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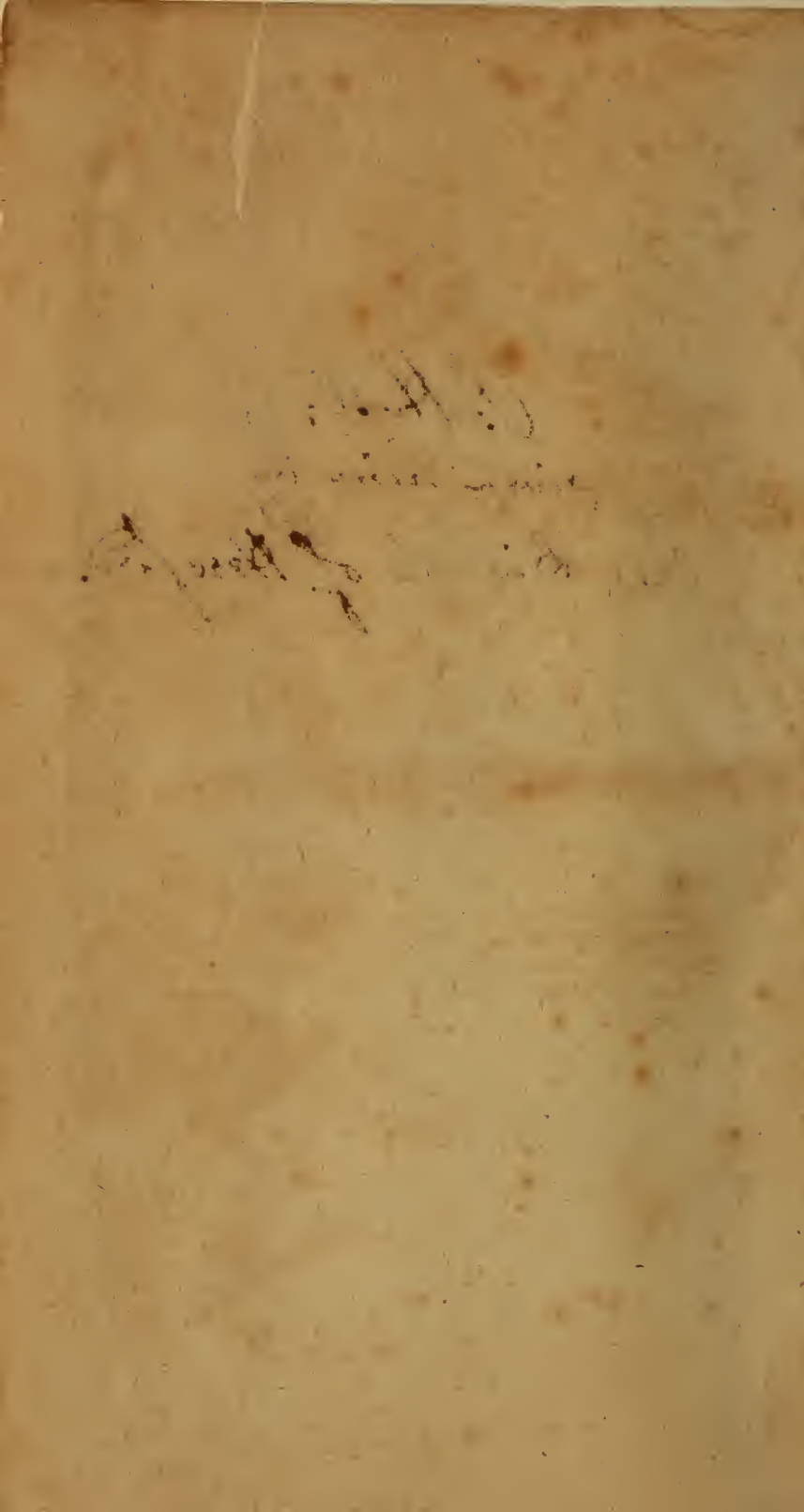
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P. Hall;
given him by
The Bishop of Hereford.



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COMMENTARIES

ON

984
1240

CLASSICAL LEARNING,

BY

The Rev. D. H. URQUHART, M. A.

PREBENDARY OF LINCOLN,

&c. &c.



“Classical studies extend the boundaries of human knowledge, and open such a new field of inquiry and observation as lead mankind to a perfect acquaintance with the powers of the mind, with the beauties of poetry, the usefulness of history, and the wisdom of philosophy.”

LONDON:

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1803.

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THE GREAT WESTERN
RAILWAY

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 10th inst. in relation to the above-named railway, and in reply to inform you that the same has been forwarded to the proper authorities for their consideration.

Very respectfully,
Your obedient servant,
J. H. [Name]

Printed by A. Strahan,
Printers-Street.

TO
THE RIGHT REVEREND
GEORGE PRETYMAN,
LORD BISHOP OF LINCOLN.

MY LORD,

I should not have asked permission to inscribe this volume to your Lordship, had I not been persuaded, that both its motive and its object would obtain your approbation.

At a time, when human learning is loudly decried by the ignorant fanatic, I assured myself that its humblest advocate would be se-

cure

cure of the countenance of a distinguished Scholar.

In the concluding section of this work, presuming on the continuance of public tranquillity, I ventured to recommend the patronage of literature to our rulers. But, alas! that flattering prospect seems now to have vanished from our view. Still, though it be the luckless condition of society, that, amidst the din of arms, the ingenuous arts are neglected; your Lordship will allow, that, as learning always offers a temporary asylum from the ills of life, it frequently invites us to turn our eyes from the horrors of war to the contemplation of objects, which afford consolation, instruction,

tion, and delight. The man of letters finds also another powerful argument to stimulate him in his favourite pursuit. Γηράσκειν διδάσκομενος, is the ardent wish of every mind which has been improved by early culture, and is actuated by laudable emulation.

I have the Honor to be

Your Lordship's

respectful and obliged servant,

D. H. URQUHART.

1847
The first of the year
I have not yet received
any of the money
which I have sent
you by the bank
I am sorry to hear
that you are not
well I hope you
will soon be
able to go home
I am your affectionate
son
John Smith

Dear Mother
I received your
kind letter of the
10th and was
glad to hear
from you
I am well at
present and hope
these few lines
will find you
the same
I have not yet
received any
of the money
which I have
sent you
I am your
affectionate
son
John Smith

ADVERTISEMENT

TO THE

R E A D E R.

IT is right to apprise the reader, that some of the quotations in this volume were made from memory, and that the name of the author did not always occur.

Some passages from Pope are so well known, as to render it unnecessary to mention his name at the end of each.

It is however proper to say, that the arrangement of the Greek and Latin writers was formed on the model of Monsieur La Harpe's ingenious work, and that his sentiments frequently appear in these Commentaries.

An apology for so large a table of Errata must be derived from a dangerous illness, which disabled the author, during the greater part of the time, from accurately correcting the Press.

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COMMENTARIES

ON

CLASSICAL LEARNING.

SECTION I.

On the general Advantages of Classical Learning, and on its particular Advantages to the Lawyer—the Physician—the Divine—to the Naval and Military Officer—the Statesman—the Poet—the Painter—the Sculptor—the Musician—and the Merchant.

THAT the cultivation of the mental powers is amongst the highest objects which can engage human attention, seems to be one of those propositions that demand and receive a general assent.

In every civilized age and country, the laborious and successful enquirer after useful

B

knowledge

knowledge has either been distinguished by the praises of his contemporaries, or duly appreciated by the juster decision of posterity. It is therefore not the least grateful of our speculative employments, to mark the progressive gradations of mankind from a state of ignorance and barbarism, to one of elegance and refinement.

In such researches our self-love is gratified, and our patriotism is warmed by the reflection that we are inhabitants of a country where art has embellished life, and science enlightened the mind; where a spirit of liberty which vindicates our civil rights, is, in a certain degree, the result of that liberal information which has taught us to know their value.

If the intellectual faculties be the highest boon which the Deity has bestowed on the most favored work of his creation, the honor of the individual, and the interests of society, depend upon the improvement of them. That a state of nature is a state

of war, history and experience combine to attest; and though a sense of the insecurity of such a state induced mankind to form a social compact, its first elements were but an indigested chaos, nor, until the mental faculties had been improved, were they ever duly disposed in order and in harmony. This becomes evident whenever we recur to those Gothic ages anterior to the casual invention of that useful art, which like the birth-place of Homer, has been so strenuously contested. The annals of those early times reflect no pleasing images on the memory. Assimilated in roughness to their brethren of the forest, the Aborigines of our isle displayed none of the higher energies of the mind. The hut of the savage was little superior to the den of the wild beast, and the ardor of the sportsman was analogous to the ferocity of his prey.

Our country was long disgraced by intestine discord and by domestic cruelty. A feeble monarch now surrendered the rights he ought to have maintained, an usurper

waded through murder to the throne, a tyrannous aristocracy attacked the regal privileges, and a bigoted priesthood fettered the rights of a vassal people.

The revival of learning by enlightening the mind, and exciting habits of reflection, rendered men better adepts in the science of government, and taught them to doubt the purity of the national religion. Error will not stand the test of enquiry. Both were at length happily reformed: the fetters were taken from genius, and taste, that refined quality which discriminates excellence, began to distinguish the candidates for literary fame. The mind of man, naturally inquisitive, and eager to discover the sources from which knowledge was originally derived, is directed to two countries as the parents of every thing valuable and ornamental in science. Their precious relics at first casually found, and now happily secured from farther ruin, ought to be explored and venerated by almost all descriptions in society, because every man

who is placed above the necessity of manual labour, would find the highest utility and the most exquisite pleasure to be the reward of his researches. That which is emphatically styled Classical Learning, the works of the poets, orators, and historians of Greece and Rome, contains every thing that can awaken the genius and improve the taste. Perfect models of both are exhibited in their epic, lyric, and dramatic writers, while their orators and historians produce the most striking examples of a disdain of the selfish passions, and that generous ardour for the public good which constitutes unsuspected patriotism.

That our parents and children are dear to us is the voice of nature; and where custom has not hardened the mind, a savage will obey its dictates. But ages of refinement alone could inform us, that the patriot acknowledges a higher object of his regard, and that the claims which our kindred have upon our affections are subordinate to the claims of our country.

“Cari sunt parentes, cari liberi, fed omnes omnium caritates complexa est patria.”

It appears no difficult task to point out the advantages of Classical Learning in all considerable situations of life. Ample indeed is the range of knowledge which expands itself to the view of the jurisperit. He should be enabled by laborious study, to deduce the principles of natural and politic law from the nature and the state of man; to discern that what is just and unjust has been notified to us by the principles of moral instinct; to trace civil society to its original formation; to observe how it has been resolved by the genius of a people into the democratic, aristocratic, or monarchical form of government. He ought to be thoroughly acquainted with the difference in their leading principles, to mark the consequences which result from thence to their civil and criminal code, to the form of their judgments, and the infliction of their punishments. It behoves
him

him to know what it is that determines the purity of well constituted states, and the causes which lead to their corruption; to perceive how the smallest deviation from their original principles is attended with a serious injury, while if those be firmly maintained, a change often becomes an amendment; to enquire in what manner the various forms of government provide for their safety by defensive, or attempt their aggrandisement by offensive operations; and above all, to investigate the laws that guard political liberty and human happiness.

But to accomplish the English lawyer, it certainly is not sufficient that he be perfectly acquainted with the oral customs and the written laws of his own country. The professor of a liberal science will best know how to appreciate them, if he has contemplated the wisdom of ancient legislators in the mirror of their institutions. The laws of Draco, Solon, and Lycurgus, will inform him of the manners of the times

and the vices of the Athenian and Spartan people. They will enable him to trace the aberrations of the human heart in the punishments denounced against crimes, and thoroughly to learn the nature and the history of his species. Without sacrificing our Alfred and Edward "to the manes of Theodosius and Justinian," he will derive no small pleasure and utility from observing what laws the masters of the ancient world borrowed from the nation they subdued; and, while he marks their progress from simplicity to refinement, and from refinement to corruption, he will confess that an acquaintance with the institutions of Greece and Rome, is more than ornamental to the English lawyer. Numerous examples to evince this truth might be found upon the bench and at the bar; but as the comparison of living characters is sometimes invidious, the praise of them is not always unsuspected. But the author of the Commentaries of the Laws of England is a splendid instance of the efficacy of classical learning. In his immortal work, the *lucidus*

usus ordo and the *copia verborum* are so happily combined, that while every professional man may trace the country in which he is to travel, every man of taste beholds its beauties with admiration.

And here indeed the question might fairly rest, did not recollection point also to that accomplished scholar who so long and so ably presided over the highest court of law in this country. Of whom alas! the poet's prediction is verified :

“ For Murray, long enough his country's pride,
“ Is now no more than Tully or than Hyde.”

Classical learning seems to be indispensably requisite to gentlemen of the medical profession. The very terms of their art are borrowed from the Greeks, and to their works they are excited to apply by the most laudable motives, an ardor after knowledge, and a veneration for excellence. It must gratify them to observe the marked pre-eminence which Homer gives to the physician, at a time when valour was esteemed
above

above all other qualities, and fynonymous with virtue itself.

Ἰητροὺς γὰρ ἀνὴρ πολλῶν ἀνιάξιος ἀλλῶν.

In those times of simplicity diseases were few, and chymistry had made but small advances towards perfection. The man, therefore, whose knowledge of the nature of simples could teach him how to mitigate the anguish of a wound, was justly esteemed during the Trojan war as of surpassing dignity and worth.

We are taught by the ancient mythology that Æsculapius was the god of physic, and that Hygeia, the goddess of health, was his daughter; but the more sober and more credible page of history informs us, that experience was long resorted to before the art of medicine was converted into a science. The Babylonians obliged themselves by an express law, to carry their sick into places of public resort, and to enquire of all who passed by, whether they ever had felt or
seen

seen any such distemper as the sick person laboured under, and what was done to remove it. The progress of physic was certainly very slow, although Herodotus calls this, as it really was, νόμος σοφὸς ἀλός, a most prudent institution, and the best which could be contrived at that time.

Homer was acquainted with the γέρον-
κόμικη, or the proper means by which the evils of old age may be alleviated. The prescription is given by Ulysses to his father Laertes :

“ Warm baths, good food, soft sleep, and generous wine,
“ These are the rights of age, and should be thine.”

Pythagoras first recommended universal moderation and temperance, and Iccus the physician of Tarentum, enforced and exemplified this precept so strongly, that the repast of Iccus became a proverbial phrase for a plain and temperate meal.

Hippocrates, justly styled the father of
physic, rendered it so completely a science,
that

that his descent, by his father from *Æsculapius*, and by his mother from *Hercules*, is forgotten in the eulogium which is his due as a man of profound learning and unimpeached integrity.

He thought it not sufficient to know the essence of particular bodies, but the constituent principles of the universe. Enriched with every species of knowledge, he enlightened experience by reasoning, and he rectified theory by practice.

The rules he lays down for forming the physician, are worthy to be engraven in letters of gold; for they exhibit profound knowledge, consummate integrity, and an irreproachable life.

In early times it was affirmed that his doctrine, adopted amongst all nations, after thousands of years would still continue to work thousands of cures; that the most extensive empires would be unable to dispute with the little island of *Cos*, the glory
of

of having produced this man; and that in the eyes of persons of real wisdom, the names of the greatest conquerors would be holden in less estimation than that of Hippocrates.

Amidst the many valuable precepts which this great legislator has left, there are some few, at least there is one, at which the imperfect morality of the divine Plato revolts. He censures Hippocrates for protracting the existence of weak persons; being of opinion that an infirm constitution is an obstacle to the practice of virtue: and he adds, that Æsculapius would not patch up habitual invalids, lest they should have children as useless as themselves; for he was persuaded, that it is an injury both to the community and to the infirm person himself, that he should continue in the world, even though he were richer than Midas.

Surely

Surely then we are no longer justified in blaming the Hottentots, who expose their decrepid parents in the woods, when a philosopher is found to advise such inhuman conduct as this ; or to wonder at the custom of the Padæan Indians, of whom Herodotus relates, that when any man fell sick amongst them, his next neighbour killed him immediately.

A learned physician who wrote in the middle of the last century, declares, that many of the rules which Hippocrates left, although delivered above two thousand years ago, are among the best we have even at this day ; and that the works of Galen, who flourished in the reign of Marcus Antoninus, are still resorted to as the basis and the model of all that has been advanced, ever since his time, on the important subjects which he treats.

To suppose then the modern physician either ignorant of his art as practised by
the

the ancients, or of the language which has transmitted it to posterity, would be a solecism in times of general information, and a disgrace to a liberal profession.

If the labour of learning the Spanish language could be compensated by the pleasure of reading Don Quixote in the original, it is better worth the while of the physician to become acquainted with Thucydides, in order to draw much professional light from the description of the plague which desolated Athens.

The empiric trusts to practice only, and the credulity of the multitude, for the establishment of his undeserved reputation; but the regular physician founds his practice on the basis of theory, and still acknowledges Hippocrates and Galen to be the preceptors and legislators of his art.

But technical knowledge however profound, would be an inadequate accomplishment to him; for he is expected to be conversant

versant with all the departments of ingenious learning.

To the successful practitioner of an art in some degree conjectural, we look with a reverence not granted to the world at large; but if his conversation be confined merely to his profession, we withdraw much of our respect from such narrowness of acquirement. The confidence which Alexander reposed in Philip we are unwilling to bestow on meanness and on ignorance. In our physician we expect to find copiousness of information, and suavity of manners; and these are exclusively the result of an ingenuous education.

It is surely unnecessary to insist that classical learning ought to form a part of the education of a clergyman. Subservient as it is to the main object of his pursuit, it will always be inseparable from his professional studies. No one but a classical scholar can, properly speaking, be a Divine.

The

The oracles of sacred truth are best to be understood in their original language ; and the retirement and the leisure incident to the clerical character form an imperious claim of profound and general information.

It has been the liberal policy of this country, to diffuse a species of learning through all the classes of society. It is its boast, to enlighten the mind, as well as to exercise the hand, of the lower orders. The code of their religious duties is rendered accessible to all ; nor does it appear probable, that the striking instances of knowledge perverted to evil will ever close it to their posterity. The ranks of society have been elegantly compared to a pyramid rising from a broad foundation, and diminishing to a point as it rises. Not only station, therefore, but knowledge should be progressive, and the degrees of each should be in exact proportion and harmony with the other. To the christian teacher all the stores of Pagan antiquity should be disclosed. History, the mirror of human life,
c must

must necessarily be the object of his contemplation. To trace the knowledge of a Creator from the earliest ages of the heathen world; to see the faint image of a Redeemer in the victims and oblations which they offered; to mark the prophecies of a true religion faintly shadowed by the oracles of those which were false, implies no small acquaintance with the language and the customs of early times.

To shew the Mosaic History verified by the pages of profane learning, and revelation confirmed by the evidence of persons hostile to its diffusion, is a task which requires no mean proficiency in the works of the Classic Authors.

To compare the doctrines of christianity with the tenets of the various sects that preceded it, asks an intimate acquaintance with the writings of the philosophers of Greece and Rome.

But

But this subject is become more interesting from the peculiar temper of the times in which we live. It is a sentiment amongst self-taught instructors, that human learning is at least useless, if not injurious to a clergyman; and the person who gratifies his own vanity with the notion of a partial and celestial illumination, or imposes the idle tale on the credulity of others, finds his personal credit to depend upon the removal of that venerable pillar which strengthens the hallowed edifice of religion. The Goths of ignorance are always numerous and violent, and it will require the combined efforts of its steady friends to join in the defence of sound classical learning, as intimately connected with the support of sacred truth.

It is the business of the pulpit orator, like that of every other, partly to convince his hearers by argument, and partly to allure them by persuasion. To effect this purpose, who of sober judgment will com-

pare the clamorous zeal of the unlettered enthusiast, with the aids which genuine piety has received from eloquence, from learning, and from taste, as displayed in the writings of Barrow, of Lowth, and of Blair?

It may perhaps by some be doubted if a classical education be compatible with the early period at which naval gentlemen usually enter upon their profession. This involves the question, whether the acquisition of the dead languages require so many years as are generally allotted to them. Under a judicious assistant, where much is required to be done in a little time, much might probably be effected; and the ground-work laid so firmly and skilfully, as to enable the young proficient to employ the intervals of an active life in raising the superstructure. It must be confessed that his technical knowledge will be little benefited by an acquaintance with the ancient nautical art. The timid navigator, who, as
yet

yet having no compass to direct him, rarely ventured to fail at any considerable distance from the shore, must appear only an object of contempt or compassion, at a period when naval tactics have reached perfection.

In this view of the subject, no argument of utility can be drawn from a familiarity with the classics.

But frequent as the ambition or the phrenzy of mankind has rendered the recurrence of war, the naval officer is not always engaged in achievements of personal valour and in acts of patriot heroism.

There are many hours in which he honors the society that honors him by his presence and his conversation,

In the intervals of peace, and at length in the retirement from an arduous service, mute attention always hangs upon the eventful story of his life.

A mind improved by early culture, and manners softened by as good an education as time and circumstances will allow, are required to give dignity and grace to the relation of interesting events, and to the description of other climes.

It seemed in former times to be the false pride of the members of this profession, to exhibit an exterior as rough as the elements with which they were conversant; but the gentlest courtesy is now found to be consistent with the bravest hearts, and wherever the mind has been duly cultivated, the gallant defenders of their country are at the same time its brightest ornaments.

Gentlemen of the military profession may derive much useful information from an acquaintance with classic authors.

Long before the monk by a pernicious chemistry had facilitated the art of slaughter,

ter, ancient tactics had made a very considerable progress. From a Greek historian, and from a Roman warrior, they may derive many precepts highly important to their art.

Polybius and Cæsar are authors more useful in the field than in the closet: they have higher attractions for the scientific soldier, than for the cloistered scholar. The valour of our contemporaries, it is true, requires not to be stimulated by ancient examples; but the schoolboy may be trained to aspire after the character of the hero, by contemplating the illustrious models of Greece and Rome.

He who aims at excellence of any kind, is naturally induced to place before his eyes, and to observe as in a mirror, some distinguished pattern of it.

The military scholar will equally applaud the love of country and the contempt of
C 4 death,

death, whether exhibited in ancient or in modern instances, and be ready to yield his testimony to that undying record of virtue, which equally immortalizes an Epaminondas and a Wolfe.

The knowledge of universal history is essential to the Statesman. Thoroughly to understand and appreciate the constitution of his own country, he must be familiarly conversant with that both of ancient and modern states. It behoves him to know by what wise regulations they arose to greatness and to glory, and by what errors in their administration they sunk into reproach and ruin. Since four great monarchies, bearing the appearance of impregnable strength and stability, have disappeared from public view, and live only in the records of the historian, it becomes him, by literary research, to explore the causes of their decay. He will find it to be the eager, but vain desire of man, to stamp immortality upon his works; and that
when,

when, like father Paul, a patriot desires his country to be perpetual, he sacrifices the dictate of reason to the wishes of his heart, the result of his experience to the ardour of his hopes. The history of empires has been truly said to be that of the misery of mankind; the history of learning, that of their grandeur and their happiness. It is not only curious but instructive to follow this revolution in the religion, government, and manners which have successively desolated and corrupted the world. The contrast of the infancy with the grandeur of Rome, is worthy the attention of the statesman. In reading the *Æneid* of Virgil, he will be instructed in all these points, and cannot fail to be struck at the comparison of a small town covered with straw, to the same town become the capital of the universe, of which "the houses were palaces, the citizens princes, and the provinces empires."

The pages of Tacitus should be his frequent and attentive study; for by reading
them,

them, he will read mankind. He will perceive scenes of horror acted at Rome unexampled but in our own times, and painted in colours which will never fade. A frantic people under the Prætorian bands and the German legions, friends to anarchy and leagued against civil government, summon his deepest attention.

In the manners of the Germans he will perceive the origin of the British constitution; and in the life of Agricola, the day-spring of that liberty which is the boast of Englishmen, and the wonder of foreign states. He will see that if the Greeks had not a second time been slaves, the Latins would again have been barbarians. Constantinople, it is true, fell beneath the sword of Mahomet; but when the Medici received the persecuted muses, and Erasmus cultivated them, Homer penetrated into regions unknown to Alexander, and Horace became the delight of countries invincible by the Romans. Those ages of reviving wisdom found that it was excellent to
peruse

peruse the ancients, and to admire them. The warrior read them in his tent, and the statesman studied them in his closet. The keen eye of Grotius pierced through the veil of antiquity. By its light he read the oracles of sacred truth, with whose powerful weapons he combated superstition and ignorance, and with whose amiable precepts he softened the rigours of war. A retrospect of past times will perhaps tend to render the statesman not only the lover of literature, but the public and avowed patron of learned men. When assailed by the war-whoop of enthusiasm against profane learning, his mind, soaring to a nobler height and taking a wider survey of things, will perceive that when sound learning flourishes, and good taste prevails, the maintenance of social order and legitimate government is recognized amidst his highest duties by the enlightened citizen.

It has been contended that a poet is born and not made, and the declarations of a
Roman

Roman and a British bard are adduced in favor of this hypothesis. But neither Ovid nor Pope would have asserted that he was not indebted to the great models he had before him, for many of his pretensions to poetical reputation. The two epic poets amongst the ancients, whose works have immortalized their names, besides the concurrent advantages resulting from the climate of the countries, and the state of the times in which they lived, were possessed of all the learning then in the world. No one can doubt this assertion respecting the friend of Augustus; and a little inquiry will satisfy us as to the acquired knowledge of Homer. Homer was educated by Phemius, one of the bards probably whose public recitations contained and conveyed all the learning of those early times. To his office was attached a dignity of which the moderns can form a very inadequate conception,

He charmed the ears of a simple age by the spontaneous effusions of unwritten and harmonious verse; he instructed them in the history of their progenitors; he entertained them with agreeable allegory and fable; and, while he astonished them with singing the harmony of the universe and the vicissitudes of nature, he professed to be under the immediate direction of the gods. Though he could not boast of wealth or power, his situation was always attended with ease and honor. He was well received at the courts of kings, necessary at sacrifices, and revered by the people.

At that period, the philosopher, the divine, and the legislator were all united in the same person: such was Orpheus and his scholar Musæus; and all the ancient lawgivers employed the muses to dispense their instructions and recommend their morals.

In such a school was Homer taught. He was first placed in the house of his
13
master

master to be instructed in poetry and philosophy, and he afterwards succeeded him in his office.

There were poems in existence before the Trojan war; and in allegory and fable, Homer found many celebrated models worthy of his imitation. Partly from study and partly from travel, he had become learned in all the wisdom of Egypt, and acquainted with all the arts of Phœnicia. His poverty as a man constituted no small part of his happiness as a poet; for when he assumed the profession of a strolling bard, he displayed the highest effort of his delightful art. When the council of the Amphictyons were met at Delphi to consult on the general welfare of Greece, his hymn to Apollo and Diana expresses the felicity attendant on his situation. "Hail, heavenly powers, whose praises I sing," says the bard, "let me also hope to be remembered in the ages to come! And when any one born of the tribes of man comes hither

a weary traveller, and inquires who is the sweetest of the singing men that resort to your feasts, and whom you most delight to hear? then do you make answer for me, It is the blind man that dwells in Chios; his songs excell all that can be sung.”

At the Pythian games the public actors were the rhapsodists; and it was long before the muscular could vie with the mental, before horse racing and wrestling made part of the entertainment. Although Eustathius says of Homer, that he breathed nothing but verse, and was so possessed with the heroic muse as to speak in numbers with more ease than others in prose; yet no inspiration can account for his being a great genealogist, a correct historian, and an admirable geographer. From Orpheus and Musæus he is said to have borrowed largely: nor was he the author of the Polytheism of the Iliad, or the inventor of its religious and philosophical allegories, but recorded them as he received them from the Egyptians.

tians. In addition, therefore, to the advantage of living at a period of society, when he could from observation delineate the varieties of the human character, kings, princes, warriors, artificers and peasants; when his mind had been expanded, and his views enlarged by foreign travel, he searched diligently every avenue to science, and verified the assertion I have made, that he possessed himself all the learning then in the world.

Horace proposes the question respecting the superior advantage of genius and learning to a poet, and determines them to be equally necessary to the perfection of his art;

“ Ego nec studium sine divite venâ,

“ Nec rude quid profit video ingenium : alterius sic

“ Altera poscit opem res, et conjurat amice.”

It would be superfluous to bring any argument to prove how much the epic poet of our own country was indebted to classical learning; for this is evident on the slightest perusal of his works. In what
sublime

sublime strains does he acknowledge his obligation to the fostering nurse of ancient literature.

“ Behold !

Where on the *Ægean* shore a city stands
Built nobly, pure the air, and light the soil,
Athens, the eye of Greece, mother of arts,
And eloquence, native to famous wits
Or hospitable, in her sweet recess,
City or suburban, studious walks and shades.”

In this country we have had many instances of poets who could not boast of a literary education ; and however we may admire the effusions of untutored enthusiasm, it is impossible to contend with success, that their wood-notes wild would not have been improved by culture and an acquaintance with the works of the ancients, those archetypes of genius, those repositories of learning, those models of fine writing, and perpetual standards of good taste.

Not only a contemplation of the works of art, but an acquaintance with the writ-

ings of the ancients is essential to the painter. Their animated descriptions, and the precious relics, unfortunately too few, which have come down to posterity, compel him to deplore the ravages which time and violence have made upon the graphic art. He perceives, however, that Greece was the unrivalled arbiter of form, that the minds of the Greeks were elevated with the notion of a celestial origin, that their shapes were moulded by a mild and genial climate, and their spirits animated by the nature of their civil polity. It has been elegantly said that in the infancy of Grecian art, the Graces rocked the cradle, and Love taught it to speak.

