vasta fugiebat.* 'The effect,' says he, 'of the concluding verb, placed where it is, is most striking.'[1] The sentence is far enough from a good one; but, confining ourselves to the sort of merit for which it is here cited as a merit peculiar to the Latin, we must say that the very same position of the verb, with a finer effect, is attainable, and in fact often attained in English sentences; see, for instance, the passage in Richard's opening soliloquy—*Now is the winter of our discontent*—and ending, *In the deep bosom of the ocean buried.* See also another at the beginning of Hooker's *Ecclesiastical Polity* on the thanklessness of the labour employed upon the *foundations* of truth, which, says he, like those of buildings, 'are in the bosom of the earth concealed.' The fact is, that the common cases of inversion, such as the suspension of the verb to the end, and the anticipation of the objective case at the beginning, are not sufficient illustrations of the Latin structure. All this can be done as well by the English. It is not mere power of inversion, but of self-intrication, and of self-dislocation, which mark the extremity of the artificial structure; that power by which a sequence of words, that naturally is directly consecutive, commences,

[1] We wish that in so critical a notice of an effect derived from the fortunate position of a single word, Dr. Whately had not shocked our ears by this hideous collision of a double '*is*',—'where it *is, is*.' Dreadful!

intermits, and reappears at a remote part of the sentence, like what is called drake-stone on the surface of a river. In this power the Greek is almost as much below the Latin as all modern languages; and in this, added to its elliptic brevity of connexion and transition, and to its wealth in abstractions, 'the long-tailed words in *osity* and *ation*,' lie the peculiar capacities of the Latin for rhetoric.

Dr. Whately lays it down as a maxim in rhetoric, that 'elaborate stateliness is always to be regarded as a worse fault than the slovenliness and languor which accompany a very loose style'. But surely this is a rash position: stateliness the most elaborate, in an *absolute* sense, is no fault at all; though it may happen to be so in relation to a given subject, or to any subject under given circumstances. 'Belshazzar the king made a great feast for a thousand of his lords.' Reading these words, who would not be justly offended in point of taste, had his feast been characterized by elegant simplicity? Again, at a coronation, what can be more displeasing to a philosophic taste than a pretended chastity of ornament, at war with the very purposes of a solemnity essentially magnificent? An imbecile friend of ours, in 1825, brought us a sovereign of a new coinage, 'Which,' said he, 'I admire, because it is so elegantly simple.' This, he flattered himself, was thinking like a man of taste. But mark how we sent him to the right about: 'And *that*, weak-minded friend, is exactly the thing which a coin ought not to be: the duty of a golden coin is to be as florid as it can, rich with Corinthian ornaments, and as gorgeous as a peacock's tail.' So of rhetoric, imagine that you read these words of introduction, '*And on a set day, Tullius Cicero returned thanks to Caesar on behalf of Marcus Marcellus*,' what sort of a speech is reasonably to be expected? The whole

purpose being a festal and ceremonial one, thanksgiving its sole burden first and last, what else than the most 'elaborate stateliness'? If it were not stately, and to the very verge of the pompous, Mr. Wolf would have had one argument more than he had, and a better than any he has produced, for suspecting the authenticity of that thrice famous oration.

In the course of his dissertation on style, Dr. Whately very needlessly enters upon the thorny question of the *quiddity*, or characteristic difference, of poetry as distinguished from prose.[1] We could much have wished that he had forborne to meddle with a *quaestio vexata* of this nature, both because in so incidental and cursory a discussion it could not receive a proper investigation, and because Dr. Whately is apparently not familiar with much of what has been written on that subject. On a matter so slightly discussed, we shall not trouble ourselves to enter farther, than to express our astonishment that a logician like Dr. Whately should have allowed himself to deliver so nugatory an argument as this which follows :—'Any composition in *verse* (and none that

[1] '*As distinguished from prose :*' Here is one of the many instances in which a false answer is prepared beforehand, by falsely shaping the question. The accessory circumstance, as '*distinguished from prose*', already prepares a false answer by the very terms of the problem. Poetry *cannot* be distinguished from prose without presupposing the whole question at issue. Those who deny that metre is the characteristic distinction of poetry, deny, by implication, that prose *can* be truly opposed to poetry. Some have imagined that the proper opposition was between poetry and science; but suppose that this is an imperfect opposition, and suppose even that there is no adequate opposition, or counterpole, this is no more than happens in many other cases. One of two poles is often without a name, even where the idea is fully assignable in analysis. But at all events the expression, as 'distinguished from prose', is a subtle instance of a *petitio principii*.

is not), is always called, whether good or bad, a poem, by all who have no favourite hypothesis to maintain.' And the inference manifestly is, that it is rightly so called. Now if a man has taken up any fixed opinion on the subject, no matter whether wrong or right, and has reasons to give for his opinion, this man comes under the description of those who have a favourite hypothesis to maintain. It follows, therefore, that the only class of people whom Dr. Whately will allow as unbiased judges on this question—a question not of fact, but of opinion—are those who have, and who profess to have, no opinion at all upon the subject; or, having one, have no reasons for it. But, apart from this contradiction, how is it possible that Dr. Whately should, in *any* case, plead a popular usage of speech as of any weight in a philosophic argument? Still more, how is it possible in *this* case, where the accuracy of the popular usage is the very thing in debate, so that, if pleaded at all, it must be pleaded as its own justification? Almsgiving, and nothing but almsgiving, is universally called *charity*, and mistaken for the charity of the Scriptures, by all who have no favourite hypothesis to maintain; i.e. by all the inconsiderate. But Dr. Whately will hardly draw any argument from this usage in defence of that popular notion.

In speaking thus freely of particular passages in Dr. Whately's book, we are so far from meaning any disrespect to him, that, on the contrary, if we had not been impressed with the very highest respect for his talents, by the acuteness and originality which illuminate every part of his book, we could not have allowed ourselves to spend as much time upon the whole, as we have in fact spent upon single paragraphs. In reality, there is not a section of his work which has not furnished us with occasion for some profitable

speculations; and we are, in consequence, most anxious to see his *Logic*, which treats a subject so much more important than *Rhetoric*, and so obstinately misrepresented, that it would delight us much to anticipate a radical exposure of the errors on this subject, taken up from the days of Lord Bacon. It has not fallen in our way to quote much from Dr. Whately *totidem verbis*; our apology for which will be found in the broken and discontinuous method of treatment by short sections and paragraphs, which a subject of this nature has necessarily imposed upon him. Had it coincided with our purpose to go more into detail, we could have delighted our readers with some brilliant examples of philosophical penetration, applied to questions interesting from their importance or difficulty, with the happiest effect. As it is, we shall content ourselves with saying, that in any elementary work it has not been our fortune to witness a rarer combination of analytical acuteness with severity of judgement; and when we add that these qualities are recommended by a scholar-like elegance of manner, we suppose it hardly necessary to add, that Dr. Whately's is incomparably the best book of its class, since Campbell's *Philosophy of Rhetoric*.

ALEXANDER 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

[1] Review of 'The Works of Alexander Pope, Esquire. By W. Roscoe, Esq.' *North British Review*, Aug., 1848. Masson, xi. 51.

writer into a collusion with its own meretricious tastes. The antithetical prose 'characters', as they were technically termed, which circulated amongst the aristocracy in the early part of the last century, the style of the dialogue in such comedy as was then popular, and much of the occasional poetry in that age, expose an immoderate craving for glittering effects from contrasts too harsh to be natural, too sudden to be durable, and too fantastic to be harmonious. To meet this vicious taste, from which (as from any diffusive taste) it is vain to look for *perfect* immunity in any writer lying immediately under its beams, Pope sacrificed, in *one* mode of composition, the simplicities of nature and sincerity; and had he practised no other mode, we repeat that *now* he must have descended from his pedestal. To some extent he is degraded even as it is; for the reader cannot avoid whispering to himself—what quality of thinking must *that* be which allies itself so naturally (as will be shown) with distortions of fact or of philosophic truth? But, had his whole writings been of that same cast, he must have been degraded altogether, and a star would have fallen from our English galaxy of poets.

We mention this particular case as a reason generally for renewing by intervals the examination of great writers, and liberating the verdict of their contemporaries from the casual disturbances to which every age is liable in its judgements, 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 *praegustatores* 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 Shakespeare'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 co-extensive 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

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

a far more important correction, applicable to the common vague idea of literature, is to be sought—not so much in a better definition of literature, as in a sharper distinction of the two functions which it fulfils. In that great social organ, which, collectively, we call literature, there may be distinguished two separate offices that may blend and often *do* so, but capable, severally, of a severe insulation, and naturally fitted for reciprocal repulsion. There is, first, the literature of *knowledge*; and, secondly, the literature of *power*. The function of the first is—to *teach*; the function of the second is—to *move*: the first is a rudder; the second, an oar or a sail. The first speaks to the *mere* discursive understanding; the second speaks ultimately, it may happen, to the higher understanding or reason, but always *through* affections of pleasure and sympathy. Remotely, it may travel towards an object seated in what Lord Bacon calls *dry* light; but, proximately, it does and must operate, else it ceases to be a literature of *power*, on and through that *humid* light which clothes itself in the mists and glittering *iris* of human passions, desires, and genial emotions. Men have so little reflected on the higher functions of literature, as to find it a paradox if one should describe it as a mean or subordinate purpose of books to give information. But this is a paradox only in the sense which makes it 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

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.

place in human interests, that it is never absolutely novel to the meanest of minds : it exists eternally by way of germ or latent principle in the lowest as in the highest, needing to be developed, but never to be planted. To be capable of transplantation is the immediate criterion of a truth that ranges on a lower scale. Besides which, there is a rarer thing than truth, namely, *power*, or deep sympathy with truth. What is the effect, for instance, upon society, of children ? By the pity, by the tenderness, and by the peculiar modes of admiration, which connect themselves with the helplessness, with the innocence, and with the simplicity of children, not only are the primal affections strengthened and continually renewed, but the qualities which are dearest in the sight of heaven—the frailty, for instance, which appeals to forbearance ; the innocence which symbolizes the heavenly, and the simplicity which is most alien from the worldly, are kept up in perpetual remembrance, and their ideals are continually refreshed. A purpose of the same nature is answered by the higher literature, 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.

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 drop 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: first, as regards absolute truth ; secondly, 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 Aeschylus,—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 plagiarize. A good steam-engine is properly superseded by a better. But one lovely pastoral valley is not superseded by another, nor a statue of Praxiteles by a statue of Michael Angelo. These things are 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 an equal writer has, to the attention and jealous winnowing of those critics, in particular, who watch over public morals. Clergymen, and all the organs of public criticism put in motion by clergymen, are more especially concerned in the just appreciation of such writers, if the two canons are remembered, which we have endeavoured to illustrate, viz. that all works

in this class, as opposed to those in the literature of knowledge, first, work by far deeper agencies; and, secondly, are more permanent; in the strictest sense they are κτήματα ἐς ἀεί: and what evil they do, or what good they do, is commensurate with the national language, sometimes long after the nation has departed. At this hour, five hundred years since their creation, the tales of Chaucer, never equalled on this earth for their tenderness, and for life of picturesqueness, are read familiarly by many in the charming language of their natal day, and by others in the modernizations of Dryden, of Pope, and Wordsworth. At this hour, one thousand eight hundred years since their creation, the Pagan tales of Ovid, never equalled on this earth for the 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.'

All the literature of knowledge builds only groundnests, 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 Encyclopaedia is its abstract; and, in this respect, it may be taken for its speaking symbol—that, before one generation has passed, an Encyclopaedia 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' ἐξοχήν, for the very same reason that it is so much more durable than the literature of knowledge, is (and by the very same proportion it is) more intense and electrically searching in its impressions. The directions in which the tragedy of this planet has trained our human feelings to play, and the combinations into which the poetry of this planet has thrown our human passions of love and hatred, of admiration and contempt, exercise a power bad or good over human life, that cannot be contemplated, when stretching through many generations, without a sentiment allied to awe.[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.

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 dis-

[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* neutralizes the separate perception of either. Fused into a *tertium quid*, or neutral state, they disappear to the popular eye as the repelling forces, which, in fact, they are.

tinguished 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 Graeco-Sicilian, *that* would not have made it rational to call geometry the Graeco-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 Shakespeare, Spenser, Milton. But this key arises spontaneously in *every* people, and by a necessity as sure as any that moulds the progress of civilization. Milton and Spenser were *not* of any Italian school. Their Italian studies were the result and not the cause of the determination given to their minds by nature working in 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 one most inconsequential in the deduction of his thoughts, and the most severely distressed in any effort to effect or to explain the dependency of their parts. There are not ten consecutive lines in Pope unaffected by this infirmity. All his thinking proceeded by insulated and discontinuous jets; and the only resource for *him*, or chance of even seeming correctness, lay in the liberty of stringing his aphoristic thoughts like pearls, having no relation to each other but that of contiguity. To *set* them like diamonds was for Pope to risk distraction;

to systematize was ruin. On the other hand, if this elliptical word *correctness*, 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 Shakespeare, in the Bible of King James's reign, and in Milton, there are very few grammatical errors.[1]

[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*

But Pope's defect in language was almost peculiar to himself. It lay in an inability, nursed doubtless by indolence, to carry out and perfect the expression of the thought he wishes to communicate. The language does not realize the idea: it simply

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—Shakespeare, 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 Shakespeare's grammar is licentious. 'The style of Shakespeare' (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 more numerically of trespasses against grammar, but (which is worse still) more unscholarlike trespasses. Shakespeare 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 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 his horror was never attained except amongst the Germans.

suggests or hints it. Thus, to give a single illustration :—

> Know, God and Nature only are the same :
> In man the judgement shoots at flying game.

The first line one would naturally construe into this : that God and Nature were in harmony, whilst all other objects were scattered into incoherency by difference and disunion. Not at all ; it means nothing of the kind ; but that God and Nature only are exempted from the infirmities of change. *They* only continue uniform and self-consistent. This *might* mislead many readers ; but the second line *must* do so : for who would not understand the syntax to be, that the judgement, as it exists in man, shoots at flying game ? But, in fact, the meaning is, that the judgement, in aiming its calculations at man, aims at an object that is still on the wing, and never for a moment stationary. We give this as a specimen of a fault in diction, the very worst amongst all that are possible ; to write bad grammar or colloquial slang does not necessarily obscure the sense ; but a fault like this is a treachery, and hides the true meaning under the cloud of a conundrum : nay worse ; for even a conundrum has fixed conditions for determining its solution, but this sort of mutilated expression is left to the solutions of conjecture.

There are endless varieties of this fault in Pope, by which he sought relief for himself from half an hour's labour, at the price of utter darkness to his reader.

One editor distinguishes amongst the epistles that which Pope addressed to Lord Oxford some years after that minister's fall, as about the most '*correct*, musical, dignified, and affecting' that the poet has left. Now, even as a specimen of vernacular English, it is 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. 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 birth-day ode to the Prince of Wales, if he were addressed as my Lord of Chester, or Baron of Renfrew, or your

Grace of Cornwall. To express a thing in cipher may do for a conspirator ; but a poet's *correctness* is shown in his intelligibility.

Amongst the early poems of Pope, the 'ELOISA TO ABELARD' has a special interest of a double order : first, it has a *personal* interest as the poem of Pope, because indicating the original destination of Pope's intellect, and the strength of his native vocation to a class of poetry in deeper keys of passion than any which he systematically cultivated. For itself also, and abstracting from its 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 mission (the *magnificabo apostolatum meum*) persuaded him that in *his* case it might be said—*Facit indignatio versum*. The indignation of Juvenal was not always very noble in its origin, or pure in its purpose : it was sometimes mean in its quality, false in its direction, extravagant in its expression : but it was tremendous in the roll of its thunders, and as withering as the scowl of a Mephistopheles. Pope having no such internal principle of wrath boiling in his breast, being really (if one must speak the truth) in the most pacific and charitable frame of mind towards all scoundrels whatever, except such as might take it into their heads to injure a particular Twickenham grotto, was unavoidably a hypocrite of the first magnitude when he affected (or sometimes really conceited himself) to be in a dreadful passion with offenders as a body. It provokes fits of laughter, in a man who knows Pope's real nature, to watch him in the process of brewing the storm that spontaneously will not come ; whistling, like a mariner, for a wind to fill his satiric sails ; and pumping up into his face hideous grimaces in order to appear convulsed with histrionic rage. Pope

should have been counselled never to write satire, except on those evenings when he was suffering horribly from indigestion. By this means the indignation would have been ready-made. The 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 Pepe'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

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

describes two thieves who act in concert with each other. One is a very aged man, and the other is his great-grandson of three years old :

There are ninety good years of fair and foul weather
Between them, and both go a-stealing together.

What reconciles the reader to this social iniquity, is the imperfect accountability of the parties ; the one being far advanced in dotage, and the other an infant. And thus

Into what sin soever the couple may fall,
This child but half-knows it, and *that* not at all.

Nobody besides suffers from their propensities : since the child's mother makes good in excess all their depredations ; and nobody is duped for an instant by their gross attempts at fraud ; 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 :

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 non-

sense, 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 Mohammedan 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

[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 fix'd, they first or last obey—
> The love of pleasure and the love of sway.

result has shown, he had not one solitary thought—good, bad, or indifferent. Total bankruptcy was impending. Yet he was aware of a deep interest connected with this section of his satires; and, to meet this interest, he invented what was pungent, when he found nothing to record which was true.

It is a consequence of this desperate resource—this plunge into absolute fiction—that the true objection to Pope's satiric sketches of the other sex ought not to arise amongst women, as the people that suffered by his malice, but amongst readers generally, as the people that suffered by his fraud. He has promised one thing, and done another. He has promised a chapter in the zoology of nature, and he gives us a chapter in the fabulous zoology of the herald's college. A tigress is not much within ordinary experience, still there *is* such a creature; and in default of a better choice, that is, of a choice settling on a more familiar object, we are content to accept a good description of a tigress. We are reconciled; but we are *not* reconciled to a description, however spirited, of a basilisk. A viper might do; but not, if you please, a dragoness or a harpy. The describer knows, as well as any of us the spectators know, that he is romancing; the *incredulus odi* overmasters us all; and we cannot submit to be detained by a picture which, according to the shifting 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.