The story of the Corinthian maid who shadowed the figure of her lover by lamp-light on a wall, may perhaps be only a legendary tale; but by appealing to our sympathy, it seems almost to deserve our belief. To the modern painter the account of the origin and progress of his art should unquestionably be familiar. Reynolds and

Fuseli

Fufeli have delighted to trace it from the first mechanical effay; from simple outline, to the magic scale of Grecian colours; to distinguish the three classes of painting, the epic, the dramatic, and the historical; the first of which prepared, the second established, and the third refined it. The origin of all the arts is involved in obscurity and obumbrated by fable; and while Pliny has preserved the scanty materials of the one we are now contemplating, he loudly complains of the want of exactness in the Greek writers on the subject. An imitation of painting is obvious to the view of the scholar, when Homer acquaints him with the employment of females in the higher ranks of life. Helen works on tapestry a representation of the battles she had caused, and the hapless Andromache is called from a similar occupation to be informed of the fall of the illustrious and much lamented defender of Troy. The praise of early excellence will be liberally bestowed by the learned artist on Polygnotus. His emulation will be excited by the art of Zeuxis,

who in a cluster of grapes could deceive the birds, and by the superior skill of Parrhasius, who in the imitation of a curtain deceived, and therefore surpassed, his rival. The name of Apelles will be ever venerated by him whom learning has enabled to explore the avenues of taste; and his observation to a young artist will be a warning voice against a fondness for meretricious ornament;—"Young man! not being able to make your Helen beautiful, you have resolved to make her fine." His literary curiosity will be gratified by an endeavor to trace the high antiquity of painting in Egypt, and by perceiving the honor which was paid to the lowest professor of the art in China.

Pliny will inform him that it was carried to perfection before the foundation of Rome. The inhabitants of Etruria were the first who connected the practice of it with the study of nature! the tombs of the Tarquins still remain as vestiges of their skill, and the vases of Campania demonstrate

strate how well the Grecian colonies taught the inhabitants of Italy the imitative arts.

An acquaintance with the writings of the Greek historians and dramatists, a thorough knowledge of the mythology of the ancients, and of the works of Virgil and Ovid, would accomplish the education of the painter. No picture of antiquity is more celebrated than the sacrifice of Iphigenia, the master-piece of Timanthes the Cynthian. His pencil could delineate the sorrow of the priest, the regret of Ulysses, and the sympathy of Menelaus, but unequal to depicture the feelings of the father, he threw a veil over his face. Can the artist feel the force of mind which the author of this melancholy story possessed, or be conscious of half the beauties of the piece, if he be ignorant of the language which has consecrated it to immortality?

Sir Joshua Reynolds, in one of his discourses to the royal academy, [very truly

observes, that he who is acquainted with the works which have pleased different ages, and different countries, and has formed his opinion on them, has more materials, and more means of knowing what is analogous to the mind of man than he who is conversant only with the works of his own age or country.

Nothing but a liberal education can enable the artist to exhibit that ethic of painting which is the acme of the art.

In an ancient specimen, where the spectator could distinguish Ulysses by his severity and vigilance, Menelaus by his mildness, and Agamemnon by a kind of divine majesty, an air of freedom in the son of Tydeus, of ferocity in Ajax, and of alertness in Antilochus, was discovered, that characteristic of transcendent excellence which induced Aristotle to denominate Polygnotus a painter of the manners. From the same source alone can the artist
derive

derive that vigor of mind which will enable him to counteract the spirit of the age in which he lives. With nature and the works of the best masters before him, Raphael was prevented by the want of education, from reaching the ideal of the ancients. Apelles soared into regions of empyrean purity; Raphael did but tread the earth, although he moved with majestic dignity. When the art revived, the Roman school was distinguished by the learning of its masters. While the magnificence derived from its commerce with the east, characterised that of Venice, and dictated its gaudy taste; the grovelling manner of the Dutch artists may be accounted for from the habits of their countrymen. It is their delight to imitate the lowest objects; the taverns, the smith's shop, and the vulgar amusements of boors. Hence it may be concluded, that grace and elegance are the handmaids of learning, and that learning confers upon the fine arts their irresistible attractions.

If the mind of the Sculptor be uninformed, his art will be merely a mechanical one.

The ancient reliques have so decided a superiority over the finest works of modern times, that the generous emulation which will stimulate the artist to imitate what perhaps never will be equalled, is connected with a natural curiosity to learn from what causes their excellence proceeded.

This eagerness of enquiry can only be gratified by having recourse to classic authors, where he will find the poet, the mythologist, and the historian contending to afford him information.

Fancy has traced the origin of sculpture to the wilds of Scythia, and imagined the head of the Urus to have been the symbol of the Deity.

“The bull’s stern front to which rude myriads kneel

“The favorite idol of benighted zeal.”

Some authors give us the same account of the origin of sculpture as of painting; and the tale of the Corinthian maid, though twice told, is never heard with scorn.

In sacred writ, the lamentation of a father for the premature death of a child, which induced him to console himself with the formation of his image, is mentioned not only as a test of parental affection, but as the origin of idolatry. "For thus in process of time an ungodly custom grown strong was kept as a law, and graven images were worshipped by the commandment of kings." The Egyptians very early applied themselves to this art, and Lucian an Assyrian and a sculptor, speaks of them as distinguished by their meritorious efforts in its infancy. Love, sorrow and superstition combined in the production of sculpture. Long before statues appeared, the trunk of a tree was worshipped by the Thespians as their Juno, and stones of a cubic

cubic form were considered as symbols of the divinity.

A thousand years were requisite to bring the art to perfection; and the intelligent sculptor must be delighted at the contrast of the pointed stake, which was the first Minerva of the Athenians, with the perfect works of Phidias and Praxiteles.

The age of Alexander the Great, somewhat more than three centuries before the christian æra, was the epoch of all the arts and sciences; from which period they began to decline.

The Grecian sculptors represented the tortures of Prometheus with unrivalled ability. The scholar who thrills with horror at the description of Æschylus, feels his mind relieved by doubting the authenticity of the story, and by yielding his assent to the report that Prometheus was a servant high in the confidence of Osiris an
Egyptian

Egyptian monarch, and that he was punished for communicating the arts of Egypt to the ruder Greeks; that the officer who guarded him was slain by Hercules, and the prisoner set free.

The story of Dædalus is the amusement of our early years, but we are not then taught to consider him as the father of Grecian sculpture. When he escaped from the rage of Minos, fable gives him the invention of wings; but Pausanias says that he executed a statue of Hercules, in return for his having buried his son Icarus, whose body had been cast upon a shore. The representation of the dance of Ariadne in bas relief, is mentioned as a work of great celebrity by Homer.

“ A figured dance succeeds, such once was seen
 In lofty Gnosus for the Cretan queen,
 Formed by Dædalean art, a comely band
 Of youths and maidens, bounding hand in hand;
 The maids in soft cymars of linen drest,
 The youths all graceful in the glossy vest.”

The

The farther the Sculptor shall be enabled to search the storehouses of ancient learning, the higher dignity will be attributable to his elegant art. He will find the talents of Phidias to have been so remarkable as to form an æra in the history of sculpture. The genius of this Athenian, matured under the reign of Pericles, excited him to convert the marble brought by the Persians as a trophy of their victory, into a memorial of their defeat. The artist who transmitted to posterity the figures of those intrepid patriots that dared to oppose the tyranny of Hipparchus, rendered sculpture the means of exciting a patriot ardor in the minds of an enslaved people, and of perpetuating the memory of those who perished in the defence of public liberty. He was adored by the Athenians, and the name of Praxiteles will exist, while those of Harmodius and Aristogiton shall be remembered.

The approach to the heart is quicker by the eye than by the ear: what effect must these
these

these statues have had upon contemporary beholders, when Lowth informs us, that the song of Harmodius would have gone further to put an end to the tyranny of the Cæsars, than all the Philippics of Demosthenes?

Sculpture not only explains ancient history, but unfolds ancient manners. A statue of a man rubbing himself after the use of the bath, delighted the fancy of Tiberius; and he removed it from the baths of Agrippa, to his own chamber. The people clamored for its restoration, and compelled the tyrant to yield in a trifling contest, whom they had not the spirit to oppose in his invasion of their liberties. The Romans had a singular inaptitude for this elegant art, which seems not reluctantly confessed by the best of their poets.

“*Excudent alii spirantia mollius æra.*”

Still they had taste or rapacity enough to import the best statues from the country

they had subdued, and by an unworthy species of deceit, which was not the parent of a generous rivalship, they often erased the Grecian inscriptions, and inserted false titles of their own countrymen.

It is not to be wondered at, that the statue of Alexander, after the conquest of Macedon, should adorn the portico of Metellus, or that Cæsar

“ Sighed at the sculptured form of Ammon’s son.”

But it is impossible not to despise the fraud of the great Constantine, who put his own name on the statue of Apollo.

Indeed deceptions of every kind were common. Phædrus informs us, that those who had pieces of sculpture to sell, erased the name of an inferior artist, and substituted that of Praxiteles.

Too much admiration cannot be rendered to the Grecians for the excellence to

which they carried the art of sculpture, nor too much respect for the uses to which they applied it. It was with them an honorable and a lasting tribute to departed worth, and a powerful stimulus to laudable emulation. The poet and the orator shared its honors with the hero and the patriot; and it is a high eulogium on the republican spirit of the Athenians, that their justice and gratitude induced them to erect a statue to Pisistratus, for having collected and published the works of Homer.

Sculpture must be in strict alliance with learning, since it has been said that if time had restored only the Laocoon, the Belvidere Apollo, and the Medicean Venus, a lover of the arts might consider his kindness equivalent to his literary beneficence, in preserving the compositions of Demosthenes, Plato, and Homer.

Much has been said on the influence of climate on the human mind, and both the ancients and the moderns have extended it
too

too far. Bœotia and Attica were adjacent countries, and if the statues found at Thebes, were generally the work of foreign artists, it should be remembered that there was a law in that country, by which sculptors and painters who did not excel, were liable to a fine: a most injudicious regulation, and of itself sufficient to check the labor of industry, and repress all the energies of genius! Where such obstacles did not oppose them, an unwholesome atmosphere could not extinguish the poetic fire of Pindar, nor cloud the philosophic spirit of Plutarch. The history of sculpture will prove it to be an art connected with the sublimest sentiments, and the best affections of the soul; and the artist who is unacquainted with the writings of the ancients, must be contented to remain a servile copier, or at best to exercise the chisel of the ignorant mechanic, undirected by the mind of the master.

Although very little of the practical part of music is come down to us, yet the wonderful

derful effect of this delightful art on the sensibility of the ancients, is an inducement to us to examine the various testimonies of its effect in softening the manners, promoting civilization, and humanizing men naturally savage and barbarous.

Pythagoras, the Samian philosopher, endeavoured to demonstrate, that the universe was fabricated by a musical scale. On account of their particular talent, Apollo was considered as the highest of the gods, and Orpheus of the demi-gods; and the gravest of writers, the historians and philosophers of Greece, contend with the poets in their praises of music.

The learned musician will know from Herodotus, that it was long disputed between the Egyptians and Phrygians, which of them first cultivated the art, for man invents, but does not create. Sacred and profane historians derived most of the arts from Egypt. By geometry they ascertained the boundaries of private property

which the overflowing of the Nile had obliterated. The antiquity of their architecture, the oldest profane historian could not discover. To Egypt the world is probably indebted for the knowledge of harmony, and the geometrical mensuration of sounds. There the profession of music was hereditary in the priesthood; a practice adopted by the Hebrews, and their Mercury was said to have invented the lyre by accidentally striking his foot against the shell of a tortoise, on the banks of the Nile. The oldest instrument of music demonstrates man to have been originally a hunter and a fisher; for the lyre was composed of two parts the horn of an animal, and the shell of a fish. The hymns to Bacchus, preserved in the Greek writers, are supposed to have originated in Egypt; and the enquirer into the origin of the art, will find it to have had admission into the religious ceremonies, public festivals, and social amusements of mankind. The musician was so highly esteemed in ancient times, that Quintilian informs us he was

honored with the name of prophet and of sage: from Phœnicia, in scripture denominated Canaan, music passed into Greece, where to the fabulous reports of its miraculous efficacy, a voluntary credulity yielded its assent.

It was said to possess not only the more credible power of repressing the passions, but the medicinal quality of curing diseases.

Terpander is reported to have appeased a violent sedition by music; and Solon by singing an elegy of his own composition, to have excited his countrymen, the Athenians, to the renewal and termination of a war with Salamis.

It was asserted that fevers were removed by song, and that deafness was cured by the sound of the trumpet; that Thales delivered the Lacedæmonians from a pestilence by the sweetness of his lyre; and that the sound of instruments was successfully employed in the cure of madness, epilepsy,

and sciatic gout. Homer represents Agamemnon as confiding the chastity of Clytemnestra to the guardianship of a Musician, until whose dismissal, her seducer Ægisthus had no power over her affections.

“ At first with worthy shame and decent pride
The royal dame his lawless suit denied ;
For virtue’s image yet possessed her mind,
Taught by a master of the tuneful kind.
Atrides parting for the Trojan war,
Consigned his youthful consort to his care.
True to his charge, the bard preserved her long
In honor’s limits, such the power of song.”

Aristotle says that the Tyrrhenians never scourged their slaves but by the sound of flutes, in order to give some counterpoise to pain.

How highly the ancients appreciated this art, may be known by the account we read of Amphion having raised the walls of Thebes, by the magical influence of his lyre.

If this induced the Thebans to fortify their town, we can readily acquiesce in the interpretation given by the poets, and in the wonderful powers possessed by the artist. The muses were originally only singers in the service of Osiris, the Egyptian Bacchus ; they were deified in Greece, denominated the daughters of Jupiter, and some of them derived their names from the excellence of their voice.

The descriptions of the orgies of Bacchus are the most voluptuous of ancient poetry. This god of pleasure is regaled with music as well as wine, and the Dithyrambics which gave birth to dramatic representation are coëval with his worship.

The Sirens of Sicily are in the commonplace book of every classical schoolboy; and the wise Ulysses although cautioned by the following warning of Circe, found great difficulty in resisting their seduction :

“ Next where the Sirens dwell you plough the seas,
Their song is death, and makes destruction please.
Unblest the man whom music wins to stray
Nigh the cursed shore, and listen to the lay ;
No more that wretch shall view the joys of life,
His blooming offspring, or his beauteous wife.”

Every one feels an interest in marking the progress of an art, which in the rudest ages of the world, was first the delight of shepherd-princes, next of ploughmen, and then of associated man ; when all that depended on proportion, appertained to the science of harmony. To whatever profession the most illustrious characters were destined, a large portion of their time was applied to music. *Nec fides didicit, nec natare*, was disgraceful to every one of fortune and of birth. The fabulous accounts of Chiron, of Amphion, Orpheus, Linus and Musæus, serve at least to shew the general opinion of the art. Hercules is said to have learned music in the school of Chiron, and an interesting painting, saved

saved amidst the ruins of Herculaneum, exhibits the young Achilles receiving instruction on the lyre from the same preceptor.

To Linus at the annual sacrifice to the Muses, the highest honors were paid, and an altar and a statue erected to him on mount Helicon. The story of Orpheus and Eurydice contains perhaps the highest eulogium which any art has ever received.

The instruments of music were few during the Trojan war. A torch, the shell of a fish, and the voice of a herald was successively the signal of battle. The bard had a place of honor at all the banquets of the Greeks, and Penelope informs us of the entertainment he afforded to the enraptured guests.

“Phemius! let acts of gods and heroes bold,
What ancient bards in hall and bower have told,
Attemper'd to the lyre, your voice employ,
Such the pleas'd ear will drink with silent joy.”

The two offices of poet and musician were combined in all the Grecian games, and Alcæus and Sappho, Simonides and Pindar sustained both these characters. But to music at the public games, a still higher dignity was attached; for it was there rendered subservient to the sacred cause of liberty. Not only Rhapsodists were appointed to sing the verses of Homer, but Harmodius and Aristogiton who had opposed the Pisistratidæ and Aristobulus who had delivered the Athenians from the power of the thirty tyrants, were the subjects of their mellifluous praises. That art indeed must have been justly esteemed which could boast of Socrates, Plato, and Pericles as its professed admirers and patrons.

The learned author of the History of Music has shewn it to have been slowly progressive in Greece. That the first attempts were rude and simple, that rhythm was attended to before tone or melody, that instruments of percussion preceded all others,

others, that the steps in the dance, and the feet in poetry, were marked with precision before sounds were refined; that the flute imitated, and the lyre accompanied the voice in its inflexions of sorrow and of joy; and what excites the curiosity of the scholar, that the irregularities in the versification of the later Greeks, were an indulgence to the instrumental performer.

From the public games music passed to the stage, where the chorus was subservient to the melody of the lyric, and from being the humble companion of poetry, became its sovereign.

The Romans borrowed all the liberal arts from other nations; before Greece was known to them they derived their music from Etruria, a country peopled by a Grecian colony, to which their youth were sent for education. Dionysius Halicarnassus says, that Romulus and Remus acquired at Gabii the knowledge of the Greek language, music, and the use of
arms.

arms. In the time of Numa the Salii danced to the flute, and Servius Tullius instituted military music. In funerals music became an accompaniment, and it was constantly attached to the Roman drama. Music, in the later periods of Rome, was chiefly confined to slaves; in Greece, it was justly considered as a liberal art, and appropriated to freemen. This circumstance may account for the pre-eminence it reached in the latter country. That capricious tyrant Nero is said to have appeared on the stage at Naples as a public singer, and to have compelled the judges in a thousand contests, to assign to him the prize.

Though the science of music is certainly obscure and difficult, the knowledge of the theory of Grecian harmony, will tend greatly to elucidate it; and the learned practitioner will be highly gratified by seeing the prodigious effects ascribed by the ancients to the favorite object of his pursuit, and the intimate connection which
it

it has always had with manners, policy and religion. Who would not desire to know the history of an art, which under the guidance of philosophy, has been said to be one of the sublimest gifts of heaven, and the noblest inventions of men?

There is no country in the world where commerce leads to wealth by so direct and short a road as in England. The English merchant is every where celebrated for the liberality of his conduct; and a certain portion of classical attainments would to no rank of society be both more ornamental and more useful. Riches rapidly conduct to honors and distinction, and it is highly requisite that ignorance should not disgrace the elevated station to which industry has climbed. That a knowledge of the dead languages facilitates the acquirement of the living ones, which are essential to a man of extensive concerns, is an assertion as incontrovertible as it is general.

But

But it is also the frequent ambition of gentlemen engaged in commercial business, to become magistrates and members of the senate, where their decision and their advice on questions of the greatest import to the interest of individuals and of their country, is looked to with respectful deference.

To every man in public life, the capacity of delivering his sentiments without perplexity or hesitation, is most desirable. This cannot be acquired by habit alone, for the foundation of all eloquence is a knowledge of the subject, and one of its principal constituents is purity of language; both these result from education and reflection.

Riches can then only be regarded as the means of happiness when they produce a desire for virtuous distinction; but if the possessor has neglected the culture of the mind, they serve but to expose him to ridicule and contempt.

In

In vain will it be that he resort to a splendor of equipage and retinue to counterbalance the defect of education, for there can be no counterpoise to poverty of mind in ostensible situations. How evident is this in such persons of noble birth as debase themselves by moral inactivity and mental indolence, who waste the precious years of youth in the amusements of the turf or the gaming table, which had been well employed in musing on the banks of the Isis, or in exploring the treasures of the Bodleian.

But although to every commercial man, public life may not have equal attractions, yet classical learning will furnish to every one a feast of luxury. In his occasional retreats from the bustle of business, it will be the solace of his labour, and the source of rational entertainment. He will learn from it the proper use of prosperity, and be eager to possess the endowments which constitute its value. In a state of nature, bodily strength or personal valour decides

the superiority of man ; but in the present state of society, all but the lowest classes are summoned to mix speculation with action, and the higher energies of the mind are required to dignify their worldly conditions.

It is said by Montesquieu, that commerce is a cure for the most destructive prejudices, and that wherever there is commerce, there we meet with agreeable manners.

That an intercourse with other nations, and an acquaintance with their manners, will enable us by comparison to improve our own, is a proposition not to be denied ; but if this intercourse be merely a barter of commodities, surely from such traffic a polished urbanity cannot proceed. It is probable that a spirit of trade may fix in the mind a sentiment of exact and scrupulous justice, but it requires education to expand that rigid principle both in its demands and its concessions.

The

The same author justly observes, that the great enterprizes of merchants are always necessarily connected with the affairs of the government; but experience will not justify his assertion that they are not suited to monarchical, but only to republican governments: indeed a subsequent chapter of his own work contradicts it; for he there says, that the English know better than any other people upon earth how to value these great advantages, religion, commerce and liberty. It is impossible to look back to the earliest effects of commerce in this country without veneration and gratitude. We owe to it the first check which was given to aristocratical power, that giant in strength, and tyrant in oppression; we owe to it the recognition of the equal rights of all the citizens, and the dawn of that civil liberty which diffuses its blessings over the whole community.

The commerce of the ancients, even in the days of Alexander, was so insignificant
when

when compared with that of modern times, that however it might amuse the leisure hours of the merchant to study the writings of their historians, with a view to obtain information on this point, he would probably not find it of much practical utility to him.

Still like the liberal arts, he would perceive it migrating from one quarter of the globe to another, as conquest expelled or freedom offered it an asylum. His prejudices in favour of his native country, would unquestionably be gratified by observing, that while the proudest cities in Asia, whose commerce once convened all the nations of the world, now exist only in the pages of Livy and of Strabo, a gloomy forest, an island of barbarians, girt by rocks and beaten by seas, displays a scene at which the false pride of Cicero would have revolted :—“ The same people at once the lords and factors of the universe.”

Having

Having thus endeavoured to shew the advantages of classical learning in its reference to the several professions, it is my design to attempt an illustration of this doctrine, by an outline of the life and a brief review of the works of the principal poets, orators, and historians of antiquity.

At the outset of this inquiry, I wish precisely to state the motive which has induced me to enter upon it, lest such of my readers as might expect to find the laborious investigations of the commentator, or the acute observations of the critic in this work, should be disappointed and disgusted by the perusal of it. My sole purpose is to enforce an important truth,—the utility of a liberal education to individuals and to society. If persons of each sex, and of various ages and conditions, shall find their access to this discussion rendered more easy by its being conducted in our vernacular language, and divested of all parade of learning; and if literary men shall not disdain to approve a work which, having

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that

that object in view, has assumed a popular air; their suffrages will vindicate the nature of my plan, and their candour will palliate the defects of its execution.

SECTION II.

*On the Epic Poets of Greece—Homer, Hesiod, Apollonius
Rhodius.*

THE climate of Greece, and the lively imagination of the people, their customs and their religious rites, were all peculiarly favourable to poetry.

These circumstances should be present to our minds when we compare ancient and modern literature. It should be remembered that, nature being always the same, the first poet who gave a description of the spring, of storms, of the night, of beauty, and of battles, was likely to make the strongest impression on the readers; and every succeeding one to appear only a copier or a plagiarist. It seems fair to reason thus when we peruse the pages of Homer, as it may tend, although not to

lessen our veneration for excellence, yet by calming our raptures to enable us more correctly to appreciate his merit. Poetry is the first art which civilized nations have cultivated, and the epic the earliest poetry. Second, in order of time, to the Holy Scriptures, and to the works of Indian and Chinese writers, are the poems of Homer. The few fragments of Orpheus which we possess are scarce worthy to contradict this assertion, but they serve to prove that the first employment of the muse was to celebrate gods and heroes. The epic is the recital in verse of an action probable, heroic, and interesting. Not bound by the strict rules of historic truth, it must, however, be guided by moral probability. Consecrated to great subjects it becomes heroic; and it is rendered interesting because it captivates the imagination, and penetrates the soul.

Of all the productions of which the human understanding is capable, epic poetry is unquestionably the highest, since it includes the best qualities of every species of writing. It cannot, therefore, but afford

us amusement and instruction to recall to our memory those great masters, whose names are immortalized by the superior nature of their works, and the unrivalled ascendancy of their genius.

Homer was born, probably, about nine hundred years before the christian æra, and three hundred after the Trojan war. Of so great a writer we are naturally anxious to inquire into every particular of the life, but here our curiosity will not be gratified. He is known only by his works; for though seven cities contended for the honour of giving him birth, no authentic documents remain to decide the contest. His imputed poverty is not well ascertained, since it is even doubtful whether the reception which he every where met with in his travels, did honor to the compassion or to the hospitality of his hosts. At all events, he amply recompensed their kindness by the recital of his incomparable poems. From very early times much industry has been wasted by learned men on the birth-place of Homer; and if the Emperor Adrian

was willing to rely on the answer of the Oracle who fixed it at Ithaca, posterity less credulous refuses to acquiesce in such suspicious authority: Perhaps the town of Smyrna and the island of Chios exhibit the best pretensions to that honor. But the question is surely unimportant, since human nature has the honor of his genius, and the world at large can boast the treasure of his works. It is not, however, unamusing to contemplate the fabulous accounts we have received of him.

Eustathius declares him to have been born in Egypt, and nursed by the priestess Isis, whose breast supplied him with honey instead of milk; that one night the infant was heard to set up cries which resembled the song of nine different birds; and that the next day there were found in his cradle nine turtle-doves who played with him. Diodorus Siculus tells us, that Homer had found a manuscript of a certain Daphne, priestess of the temple of Delphi, who had an admirable talent for rendering in
good

good verse the oracles of the gods, and that thence Homer transcribed them into his poems. Others make him descended in a right line from Apollo, from Linus, and from Orpheus. It is also fabled that long before his time, a woman of Memphis, whose name was Phantasy, had composed a poem on the Trojan war. All these prove the taste of the Greeks for allegorical tales, and compose the highest possible eulogium on the greatest of poets.

His verses were first sung in Ionia by the rhapsodists or reciters. Not being then collected into books, they would chant some favorite part of them; the quarrel of Achilles with Agamemnon, or the death of Patroclus, or the parting of Hector and Andromache. Lycurgus, in his voyage to Ionia, first collected and brought them to Lacedæmon, whence they spread through the whole of Greece. In the time of Solon and Pisistratus, Hipparchus, son of the latter, made a new copy at Athens by order of his father, which was currently in use till the time of Alexander the Great. That

prince commanded Callisthenes and Anaxarchus carefully to review the poems of Homer, which must have been altered in passing through so many hands and so many countries. Aristotle was consulted about this edition, which was called the casket; because Alexander inclosed a copy of it in a small box of inestimable value, taken on his journey from Arbela, amidst the spoils of Darius. This he always kept under his pillow, saying that the most precious casket in the whole world should contain the finest work of human genius.

After the death of Alexander, Zenodorus of Ephesus again revised this edition, under the reign of the first of the Ptolemies. Finally, under Ptolemy Philometer, five hundred years before Christ, Aristarchus, so celebrated for his taste and understanding, undertook the last revision of the poems of Homer. This eclipsed all the others; it is the one which has come down to us, and seems to have suffered few essential alterations,

No subject could have been found to operate so forcibly on the feelings of the Grecians, as that of the siege and destruction of Troy. The recital of the interesting story must at once have gratified their vanity, excited their military ardour, and warmed their patriotism. That the choice of his subject was not more happy than the execution of his plan, is a commendation bestowed on Homer by the best critics of every age. Horace places him above the chiefs of the Academy and the Portico; and though Plato would banish him, together with all other poets, from his republic, yet he confesses that his early respect and love for his writings, ought to chain his tongue; that he is the creator of all the poets who have followed him.

The fable of the Iliad, divested of its episodes, is remarkably simple and concise. " One of the Grecian generals, discontented with the commander in chief, retires from the camp, deaf to the call of duty, of reason, and of his friends; he scruples not to abandon the public weal to his private resentment;

resentment ; and his enemies, profiting by his misconduct, obtain great advantages over his party, and kill his bosom-friend. Vengeance and friendship induce him to re-assume his arms, and he overcomes the chief of the enemy.”

Whoever carefully peruses the Iliad, will find the execution of the work to be not less judicious than the plan, which was to demonstrate the evils arising from discord amongst rulers.

The description that Homer gives of characters is throughout consistent, and his manner, though simple, is sublime. His images are finished pictures, his reflections are moral axioms. His imagination is rich in a superlative degree ; and his knowledge is universal. He is of all professions, poet, orator, mathematician, philosopher, geographer, and artisan. In the order of his story there is a variety, and in the relation of it an energy, which are produced by elevation of genius ; and his verses, which delight the ear by their rhythm and their

their cadence, denominate him the true poet of nature.

In reading the twelve first books of Homer, we are struck with the simple yet noble progress of the work. We admire the artifice of the poet, who suffers the intervention of the gods to terminate a battle between Menelaus and Paris, which must otherwise have terminated the war. Our attention is summoned to that part where Helen passes before the old Trojans, who regard her with admiration, and are no longer astonished at seeing Europe and Asia bleeding on her account. Her conversation with the aged Priam, when she makes known to him the principal chiefs of Greece, is particularly interesting. The scene between Hector and Andromache when the hero returns to order a sacrifice, and then departs from Troy never to re-enter it, has not been celebrated too often or too much.

These are delightful episodes, which agreeably vary the uniformity of the principal action.

In

In the ninth book, Homer appears as a dramatist and an orator. In the speeches of Phœnix, of Ulysses, of Ajax, and in the answer of the inflexible Achilles, we may discern models of all kinds of eloquence. We are then carried to the field of battle where the contending armies display every effort of prowess. The Greeks are driven within their entrenchments, and their ships become their last asylum. The Trojans hasten in crowds to force this barrier, and Sarpedon pulls down one of the battlements of the wall; Hector hurls an enormous stone against the gates; they fly open, and he loudly calls for a torch to fire the ships;

“Haste, bring the flames! the toil of ten long years
Is finished, and the day desired appears.”