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.

[1] This refers to the Act of Parliament, then recent, for burying

'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—

corpses in woollen, which greatly disturbed the fashionable costume in coffins *comme il faut*.

because offering not so much an anomaly in one single trait of her character, as an utter anarchy in all. *Flavia* and *Philomedé* again present the same multitude of features with the same absence of all central principle for locking them into unity. They must have been distracting to themselves; and they are distracting to us a century later. *Philomedé*, by the way, 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

[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.

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 leave 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[1] or so to have been that true and faithful friend which, as contemporaries, we *might* have been.

What we love Sarah for, is partly that she has been ill used by all subsequent authors, one copying from another a fury against her which even in the first of these authors was not real. And a second thing which we love is her very violence, qualified as it was. Sulphureous 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 were, and must have been, from herself, since there could have been no adequate motive for altering them, and nobody else could have had the same motive for uttering them. It is singular that in the case of the Duchess, as well as that of the lady M. W. Montagu, the same two men without concert, were the original aggressors amongst the *gens de plume*, viz. Pope, and sub-

[1] 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; 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.

sequently, 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 published. This calumny we believe to have been utterly without foundation. It is repelled by Pope's character, incapable of any act so vile, and by his position, needing no bribes. But what we wish to add is, that the calumny is equally repelled by Sarah's character, incapable of any propitiation so abject. Pope wanted no thousand pounds ; but neither did Sarah want his clemency. *He* would have rejected the £1,000 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 Aeolus, 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 idiosyncracies, or else foibles shockingly caricatured, but, above all, to be such foibles as could not have connected themselves with *sincere* feelings of indignation in any rational mind.

The length and breadth (almost we might say—the *depth*) of the shallowness, which characterizes Pope's Philosophy, cannot be better reflected than from the four well-known lines—

> For modes of faith let graceless zealots fight,
> *His* can't be wrong, whose life is in the right ;
> For forms of government let fools contest,
> Whate'er is best administered is best.

In the first couplet, what Pope says is, that a life, which is irreproachable on a *human* scale of appreciation, neutralizes and practically cancels all possible errors of creed, opinion, or theory. But this schism

between the moral life of man and his moral faith, which takes for granted that either may possibly be true, whilst the other is entirely false, can wear a moment's plausibility only by understanding *life* in so limited a sense as the sum of a man's external actions, appreciable by man. He whose life is in the right, cannot, says Pope, in any sense calling for blame, have a wrong faith ; that is, if his life *were* right, his creed might be disregarded. But the answer is—that his life, according to any adequate idea of life in a moral creature, *cannot* be in the right unless in so far as it bends to the influences of a true faith. How feeble a conception must that man have of the infinity which lurks in a human spirit, who can persuade himself that its total capacities of life are exhaustible by the few gross *acts* incident to social relations or open to human valuation ? An act, which may be necessarily limited and without opening for variety, may involve a large variety of motives—motives again, meaning grounds of action that are distinctly recognized for such, may (numerically speaking) amount to nothing at all when compared with the absolutely infinite influxes of feeling or 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' ἐξοχήν 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 recognized them. Infidels of the most determined class talk in Christian lands the morals of Christianity, and exact that morality with their hearts, constantly mistaking it for a morality 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, the herald angels say,
> Sister spirit, come away!

Or, again, as some persons read the great lessons of spiritual ethics more pathetically in those that have transgressed them than in those that have been faithful to the end—read them in the Magdalen that fades away in penitential tears rather than in the virgin

martyr triumphant on the scaffold—we may see in his own Eloisa, and in her fighting with the dread powers let loose upon her tempestuous soul, how profoundly Pope also had drunk from the streams of Christian sentiment through which a new fountain of truth had ripened a new vegetation upon earth. What was it that Eloisa fought with? What power afflicted her trembling nature, that any Pagan religions *could* have evoked? The human love 'the nympholepsy of the fond despair', might have existed in a Vestal Virgin of ancient Rome: but in the Vestal what counter-influence could have come into conflict with the passion of love through any operation whatever of religion? None of any ennobling character that could reach the Vestal's own heart. The way in which religion connected itself with the case was through a traditional superstition—not built upon any fine spiritual sense of female chastity as dear to heaven—but upon a gross fear of alienating a tutelary goddess by offering an imperfect sacrifice. This sacrifice, the sacrifice of the natural household[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

[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.

Eloisa how grand is the collision between deep religious aspirations and the persecuting phantoms of her undying human passion! The Vestal feared to be walled up alive—abandoned to the pangs of hunger—to the trepidations of darkness—to the echoes of her own lingering groans—to the torments perhaps of frenzy rekindling at intervals the decaying agonies of flesh. Was *that* what Eloisa feared? Punishment she had none to apprehend: the crime was past, and remembered only by the criminals: there was none to accuse but herself: there was none to judge but God. Wherefore should Eloisa fear? Wherefore and with what should she fight? She fought by turns against herself and against God, against her human nature and against her spiritual yearnings. How grand were the mysteries of her faith, how gracious and forgiving its condescensions! How deep had been her human love, how imperishable its remembrance on earth! 'What is it,' the Roman Vestal would have said, 'that this Christian lady is afraid of? What is the phantom that she seems to see?' Vestal! it is not fear, but grief. She sees an immeasurable heaven that seems to touch her eyes: so near is she to its love. Suddenly, an Abelard—the glory of his race—appears, that seems to touch her lips. The heavens recede and diminish to a starry point twinkling in an unfathomable abyss; they are all but lost for *her*. Fire, it is in Eloisa that searches fire: the holy that fights with the earthly; fire that cleanses with fire that consumes: like cavalry the two fires wheel and counterwheel, advancing and retreating, charging and countercharging through and through each other. Eloisa trembles, but she trembles as a guilty creature before a tribunal unveiled within the secrecy of her own nature: there was no such trembling in the heathen worlds, for there was no

such secret tribunal. Eloisa fights with a shadowy enemy: there was no such fighting for Roman Vestals: because all the temples of our earth (which is the crowned Vesta), no, nor all the glory of her altars, nor all the pomp of her cruelties, could cite from the depths of a human spirit any such fearful shadow as Christian faith evokes from an afflicted conscience.

Pope, therefore, wheresoever his heart speaks loudly, shows how deep had been his early impressions from Christianity. That is shown in his intimacy with Crashaw, in his Eloisa, in his Messiah, in his adaptation to Christian purposes of the Dying Adrian, &c. It is remarkable, also, that Pope betrays, in all places where he has occasion to *argue* about Christianity, how much grander and more faithful to that great theme were the subconscious perceptions of his heart than the explicit commentaries of his understanding. He, like so many others, was unable to read or interpret the testimonies of his own heart, 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 judgement 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.

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 theorizing 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 adiecto*—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 organization.

To address the *insulated* understanding is to lay aside the Prospero's robe of poetry. The objection, therefore, to didactic poetry, as vulgarly understood, would be fatal even if there were none but this logical objection derived from its definition. To be in self-contradiction is, for any idea whatever, sufficiently to destroy itself. But it betrays a more obvious and practical contradiction when a little searched. If the true purpose of a man's writing a didactic poem were to teach, by what suggestion of idiocy should he choose to begin by putting on fetters ? wherefore should the simple man volunteer to handcuff and manacle himself, were it only by the 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, 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 milk-maids to propose an inspection of a model dairy. You pass through the poultry-yard, under whatever pretence, in reality to see the peacock and his harem. And so on to the very end, the pretended instruction is but in secret the connecting tie which holds together the laughing flowers going off from it to the right and to the left ; whilst if ever at intervals this prosy thread of pure didactics is brought forward more obtrusively, it is so by way of foil, to make more effective upon the eye the prodigality of the floral magnificence.

We affirm, therefore, that the didactic poet is so far from seeking even a secondary or remote object in

the particular points of information which he may happen to communicate, that much rather he would prefer the having communicated none at all. We will explain ourselves by means of a little illustration from Pope, which will at the same time furnish us with a miniature type of what we ourselves mean by a didactic poem, both in reference to what it *is* and to what it is *not*. In the *Rape of the Lock* there is a game at cards played, and played with a brilliancy of effect and felicity of selection, applied to the circumstances, which make it a sort of gem within a gem. This game was not in the first edition of the poem, but was an afterthought of Pope's, 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 ? In describing any particular game he does not seek to *teach* you that game—he postulates it as *already* known to you—but he relies upon separate resources. First, he will revive in the reader's eye, for picturesque effect, the well-known personal distinctions of the several kings, knaves, &c., their appearances and their powers. Secondly, he will choose some game in which he may display a happy selection applied to the chances and turns of fortune, to the manœuvres, to the situations of doubt, of brightening expectation, of sudden danger, of critical deliverance, or of final defeat. The

interest of a war will be rehearsed—*lis est de paupere regno*—that is true ; but the depth of the agitation on such occasions, whether at chess, at draughts, or at cards, is not measured of necessity by the grandeur of the stake ; he selects, in short, whatever fascinates the eye or agitates the heart by mimicry of life ; but so far from *teaching*, he presupposes the reader already *taught*, in order that he may go along with the movement of the descriptions.

Now, in treating a subject so vast 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. 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 principled section. Here lay the impracticable dilemma for Pope's Essay on Man. To satisfy the demands of the subject, was to defeat the objects of poetry. To evade the demands in the way that Pope has done, is to offer us a ruin for a palace. The very same dilemma existed for Lucretius, and with the very same result. The *De Rerum Natura* (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 Natura*), are both, and from the same cause, fragments that could not have been completed. Both are accumulations of diamond-dust without principles of coherency. In a succession of pictures, such as usually form the materials of didactic poems, the slightest thread of interdependency is sufficient. But, in works essentially and everywhere argumentative and polemic, to omit the connecting links, as often as they are insusceptible of poetic effect, is to break up the unity of the parts, and to undermine the foundations, in what expressly offers itself as a systematic and architectural whole. Pope's poem has suffered even more than that of Lucretius from this want of cohesion. It is indeed the realization of anarchy; and one amusing test of this may be found in the fact, that different commentators have deduced from it the very opposite doctrines. In some instances this apparent antinomy is doubtful, and dependent on the ambiguities or obscurities of the expression. But in others it is fairly deducible; and the cause lies in the elliptical structure of the work: the ellipsis, or (as sometimes it may be called) the chasm, may be filled up in two different modes essentially hostile:

and he that supplies the *hiatus*, in effect determines the bias of the poem this way or that—to a religious or to a sceptical result. In this edition the commentary of Warburton has been retained, which ought certainly to have been dismissed. The essay is, in effect, a Hebrew word with the vowel-points omitted : and Warburton supplies one set of vowels, whilst Crousaz 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.

[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.

ON THE KNOCKING AT THE GATE IN MACBETH [1]

From my boyish days I had always felt a great perplexity on one point in *Macbeth*. It was this: the knocking at the gate, which succeeds to the murder of Duncan, produced to my feelings an effect for which I never could account. The effect was, that it reflected back upon the murder a peculiar awfulness and a depth of solemnity; yet, however obstinately I endeavoured with my understanding to comprehend this, for many years I never could see *why* it should produce such an effect.

Here I pause for one moment, to exhort the reader never to pay any attention to his understanding, when it stands in opposition to any other faculty of his mind. The mere understanding, however useful and indispensable, is the meanest faculty in the human mind and the most to be distrusted; and yet the great majority of people trust to nothing else; which may do for ordinary life, but not for philosophic purposes. Of this out of ten thousand instances that I might produce, I will cite one. Ask of any person whatsoever, who is not previously prepared for the demand by a knowledge of the perspective, to draw in the rudest way the commonest appearance which depends upon the laws of that science; as, for instance, to represent the effect of two walls standing at right angles to each other, or the appearance of the houses on each side of a street, as seen by a person

[1] *London Magazine*, Oct., 1823. Masson, x. 389.

looking down the street from one extremity. Now in all cases, unless the person has happened to observe in pictures how it is that artists produce these effects, he will be utterly unable to make the smallest approximation to it. Yet why? For he has actually seen the effect every day of his life. The reason is—that he allows his understanding to overrule his eyes. His understanding, which includes no intuitive knowledge of the laws of vision, can furnish him with no reason why a line which is known and can be proved to be a horizontal line, should not *appear* a horizontal line; a line that made any angle with the perpendicular, less than a right angle, would seem to him to indicate that his houses were all tumbling down together. Accordingly, he makes the line of his houses a horizontal line, and fails, of course, to produce the effect demanded. Here, then, is one instance out of many, in which not only the understanding is allowed to overrule the eyes, but where the understanding is positively allowed to obliterate the eyes, as it were; for not only does the man believe the evidence of his understanding in opposition to that of his eyes, but (what is monstrous!) the idiot is not aware that his eyes ever gave such evidence. He does not know that he has seen (and therefore *quoad* his consciousness has *not* seen) that which he *has* seen every day of his life.

But to return from this digression, my understanding could furnish no reason why the knocking at the gate in *Macbeth* should produce any effect, direct or reflected. In fact, my understanding said positively that it could *not* produce any effect. But I knew better; I felt that it did. and I waited and clung to the problem until further knowledge should enable me to solve it. At length, in 1812, Mr. Williams made his *début* on the stage of Ratcliffe

Highway, and executed those unparalleled murders which have procured for him such a brilliant and undying reputation. On which murders, by the way, I must observe, that in one respect they have had an ill effect, by making the connoisseur in murder very fastidious in his taste, and dissatisfied by anything that has been since done in that line. All other murders look pale by the deep crimson of his; and, as an amateur once said to me in a querulous tone, 'There has been absolutely nothing *doing* since his time, or nothing that 's worth speaking of.' But this is wrong; for it is unreasonable to expect all men to be great artists, and born with the genius of Mr. Williams. Now it will be remembered, that in the first of these murders (that of the Marrs), the same incident (of a knocking at the door soon after the work of extermination was complete) did actually occur, which the genius of Shakespeare has invented; and all good judges and the most eminent dilettanti acknowledged the felicity of Shakespeare's suggestion, as soon as it was actually realized. Here, then, was a fresh proof that I was right in relying on my own feeling, in opposition to my understanding; and again I set myself to study the problem; at length I solved it to my own satisfaction; and my solution is this. Murder, in ordinary cases, where the sympathy is wholly directed to the case of the murdered person, is an incident of coarse and vulgar horror; and for this reason—that it flings the interest exclusively upon the natural but ignoble instinct by which we cleave to life; an instinct which, as being indispensable to the primal law of self-preservation, is the same in kind (though different in degree) amongst all living creatures: this instinct, therefore, because it annihilates all distinctions, and degrades the greatest of men to the level of 'the poor beetle

that we tread on', exhibits human nature in its most abject and humiliating attitude. Such an attitude would little suit the purposes of the poet. What then must he do? He must throw the interest on the murderer. Our sympathy must be with *him*; (of course I mean a sympathy of comprehension, a sympathy by which we enter into his feelings, and are made to understand them,—not a sympathy of pity or approbation[1]). In the murdered person, all strife of thought, all flux and reflux of passion and of purpose, are crushed by one overwhelming panic; the fear of instant death smites him 'with its petrific mace'. But in the murderer, such a murderer as a poet will condescend to, there must be raging some great storm of passion—jealousy, ambition, vengeance, hatred—which will create a hell within him; and into this hell we are to look.

In *Macbeth*, for the sake of gratifying his own enormous and teeming faculty of creation, Shakespeare has introduced two murderers: and, as usual in his hands, they are remarkably discriminated: but, though in Macbeth the strife of mind is greater than in his wife, the tiger spirit not so awake, and his feelings caught chiefly by contagion from her,—yet, as both were finally involved in the guilt of murder, the murderous mind of necessity is finally to be presumed in both. This was to be expressed; and on its own account, as well as to make it a more proportionable

[1] It seems almost ludicrous to guard and explain my use of a word, in a situation where it would naturally explain itself. But it has become necessary to do so, in consequence of the unscholarlike use of the word sympathy, at present so general, by which, instead of taking it in its proper sense, as the act of reproducing in our minds the feelings of another, whether for hatred, indignation, love, pity, or approbation, it is made a mere synonyme of the word *pity*, and hence, instead of saying 'sympathy *with* another', many writers adopt the monstrous barbarism of 'sympathy *for* another'.

antagonist to the unoffending nature of their victim, 'the gracious Duncan,' and adequately to expound 'the deep damnation of his taking off', this was to be expressed with peculiar energy. We were to be made to feel that the human nature, i.e. the divine nature of love and mercy, spread through the hearts of all creatures, and seldom utterly withdrawn from man—was gone, vanished, extinct; and that the fiendish nature had taken its place. And, as this effect is marvellously accomplished in the *dialogues* and *soliloquies* themselves, so it is finally consummated by the expedient under consideration; and it is to this that I now solicit the reader's attention. If the reader has ever witnessed a wife, daughter, or sister in a fainting fit, he may chance to have observed that the most affecting moment in such a spectacle is *that* in which a sigh and a stirring announce the recommencement of suspended life. Or, if the reader has ever been present in a vast metropolis, on the day when some great national idol was carried in funeral pomp to his grave, and chancing to walk near the course through which it passed, has felt powerfully in the silence and desertion of the streets, and in the stagnation of ordinary business, the deep interest which at that moment was possessing the heart of man—if all at once he should hear the death-like stillness broken up by the sound of wheels rattling away from the scene, and making known that the transitory vision was dissolved, he will be aware that at no moment was his sense of the complete suspension and pause in ordinary human concerns so full and affecting, as at that moment when the suspension ceases, and the goings-on of human life are suddenly resumed. All action in any direction is best expounded, measured, and made apprehensible, by reaction. Now apply this to the case in *Macbeth*.

Here, as I have said, the retiring of the human heart, and the entrance of the fiendish heart was to be expressed and made sensible. Another world has stept in; and the murderers are taken out of the region of human things, human purposes, human desires. They are transfigured: Lady Macbeth is 'unsexed'; Macbeth has forgot that he was born of woman; both are conformed to the image of devils; and the world of devils is suddenly revealed. But how shall this be conveyed and made palpable? In order that a new world may step in, this world must for a time disappear. The murderers, and the murder must be insulated—cut off by an immeasurable gulf from the ordinary tide and succession of human affairs—locked up and sequestered in some deep recess; we must be made sensible that the world of ordinary life is suddenly arrested—laid asleep—tranced—racked into a dread armistice; time must be annihilated; relation to things without abolished; and all must pass self-withdrawn into a deep syncope and suspension of earthly passion. Hence it is, that when the deed is done, when the work of darkness is perfect, then the world of darkness passes away like a pageantry in the clouds: the knocking at the gate is heard; and it makes known audibly that the reaction has commenced; the human has made its reflux upon the fiendish; the pulses of life are beginning to beat again; and the re-establishment of the goings-on of the world in which we live, first makes us profoundly sensible of the awful parenthesis that had suspended them.

O mighty poet! Thy works are not as those of men, simply and merely great works of art; but are also like the phenomena of nature, like the sun and the sea, the stars and the flowers; like frost and snow, rain and dew, hail-storm and thunder, which are to

be studied with entire submission of our own faculties, and in the perfect faith that in them there can be no too much or too little, nothing useless or inert—but that, the further we press in our discoveries, the more we shall see proofs of design and self-supporting arrangement where the careless eye had seen nothing but accident !

THEORY OF LITERATURE

THE LITERATURE OF KNOWLEDGE AND THE LITERATURE OF POWER

THE word *literature* is a perpetual source of confusion, because it is used in two senses, and those senses liable to be confounded with each other. In a philosophical use of the word, literature is the direct and adequate antithesis of books of knowledge. But in a popular use, it is a mere term of convenience for expressing inclusively the total books in a language. In this latter sense, a dictionary, a grammar, a spelling-book, an almanac, a pharmacopoeia, a Parliamentary report, a system of farriery, a treatise on billiards, the Court Calendar, &c., belong to the literature. But, in the philosophical sense, not only would it be ludicrous to reckon these as parts of the literature, but even books of much higher pretensions must be excluded—as, for instance, books of voyages and travels, and generally all books in which the matter to be communicated is paramount to the manner or form of its communication ('ornari res ipsa negat, contenta doceri'). It is difficult to construct the idea of 'literature' with severe accuracy; for it is a fine art—the supreme fine art, and liable to the difficulties which attend such a subtle notion; in fact, a severe construction of the idea must be the *result* of a philosophical investigation into this subject, and cannot precede it. But, for the sake of obtaining some expression for literature that may answer our present purpose, let us throw the question into another

form. I have said that the antithesis of literature is books of knowledge. Now, what is that antithesis to *knowledge*, which is here implicitly latent in the word literature ? The vulgar antithesis is *pleasure* (' aut prodesse volunt, aut delectare poetae '). Books, we are told, propose to *instruct* or to *amuse*. Indeed ! However, not to spend any words upon it, I suppose you will admit that this wretched antithesis will be of no service to us. . . . The true antithesis[1] to knowledge, in this case, is not *pleasure*, but *power*. All that is literature seeks to communicate power ; all that is not literature, to communicate knowledge. Now, if it be asked what is meant by communicating power, I, in my turn, would ask by what name a man would designate the case in which I should be made to feel vividly, and with a vital consciousness, emotions which ordinary life rarely or never supplies occasions for exciting, and which had previously lain unwakened, and hardly within the dawn of consciousness—as myriads of modes of feeling

[1] For which distinction, as for most of the sound criticism on poetry, or any subject connected with it that I have ever met with, I must acknowledge my obligations to many years' conversation with Mr. Wordsworth. Upon this occasion it may be useful to notice that there is a rhetorical use of the word ' power ', very different from the analytic one here introduced, which, also, is due originally to Mr. Wordsworth, and will be found in no book before 1798 ; this is now become a regular slang term in London conversation. In reference to which, it is worth notice that a critic, speaking of the late Mr. Shelley, a year or two ago, in the most popular literary journal of the day, said, ' It is alleged that there is power in Mr. Shelley's poetry ; now, there can be no power shown in poetry, except by writing good poems ' (or words to that effect). Waiving, however, the question of Mr. Shelley's merits, so far is this remark from being true, that the word was originally introduced expressly to provide for the case where, though the poem was *not* good from defect in the *composition*, or from other causes, the stamina and *matériel* of good poetry as fine thinking and passionate conceptions, could not be denied to exist.

are at this moment in every human mind for want of a poet to organize them ? I say, when these inert and sleeping forms *are* organized, when these possibilities *are* actualized, is this conscious and living possession of mine *power*, or what is it ?

When, in *King Lear*, the height, and depth, and breadth, of human passion is revealed to us, and, for the purposes of a sublime antagonism, is revealed in the weakness of an old man's nature, and in one night two worlds of storm are brought face to face—
—the human world, and the world of physical nature—
mirrors of each other, semichoral antiphonies, strophe and antistrophe heaving with rival convulsions, and with the double darkness of night and madness,—when I am thus suddenly startled into a feeling of the infinity of the world within me, is this power, or what may I call it ? Space, again—what is it in most men's minds ? The lifeless form of the world without us, a postulate of the geometrician, with no more vitality or real existence to their feelings than the square root of two. But, if Milton has been able to *inform* this empty theatre, peopling it with Titanic shadows, forms that sat at the eldest counsels of the infant world, chaos and original night,—

> Ghostly shapes,
> To meet at noontide, Fear and trembling Hope,
> Death the Skeleton,
> And Time the Shadow,—

so that, from being a thing to inscribe with diagrams, it has become under his hands a vital agent on the human mind,—I presume that I may justly express the tendency of the *Paradise Lost*, by saying that it communicates power ; a pretension far above all communication of knowledge. Henceforth, therefore, I shall use the antithesis power and knowledge as the

most philosophical expression for literature (that is, Literae Humaniores) and anti-literature (that is, Literae didacticae—Παιδεία).

'Letters to a Young Man whose Education has been neglected.' *London Magazine*, March, 1823. Masson, x. 46.

LITERATURE SUPREME OF FINE ARTS

Literature, provided we use that word not for the mere literature of knowledge, but for the literature of power—using it for literature as it speaks to what is genial in man, viz. to the human *spirit*, and *not* for literature (falsely so-called) as it speaks to the meagre understanding—is a fine art: and not only so; it is the supreme of the fine arts; nobler, for instance, potentially, than painting or sculpture or architecture. . . . A *litterateur* may say that *his* fine art wields a sceptre more potent than any other. Literature is more potent than other fine arts, because *deeper* in its impressions according to the usual tenor of human sensibilities; because more *extensive*, in the degree that books are more diffused than pictures or statues; because more *durable*, in the degree that language is durable beyond marble or canvas, and in the degree that vicarious powers are opened to books for renewing their phoenix immortality through unlimited translations: powers denied to painting except through copies that are feeble, and denied to sculpture except to casts that are costly. . . .

Literature has no relations to any sections or social schisms amongst men—its relations are to the race. In proportion as any literary work rises in its pretensions—for instance, if it works by the highest forms of passion—its *nisus*, its natural effort, is to

address the race, and not any individual nation. That it found a bar to this *nisus*, in a limited language, was but an accident : the essential relations of every great intellectual work are to those capacities in man by which he tends to brotherhood, and not to those by which he tends to alienation. Man is ever coming nearer to agreement, ever narrowing his differences, notwithstanding that the interspace may cost an eternity to traverse. Where the agreement is, not where the difference is, in the centre of man's affinities, not of his repulsions, *there* lies the magnetic centre towards which all poetry that is potent, and all philosophy that is faithful, are eternally travelling by natural tendency.

Oliver Goldsmith. *North British Review*, May, 1848. M., iv. 308–11.

TRUE OBJECT OF THE FINE ARTS

[A] fundamental error lies in affirming the final objects of the Fine Arts to be pleasure. Every man, however, would shrink from describing Aeschylus 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.

Note to translation of Lessing's *Laocoon*. *Blackwood*, Nov., 1826. M., xi. 173.

PRINCIPLE OF *IDEM IN ALIO*

The first elementary idea of a Greek tragedy is to be sought in a serious Italian opera. The Greek dialogue is represented by the recitative, and the tumultuous lyrical parts assigned chiefly, though not exclusively, to the chorus on the Greek stage, are represented by the impassioned airs, duos, trios, choruses, &c., on the Italian. And here, at the very outset, occurs a question which lies at the threshold of a Fine Art,—that is, of *any* Fine Art : for had the views of Addison upon the Italian opera had the least foundation in truth, there could have been no room or opening for any mode of imitation except such as belongs to a *mechanic* art.

The reason for at all connecting Addison with this case is, that *he* chiefly was the person occupied in assailing the Italian opera ; and this hostility arose, probably, in his want of sensibility to good (that is, to Italian) music. But whatever might be his motive for the hostility, the single argument by which he supported it was this,—that a hero ought not to sing upon the stage, because no hero known to history ever summoned a garrison in a song, or charged a battery in a semichorus. In this argument lies an ignorance of the very first principle concerned in *every* Fine Art. In all alike, more or less directly, the object is to reproduce in the mind some great effect, through the agency of *idem in alio.* The *idem,* the same impression, is to be restored ; but *in alio,* in a different material,—by means of some different instrument. For instance, on the Roman stage there was an art, now entirely lost, of narrating, and in part of dramatically representing an impassioned tale, by means of dancing, of musical

accompaniment in the orchestra, and of elaborate pantomime in the performer. *Saltavit Hypermnestram*, he danced (that is, he represented by dancing and pantomime the story of) Hypermnestra. Now, suppose a man to object, that young ladies, when saving their youthful husbands at midnight from assassination, could not be capable of waltzing or quadrilling, how wide is this of the whole problem! This is still seeking for the *mechanic* imitation, some imitation founded in the very fact; whereas the object is to seek the imitation in the sameness of the impression drawn from a different, or even from an impossible fact. If a man, taking a hint from the Roman 'Saltatio' (*saltavit Andromachen*), should say that he would 'whistle Waterloo', that is, by whistling connected with pantomime, would express the passion and the charges of Waterloo, it would be monstrous to refuse him his postulate on the pretence that 'people did not whistle at Waterloo'. Precisely so: neither are most people made of marble, but of a material as different as can well be imagined, viz. of elastic flesh, with warm blood coursing along its tubes; and yet, for all *that*, a sculptor will draw tears from you, by exhibiting, in pure statuary marble, on a sepulchral monument, two young children with their little heads on a pillow, sleeping in each other's arms; whereas, if he had presented them in waxwork, which yet is far more like to flesh, you would have felt little more pathos in the scene than if they had been shown baked in gilt gingerbread. He has expressed the *idem*, the identical thing expressed in the real children; the sleep that masks death, the rest, the peace, the purity, the innocence; but *in alio*, in a substance the most different; rigid, non-elastic, and as unlike to flesh, if tried by touch, or eye, or by experience of life,

as can well be imagined. So of the whistling. It is the very worst objection in the world to say, that the strife of Waterloo did not reveal itself through whistling: undoubtedly it did not; but that is the very ground of the man's art. He will reproduce the fury and the movement as to the only point which concerns you, viz. the effect upon your own sympathies, through a language that seems without any relation to it: he will set before you what *was* at Waterloo through that which was *not* at Waterloo. Whereas any direct factual imitation, resting upon painted figures drest up in regimentals, and worked by watchwork through the whole movements of the battle, would have been no art whatsoever in the sense of a Fine Art, but a base *mechanic* mimicry.

This principle of the *idem in alio*, so widely diffused through all the higher revelations of art, it is peculiarly requisite to bear in mind when looking at Grecian tragedy, because no form of human composition employs it in so much complexity.

The Antigone of Sophocles. *Tait's Magazine*, Feb., 1846. M., x. 368.

One part of the effect from the symbolic is dependent upon the great catholic principle of the *Idem in alio*. The symbol restores the theme, but under new combinations of form or colouring; gives back, but changes; restores, but idealizes.

'Suspiria de Profundis.' *Blackwood*, 1845. Revised, 1853. M., i. 51.

LAW OF EBB AND FLOW IN WORKS OF ART

[There is a principle which should govern the conclusion of an epitaph.] . . . It is this :—we may observe that poets of the highest class, whether otherwise delighting or not in the storm and tumultuous agitation of passion, whether otherwise tragic or epic in the constitution of their minds, yet, by a natural instinct, have all agreed in tending to peace and absolute repose, as the state in which only a sane constitution of feelings can finally acquiesce. And hence, even in those cases where the very circumstances forbade the absolute tranquillity of happiness and triumphant enjoyment, they have combined to substitute a secondary one of resignation. This may be one reason why Homer has closed his chief poem with the funeral rites of Hector ; a section of the *Iliad* which otherwise has appeared to many an excrescence. Perhaps he was unwilling to leave us with the painful spectacle of the noble and patriotic martyr dragged with ruffian violence round the funeral pyre of Patroclus, the coming desolation of Troy in prospect, the frenzy of grief in its first tempestuous career amongst the Trojan women and children, and the agitations of sympathy in the reader as yet untranquillized. A final book, therefore, removes all these stormy objects, leaving the stage in possession of calmer objects, and of emotions more elevating, tranquillizing, and soothing :—

Ὡς οἵ γ' ἀμφίεπον τάφον Ἕκτορος ἱπποδάμοιο.

So tended they the grave (ministered to the obsequies) of Hector, the tamer of horses.

Or, to give it with the effect of Pope's rhythmus—

> Such honours Ilion to her hero paid;
> And peaceful slept the mighty Hector's shade.

In one sense, indeed, and for that peculiar auditory whom Homer might contemplate—an auditory sure to merge the universal sense of humanity in the local sense of Grecian nationality—the very calamities of Troy and her great champion were so many triumphs for Greece; and, in that view, it might be contended that the true point of repose is the final and absolute victory of Achilles; upon which supposition, the last book really is an excrescence, or at least a sweeping ceremonial train to the voluminous draperies of the *Iliad*, in compliance with the religious usages of ancient Greece. But it is probable that my own view of the case is more correct; for there is other and independent evidence that Homer himself was catholic enough in his sensibilities to sympathize powerfully with Hector and Priam, and means his hearers to do so. Placing himself, therefore, at least for the occasion, in the neutral position of a modern reader, whose sympathies are equally engaged for Greece and for Troy, he felt the death of Hector as an afflicting event; and the attending circumstances more as agitating than as triumphant; and added the last book as necessary to regain the key of a disturbed equanimity. In *Paradise Lost*, again, this principle is still more distinctly recognized, and is practically applied to the case by an artifice even more elaborate. There the misery—the anguish, at one point of the action—the despair, are absolute; nor does it appear at first sight how, or by what possibility, the reader can repossess himself of the peace and fortitude which even the sullen midnight of tragedy requires, much more the large sunlight of

the Epopee. Paradise was lost: that idea ruled and domineered in the very title; how was it to be withdrawn, or even palliated, in the conclusion? Simply thus:—If Paradise were lost, Paradise was also regained; and though that reconquest could not, as an event, enter into the poem, without breaking its unity in a flagrant manner, yet, proleptically, and in the way of vision, it might. Such a vision is placed by the arch-angelic comforter before Adam; purged with euphrasy and rue, his eye beholds it; and for that part which cannot artistically be given as a visionary spectacle, the angel interposes as a solemn narrator and interpreter. The consolations which in this way reach Adam, reach the reader no less; and the reader is able to unite with our general father in his thankful acknowledgement:—

> Greatly instructed shall I hence depart;
> Greatly *in peace of mind*.

Accordingly, spite of the triumphs of Satan—spite of Sin and all-conquering Death, who had left the gates of hell for their long abode on earth—spite of the pollution, wretchedness, and remorse, that had now gained possession of man—spite of the far-stretching taint of that contagion, which (in the impressive instances of the eagle and the lion) too evidently showed itself by 'mute signs', as having already seasoned for corruption earth and its inheritance—yet, by means of this one sublime artifice, which brings together the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and end of time, the last day of man's innocence, and the first of his restoration, it is contrived that a twofold peace—the peace of resignation and the peace of hope—should harmonize the key in which the departing strains of this celestial poem roll off; and its last cadences leave behind an echo,

which, with the solemnity of the grave, has also the halcyon peace of the grave, and its austere repose. A third instance we have—even more direct and unequivocal, of the same principle, from this same poet, not only involved silently in his practice, but also consciously contemplated. In the *Samson Agonistes*, though a tragedy of most tumultuous catastrophe, it is so contrived, by the interposition of the chorus, who, fixing their hopes in the heavens, are unshaken by sublunary griefs, not only that all should terminate

In peace of spirit and sublime repose,

but also that this conclusion should be expressly drawn out in words as the great moral of the drama; by which, as by other features, it recalls, in its most exquisite form, the Grecian model which it follows, together with that fine transfiguration of moral purpose that belongs to a higher, purer, and far holier religion.

Peace, then, severe tranquillity, the brooding calm, or γαλήνη of the Greeks, is the final key into which all the storms of passion modulate themselves in the hands of great poets.

In war itself—war is no ultimate end.

All tumult is for the sake of rest—tempest, but the harbinger of calm—and suffering, good only as the condition of permanent repose.

Dr. Samuel Parr. *Blackwood*, Jan., &c., 1831. M., v. 103.

There is one peculiarity about Lucretius which, even in the absence of all anecdotes to that effect, would have led an observing reader to suspect some unsoundness in his brain. It is this, and it lies in his manner. In all poetic enthusiasm, however grand

and sweeping may be its compass, so long as it is healthy and natural, there is a principle of self-restoration in the opposite direction; there is a counter state of repose, a compensatory state, as in the tides of the sea, which tends continually to 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.

Notes on Gilfillan's *Literary Portraits*: Keats. *Tait's Magazine*, April, 1846. M., xi. 379.

POETRY AND PAINTING

[Note on Lessing's comparison between the arts.]

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' ἐξοχήν, 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 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*.

ALLEGORY

[Note on Lessing's statement that supernatural beings are treated by the poet as concrete persons, by the sculptor as symbolical forms.]