Almost all the chiefs of Greece are wounded, and retired from fight. Ajax is the only rampart of his country, which he still protects with his valour and his shield; at length, though oppressed by fatigue,

tigue, and driven to the ships, he yet repels the victors ;

“ Ev’n to the last, his naval charge defends;
Now shakes his spear, now lifts, and now pretends.
Ev’n yet the Greeks with piercing shouts inspires,
Amidst attacks and death, and darts and fires.”

The flames at length appear rising from the ships; and this was the date which Achilles had fixed to his rage. He then yields to the entreaties of his friend ;

“ Arm, arm, Patroclus ! Lo ! the blaze aspires,
The glowing ocean reddens with the fires.
Arm, ere our vessels catch the spreading flame,
Arm, ere the Grecians be no more a name.”

It has been justly observed by Mr. Gibbon, that the 16th book of the Iliad affords a very clear idea of the polytheism of the Greeks, and that it contains some prodigiously fine similies. When encouraged by Apollo, who promises him the aid of Jove, how glorious is the ardour and how powerful the effect of Hector’s fortitude !

“ Urged

“ Urged by the voice divine, thus Hector flew,
 Full of the god, and all his host pursue ;
 As when the force of men and dogs combined
 Invade the mountain goat, or branching hind ;
 Far from the hunter’s rage, secure they lie,
 Close in the rock, not fated yet to die ;
 When lo ! a lion shoots across the way,
 They fly : at once the chasers and the prey.
 So Greece that late in conquering troops pursued,
 And marked their progress thro’ the ranks in blood,
 Soon as they see the furious chief appear,
 Forget to vanquish, and consent to fear.”

POPE.

It is from the Iliad that Longinus selects his examples of grand ideas, and grand images. He takes an instance of it from the 20th book, where Jupiter gives permission to the gods to mingle in the quarrel with the Greeks and Trojans, and to descend into the field of battle. He himself gives the signal by making his thunder sound from the height of heaven ; and Neptune, striking the earth with his trident, makes the summits of Ida to tremble. You see, says Longinus, the earth shaken to its foundation, Tartarus discovered,

discovered, the machine of the world overturned, and heaven and hell, mortals and immortals, all together in the combat and in the danger.

In the moral pictures of Homer, there is no one more captivating than that where the anger of Achilles is represented as yielding to the soft emotions of friendship. Patroclus, ever mild and amiable, seems to convey a portion of his spirit to the inexorable hero. The contrast of passions which is exhibited by Achilles, when he is informed of the death of Patroclus; his tender care and pious offices to his corpse; the interview between him and Priam, when the afflicted monarch falls prostrate before the murderer of his son; are passages which in point both of poetical merit and tragic effect, have never been excelled.

It has been objected to Homer, that he has degraded his gods by representing them as under the influence of some of the most despicable of the human passions: but it should be recollected that this was the vul-

gar creed, and that if the gods of Virgil are beings of more dignity and worth, it is because the age was more enlightened and refined. It is the duty of the philosopher to correct the false notions that prevail amongst men; it is the office of the poet to represent them as they exist: the one is the reformer, the other the historian of his time. Impressed with the force of this objection against Homer, some of his admirers have asserted that the mythology is merely allegorical: that the air was designated by Jupiter, fire by Vulcan, the earth by Cybele, and the sea by Neptune, may be true; but to declare that Jupiter means only the power of God, Destiny his will, Juno his justice, Venus his pity, and Minerva his wisdom, is a sentiment so replete with absurdity, that it can never obtain the assent of a rational critic.

The manners of the times furnish a similar if not a sufficient apology for the heroes of Homer, as for his gods. Praise was the prerogative of bodily strength: he

who could sustain the greatest weight of armour, and pierce through cuirasses and bucklers, had the highest rank in the Grecian table of precedence.

In forming our judgments on ancient modes, we must divest ourselves of the prejudices of habit and education. Modern arms and modern honor, place all gentlemen on a level; but in the Iliad, it is common to see a warrior retreat without shame, confessing that another is his superior in strength. Æneas does not blush when he says to Achilles, I well know that you are more valiant than I am, (which means, I know you are stronger,) but if some god would assist me, I could conquer you.

This intervention of the deities raised the warrior in the opinion of his contemporaries; for it constituted no small share of his merit, to be a favorite of heaven. This too served as an excuse for every error, and for every crime. When Agamemnon would justify himself for injuring Achilles, he says, some god
G had

had disturbed his reason. Achilles exhorts Patroclus to avoid Hector, for he had always near him some protecting deity.

It has been said that the valour of Achilles excites no admiration, because he is invulnerable. This is a popular mistake; an invention of later date, and no where to be found in the Iliad. Achilles is wounded in the hand; and there is great address in the poet, who represents his hero firm and undaunted in his mind, although he is conscious that he shall die before the walls of Troy. He knows that his youth and beauty, and the divinity of his mother will avail him nothing; that he sacrifices every thing to glory; and though he carries conquest all around, that he marches to inevitable death. All these circumstances fix our attention on Achilles, for whom we feel that interest which always attaches to extraordinary men. The transcendant genius of Homer is shewn, in making the retirement of his hero the spring which gives action and energy to
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the poem : even at the moment when Hector has driven the Grecians to their ships, and their destruction seems inevitable, our attention is carried from the fury of the fight, from flames and death, to contemplate Achilles in his tent, tranquilly lamenting the loss of so many brave men, victims to the rage of Agamemnon ; and exulting at the dreadful abasement of his pride.

It has been objected to Homer, that he exhibits his Chiefs employed in the most servile offices ; Achilles, for instance, preparing the repast for the deputies of the army. Nothing surely can be more false than this criticism : if it be true, that a great genius “ pleases more when he dazzles less,” it is equally so that a hero summons a greater portion of our esteem, when he exhibits the mild attributes of courteousness and humanity :

“ When pure affection thinks no office mean.”

Were a poet to treat of that point in history where Curius receives the deputies

of Pyrrhus, who come to bribe him with presents, would he withhold the circumstance of the herbs which he prepared himself, and placed before them, saying, "You see that he who lives in this manner, has no want of any thing. The Romans do not care about having gold themselves; they wish to command those who have it."

The most reasonable censure brought against the author of the Iliad, is the tedious repetition of combats which occupy nearly half the work: the nature of his subject is however partly an apology, and the richness of imagination with which he has ornamented them, in a great degree redeems the fault. "One while he describes the character, age, and nation of the dying hero; at another time he describes different kinds of wounds and death; sometimes by tender and pathetic strokes he reminds the reader of the aged parent, who is fondly expecting the return of his murdered son; of the desolate condition of the
widows

widows who will now be enslaved, and of the children that will be dashed against the stones." A Grecian would have heard those recitals with enthusiasm, which we peruse with coldness and fastidiousness.

Envy is inseparable from excellence: two centuries and a half before the Christian æra, Zoilus, a sophist, a declaimer, and a hungry critic, presented his strictures on the works of Homer, to Ptolemy Philadelphus; but the monarch of Egypt rejected them with disdain. The temerity of the defamer was severely punished by the inhabitants of Smyrna, who ordered him to be burned, as a memorial of their regard for a poet, whom they claimed as their citizen.

Had Homer seen the criticisms of Zoilus, he would perhaps have been equally unmoved with the epic poet of our own country, when his bookseller offered him five pounds for the copyright of his *Paradise lost*. Like Milton, he would have known that immortality was the price of

his works, and that the discernment of posterity would spontaneously pay it.

The Emperor Caligula has completed his character by having endeavoured, happily in vain, to destroy the productions of Homer. The witty and the powerful were amongst his adversaries; yet though the splendor of his name irritated pride and envy in a similar degree, neither species of enmity could lessen his reputation.

Merit which can sustain such proofs, is gold tried by the furnace. Our admiration of Homer yields only to his genius and his fame: three thousand applauding years have consecrated his name, and we exult to find a poet so great, and mankind so just.

Longinus says, that "Homer in the Odyffey is like the setting sun, which is still great to the eyes, but we no longer feel its warmth. It is no longer the fire which animates the whole of the Iliad, that height of genius which never debases itself, that
activity

activity which never reposes, that torrent of passions which hurries us away, that crowd of fictions happy and probable; but as the ocean at the moment of its reflux, and when it leaves its shores, is still the ocean, the old age of which I speak, is still the old age of Homer."

Those who are disposed to depreciate the *Odyſſey*, ſay of it, that its fables are only fitted for the amuſement of children, that its progreſs languiſhes, that the poem drags on from adventure to adventure without attracting attention or exciting intereſt. That the ſituation of Penelope and Telemachus is the ſame during twenty-four books,—a conſtant re-iteration of outrages on the part of the ſuitors, and ſimilar complaints on the part of the mother and the ſon. That Ulyſſes is in Ithaca ſo early as in the 12th book; that he lives a very long time with Eumæus, diſguiſed as a beggar, while the action of the poem does not advance a ſtep. That in the menial offices and indignities ſuſtained by him there, Homer has outraged the effect of

contrast, and passed all the bounds of decorum. That the meeting of the husband and the wife so long expected, is cold and unproductive of the effects of which it is susceptible; and, what is revolting to good sense, that scarcely had Ulysses been recognised by Penelope, before he informs her that fate condemns him again to traverse the world with an oar upon his shoulder until he meet a man who may take it to fan his corn:—

“ To this the king : ah, why must I disclose
 A dreadful story of approaching woes ?
 Why in this hour of transport wound thy ears ?
 When thou must learn what I must speak with tears,
 Heaven by the Theban Ghost thy spouse decrees
 Torn from thy arms to sail a length of seas.”

It is objected too, that the sojourning of Ulysses in the island of Calypso and of Circe, offers nothing interesting to the reader; and that if Calypso be the original of Dido, it is a drop of water converted into a pearl: that in his descent to the shades below, Ulysses entertains himself with a crowd of ghosts who are absolutely strangers to

to

to him, and who recount adventures in which he is entirely uninterested.

These strictures are undoubtedly too severe, and not warranted by the impression which the perusal of the *Odyſſey* makes upon our minds.

It presents us with a pleasing picture of ancient manners, with the virtues of hospitality and respect for age, of patience, prudence, wisdom, temperance and fortitude. Menelaus, Nestor and Eumæus, display the first; Telemachus is a striking instance of the second, together with courage, candour and nobleness of nature; and the others shine in an unexampled manner in the character of Ulyſſes. The address of Eumæus to his unknown master, is very attractive.

“ The swain replied ; It never was our guise
To slight the poor, or ought humane despise.
For Jove unfolds our hospitable door,
'Tis Jove that sends the stranger and the poor.”

If Ulyſſes be too much degraded by his disguise, and too long in inaction, yet these circumstances produce a suspension
and

and an attention to the catastrophe, which render it more bold and lively. The slaughter of the suitors is traced with colours which recal the pictures of the Iliad. Of the two poems the moral of the Odyſſey is preferable. The qualities I have mentioned are of general concern, and all ranks of life may be benefited by the cultivation of them. The Iliad has been called the manual of monarchs, and it undoubtedly furniſhes an awful leſſon againſt the impetuofity and tyranny of power. But its uſefulneſs is leſs extenſive, as its application is more limited. Of the ſubjects of the Odyſſey one is perfectly in uniſon with the nature of reſentment, the other with our experience. Ulyſſes is driven by the fury of the winds and waves, becauſe Neptune was juſtly enraged at his treatment of his ſon Polypheme; and the deſtroyation and ruin conſequent upon his abſence from home, allowing ſomewhat for poetical embellishment, would occur in any family where the beauty of the miſtreſs ſhould invite ſuitors, and the rapacity and inſolence

lence of servants should be without control. The progress and catastrophe of the poem, are equally probable as the plan.

When a storm has compelled Ulysses to ask the hospitality of the Phæacians, they entertain him in a manner suitable to the kindness and simplicity of the times. A bard then furnished the highest entertainment at every feast, and Demodorus recited the interesting story of the fall of Troy. We may easily imagine what an effect this would produce on Ulysses, and that the curiosity of the king Alcinous and his assembled guests would lead to the discovery of the stranger. Although modern refinement renders similar incidents impossible, we feel no repugnance in believing, that the Phæacians were moved by the relation of his melancholy adventures to so great a degree, as to conduct him safely to Ithaca. There the circumstance of his faithful dog, who recognises him with all the acuteness and affection which instinct boasts, and then expires at his feet, affects the reader in the most lively manner; and the doubts, and fears,
and

and hopes of Penelope, are the natural suggestions of a mind long habituated to misfortune, at the sudden dawn of unexpected happiness.

It is the glory of Homer to have been an original writer. The arts have been brought to perfection in corrupt times; but poetry may challenge to itself this honorable distinction, that it attained its highest excellence in an age of purity and simplicity.

Homer has been truly said to be the great source whence all the Greek writers derive their chief excellence. He gave rise to all the various kinds of composition; he is the best poet and orator in the various kinds of elocution; he excels all mankind in grandeur, vehemence, sweetness, and accuracy of style.

There is, however, a question which naturally suggests itself on this subject. Admitting the fact, we are desirous to know the cause of Homer's pre-eminence above all subsequent poets. At first view it should seem paradoxical, that all the writers of every age and country must
yield

yield the palm to him, since his composition, his style, his diction, his manner, his sublimity, have presented a model to their eyes, which while it instructed and formed their understanding, has ever stimulated them to a desire of competition and of excellence.

Sir William Temple has resolved the doubts of every sceptic in this interesting enquiry. “Of all the numbers of mankind,” says he, “that live within the compass of a thousand years, for one man that is born capable of making a great poet, there may be a thousand born capable of making as great generals or ministers of state as the most renowned in story. Conjectures and manners are not sufficient to produce poets. Greece and the climate of Asia, though in a proper temperament, for the space of two or three hundred years, produced only one Homer. Something more than these is necessary, an universal and elevated genius, a quality as rare as it is valuable: certainly many circumstances of life, many advantages of education, and

opportunities of knowing mankind, are necessary; great travelling, and wide observation.

HESIOD.

Of the precise period when Hesiod was born we have no certain account, but Ascra in Bœotia is said to have been the place of his nativity. He who searches most anxiously for the date of that event, finds himself lost in the clouds by which antiquity is obscured. Whether he were anterior to the time of Homer, his contemporary, or successor, has been a subject on which ancient writers have differed; and their contrary assertions still require the corroboration of proof. One thing is certain, that he had seen his works, for he has entire verses which are borrowed from him. Mythology seems to have had two fathers; and these most ancient poets may alike lay claim to the production.

Only two complete poems written by him are still extant, the one entitled Works and
and

and Days, the other the Theogony or the Birth of the Gods. The first contains precepts of agriculture, from which probably Virgil first conceived his idea of the Georgics. But reflections which would do honor to a philosopher, are interspersed throughout the work. It is divided into three parts, the one mythological, the other moral, the last didactic.

Hesiod begins by recounting the fable of Pandora; and if he be the inventor of it, no scanty portion of praise is due to his imagination. We feel a considerable gratification on its first perusal; and it is never read with disgust. He describes also the birth of Venus, and of those coy females, the nine daughters of Jupiter and Mnemosyne.

Then follows a description of the different ages of the world, which has been imitated by Ovid; but the former poet adds one to the general number. Like every writer on this subject, he considers himself as living in the age of iron; this age, therefore,

fore, must have been of wonderful duration.

A course of morals succeeds to his mythology; it is addressed to his brother Perseus, with whom he had been engaged in a law-suit respecting their paternal succession; and in this part of his work, precepts of husbandry are blended with lessons of wisdom. He was a priest of the Temple of the Muses on Mount Helicon, and the gravity of his office was well suited to the instructions which he gave. The conclusion of the work is a tissue of the most absurd superstitions. Particular days of the month are stated as favorable to the celebration of marriage, to the shearing of sheep, and to the production of children. Experience has not confirmed the hypothesis, which was the suggestion of the grossest ignorance.

The Theogony fatigues the reader with its long catalogue of gods and goddesses of every species; but at the end of the work it repays him for his labour by an animated description

description of the war of the gods against the giants. This description, indeed, together with that of winter in the Works and Days, is worthy to be compared with the finest passages of Homer. The picture of Tartarus where the Titans are thrown down by the thunder of Jupiter, has certain traits of resemblance to the Hell of Milton so striking, that the one was probably the model of the other. A very singular coincidence, if we consider the difference in the religious sentiments of the authors. It is not true, as has been asserted, that Hesiod vanquished Homer in a poetical contest at the funeral of Amphidamas; but his verses, which are possessed of elegance of style and sweetness of poetry, were written on tablets in the temple of the muses, and the Greeks compelled their children to learn them by heart.

Cicero confers upon him a handsome eulogium; but Quintilian will not allow that he often rises to excellence. He grants him only the praise which belongs to smoothness of language, and refuses him

the palm that is due to superiority of talents.

APOLLONIUS RHODIUS.

This writer was born at Naucratis in Egypt, about two hundred and thirty years before Christ. He was surnamed the Rhodian from his residence in that island. His education was the best, for Callimachus and Panætius were his preceptors. He was one of the keepers of the famous library of Alexandria under Ptolemy Evergetes. Nothing remains of his writings but his poem on the Expedition of the Argonauts in four books. The plan of his work has been generally considered as having too little of the epic in it. It is too historical in the order of the facts, and overcharged with episodes, which are introduced without selection, and told without effect. In some parts the execution is not destitute of merit. The love of Medea for Jason, is painted in glowing colours; and Virgil has not disdained to borrow ideas from Apollonius.

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But he has given to Dido a force of expression from which the Greek poet is far distant. His plagiarisms are few, and his superiority is infinite.

SECTION III.

*Lyric Poetry. Linus, Orpheus, Musæus, Stesichorus,
Sappho, Simonides, Anacreon, Pindar.*

THE origin of lyric poetry is lost in fable. Linus has been said to be the inventor of rhythm and melody, and being born at Thebes in Bœotia, is one amongst many instances to prove how little is the influence of climate and local situation on original genius. The poetry of the Greeks being always accompanied by music, produced that enthusiasm both in the hearer and the composer, which was easily excited in men remarkable for the sensibility of their organs. The Mantuan bard assigns to Linus, in his sixth eclogue, the most distinguished place amongst the favorites of the muses, and honors him with the appellation of their interpreter. Mortals of great celebrity were

were frequently dignified by a supposed celestial origin; and the son of Ismenias the musician, who had this tribute paid to his art by a certain king of Scythia, that he preferred his music to the braying of an ass, was poetically descended from Mercury and Urania. Similar legendary tales inform us, that he was killed by a stroke of the lyre from his pupil Hercules, and that Apollo deprived him of life for presuming to imitate him.

It is unfortunate for his fame, that none of his poems remain to enable posterity to estimate the quantity of truth which is blended with fiction, or to determine how well qualified Linus was to be the rival of a God.

Orpheus, whether the son of a Thracian king, or of Apollo, is generally said to have been the offspring of Caliope, and to have attained a reputation superior to that of his preceptor Linus, because he rendered poetry and music subservient to the ceremonies of religion.

These ceremonies he borrowed from the Egyptians and introduced into Greece. He instituted the mysteries of Bacchus, and the Eleusinian Ceres in imitation of those of Isis and Osiris. Some fragments attributed to him are preserved, which have no corruption of polytheism, but which a christian and a philosopher may peruse with no small gratification.

“God alone exists of himself and by himself; he is in all things; no mortal can see him, and he sees every thing. He alone in his justice distributes the evils which afflict mankind, war and misery. He governs the winds which agitate the air, and he lights the fires of the thunder. He sits on high in the heavens on a throne of gold, and the earth is under his feet. He stretches his hand to the utmost limits of the ocean, and the mountains tremble to their foundations. It is he who made every thing in the universe, and who is at once the beginning, the middle, and the end.” This fragment preserved by Suidas, seems to give some sanction to what has
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been considered a fanciful notion of Bishop Warburton, respecting the grand secret in the Eleusinian mysteries. But if the unity of God were the belief of sages, the popular creed was essential to the preservation of social order amidst a people whose imagination was ardent, and whose minds on this important subject were unenlightened.

So correct was the conduct of Orpheus, that whoever led a life of more than ordinary purity, was said to be his scholar. Indeed, his elevated sentiments of Deity would naturally operate on his morals and his heart, for poetry in his time was always intimately connected with ethics and religion.

Musæus was the disciple of Orpheus, and presided over the Eleusinian mysteries at Athens. Virgil in his sixth *Æneid*, places him at the head of the poets in the Elysian Fields, where they celebrate those who are worthy of Apollo. None of his compositions remain. In searching into antiquity, we have perpetually to lament the depredations which time and violence and
H 4 bigotry

bigotry have made on the proudest monuments of genius and of skill. But it is some consolation to reflect that if the offer were given us to exchange what has been preserved for that which has been lost, we should not for a moment hesitate in retaining the valuable relics of which we are in possession.

Where is the literary epicure of refined taste, who would steal a moment from the enchanting entertainment with which Homer and Pindar are ever ready to present him, in order to lament the loss of those lesser dainties that Bacchylides and Mææus might once have afforded?

These lyrical writers flourished nearly thirteen centuries before the christian æra; and of many others who succeeded them, after a lapse of several centuries, we possess only a dull catalogue of names, and a few fragments contained in Athenæus.

Amongst these is Alcæus, who lived about six hundred years before Christ, a native of Mitylene, and the supposed inventor of the harp, and of Alcaic metre.

His

His works are said to have been serviceable to the public manners ; concise, dignified and accurate in the style, and not dissimilar to that of Homer. Still he could descend to trifle on subjects of sport and love, and to pay his addresses to the much celebrated inventress of Sapphic verse.

Poets have not been very remarkable for their courage. Alcæus fled from a battle in which Pittacus delivered his country from the power of the Athenians, and his arms were suspended in the Temple of Minerva, as a monument of his disgrace.

Horace in describing the amusement of the manes in Elysium, says,

“ Whene’er Alcæus lifts the strain,
To deeds of war and tyrants slain ;
In thicker crowds the shadowy throng
Drink deeper down the martial song.”

Stesichorus was a native of Himera in Sicily ; he lived about five hundred and seventy years before Christ, and received his name from some alteration that he

made in the chorus which he sung to the accompaniment of his harp. Of twenty-six books which he wrote in the Doric dialect, but a few lines have reached posterity. His merit must have been considerable, for his funeral was magnificently celebrated at the public cost, by the inhabitants of Catana; and Phalaris the tyrant of Agrigentum, erected a temple to his name, and decreed him divine honors.

About six hundred years before the christian æra, Sappho, equally renowned for beauty, poetry, and ill-requited love, gave celebrity to the Isle of Lesbos, the place of her nativity. The usual cure for lovers, a leap from mount Leucate, put a period to her woes and her existence; and the specimens of her talents which have reached us, a hymn to Venus, and an ode to Lesbia, together with the appellation of the tenth muse, given to her by the ancients, have induced the literary world to lament the loss of her three books of lyrical compositions, her elegies, and her epigrams.

Philips

Philips has done himself so much credit by his translation of those odes, that my readers will probably not censure me for transcribing the first stanza of one of them.

“ O Venus ! beauty of the skies,
 To whom a thousand temples rise ;
 Gaily false in gentle smiles,
 Full of love-perplexing wiles.
 O Goddess ! from my heart remove
 The wasting cares and pains of love.”

Plutarch compares Sappho to Cacus the son of Vulcan, who breathed nothing but flame ; and Horace says, that the fire of her love still burns in her verses. It is well observed by Mr. Addison, of this unfortunate poetess “ that he does not know by the character that is given of her works, whether it be not for the benefit of mankind, that they are lost. They were filled with such bewitching tenderness and rapture, that it might have been dangerous to have given them a reading. From the time of Homer till that of Sappho, there is almost a total blank in literature ; nor are

any productions preserved between the time of Sappho and Anacreon, who flourished at the distance of seventy years from each other. Between Anacreon and Pindar, another chasm appears. After this the works of the tragedians, historians, and philosophers were produced, all within three hundred years; the most illustrious period of human genius!"

Simonides a celebrated poet of Cos, was born about five hundred and thirty-seven years before Christ, and lived in the court of Hipparchus the Athenian tyrant. He wrote elegies, epigrams, and dramatical pieces, esteemed for their sweetness and elegance. He composed also an epic poem on Cambyfes king of Persia; and another on the battle of Salamis. It was his happiness to be courted by all the princes of Greece and Sicily. Phædrus says when a house fell upon the guests at a feast, the gods spared the life of Simonides. He obtained a prize in the eightieth, and survived to the ninetieth year of his age. The Syracusans erected a monument to his

his memory. His style was so formed for exciting pity, that some critics have declared him in that respect, to excel all other writers. Plato mentions him with praise, and Dionysius places him amongst those polished writers who excel in a smooth volubility, and flow like plenteous and perennial streams.

The story of Danaë enclosed in a chest with her infant Perseus, and thrown into the sea by her father, is related by the poet in very beautiful verses.

The following is, I fear, an inadequate attempt at a translation :

“ While sorrow chills thy mother’s breast,
 Sleep seals thy lovely eyes my boy ;
 Close cradled in thy darksome chest,
 No fears thy innocence annoy.
 Unheard, the winds around thee howl,
 The waves unseen their fury try ;
 Enveloped in thy purple stole,
 Sweet sleep can all their power defy.
 Did’st thou the impending danger know,
 And fears that rack a parent’s heart,
 Then would’st thou listen to my woe,
 And from thy peaceful slumbers start.

But

But still sleep on my beauteous child,
Ye waves to Halcyon calm subside;
Sleep too my griefs, lest accents wild
Should wake and scare my darling pride."

From these poets, of whom so few fragments remain, we pass on to one who is immortalized by all the devotees of pleasure, and whose name will probably descend to posterity, with those authors who have deserved to be remembered by the utility of their labors. About five hundred and thirty years before Christ, Anacreon was born at Teos in Ionia. This voluptuous bard seems to have had no other ambition, than to love and to sport; no other desire of glory than to sing his loves and his joys. Plato will have him to have been royally descended from Codrus the last king of Athens; if that account be true, his spirit was perfectly different from that of his progenitor. He lived a long time at Samos in the court of Polycrates, who was a tyrant only in name. This prince presented him with five talents, which
with

with a disinterestedness equal to the munificence of his patron, he refused. He is said to have been a martyr in the cause he adored, and to have been choked by a grape stone in the eighty-fifth year of his age. His poetry is replete with such delicacy and grace, as to render all attempts to translate it into the English language unsatisfactory: a language encumbered with coarse consonants, can never express the sweet strains of Anacreon. He does not write in the formal manner of a person who means to attract the public eye, but he appears at table with his Grecian beauties, where flowers are interwoven in his locks, and he joins them in the dance with all the frolic gaiety of youth.

Sometimes he assumes his lyre, and in Lydian strains, he pours forth a hymn to the rose.

I hesitate in presenting the following Odes from a translation of this enchanting poet.

“ The rose, love’s favorite flower divine,
Shal’ grace our circling bowls of wine ;

With

With its fair leaves our temples bound,
 The toast and laugh shall both go round.
 Rose, sweetest flower, spring's partial love,
 Delight of all the gods above ;
 With thee, the boy of Venus crowned,
 The Graces joins in mazy round.
 Crown me, and instant, God of wine,
 Strains from my lyre shall reach thy shrine :
 Whilst decked with roses, I prepare,
 To trip it with the well-made fair."

If he speaks of age or of death, it is not to brave them with Stoic apathy, but to exhort himself to lose nothing of all that can disrobe them of their terrors.

" Care sleeps whene'er I drink my wine,
 Then why thus anxiously repine ?
 Since sadness cannot death defer,
 Why does my life from reason err.
 With Bacchus let us revels keep,
 For while we drink our sorrows sleep."

Sometimes he invites his mistress to a delightful retreat, such as would furnish a painter with a subject for his art.

" Sit in this shade : the lovely tree
 Expands its tender leaves for thee :
 Soft is each branch that on it grows,
 Hard by, Persuasion's fountain flows :

So exquisite a lodging nigh,
Who in his senses would pass by?"

It is an opinion I am not likely to surrender, that whoever would perceive the softness of the colouring, the happy mixture of light and shade, the easy, simple graces of Anacreon, will find them only in the original composition.

In quitting Anacreon to contemplate the first of lyric poets, the transition is particularly striking.

Bœotia boasts the nativity of Pindar, who lived at the time of the expedition of Xerxes, about four hundred and eighty years before our Saviour, and was then about forty years old.

Pausanias says, that the inhabitants of Delphi were commanded by an oracle of Apollo, to set apart for Pindar, one half of the first-fruit offerings brought by the religious to his shrine, and to allow him a place in his temple. The iron chair in which he was accustomed to sit, and sing his hymns in honor of the god, was shewn to Pausanias many centuries after, as a re-

lic not unworthy the sanctity of the place. Unhappily for the learned world, his hymns to the heathen deities are lost, and his odes only remain. Horace says of this poet, that to relish him thoroughly, we ought to transport ourselves to the time in which he lived.

The theory is indisputable, but the practice is difficult. We are so full of modern ideas, manners, and prejudices, that we do not easily obey any admonitions to desert them. The account of Hercules and Theseus, the adventures of Cadmus, and the war of the giants, the Olympic games, and the Argonautic expedition, do not touch us as they did the Greeks; and the odes which contain only allusions to these stories, are not sufficiently striking to excite any very pleasurable emotions in us: but the history of their country would be supremely interesting to the Greeks; and while their fables were in a great degree their history, they also contained the essence of their religion. The Olympic, Isthmian, Pythian, and Nemean

Nemean games, were all in their origin, religious acts; solemn festivals in honor of their gods. The poet therefore acted agreeably to the sentiments of the people, when he blended the names of the deities who presided over these games, with those of the Athletæ who triumphed at them. The enraptured hearers have been falsely supposed to have dispensed with the regular order of composition, and willingly to have surrendered method and clearness to harmony of numbers, and sublimity of diction. Congreve on the other hand says that "there is nothing more regular than the odes of Pindar, both as to the exact observation of the measures and numbers of his stanzas and verses, and the perpetual coherence of his thoughts. For though his digressions are frequent, and his transitions sudden, yet is there ever some secret connexion, which though not always appearing to the eye, never fails to communicate itself to the understanding of the reader." The first Pythian ode of Pindar was composed in honor of Hiero, king of

Syracuse, a victor in a chariot race. Of such spectacles the Greeks were so enamoured, that they could not sufficiently celebrate him who had procured himself the best coachmen and the fleetest horses; for to these, after all, the praise of victory was due.