The subject of allegory, and its proper treatment in the arts, is too extensive and profound to be touched upon in a note. Yet one difficulty, which perplexes many 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 this objection, would be volatilized 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.

Notes to translation of Lessing's *Laocoon*. *Blackwood*, Jan., 1827. M., xi. 206 and 198,

PERIODIC UPGROWTH OF GENIUS

We wish to direct the reader's eye upon a remarkable phenomenon in the history of [Greek] literature, and subsequently of all human genius. . . . The earliest known occasion on which this phenomenon drew a direct and strong gaze upon itself, was in a little historical sketch composed by a Roman officer during the very opening era of Christianity. We speak of

the *Historia Romana*, written and published about the very year of the crucifixion by Velleius Paterculus, in the court of Tiberius Caesar, the introduction to which presents us with a very interesting outline of general history. . . .

Recurring to that remark . . . by which he connects himself with our subject, we may venture to say, that, if it was a very just remark for *his* experience, it is far more so for ours. What he remarked, what he founded upon a review of two nations and two literatures, we may now countersign by an experience of eight or nine. His remark was upon the tendency of intellectual power to gather in clusters; its unaccountable propensity (he thought it such) to form into separate insulated groups. This tendency he illustrates first in two cases of Grecian literature. Perhaps that might have been an insufficient basis for a general theory. But it occurred to Paterculus in confirmation of his doctrine, that the very same tendency had reappeared in his native literature. The same phenomenon had manifested itself, and more than once, in the history of Roman intellect; the same strong *nisus* of great wits to gather and crystallize about a common nucleus. That marked gregariousness in human genius had taken place amongst the poets and orators of Rome, which had previously taken place amongst the poets, orators, and artists of Greece.

[He cites from Paterculus the instances of Greek tragedy (Aeschylus to Euripides), and of Greek oratory (Isocrates and his followers).]

We must allow that the singular phenomenon first noticed by Paterculus, as connecting itself with the manifestations of human genius, is sufficiently established by so much of human history as even he had witnessed . . . or if Pagan ages had left that point

doubtful, we have since witnessed Christian repetitions of the truth on the very widest scale. The Italian age of Leo X in the fifteenth century, the French age of Louis XIV in the seventeenth century, the German age, commencing with Kant, Wieland, Goethe, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, all illustrate the tendency to these intermitting paroxysms of intellectual energy. The lightning and the storm seem to have made the circuit of the whole European heavens, to have formed vortices successively in every civilized land, and to have discharged themselves by turns from every quarter of the atmosphere. In our own country there have been three such gatherings of intellectual power :— first, the age of Shakespeare, Spenser, and the great school of dramatists that were already dying out in the latter days of Ben Jonson (1636), and were finally extinguished by the great civil commotions beginning in 1642; secondly, the age of Queen Anne and George I; thirdly, the age commencing with Cowper, partially roused perhaps by the American war, and afterwards so powerfully stimulated (as was the corresponding era of Kant and Wieland) by the French Revolution. This last volcanic eruption of the British genius has displayed enormous power and splendour. Let malice and the base detraction of contemporary jealousy say what it will, greater originality of genius, more expansive variety of talent, never was exhibited than in our own country since the year 1793. Every mode of excellence, except only dramatic excellence (in which we have nothing modern to place by the side of Schiller's *Wallenstein*), has been revealed in dazzling lustre. . . .

But the point upon which we wish to fix the reader's attention in citing this interesting observation of the Roman officer, and the reason for which we have

cited it at all, is not so much for the mere fact of these spring-tides occurring in the manifestations of human genius, intermitting pulses (so to speak) in human energies, as the psychological peculiarity which seems to affect the cycle of their recurrences. Paterculus occupies himself chiefly with the *causes* of such phenomena ; and one main cause he suggests as lying in the emulation which possesses men when once a specific direction has been impressed upon the public competitions. This no doubt is one of the causes. But a more powerful cause perhaps lies in a principle of union than in any principle of division amongst men, viz. in the principle of sympathy. The great Italian painters, for instance, were doubtless evoked in such crowds by the action of this principle. To hear the buzz of idolizing admiration settling for years upon particular works of art and artists, kindles something better than merely the ambition and rivalship of men ; it kindles feelings happier and more favourable to excellence, viz. genial love and comprehension of the qualities fitted to stir so profound and lasting an emotion. This contagion of sympathy runs electrically through society, searches high and low for congenial powers, and suffers none to lurk unknown to the possessor. A vortex is created which draws into its suction whatever is liable to a similar action. But not to linger upon this question of causes, what we wish to place under the reader's eye is rather the peculiar type which belongs to these revolutions of national intellect, according to the place which each occupies in the order of succession. Possibly it would seem an over-refinement if we were to suggest that the odd terms in the series indicate creative energies, and the even terms reflective energies ; and we are far enough from affecting the honours of any puerile hypothesis. But, in a general

way, it seems plausible and reasonable that there will be alternating successions of power in the first place, and next of reaction upon that power from the reflective faculties. It does seem natural that first of all should blossom the energies of creative power; and in the next era of the literature, when the consciousness has been brightened to its own agencies, will be likely to come forward the re-agencies of the national mind on what it has created. The period of meditation will succeed to the period of production. Or if the energies of creation are again partially awake, finding themselves forestalled as regards the grander passions, they will be likely to settle upon the feebler elements of manners. Social differences will now fix the attention by way of substitute for the bolder differences of nature. Should a third period, after the swing of the pendulum through an arch of centuries, succeed for the manifestation of the national genius, it is possible that the long interval since the inaugural era of creative art will have so changed all the elements of society and the aspects of life, as to restore the mind to much of its infant freedom; it may no longer feel the captivity of an imitative spirit in dealing with the very same class of creations as exercised its earliest powers. The original national genius may now come forward in perfectly new forms without the sense of oppression from inimitable models. The hoar of ages may have withdrawn some of these models from active competition. And thus it may not be impossible that oscillations between the creative and reflective energies of the mind might go on through a cycle of many ages.

In our own literature we see this scheme of oscillations illustrated. In the Shakespeare period we see the fullness of life and the enormity of power throwing up a tropical exuberance of vegetation. A century

afterwards we see a generation of men lavishly endowed with genius, but partly degraded by the injurious training of a most profligate era growing out of great revolutionary convulsions, and partly lowered in the tone of their aspirations by a despair of rivalling the great creations of their predecessors. We see them universally acquiescing in humbler modes of ambition ; showing sometimes a corresponding merit to that of their greatest forefathers, but merit (if sometimes equal) yet equal upon a lower scale. Thirdly, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries we see a new birth of original genius, of which it is not lawful to affirm any absolute inferiority even by comparison with the Shakespearian age of Titans. For whatsoever is strictly and thoroughly original, being *sui generis*, cannot be better or worse than any other model of excellence which is also original. One animal structure compared with another of a different class is equally good and perfect. One valley which is no copy of another, but has a separate and peculiar beauty, cannot be compared for any purpose of disadvantage with another. One poem which is composed upon a law of its own, and has a characteristic or separate beauty of its own, cannot be inferior to any other poem whatsoever. The class, the order, may be inferior ; the scale may be a lower one ; but the individual work, the degree of merit marked upon the scale must be equal, if only the poem is equally original. In all such cases understand, ye miserable snarlers at contemporary merit, that the puerile *goût de comparaison* (as La Bruyère calls it) is out of place ; universally you cannot affirm any *imparity* where the ground is preoccupied by *disparity*. Where there is no parity of principle there is no basis for comparison.

'Style.' *Blackwood*, Oct., 1840. M., x. 194–203.

CLASSICAL AND MODERN DRAMA

The Greek tragedy is a dark problem. We cannot say that the Greek drama, as a whole, is such in any more comprehensive sense ; for the comedy of Greece depends essentially upon the same principles as our own. Comedy, as the reflex of social life, will shift in correspondence to the shifting movements of civilization. Inevitably as human intercourse in cities grows more refined, comedy will grow more subtle ; it will build itself on distinctions of character less grossly defined, and on features of manners more delicate and impalpable. But the *fundus*, the ultimate resource, the well-head of the comic, must for ever be sought in one and the same field—viz. the ludicrous of incident, or the ludicrous of situation, or the ludicrous which arises in a mixed way between the character and the situation. The age of Aristophanes, for example, answered in some respects to our own earliest dramatic era, viz. from 1588 to 1635, an age not (as Dr. Johnson assumes it to have been, in his elaborate preface to Shakespeare) rude or gross ; on the contrary, far more intense with intellectual instincts and agencies than his own, which was an age of collapse. But in the England of Shakespeare, as in the Athens of Aristophanes, the surface of society in cities still rocked, or at least undulated, with the ground-swell surviving from periods of intestine tumult and insecurity. The times were still martial and restless ; men still wore swords in pacific assemblies ; the intellect of the age was a fermenting intellect ; it was a revolutionary intellect. And comedy itself, coloured by the moving pageantries of life, was more sinewy, more audacious in its movements ; spoke with something more of an impassioned tone ; and

was hung with draperies more rich, more voluminous, more picturesque. On the other hand, the age of the Athenian Menander, or the English Congreve, though still an unsettled age, was far less insecure in its condition of police, and far less showy in its exterior aspect. In England, it is true that a picturesque costume still prevailed; the whole people were still draped professionally; each man's dress proclaimed his calling; and so far it might be said, 'natio comoeda est.' But the characteristic and dividing spirit had fled, whilst the forms survived; and those middle men had universally arisen, whose equivocal relations to different employments broke down the strength of contrast between them. Comedy, therefore, was thrown more exclusively upon the interior man; upon the *nuances* of his nature, or upon the finer spirit of his manners. It was now the acknowledged duty of comedy to fathom the coynesses of human nature, and to arrest the fleeting phenomena of human demeanour.

But tragedy stood upon another footing. Whilst the comic muse in every age acknowledges a relationship which is more than sisterly—in fact, little short of absolute identity—the tragic muse of Greece and England stand so far aloof as hardly to recognize each other under any common designation. Few people have ever studied the Grecian drama; and hence may be explained the possibility that so little should have been said by critics upon its characteristic differences, and nothing at all upon the philosophic ground of these differences. Hence may be explained the fact, that, whilst Greek tragedy has always been a problem in criticism, it is still a problem of which no man has attempted the solution. This problem it is our intention briefly to investigate.

I. There are cases occasionally occurring in the

English drama and the Spanish, where a play is exhibited within a play. To go no further, every person remembers the remarkable instance of this in *Hamlet*. Sometimes the same thing takes place in painting. We see a chamber, suppose, exhibited by the artist, on the walls of which (as a customary piece of furniture), hangs a picture. And as this picture again might represent a room furnished with pictures, in the mere logical possibility of the case we might imagine this descent into a life below a life going on *ad infinitum*. Practically, however, the process is soon stopped. A retrocession of this nature is difficult to manage. The original picture is a mimic—an unreal life. But this unreal life is itself a real life with respect to the secondary picture; which again must be supposed realized with relation to the tertiary picture, if such a thing were attempted. Consequently, at every step of the *introvolution* (to neologise a little in a case justifying a neologism), something must be done to differentiate the gradations, and to express the subordinations of life; because each term in the descending series, being first of all a mode of non-reality to the spectator, is next to assume the functions of a real life in its relations to the next lower or interior term of the series.

What the painter does in order to produce this peculiar modification of appearances, so that an object shall affect us first of all as an idealized or unreal thing, and next as itself a sort of relation to some secondary object still more intensely unreal, we shall not attempt to describe; for in some technical points we should, perhaps, fail to satisfy the reader: and without technical explanations we could not satisfy the question. But, as to the poet—all the depths of philosophy, at least of any known and recognized philosophy, would less avail to explain, speculatively,

the principles which, in such a case, should guide him, than Shakespeare has explained by his practice. The problem before him was one of his own suggesting; the difficulty was of his own making. It was—so to differentiate a drama that it might stand within a drama, precisely as a painter places a picture within a picture; and therefore that the secondary or inner drama should be non-realized upon a scale that would throw, by comparison, a reflex colouring of reality upon the principal drama. This was the problem: this was the thing to be accomplished: and the secret, the law, of the process by which he accomplishes this, is—to swell, tumefy, stiffen, not the diction only, but the tenor of the thought; in fact, to stilt it, and to give it a prominence and an ambition beyond the scale which he adopted for his ordinary life. It is, of course, therefore, in rhyme—an artifice which Shakespeare employs with great effect on other similar occasions (that is, occasions when he wished to solemnize or in any way differentiate the life); it is condensed and massed as respects the flowing of the thoughts; it is rough and horrent with figures in strong relief, like the embossed gold of an ancient vase: and the movement of the scene is contracted into short gyrations—so unlike the free sweep and expansion of his general developments.

Now, the Grecian tragedy stands in the very same circumstances, and rises from the same original basis. If, therefore, the reader can obtain a glimpse of the life within a life, which the painter sometimes exhibits to the eye, and which the *Hamlet* of Shakespeare exhibits to the mind—then he may apprehend the original phasis under which we contemplate the Greek tragedy.

II. But to press further into the centre of things, perhaps the very first element in the situation of the

Grecian tragedy, which operated by degrees to evoke all the rest, was the original elevation of the scale by which all was to be measured, in consequence of two accidents—first, the sanctity of the ceremonies in which tragedy arose ; second, the vast size of the ancient theatres.

The first point we need not dwell on : everybody is aware that tragedy in Greece grew by gradual expansions out of an idolatrous rite—out of sacrificial pomp : though we do not find anybody who has noticed the consequent overruling effect which this had upon the quality of that tragedy : how, in fact, from this early cradle of tragedy, arose a sanctity which compelled all things to modulate into the same religious key. But next, the theatres—why were they so vast in ancient cities, in Athens, in Syracuse, in Capua, in Rome ? Purely from democratic influences. Every citizen was entitled to a place at the public scenical representations. In Athens, for example, the state paid for him. He was present, by possibility and by legal fiction, at every performance : therefore, room must be prepared for him. And, allowing for the privileged foreigners (the domiciled aliens called μέτοικοι), we are not surprised to hear that the Athenian theatre was adapted to an audience of thirty thousand persons. It is not enough to say that *naturally*—we have a right to say that *inevitably*—out of this prodigious compass, exactly ten times over the compass of the *large* Drury Lane burned down a generation ago, arose certain immediate results that moulded the Greek tragedy in all its functions, purposes, and phenomena. The person must be aggrandized, the countenance must be idealized. For upon any stage corresponding in its scale to the colossal dimensions of such a house, the unassisted human figure would have been lost ; the

unexaggerated human features would have been seen as in a remote perspective, and besides, have had their expression lost; the unreverberated human voice would have been undistinguishable from the surrounding murmurs of the audience. Hence the cothurnus to raise the actor; hence the voluminous robes to hide the disproportion thus resulting to the figure; hence the mask larger than life, painted to represent the noble Grecian contour of countenance; hence the mechanism by which it was made to swell the intonations of the voice like the brazen tubes of an organ.

Here, then, you have a tragedy, by its very origin, in mere virtue of the accidents out of which it arose, standing upon the inspiration of religious feeling; pointing, like the spires of our English parish churches, up to heaven by mere necessity of its earliest purpose, from which it could not alter or swerve *per saltum*; so that an influence once there, was always there. Even from that cause, therefore, you have a tragedy ultra-human and Titanic. But next, from political causes falling in with that early religious cause, you have a tragedy forced into a more absolute and unalterable departure from a human standard. That figure so noble, that voice so profound, and, by the very construction of the theatres as well as of the masks, receiving such solemn reverberations, proclaim a being elevated above the ordinary human scale. And then comes the countenance always adjusted to the same unvarying tone of sentiment, viz. the presiding sentiment of the situation, which of itself would go far to recover the key-note of Greek tragedy. These things being given, we begin to perceive a life removed by a great gulf from the ordinary human life even of kings and heroes: we descry a life within a life.

III. Here, therefore, is the first great landing-place, the first station, from which we can contemplate the Greek tragedy with advantage. It is, by comparison with the life of Shakespeare, what the inner life of the mimetic play in *Hamlet* is to the outer life of the *Hamlet* itself. It is a life below a life. That is—it is a life treated upon a scale so sensibly different from the proper life of the spectator, as to impress him profoundly with the feeling of its idealization. Shakespeare's tragic life is our own life exalted and selected: the Greek tragic life presupposed another life, the spectator's, thrown into relief before it. The tragedy was projected upon the eye from a vast profundity in the rear: and between this life and the spectator, however near its phantasmagoria might advance to him, was still an immeasurable gulf of shadows.

'Theory of Greek Tragedy.' *Blackwood*, Feb., 1840. M., x. 342.

CHRISTIAN AND PAGAN POETRY

In the Greek tragedy, however otherwise embittered against ancient literature by the dismal affectations current in the scenical poetry, at least, I felt the presence of a great and original power. It might be a power inferior, upon the whole, to that which presides in the English tragedy; I believed that it was; but it was equally genuine, and appealed equally to real and deep sensibilities in our nature. Yet, also, I felt that the two powers at work, in the two forms of drama, were essentially different; and, without having read a line of German at that time, or knowing of any such controversy, I began to meditate on the elementary grounds of difference

between the Pagan and the Christian forms of poetry. The dispute has since been carried on extensively in France, not less than in Germany, as between the *classical* and the *romantic*. But I will venture to assert that not one step in advance has been made, up to this day. The shape into which I threw the question, it may be well to state; because I am persuaded that out of that one idea, properly pursued, might be evolved the whole separate characteristics of the Christian and the antique; why is it, I asked, that the Christian idea of sin is an idea utterly unknown to the Pagan mind? The Greeks and Romans had a clear conception of a moral ideal, as we have; but this they estimated by a reference to the will; and they called it virtue, and the antithesis they called vice. The *lacheté*, or relaxed energy of the will, by which it yielded to the seductions of sensual pleasure, that was vice; and the braced-up tone by which it resisted these seductions, was virtue. But the idea of holiness, and the antithetic idea of sin, as a violation of this awful and unimaginable sanctity, was so utterly undeveloped in the Pagan mind, that no word exists in classical Greek or classical Latin which approaches either pole of this synthesis; neither the idea of *holiness*, nor of its correlate, *sin*, could be so expressed in Latin as at once to satisfy Cicero and a scientific Christian. Again (but this was some years after), I found Schiller and Goethe applauding the better taste of the ancients, in symbolizing the idea of death, by a beautiful youth, with torch inverted, &c., as compared with the Christian types of a skeleton and hour-glasses, &c. And much surprised I was to hear Mr. Coleridge approving of this German sentiment. Yet here again I felt the peculiar genius of Christianity was covertly at work, moving upon a different

road, and under opposite ideas, to a just result, in which the harsh and austere expression yet pointed to a dark reality, whilst the beautiful Greek adumbration was, in fact, a veil and a disguise. The corruptions and the other 'dishonours' of the grave, and whatsoever composes the sting of death, in the Christian view, is traced up to sin as its ultimate cause. Hence, besides the expression of Christian humility, in thus nakedly exhibiting the wrecks and ruins made by sin, there is also a latent profession indicated of Christian hope. For the Christian contemplates steadfastly, though with trembling awe, the lowest point of his descent; since, for him, that point, the last of his fall, is also the first of his re-ascent, and serves, besides, as an exponent of its infinity; the infinite depth becoming, in the rebound, a measure of the infinite re-ascent. Whereas, on the contrary, with the gloomy uncertainties of a Pagan on the question of his final restoration, and also (which must not be overlooked) with his utter perplexity as to the nature of his restoration, if any were by accident in reserve, whether in a condition tending downwards or upwards, it was the natural resource to consult the general feeling of anxiety and distrust, by throwing a thick curtain and a veil of beauty over the whole too painful subject. To place the horrors in high relief could here have answered no purpose but that of wanton cruelty; whereas, with the Christian hopes, the very saddest memorials of the havocs made by death, are antagonist pre-figurations of great victories in the rear.

These speculations, at that time, I pursued earnestly; and I then believed myself, as I yet do, to have ascertained the two great and opposite laws under which the Grecian and the English tragedy has each separately developed itself. Whether wrong

or right in that belief, sure I am that those in Germany, who have treated the Classical and Romantic, are not entitled to credit for any discovery at all. The Schlegels, who were the hollowest of men—the windiest and the wordiest—(as least, Frederick was so)—pointed to the distinction; barely indicated it; and that was already some service done, because a presumption arose that the antique and the modern literatures, having clearly some essential differences, might, perhaps, rest on foundations originally distinct, and obey different laws. And hence it occurred that many disputes, as about the unities, &c., might originate in a confusion of these laws. This checks the presumption of the shallow criticism, and points to deeper investigations. Beyond this, neither the German nor the French disputers on the subject have talked to any profitable purpose.

'Sketches of Life and Manners from the Autobiography of an English Opium-Eater.' *Tait's Magazine*, Aug., 1835. M., ii. 72.

STYLE AND LANGUAGE

STYLE

It is a natural resource that whatsoever we find it difficult to investigate as a result, we endeavour to follow as a growth ; failing analytically to probe its nature, historically we seek relief to our perplexities by tracing its origin. Not able to assign the elements of its theory, we endeavour to detect them in the stages of its development. Thus, for instance, when any feudal institution (be it Gothic, Norman, or Anglo-Saxon) eludes our deciphering faculty from the imperfect records of its use and operation, then we endeavour conjecturally to amend our knowledge by watching the circumstances in which that institution arose ; and from the necessities of the age, as indicated by facts which have survived, we are sometimes able to trace, through all their corresponding stages of growth, the natural succession of arrangements which such necessities would be likely to prescribe.

This mode of oblique research, where a more direct one is denied, we find to be the only one in our power. And, with respect to the liberal arts, it is even more true than with respect to laws or institutions, because remote ages widely separated differ much more in their pleasures than they can ever do in their social necessities. To make property safe and life sacred, that is everywhere a primary purpose of law. But the intellectual amusements of men are so different that the very purposes and elementary functions of these amusements are different. They point to

different ends as well as different means. The drama, for instance, in Greece, connects itself with religion; in other ages, religion is the power most in resistance to the drama. Hence, and because the elder and ruder ages are most favourable to a ceremonial and mythological religion, we find the tragedy of Greece defunct before the literary age arose. Aristotle's era may be taken as the earliest era of refinement and literary development. But Aristotle wrote his Essay on the Greek Tragedy just a century after the *chefs-d'œuvre* of that tragedy had been published.

If, therefore, it is sometimes requisite for the proper explanation even of a law or legal usage that we should go to its history, not looking for a sufficient key to its meaning in the mere analogies of our own social necessities, much more will that be requisite in explaining an art or a mode of intellectual pleasure. Why it was that the ancients had no landscape painting, is a question deep almost as the mystery of life, and harder of solution than all the problems of jurisprudence combined. What causes moulded the tragedy of the ancients could hardly be guessed if we did not happen to know its history and mythologic origin. And with respect to what is called *Style*, not so much as a sketch, as an outline, as a hint could be furnished towards the earliest speculations upon this subject, if we should overlook the historical facts connected with its earliest development.

What was it that first produced into this world that celebrated thing called *Prose*? It was the bar, it was the hustings, it was the *Bema* (τὸ βῆμα). What Gibbon and most historians of the Mussulmans have rather absurdly called the pulpit of the Caliphs, should rather be called the rostrum, the Roman military *suggestus*, or Athenian *bema*. The fierce

and generally illiterate Mohammedan harangued his troops; preach he could not; he had no subject for preaching. Now this function of man in almost all states of society, the function of public haranguing, was, for the Pagan man who had no printing-press, more of a mere necessity through every mode of public life than it is for the modern man of Christian light; for as to the modern man of Mohammedan twilight, his perfect bigotry denies him this characteristic resource of Christian energies. Just four centuries have we of the Cross propagated our light by this memorable invention; just four centuries have the slaves of the Crescent clung to their darkness by rejecting it. Christianity signs her name; Islamism makes her mark. And the great doctors of the Mussulmans take their stand precisely where Jack Cade took *his* a few years after printing had been discovered. Jack and they both made it felony to be found with a spelling-book, and sorcery to deal with syntax.

Yet with these differences, all of us alike, Pagan, Mussulman, Christian, have practised the arts of public speaking as the most indispensable resource of public administration and of private intrigue. Whether the purpose were to pursue the interests of legislation, or to conduct the business of jurisprudence, or to bring the merits of great citizens pathetically before their countrymen; or (if the state were democratic enough) oftentimes to explain the conduct of the executive government; oftentimes also to prosecute a scheme of personal ambition, whether the audience were a mob, a senate, a judicial tribunal, or an army, equally (though not in equal degrees) for the Pagan of 2,500 years back, and for us moderns, the arts of public speaking, and consequently of prose as opposed to metrical composition, have been the

capital engine, the one great intellectual machine of civil life.

This to some people may seem a matter of course : ' Would you have men speak in rhyme ? ' We answer, that when society comes into a state of refinement, the total uses of language are developed in common with other arts ; but originally, and whilst man was in his primitive condition of simplicity, it must have seemed an unnatural, nay an absurd thing to speak in prose. For in those elder days the sole justifying or exciting cases for a public harangue would be cases connected with impassioned motives. . . . In itself metre must always have been the earliest vehicle for public enunciations of truth among men, for these obvious reasons : (1) That if metre rises above the standard of ordinary household life, so must any truth of importance and singularity enough to challenge a public utterance. (2) That because religious communications will always have taken a metrical form by a natural association of feeling, whatsoever is invested with a privileged character will seek something of a religious sanction by assuming the same external shape ; and, (3) That expressions, or emphatic verbal forms, which are naturally courted for the sake of pointed effect, receive a justification from metre as being already a departure from common usage to begin with, whereas in plain prose they would appear so many affectations. Metre is naturally and necessarily adopted in cases of impassioned themes, for the very obvious reason that rhythmus is both a cause of impassioned feeling, an ally of such feeling, and a natural effect of it ; but upon other subjects *not* impassioned, metre is also a subtle ally, because it serves to introduce and to reconcile with our sense of propriety various arts of condensation, of antithesis, and other rhetorical effects, which, without the metre

(as a key for harmonizing them) would strike the feelings as unnatural or as full of affectation. Interrogations, for example, passionate ejaculations, &c., seem no more than natural when metre (acting as a key) has attuned and prepared the mind for such effects. The metre raises the tone of colouring so as to introduce richer tints without shocking or harshly jarring upon the presiding key, when without this semi-conscious pitching of the expectations, the sensibility would have been revolted. Hence, for the very earliest stages of society, it will be mere nature that prompts men to metre; it is a mode of inspiration, it is a promise of something preternatural; and less than preternatural cannot be any possible emergency that should call for a public address. Only great truths could require a man to come forward as a spokesman; he is then a sort of interpreter between God and man.

At first, therefore, it is mere nature which prompts metre. Afterwards, as truth begins to enlarge itself—as truth loses something of its sanctity by descending amongst human details—that mode of exalting it, and of courting attention, is dictated by artifice, which originally was a mere necessity of nature raised above herself. For these reasons, it is certain that men, challenging high authentic character, will continue to speak by metre for many generations after it has ceased to be a mere voice of habitual impulse. Whatsoever claims an oracular authority, will take the ordinary external form of an oracle. And after it has ceased to be a badge of inspiration, metre will be retained as a badge of professional distinction; Pythagoras, for instance, within five centuries of Christ, Thales or Theognis, will adopt metre out of a secondary prudence; Orpheus and the elder Sibyl, out of an original necessity.

Those people are, therefore, mistaken who imagine that prose is either a natural or a possible form of composition in early states of society. It is such truth only as ascends from the earth, not such as descends from heaven, which can ever assume an unmetrical form. Now, in the earliest states of society, all truth that has any interest or importance for man will connect itself with heaven. If it does not originally come forward in that sacred character, if it does not borrow its importance from its sanctity; then, by an inverse order, it will borrow a sanctity from its importance. Even agricultural truth, even the homeliest truths of rural industry, brought into connexion with religious inspiration, will be exalted (like the common culinary utensils in the great vision of the Jewish prophet) and transfigured into vessels of glorious consecration. All things in this early stage of social man are meant mysteriously, have allegoric values; and week-day man moves amongst glorified objects. So that if any doctrine, principle, or system of truth, should call for communication at all, infallibly the communication will take the tone of a revelation; and the holiness of a revelation will express itself in the most impassioned form, perhaps with accompaniments of music, but certainly with metre.

Prose, therefore, strange as it may seem to say so, was something of a discovery. If not great invention, at least great courage would be required for the man who should first swim without the bladders of metre. It is all very easy talking, when you and your ancestors for fifty generations back have talked prose. But that man must have had *triplex aes* about his *praecordia*, who first dared to come forward with pure prose as the vehicle for any impassioned form of truth.

STYLE AND MATTER

All subjective branches of study favour the cultivation of style. Whatsoever is entirely independent of the mind, and external to it, is generally equal to its own enunciation. Ponderable facts and external realities are intelligible in almost any language : they are self-explained and self-sustained. But, the more closely any exercise of mind is connected with what is internal and individual in the sensibilities,—that is, with what is philosophically termed *subjective*,—precisely in that degree, and the more subtly, does the style or the embodying of the thoughts cease to be a mere separable ornament, and in fact the more does the manner become confluent with the matter. In saying this we do but vary the form of what we once heard delivered on this subject by Mr. Wordsworth. His remark was by far the weightiest thing we ever heard on the subject of style ; and it was this : that it is in the highest degree unphilosophic to call language or diction ' the *dress* of thoughts '. . . . He would call it ' the *incarnation* of thoughts '. Never in one word was so profound a truth conveyed. Mr. Wordsworth was thinking, doubtless, of poetry like his own : viz. that which is eminently meditative. And the truth is apparent on consideration : for, if language were merely a dress, then you could separate the two ; you could lay the thoughts on the left hand, the language on the right. But, generally speaking, you can no more deal thus with poetic thoughts than you can with soul and body. The union is too subtle, the intertexture too ineffable, —each co-existing not merely *with* the other, but each *in* and *through* the other. An image, for instance, a single word, often enters into a thought as a

constituent part. In short, the two elements are not united as a body with a separable dress, but as a mysterious incarnation. And thus, in what proportion the thoughts are subjective, in that same proportion does the very essence become identical with the expression, and the style become confluent with the matter.

FRENCH AND ENGLISH STYLE

(*a*)

One rise in every sentence, one gentle descent, that is the law for French composition; even too monotonously so; and thus it happens that such a thing as a long or involved sentence can hardly be produced from French literature. Whereas now, amongst us English, not only is the too general tendency of our sentences towards hyperbolical length, but it will be found continually that, instead of one rise and one corresponding fall—one *arsis* and one *thesis*—there are many. Flux and reflux, swell and cadence, that is the movement for a sentence; but our modern sentences agitate us by rolling fires after the fashion of those internal earthquakes that, not content with one throe, run along spasmodically in a long succession of intermitting convulsions.

(*b*)

The French . . . undoubtedly possess one vast advantage over all other nations in the good taste which governs the arrangement of their sentences; in the simplicity (a strange pretension to make for anything French) of the modulation under which their thoughts flow; in the absence of all cumbrous involution, and in the quick succession of their periods. In reality this invaluable merit tends to an excess; and the *style coupé* as opposed to the

style soutenu, flippancy opposed to solemnity, the subsultory to the continuous, these are the too frequent extremities to which the French manner betrays men.

'Style.' *Blackwood*, July, Sept., Oct., 1840, and Feb., 1841, M., x. 134 et seq.

ENGLISH VALUATION OF STYLE

We English in this matter [of style] occupy a middle position between the French and the Germans. Agreeably to the general cast of the national character, our tendency is to degrade the value of the ornamental, whenever it is brought before us under any suggestion of comparison or rivalry with the substantial or grossly useful. Viewing the thoughts as the substantial objects in a book, we are apt to regard the manner of presenting these thoughts as a secondary or even trivial concern. The one we typify as the metallic substance, the silver or gold, which constitutes the true value, that cannot perish in a service of plate; whereas the style too generally, in *our* estimate, represents the mere casual fashion given to the plate by the artist—an adjunct that any change of public taste may degrade into a positive disadvantage. But in this we English err greatly; and by these three capital oversights:—

1. It is certain that style, or (to speak by the most general expression) the management of language, ranks amongst the fine arts, and is able therefore to yield a separate intellectual pleasure quite apart from the interest of the subject treated. So far it is already one error to rate the value of style as if it were necessarily a secondary or subordinate thing. On the contrary, style has an *absolute* value, like the product of any other exquisite art, quite distinct from the value of the subject about which it is

employed, and irrelatively to the subject; precisely as the fine workmanship of Scopas the Greek, or of Cellini the Florentine, is equally valued by the connoisseur, whether embodied in bronze or marble, in an ivory or a golden vase. But

2. If we *do* submit to this narrow valuation of style, founded on the interest of the subject to which it is ministerial, still, even on that basis, we English commit a capital blunder, which the French earnestly and sincerely escape; for, assuming that the thoughts involve the primary interest, still it must make all the difference in the world to the success of those thoughts, whether they are treated in the way best fitted to expel the doubts or darkness that may have settled upon them; and, secondly, in cases where the business is, not to establish new convictions, but to carry old convictions into operative life and power, whether they are treated in the way best fitted to rekindle in the mind a practical sense of their value. Style has two separate functions—first, to brighten the *intelligibility* of a subject which is obscure to the understanding; secondly, to regenerate the normal *power* and impressiveness of a subject which has become dormant to the sensibilities. Darkness gathers upon many a theme, sometimes from previous mistreatment, but oftener from original perplexities investing its very nature. Upon the style it is, if we take that word in its largest sense—upon the skill and art of the developer, that these perplexities greatly depend for their illumination. Look, again, at the other class of cases, when the difficulties are not for the understanding but for the practical sensibilities as applicable to the services of life. The subject, suppose, is already understood sufficiently; but it is lifeless as a motive. It is not new light that is to be communicated, but old torpor that

is to be dispersed. The writer is not summoned to convince, but to persuade. Decaying lineaments are to be retraced, and faded colouring to be refreshed. Now, these offices of style are really not essentially below the level of those other offices attached to the original *discovery* of truth. He that to an old conviction, long since inoperative and dead, gives the regeneration that carries it back into the heart as a vital power of action—he, again, that by new light, or by light trained to flow through a new channel, reconciles to the understanding a truth which hitherto had seemed dark or doubtful—both these men are really, *quoad* us that benefit by their services, the *discoverers* of the truth. Yet these results are amongst the possible gifts of style. Light to *see* the road, power to *advance along* it—such being amongst the promises and proper functions of style, it is a capital error, under the idea of its ministeriality, to undervalue this great organ of the advancing intellect—an organ which is equally important considered as a tool for the culture and *popularization* of truth, and also (if it had no use at all in that way) as a mode *per se* of the beautiful, and a fountain of intellectual pleasure. The vice of that appreciation, which we English apply to style, lies in representing it as a mere ornamental accident of written composition—a trivial embellishment, like the mouldings of furniture, the cornices of ceilings, or the arabesques of tea-urns. On the contrary, it is a product of art the rarest, subtlest, and most intellectual; and, like other products of the fine arts, it is then finest when it is most eminently disinterested—that is, most conspicuously detached from gross palpable uses. Yet, in very many cases, it really *has* the obvious uses of that gross palpable order; as in the cases just noticed, when it gives light to the understanding, or

power to the will, removing obscurities from one set of truths, and into another circulating the life-blood of sensibility. In these cases, meantime, the style is contemplated as a thing separable from the thoughts; in fact, as the *dress* of the thoughts—a robe that may be laid aside at pleasure. But

3. There arises a case entirely different, where style cannot be regarded as a *dress* or alien covering, but where style becomes the *incarnation* of the thoughts. The human body is not the dress or apparel of the human spirit; far more mysterious is the mode of their union. Call the two elements A and B; then it is impossible to point out A as existing aloof from B, or vice versa. A exists in and through B, B exists in and through A. No profound observer can have failed to observe this illustrated in the capacities of style. Imagery is sometimes not the mere alien apparelling of a thought, and of a nature to be detached from the thought, but is the coefficient that, being superadded to something else, absolutely *makes* the thought as a *third* and separate existence.