From an invocation to his lyre, and a description of the effects produced by its delightful harmony, he passes on a sudden to the description of Typhæus, the terror of the gods; at length after numerous conflicts, chained under Mount Ætna.

“ Now under smoking Cuma’s sulphurous coast,
 And vast Sicilia, lies his tortured breast,
 By snowy Ætna, nurse of endless frost,
 The mighty prop of Heaven, for ever prest:
 Forth from whose flaming caverns issuing rise
 Tremendous fountains of pure liquid fire,
 Which veil in muddy mist the noon-day skies;
 While wrapt in smoke the eddying flames aspire,
 Or gleaming through the night with hideous roar,
 Far o’er the reddening main huge rocky fragments roar.”

WEST.

Hiero reigned over Sicily, it was natural therefore for the poet who mentioned
 Ætna

Ætna to speak of Typhæus, and thus to gratify the passion of the Greeks for descriptive poetry.

Every victor at the public games was solicitous to have Pindar for his panegyrist, which accounts for the great number of odes written by him on the same occasion. Certainly there cannot be a stronger testimony of his extraordinary powers, than is deducible from the manner in which similar scenes are represented to the reader. His exalted ideas of the deity are worthy to be imprinted on the mind of a christian. "God directs all events according to his will; God who seizes the towering eagle in his flight, outruns the marine dolphin, overthrows proud mortals, and bestows a never-fading glory on the humble."

In the third Pythian he says,

"His burning thunderbolt is winged with death."

The odes contain many references to historical facts, which have not descended to our times; many allusions to persons and places of which we have never heard; and these throw sometimes a veil of ob-

scurity over them, through which we cannot penetrate.

But good sense defies the obliterations of time, and the judicious reflections and the moral sentiments of Pindar, atone for the obscurity of particular parts.

He is not less celebrated for the tenderness than for the sublimity of his sentiments. It is impossible to read many passages without being sensibly affected by them; as where the aged Æson recognises his son Jason, an all accomplished youth whom he had lamented as dead; or where Antilochus rushes with eagerness against Memnon, and gives himself a willing sacrifice to save the life of his father Nestor—an action which has carried with it the renown of piety throughout all succeeding ages.

He yields a due eulogium to conquerors of the lowest order, and with a noble spirit of independence disdains to be the flatterer of kings. To them his admonitions are bold and forcible: “ Be just in all your actions, faithful in all your words, and remember that thousands of witnesses have their
their

their eyes fixed upon you." Pindar teaches us, with the wisdom of the philosopher, to be contented with our station, and to prefer mediocrity to greatness; with the moralist to cultivate truth, and to practise sincerity, and to leave to posterity the example of a spotless name. He concludes that the first of human blessings is to be virtuous, the second to be praised; and that the man who at the same time enjoys both these distinctions, is arrived at the summit of earthly felicity.

" The first, the greatest bliss on man conferr'd,
Is in the acts of virtue to excel;
The second to obtain their high reward,
The soul-exalting praise of doing well.
Who both these lots attains is blest'd indeed,
Since fortune here below can give no richer meed."

As a poet his vigorous genius is bold, irregular, and impetuous. When he soars to heaven, it is with the eagle's flight,

" With terror in his beak, and lightning in his eye."

When he rushes amidst the lists of man, it is with the fury of the war-horse,

“ Whose neck is clothed with thunder.”

The images he uses are sublime, and the diction is resplendent. He gives an air of majesty to all his subjects, so that the reader is raised from the gross atmosphere of earth, and conveyed into regions of empyrean purity. It is said by West that his faults are the excess of his acknowledged beauties, of his poetical imagination, his warm and enthusiastic genius, his bold and figurative expression, his concise and sententious style.

The praises he bestowed on the victors in the plains of Olympia, were at once an excitement and a reward of their patriotism. They recalled to their memory their recent victories over the Persians, and animated them to every gallant deed in defence of their liberty. Indeed the exercises in general of the Grecian youth, were intended to render them strenuous defenders of their country.

The beauty of Corinna might win from him those prizes which were not due to her compositions ;

compositions ; but while he surpassed every other competitor in the public assemblies of Greece, it might be no disgrace to Apollo to share with him the offerings of his altar.

Posthumous honors are not only a tribute of justice, but an incitement to laudable emulation. The noblest employment of ancient statuary was to perpetuate the memory of the deserving ; and six centuries after his death, Pausanias saw with admiration the tribute which the Thebans had paid to their countryman. His worth is sealed by the attestation of enemies, as well as by the enduring record of his friends. Dionysius Halicarnassus says that Pindar is admirable for the choice of his words and of his thoughts : that he has grandeur, harmony, copiousness, order, vigour in his expressions ; and all this accompanied with a certain gravity and force, but always mixed with an agreeable sweetness : that he is wonderful in his sentences, his energy, his figures, his address in expressing the manners, his amplifications,

tions, his elocution ; and above all for that integrity of mind which appears in his writings ; where temperance, piety, and greatness of soul are displayed throughout. The testimony to his transcendent merit given by the first of Roman lyric poets, in the fourth ode of his second book, deserves our recollection.

“ He who aspires to reach the towering height
 Of matchless Pindar’s heaven-ascending strain,
 Shall sink, unequal to the arduous flight ;
 Like him who, falling, named the Icarian main,
 Presumptuous youth ! to tempt forbidden skies,
 And hope above the clouds on waxen plumes to rise.
 Pindar, like some fierce torrent swollen with showers
 Or sudden cataracts of melting snow,
 Which from the Alps its headlong deluge pours,
 And foams and thunders o’er the vales below,
 With deultory fury borne along,
 Rolls his impetuous, vast, unfathomable song.”

FRANCIS.

Let us hear too our own unrivalled
 British poet ;

“ Four swans sustain a car of silver bright,
 With heads advanced, and pinions stretched for flight ;
 Here, like some furious prophet, Pindar rode,
 And seemed to labour with the inspiring god,
 Across the harp, a careless hand he flings,
 And boldly sinks into the sounding strings.

The

The figured games of Greece the column grace ;
Neptune and Jove survey the rapid race.
The youth hang o'er their chariots as they run ;
The fiery steeds seem starting from the stone ;
The champions in distorted postures threat ;
And all appears irregularly great."

TEMPLE OF FAME.

When the Spartans razed the city of Thebes, they spared the house which Pindar had inhabited, and Alexander displayed a similar veneration for the prince of lyrics.

How insignificant then is the influence of climate on the genius and character of man, since Bœotia can boast of Epaminondas as its hero, and of Pindar as its poet !

SECTION IV.

*Greek Tragedy. Thespis, Æschylus, Sophocles,
Euripides.*

TRAGEDY was in its origin only a rustic song in honor of Bacchus, who had found out the secret of drawing wine from the grape.

The god is fabled to have communicated the invention to Icarius, an inhabitant of Attica, who one day observing a goat in the act of destroying his vines, sacrificed him to his benefactor. The peasants who were witnesses of the scene, danced round the victim; and this casual frolic became an annual custom, and in process of time a very solemn rite.

In rustic antiquity all was sacred; sports and amusements were converted into festivals, and temples were frequently metamorphosed into theatres. The prize contended

tended for by the earliest poets was a cask of wine; and the Bacchic hymn, since called tragedy, was denominated the song of the cask or of the vintage.

The progress of the drama to perfection was regular, but slow. To relieve the singer from the pressure of fatigue, Thespis, a native of Icaria, above five hundred and thirty years before Christ, introduced a single actor on the stage who personated some hero, and pronounced a discourse which was called an episode. Improving on this simple plan, he exhibited the same speaker in various parts of the imperfect drama, as the narrator of an uniform story. For this purpose he erected a temporary stage upon a cart, and conveyed his rough machinery from town to town, where the faces of his actors smeared with the lees of wine, were the amusement and admiration of a people fond of pleasure, but as yet unenlightened by taste.

Æschylus not long posterior to Thespis, must however be regarded as the true inventor of tragedy. He was born in Attica,
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of an old and honorable family, and divided his time between philosophy, war, and the theatre. He was initiated in the doctrine of Pythagoras; he was present at the battle of Salamis, and wounded on the plains of Marathon. The triumphs of his country, therefore, he was well able to celebrate on the stage; and in his tragedy of the Persians, he displayed a victory in which himself had borne no inconsiderable part. Abstracted from the nature of the subjects which were represented, tragedy must have produced a far more powerful effect upon the Greeks than on the moderns.

It was exhibited by the magistrates to the whole collective body of the people in an immense amphitheatre. So mild was the air, that no other canopy than that of simple linen was required, and while the magnificence of the structure captivated the eye, the ear was charmed by the declamation of the actors, which was suited to a regular rhythm and movement given by an orchestra of wonderful extent. When we add to this, that the events they cele-

brated were domestic, and the heroes their own countrymen, that the epochs were ever present to their memory, because the details were the lessons of their childhood, we shall no longer be surpris'd at the eager interest which was felt by the Greeks in scenical entertainments.

To poetical genius, Æschylus joined a spirit inventive of every thing that regards mechanism and theatrical decoration. He formed those majestic robes which the ministers of the altar borrowed for the ceremonies of religion. The theatre ornamented with the best paintings of the time, represented all objects conformably to the rules and effects of perspective. The ancient, like the modern stage, exhibited temples, sepulchres, armies, fleets, flying cars, and apparitions. He instituted a choir of figure dancers, and was the creator of pantomime.

The apparatus of the theatre was analogous, and indeed necessary to its size. The actors were mounted on stilts; the masks they wore, augmented the natural founds of
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the voice, and vessels of brass placed in the concavities of the theatre, re-echoed them in a manner and degree altogether inconceivable by us. The whole tended to form a spectacle which enchanted a people whose souls were equally sensible to harmony and alive to glory.

When Æschylus added a second actor to the individual reciter of Thespis, Dialogue the germ of tragedy began; before this innovation, the exhibition was only a species of epic poetry, but the transition from the epos to tragedy was more natural and easy than from the simple chorusses of Bacchus to the invention of Thespis.

If delusion be at all necessary to the audience of a theatre, they would be with less difficulty deceived into the opinion that the representation was a reality when two actors were introduced, than when the same actor played first the part of Agamemnon and then of Achilles.

Homer, under the guidance of a superior understanding, selected one subject which he has conducted through the whole of his

poem. The same principle actuated Æschylus in the choice of one grand, illustrious, interesting action. He knew that tragedy is but an epic poem abbreviated, that they chiefly differ in the developement of the subject, that the former ought to be less charged with incidents, and more lively than the latter. The military genius of Æschylus is evident in his works; and he was indebted to his martial profession for his acquittal before the Areopagus, when accused by the priests for exhibiting the mysteries of religion upon the stage. The wounds he had received at Marathon, pleaded his cause better than his innocence.

When far advanced in life, Sophocles, then only twenty-four years of age, became his successful competitor in a poetical contest. He then quitted his country, and retired to the court of Hiero king of Sicily, the friend and protector of literary men. Here he died in the sixty-fifth year of his age; and the credulity of the times listened to a tale, that an eagle mistaking his bald
κ head

head for a stone, dropped a tortoise upon it to break the shell, which instantly destroyed him.

Of nearly a hundred tragedies written by Æschylus, only seven have come down to us; and on these, by different critics, extravagant censure and unqualified praise have been bestowed. It has been said that they all favour of the infancy of the art, and that their beauties are more those of an epic poem than of tragedy. That the plan of the Prometheus is monstrous; that the Persians is without any trace of action or plot; that the Agamemnon is coldly atrocious; that the Coephoris is nothing but the well known subject of Electra and Orestes; and that the Furies is more estranged from our manners than the Prometheus; that the Suppliants is a very absurd story, and that the Seven Chiefs at Thebes, except in the chorusses, is extremely tedious.

These strictures do not proceed from the coldness of criticism, but from the gall of satire.

It may give us some idea of the estimation in which Æschylus was holden by his contemporaries, when we are informed that forty of his tragedies were rewarded with the public prize; and this is an unequivocal testimony of his extraordinary merit.

So powerful was the effect of his genius in exciting martial ardor, that the people marched immediately from the theatre to the battle of Marathon. The engines of terror were so much at his command, that many persons died at the exhibition of the Furies. The Agamemnon, the Coeophori, and the Furies, form one complete story. Agamemnon had promised his wife Clytemnestra that if he should take Troy, he would apprize her of it by a burning torch placed on an eminence, which was to be repeated by other torches till the light should reach to Argos. The information thus communicated by this telegraph of ancient times, and his arrival with his captive Cassandra, the prophetic daughter

of Priam, were not so desired by Clytemnestra as the news of his defeat.

With the assistance of Ægisthus, her paramour, she projects and perpetrates the murder of her husband; and this tragedy, written when Æschylus was in the decline of life, deserved the high applause and reward which it received. The passions are carried to the highest pitch, the prophecies of Cassandra are terrific to the greatest degree. Such are her agonies of divination, that we contemplate with silent wonder, an human imagination capable of furnishing her with the ideas, and with words to give them utterance.

In the Agamemnon, the crime is punished only by these predictions; but we find the continuation and the dreadful catastrophe in the Coephorî and the Furies, which depicture the revenge of Orestes on the murderers of his father, his madness, and his re-establishment on the throne.

The opening of the Coephorî, or carriers of libations to the tomb of Agamemnon,

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is singularly striking and noble ; the veneration paid by the Greeks to the memory of their parents, and the ceremonies which attended their funerals, still excite agreeable sensations in the feeling mind, although every trace of superstition has departed.

When Orestes implores Jupiter to aid him in his project of vengeance, the force and energy of his expressions seem to defy translation. The suspense, the hopes and fears of Electra till Orestes appears ; his eloquent prayer to Jupiter, after the first transports of their meeting to preserve the few relics of an illustrious family ; the conflict which passes in his breast between the desire of obeying the oracle and satisfying his revenge, and the consciousness of the dreadful punishment which would result to himself from his obedience to the god ; these various emotions of tenderness, filial piety, indignation, and terror, have seldom been exhibited in a more impressive manner, and are sufficient to evince that Æschylus was a master of the tragic art,

and capable of producing in his audience those effects which history has recorded.

If there appear somewhat of absurdity in the plan and conduct of the Furies, still it displays an ancient and noble painting of the remorse which stings a guilty conscience. Do not imagine, says the Roman orator, as you see represented in fables, that those who have committed any thing impious, are really terrified and agitated by the torches of Furies. Their own wickedness, their own fears, are the furies that torment them; their own crimes affect them with madness; their own evil thoughts and consciousness affright them; these are to the impious constant and domestic furies, which day and night demand from wicked children the punishments due to them by their parents. The subject of these tragedies has produced more than a temporary interest; since, besides being contended for by the three Greek tragedians, it has been represented with general approbation on modern theatres.

The

The Seven Chiefs at Thebes possesses beauties of a very appropriate kind. The chorusses, one of the most brilliant parts of Æschylus, are here particularly admirable. The piece is full of noble traits, and warlike movements; the suspensions are extremely affecting, and the spectacle it exhibits is truly astonishing.

The subject of the Persians is the defeat of that people at the battle of Salamis. If it be read by us with indifference, we can easily acquiesce in the applause bestowed upon it by the Athenians.

Its recitals, descriptions, presages, dreams, and lamentations, which now appear tedious and insipid from the absence of a complicated plot, called forth correspondent passions in contemporary spectators, and gratified that ardent love of their country which every circumstance they saw tended to excite within their bosoms.

The Prometheus combines tenderness with elevation and grandeur. The unconquerable spirit of the son of Japetus, exhibits a species of the sublime very different

from that fortitude which results from firmness of nerves or inflexible obstinacy of mind. He whom misfortune cannot subdue, and whom torture cannot move; he who professes to resist the tyranny of a cruel deity, and braves every effort of his power, the vulture that tears, and the lightening that blasts, displays a character so far superior to that which common life presents, either in the philosopher or the hero, that we regard him with the veneration due to unexampled magnanimity.

If Æschylus be sometimes obscure, he is very often sublime; if his plots be inartificial, his characters are well sustained. He thoroughly understood the dispositions of the Athenians; he knew them to be fond of liberty, idolaters of their country and of their customs, and disdainful or indifferent about those of other nations.

If the subjects he treated were simple, they were interesting; if few in number, they were selected with judgment. On the Grecian stage, we must not look for love or galantry. The spectators, political and
ambitious

ambitious in their views and their pursuits, would have been shocked at the representation of passions unworthy the majesty of the tragic theatre. The overthrow of states, the splendor of republics, the conflict of the higher passions, were objects conformed to their character. The writings of Æschylus received perhaps a colour from his profession as a soldier. They are vivid, bold, and impetuous; and have been resembled to a torrent which rolls down rocks, forests, and precipices.

If his language be sometimes too figurative, if his epithets be occasionally too harsh, still the classic can never forget the obligations which he owes to him who first introduced dialogue on the stage, rectified the office of the chorus, produced the beauties of scenic decoration, and must ever be considered as the great inventor of the ancient drama. When the prize was voted to Sophocles in preference to him, he appealed from the sentence of the judges to the opinion of posterity, who decreed that his tragedies should be performed at the

public expence. A statue and a painting which described his conduct at Marathon, consecrated his memory at Athens.

SOPHOCLES.

Sophocles was born at Colone, a town of Attica, four hundred and ninety-seven years before the birth of Christ.

It is rather a remarkable co-incidence, that both he and Æschylus acquired reputation in arms as well as in poetry, Sophocles was a commander in the army of Pericles, and was elevated to the dignity of archon, the first honor in the republic of Athens. He is said to have written one hundred and twenty tragedies, of which seven only remain. In domestic life he was less fortunate than in his public career; his children, disappointed in their eager wishes for his death, and solicitous for the immediate possession of his fortune, accused him of insanity before the Areopagus.

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He was acquitted by reading to his judges his play of *Œdipus at Colone*, which represents an old man despoiled by his children. More flexible and indulgent than *Œdipus*, he forgave their crime, and admitted them again to his favor.

He lived to the age of ninety, and is reported to have died through excess of joy at having obtained a prize in the Olympic games.

Sophocles added a third speaker to the dialogue, and advanced the drama in every respect to perfection. He has no unnecessary prologues or episodes, no violations of probability. His explanations are fine, his plans sagacious, his dialogues noble and animated. His style is never too figurative like that of *Æschylus*, nor too familiar like that of *Euripides*. The language of nature, and the eloquence of misfortune, are often with him carried to the highest point of excellence. Such is the language of the panegyrist of Sophocles; and it must be confessed, upon a review of his writings,

writings, that the style of panegyric is the voice of truth.

Aristotle defines tragedy to be an imitation of some action that is important, entire, and of a proper magnitude, by embellished language, effecting through terror and pity, the correction and refinement of the passions.

In the *Eumenides* the chorus consisted of fifty furies, whose habits, gesture, and whole appearance, was by the art of the poet rendered so formidable as to frighten the whole audience. A decree was immediately issued to limit the number of the chorus. The chorus filled up the vacant parts of the drama, particularly in an affecting tragedy, better than the jigs of an English orchestra, which break in upon and enfeeble the warmest sensations of the human heart, by a strange and unjustifiable interruption.

The play of *Ædipus Tyrannus* when brought to the test, will be found fully to correspond with the definition given by the
great

great master of criticism. The story of a monarch of a neighbouring country, whose misfortunes were unparalleled, must have wonderfully interested an Athenian audience; for the perusal of it fixes the attention, and excites the sympathy of every reader, though ages have elapsed, and though the scene of action is so distant.

Of the proper decoration of tragedy, we cannot conceive a better idea than from the scene that first presents itself. The view is splendid and multiform: on one side appears the royal palace with different prospects of Thebes: the pestilence which rages in the city has assembled a crowd of trembling citizens. On all sides groans of lamentation are heard, and the bodies of the dying and the dead obstruct the passenger in the streets. Eager every where is the resort to the temples of the gods, and superstition alone affords a ray of hope to the wretched suppliants. In the vestibule of the palace a triple row of boys, of youths, and of priests, is discovered prostrate at the altars. *Ædipus*, roused by the
mournful

mournful clamour, comes forth, and then begins the most interesting part of the drama, namely the fable.

We read of the fall of empires with less emotion than is excited by the woes of a single family; nor does Virgil's account of the fatal night in which Troy fell, strike the mind with similar regret.

The conduct of the fable is in every view correspondent to the strictest rules of the Stagyrice. From the prologue the mind is kept in an awful suspense and dread; the discoveries are most artfully conducted; the revolutions are of the most tremendous kind; and unexampled horror attends the catastrophe. The manners are such as become the illustrious personages of the drama; and as they always receive a tincture from the temper of the times, they shew us that Athens was arrived at its highest state of politeness in the time of Sophocles. He lived at the most brilliant æra of the Athenians; in an age of grandeur, replete with the magnificence of riches, of monuments, and of spectacles; an age of
poets,

poets, philosophers, orators, historians, heroes, and great men in every department, above all in that of tragedy; and was one of the three contemporary authors who raised it to its highest eminence.

The diction of the *Œdipus Tyrannus* is uniformly elegant; the odes are sometimes highly beautiful, sometimes peculiarly sublime. The sentiments are such as become the situation of, all the speakers, and those of the chorus are the result of benevolence, patriotism, and piety. When *Œdipus* recommends his children to the care of Creon, the heart of every parent is thrilled at his expressions.

“ My sons are men, and wheresoever fortune
 May place them, cannot want the means of life;
 They shall not burthen thee: but, oh! my friend,
 What will become of my unhappy daughters,
 With tenderest love, beneath a father’s hand
 Cherished so long? O take them to thy care,
 Thou best of men! O might I but embrace them;
 But shed a tear o’er their disastrous fate!
 Might I be suffered but to touch them here,
 I should rejoice, and think I saw them still.”

FRANKLIN.

The introduction of music on the Grecian theatre, seems to have been attended with the best effects. The restricted chorus, consisting of fifteen persons, always interested in the subject of the drama, fills up the vacuity of action, by addressing the gods in supplicating strains, or by uttering sentiments well worthy of a democratical people.

If terror and pity be the true ingredients of tragedy, we cannot refuse our assent to the assertion of Scaliger, that the *Ædipus Tyrannus* is the most tragical of all dramatic compositions.

But if the end of poetry be to instruct as well as to please, I am bold enough to think that there is an objection against the fable of *Ædipus*, and a defect in the requisites which Aristotle demands. It leaves the mind in a state of absolute despair: the heart is not meliorated, the understanding is not improved. It does not combine tragic effect with moral tendency; for it enforces no important truths to regulate the conduct of human life.

“ It

It is said by Franklin, "that the play of Philoctetes, though extremely barren of dramatic incidents, and divested of every theatrical ornament, abounds at the same time in such amiable simplicity, such strength of colouring, and propriety of character and manners, as may render it even more pleasing to the judicious and classical reader, than those plays of Sophocles where the fable is apparently more interesting." There is certainly more difficulty in speaking to the heart by the expression of true sentiments, than in gaining attention by a train of events. When we consider that this play is constituted of only three personages in a desert; that it never languishes for an instant, but, on the other hand, that the interest rises and supports itself by the most natural means; that Philoctetes is in himself one of the most theatrical persons we can conceive, uniting the greatest bodily miseries with resentments the most natural; that the cry of vengeance is with him only the cry of oppression; in short, that his part is through-

out a perfect model of tragic eloquence ; we shall agree that those are justified, who think they find in this piece the finest dramatic invention which antiquity can boast.

EURIPIDES.

Euripides was about twelve years younger than Sophocles, and born at Salamis in the midst of the fêtes which celebrated the defeat of Xerxes ; an event that has rendered the name of that island so illustrious. His birth was humble, but his eagerness for literary acquisitions was very remarkable. Anaxagoras taught him natural philosophy, Prodicus instructed him in rhetoric, and the great Socrates was his master in moral philosophy.

To acquire the power of writing tragedy, he is said to have sequestered himself from the world, and to have lived for a considerable time in a wild and horrid cave, calculated to inspire him with ideas of terror and sublimity. The jealousy natural to
rivals

rivals existed for a while between him and Sophocles ; but reflection, the frequent corrector of the passions, at length reconciled them, when they rendered reciprocal justice to each other, and exhibited mutual proofs of unequivocal friendship. Envy and unpopularity, the too constant attendants on genius, induced him to quit Athens, and to accept the invitation of Archelaus king of Macedon, to reside within the precincts of his court. Here he enjoyed the favor of royal munificence, and the tranquillity of learned ease. But who has ever been able to boast of continued happiness ! Removed from the seat of competition and ridicule, he suffered a domestic calamity greater than usually falls to the lot of man. He lost his wife and three children at one time, and the dire event is said to have been always present to his mind. It had a powerful influence on his temper and his spirit, and produced that plaintiveness of manner which is so conspicuous in his writings. Athenæus speaks of an epigram written by

him on the loss of his family, of which this is the sense. "O sun, who travellest over the immensity of the heavens, hast thou ever seen so dreadful a calamity? What a mother and three children torn at once from my sight!" In this simple, pathetic, and affecting style, does he express the severity of his anguish.

His death was very unfortunate, for he was torn to pieces by the dogs of Archelaus; but honors were heaped upon him when he was no longer conscious of their value. The Athenians demanded his body to give it an honorable burial, but Archelaus refused to restore it, being desirous to preserve to his country the remains of a great man; and the Athenians were reduced to the honorable consolation of raising a cenotaph to his memory.

A small but valuable portion of his plays, nineteen out of eighty, are come down to us: against some of these the voice of criticism has been loudly indignant. The *Bacchantes* has been said not to deserve the
name

name of tragedy, but to be a dramatic monster without shape or comeliness. It is indeed, throughout, an eulogium on wine and temulence.

The *Suppliants* has more of the tone of tragedy, but the species of interest it contains is purely national, and could not exist but among the Greeks. It is a question about burial, and Sophocles alone knew how to place in scenes like these a species of beauty that is equally striking and permanent.

The *Orestes* resembles an opera rather than a tragedy; the marvellous is employed without art, and the events are accumulated without preparation, and without effect.

The *Medea* has been imitated by a crowd of authors. There is in that bold forcerefs, a certain splendor that captivates every beholder. The female character, rendered furious by the desertion of him for whom she had sacrificed every thing, is enfeebled only by her crimes, and by the coldness of Jason.

Still the resentments of a wife outraged by an ungrateful man, her desire of vengeance, her maternal tenderness, and the dissimulation with which she conceals her fell designs, produce emotions so terrific and so pathetic, as to furnish scenes which have never been surpassed.

The Iphigenia in Aulis may be regarded not only as the master-piece of Euripides, but as the tragedy in which the dramatic art has reached the summit of perfection.

The contest between nature and ambition, which forms the basis of the character of Agamemnon; the joy which appears at the arrival of the mother and the daughter, a circumstance of heart-rending woe to the father; the moving scene between him and Clytemnestra; the horror produced by Arcas—"He attends at the altar for the sacrifice;" the pretended marriage of Achilles; the despair of Clytemnestra prostrate at the feet of the only defender that remains to her daughter; the noble indignation of the young hero whose name is so improperly usurped; the transports of maternal
tenderness

tendernefs defending a daughter againft an inhuman husband ; the modeft refignation of the victim, and the fervent and filial prayers ſhe addreffes to her father ; all theſe beauties are the excluſive prerogative of Euripides.

The character of Andromache in the play which bears her name, that of Alceſte, that of Medea, many ſcenes of the Trojans, the three firſt acts of the Hecuba, the two plays of Iphigenia, are monuments of a great genius, and vindicate Aristotle in denominating Euripides the moſt tragic of poets.

If he want the ſublimity of *Æſchylus*, if he do not poſſeſs the ſweetneſs of *Sophocles*, he balances theſe advantages by ſo much pathos and moral ſentiment as to exhibit the moſt touching ſcenes of the Grecian drama.

The following lines on the origin and progreſs of the drama, are ſubmitted to the candour rather than to the criticifm of the reader :

" Ere art had smoothed, or science had refined
 The unpolish'd marble, and uncultured mind
 Where fam'd Ilyffius rolled his silver tide,
 The Attic muses rose with patriot pride.
 Here first Melpomene's soft bosom heav'd,
 Awaked to life, and triple aid received ;
 Here the best patrons rear'd her tender form,
 And taught her mind to glow like nature warm ;
 Gave soft eyed Pity, poured Distraction wild,
 And lent Persuasion's tongue to Virtue's child.
 Those generous thoughts which patriot souls engage,
 Were formed and cherished by the Athenian stage ;
 Those arts which mark refinement's early dawn
 Here burst to light, and beamed a golden morn.
 The God of war appeared in vivid stone,
 And beauty's queen in breathing canvas shone.
 Yet rising Commerce scarce her sails unfurled,
 When Roman eagles fought the eastern world ;
 Soon as they came, fierce rapine marked their way,
 " Sad was the scene, for beauty was the prey ;
 Soon as they came, fell Conquest flapp'd her wing,
 And every tuneful muse forgot to sing ;
 Borne from their Greece to drag the victor's chains,
 And swell triumphant pomp on Latian plains.

Long did they mourn their native freedom lost,
 Their much loved patrons, and congenial coast ;
 While Tyber's streams, with human blood supplied,
 O'erflowed his banks, and roll'd in barb'rous pride :
 The tragic muse whom love had erst inspir'd
 Now felt her breast by wildest passions fir'd ;
 Caught the fierce manners of a Roman soul,
 The reeking dagger, and the poison'd bowl ;

Shewed

Shewed nature's laws, by custom's force withstood,
 And female softness pleased with scenes of blood.
 This her sad task, till Latium's happier days,
 When every art received its meed of praise ;
 When every muse might boast a patron's name,
 And Roscius claimed a share in Tully's fame ;
 Again she urged the liberal tear to flow,
 Nor virtue blushed to weep at tales of woe ;
 No savage passions Pity now dethrone,
 But all again is Attic, and her own.

Awhile she grew beneath the fostering hand,
 Till Gothic fury scoured corruption's land ;
 When boding augurs spoke the awful doom
 Of art and science, Majesty and Rome,
 Chafed from her seat, she drooped her languid head,
 Her charms forgotten, and her vigour fled ;
 Campania's every elegance lay waste,
 And the muse slumbered through long nights of taste.
 At learning's second dawn again she rose,
 And genius rescued her from bigot foes
 With joy elate, from all restraint set free,
 Awhile she wantoned in her liberty.
 Her early patrons, formed in rougher mould,
 Approved her zoneless vest, and gestures bold.
 In vain contending lovers sought her smile,
 When Britain's guardian shewed her Britain's isle.
 She viewed the prospect which his zeal display'd,
 And matchless beauties struck the ravish'd maid ;
 No more she mourns the scenes of early love,
 Her Homer's martial fields, her Plato's grove ;
 No more Ilyffus is her envied boast,
 But freedom's smiling plains and sea-girt coast ;

'Twas

'Twas she who gave to Shakspeare's deathless page,
The glowing thoughts that fire the rising age ;
'Midst scenic beauties bade the artist trace
The forms of sprightly ease and heaven-born grace ;
'Taught the young sculptor's hand to stamp the mien
Of love's fly god, and beauty's peerless queen ;
Well pleased for Britain's isle her Greece to quit
Where Spartan virtue blends with Attic wit."

SECTION V.

*On Greek Comedy, the old, the middle, and the new.
Aristophanes, Menander, and many Writers, of whom
only Fragments are extant.*

As the manners are its objects, comedy, it is probable, would have preceded tragedy, which delineates the passions, had not a casual circumstance given priority to the latter. The drama was originally under the patronage of the magistrates; and it was not till a late period that they exhibited comic chorusses to the people; but although many centuries elapsed before comedy was written, yet, a thousand years anterior to Christ, there were actors who played for their own advantage. Its complexion indeed was then of the most extravagant kind. It was an extempore village mask, where ignorance was invited to applaud the grotesque mimickry of the low and
I impudent

impudent buffoon. The ancient comedy appeared under three forms, and as many appellations.

It is at this day not easy to determine if it had only a single, or many contemporary inventors; but its mutations appear to have arisen not only from the genius of the writers, but from the laws of magistrates, and the change of the popular government. Sufarion and Dolon have been called the inventors of comedy, which was acted at Athens on a moveable scaffold five hundred and sixty-one years before Christ. But a statue of brass erected to Epicharmus, the Syracusan schoolmaster, announces him, by the inscription on its pedestal, to have been the first writer of comedy. He lived four hundred and fifty years before Christ, during the reign of Hiero the tyrant of Sicily, who punished him for certain improper jests exhibited before his queen.

All the ancient dramatic writers furnish us with a subject of admiration in the number of their works. Epicharmus is said to have written fifty comedies; and from the

specimen of his manner of writing, preserved in a few fragments which have reached us, we have reason to lament the loss of the entire compositions. The author of the *Observer* has afforded much entertainment to all readers of curiosity and taste, by presenting them with many pieces from the ancient comic writers in an English dress. An occasional quotation from them will I think not be unacceptable to my readers, who, recollecting from whence they are copied, may perhaps apply to the same source for a larger portion of similar amusement.

Epicharmus introduces a person of ignoble birth, thus addressing an old woman who had boasted of her ancestry ;

“ Good gossip, if you love me, prate no more ;
What are your genealogies to me ?
Away to those who have more need of them !
Let the degenerate wretches if they can,
Dig up dead honor from their fathers' tombs,
And boast it for their own. Vain, empty boast !
When every common fellow that they meet,
If accident hath not cut off the scroll,
Can shew a list of ancestry as long.
You call the Scythians barbarous, and despise them ;

Yet

Yet Anacharsis was a Scythian born :
 And every man of a like noble nature,
 Though he were moulded from an Æthiop's loins,
 Is nobler than your pedigrees can make him."

Epicharmus had four contemporary poets who were joint fathers of comedy, but not a vestige remains of their works. A decree which continued in force only two years, prohibiting the representation of comedies, is a convincing proof of the sentiments of the magistracy on the subject, if not of the licentiousness of the early drama. It appears then that the comic muse was not first introduced, as Horace says, but re-instated under Eupolis, Cratinus, and Aristophanes. These writers of the old comedy, represented the habits, gestures, and airs of those whom they wished to expose to public scorn. Even personal defects were not secure from strictures of severity. Horace has drawn the character of these poets in a few masterly strokes.

" The comic poets in its earliest age,
 Thus paint the manners of the Grecian stage.

Was

Was there a villain who might justly claim,
A better right of being doomed to fame,
Rake, cutthroat, thief, whatever was his crime,
They freely stigmatized the wretch in rhyme."

FRANCIS.

But it was not the exposure of vice or folly, with which these writers were contented. Nothing was spared in so libertine a state as Athens, not even the first magistrates, nor the judges who had the power to sanction or proscribe the comedies.

The works of Eupolis and Cratinus are lost; of the former we have only the titles of twenty of his comedies, and a few fragments. It was his character that he terrified vice by the severity of his lashes; but he was destitute of all purity and all grace of style. He flourished about four hundred and thirty-five years before Christ, but the scanty memorials of ancient times furnish us with no other particulars of his profession or his life.

Cratinus was the countryman of Eupolis, and somewhat his senior. It is recorded of him, that he abounded in imagination,

tion, and was in possession of an ornamented style. He obtained nine prizes at the public games, and successfully repelled the attack of Aristophanes, who had ridiculed his infirmities in a comedy denominated the *Flaggon*. He obtained the laurel from his opponent, and shortly after expired amidst the exultations of his victory. Thirty comedies, the effusions of his genius, have perished in the abyss of time, and scarcely left a wreck behind.

Of the old comedy we should have known nothing but the name, had not a part of the writings of Aristophanes been rescued from the shade of oblivion. He was a native of *Ægina*, a small island near *Peloponnesus*, born about four hundred and thirty-four years before Christ, and acquired by his talents, what he had no legal title to by his birth, the privileges of a citizen of Athens. He flourished in an age of illustrious men, when the philosophy of *Socrates*, the oratory of *Demosthenes*, and the drama of *Euripides*, were the admiration of the polished states of Greece.

During

During the Peloponnesian war, he appeared less as a comic writer whose object it was to amuse the people, than as a censor of their government, and a general reformer.

Of above fifty comedies, eleven only have descended to posterity; and of his character as a writer, it may perhaps be proper to form an accurate estimate, by adopting the mean between the two extremes of his censurers and his panegyrists.

It has been objected to him by the former, that he is careless in the conduct of his fables, that his fictions are improbable, and that his jests are obscene: that his raillery is rudeness; that his language is obscure, embarrassed, low, and trivial; that his frequent play upon words, and his mixture of style tragic and comic, are in bad taste.

Plutarch says that his poetry is a courtesan on the stool of repentance, who affects the airs of a prude, but cannot place her impudence under such restraints as to be pardoned by the people. That his salt

is bitter, sharp, cutting, and ulcerating. He much disapproves his puns and antitheses, and thinks his jokes more likely to excite a hiss than a laugh; his amours less gay than indecent; and in short that it is not so much for sensible people that he has written, as for men consumed by envy calumny, and debauchery.

The enemies of his fame are however at least balanced by the zeal of his admirers. The divine Plato, who was his contemporary, gives him a distinguished place in his banquet; and is reported to have sent a copy of the plays of Aristophanes to Dionysius the tyrant, exhorting him to read them with attention, if he wished to know thoroughly the republic of Athens. He adds this hyperbole of praise—that the graces sought for a durable mansion, and fixed at length in the bosom of Aristophanes.

His works are said to have been rescued from the destruction to which all the comic writers were destined, by the taste of St. Chryostom, who placed them under his pillow, as Alexander did the Iliad of Homer,

Homer, to read them at night before he went to sleep, and in the morning at waking.

A modern French encomiast, Madame Dacier, "says that no man has had more art in finding the ridiculous, nor more adroitness in exhibiting it. That his manner is delicate, his fancy fertile, and his criticism just. That the Attic spirit, of which the antients so loudly boast, appears more in Aristophanes than in any other author of antiquity. But that which we ought the most to admire in him is, that he is always so much master of the subject he treats, that without constraint he finds the method of producing those events which at first appeared the most foreign to it. That his style is as agreeable as his spirit; that besides its purity, neatness, and force, it has a certain sweetness which so agreeably flatters the ear, that there is nothing comparable to the pleasure of reading him. When on common topics, he is not low; when sublime, he rises without obscurity, and is then equal to Æschylus and

to Pindar. That his wit is of various kinds, general and local; his powers of humour unrivalled. That his satire against vice, leaves no shelter to ignorance or immorality. That whoever has studied the remains of ancient Greece, but has not read Aristophanes, cannot know all the charms and all the beauties of the language.”

Aristotle defines comedy to be a picture of human nature worse and more deformed than the original. The first part of this definition only seems to be correct, and those critics who accuse Aristophanes of adopting the latter part of it, seem to forget that the applause given to a writer by the general voice of his contemporaries, at a time when envy interposes its baneful influence, may be considered as the true test of his merit.

The comedies of Aristophanes being written during the Peloponnesian war, an intimate acquaintance with the events of that period is required, to enable us thoroughly to understand his allusions.

He

He has been much censured for his ridicule of Socrates. The schools of the sophists were fair objects of derision; their contradictory first principles, their dæmons, clouds, water, and fire; their devices to catch the vulgar, and the affected rigour of their manners, were fit subjects for the strictures of the satirist.

In the play of the Clouds, Aristophanes laughs at the doctrine of the philosopher, and shews how the cunning of his disciples might draw such inferences from it as would annihilate all subordination, and give colour to every species of dishonesty and fraud. The son who beats his father, and who defrauds his creditors, arguing philosophically that he has a right to do so, is an instance of the facility with which the scholars of Socrates could pervert the precepts of their master.

Although the interval between the representation of this play, and the trial of Socrates, was twenty-five years, it prepared the unjust process against that incomparable man, for the accusations of Anytus

were precisely the same with those which the poet brings against the philosopher. If it be observed that such a spectacle of buffoonery and impiety was never endured in any other nation, it may be answered that the Athenians, escaped from the tyranny of the Pisistratides, passed to the extreme of liberty, and to all the abuses of democracy. These abuses were balanced by the patriot spirit that animated all Greece at the moment of the invasion of Darius and Xerxes. But as danger produced virtue, victory brought luxury and corruption in its train. Athens was the most powerful, the richest, the vainest, and the most dissolute of all the republics of Greece, in the time of Pericles, which was that of Aristophanes.

On the other hand, the Archons found the schools so detrimental to the morals of youth, that they expelled the masters; and the Lacedæmonians, a grave and virtuous people, suffered no philosophers to open seminaries of education.

It is the business of comic writers to paint the manners as they rise. These are perpetually

perpetually changing : in passing to posterity, they come to a new world which does not recognise them ; the same objects and the same taste of ridicule do not exist in distant ages ; and hence it is that the muse of Aristophanes appears to us with the wildness of a bacchante, and that she seems to carry under her tongue the poison of the viper or the asp.

But is not comedy to be an image of common life ? Is it not her province to exhibit on the theatre the prevalent vices and follies of the age, and to correct them by the fear of ridicule ?

Aristophanes might plead the custom of the times, in vindication of his introducing individual characters into his drama. A better taste prevailed a short time after, and it is more grateful to our feelings to see general vices attacked upon the stage, than the defects of particular persons exposed to public derision.

“ Bond is but one, but Harpax is a score.”

It is not wonderful that Plutarch, a Greek, a courtier, and one who lived in the time of Trajan, should be offended with the style of Aristophanes. Its variations, however, were suitable to the variety of his characters. Quintilian greatly approves the old comedy, and says that it almost exclusively retains the Attic purity; that it is energetic, elegant, and graceful; and, next to Homer, is better adapted to form the orator than any other composition.

But it must be confessed that mortification and chagrin stimulated Aristophanes to vilify the most respectable characters. He hated and burlesqued Euripides, Socrates, and Anaxagoras, because they despised his comedies too much to attend the representation of them, and denominated them scandalous farces: perhaps they ought to have remembered, that comedy is the slave of the reigning taste. Aristophanes, as it is well said by the author of the Observer, “ makes use of chorusses, some so fanciful and imaginary, as to be obliged to create

as it were a new language for them. Gods and heroes demand a swelling tragic pomp, such as that of the tragedians ; and this excellence is discrimination of character. If we are allowed to argue and decide by events, we shall not be disposed to lavish a large share of blame on him for his exposure of the sophists, from the reflection that the liberties of Athens were victims at the shrine of false philosophy. When Aristophanes attacked Pericles, whose name was revered throughout Greece, the Athenians were not displeased, because they considered it as a symbol of republican equality. A comic poet was then a party man, who offered his advice on public affairs, and spoke on the stage as declaimers did in the assemblies of the people. The subject of the Acarnanians, for instance, is entirely a political one. When Athens and Lacedæmon had mutually ravaged each other, and a negociation for peace was proposed, the generals Cleon and Lamachus resist the overtures, which Aristophanes advises them to accept. He burlesques these generals
without

without due discrimination: he represents Cleon in his true character, intriguing and eloquent; but he does not treat Lamachus with the candour which is his due; Lamachus, a noble foldier who died fighting for his country before Syracuse!

The Athenians, light and frivolous, heard with more attention the satire of their comic poets, than the more labored and serious harangues of their orators. With respect to the charge of indecency of language, it may be observed, that the Greeks had a general custom of living with courtezans in the most free and unreserved manner in their own houses, while their wives were kept with great strictness in the interior, intent on domestic affairs, and the nurture of their children. This sort of life, which the religion of the Athenians sanctified, would have a natural tendency to produce laxity of manners and conversation; and perhaps every exception we take to the writings of Aristophanes, may find a palliation in the reigning modes, the spirit, and the government, of Athens. There is,
at

at first view, a seeming contradiction in the character of the Athenians, who punished a contempt of the gods with the utmost severity, and yet allowed it in Euripides and Aristophanes. Comedies were not performed by public authority more than three or four times in a year: but those were the feasts of Bacchus, when unbridled licence was allowed both to the writers and the actors. Judges named by the state examined the merit of the pieces before their representation, and the suffrages of the majority determined which should be crowned as victorious, and exhibited with all possible pomp to the people.

An olive crown was assigned to Aristophanes in a public assembly; nor is it fair to acquiesce in the partiality of which his judges have been suspected, since solicitation and cabal, caprice and prejudice, have in all ages been imputed by the unsuccessful candidates, and sometimes perhaps too justly, to the deciders on literary fame.

The following are some pleasant fragments of the writers of the old comedy,
 who

who seem to have abounded both in wit and sentiment.

Crates a comic poet, and a celebrated actor, two characters very frequently combined at that time, has left us the following reflections on old age.

“ These shrivelled sinews, and this bending frame,
The workmanship of time’s strong hand proclaim ;
Skilled to reverse whate’er the gods create,
And make that crooked which they fashion straight.
Hard choice for man ! to die, or else to be
That tottering, wretched, wrinkled, thing you see :
Age, then, we all prefer ; for age we pray ;
And travel on to life’s last lingering day.
Then sinking slowly down from worse to worse,
Find heaven’s extorted boon our greatest curse.”

Pherecrates a comic writer contemporary with Plato and Aristophanes, and the inventor of one of the metres used by Horace, “ *Grato Pyrrha sub antro*” has left only a few lines, and those no very flattering testimony to the sobriety of his countrywomen.

“ Remark how wisely ancient art provides
The broad-brimmed cup with flat expanded sides ;

A cup

A cup contrived for man's discreter use,
And sober potions of the generous juice.
But woman's more ambitious, thirsty soul,
Soon longed to revel in the plenteous bowl:
Deep and capacious as the swelling hold
Of some stout bark, she shaped the hollow mould;
Then turning out a vessel like a tun,
Simpering, exclaimed, Observe! I drink but one."

Amipias, another writer at the same period, has left us the titles only of his plays, but from them we may form a correct judgment of their tendency. They are, the Gamesters, the Glutton, the Beard, the Adulterers, and the Philosopher's cloak. Every relique of their works shew, that with an unsparring hand they lashed all the prevailing vices of their country, and that their instruments of punishment inflicted wounds too deep and severe for the delicate texture of the Athenian character.

Impiety having succeeded to insolence, the licence of which Socrates was the victim, was at length restrained by law, and the middle comedy was substituted for the old. In this the writers traced living characters

acters under fictitious names, and the people delighted in finding out the resemblance. Controlled by the Macedonian princes, the muse of Aristophanes was compelled to take a milder strain; and death had stopped the impetuous tongue of Demosthenes. The bitter Cratinus himself was compelled to war only with the dead, and to ridicule the *Odysey* of Homer.

The author of the *Observer* justly remarks, that the loose hold which the established religion had upon the minds of the common people, arising probably from the influence of the new philosophy, may be seen in some of the writers of the middle comedy, whose satire against the gods would not have been tolerated in *Æschylus* or *Aristophanes*.

Diodorus was a native of *Senope*, a city of *Pontus*, the birth-place of many eminent poets and philosophers. The following fragment written by him remains, and was spoken by a person sustaining the character of a parasite. “ All other arts, have been of man’s invention without the help of the
I I gods ;

gods; but Jupiter himself, who is our partner in trade, first taught us how to play the parasite; and he, without dispute, is of all the gods the greatest. 'Tis his custom to make himself welcome in every house he enters, rich or poor, no matter which; wherever he finds the dinner table neatly spread, the couches ready set, and all things in decent order, down sits he without ceremony, eats, drinks, and makes merry, and all at free cost, cajoling his poor host; and in the end, when he has filled his belly and bilked his club, coolly walks home at his leisure."

Very copious collections from the writers of the middle comedy have been made, and well translated by the same ingenious author.

Eubulus, a native of Atama in Lesbos, a celebrated poet, and the author of fifty comedies, introduces Bacchus laying down these temperate and moral rules:

" Three cups of wine a prudent man may take;
The first of these for constitution's sake:

The second to the girl he loves the best ;
 The third and last to lull him to his rest ;
 Then home to bed. But if a fourth he pours,
 That is the cup of folly and not ours.
 Loud noisy talking on the fifth attends ;
 The sixth breeds feuds and falling out of friends.
 Seven beget blows and faces stained with gore ;
 Eight, and the watch patrol breaks ope the door.
 Mad with the ninth, another cup goes round,
 And the swilled sot drops senseless on the ground."

Plato was styled the prince of the middle comedy. The following are his lines on the tomb of Themistocles :

" By the sea's margin on the watery strand,
 Thy monument Themistocles shall stand ;
 By this directed to thy native shore,
 The merchant shall convey his freighted store.
 And when our fleets are summoned to the fight,
 Athens shall conquer with thy tomb in fight."

The licentiousness of the Athenian stage being thus in some degree corrected, a way was made for the introduction of the third epoch called the New Comedy.

This was an exquisite refinement of the magistrates, who having first abolished real names,

names, they now abolished real subjects, and a too slanderous chorus. The poets were therefore reduced to the necessity of producing on the stage, subjects and names of pure invention, by which the theatre was both purified and enriched, for then comedy ceased to be a Megæra armed with torches, and became an agreeable and innocent mirror of human life.

Such was the comedy of Menander, of whom Quintilian says, that he has obliterated the name of all the writers in that department, and thrown them into the shade by the transcendency of his own lustre. Menander was born, about three hundred and forty-five years before Christ, at Athens, and educated under the peripatetic philosopher Theophrastus. He began to write for the stage at twenty years of age, and did not disgrace his compositions, by personal satire, but was replete ^{with} in the elegance of style, refined wit, and correct judgment. Terence borrowed all his plays from him but his Phormio and Hecyra, hence Cæsar styled him the Demi-Menander. Of a hundred

dred plays, only some fragments and titles remain, containing sentiments of various kinds, moral, sublime, and gloomy. The testimonies in his favour are numerous and respectable. Quintilian says he eclipses every writer of his class; Dion Chrysoptom recommends him as a model for all who study to excel in oratory.

The style of Menander, says Plutarch, is always uniform and pure. He has the address to adjust himself to the different characters without neglecting the comic in any degree, where the nature of the object renders it necessary. He attained a perfection to which no artizan has known how to reach. For what man has ever had the art to form a mask calculated alike for children and women, divinities and heroes? but Menander has found this happy secret. His works disparage those of the philosophers; and he is, with regard to them, a meadow enamelled with flowers, where one delights to respire an air that is pure.

He

He does not neglect the comic, nor outrage it. He never loses sight of nature, and the suppleness and flexibility of his style has never been surpassed. It is like a limpid stream which, running between irregular and *tortuous* banks, takes all forms without losing aught of its purity. He writes like a man of spirit, a man of the world; he was made to be read, represented, learned by heart; to please in all places, and at all times; and in reading his pieces, we are not surprised to find that he passed as a man who expressed himself most agreeably, both in conversation and in writing, of any of his age.

How can we sufficiently lament the loss of an author of whose excellence we may form some judgment, both from the testimony of the ancients, and the valuable works of Terence, who closely imitated, if he did not literally translate him!

Menander was drowned as he was bathing; some say he drowned himself because Philemon triumphed over him in a poetical contest.

The fragments of his works cited by various authors are not very favourable to his philanthropy. There is one, however, of a comic turn from the minstrel, pointed at avarice.

“ Ne'er trust me, Phemius, but I thought till now
That you rich fellows had a knack of sleeping
A good sound nap, that held you all the night.
And not like us poor rogues who tofs and tumble,
Sighing ah me! and grumbling at our being.
But now I find, in spite of all your money,
You rest no better than your needy neighbours,
And sorrow is the common lot of all.”

The new comedy continued from the death of Alexander of Macedon to that of Menander. It was a splendid æra, abounding in comic writers of great celebrity, of whom we have now only a barren catalogue of names. Philemon, the successful rival of Menander, seems to have been plaintive and melancholy in his writings.

The author of the Observer confirms this opinion by his translation of the following fragments :

" O Cleon, cease to trifle thus with life,
 A mind so barren of experience
 Can hoard up nought but misery, believe me;
 The ship-wrecked mariner must sink outright
 Who makes no effort to regain the shore.
 The needy wretch who never learned a trade
 And will not work, must starve. What then? you cry
 My riches! frail security:—my farms,
 My houses, my estate: alas! my friends,
 Fortune makes quick despatch, and in a day
 Can strip you bare as beggary itself.
 Grant that ye now had piloted your bark
 Into good fortune's haven, anchored there,
 And moored her safe as caution could devise;
 Yet if the headstrong passion seize the helm
 And turn her out to sea, the stormy gulls
 Shall rise, and blow you out of sight of port,
 Never to reach prosperity again
 What tell you me? have I not friends to fly to?
 I have: and will not those kind friends protect me?
 Better it were you should not need their service,
 And so not make the trial. Much I fear
 Your sinking hand would only grasp a shade."

The same poet sings thus also:

" Still to be rich, is still to be unhappy;
 Still to be envied, hated, and abused,
 Still to commence new law-suits, new vexations;
 Still to be racking, still to be collecting,
 Only to make your funeral a feast
 And hoard up riches for a thriftless heir.
 Let me be light in purse, and light in heart.

Give me small means, but give content withal.
Only preserve me from the law, kind gods!
And I will thank you for your poverty."

Philemon lived above a hundred years and seems to the latest period of his life to have derived his happiness from his muse.

This was the last species of Grecian comedy, and the Romans shewed their high estimation of it, for they did not attempt to imitate the works of Menander, but were the servile and literal translators of them. The models indeed had much merit to recommend them, and from the scanty specimens that remain, we may presume that they abounded in just opinions of life and manners; by indulging their talent for ridicule on topics of a general nature, they were more likely to benefit society than their predecessors, who gratified their spleen by the representation of personal defects, and the exposure of the vices and the follies of individuals.

This is an imperfect, but as far as it goes, I trust, a just account of the progress of

the Grecian drama. It owed its origin most unquestionably to the perusal of the poems of Homer; and Pisistratus, who obtained them by public proclamation from the rhapsodists, and preserved them from political interpolations, and the mutilations of defective memory, must be considered as worthy the perpetual veneration and gratitude of learned men. The taste of an age and country may in general be known by the particular species of its literary works. It appears wonderful to us at this day, to be told that Euclid had collected three thousand plays, and that his collection was imperfect, and that when Terence was writing, Rome had two thousand Greek comedies. But we must not imagine that an idle fondness for spectacles actuated the Athenians in their rage for theatrical amusements; the representations came home both to their business as republicans, and to their bosoms as men. In their drama we shall find, as Francklin has observed, "a most exact and faithful picture of the manners of Greece, its religious and civil policy,

policy, sublimity both of sentiment and diction, regularity, symmetry and proportion, excellent moral aphorisms and reflections, together with a most elegant and amiable simplicity diffused throughout every page. Besides this, it was not as with us a mere matter of amusement, but the channel of public instruction, and the instrument of public policy."

SECTION VI.

*Pastoral Poetry.—Epigram.—Theocritus.—Bion.—Mef-
chus.—Anthologia.*

PASTORAL poetry is more at variance with our experience than any other. Our climate, and the ignorance of our shepherds, gives it an air of fiction and of fable which takes away much of the pleasure it might otherwise afford to the reader.

But in ancient times every shepherd was musical and poetical; and in Sicily to this day there are contentions between the rustic performers on the flute.

Theocritus was born, nearly three centuries before the christian æra, at Syracuse. He has written thirty eclogues, and the Doric dialect gives him a decided pre-eminence in this species of poetry. Some of his lines on the passions are well expressed. That poem in which he represents a
shepherdes

shepherdes employing magic to bring back a fugitive lover, has been considered as one of the most impassioned pieces which the ancients possessed. His predominant character is simplicity, but this simplicity sometimes descends to grossness. He presents the reader with too many indifferent circumstances, and his subjects have too much resemblance. Contentions on the flute, and quarrels between shepherds, are to us insipid in themselves, and tiresome by their repetition. They neither excite our curiosity, nor awaken our sympathy. The half-attentive reader begins with languor and finishes with disgust. Bion and Moschus were contemporaries of Theocritus, the one of Smyrna, the other of Syracuse. They both wrote with ease and elegance. Their Idyllia possess a peculiar delicacy, and their elegies are tender and sentimental.

The ode of the former on the death of Adonis has been much celebrated, and indeed in general the verses of both these poets seem to have been written with more
care

care than those of Theocritus, but are not wholly devoid of affectation.

The lover of rural scenes will be gratified by the images which they present him, and cannot fail to admire the sweetness and elegance of the poetry.

GREEK EPIGRAM.

In the modern sense of the word, the epigram is, of all kinds of poetry, that which approaches nearest to satire, since it has the same objects, censure and raillery. The word now applies to an ingenious thought or turn of expression, which constitutes the merit of a short poem. But the term in itself signifies only an inscription, and it has retained amongst the Greeks its etymological acceptance. The epigrams collected by Agathias, Planudes, Constantine, Hierocles and others, which compose the Greek Anthologia, are but little more than inscriptions for religious offerings, for tombs, statues and monuments. They are for the most part extremely

extremely simple, in conformity to their object, which is only to relate a fact.

Those upon a statue of Niobe, on the adventure of Leander and Hero, on the Venus of Praxiteles, and on Hercules, seem most to resemble the modern epigram. The last, written by Plato, is one of the prettiest. Laïs on her return from Greece, consecrates her looking-glass in the temple of Venus with these lines :

“ Venus, take my votive glass,
 Since I am not what I was ;
 What from this day I shall be,
 Venus, let me never see.”

The following epigram on Troy, a legitimate proof that the Greek word imported an inscription, has been so happily imitated by Dr. Aikin, that the reader will require no apology for the insertion of it :

“ Where, hapless Ilium ! are thy heav'n-built walls,
 Thy high embattled towers, thy spacious halls,
 Thy solemn temples filled with forms divine,
 Thy guardian Pallas in her awful shrine,
 The mighty Hector, where ? thy fav'rite boast,
 And all thy valiant sons, a numerous host ;
 Thy arts, thy arms, thy riches and thy state ;
 Thy pride of pomp, and all that made thee great ?

These,

These, prostrate all, in dust and ruins lie,
But thy transcendent fame can never die.
'Tis not in fate to sink thy glories past;
They fill the world, and with the world shall last."

LYCOPHRON.

Lycophron was born at Chalcis in Eubœa in the time of Ptolemy Philadelphus, about two hundred and seventy-six years before Christ, when a galaxy of learned men gave splendour to the age. All that remains of his writings, except the mere titles of some tragedies, is a work intitled the *Cassandra*, containing the supposed prophecies of the daughter of Priam uttered during the Trojan War. They are delivered, by the keeper of the tower in which she was lodged, to the king. Lycophron has been accused of great obscurity: but, as the reader is informed at the outset that the prophetess was dark in her prefaces, he cannot surely, after that information, expect to find the poet afford him a very intelligible recital.

In defence of this writer, it has been said that the nature of his poem involved difficulty

ficulty in it ; but as he has always understood himself, by due labour and attention he may be understood by the reader : that where it was permitted him to be clear, no poet is more so : that he has all the fire of Pindar, and contains passages which would gladly have been claimed by the first writers in Greece and Rome : that when Horace delivers the beautiful prophecy of the destruction that was to be the consequence of the rape of Helen, he is a close imitator of the Cassandra.