In this third case, our English tendency to undervalue style goes more deeply into error than in the other two. In those two we simply underrate the enormous services that are or might be rendered by style to the interests of truth and human thinking; but, in the third case, we go near to abolish a mode of existence.

'Language.' Circumstances of original publication unknown. Edinburgh edition, 1858, vol. ix. M., x. 259.

THE ART OF PROSE COMPOSITION

The two capital secrets in the art of prose composition are these: first, the philosophy of transition and connexion; or the art by which one step in an evolution of thought is made to arise out of another: all fluent and effective composition depends on the *connexions*: secondly, the way in which sentences are made to modify each other; for the most powerful effects in written eloquence arise out of this reverberation, as it were, from each other in a rapid succession of sentences: and, because some limitation is necessary to the length and complexity of sentences, in order to make this interdependency felt; hence it is that the Germans have no eloquence. The construction of German prose tends to such immoderate length of sentences, that no effect of intermodification can ever be apparent. Each sentence, stuffed with innumerable clauses of restriction, and other parenthetical circumstances, becomes a separate section—an independent whole.

'Sketches of Life and Manners from the Autobiography of an English Opium-Eater.' Oxford. *Tait's Magazine*, Aug., 1835. M., ii. 65.

THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

(*a*)

The peculiar, and without exaggeration we may say the providential, felicity of the English language has been made its capital reproach—that, whilst yet ductile and capable of new impressions, it received a fresh and large infusion of alien wealth. It is, say the imbecile, a 'bastard' language—a 'hybrid'

language, and so forth. And thus, for a metaphor, for a name, for a sound, they overlook, as far as depends on *their* will, they sign away, the main prerogative and dowry of their mother tongue. It is time to have done with these follies. Let us open our eyes to our own advantages. Let us recognize with thankfulness that fortunate inheritance of collateral wealth which, by inoculating our Anglo-Saxon stem with the mixed dialect of Neustria, laid open an avenue mediately through which the whole opulence of Roman, and, ultimately of Grecian thought, play freely through the pulses of our native English. Most fortunately the Saxon language was yet plastic and unfrozen at the era of the Norman invasion. The language was thrown again into the crucible, and new elements were intermingled with its own when brought into a state of fusion. And this final process it was, making the language at once rich in matter and malleable in form, which created that composite and multiform speech—fitted, like a mirror, to reflect the thoughts of the myriad-minded Shakespeare (ὁ ἀνὴρ μυριόνους) and yet at the same time with enough remaining of its old forest stamina for imparting a masculine depth to the sublimities of Milton, or the Hebrew Prophets, and a patriarchal simplicity to the Historic Scriptures.

(*b*)

Another question, which arises upon all languages, respects their degrees of fitness for poetic and imaginative purposes. The mere question of fact is interesting ; and the question as to the causal agency which has led to such a result is still more so. In this place we shall content ourselves with drawing the reader's attention to a general phenomenon

which comes forward in all non-poetic languages, viz. that the separation of the two great fields, prose and poetry, or of the mind, impassioned or unimpassioned, is never perfectly accomplished. This phenomenon is most striking in the Oriental languages, where the common edicts of government or provincial regulations of police assume a ridiculous masquerade dress of rhetorical or even of poetic animation. But amongst European languages this capital defect is most noticeable in the French, which has no resources for elevating its diction when applied to cases and situations the most lofty or the most affecting. The single misfortune of having no neuter gender, by compelling the mind to distribute the colouring of life universally; and by sexualizing in all cases, neutralizes the effect, as a special effect, for any case. To this one capital deformity, which presents itself in every line, many others have concurred. And it might be shown convincingly that the very power of the French language, as a language for social intercourse, is built on its impotence for purposes of passion, grandeur, and native simplicity. The English, on the other hand, besides its double fountain of words, which furnishes at once two separate keys of feeling, and the ready means of obtaining distinct movements for the same general passion, enjoys the great advantage above southern languages of having a neuter gender, which, from the very first establishing a mode of shade, establishes, by a natural consequence, the means of creating light, and a more potent vitality.

GROWTH OF LANGUAGE

The process by which languages grow is worthy of deep attention. So profound is the error of some men on this subject that they talk familiarly of language as of a thing deliberately and consciously 'invented' by the people who use it. A language was never invented[1] by any people: that part which is not borrowed from adjacent nations arises under instincts of necessity and convenience.

'The English Language.' *Blackwood*, April, 1839. M., xiv. 146.

[1] Meantime, a few insulated words have been continually nourished by authors; that is, transferred to other uses, or formed by thoughtful composition and decomposition, or by skilful alterations of form and inflexion. Thus Mr. Coleridge introduced the fine word *ancestral*, in lieu of the lumbering word *ancestorial*, about the year 1798. Milton introduced the indispensable word *sensuous*. Daniel, the truly philosophic poet and historian, introduced the splendid *class* of words with the affix of *inter*, to denote reciprocation, e. g. *interpenetrate*, to express mutual or interchangeable penetration; a form of composition which is deeply beneficial to the language, and has been extensively adopted by Coleridge. We ourselves may boast to have introduced the word *orchestric*, which we regard with parental pride, as a word expressive of that artificial and pompous music which attends, for instance, the elaborate hexameter verse of Rome and Greece in comparison with the simpler rhyme of the more exclusively accentual metres in modern languages; or expressive of any organized music in opposition to the natural warbling of the woods.

MILTON

We have two ideas, which we are anxious to bring under public notice, with regard to Milton. [We crave leave to convert the reader from] the prevalent opinion upon Milton in two particular questions of taste—questions that are not insulated, but diffusive; spreading themselves over the entire surface of the *Paradise Lost*, and also of the *Paradise Regained*; insomuch that, if Milton is wrong once, then he is wrong by many scores of times. Nay—which transcends all counting of cases or numerical estimates of error—if, in the separate instances (be they few or be they many), Milton is truly and indeed wrong, then he has erred, not by the case, but by the principle; and that is a thousand times worse: for a separate case or instance of error may escape any man—may have been overlooked amongst the press of objects crowding on his eye; or, if *not* overlooked —if passed deliberately—may plead the ordinary privilege of human frailty. The man erred, and his error terminates in itself. But an error of principle does *not* terminate in itself: it is a fountain, it is self-diffusive, and it has a life of its own. The faults of a great man are in any case contagious; they are dazzling and delusive, by means of the great man's general example. But his false principles have a worse contagion. They operate not only through the general haze and halo which invests a shining example; but, even if transplanted where that example is unknown, they propagate themselves by the vitality inherent in all self-consistent principles, whether true or false.

Before we notice these two cases of Milton, first of all let us ask—Who and what *is* Milton? . . . That is to say, what is the place which he fills in his own vernacular literature? what station does he hold in universal literature?

I, if abruptly called upon in that summary fashion to convey a *commensurate* idea of Milton, one which might at once correspond to his pretensions, and yet be readily intelligible to the savage, should answer perhaps thus:—Milton is not an author amongst authors, not a poet amongst poets, but a power amongst powers; and the *Paradise Lost* is not a book amongst books, not a poem amongst poems, but a central force amongst forces. Let me explain. There is this great distinction amongst books: some, though possibly the best in their class, are still no more than books—not indispensable, not incapable of supplementary representation by other books. If they had never been—if their place had continued for ages unfilled—not the less, upon a sufficient excitement arising, there would always have been found the ability, either directly to fill up the vacancy, or at least to meet the same passion virtually, though by a work differing in form. Thus, supposing Butler to have died in youth, and the *Hudibras* to have been intercepted by his premature death, still the ludicrous aspects of the Parliamentary War, and its fighting saints, were too striking to have perished. If not in a narrative form, the case would have come forward in the drama. Puritanical sanctity, in collision with the ordinary interests of life, and with its militant propensities, offered too striking a field for the Satiric Muse, in any case, to have passed in total neglect. The impulse was too strong for repression—it was a volcanic agency that, by some opening or other, must have worked

a way for itself to the upper air. Yet Butler was a most original poet, and a creator within his own province. But, like many another original mind, there is little doubt that he quelled and repressed, by his own excellence, other minds of the same cast. Mere despair of excelling him, so far as not, after all, to seem imitators, drove back others who would have pressed into that arena, if not already brilliantly filled. Butler failing, there would have been another Butler, either in the same, or in some analogous form.

But, with regard to Milton and the Miltonic power, the case is far otherwise. If the man had failed, the power would have failed. In that mode of power which he wielded, the function was exhausted in the man—the species was identified with the individual —the poetry was incarnated in the poet.

Let it be remembered, that, of all powers which act upon man through his intellectual nature, the very rarest is that which we moderns call the *sublime.* The Grecians had apparently no word for it, unless it were that which they meant by τὸ σεμνόν: for ὕψος was a comprehensive expression for all qualities which gave a character of life or animation to the composition, such even as were philosophically opposed to the sublime. In the Roman poetry, and especially in Lucan, at times also in Juvenal, there is an exhibition of a moral sublime, perfectly distinct from anything known to the Greek poetry. The delineations of republican grandeur, as expressing itself through the principal leaders in the Roman camps, or the trampling under foot of ordinary superstitions, as given in the reasons assigned to Labienus for passing the oracle of the Libyan Jupiter unconsulted, are in a style to which there is nothing corresponding in the whole Grecian literature, nor would they have been comprehensible to an Athenian.

The famous line—'Iupiter est quodcunque vides, quocunque moveris,' and the brief review of such questions as might be worthy of an oracular god, with the summary declaration, that every one of those points we know already by the light of nature, and could not know them better though Jupiter Ammon himself were to impress them on our attention—

Scimus, et haec nobis non altius inseret Ammon :
We know it, and no Ammon will ever sink it deeper into our hearts ;

all this is truly Roman in its sublimity ; and so exclusively Roman, that there, and not in poets like the Augustan, expressly modelling their poems on Grecian types, ought the Roman mind to be studied.

On the other hand, for that species of the sublime which does not rest purely and merely on moral energies, but on a synthesis between man and nature —for what may properly be called the Ethico-physical Sublime—there is but one great model surviving in the Greek poetry ; viz. the gigantic drama of the Prometheus crucified on Mount Elborus. And this drama differs so much from everything else, even in the poetry of Aeschylus, as the mythus itself differs so much from all the rest of the Grecian Mythology (belonging apparently to an age and a people more gloomy, austere, and nearer to the *incunabula mundi*, than those which bred the gay and sunny superstitions of Greece), that much curiosity and speculation have naturally gathered round the subject of late years. Laying this one insulated case apart, and considering that the Hebrew poetry of Isaiah and Ezekiel, as having the benefit of inspiration, does not lie within the just limits of competition, we may affirm that there is no human composition which

can be challenged as constitutionally sublime—sublime equally by its conception and by its execution, or as uniformly sublime from first to last, excepting the *Paradise Lost*. In Milton only, first and last, is the power of the sublime revealed. In Milton only does this great agency blaze and glow as a furnace kept up to a white heat—without suspicion of collapse.

If, therefore, Milton occupies this unique position—and let the reader question himself closely whether he can cite any other book than the *Paradise Lost*, as continuously sublime, or sublime even by its prevailing character—in that case there is a peculiarity of importance investing that one book which belongs to no other; and it must be important to dissipate any erroneous notions which affect the integrity of that book's estimation. Now, there are two notions countenanced by Addison and by Dr. Johnson, which tend greatly to disparage the character of its composition. If the two critics, one friendly, the other very malignant, but both endeavouring to be just, have in reality built upon sound principles, or at least upon a sound appreciation of Milton's principles, in that case, there is a mortal taint diffused over the whole of the *Paradise Lost*: for not a single book is clear of one or other of the two errors which they charge upon him. We will briefly state the objections, and then as briefly reply to them, by exposing the true philosophy of Milton's practice. For we are very sure that, in doing as he did, this mighty poet was governed by no carelessness or oversight (as is imagined), far less by affectation or ostentation, but by a most refined theory of poetic effects.

1. The first of these two charges respects a supposed pedantry, or too ambitious a display of erudition. It is surprising to us that such an objection should

have occurred to any man ; both because, after all, the quantity of learning cannot be great for which any poem can find an opening ; and because, in any poem burning with concentrated fire, like the Miltonic, the passion becomes a law to itself, and will not receive into connexion with itself any parts so deficient in harmony, as a cold ostentation of learned illustrations must always have been found. Still, it is alleged that such words as *frieze*, *architrave*, *cornice*, *zenith*, &c., are words of art, out of place amongst the primitive simplicities of Paradise, and at war with Milton's purpose of exhibiting the paradisaical state.

Now, here is displayed broadly the very perfection of ignorance, as measured against the very perfection of what may be called poetic science. We will lay open the true purpose of Milton by a single illustration. In describing impressive scenery as occurring in a hilly or a woody country, everybody must have noticed the habit which young ladies have of using the word *amphitheatre* : 'amphitheatre of woods '—'amphitheatre of hills '—these are their constant expressions. Why ? Is it because the word *amphitheatre* is a Grecian word ? We question if one young lady in twenty knows that it is ; and very certain we are that no word would recommend itself to her use by that origin, if she happened to be aware of it. The reason lurks here :—In the word *theatre* is contained an evanescent image of a great audience—of a populous multitude. Now, this image—half-withdrawn, half-flashed upon the eye, and combined with the word *hills* or *forests*—is thrown into powerful collision with the silence of hills—with the solitude of forests ; each image, from reciprocal contradiction, brightens and vivifies the other. The two images act, and react, by strong repulsion and antagonism.

This principle I might exemplify, and explain at great length ; but I impose a law of severe brevity upon myself. And I have said enough. Out of this one principle of subtle and lurking antagonism, may be explained everything which has been denounced under the idea of pedantry in Milton. It is the key to all that lavish pomp of art and knowledge which is sometimes put forward by Milton in situations of intense solitude, and in the bosom of primitive nature—as, for example, in the Eden of his great poem, and in the Wilderness of his *Paradise Regained.* The shadowy exhibition of a regal banquet in the desert draws out and stimulates the sense of its utter solitude and remotion from men or cities. The images of architectural splendour, suddenly raised in the very centre of Paradise, as vanishing shows by the wand of a magician, bring into powerful relief the depth of silence and the unpopulous solitude which possess this sanctuary of man whilst yet happy and innocent. Paradise could not in any other way, or by any artifice less profound, have been made to give up its essential and differential characteristics in a form palpable to the imagination. As a place of rest, it was necessary that it should be placed in close collision with the unresting strife of cities ; as a place of solitude, with the image of tumultuous crowds ; as the centre of mere natural beauty in its gorgeous prime, with the images of elaborate architecture and of human workmanship ; as a place of perfect innocence in seclusion, that it should be exhibited as the antagonist pole to the sin and misery of social man.

Such is the covert philosophy which governs Milton's practice, and which might be illustrated by many scores of passages from both the *Paradise Lost* and the *Paradise Regained.*[1] In fact, a volume

[1] For instance, this is the key to that image in the *Paradise*

might be composed on this one chapter. And yet, from the blindness or inconsiderate examination of his critics, this latent wisdom, this cryptical science of poetic effects in the mighty poet, has been misinterpreted, and set down to the effect of defective skill, or even of puerile ostentation.

2. The second great charge against Milton is, *prima facie*, even more difficult to meet. It is the charge of having blended the Pagan and Christian forms. The great realities of angels and archangels are continually combined into the same groups with the fabulous impersonations of the Greek Mythology. Eve is interlinked in comparisons with Pandora, with Aurora, with Proserpine. Those impersonations, however, may be thought to have something of allegoric meaning in their conceptions, which in a measure corrects this paganism of the idea. But Eve is also compared with Ceres, with Hebe, and other fixed forms of pagan superstition. Other allusions to the Greek mythologic forms, or direct combination of them with the real existences of the Christian heavens, might be produced by scores, were it not that we decline to swell our paper beyond the necessity of the case. Now, surely this at least is an error. Can there be any answer to this ?

At one time we were ourselves inclined to fear that Milton had been here caught tripping. In this instance, at least, he seems to be in error. But

Regained, where Satan, on first emerging into sight, is compared to an old man gathering sticks, ' to warm him on a winter's day.' This image, at first sight, seems little in harmony with the wild and awful character of the supreme fiend. No ; it is *not in* harmony, nor is it meant to be in harmony. On the contrary, it is meant to be in antagonism and intense repulsion. The household image of old age, of human infirmity, and of domestic hearths, are all meant as a machinery for provoking and soliciting the fearful idea to which they are placed in collision, and as so many repelling poles.

there is no trusting to appearances. In meditating upon the question, we happened to remember that the most colossal and Miltonic of painters had fallen into the very same fault, if fault it were. In his 'Last Judgement', Michael Angelo has introduced the pagan deities in connexion with the hierarchy of the Christian heavens. Now, it is very true that one great man cannot palliate the error of another great man, by repeating the same error himself. But, though it cannot avail as an excuse, such a conformity of ideas serves as a summons to a much more vigilant examination of the case than might else be instituted. One man might err from inadvertency; but that two, and both men trained to habits of constant meditation, should fall into the same error, makes the marvel tenfold greater.

Now we confess that, as to Michael Angelo, we do not pretend to assign the precise key to the practice which he adopted. And to our feelings, after all that might be said in apology, there still remains an impression of incongruity in the visual exhibition and direct juxtaposition of the two orders of supernatural existence so potently repelling each other. But, as regards Milton, the justification is complete: it rests upon the following principle:—

In all other parts of Christianity, the two orders of superior beings, the Christian Heaven and the Pagan Pantheon, are felt to be incongruous—not as the pure opposed to the impure (for, if that were the reason, then the Christian fiends should be incongruous with the angels, which they are not), but as the unreal opposed to the real. In all the hands of other poets, we feel that Jupiter, Mercury, Apollo, Diana, are not merely impure conceptions, but that they are baseless conceptions, phantoms of air, nonentities; and there is much the same objection

in point of just taste, to the combination of such fabulous beings in the same groups with glorified saints and angels, as there is to the combination, by a painter or a sculptor, of real flesh-and-blood creatures, with allegoric abstractions.