It seems to have been the custom with the Latin poets to consider the works of the Greeks as a common stock which they had a right to pillage: but the poem of Lycophron has been so little read, that many plagiarisms from him have escaped observation. There is a certain intellectual cowardice in the generality of scholars, which renders them unwilling to attack the works of authors who have too rashly been condemned and laid aside for a supposed impenetrable obscurity.

He who has the spirit to think for himself, and the resolution to encounter labour, will find that the apparent difficulties of Lycophron are not insuperable as he at first conceived; but that they yield to the persevering efforts of application.

Every obstacle is easily removed when the powers of mechanism are summoned to the aid of individual strength. A vigorous exertion of the same talents which finds connexion in the chorusses of Æschylus, will disperse the clouds that darken the prophecies of Cassandra.

SECTION VII.

On Grecian Oratory. Pericles, Lyfias, Ifocrates, Hyperides, Ifæus, Æfchines, Demofthenes.

WHEN we pafs from poetry to eloquence, objects the moft ferious and important, ftudies the moft fevere and demanding the deepeft reflection, take place of the fports of the imagination.

I do not mean to fay that imagination is not effential to the orator; or that the poet, in the moft lofty flights of enthufiafm, ought to lofe fight of reafon; but the one predominates in eloquence, the other in poetry. The tranfition, however, is from the amufements of youth to the labours of maturer age; for, poetry is converfant with pleafure, eloquence with bufinefs. Poetry is a ferious occupation to the writer only, and a delightful entertainment to the reader of tafte and feeling. But when the orator
declaims

declaims, or the statesman deliberates in a popular assembly, eloquence is a most useful art, and well calculated to attract the veneration of the citizens. It shews that there is a natural connection between genius and virtue, and that knowledge and talents are the true instruments of national safety and felicity. If they have sometimes deviated from their original institution, the inference is, that being a species of power, they have in bad hands been perverted into instruments of oppression. No argument is hence to be drawn against their dignity or their value.

The qualifications necessary to form the orator have been delineated by one of the greatest that ever appeared, and are so numerous as to render men of common acquirements hopeless of obtaining them.

When the theatre represents to us temples, palaces and groves, the spectator is enchanted by the spectacle; but he ought to remember that the artist who produces this agreeable illusion, must have studied the effects of perspective, the advantage

of light and shade, and the magic of colours.

It is a remarkable trait in the history of the human mind, that there have been only two republics which have left to the world perpetual models of poetry and eloquence. It is as from the bosom of liberty that those lights of good taste were twice diffused which now illuminate the polished nations of Europe. Of these two great empires, nothing remains except the recollection of annihilated grandeur, but the fine arts are the noble inheritance which we have recovered from the ruins of Athens and of Rome.

It is in Athens, says Cicero, that the first orator existed, and this orator was Pericles. He flourished, about four hundred and twenty years before Christ; and although Pisistratus and Clisthenes, who preceded him, had merit for their time, and Themistocles possessed the art in a considerable degree, yet before him there was no true eloquence. The names of many orators who were contemporary with
Pericles

Pericles remain, but as none of their works are in existence, we can only loosely conjecture the reigning taste of the age. Their style was sententious, but on account of its precision, it was somewhat obscure. From perceiving the effects which a well composed discourse could produce, there started up a race who offered themselves as professors of the art of oratory. Gorgias Leontinus, Thrasimachus, Protagoras, Prodicus Hippias, and many others obtained celebrity in their profession; but it was not much in favour of their art that they declared themselves capable of making a bad cause appear a good one.

Lysias, the son of Cephalus, was a native of Syracuse, and born about four hundred and sixty years before our æra. Immediately after his birth his father removed to Athens, and there he carefully educated his son. In his fifteenth year, Lysias accompanied the colony which the Athenians sent to Thurium; and after a long residence in that place, returned home in his forty-seventh year. He distinguished himself

by the pure style of his orations, of which thirty-four only remain out of two hundred and thirty. The manners of the Athenians may be seen in a clear point of view in his first oration, and the learned reader will think that the scene lies in London, and that the event has taken place in the nineteenth century.

The most celebrated lawyer at the English bar would be delighted with the perusal of this oration, and not disdain on a similar occasion to defend his client with the arms of Lyfias. He survived to the eighty-first year of his age.

Isocrates was born at Athens about four hundred and thirty-seven years before Christ. His father was a maker of musical instruments. He never spoke in public, but opened a school of eloquence. Thirty-one of his orations are still extant. His school, which was open sixty years, was the most celebrated in Greece, and rendered great service to the art of oratory, as Cicero attests in these words: "He was a great orator, a perfect master of the art,

and, without shining in the rostrum, without quitting his own house, arrived at a degree of celebrity which no one else had attained. He wrote well, and taught others to write well. He knew better than his predecessors the oratorical art in all its departments. But, above all, he was the first to understand that if prose ought to have the rhythm of verse, it ought at least to have numbers, and an harmony which are proper to itself." The remains of his orations inspire the reader with the highest veneration for his abilities, and his virtues. He was intimate with Philip; and to this the Athenians owed some years of peace. The aspiring ambition of that monarch, however, disgusted him; and after the battle of Chæronea he did not survive the disgrace of his country, but died after refusing aliment for four days, in the ninety-ninth year of his age. The severe conduct of the Athenians against Socrates had so highly displeased him, that he put on mourning the very day of his death.

The beauties of language may successfully be sought for in Isocrates. The smoothness of his style, the ease, the elegance, the delicacy, and the sweetness of his expressions, captivate every ear that is attuned to harmony. His attention to excellencies of this sort was laborious and minute. Ten years, he confesses to have been employed on one of his orations, and many of the others are the fruit of long protracted industry. The qualifications with which nature endowed Isocrates, he wisely cultivated and improved. His knowledge was superior to his rhetoric. While we admire the orator, we reverence the philosopher, and are enchanted at his delivery of truths which evince an enlightened understanding and an upright heart. The love of his country was an active principle which warmed him to enthusiasm, but it did not exclude the more generous principle of philanthropy. The great orator of Greece could discern nothing worthy of praise but in his native
Athens,

Athens, and Rome exclusively might boast the eulogies of Tully; but merit, whether in Greek or Barbarian, was recognized by Isocrates. He well knew that genius and virtue are not the growth or invention of any particular country, but the ornament and pride of every one where they flourish.

Hyperides had every advantage which could attend the education of an orator, for he was taught by Plato and by Socrates. We learn that he was frequently opposed to Demosthenes, and from this circumstance we may form some judgment of his merit.

One only of his orations is extant, a fair specimen of his ability; but Longinus, who read them all, decides his character. He says that Hyperides has all the qualities wanting to Demosthenes, but that he never elevates himself to the sublime.

Amidst the first orators in the second rank, is Isæus the preceptor of Demosthenes, born about three hundred and eighty years before Christ. He was born at Chalcis in

Eubœa, and when he came to the seat of learning, he placed himself under the instruction of Lyfias. His eloquence was vigorous and energetic; and those qualities obtained him the praise and imitation of his illustrious pupil. Ten out of sixty-four of his orations are extant, and they vindicate the approbation bestowed upon him by Demosthenes.

Æschines flourished at Athens about three hundred and forty-two years before Christ. It was his glory to have been the rival of Demosthenes, and his disgrace to have been bribed by Philip of Macedon.

To his envy of the former we are indebted for the two orations *De Corona*, when Ctesiphon proposed to reward the patriotism of his friend, and the speakers exerted all their powers, the one in opposing, the other in defending the proposal.

However well known the subject, it may not be improper to refer to these two celebrated speeches in considering the literary character of these distinguished orators.

There

There could not be produced a stronger proof of their abilities, for each of them employed more than four years in preparing himself for the contest. Their animosity was so well known throughout Greece, that it drew together an immense concourse from all parts to see the combat between these two great men who had become so celebrated by their rivalry.

After their defeat at Chæronea, the Athenians, fearful of being besieged, began to repair their walls. Demosthenes advised the measure, and was charged with the execution of it. In this office he acquitted himself so nobly that he furnished from his private fortune, a considerable sum for this patriotic purpose. Ctesiphon demanded of the Athenians that they should honor him with a crown of gold as a reward of his generosity. The decree passed, importing that the proclamation should be made in the theatre during the festival of Bacchus, when all Greece was assembled to behold the spectacle. Æschines had long been the enemy of
Demosthenes,

Demosthenes, and the "*Oidium in longum jacens*" gladly seized on the present favourable occasion to display itself.

He was possessed of great talents, and a happy organization, which he had exercised very early in life, having been bred up a comedian. But he had also a venal soul, and was one of the many orators who had bartered his independence for money.

The present accusation of Æschines turned on three points of law.

That no citizen charged with any administration should be crowned, and that Demosthenes had been charged with the expence of the public spectacles, and the reparation of the walls.

That a decree of coronation carried by the senate should not be proclaimed elsewhere than in the senate itself, whereas that of Ctesiphon ought to have been proclaimed according to its tenor in the theatre.

That the decree imported that the crown was to be given to Demosthenes for the services

services which he had rendered to the state, while, on the contrary, Demosthenes had done nothing but injury to the state.

Notwithstanding the brilliant eloquence of Æschines, we discern every moment the feebleness of his arguments, and the artifice of his falsehoods. He gives a forced sense to all the laws he cites, and a malignant interpretation of all the actions of his adversary. He accuses him of every thing in which he is himself culpable; he reproaches him with being sold to Philip, whose pensioner he himself is, and the more he feels the defects of his proofs, the more he accumulates his expressions of calumny and detraction.

Æschines begins by insisting upon the religious veneration which all men ought to have for the laws of their country, and particularly in a free state. This is the basis of his exordium, and he treats it with that noble gravity which becomes the subject. We may pass over the juridical part of the oration, and come to that where Æschines flatters himself with the possession

possession of the vantage ground, namely, the bad success of the war, and the delinquency of the orator who had advised it. Here he exerts all his abilities to make Demosthenes unpopular and odious. He invokes the shades of those citizens who had fallen, and surrounds him with their avenging manes, forming them around him as a rampart from which he thinks it impossible for him to escape.

The world are too often guided in their opinions of men and things, by the improper criterion of events. But so far were the Athenians from imputing their misfortunes to the adviser of the war, that they had unanimously appointed him to the honor of pronouncing the funeral eulogy on the soldiers who had died in it, and to whom a monument had been raised at the public expence. This appointment was so desirable, that many orators, and amongst them Æschines, had been candidates to obtain it. From the two principal points which Æschines treats in the latter part of his discourse, it is plainly shewn what a
great

great degree of terror the eloquence of Demosthenes inspired. For he endeavours to prescribe to him the precise mode of his defence, and petitions the judges to oblige him to conform to the same order as he had done in his accusation. Finally, he attempts to prove that Ctesiphon ought to defend himself; and that, when in compliance with the usual form, he should say, permit me to call Demosthenes to speak for me, that they should from that moment refuse to attend to him. The art of Æschines here seems to desert him; his demand was revolting to common sense, as well as to justice, and could not be granted. Demosthenes, not Ctesiphon, had been the main object of attack, and Æschines was injudicious in a double view, both in allowing his fears of his rival to appear, and in persuading himself that the judges of Athens would deprive themselves of the pleasure of hearing so great an advocate in his own cause.

But Æschines well knew that misfortune, which exasperates a people, frequently
renders

renders them unjust, and is apt to excite resentment against the innocent cause of it. He thought it likely that he would sink under the weight of the public disasters, and that as events were all hostile to him, he would not find an adequate apology in the purity of intention. He was besides amply furnished with all those commonplace arguments which are so powerful in aiding a weak cause—the blood of so many citizens shed in the war, the devastation of cities, the grief of families, which he details with all the insidiousness of art, the bitterness of indignation, and the perfidy of hatred.

Demosthenes was extremely wise, as well as spirited, in refusing to pursue the plan of defence which the artifice of Æschines had prescribed to him, when he would have obliged him to answer first to the infraction of legal forms. He well knew that the legal discussion, already too long in the speech of Æschines, would appear still more tedious by a repetition; that it would refrigerate his exordium, weary and disgust his audience. It was his business

ness to prove that he deserved the crown, by placing before their eyes all that he had done for the state. The picture he draws of his administration, traced with all the glowing colours he possessed, must have tended to humiliate his adversary, by aggrandizing himself in the eyes of the Athenians, and placing his cause in the most favourable point of view. He well knew how to insinuate himself into the hearts of his hearers, by the delicate manner in which he bears testimony in favour of his own conduct.

It is the Athenians who have done every thing; his thoughts, his resolutions, have always been theirs. His advice has always been in congruity with their sentiments. Whence we may conceive to what degree he must please a people naturally vain, and how little surprizing it is, that he obtained all their suffrages.

When he comes to the most difficult part of the question, he thus addresses Æschines;
“ Unhappy man! If it be the public disasters which have given you such audacity,

city, and which, on the contrary, you ought to lament, together with me, I challenge you to exhibit a single instance in which I have contributed to the misfortune. Wherever I have been ambaffador, have the envoys of Philip had any advantage over me? No, never; not in any place, neither in Theffaly, nor Thrace, nor Byzantium, nor Thebes, nor Illyricum. But that which I accomplished by words, Philip overturned by force; and you complain of me for this, and do not blush to demand of me an account of it. This same Demosthenes whom you represent to be so feeble a man, you will have it, ought to have prevailed over the armies of Philip; and with what? with words! for I had only words to use: I had not the disposal of the arms, nor the fortune of any one. I had no military command, and no one but you has been so senseless as to demand from me the reason of it. But what could, what ought, an Athenian orator to have done? To see the evil in its birth, to make others see it, and that is what I
have

have done. To prevent as far as it was possible the delays, the false pretences, the opposition of interests, the mistakes, the faults, the obstacles of every species so common amidst republics jealous of each other: and that is what I have done. To oppose to all these difficulties, zeal, promptness, love of duty, friendship, concord: and that is what I have done. On any of these points, I defy any one to find me in fault; and if they ask me how Philip has prevailed, all the world will answer for me: by his arms which have invaded every thing; by his gold which has corrupted every thing. It was not in my power to combat either the one or the other; I had neither treasures nor soldiers: but as far as was in my power, I dare say this, I have conquered Philip—and, how? by refusing his presents, by refusing to be bribed. When a man allows himself to be bought, the buyer may say that he has triumphed over him; but he who lives incorruptible, may say that he has triumphed over the corrupter. So then as much as it

depended on Demosthenes, Athens has been victorious, Athens has been invincible."

This speech is the first in point of oratorical argumentation that ever was made; we may think we still hear the acclamations which pursued it: nothing could resist a genius of such force; ^{it} ~~they~~ do honor both to the head, and to the heart.

When Demosthenes deigns to come to the legal details, he destroys in a few lines the sophisms accumulated by Æschines under the pretended violation of the laws in the form of the coronation, ordered by the decree of Ctesiphon. Æschines had very adroitly seized that part which seemed favorable to him, and which he could not have done without catching at the words of the law. Demosthenes withdraws rapidly from a subject which is dryly contentious, and rouses himself to new rhetorical argumentation. Having refuted the different points of accusation preferred against him, he exposes the states of Greece at the mo-

ment when he undertook the administration of the public affairs; the ambition, the intrigues of Philip, and the venality of orators such as Æschines, who served that prince at the expence of their country. How nobly does he express himself on the subject of the war against Philip, which he had been reproached with having advised! What a sublime ejaculation of patriot enthusiasm, and how insignificant at the moment does Æschines appear when compared with him! He recalls the recollection of that terrible day when the news of the capture of Plataea was brought to Athens, which opened a passage for Philip into Attica. The Athenians must either have remained exposed to an invasion, or united themselves with the Thebans, their ancient enemies.

We ought here to recollect that the Greeks regarded the Macedonians as barbarians, and that the different states of Greece, though often divided amongst each other, thought themselves bound by a species of national confraternity to combat

every thing that was not Grecian. It was not till after the reign of Philip, whose influence was so powerful, and under Alexander, who caused himself to be named generalissimo of Greece against the Persians, that the Macedonians mingled amongst the other Greek nations in the general league against their common enemies. Demosthenes founds his peroration upon the honor which they had done him, in confiding to him the funeral eulogy of the citizens killed at Chæronea. Æschines had compelled him to this by making it a subject of reproach; and as he had himself vainly solicited the office, he draws from it an additional triumph for himself, and a new humiliation for his accuser.

It must be confessed, that the profusion of personal allusions on both sides, appears at this day very objectionable; but it was authorized by the coarseness of republican manners, and at that period had its full effect.

An Athenian accuser could not exercise his talent without considerable hazard; for
unless

unless a fifth part of the votes were with him, he was condemned to banishment. This happened to Æschines: having retired to Rhodes, where he opened a school of rhetoric, it is very remarkable, that his first essay was the recital of the two speeches which had caused his condemnation. It is difficult to conceive how he had the courage to read to his scholars that of Demosthenes. It is not a crime to be less eloquent than another person, but how could he without a blush confess that he had been convicted of being a calumniator and a bad citizen? When Æschines had read the speech of Demosthenes, and the greatest applause was given to it, he very ingenuously exclaimed, "What would you have said had you heard him deliver it?" This accounts for the remarkable exclamation of Demosthenes, meaning that action is the sovereign quality, the first, the second, and the third part of eloquence.

Æschines wrote three orations, and nine epistles, the former only are extant. They

received the name of the graces, as the latter did of the muses.

The greatest part of the works of Demosthenes have for their object the rousing the indolence of the Athenians, and arming them against the artful ambition of Philip. Under this name we may comprehend not only the four harangues which particularly bear the title of Philippics, but all those which respect the disputes of the Athenians with the "man of Macedon," such as the three orations generally called Olynthiacs, that on the proposal of peace to Philip, that which was made on the occasion of the letter of the same prince, and that which is entitled "On the Chersonese."

In reasoning, and in emotion, consists the eloquence of Demosthenes. No man has ever given to reason more penetrating and inevitable weapons. Truth is in his hand a piercing dart which he throws with as much rapidity as force, and without ceasing repeats his attack. His style is
nervous

nervous and bold, analogous to a soul free and impetuous. He rarely condescends to add ornament to his thoughts. This care appears below him; he only thinks of conveying them to the hearts of his hearers. In his rapid march he draws them whithersoever he pleases, and that which distinguishes him from all other orators is, that the attention he gains is to the object of which he treats, and not to himself. Of others, we say they speak well; of Demosthenes, he is in the right. Sentiments and passions constitute the affections of the soul—compassion and vengeance, love and hatred, emulation and shame, fear and hope, presumption and humility;—in all these Demosthenes excels. He has not used the tender pathetic, because his subjects would not bear it; but he has in a superior manner managed the vehement pathetic, which is peculiarly adapted to declamatory oratory. An orator must be a logician, he must seize the connection and opposition of ideas; mark with precision the main point of a disputed question, dis-

cover the mazes in which it has been involved ; define his terms, apply the principle to the question, and the consequences to the principle, and then break the threads of sophistry, in which perfidy would entangle ignorance. All these powers belonged to Demosthenes, the most terrific warrior that ever used the armour of words. When he attacks his adversary, it is Entellus driving Dares from one side of the arena to the other.

“ Præcipitemque Daren ardens agit æquore toto

“ Creber utrâque manu pulsat versatque Dareta.”

This great man had governed Athens by his oratory for twenty years ; the contest therefore between him and Æschines was a deadly one, for in Athens and Rome banishment was considered as a sort of capital punishment. Whilst he had therefore on one side his mortal enemy, and on the other his assembled country, the one which outraged, the other, which honored him, his soul must have been elevated by all the sentiments of national grandeur, and
warmed

warmed by all the emotions of personal indignation.

Thoroughly to understand the importance attached to the character of an orator, we should know that it was a species of magistracy, and conveyed so much power to Demosthenes, that Philip said, of all the Greeks, he feared only him. His temperament was naturally melancholy, and this gave him a seriousness and severity of manner, which much contributed to heighten the estimation of his moral character. It was this which produced a boldness that would declare itself so loudly against Philip, and against Alexander the conqueror of the world. Demosthenes always treats them with a haughtiness which kings have never experienced from any other individual, who had no authority but what was derived from his reputation, no power but what depended on his eloquence.

Atticism is said to consist in a perfect purity of language, an entire freedom from all affectation, in a certain noble simplicity,

which ought to have the air of conversation, although much more dignified and elevated. In all these qualities Demosthenes excelled. He had received from nature a vast and elevated genius, and a courage and application which nothing could ever check. When accomplished with all the knowledge requisite to his profession, he placed himself for the practical part of it under the care of the best actors on the theatre, who, by their recitation of verses from Sophocles and Euripides, convinced him of what importance pronounciation is to eloquence. Hence he acquired, in addition to his native vehemence, so animated an exterior, that his hearers felt to the bottom of their hearts the effect of his action.

Longinus says of him that he does not succeed in moderate movements, that he wants flexibility, and has a certain degree of harshness, which knows not how to manage pleasantry. It was for the sublime that Demosthenes was born: nature and study had given him every thing that could conduce to this. He united all those qualities.

lities which constitute the great orator; a tone of majesty, a vehemence, a richness of endowments, address, rapidity, and vigor in the highest degree.

Valerius Maximus reports that he had a piercing vivacity in his eyes, which had a wonderful effect in rendering his countenance menacing and terrible. That he could give an inflexion to his voice, a tone to his words, an air to his whole person, which riveted the attention and commanded the admiration of all who heard him.

Dionysius^{of} Halicarnassus makes it evident, that Demosthenes sometimes imitates him, and copies those qualities which neither Lyfias nor Isocrates could boast, as that vehemence and ardour, roughness and acrimony which give spirit and force to oration, and are wonderfully successful in raising the passions; and that he entirely avoids his obscurity, uncommon phrases, preposterous figures, and irregular arrangement of periods. That he retains only what is useful and intelligible; his short,
abrupt,

abrupt, and pungent sentences ; his ⁿcathememes which are of admirable use in oratory, when properly introduced. Of all uninspired writers, he is certainly the first master of the sublime.

Cicero, having complimented the other Grecian orators, says, Demosthenes unites in himself the purity of Lyfias, the spirit of Hyperides, the sweetness of Æschines, and in power of thought and movement of discourse, he is above them all ; in a word, we can imagine nothing more divine.

This all-accomplished orator was descended of very low parents, his father having been only a blacksmith. He was born about three hundred and eighty-two years before Christ. Having lost his parents when he was young, he fell into the hands of tutors who, through negligence or parsimony, took no care of his education. His mother seconded this neglect by a false tenderness to her son. He was indeed of a delicate constitution, which would not permit his being much pressed by study : so that at the age of sixteen, the
period

period fixed for the learning of rhetoric, instead of placing him under Isocrates, who then had the highest reputation, they sent him to the rhetorician Isæus, where the expence was less; and in whose school he learned those bad habits, of which afterwards he took such pains to divest himself.

This circumstance accounts for the neglect of his early education, but he afterwards became the pupil and studied the works of the best preceptors. The fortune acquired by his father in trade enabled him to place himself under their care, and the acquirements he derived from them gave him the power of exhibiting the first fruits of his education in an eloquent and successful speech against his guardians, who had embezzled his estate. The difficulties he laboured under from nature and from habit, and the means he used to remove them, are too commonly known to need repetition, but it may be an encouragement to those who have similar defects, whether natural or acquired, to be reminded that he
got

got the better of an hesitation in his speech by reciting with pebbles in his mouth; of distorted features, by speaking before a mirror; and that he strengthened a weak voice by running up the steepest hills, and, by declaiming aloud on the sea shore, taught himself to brave the tumult of a popular assembly. Hence the eloquence which was natural to Cicero, was the effect of much personal exertion in Demosthenes. This was instigated by the most laudable ambition of becoming an orator; this it was that enabled him to vanquish the bad inclinations of an age which pants only for pleasure, although he lived in a city abandoned to delicacy and debauchery. Still he found it necessary for a time to retire from the bustle of the world, and having shaved one half of his head, that a sense of decency might compel him to be invisible, he applied himself entirely to the study of eloquence. His passion for the acquisition of this art, was first excited by the applause which he saw given to Callistratus in a cause he pleaded, and from that moment
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it was the increasing object of his contemplation and desire.

It has indeed been said that the firmness of Demosthenes so long immoveable, his disinterestedness so long sustained, at length was found to falter ; that, having for some time elevated his voice against the tyranny of Alexander, with the same vehemence as he had attacked Philip, he in the end allowed himself to be bribed ; that twenty talents and a golden vase induced him to feign illness that he might not mount the rostrum ; and that this dishonorable conduct lost him the affections of the people, and compelled him to leave Athens as a banished man : Dinarchus, a venal orator, was his accuser. But Pausanias treats the charge as a calumny ; and it is fair to doubt the report, since his end, in the eye of an heathen the most courageous and laudable, appears a complete refutation of it. Returned to Athens after the death of Alexander, he did not cease to declaim against the tyranny of the Macedonians, until Antipater their king had obtained such
power,

power, as enabled him to seize all the orators who declared themselves his enemies.

Demosthenes attempted flight, but, finding himself in danger of being captured by his pursuers, he had recourse to poison, which he always carried with him, as an antidote against a disgraceful death. Taking the cup in the presence of Archias, who pressed him to yield to the conqueror of Greece, he said, "Tell your master that Demosthenes will owe nothing to the tyrant of his country." Thus perished this great man at the age of sixty.

As several reasons concurred to give a decided pre-eminence to the poetry of the Greeks, so the institutions of Athens excited the talents of the orator, and called every one who distinguished himself in that transcendent art to places of distinction. They occupied them in the government of their country, and rivalry and praise were the incitement and the reward of genius and of learning. Greece was in the envied possession of the most tuneable language the world

world has ever known; and the dialects gave a grace and variety, a force and emphasis to the expression of the speaker, in vain attempted amidst the poverty of modern tongues.

In reflecting on the productions of the ancients, the poet and the orator of modern times will be led to consider the advantages which the former had to boast both in point of climate, language, and political arrangements. These considerations will not prevent the most vigorous efforts of ingenious minds to a laudable although hopeless competition, and may at once furnish them with a subject of despair and consolation.

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SECTION VIII.

On the Grecian Historians.—Cadmus.—Hecataeus.—Herodotus.—Thucydides.—Xenophon.—Polybius.—Diodorus Siculus.—Dionysius of Halicarnassus.—Appian.—Arrian.—Dion Cassius.—Herodian.

HISTORY seems in its origin to have been only a collection of simple facts entrusted to oral tradition and engraven on the memory by the assistance of poetry, or else recorded by public monuments calculated to perpetuate the remembrance of important events.

It has been frequently committed to the durable memorials of brass and stone, of statues and medallions. Of the latter, a great number have escaped the ravages of time; and have not only gratified the curiosity of the antiquary, but enabled men of laborious and useful research to clear up

up disputed points of history and to establish the epochs of the remotest ages.

The early writers were compelled by their education and other circumstances to confine their history to the account of a single city or state, because they were ignorant of the situation of the different nations of the world. Above five hundred years before Christ, Cadmus wrote an account of the antiquities of Miletus the capital of Ionia, his native country; and Hecatæus his countryman, ventured to extend his views to Egypt, and to throw a ray of light on geography by his description of the earth. But these topographers were not deserving the name of historians; and their reputation, whatever it might have been, was lost in the blaze of glory which shortly after their day surrounded the great father of history.

Herodotus was born about four hundred and eighty-four years before Christ at Halicarnassus in Caria. The troubles of his country first brought him into Greece,

where his talents obtained him a welcome reception.

It is to him we are indebted for the little we know of the ancient dynasties of the Medes, Persians, Phœnicians, Lydians, Greeks, Egyptians, and Scythians. He had the merit of connecting the events of time and place, and forming one regular whole from a number of detached parts. The Greeks acknowledged their high obligations to him, for unfolding to them the history of the then known world for two hundred and forty years. He shewed them nations jealous and disquiet, disunited by interest yet connected by the alliances produced in times of war, fighting for liberty and groaning under tyranny. When he read publicly at the Olympic games his account of the bloody contests between the Persians and the Greeks from Cyrus to Xerxes, composed in his thirty-ninth year, his veracity receives an attestation from the high honor which was given to him at this great assembly of the Greeks. The name
of

of one of the muses was bestowed on each of his nine books by his contemporaries, and will be attached to them as long as the writings of the historian shall exist.

“ His eager country, in the Olympic vale
 Throngs with proud joy to catch the martial tale.
 Behold where Valour, resting on his lance,
 Drinks the sweet sound in rapture’s silent trance :
 Then with a grateful shout of loud acclaim,
 Hails the just herald of his country’s fame.”

HAYLEY.

Herodotus has frequently been accused of neglecting that sincerity which is the highest merit of an historian, to record the marvellous and incredible. Such accusations may probably be in a great measure repelled. The moderns are too apt to doubt every thing which is contrary to their experience, and to impute to Greek historians a desire of gratifying their countrymen in their eager love for whatever was connected with novelty or with fable. The descriptions given of Egypt by Herodotus, have frequently been verified by travellers in points where he was discredited ; and it

should always be observed, that where he receives his account from others, he does not vouch for their authenticity but reports only that he had heard. This particularly applies to those incidents which relate to the Assyrians and Medes and to the earlier part of the Egyptian history.

Some errors have certainly been detected and exposed by Ctesias, who was physician to Artaxerxes at Susa, respecting Assyria and Persia, but of whom only fragments remain.

Plutarch has spoken with disrespect of Herodotus; but be it recollected that he was a Theban, and that his countrymen had abandoned the cause of Greece and become the auxiliaries of Xerxes. It was a disgrace which could only be effaced by arraigning the truth of the historian who recorded it. The story which concerned all Greece, all Greece in a public assembly declared to be true; and honored the reciter of it, with a more public and splendid encomium than any other writer can boast.