This is the objection to such combination in all other poets. But this objection does not apply to Milton; it glances past him; and for the following reason: Milton has himself laid an early foundation for his introduction of the Pagan Pantheon into Christian groups: *the false gods of the heathen world were, according to Milton, the fallen angels.* See his inimitable account of the fallen angels—who and what they subsequently became. In itself, and even if detached from the rest of the *Paradise Lost*, this catalogue is an *ultra*-magnificent poem. They are not false, therefore, in the sense of being unreal, baseless, and having a merely fantastical existence, like our European Fairies, but as having drawn aside mankind from a pure worship. As ruined angels under other names, they are no less real than the faithful and loyal angels of the Christian heavens. And in that one difference of the Miltonic creed, which the poet has brought pointedly and elaborately under his reader's notice, by his matchless roll-call of the rebellious angels, and of *their pagan transformations*, in the very first book of the *Paradise Lost*, is laid beforehand[1] the amplest foundation for his subsequent practice; and at the same time, therefore,

[1] Other celebrated poets have laid no such preparatory foundations for their intermixture of heathen gods with the heavenly host of the Christian revelation; for example, amongst thousands of others, Tasso, and still more flagrantly Camoens, who is not content with allusions or references that suppose the Pagan Mythology still substantially existing, but absolutely introduces them as potent agencies amongst superstitious and bigoted worshippers of papal saints. Consequently, they, beyond all apology, are open to the censure which for Milton is subtly evaded.

the amplest answer to the charge preferred against him by Dr. Johnson, and by so many other critics, who had not sufficiently penetrated the latent theory on which he acted.

'On Milton.' *Blackwood*, Dec., 1839. M., x. 395

ANTAGONISM

In this article I mean to apply the principle of antagonism, as it is manifested in the fine arts, to the solution of a particular difficulty in Milton; and in that way to draw the attention of the reader to a great cardinal law on which philosophical criticism, whenever it arises, must hereafter mainly depend.—I presume that my reader is acquainted with the meaning of the word antagonism as it is understood in the term 'antagonist muscle', or in general from the term 'antagonist force'.

It has been objected to Milton that he is guilty of pedantry in the introduction of scientific and technical terms into the *Paradise Lost*; and the words *frieze*, *architrave*, *pilaster*, and other architectural terms, together with terms from astronomy, navigation, &c., have been cited as instances of this pedantry. This criticism I pronounce to be founded on utter psychological ignorance and narrow thinking. And I shall endeavour to justify Milton by placing in a clear light the subtle principle by which he was influenced in that practice: which principle I do not mean to say that Milton had fully developed to his own consciousness; for it was not the habit of his age or of his mind to exercise any analytic subtlety of mind; but I say that the principle was immanent in his feelings; just as his fine ear contained implicitly all the metrical rules which are latent in his exquisite

versification, though it is most improbable that he ever took the trouble to evolve those to his own distinct consciousness.

'Notes from the Pocket-Book of a late Opium-Eater.' No. III. *London Magazine*, Nov., 1823. M., x. 436.

THE 'MORAL' OF *PARADISE LOST*

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 organization 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. . . .

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 realized 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.

'Milton *v.* Southey and Landor.' *Tait's Magazine*, April, 1847. M., xi. 454.

SATAN'S SYNONYMS

The result of this collision [between Satan and the junior angels], and of the examination which follows, is what no reader can ever forget—so unspeakable is the grandeur of that scene between the two hostile archangels, when the *Fiend* (so named at the moment under the fine machinery used by Milton for exalting or depressing the ideas of his nature) finally takes his flight as an incarnation of darkness.

And fled
Murmuring; and with him fled the shades of night.

The darkness flying with him, naturally we have the feeling that he *is* the darkness, and that all darkness has some essential relation to Satan.

' Pope's retort upon Addison.' American Collective Edition, vol. xvi, Boston, 1854. M., x. 418.

MILTON'S DICTION

I affirm . . . that Lord Brougham's counsel to the Glasgow students [that the Saxon part of our English idiom is to be favoured at the expense of that part which has coalesced with the language from the Latin or Greek] is not only bad counsel, . . . but also that, in the exact proportion in which the range of thought expands, it is an impossible counsel—an impracticable counsel—a counsel having for its purpose to embarrass and lay the mind in fetters, where even its utmost freedom and its largest resources will be found all too little for the growing necessities of the intellect. . .

Coleridge remarks on Wordsworth's philosophic poetry, that, in proportion as it goes into the profound of passion and of thought, do the words increase which are vulgarly called ' *dictionary* words '. Now these words—these dictionary words—what are they ? Simply words of Latin or Greek origin ; no other words, no Saxon words, are ever called by illiterate persons dictionary words. And these dictionary words are indispensable to a writer, not only in the proportion by which he transcends other writers as to extent and as to subtility of thinking, but also as to elevation and sublimity. Milton was not an extensive or discursive thinker, as Shakespeare was ; for the motions of his mind were slow—solemn —sequacious, like those of the planets ; not agile

and assimilative; not attracting all things within its own sphere; not multiform: repulsion was the law of his intellect; he moved in solitary grandeur. Yet merely from this quality of grandeur—unapproachable grandeur—his intellect demanded a larger infusion of Latinity into his diction. For the same reason (and, without such aids, he would have had no proper element in which to move his wings), he enriched his diction with Hellenisms and with Hebraisms; but never, as could be easy to show, without a full justification in the result. Two things may be asserted of all his exotic idioms—first, that they express what could not have been expressed by any native idiom; second, that they harmonize with the English language, and give a colouring of the antique, but not any sense of strangeness to the diction. Thus, in the double negative—'nor did they not perceive,' &c., which is classed as a Hebraism—if any man fancy that it expresses no more than the simple affirmative, he shows that he does not understand its force; and, at the same time, it is a form of thought so natural and universal, that I have heard English people, under corresponding circumstances, spontaneously fall into it. In short, whether a man differ from others by greater profundity or by greater sublimity, and whether he write as a poet or as a philosopher, in any case, he feels, in due proportion to the necessities of his intellect, an increasing dependance upon the Latin section of the English language.

'Sketches of Life and Manners from the Autobiography of an English Opium-Eater.' *Tait's Magazine*, Aug., 1835. M., ii. 68.

MILTON'S VERSIFICATION CRITICIZED BY LANDOR

(*a*)

Mr. Landor returns to Milton 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. . .

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. . . 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 caesura, or perhaps a different suspension of the voice, so as to bring out a new and self-justifying effect. . .

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 caesura 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:

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.

(*b*)

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,

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?

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. . . .

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.

' Milton *v.* Southey and Landor.' *Tait's Magazine*, April, 1847. M., xi. 453.

MILTON'S SPELLING

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

[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.

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.

'Orthographic Mutineers.' *Tait's Magazine*, March, 1847. M., xi. 444.

MILTON AND OVID

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.

'Orthographic Mutineers.' *Tait's Magazine*, March, 1847. M., xi. 449.

POPE

That Pope is to be classed as an inferior poet, has arisen purely from a confusion between the departments of poetry which he cultivated and the merit of his culture. The first place must undoubtedly be given for ever—it cannot be refused—to the impassioned movements of the tragic, and to the majestic movements of the epic muse. We cannot alter the relations of things out of favour to an individual. But in his own department, whether higher or lower, that man is supreme who has not yet been surpassed ; and such a man is Pope. . .

Not for superior correctness, but for qualities the very same as belong to his most distinguished brethren, is Pope to be considered a great poet ; for impassioned thinking, powerful description, pathetic reflection, brilliant narration. His characteristic difference is simply that he carried these powers into a different field, and moved chiefly through the social paths of men, and viewed their characters as operating through their manners.

And our obligations to him arise chiefly on this ground, that having already, in the persons of earlier poets, carried off the palm in all the grander trials of intellectual strength, for the majesty of the epopee and the impassioned vehemence of the tragic drama, to Pope we owe it that we can now claim an equal pre-eminence in the sportive and aërial graces of the mock heroic and satiric muse ; that in the *Dunciad*, we possess a peculiar form of satire, in which (according to a plan unattempted by any other nation) we see alternately her festive

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

'Pope.' *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 7th edition. M., iv. 278-80.

THE ESSAY ON CRITICISM

The *Essay on Criticism* . . . 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.

'Schlosser's Literary History of the Eighteenth Century.' *Tait's Magazine*, Sept. and Oct., 1847. M., xi. 29.

The *Essay on Criticism* . . . is a collection of independent maxims, tied together by the printer, but having no natural order or logical dependancy : generally so vague as to mean nothing : like the general rules of justice, &c., in ethics, to which every man assents ; but when the question comes about any practical case, *is* it just ? the opinions fly asunder far as the poles.

'Pope.' *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 7th edition. M., iv. 280.

POPE'S SATIRE

Pope alleges it as a palliation of his satiric malice, that it had been forced from him in the way of retaliation; forgetting that such a plea wilfully abjures the grandest justification of a satirist, viz. the deliberate assumption of the character as something corresponding to the prophet's mission amongst the Hebrews. It is no longer the *facit indignatio versum*. Pope's satire, where even it was most effective, was personal and vindictive, and upon that argument alone could not be philosophic.

'Pope's retort upon Addison.' American Collective Edition, vol. xvi, Boston, 1854. M., iv. 286.

POPE AND DRYDEN

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.

'Lord Carlisle on Pope.' *Tait's Magazine*, April–July, 1851. M., xi. 119.

WORDSWORTH

ON WORDSWORTH'S POETRY

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

[1] William Wordsworth had, on the death of Southey, accepted the Laureateship.

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

[1] ' *Modern Rector* : '—viz. Lord Brougham.

affections, naturally moves by Saxon words. Lyrical emotion of every kind, which (to merit the name of *lyrical*) must be in the state of flux and reflux, or, generally, of agitation, also requires the Saxon element of our language. And why ? Because the Saxon is the aboriginal element ; the basis, and not the superstructure ; consequently it comprehends all the ideas which are natural to the heart of man, and to the *elementary* situations of life. And, although the Latin often furnishes us with duplicates of these ideas, yet the Saxon, or monosyllabic part, has the advantage of precedency in our use and knowledge ; for it is the language of the NURSERY, whether for rich or poor, in which great philological academy no toleration is given to words in '*osity*' or '*ation*'. There is, therefore, a great advantage, as regards the consecration to our feelings, settled, by usage and custom, upon the Saxon strands, in the mixed yarn of our native tongue. And, universally, this may be remarked—that, wherever the passion of a poem is of that sort which *uses*, *presumes*, or *postulates* the ideas, without seeking to extend them, Saxon will be the 'cocoon' (to speak by the language applied to 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.

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, Shakespeare, the Bible of 1610, 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 the 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 even been given of the particular phraselogy 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 sympathizing powerfully with the martial spirit. Other poets, favourites of Mr. Hazlitt, have never struck a solitary note from this Tyrtaean 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 fullness 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—

> Pleasure is spread through the earth,
> In stray gifts to be claim'd 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

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

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

Undeniably there is (and without ground for complaint there is) even here, where the spirit of 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 agonizing race through thirteen hours—out of the anguish in the perishing brute, and the headlong courage of his final despair,

Not unobserved by sympathy divine—

out of the ruined lodge and the forgotten mansion, 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

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

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 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. . . .

[Here follow eleven pages of criticism upon the story of the first three books of *The Excursion*.]

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 *amoebaean* character upon the process of altercation. But the topics and the quality of the arguments being *moral*, in which always the reconciliation of the feelings is to be secured by gradual persuasion, rather than the understanding to be floored by a solitary blow, inevitably it becomes impossible that anything of this brilliant conversational sword-play, cut-and-thrust, ' carte ' and ' tierce ', can make for itself an opening. Mere decorum requires that the speakers should be prosy. And you yourself, though sometimes

disposed to say, 'Do now, dear old soul, cut it short,' are sensible that 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 sub-consciousness. 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, harmonizing, by which a mode of obscurity executes for the eye the same mysterious office which the mind so often, within its own shadowy realms, executes for itself. In the dim interspace between day and night, all disappears from our earthly scenery, as if touched by an enchanter's rod, which is either mean or inharmonious or unquiet, or expressive of temporary things. Leaning against a column of rock, looking down upon a lake or river, and at intervals carrying your eyes forward through a vista of mountains, you become aware that your sight rests upon the very same spectacle, unaltered in a single feature, which once at the same hour was beheld by the legionary Roman from his embattled camp, or by the roving Briton in his 'wolf-skin vest', lying down to sleep, and looking

> Through some leafy bower,
> Before his eyes were closed.

How magnificent is the summary or abstraction of the elementary features in such a scene, as executed by the poet himself, in illustration of this abstraction daily executed by nature, through her handmaid

Twilight! Listen, reader, to the closing strain, solemn as twilight is solemn, and grand as the spectacle which it describes :—

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

Another great field there is amongst the pomps of nature, which, if Wordsworth did not first notice, he certainly has noticed most circumstantially. I speak of cloud-scenery, or those pageants of sky-built architecture, which sometimes in summer, at 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. But the cloud-architecture of the day-light belongs alike to north and south. Accordingly, I remember one notice of it in Hesiod, a case where the clouds exhibited

> 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 Shakespeare, beginning,

Sometimes we see a cloud that 's dragonish.

Subsequently to Shakespeare, 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*, 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,[1] make such blunders as that of supposing the moon to tip with silver the hills *behind* which she is rising, not by erroneous use of their eyes (for they use them not at all), but by inveterate preconceptions. Scarcely has there been a poet with

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

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,

> 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 these 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 sympathize with man's frenzy in hunting, who divide with man the burdens of noonday. Far otherwise it is with dogs, that share

the hearths of man, and adore the footsteps of his children. These man loves ; of these he makes dear, though humble friends. These often fight for *him* ; and for *them* he 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 is 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 of 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 judgements 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 by-word of scorn. Since then, and more than once, senates have rung with acclamations to the echo of his name. Now at this moment, 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 Shakespeare.

Tait's Magazine, Sept., 1845. M., xi. 294.

DESCRIPTIVE SKETCHES

On his return [from abroad, 1790], Wordsworth published a quarto pamphlet of verses, describing, with very considerable effect and brilliancy, the grand scenery amongst which he had been moving. This poem, as well as another in the same quarto form, describing the English lake scenery of Westmoreland and Cumberland, addressed by way of letter 'to a young lady' (viz. Miss Wordsworth), are remarkable, in the first place, as the earliest effort of Wordsworth in verse, at least as his earliest publication; but, in the second place, and still more so, from their style of composition. 'Pure description,' even where it cannot be said, sneeringly, 'to

[1] Written in 1845.

hold the place of sense,' is so little attractive as the direct exclusive object of a poem, and in reality it exacts so powerful an effort on the part of the reader to realize visually, or make into an apprehensible unity, the scattered elements and circumstances of external landscapes painted only by words, that, inevitably, and reasonably, it can never hope to be a popular form of composition; else it is highly probable that these *Descriptive Sketches* of Wordsworth, though afterwards condemned as vicious in their principles of composition by his own maturer taste, would really have gained him a high momentary notoriety with the public, had they been fairly brought under its notice; whilst, on the other hand, his revolutionary principles of composition, and his purer taste, ended in obtaining for him nothing but scorn and ruffian insolence. This seems marvellous; but, in fact, it is not so; it seems, I mean, *prima facie*, marvellous that the inferior models should be fitted to gain a far higher reputation; but the secret lies here—that these were in a style of composition which, if sometimes false, had been long reconciled to the public feelings, and which, besides, have a specific charm for certain minds, even apart from all fashions of the day; whereas, his later poems had to struggle against sympathies long trained in an opposite direction, to which the recovery of a healthier tone (even where nature had made it possible) presupposed a difficult process of weaning, and an effort of discipline for reorganizing the whole internal economy of the sensibilities, that is both painful and mortifying: for—and that is worthy of deep attention—the misgivings of any vicious or unhealthy state; the impulses and suspicious gleams of the truth struggling with cherished error; the instincts of light conflicting with darkness—these are

the real causes of that hatred and intolerant scorn which is ever awakened by the first dawnings of new and important systems of truth.... Therefore was the Wordsworthian restoration of elementary power, and of a higher or transcendent truth of nature (or, as some people vaguely expressed the case, of *simplicity*), received at first with such malignant disgust. For there was a galvanic awakening in the shock of power, as it jarred against the ancient system of prejudices, which inevitably revealed so much of truth as made the mind jealous; enlightened it enough to descry its own wanderings, but not enough to recover the right road.

EFFECT OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

It was about this period that the French Revolution broke out; and the reader who would understand its appalling effects—its convulsing, revolutionary effects upon Wordsworth's heart and soul—should consult the history of the Solitary, as given by himself in the *Excursion*; for that picture is undoubtedly a leaf from the personal experience of Wordsworth :—

From that dejection I was roused—but how ?

Mighty was the transformation which it wrought in the whole economy of his thoughts; miraculous almost was the expansion which it gave to his human sympathies; chiefly in this it showed its effects—in throwing the thoughts inwards into grand meditations upon man, his final destiny, his ultimate capacities of elevation; and, secondly, in giving to the whole system of the thoughts and feelings a firmer tone, and a sense of the awful *realities* which surround the mind; by comparison with which the previous literary tastes seemed (even where they

were fine and elegant, as in Collins or Gray, unless where they had the self-sufficing character of religion, as in Cowper) fanciful and trivial. In all lands this result was accomplished, and at the same time: Germany, above all, found her new literature the mere creation and rebound of this great moral tempest; and, in Germany or England alike, the poetry was so entirely regenerated, thrown into moulds of thought and feeling so new, that the poets everywhere felt themselves to be putting away childish things, and now first, among those of their own century, entering upon the dignity and the sincere thinking of mature manhood.

'The Lake Poets: William Wordsworth.' *Tait's Magazine*, Feb., 1839. M., ii. 271–4.