Such

Such were the sentiments of his contemporaries; and to the latest posterity, he has conveyed an account of the most celebrated country in the world and rendered intelligible the relations of its poets.

It has perhaps with more grounds been said, that if we look for clear method, deep reflection, or acute criticism in this author, we shall probably be disappointed. That though his relation of facts is interesting from its simplicity, and his descriptions are attractive by their vivacity; yet he does not dive deeply into characters, nor form a correct judgment of political institutions. From an avidity of relating events, he does not stop to consider their causes or justly and accurately to bestow blame and approbation. Moral truths and common facts, fine speeches and bad actions, good laws and tyrannical edicts, are transmitted in the same manner, without any analysis of characters or of principles; and the conduct of men is described

like the vegetation of plants, without a single reflexion from the historian.

But the style of Herodotus is so elegant, that Dionysius declares him to be one of those enchanting writers whom you read to the last syllable with pleasure and still wish for more: and his admirers contend, that he is simple and unaffected in the choice of his words and that his metaphors approach to poetry; that no writer has more exactly founded the depth of his own genius; that he has no irregular fallies of wit, no turgid swell of diction, no towering flights of imagination.

It is very easy to perceive that he is an imitator of Homer. He resembles him in copiousness of invention, elegance of phrase; in sweetness, ease, and perspicuity; and unlike all others, what he has imitated he has equalled. Theophrastus, that venerable Greek and candid critic, allows that he first introduced ornaments into the style of history, and carried the art of writing to perfection.

The

The speech of Xerxes in the seventh book, has been resembled to that of Hector when calling on his soldiers to burn the Grecian ships. The tone of an arbitrary prince who considers mankind as slaves, is exactly expressed in the language of the historian.

“ For the sake of Darius and the other Persians, I will never cease till I take and burn Athens. For these reasons I am provoked to make war against them. Thus will we extend the Persian empire, till it have no confine but the sky. The sun shall see no land adjacent to our dominions. I will traverse all Europe, and reduce the whole earth under your sway.”

The beautiful description of an eclipse in the same book, when Xerxes had lashed the ocean for its disobedience and thrown a bridge over the Hellespont, has been justly compared to the darkness spread over the body of Patroclus.

“ In one thick darkness all the fight was lost.

The sun, the moon, and all the ethereal host

Seemed

Seemed as extinct; day ravished from their eyes;
And all Heaven's splendor blotted from the skies."

Another quotation has been made from the same part of the work, in which the author evidently borrows an idea from Homer.

Artabanus the uncle of Xerxes tells him, that he is endowed with prudence but is led astray by the conversation of wicked men.

"Just as they say, the breath of the winds falling on the sea, the most useful of all things to mankind, hinders it from enjoying its own natural state."

The allusion is certainly a very beautiful one; and well represents the situation of a mind naturally tranquil, when agitated by the furious passions of others.

The historian in many other instances borrows the figures, sentiments, and expressions of the poet who will ever be left in the exclusive possession of innumerable graces which are not attainable by any imitator.

But

But Herodotus was not only a poetical, he was an oratorical historian. Cicero, the best judge of style, considers him in this light: and says that no eloquence ever pleased him like his; nothing so alluring, so gentle and so strong, so ravishing and so convincing. In Herodotus he finds nothing of that harshness that offends in many of the prose writers. The soft style glides like the clear stream of some deep river, keeping its course uninterruptedly along and every where alike. It is Cicero who gives him the honorable title of father of history, not for his antiquity but his excellence. To so great an authority, the world will readily defer; and when they observe the futility of the objections brought against him, they will observe that the waves of calumny dash themselves in pieces against the rocks which they labour to undermine.

THUCIDYDES.

Thucydides was only thirteen years younger than Herodotus, and descended from
from

from one of the first families in Athens. He was bred a soldier; but having been prevented by Brasidas the Lacædemonian general from relieving the besieged city of Amphipolis, he was punished by banishment. At Ægina, a small island of the Peloponnesus, where he died at the age of fifty after a residence of twenty years, he wrote his history. His fondness for travel sustained him in his misfortunes; and a large fortune brought him by his wife, enabled him to ascertain every thing connected with his design. He served his country both by his sword and by his pen. As his appointments had acquainted him with the affairs of his own republic, his exile opened to him those of the Lacedæmonians; which to a writer at a distance, party zeal would have obscured. This circumstance fortunate for the world, enabled him to collect materials for the history of the Peloponnesian war; of the greatest part of which he was an eye witness.

Of the twenty-seven years the term of its duration, he has left the annals of

twenty-one ; and the remainder were written by Xenophon.

No writer was ever better prepared to be an historian by the combination of knowledge and probity, than Thucydides. The soldier, the statesman, and the philosopher, are discoverable in his works.

They contain the precepts of wisdom he had learned from Anaxagoras, and the lessons of eloquence he had received from the orator Antiphon. To these may be added, an aversion to injustice and a passion for virtue. The excellence he attained, was the result of early emulation ; for being present at the age of fifteen on the occasion when Herodotus recited his history at the Olympic games, he was so much affected as to burst into tears.

It has been objected to him, that his style is so concise as to be obscure and harsh, and that he uses both novel and obsolete words ; that his language is unpolished, and the structure of his sentences preposterous.

Dionysius

Dionysius Halicarnassensis finds many faults in him, with a view of giving the superiority to his countryman Herodotus; he says that he observes no connection, and falls into a dryness of style which renders his discourses hard and fettered. His panegyriste declare, that the justness and dignity of his sentiments when after repeated perusals they are understood, requite the pains which are required for the discovery; that the narrative part, is a model worthy of imitation.

The debate between the ambassadors of Corinth and Athens in the first book, is managed in a clear and elegant manner. The troubles of Corcyra, gave the historian an opportunity of making a digression on the factions which arise in a state and the disorders which ensue. His reflections on the subject, are worthy the particular attention of politicians, legislators, and statesmen. His description of the plague at Athens, has been imitated by the best of the Latin poets and extolled by every reader

of learning and of taste. Lucretius borrows copiously from it in his sixth book; Virgil both in his third *Æneid* and third *Georgic*; and Ovid and Statius have had it in their view. Thucydides aims rather at the sublimity of Pindar, than at the simplicity of Homer. The admirable speech which Pericles makes in the first book when he advises the Athenians to go to war, exhibits sentiments of greatness and elevation. "Let us not regret the loss of our lands and country houses, let us regret the loss of our liberty. We were not made for our estates, but our estates for us. I fear our own vices, more than all the advantages of our enemies. Great and perilous enterprizes alone constitute glory and reputation."

But the funeral oration of the same speaker in the second book, appears to contain every beauty of which the subject is capable. Isocrates imitated it in his panegyric, and Plato in his *Menexenus*.

When

When he speaks of the manners and government of Athens, he says, "Our state is popular, because its end is the public good, not the aggrandisement of individuals; and honor is not given to birth, but to merit. We love politeness without loving luxury; and we apply ourselves to the study of philosophy, without abandoning ourselves to that effeminacy of idleness which is the ordinary companion of this study. We only esteem riches for their use; and do not think it a reproach to be poor, but not to do that which must be done to avoid poverty."

The politeness of the Athenians, is well opposed to the Spartan roughness and severity. Of the former he says, "We refresh the mind with frequent recesses from labour, by our annual festivals and games and our elegant entertainments in private. These pleasures thus frequently renewed, expel all melancholy.

"Pindar says, that joy is the best physician to labour, the wise songs of the Muse sweeten our toils."

Of

Of his countrymen he observes :

“ Our brave and noble deeds are so many illustrious proofs of our power, and will make us the admiration of the present and future ages. We want no Homer to found our praises ; our courage has opened to us a passage through every land and sea, and we have every where erected eternal monuments of our hostility or beneficence. By giving their bodies to the public, they have procured to themselves immortal praise.

“ The whole earth is a monument to illustrious men ! The inscription on a domestic tomb is not the only testimony of their virtue ; but even in remote nations, the memory of their glorious actions is engraven more deeply on the hearts of men, than on the marble at home.”

“ Fortune,” says Pindar, “ often wrests from brave men their glory. You know the fate of Ajax, who, when supplanted by the corrupt arts of his inferior, fell upon his sword. But Homer by his divine poetry, has made all mankind honor and admire

his virtues; the immortal Muse goes on sublimely founding through all ages, and spreads the unextinguished splendour of heroic deeds over the fruitful earth and boundless ocean.”

Accuracy, impartiality and fidelity characterise Thucydides, and no resentment against the Athenians for their severe treatment is evident in any part of his work. He mentions his banishment but slightly, and represents Brasidas, whose glory eclipsed his own, as a man eminently great. His style is ardent, rapid and bold. He delineates his subject with a few happy strokes, and leaves much to the imagination of the reader. The following is the comparison made between him and the historian of Halicarnassus by Quintilian.

“Thucydides is compressed, brief, and always equal to himself. Herodotus, sweet, clear, and diffuse; the former great in exciting the vehement, the other the softer affections; that in animated speeches, this in calmer ones; that in force, this in beauty.”

Herodotus

Herodotus certainly had a higher subject, for it included all that was great in Europe and Asia, amongst the Greeks and the Barbarians. It has been said that his great desire to please made him sometimes deviate from truth. Without deciding a questionable point, it may be asserted that his character was destitute of that solidity and love of labour which are requisite to a faithful historian.

In these respects, and in many others, Thucydides had the advantage. Attachment to truth appears in him a settled and religious principle, and his piety is a prominent feature in his works.

In the seventh book, speaking of a virtuous but unfortunate General, he says, "Thus perished Nicias, who of all those of his time was least worthy to perish in that manner on account of his having always been attached to the service of the gods."

Marcellinus, who has left a fragment of his life, asserts that he was descended from the blood royal of Thrace, and that Miltiades and Cimon, two illustrious generals

of Athens, were numbered amongst his ancestors. A consciousness of noble birth might probably tend to inspire him with those high sentiments of honor and dignity for which he is conspicuous almost above every ancient writer. Cicero says of him, "that he surpasses in nobleness of style, and in the art of eloquence, all those who have written; he is so full of great sentiments, that the number of his thoughts almost equals that of his words, and he is so accurate and concise in what he says, that it is difficult to determine if he most adorn things by words, or words by things. That he has a dignity of mind, a force of imagination, a vigour of language, a depth of reasoning, a clearness of conception, imagery, colours, and expressions, of which all the other Greek historians are destitute."

These are not the endowments of nature only, but partly the acquisitions of study. His biographer accordingly tells us, that he attached himself to an excellent preceptor, Prodicus of the isle of Cos, for the exact choice of terms, and to Gorgias

Leontinus for order and arrangement; that he learned persuasion of Socrates, and formed himself on the model of Pindar for the sublime.

To an institution so perfect, was added the great advantage which is always derived from a noble emulation. The applause acquired by Herodotus was a daily incentive to his industry, and excitement to his genius. He stood upon the shoulders of the giant and took in a wider field of observation. He marked his excellencies and defects, and, disdaining to be a servile copier, he merited the praise of a judicious critic.

He considered Herodotus as having undertaken too extensive a subject, and determined to avoid a similar error; he thought him a cold narrator of facts, and to that we owe the eloquence he displays. He censured his history as prolix, and willingly sacrificed some beauties to conciseness. The Attic dialect of Thucydides was appropriated to fire and spirit, to dignity and elevated sentiments, as the Ionic

of Herodotus was to all the softer ones. Thucydides works upon the passions; Herodotus entertains the fancy rather than captivates the heart. The one is an oratorical, the other a poetical historian.

Thucydides derived many advantages from an intimate acquaintance with Socrates, Plato, Critias, Alcibiades, Pericles, and all the other great men of an age the most polished that the Greeks had known. This circumstance tended to fill his mind with such great ideas and sound principles as were eminently useful both to the man and to the historian. Learned as he was, he knew the world still better than books; he had deeply studied mankind, and could penetrate to the most hidden recesses of the heart. He could trace the effects of rivalry, jarring interests and passions; and from thence he draws those lively, ardent, pathetic descriptions with which he embellishes his work. From thence he takes his narration of battles, sieges, warlike expeditions, and all those agitations which happen in republics. From this fruitful source, the
knowledge

knowledge of human manners, he represents every thing naturally and correctly, and by an irresistible eloquence commands the attention of his readers. He was indeed completely eloquent before Aristotle had written rules for the art. His style is the image of his mind; the one serious and dignified, the other manly, vigorous, and replete with that force and energy which distinguish him from all other authors. His high notion of the sublime rendered him inattentive to trifling matters, which ~~revolts~~ ^{disgusts} the prudish grammarian. He disregarded change of tenses, numbers and persons, provided he could insert more warmth and vehemence into his diction. If his narration be not always connected, the error proceeds less from the nature of his disposition than from that of his subject: the war had no settled principle; the campaigns were not formed by preconcerted regulations; all passed tumultuously according to the movement of the opposing interests and passions of those who waged it. If the use of history be to give instruction

under the form of examples, where is this to be found so well as in Thucydides, who affords a series of moral lessons suited to the greatest persons, and delivered in the greatest manner. The natural dignity of his way of thinking, and his judicious application of rhetorical figures, give at the same time weight and splendour to his sentiments. Sound reasoning and exact judgment complete the whole of his literary character. Trifling errors are to be pardoned where there is so much of excellence; the brightest fire is occasionally clouded by smoke, the loveliest landscape is sometimes intercepted by vapour.

XENOPHON.

About four hundred and forty-nine years before the christian æra, Athens boasted the birth of this elegant historian. In the school of Socrates he acquired all those martial talents, domestic virtues, and philosophical endowments which distinguished a life protracted to the extraordinary age of ninety.

ninety. The testimonies he has left accord with the appellation bestowed upon him by his countrymen: they called him the Attic Bee; and from the sweetness of his style he appears to have well deserved the title.

He added seven books to the history of Thucydides, wrote an account of the life and actions of Cyrus the Great, and of the retreat of the ten thousand Greeks, whom, after the defeat and fall of their leader, he conducted home in a perilous march of eighteen hundred miles, with a resolution and sagacity which have never been excelled.

A modern poet thus characterises him:

“ O rich in all the blended gifts that grace
 Minerva’s darling sons of Attic race;
 The sage’s olive, the historian’s palm,
 The victor’s laurel, all thy name embalm.
 Thy simple diction, free from glaring art,
 With sweet allurements steals upon the heart,
 Pure as the rill that Nature’s hand refines,
 Clear as thy harmony of soul it shines.”

HAYLEY.

While

While the soldier has always admired his talents in conducting, and the scholar in describing the retreat, the philosopher and statesman have alike been delighted with his charming work of the institution of Cyrus. His contemporaries regarded him with veneration, and Scipio and Lucullus perused him with avidity. He had the charms of Attic eloquence, with a Spartan soul. When he was sacrificing to the gods, his head crowned with flowers, messengers arrived to tell him that his son was killed in the battle of Mantinea; he took up the chaplet and burst into tears: but when they added that his son, fighting to the last breath, had mortally wounded the general of the enemy, he re-assumed his chaplet; "I knew," said he, "that my son was mortal, and his glory ought to console me for his death."

When the work of Thucydides fell into his hands, he not only ingenuously published it, but himself added the transactions of the war subsequent to the period
where

where the former had left it. This continuation is come down to us under the name of the Hellenica.

The *Cyropædia* has frequently been called a romance. The object of the writer was probably to please the elder Cyrus, by describing the character of an accomplished prince; and many conversations and some events are imaginary. But truth is still blended with fiction, as in the account of the capture of Babylon, which was a real event. His imitations of Homer may be traced by the most careless reader. The decisive battle in the seventh book betwixt Cyrus and the Assyrians has traits of striking resemblance with many of the combats in the *Iliad*.

The Historian observes, that

“ In that quarter of the army there was a great slaughter of men, a great noise of clashing arms and darts, great cries of the combatants, some calling on others, some exhorting, some invoking the gods.

The

The poet sings,

“ Now shield with shield, with helmet helmet closed ;
 To armor^{the} armor^{the}, lance to lance opposed.
 Victors and vanquished join promiscuous cries,
 And shrilling shouts and dying groans arise.”

POPE.

In the fourth book, Xenophon shews himself master of the pathetic, where he introduces Gobrias recounting to Cyrus the murder of his son by the Assyrian prince, to which cruel deed he had been incited by his envy of him as a superior marksman.

“ My only son, O Cyrus! beautiful and virtuous, who loved and honored me with such a filial tenderness and respect, as made a father happy ;—this son the present king deprived of life, plunging a spear into the bosom of my dear and only child ; and I, unhappy man, carried home a dead body instead of a bridegroom, and at this age buried this excellent and darling son, murdered in the bloom of life.”

In

In the expedition of the younger Cyrus, being himself a principal actor, his imagination is much more vivid, and his diction much more ornamented.

When he describes his countrymen rushing to the battle, he says, "As they proceeded, when any part of the phalanx by their quick advance outstripped the rest, making the line swell out like a billow, those left behind began to run, and at the same time an universal shout was heard, such as is made in the exclamation to Mars."

At the beginning of the third book, when many of the generals had fallen victims to the treachery of Tissaphernes, the reflections of the army on their wretched situation, ^{throw}~~throws~~ them into a state bordering on despair. "Few tasted meat that night, few kindled fires; many neglected the duty of the camp; every man threw himself down, but was unable to sleep through grief and regret at the loss of his country, parents, wife and children." This has been well resembled to the perplexity
of

of Agamemnon in the ninth and tenth Iliad, after the defeat of the Grecians :

“ Now o’er the fields, dejected, he surveys
 From thousand Trojan fires the mounting blaze,
 Hears in the passing wind their music blow,
 And marks distinct the voices of the foe.
 Now looking backward to the fleet and coast,
 Anxious he forrows for the endangered host.
 He rends his hairs in sacrifice to Jove,
 And vews to him that ever lives above.
 Inly he groans, while glory and despair
 Divide his heart, and wage a doubtful war.”

Perhaps however the most interesting, certainly the most celebrated, part of the Anabasis is that where the author describes the exultations of joy in the Grecian army on their first discovery of the sea, the first harbinger of a safe return to their country.

“ A great shout was raised at the sight of so welcome an object; Xenophon, alarmed, for he commanded in the rear, the post of danger and of honor, mounts a horse, and rides up with some other officers to enquire into the cause of this tumultuous noise; and immediately they hear the
 soldiers

soldiers crying, the sea! the sea! and congratulating one another.”

The beautiful words of the original language are an instance in which the sound is an echo to the sense.

These natural effusions of surprize and of delight affect the reader with the most lively sympathy, such as a laboured description would vainly have endeavoured to excite.

Xenophon was more captivated by the style of Herodotus than by that of Thucydides, and there are many passages in which he has imitated him. The ancient orators and historians used that figure in rhetoric the most freely, which best accorded with their disposition. Thucydides has frequently recourse to the hyperbaton, because his prevailing qualities were force and spirit. In Xenophon the metaphor is most conspicuous, because his character was ease and simplicity. “The Graces,” says Quintilian, “formed his style, and the goddesses of Persuasion dwelt upon his lips.”

Besides sweetness, Xenophon has also variety of language equally adapted to great occasions and to familiar dialogues. The chain of his composition seems to have been formed at once, and disposed link by link with perfect regularity. It always has the same lucid order, the production of a clear head, and always conveys the same amiable sentiments, the offspring of an upright heart. The number of speeches in the writings of this historian seems to be his greatest defect. They are very numerous in Thucydides, but they are not too numerous because they are so spirited. They abound in Herodotus, but their elegance secures them from criticism. The simplicity of Xenophon renders them tedious and dull, when introduced on trivial occasions; but when a proper one occurs, he yields not to any adept in declamation; as when Cyrus recommends unanimity in an army. His dying speech to his sons also is not more remarkable for its good sense, than for its eloquence.

In

In his attempts at wit he generally fails. The effusions of fancy and imagination are striking when they are unpremeditated; but he whose conception is slow and labour-ed, can never expect a happy delivery.

His philosophy appears in his account of the memorable actions and sayings of Socrates, and in his apology for that divine man.

His sentiments on the subject of death, were the same with those of his preceptor, whom he nearly resembled in all the qualities of his mind; but to Plato he was a rival and an enemy.

No writer was ever more rationally religious: Herodotus had a respect for forms, Xenophon for the essence. He always treats the subject in a manner so awful and solemn, as shews it to be the veneration of the heart.

If his style sometimes appear cold, it is always pure: if his works seem deficient in business and in bustle, they are always replete with instruction: if the story be dull,

it contains a sober and useful lesson of morality.

His general excellence will excuse, though it may tend to discover a few trifling defects; as the smallest flaws are most easily distinguishable in the brightest diamonds.

It is unpleasant to reflect on the number of authors in every department of learning, of whom little more has reached posterity than either their mere names, or a few fragments which serve but to excite regret at the destruction of their labours.

Learning indeed has been a vessel tossed and shattered in a tempestuous ocean, and we are too apt to prize every piece of wreck which has been cast upon the shore, however trivial and useless. Many historians who lived between the time of Xenophon and Polybius are in this predicament: and if Theopompus the disciple of Isocrates obtained a prize for the best funeral oration in honor of Mausolus, when his master was his competitor; Quintilian, who places
him

him next to Herodotus and Thucidydes, must have had a far more certain criterion to decide his merit, than posterity can boast in the scanty relics of his works. That Philistus was a perspicuous, and Ephorus a voluminous writer; or that the genius of Clitarchus was less questionable than his veracity, are facts which we can know only by testimony: nor can we appreciate either their abstract or comparative deserts, since the violence or the accidents of time have left them only the "baseless fabric of a vision."

POLYBIUS.

Polybius was born at Megalopolis in Peloponnesus, about two hundred years before Christ. He possessed advantages which few persons can boast; for his father was not only a man of rank and family, but a general and a statesman. The advantages he derived from these fortunate circumstances, gave a colour to every incident of his life.

From his youth he was instructed in the science of politics, and his education was as finished a one as an anxious and accomplished parent could make it. He attended his father when he went ambassador to Egypt; and his diligence in acquainting himself with every thing respecting that country, was a prelude to the consummate knowledge which he afterwards attained of the quarters of the globe which were then known.

His patriotifm displayed itself in fighting againft the Romans as the enemies of his country; but when the defeat of Perſius expoſed that cowardly monarch to the derifion of his conqueror, Polybius was ſpared the mortification of being dragged as a ſlave to adorn a triumph which his perſonal valour would have deſerved.

True merit is always acknowledged by a generous enemy. The fatal battle of Pydna and the cowardice of his fugitive commander, left him a captive; in which ſituation he was conducted to Rome: yet Scipio and Fabius admired his virtues, and by every effort of honourable ſolicitation acquired his
friendſhip,

friendship. His profession of a soldier was still dear to him, and the victor of Carthage eagerly sought the assistance of those military talents of which he had long known the extent and the value.

The love of his country was unbounded, and he evinced it to the last moment of his existence. When it became a province to Rome, his power and influence tended to console and lessen its distresses; and when Scipio was dead, he returned thither and passed the remainder of his life, which terminated in the eighty-second year of his age by a fall from his horse.

Whilst he lived amongst the Romans, so constant was his application to study and so successful was the result of it, that he is said not only to have made himself master of their language, but to have become better acquainted with their laws than their own statesmen.

Such was his ardour after military knowledge, that he traced every step of Hannibal's march over the Alps and every conquest of Scipio in Spain. His acquaintance at Rome,

the best and greatest men in the republic, respected and esteemed him; Constantine consulted him as an oracle of truth; and the Greeks erected statues to him as their friend and protector.

With these acquirements he wrote an universal history in forty books, from the commencement of the second Punic war to the conquest of Macedon by Paulus Æmilius; an eventful period of fifty-three years. Of these, five books only are entire, with fragments of the succeeding twelve.

Polybius is not eloquent like Thucydides, nor poetical like Herodotus, nor perspicuous like Xenophon. He gives us the first rough draught of his thoughts, and seldom imposes on himself the trouble to arrange or methodize them. They are often vague and desultory, and not unfrequently deviate entirely from the subject.

His style has no cadence, rhythm, or measured harmony; and by these defects one of the noblest histories is greatly injured: but his language only can be censured, for in the higher qualities of an historian he has

no superior. A love of truth predominates in his writings, he has judgment to trace effects to their causes, he has knowledge of his subject drawn from every source that could produce it, he has boldness of mind which prompts him to declare what he knew, and he has impartiality which forbids him to conceal it. His description of a battle has never been equalled; and it must gratify every military man whose education enables him to peruse Polybius, to compare ancient with modern tactics. On these occasions he exhibits all the warmth and vehemence in recital which distinguished him in the field; it is then evident, that he does not calmly and coldly relate what he had heard, but that he paints in vivid colours the scenes he had witnessed. His writings have been admired by the warrior, copied by the politician, and imitated by the historian. Brutus had him ever in his hands, Tully transcribed him, and many of the finest passages of Livy are the property of the Greek historian.

His character however is much depreciated by an imputation of atheism, from which his panegyrists have not been able to defend him. He declared the gods to be a fraudulent invention, the offspring of priests and politicians; and all religion he denominated superstition. The fact is undeniable; and it admits of no excuse, unless we suppose him so disgusted with the absurdities of the popular creed, as to avert his eyes from those convincing arguments which every object in creation afforded to the reflecting heathen for the existence of a deity.

DIODORUS SICULUS.

The few remaining Greek historians are not considered amongst the first class of writers; and in estimating the merit of their works, much allowance has been claimed for them on account of the declining state of the Greek language at the time they wrote.

Whether the effects resulting from this cause be not exaggerated, may probably be discerned

discerned by a recurrence to their style and manner; and that may enable us to form a general judgment on the subject.

Diodorus Siculus was a native of Argyra in Sicily, and did not precede our Saviour quite half a century. Fifteen books are all that remain of forty, which contained an account of Egypt, Persia, Syria, Media, Greece, Rome, and Carthage.

This extensive work describes every important event from the invasion of Xerxes to the year of the world 3650. Whoever wishes fully to enjoy the ancient poets, must first be master of the ancient theology. In Diodorus is to be found the fabulous history of Greece, the supposed creation of the world, and the whole system of polytheism. We must have recourse to him for information respecting both Greeks and Barbarians, during the period of which he treats; and when his relations fail to obtain the acquiescence of our minds, we should remember that like Herodotus he does not pledge himself for their veracity.

He

He had industry, the first merit of a compiler; and he had judgment in selecting from books whatever might be useful to his plan. He has preserved some important parts of works extant in his time, which but for him would have been lost to the world.

His language is devoid of elegance, and his arrangement has been made with too little attention to order or to method.

It is probably, not owing to his being contemporary with Augustus, that the style of his Greek is harsh, but that like the style of every compiler, it is restrained by fetters.

In the parts that are original, he writes with much more ease, and this circumstance seems to give a colour to the foregoing observation.

Diodorus deserves to be read, but not to be imitated. Utility rather than pleasure will be derived to the scholar from the perusal of his works; what he finds in other authors will be rendered familiar by
a pre-

a previous acquaintance with him; as the march of an army is facilitated, by the rugged but useful office of the pioneer.

DIONYSIUS of HALICARNASSUS.

When the polite arts had taken their westward flight, and the patronage of Augustus invited every man of talents to Rome, Dionysius came thither, a few years after the birth of Christ; and affords a striking proof, that genius and application, forming themselves on models of excellence, can overcome all the disadvantages arising to an author who writes when a language has declined from its pristine purity.

His diction is as varied, as that of the different authors whom he imitated. It contains the characteristics of diffusion, conciseness, and familiarity,—in the respective parts where he wished to shew them. Xenophon and Herodotus are his favorite authors; and like the latter, he relieves his
work

work by lively episodes and happy digressions.

The use he made of such illustrious authorities, was to form a style correct, expressive, and elegant; and genius modelling imitation, rendered it completely his own.

The subjects he treats are the antiquities of Rome, for the period of three hundred and twelve years; of which only the eleven first books out of twenty are now in existence. They were the result of twenty-four years of useful labour; and display the correct chronologer, the judicious critic, and the faithful historian. Abandoning all fable, disdaining every thing of the marvellous and miraculous, he delineates the constitution and government of a country to which he was a foreigner, with far more accuracy than any of the writers who were Romans.

Native authors sometimes carelessly report transactions to which they are familiar, presuming upon a similar acquaintance with themselves on the part of their readers; and

and strangers are more careful and more minute in their investigations, and less tinged with national pride and partiality.

Like them however when he traces the Romans to their origin and would give us an account of the inhabitants who preceded them in Italy, it is not to be wondered at that he loses himself in the obscurity of such distant ages; but that credulity is surely censurable which induced him to believe that he saw his way through the impenetrable shade.

Dionysius participated every advantage which the most polished period of Rome could afford him. He obtained a knowledge of men and manners, by an acquaintance with all the witty and the learned who flourished in the court of Augustus. Conversation, a powerful test of genius and information, acquainted him with every thing respecting the empire of the world which he could not learn from books. His talents were furnished with materials from
every

every source which could ^{produce} display them; and in the perusal of his works, we shall not be disappointed in our search both for profit and for pleasure.

APPIAN.

At a late period, more than a hundred and forty years after the birth of Christ, flourished Appian, a native of Alexandria.

He wrote an account in twenty-four books of all the countries which had been subdued by the Romans; but time has much mutilated his work: still, some of the most important events in the Roman history may be found in this author.

The Syrian, Parthian, Punic, and civil wars from the time of the Gracchi, are ably written by him; and in many instances the story is compressed into a small compass. He has been accused of general plagiarism, and of adopting the style of every author from whom he pillaged in such a manner as to have none of his own.