NOTE ON THE VALLEY OF GRASMERE

Thirty years ago, a gang of Vandals . . . carried a horrid causeway of sheer granite masonry, for three quarters of a mile, right through the loveliest succession of secret forest dells and shy recesses of the lake, margined by unrivalled ferns, amongst which was the *Osmunda regalis*. This sequestered angle of Grasmere is described by Wordsworth, as it unveiled itself on a September morning, in the exquisite poems on the *Naming of Places*. From this also—viz. this spot of ground, and this magnificent crest (the Osmunda)—was suggested that unique line—the finest independent line through all the records of verse :—

Or lady of the lake,
Sole-sitting by the shores of old romance.

Confessions of an English Opium-Eater. Edinburgh edition, 1856. Vol. v. M., iii. 407.

SOUTHEY

THERE were . . . two other notions currently received about Southey, one of which is altogether erroneous, and the other true only in a limited sense. The first is the belief that he belonged to what is known as the lake school of poetry; with respect to which all that I need say in this place, is involved in his own declaration frankly made to myself in Easedale, during the summer of 1812; that he considered Wordsworth's theory of poetic diction, and still more his principles as to the selection of subjects, and as to what constituted a poetic treatment, as founded on error. There is certainly some community of phraseology between Southey and the other lakers, naturally arising out of their joint reverence for scriptural language: this was a field in which they met in common: else it shows but little discernment and power of valuing the essences of things, to have classed Southey in the same school with Wordsworth and Coleridge. The other popular notion about Southey, which I conceive to be expressed with much too little limitation, regards his style. He has been praised, and justly, for his plain, manly, unaffected English, until the parrot echoers of other men's judgements, who adopt all they relish with undistinguishing blindness, have begun to hold him up as a great master of his own language, and a classical model of fine composition. Now, if the error were only in degree, it would not be worth while to notice it; but the truth is, that Southey's defects in this particular power, are as striking as his characteristic

graces. Let a subject arise—and almost in any path there is a ready possibility that it should—in which a higher tone is required, of splendid declamation, or of impassionate fervour, and Southey's style will immediately betray its want of the loftier qualities as flagrantly as it now asserts its powers in that unpretending form which is best suited to his level character of writing and his humbler choice of themes. It is to mistake the character of Southey's mind, which is elevated but not sustained by the higher modes of enthusiasm, to think otherwise. Were a magnificent dedication required, moving with a stately and measured solemnity, and putting forward some majestic pretensions, arising out of a long and laborious life ; were a pleading required against some capital abuse of the earth—war, slavery, oppression in its thousand forms ; were a *Defensio pro Populo Anglicano* required ; Southey's is not the mind, and, by a necessary consequence, Southey's is not the style, for carrying such purposes into full and memorable effect. His style is *therefore* good, because it has been suited to his themes ; and those themes have hitherto been either narrative, which usually imposes a modest diction, and a modest structure of sentences, or argumentative in that class which is too overburthened with details, with replies, with interruption, and every mode of discontinuity to allow a thought of eloquence, or of the periodic style which a perfect eloquence instinctively seeks.

'The Lake Poets: Southey, Wordsworth, and Coleridge.' *Tait's Magazine*, August, 1839. _ M., ii. 345.

LAMB

LAMB AND HAZLITT

THE account given of Lamb's friends, of those whom he endeavoured to love because he admired them, or to esteem intellectually because he loved them personally, is too much coloured for general acquiescence by Serjeant (since Mr. Justice) Talfourd's own early prepossessions. . . . Hazlitt is styled 'The great thinker'. But had he even been such potentially, there was an absolute bar to his achievement of that station in act and consummation. No man *can* be a great thinker in our days upon large and elaborate questions without being also a great student. To think profoundly, it is indispensable that a man should have read down to his own starting-point, and have read as a collating student to the particular stage at which he himself takes up the subject. At this moment, for instance, how could geology be treated otherwise than childishly by one who should rely upon the encyclopaedias of 1800 ? or comparative physiology by the most ingenious of men unacquainted with Marshall Hall, and with the apocalyptic glimpses of secrets unfolding under the hands of Professor Owen ? In such a condition of undisciplined thinking, the ablest man thinks to no purpose. He lingers upon parts of the inquiry that have lost the importance which once they had, under imperfect charts of the subject ; he wastes his strength upon problems that have become obsolete ; he loses his way in paths that are not in the line of direction upon which the improved speculation is moving ; or he gives narrow conjectural solutions of difficulties that have long

since received sure and comprehensive ones. It is as if a man should in these days attempt to colonize, and yet, through inertia or through ignorance, should leave behind him all modern resources of chemistry, of chemical agriculture, or of steam-power. Hazlitt had read nothing. Unacquainted with Grecian philosophy, with Scholastic philosophy, and with the recomposition of these philosophies in the looms of Germany during the last seventy and odd years, trusting merely to the untrained instincts of keen mother-wit—whence should Hazlitt have had the materials for great thinking? It is through the collation of many abortive voyages to polar regions that a man gains his first chance of entering the polar basin, or of running ahead on the true line of approach to it. The very reason for Hazlitt's defect in eloquence as a lecturer, is sufficient also as a reason why he could not have been a comprehensive thinker. 'He was not eloquent,' says the Serjeant, 'in the true sense of the term.' But why? Because it seems 'his thoughts were too weighty to be moved along by the shallow stream of feeling which an evening's excitement can rouse',—an explanation which leaves us in doubt whether Hazlitt forfeited his chance of eloquence by accommodating himself to this evening's excitement, or by gloomily resisting it. Our own explanation is different; Hazlitt was not eloquent, because he was discontinuous. No man can be eloquent whose thoughts are abrupt, insulated, capricious, and (to borrow an impressive word from Coleridge) non-sequacious. Eloquence resides not in separate or fractional ideas, but in the relations of manifold ideas, and in the mode of their evolution from each other. It is not indeed enough that the ideas should be many, and their relations coherent, the main condition lies in the *key* of the evolution,

in the *law* of the succession. The elements are nothing without the atmosphere that moulds, and the dynamic forces that combine. Now Hazlitt's brilliancy is seen chiefly in separate splinterings of phrase or image which throw upon the eye a vitreous scintillation for a moment, but spread no deep suffusions of colour, and distribute no masses of mighty shadow. A flash, a solitary flash, and all is gone. Rhetoric, according to its quality, stands in many degrees of relation to the permanencies of truth; and all rhetoric, like all flesh, is partly unreal, and the glory of both is fleeting. Even the mighty rhetoric of Sir Thomas Browne, or Jeremy Taylor, to whom only it has been granted to open the trumpet-stop on that great organ of passion, oftentimes leaves behind it the sense of sadness which belongs to beautiful apparitions starting out of darkness upon the morbid eye, only to be reclaimed by darkness in the instant of their birth, or which belongs to pageantries in the clouds. But if all rhetoric is a mode of pyrotechny, and all pyrotechnics are by necessity fugitive, yet even in these frail pomps, there are many degrees of frailty. Some fireworks require an hour's duration for the expansion of their glory; others, as if formed from fulminating powder, expire in the very act of birth. Precisely on that scale of duration and of power stand the glitterings of rhetoric that are not worked into the texture, but washed on from the outside. Hazlitt's thoughts were of the same fractured and discontinuous order as his illustrative images—seldom or never self-diffusive; and *that* is a sufficient argument that he had never cultivated philosophic thinking.

Not, however, to conceal any part of the truth, we are bound to acknowledge that Lamb thought otherwise on this point, manifesting what seemed

to us an extravagant admiration of Hazlitt, and perhaps even in part for that very glitter which we are denouncing—at least he did so in conversation with ourselves. But, on the other hand, as this conversation travelled a little into the tone of a disputation, and *our* frost on this point might seem to justify some undue fervour by way of balance, it is very possible that Lamb did not speak his absolute and most dispassionate judgement. And yet again, if he *did*, may we, with all reverence for Lamb's exquisite genius, have permission to say—that his own constitution of intellect sinned by this very habit of discontinuity. It was a habit of mind not unlikely to be cherished by his habits of life. Amongst these habits was the excess of his social kindness. He scorned so much to deny his company and his redundant hospitality to any man who manifested a wish for either by calling upon him, that he almost seemed to think it a criminality in himself if, by accident, he really *was* from home on your visit, rather than by possibility a negligence in you, that had not forewarned him of your intention. What was the consequence ? All his life, from this and other causes, he must have read in the spirit of one liable to sudden interruption ; like a dragoon, in fact, reading with one foot in the stirrup, when expecting momentarily a summons to mount for action. In such situations, reading by snatches and by intervals of precarious leisure, people form inevitably the habit of seeking and unduly valuing condensations of the meaning, where in reality the truth suffers by this shorthand exhibition ; or else they demand too vivid illustrations of the meaning....

To read therefore habitually, by hurried instalments, has this bad tendency—that it is likely to found a taste for modes of composition too artificially

irritating, and to disturb the equilibrium of the judgement in relation to the colourings of style. Lamb, however, whose constitution of mind was even ideally sound in reference to the natural, the simple, the genuine, might seem of all men least liable to a taint in this direction. And undoubtedly he *was* so, as regarded those modes of beauty which nature had specially qualified him for apprehending. Else, and in relation to other modes of beauty, where his sense of the true, and of its distinction from the spurious, had been an acquired sense, it is impossible for us to hide from ourselves—that not through habits only, not through stress of injurious accidents only, but by original structure and temperament of mind, Lamb had a bias towards those very defects on which rested the startling characteristics of style which we have been noticing. He himself, we fear, not bribed by indulgent feelings to another, not moved by friendship, but by native tendency, shrank from the continuous, from the sustained, from the elaborate.

The elaborate, indeed, without which much truth and beauty must perish in germ, was by name the object of his invectives. The instances are many, in his own beautiful essays, where he literally collapses, literally sinks away from openings suddenly offering themselves to flights of pathos or solemnity in direct prosecution of his own theme. On any such summons, where an ascending impulse, and an untired pinion were required, he *refuses* himself (to use military language) invariably, The least observing reader of *Elia* cannot have failed to notice that the most felicitous passages always accomplish their circuit in a few sentences. The gyration within which his sentiment wheels, no matter of what kind it may be, is always the shortest possible. It does not prolong itself—it does not repeat itself—it does not

propagate itself. But, in fact, other features in Lamb's mind would have argued this feature by analogy, had we by accident been left unaware of it directly. It is not by chance, or without a deep ground in his nature, *common* to all his qualities, both affirmative and negative, that Lamb had an insensibility to music more absolute than can have been often shared by any human creature, or perhaps than was ever before acknowledged so candidly. The sense of music—as a pleasurable sense, or as any sense at all other than of certain unmeaning and impertinent differences in respect to high and low, sharp or flat—was utterly obliterated as with a sponge by nature herself from Lamb's organization. It was a corollary from the same large *substratum* in his nature, that Lamb had no sense of the rhythmical in prose composition. Rhythmus, or pomp of cadence, or sonorous ascent of clauses, in the structure of sentences, were effects of art as much thrown away upon *him* as the voice of the charmer upon the deaf adder. We ourselves, occupying the very station of polar opposition to that of Lamb, being as morbidly, perhaps, in the one excess as he in the other, naturally detected this omission in Lamb's nature at an early stage of our acquaintance. Not the fabled Regulus, with his eyelids torn away, and his uncurtained eyeballs exposed to the noontide glare of a Carthaginian sun, could have shrieked with more anguish of recoil from torture than we from certain sentences and periods in which Lamb perceived no fault at all. *Pomp*, in our apprehension, was an idea of two categories; the *pompous* might be spurious, but it might also be genuine. It is well to love the simple—*we* love it; nor is there any opposition at all between *that* and the very glory of pomp. But, as we once put the case to Lamb, if, as a musician, as the leader of a

mighty orchestra, you had this theme offered to you —' Belshazzar the king gave a great feast to a thousand of his lords '—or this, ' And on a certain day, Marcus Cicero stood up, and in a set speech rendered solemn thanks to Caius Caesar for Quintus Ligarius pardoned, and for Marcus Marcellus restored '—surely no man would deny that, in such a case, simplicity, though in a passive sense not lawfully absent, must stand aside as totally insufficient for the *positive* part. Simplicity might guide, even here, but could not furnish the power ; a rudder it might be, but not an oar or a sail. This Lamb was ready to allow ; as an intellectual *quiddity*, he recognized pomp in the character of a privileged thing ; he was obliged to do so ; for take away from great ceremonial festivals, such as the solemn rendering of thanks, the celebration of national anniversaries, the commemoration of public benefactors, &c., the element of pomp, and you take away their very meaning and life ; but, whilst allowing a place for it in the rubric of the logician, it is certain that, *sensuously*, Lamb would not have sympathized with it, nor have *felt* its justification in any concrete instance. We find a difficulty in pursuing this subject, without greatly exceeding the just limits. We pause, therefore, and add only this one suggestion as partly explanatory of the case. Lamb had the Dramatic intellect and taste, perhaps in perfection ; of the Epic, he had none at all. Here, as happens sometimes to men of genius preternaturally endowed in one direction, he might be considered as almost starved. A favourite of nature, so eminent in some directions, by what right could he complain that her bounties were not indiscriminate ? From this defect in his nature it arose, that, except by culture and by reflection, Lamb had no genial appreciation of Milton. The solemn planetary wheelings of the *Paradise Lost*

were not to his taste. What he *did* comprehend, were the motions like those of lightning, the fierce angular coruscations of that wild agency which comes forward so vividly in the sudden περιπέτεια, in the revolutionary catastrophe, and in the tumultuous conflicts, through persons or through situations, of the tragic drama.

There is another vice in Mr. Hazlitt's mode of composition, viz. the habit of trite quotation, too common to have challenged much notice, were it not for these reasons; first, that Serjeant Talfourd speaks of it in equivocal terms, as a fault perhaps, but as a 'felicitous' fault, 'trailing after it a line of golden associations;' secondly, because sometimes it involves a dishonesty. On occasion of No. 1, we must profess our belief that a more ample explanation from the Serjeant would have left him in substantial harmony with ourselves. We cannot conceive the author of *Ion*, and the friend of Wordsworth, seriously to countenance that paralytic 'mouth-diarrhoea' (to borrow a phrase of Coleridge's)—that *fluxe de bouche* (to borrow an earlier phrase of Archbishop Huet's) which places the reader at the mercy of a man's tritest remembrances from his most schoolboy reading. . . . The very stage has grown weary of ridiculing a folly, that having been long since expelled from decent society has taken refuge amongst the most imbecile of authors. Was Mr. Hazlitt, then, of that class? No; he was a man of splendid talents, and of capacity for greater things than he even attempted, though without known pretensions of the philosophic kind ascribed to him by the Serjeant. Meantime the reason for resisting the example and practice of Hazlitt lies in this—that essentially it is at war with sincerity, the foundation of all good writing, to express one's own thoughts by another man's words.

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

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

Review of Talfourd's 'Final Memorials of Charles Lamb'. *North British Review*, Nov., 1848. M., v. 230.

LAMB AND WILSON

His biographer thinks that Lamb had more points of resemblance to Professor Wilson, than to any other eminent person of the day. It would be presumptuous to dismiss too hastily any opinion put forward by the author of *Ion* ; otherwise, I confess, that, for my own part, knowing both parties most intimately, I cannot perceive much closer resemblance than what must always be found between two men of genius ; whilst the differences seem to me radical. To notice only two points, Professor Wilson's mind is, in its movement and style of feeling, eminently diffusive—Lamb's discontinuous and abrupt. Professor Wilson's humour is broad, overwhelming, riotously opulent—Lamb's is minute, delicate, and scintillating. In one feature, though otherwise as different as possible, Lamb resembles Sir Walter Scott—viz. in the dramatic character of his mind and taste.

Both of them recoiled from the high ideality of such a mind as Milton's ; both loved the mixed standards of the world as it is—the dramatic standards in which good and evil are intermingled ; in short that class of composition in which a *human* character is predominant. Hence, also, in the great national movements, and in the revolutionary struggles, which, in our times, have gone on in so many interesting parts of the world, neither Sir Walter Scott, nor Lamb much sympathized nor much affected to sympathize, with the aspirations after some exaltation of human nature by means of liberty, or the purification of legal codes or of religious creeds. They were content with things as they are ; and, in the dramatic interest attached to these old realities, they found sufficient gratification for all their sensibilities. In one thing, upon consideration, there *does* strike me, some resemblance between Lamb and Professor Wilson—viz. in the absence of affectation, and the courageous sincerity which belong to both ; and also, perhaps, as Serjeant Talfourd has remarked, in the comprehensiveness of their liberality towards all, however opposed to themselves, who have any intellectual distinctions to recommend them.

' Recollections of Charles Lamb.' *Tait's Magazine*, June, 1838. M., iii. 87.

LANDOR

Mr. Landor . . . 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, and the accidents of education, have turned aside into a contemplative recluse.

GEBIR

His first work was a poem, viz. *Gebir* ; and it had the sublime distinction for some time of having enjoyed only two readers ; which two were Southey and myself.

[He gives an account of the story of Gebir.]

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 EnglishValerius Flaccus.

Gebir on Repairing to his First Interview with Charoba

But Gebir, when he heard of her approach,
Laid by his orbéd 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.

COUNT JULIAN

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, 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. . . .

How much, then, is in this brief drama of Count Julian, chiselled, as one might think, by the hands of that sculptor who fancied the great idea of chiselling Mount Athos into a demigod, which almost insists on being quoted: which seems to rebuke and frown on one for *not* quoting it: passages to which, for their solemn grandeur, one raises one's hat as at night in walking under the Coliseum; passages which, for their luxury of loveliness, should be inscribed on the phylacteries of brides, or upon the frescoes of Ionia, illustrated by the gorgeous allegories of Rubens.

Sed fugit interea, fugit irreparabile tempus,
Singula dum capti circumvectamur amore.

Yet, reader, in spite of time, one word more on the subject we are quitting. . . .

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 primaeval 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 Aeschylus (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 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 ' burn'd 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 Aeschylean ideal in composing *Count Julian?* I know not : there it is.

' Notes on Savage Landor.' *Tait's Magazine*, January and February, 1847. M., xi. 394.

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