If

If he cannot be defended from this charge, it must however be allowed by his accusers that he is a pilferer of judgment; since he not only has copied much important matter, but has omitted every thing fabulous and absurd. If the incidents be old, the manner of relating them gives them an appearance of novelty, and produces a considerable degree of interest in the reader. The actions are not blended as in most other histories, but the order of time in which they happened in each particular country is observed. There seems something to recommend this plan; for it affords a connected history of places and of people, not deranged by the deviations of a general or an army. He is so minute in his relations, that we may perceive he means to deliver only what is true; but his extreme partiality to the Romans leaves him without a possible vindication. That he should be well inclined to the people with whom he found a welcome reception and by whose government he was advanced to offices

of state, is the natural impulse of a grateful mind; but praise and blame are a sacred charge reposed in the historian, and never to be attributed but by the laws of justice and of truth.

Arrian lived about one hundred and thirty-six years after Christ, and was born at Nicomedia the capital of Bithynia, once a very powerful country of Asia Minor. He was no less celebrated as a philosopher, than as a soldier, the favourite scholar of the stoic Epictetus, the faithful historian of Alexander's expedition, and the Periplus of the Ægean sea. The emperor Antoninus had sufficient wisdom to discern, and liberality to reward his merit: he made him consul, and gave him the government of Cappadocia.

When the Greek language was in its highest purity, no writer ever surpassed Arrian in that best attribute of style. Forming himself on the example of Xenophon, he participated the sweetness of his model. The softness of his language has not excluded strength and vigour, nor do his

flowing periods convey a meaning that is vague or unimpressive. His speeches are peculiarly his own, and combine a powerful address to the passions with arguments that are solid and convincing. On these occasions his figures are happily selected, and well illustrate the points which he would enforce. His epithets are neither exuberant nor are his metaphors jumbled; and if his matter be not compressed into the smallest compass, it is at least not loosely extraneous. His story is told with a plain and pleasing familiarity: whenever he quits the main subject, it is evidently his intention to relieve the reader from the fatigue of a long and uninterrupted narration; and though he avoids scepticism, which has been called "one of the nerves of the mind," he is no credulous reporter of legendary tales, but an historian of undoubted integrity and truth.

The description he gives us of Alexander's conquests affects us with a mixture of pleasure and concern; we peruse his account of them with such a degree of satisfac-

faction, as makes us regret that we have no knowledge of the succeeding periods but what the imperfect remains of Photius have conveyed to us.

He who forms his style on that of another, is as likely to copy the defects as the merits of his original; and if a languor and a tameness sometimes appear in parts which a livelier spirit would have improved, he might plead the example of Xenophon as his authority, though not his vindication.

DION CASSIUS.

In a general reference to classic writers, it may be proper to glance at those of inferior reputation, although their memorials be scanty, and not replete with entertainment to the reader.

Nicæa in Bithynia was the birthplace of this writer, who was about two hundred and thirty years posterior to our Saviour.

It is grateful to have recourse to times when the labours of the scholar were hold-

en in repute by ministers and princes; since the same talents which have raised men to an eminence in learning, might frequently be a valuable acquisition to the service of the state. Dion Cassius was called to adorn the highest ministerial offices in the Roman empire, by Pertinax and his three immediate successors; and the same industry which he displayed in speculative, accomplished him for the purposes of active life. In an unwearied application of ten years to the subject, he composed a history of which only very imperfect fragments are in existence.

He is a close and not unsuccessful imitator of Thucydides, and, like all imitators, exhibits his faults as well as his beauties: for, if like him he sometimes be a sublime writer, like him he introduces the same bold figures and the same irrelevant matter. His words are judiciously chosen and properly arranged; nor is he destitute of the beauties of variety and the harmony of periods. Could we ever be reconciled to long sentences and parentheses, this writer

would mediate their excuse : but that which has disfigured the history of Clarendon, is too often repeated to be pardoned in Dion Cassius. Had Thucidydes never written, his renown would have been more eminent. His veracity as an historian yields to his partiality to Cæsar ; nor is it any proof either of the independence of his mind or the soundness of his judgment, that success appears in his view to be the certain criterion of merit, and that his suffrage is always in favour of the fortunate, at the expence of the unhappy.

Dion believed that a familiar spirit constantly attended him as the monitor of his conduct, and the adviser and prompter of his literary compositions. Such superstition may serve occasionally to embolden and repress the ardour of the soldier in the day of battle, and may by turns be useful and disadvantageous to the mariner. The poet who thinks he feels the influence of his inspiring god, may reach to sublimity by the aid of his enthusiasm : but when once the historian disobeys the dictates of
sober

sober reason, his veracity is as much to be doubted, as the religion of the credulous devotee, who believes or pretends to believe in a partial illumination from heaven.

HERODIAN was born at Alexandria about two hundred and fifty years after the Christian æra; but he removed at an early period of his life to Rome, where he was employed in many civil offices, and wrote a history of the times, in eight books, from the death of Marcus Aurelius to Maximinus, comprizing nearly seventy years.

The imitation of his style is more desirable than difficult. It possesses ease without negligence, and delicacy without affectation.

Herodian is a methodical and an accurate writer; his digressions are natural and his precepts are worthy to be engraven on the memory. It is no objection to his work that the subject is so limited, for he was thence enabled to relate circumstances of which he had been an eye-witness; while his official situation opened to him all the

hidden motives of action, all those secret springs which regulate political manœuvres.

To knowledge so unclouded, he added a correct judgment and a perfect integrity; and few of his predecessors could boast more of the qualities which constitute a good historian.

The curiosity of the learned reader will be highly gratified by the description which he has given of the Roman ceremonies, and of the adulation of a corrupt and declining people in the apotheosis of their emperors.

SECTION IX.

PLUTARCH.

PLUTARCH was born at Chæroneæ a celebrated city of Bœotia, somewhat less than a century after Christ, of a family respectable in station and eminent in talents.

His education was acquired at Delphi, a place which the temple of Apollo has consecrated to perpetual remembrance. While the Pythian priestess labored with the oracles of the god, Ammonius dispensed to his youthful disciples the more intelligible precepts of natural and moral philosophy.

Plutarch improved the discipline of a schoolmaster by the advantages of foreign travel. His country employed him early in life on an important embassy to Rome, where he himself became a teacher of

youth, after having explored the literary treasures of Egypt and of Greece.

The capital of the world was at that time the principal seat of erudition; and learned men could not then complain of that coldness and neglect which they have frequently experienced from persons in power.

It would have been an honorable inscription on the column of Trajan, that he was the friend of Plutarch, and that he called him from a humble and laborious employment, to be the consul of Rome and the governor of Illyricum.

When death had closed the eyes of his munificent patron, the love of his native soil induced him to revisit Chæronea, where he lived to a very advanced age, during which his exulting countrymen heaped upon him all the honors they had to bestow.

Here he projected, and here he completed, his lives of illustrious men, a work which has been honored with unbounded

praise, and yet perhaps never praised beyond its desert.

This remark however must be accompanied with an exception; for, when some of his panegyriste declare that if it were in their option to save only one work of the ancients from destruction, it should be the lives of Plutarch, the encomium is extravagant and unjust.

Biography is no where more agreeable, and history no where so essentially moral, as in this writer. It is the man who occupies him more than the event, and in delineating individuals he does not accumulate particulars, but contents himself with giving select traits of character. His parallels are perfect compositions both in style and manner. In his admiration of shining qualities, he does not forget properly to estimate those which are useful and solid: he carefully examines and duly appreciates every thing; confronts the hero with himself, the actions with the motives, the success with the means, the faults with the excuses. Justice, virtue, and a love of truth

truth are the sole objects of his esteem ; and his judgment is formed with as much reserve as gravity. His reflections are a treasure of wisdom and sound policy, and ought to be engraven on the hearts of all those who are emulous to direct their public and private life by the unerring rules of integrity.

When he quits his moral walk, we still perceive him to be a laborious inquirer ; into physical and metaphysical subjects. Concurring with Aristotle and Plato, he imbibed with avidity their doctrines of truth and error, and zealously refuted the paradoxes of the Stoics. The form of the Socratic dialogue he adopted in order to enforce his arguments, which are not always fraught with instruction or conviction. The banquet of the seven sages, and the questions of the table, have been quoted as instances where the matter is futile however the entertainment may be pleasing ; but the latter, like the conversation of polished societies, has a mixture of debate without asperity, gaiety without buffoonery,

ery, fallies of wit, aphorisms and anecdotes, which attract and never weary the attention.

His religious sentiments are those of Plato, and a christian may applaud his exhortations to men to abstain from judging of the designs of Providence, and to resign to its dispensations the management of the world. He cites with approbation a passage of Pindar, which shews that great poets reasoned on this subject like great philosophers. " God, the author and the master of every thing, is also the author and the master of justice. To him alone it appertains to determine when, how, and till what time, each ought to be punished for the evil which he has done."

On these serious and important points, however, his comparisons are not always just : as, when he resembles a generous and delicate friend, who obliges without wishing to be known, to the deity who loves to benefit mankind without their perceiving it, because he is beneficent in his nature.

The

The blessings we receive from God, however thrown away upon the careless mind, are intended to impress us with a due sense of his mercy and his goodness; nor is gratitude less a duty than veneration and fear. Such gratitude meliorates the heart which it inhabits: Plutarch was not entirely ignorant of this truth, for he cites with praise this maxim of Pythagoras, "When we approach God by prayer, we become better."

It has been objected to Plutarch, that his narration is not always so methodical as it might be; but it should be remembered, that he always presumes on a previous knowledge of general history in his readers.

He has also been accused by a French critic, M. Dacier, of being destitute of all the graces of language, harmony, and arrangement. Neither the time in which he wrote, nor the country in which he was born, were likely to render him faultless in his style. Many centuries had elapsed between the days of Pericles and of Adrian;
and

and the bogs of Bœotia were never susceptible of Attic purity. Still he is not deficient in clearness, in dignity, and in force. He is sometimes too figurative for the language of history, sometimes too abstract and philosophical for the simple tone of biography: but genius will have its excursions, and a superior understanding will indulge itself in its aptitude for deep reflection.

The speeches he introduces are in perfect unison with characters and with times, and so great is his general merit, that every reader will excuse a few partial defects.

If his language be sometimes inharmonious, the sentiment is correct and true. While we admire the splendour of the diamond, we disregard the coarseness of the setting.

It has been said, that he is more accurate in his detail of facts in his lives of Greeks than of Romans. Perhaps his knowledge of the Latin language and of Roman characters was imperfect, and this circumstance will furnish a better apology than

than arises from the partiality to his countrymen, which has been attributed to him with as little reluctance as authority.

He is reported to have been a favourite author with a celebrated person, now no more, who long presided over the highest court of British jurisprudence.

If the petty transactions of this sublunary world be worthy of his regard, it will be a subject of regret to that great man, to perceive that the incidents of his own life, worthy doubtless of a more durable record, should so long be obscured by the impenetrable dullness of a technical biographer.

SECTION X.

Grecian Satire.

LUCIAN.

HAD the birth of Quintilian been a little later, he would not have been authoris'd in saying that satire exclusively belongs to the Romans. "*Satira quidem tota nostra est.*" The testimony of ancient writers rather than the remains of their writings, may serve to convince us that Archilochus and Hipponax might have challenged every subsequent satirist in the asperity of their ridicule.

So bitter was the gall in which they dipped their pens, that the persons whom they attacked could find no refuge from the poignancy of their feelings but in the last act of human weakness; and it is no where recorded that the poets exhibited any sort of contrition for having been the cause of
suicide.

suicide. Satire is indeed to be found in all nations. It seems the dictate of nature to resent injuries and to ridicule absurdity.

Lucian was born at Samosata in Syria, somewhat less than a hundred years after the christian æra. The poverty of his father prevented him from obtaining the advantage of an early education: having first been disgusted with the mechanical labour of a sculptor, for which he was apprenticed to an uncle; and afterwards with the artifices then conspicuous in the life of a lawyer, the second object of his attention; he resolved to pursue no trade or profession, but to devote himself entirely to studious occupations.

His talents soon rendered him eminent in philosophy and eloquence; these he improved and displayed in all the polished countries of Europe and Asia; and the Emperor Aurelius did homage to his own discernment of them when he appointed him to a civil office under the Roman governor of Egypt.

Many

Many of the learned men of those times are said to have survived to an extraordinary age; and the long period of ninety years enabled Lucian to mark the follies and appreciate the merit of mankind by the test of personal experience.

His dialogues, written in the Attic style, and with truly Attic wit, entitle him to be considered as the most entertaining of all the Greek prose writers. They contain in select portions the whole of the ancient mythology. The gods and their votaries are the constant subject of his ridicule; and indeed while we deplore his atheism, it must be confessed, that the popular system of the heathens was too absurd for reverence. But if his satire was directed against a false religion, he no where exhibits a veneration for that which was founded on the basis of truth: but it is asserted by some writers that he was destroyed by dogs for his impious profanation of christianity.

His dialogues are portions of the drama, in which his characters are admirably sustained throughout. His wit is subtle, and

the effect he would produce irresistible. His language has every merit which such compositions can contain. It is not less elegant than simple; not less animated than correct. When he delineates the prevailing vices of the times in which parasites and fortune-hunters abounded, he is so happy in his portraits of meanness and of avarice, that the disgust which he excites always terminates in satisfaction at the punishment he inflicts upon them. Here his morality has a sterling value, since it is pointed to the instruction of every age.

If ridicule be not the test of truth, it is at least the formidable foe of error, and stern avenger of vice; and in this view the dialogues of Lucian may tend to improve the youthful mind, which they will not fail to delight. He however who is possessed of the shining but dangerous quality of wit, is too apt to be destitute of prudence or discrimination. He slays indiscriminately both friend and foe. The satirist who so well burlesqued the morose and unsocial disposition of the cynics, has nothing to urge in
his

his justification, when, without any distinction, he assumes the same weapons to attack the almost superhuman virtues of Socrates and the almost divine doctrines of Plato.

It appears wonderful to reflect that Lucian, born in Syria, and in the time of the Antonines when Greek and Roman letters were equally decayed, should be worthy to be considered as a classic writer, both in the purity and elegance of his diction. Other instances have however been mentioned, and he may be added to the number, to prove, that genius disdains all the fetters of time and place, and often throws a vivid though a transient light on ages of obscurity.

These sketches of the lives and writings of the principal poets, orators, and historians of Greece, may serve to evince the efficacy of education in that country. It was this which gave such superiority to Athens, and such celebrity to its citizens; and the object of the present writer will be

answered, if the slight reference he has made to the works of the ancients shall induce his readers to examine the subject more accurately and deeply, since the result must be a thorough conviction of the value of Classical Learning.

If it be asked why the earliest authors of the three departments of the belles lettres still remain in possession of the vantage ground of excellence and fame; it is not enough to say that nature first presented her various objects to their view, which rendered their representations as original as their genius: since the most superficial examiner will find that true pre-eminence was acquired by a degree of personal industry that has in no age or nation been excelled. “If ever the human intellect was cultivated to the extent of its powers; if ever the arts were carried to the summit of perfection; if ever generous competition effected more than the love of gain; it was unquestionably in Greece.”

SECTION XI.

*On Roman Literature.—The Drama.—Comedy.—Livius
Andronicus.—Ennius.—Plautus.—Cecilius.—Terence.
—Pantomime.*

WHOEVER contemplates the rise and progress of the Roman empire, will easily account for the late appearance of learning amidst that celebrated people.

Being descended from shepherds, and deriving much of their population from the refuse of neighbouring nations, their highest art was agriculture, and their favourite employment was war. Their manners, of course, were assimilated to their occupations, and those were far remote from softness and from elegance.

If other testimonies to evince this assertion were required, we have one of undoubted authority in the declarations of a bard, who was enlightened by all the learn-

ing of an accomplished age, and polished by all the refinements of a court.

“ More skilled shall others mould the brazen form,
 Or bid the marble glow like nature warm ;
 Excel in legal eloquence severe,
 Or trace with brighter ken the starry sphere :
 Roman, thy sterner character sustain,
 And bind round subjugated realms the chain ;
 Be these thy arts ! the laws of peace to impose,
 And sparing prostrate, crush resisting foes.”

In all unpolished nations the germs of poetry are found ; for they are the native products of the intellectual waste, and the first objects of human cultivation. So early as the time of Romulus, songs of triumph were in use ; and gratitude to their tutelary gods dictated the first metrical compositions of the Romans. Their whole liturgy indeed was poetical ; to these succeeded their Fescennine verses, sung at their feasts, after the vintage or harvest, containing praises of the rustic divinities, and the extemporaneous jests and sarcasms of clowns.

Advancing like all human things by slow gradations, these sarcasms of individuals

duals assumed the form of dialogue, the licentiousness of which it was found necessary to restrain by law, after they had for three centuries been the delight of the people. We are authorized by the opinions of Horace and of Livy, not to lament the loss of productions which the taste of Augustus condemned to conflagration.

Chance however contributed to the melioration of Roman poetry. The dejection consequent upon a pestilence at Rome, nearly four hundred years before Christ, induced the people to invite a troop of players from Tuscany, to amuse them at their public festivals. Ignorant of the language spoken by these players, they were contented that the representation should be merely gesture, assisted by the delightful accompaniment of the flute, and this was at least a cure for melancholy, if not an antidote against the plague.

We may properly refer the origin of the Roman drama to Livius Andronicus, a freedman of Salinator, and the preceptor of his sons, who lived about two hundred

and forty years before Christ, and who was for a considerable time the sole writer for the stage. He is said to have been less polished even than those to whom he exhibited his works; and Cicero condemns him as not worthy of a second perusal. He probably formed himself on the model of the old Grecian comedy, and was replete with personal allusions, which were less congenial to the disposition of the Romans, than of the Greeks.

The writers who were coëval with Andronicus or his immediate successors, appear to have been only servile imitators of the Greeks; and if very little remains of their writings, it seems to be because very little was worthy to be preserved. The names of Nævius, Aquilius, and many others are scarcely remembered; fragments of them remain, and the scantiness of the gleanings will not allow us to believe that the harvest was abundant.

Ennius enjoyed a higher reputation; for Lucretius says of him, that he was the first of the Roman poets who deserved a
lasting

lasting crown from the muses. The inferior Roman dramatists were actors as well as poets, and wrote both tragedies and comedies; but that was never attempted by writers of more established reputation: there is no tragedy of Menander or Terence, no comedy of Euripides or Accius. The quiet which succeeded the second Punic war, afforded them leisure to improve their poetry. They had the benefit of the best models before them, and, when this circumstance is considered, we shall probably be more surpris'd at their defects than at their merits.

There is one radical error in the Roman comedy; the language only is Latin, the personages and scenes entirely Grecian. It seems as incongruous to describe common life in a foreign country, as to clothe an ancient statue in modern drapery.

The first age of Roman poetry was more remarkable for strength than for refinement; but it is curious to observe, and impossible to reconcile, the different sentiments of the three great Roman critics on
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the same subject: Cicero passes a high eulogium on the old dramatic writers, Horace is as unbounded in his censure of them, and Quintilian is the moderator between both.

The beauty of the Attic dialect probably rendered the Grecian dramatists superior to rivalry; besides which, it should be remembered that the imitator rarely approaches the merit of his original. It has been thought that our ancestors who raised that Palladium of English liberty, the trial by jury, were guilty of an error when they prescribed the jurors to come from the vicinage, in order that they might correct the falsities of evidence by their private knowledge of the facts. In criticism the passions and prejudices of the writer mingle, often imperceptibly to himself, in his delineation of the works of others. Cicero was perhaps misled by his proximity to the times of which he wrote, and Horace in some degree warped from his wonted candour by the nature of his subject. The moderation of Quintilian seems to establish
a pre-

a preference in favour of his judgment. He compares Ennius to a sacred grove, in which the old oaks appear rather venerable than pleasing; and by this figure we may fairly appreciate the merit of all the earlier comic poets of Rome.

About two hundred and twenty years before the Christian æra, Plautus was born at Sarsina in Umbria. No certain tradition of his family has reached us; but vague accounts of his failure in trade, and a consequent application to the most servile offices, have been attested and contradicted by different authors.

That he was poor, from whatever cause, there seems to be no doubt; but his poverty was probably a stimulant to his genius, though it might be an enemy to the correctness of his writings.

He wrote twenty-five comedies, of which we are in possession of nineteen. His death happened about one hundred and eighty years before Christ, on which occasion his countryman Varro inscribed an epitaph on his tomb, of which the

following translation may convey an imperfect idea :

The comic muse laments her Plautus dead ;
 Deserted theatres show genius fled ;
 Mirth, sport, and joke, and poetry bemoan,
 And echoing myriads join their plaintive tone.

He who is unwilling to decide for himself on the merits of Plautus, will probably be perplexed by the varying sentiments of critics. He will be told by some that his uniformity is such as always to have the same personages in the drama. There is always a young courtesan, an old person who sells her, a young man who buys her, and who makes use of a knavish valet to extort money from his father ; a parasite of the vilest kind, ready to do any thing for his patron who feeds him ; a braggadocio foldier, whose extravagant boasting and ribaldry have served as a model for the Copper Captains of our old comedy. To these censures he will find it added, that the style and dialogues are tasteless ; that the wit is buffoonery of the lowest sort ;

that he was ignorant of that species of gaiety which ought to reign in comedy, and of the pleasantry properly belonging to the theatre; that these should arise naturally from the character and situation of the actor, and be conformed to them exactly; that his dialogues are long narrations, interspersed with tedious soliloquies; that his actors come in and go out without a reason; that persons who are in a great hurry continue upon the stage a full quarter of an hour; and that he introduces the lowest prostitutes with the most vulgar and indecent language and manners.

The admirers of Plautus declare him to have a fertility of invention never equalled by any writer before or since his time, together with an unrivalled judgment in the choice and conduct of his fable; that his characters are drawn from nature; and that the richest vein of ease runs through all his works; the perusal of which is accompanied not with calm satisfaction but with infinite delight.

When

When we are considering these opposite opinions, we ought to recollect that Plautus had not only a great reputation in his own time, but preserved it beyond the Augustan age. Varro says, if the muses had spoken Latin, it would have been in the language of Plautus. Cicero and Quintilian each afford him a high encomium, notwithstanding Terence had already written. They particularly commend his knowledge of the Latin tongue, although he wrote before the language had arrived at perfection; and the former says, that his wit is elegant, urbane, ingenious, and facetious. Horace, indeed, says, "We have admired the verses and the jests of Plautus with a complaisance which may be denominated folly." But for five hundred years Plautus was a favorite at Rome, although the language had become more polished and correct, and criticism and polite literature had made rapid strides. He must be confessed to have a fund of comic humour and gaiety; and ~~that~~ his imitator, Moliere, owes much of the approbation he has received to the original from
which

which he drew his characters. In ancient comedy where shall we find more entertainment than in the *Amphitruon* and the *Menæchmi*?

Some apology may be made for the defects of Plautus, arising from the taste of the times in which he wrote. If his wit be often false, it was relished because it was the fashion of his day. A better taste in the public would have produced an exuberance of finer wit in him.

It was not allowed to comic writers to represent on the stage any mistresses but courtezans: the delicacy of true love therefore could not be exhibited by the writers of the drama. If Plautus was careless, and poor and mercenary, the vivacity of his genius counterbalances these defects. All the business and bustle of comedy are to be found in his scenes. Variety too belongs to him, for the incidents are equally numerous and pleasant.

He has also adapted his plays to theatrical representation; and in that respect he carries

carries away the prize from the elegant friend of Scipio.

Such is the language of those who are admirers of Plautus; and if on a perusal of this author we are induced to think that it is the language rather of panegyric than of truth, let us not forget the thunder of applauding theatres which always attended the representation of his plays.

The general praise of his contemporaries, seconded by that of several succeeding ages of learning and of taste, is surely sufficient to disparage all the strictures of modern criticism.

If it be true that his jests are rough, and that his wit in general is coarse, bearing a similitude to the old comedy at Athens, it must be confessed that, more than any other comic writer, he has consulted his own genius; and that his strength and spirit are such as to attract and gratify the attention of every reader who is not of a disposition more than commonly fastidious.

Cæcilius flourished about a century and a half before Christ, and was the author of
thirty

thirty comedies, of which the high and general eulogium of antiquity has induced the literary world to lament the loss. Horace acknowledges the energy of his muse; and Cicero, while he describes his language as incorrect, declares him to be the best comic writer which his country had ever produced, both with respect to the dignity of his characters and the vigour of his sentiments.

TERENCE.

That a native of Africa, the purchased slave of a Roman senator, whose name he afterwards bore, should acquire the highest reputation as a comic writer, is so singular a fact in literary history, as would at first view induce us to withhold our assent from it.

But when we consider that his generous master not only conferred upon him his freedom, but furnished him with the means of acquiring all the accomplishments of a scholar, and introduced him to the acquaintance of the most learned men in Rome, our doubts will vanish, and our admiration will decrease.

The friend of Scipio and Lælius, the associate of Lucretius and Polybius, must have had the best opportunity of improving his natural talents by every thing which polishes the manners and improves the mind.

The disadvantage of humble birth was thus happily removed by such an introduction into society, and such a patronage as genius can rarely boast. The gem was rescued from the dark caves of ocean, and its pure brightness still irradiates the world.

Terence was born about a hundred and ninety-four years before Christ; and upon a careful review of the models of the Greeks, willingly surrendered the palm of originality to be the imitator or translator of the elegant Menander.

He began to write at twenty-five years of age; and his dramatic labours were probably confined to the short period of ten years.

But it was a period of bodily health and mental vigour; for its fruits were not only rich but abundantly copious; since we have to lament that only six of his plays have
reached

reached us, out of more than a hundred which he produced.

The fine moral or rather truly christian sentiment exhibited in the *Andrian*, his first play, where it is said, that man is interested in all the concerns of his fellow beings, might well be received with that thunder of applause, which succeeding ages have not failed to repeat; it was the harbinger of a lasting fame; and though the sentence be perpetually quoted it is never heard without approbation.

In the choice of his subjects there is a certain dull uniformity, partly arising from the restrictions placed upon the ancient drama. No mistress could be represented on the stage who was not a courtesan; but Terence has endeavoured to attach a considerable interest to the character by representing his females as infants stolen from their parents and sold by fraud or accident. He has also given them a degree of respect, by exhibiting them as endued with a passion for a single object on whom they lavish all their tenderness and constancy, and for whom they consider the world well lost.

He has been said to have no buffoonery, licentiousness, or grossness, but to have been the only one of the comic writers who has brought the language of gentlemen on the stage; the language of the passions, the true tone of nature. But surely the impudence of servants throughout his plays would induce the reader to imagine that the licence of the Saturnalia had been perennial, and furnishes a contradiction to this assertion of his panegyrists.

If we concur with them in thinking that the moral of his drama is sound and instructive; that his pleasantry has good taste; that his dialogue unites clearness, precision, and elegance; and that he penetrates to the inmost recesses of the heart; we must allow with the opponents of his fame, that we should be better gratified by finding more force of invention in his plots; more interest in his subjects; more genuine spirit in his characters. Julius Cæsar seems to have appreciated his merits justly when he said: “And you, Demi-Menander, are placed near our great writers, and you deserve it by the
purity

purity of your style. Could but the beauty of your composition have joined to itself that comic vein which was possessed by the Greeks; then would you not have been their inferior in the dramatic list. That is what you want, Terence, and what I so much regret."

Terence began his career with the happiest auspices. When he had composed his *Andrian* and presented it to the *ædiles*, who were in the habit of purchasing dramatic works for the gratification of the people at the shows, before they would conclude a bargain, they sent it to *Cæcilius* for his opinion.

The old man ordered Terence to read a part of it to him as he was lying on his couch. Before he had finished the first scene, *Cæcilius* raised himself up with evident marks of surprise and pleasure and invited him to supper. He afterwards heard the whole of the piece, and bestowed upon him such praises as were equally creditable to both the parties.

His Eunuch received more approbation than any of his plays. It was acted twice in one day; and the sum of thirty pounds, for which he sold the copy-right, was hitherto without precedent in the annals of the Roman stage.

It is I believe generally confessed, that the style of Terence is the perfection of the Latin language. It is equally celebrated for accuracy and elegance. No forced antitheses, no glaring ornaments deform it; and it has stood the test of the severest criticism in the closet. The poetry of Terence, compared to that of the Augustan age, has been said to be the Ionic order, compared to that of the Corinthian; not so splendid or so rich, but equally if not more exact and pleasing. If it excel the language of his age, it was the language spoken in the accomplished families of the Lælii and the Scipios; and perhaps we may ascribe to the advantage derived from their elegant conversation, those well written dialogues which Cicero and Quintilian conceive him unable to have composed without their assistance.

That

That Terence is a cold and a tame writer will not willingly be confessed by those who have witnessed the exhibition of his plays at one of the first seminaries of youth in this country. Those scenes cannot be wholly destitute of fire which display so vivid a portion of it on their classic stage. An audience of scholars and of critics will perhaps always be in doubt, whether a larger portion of the pleasure they receive from the representation be due to the composition of the author, or to the talents and spirit of the performers.

During the first three ages of Roman comedy, the writers were the servile imitators of the Greeks. But soon after the time when Terence had quitted Rome, Afranius and others whose compositions are lost, delivered the stage from the tyranny of foreign personages, and exhibited those pieces only in which the stories and the characters were Roman.

Horace applauds the spirit of those who ventured upon this innovation:

“Nec minimum meruere decus vestigia Græca
Ausi deferere, et celebrare domestica facta.”

From this period, comedy was divided into two species, which took their names from the different habits of the two countries. The Roman comedy was subdivided into four kinds ; the first of which, borrowing its name from the dress of plain citizens, was called the togata, and, when persons of distinction were introduced, the prætextata. This was of a serious nature, perhaps like the sentimental comedy of modern times.

The second was of a comic cast, deriving its name Tabernaria from a town or place of residence where the persons met whose characters were exhibited.

The Atellana was the third species, in which the actors not speaking from written dialogues, trusted to the spontaneous effusions of their fancy ; and it had this privilege, that the spectators could not oblige them to unmask. Another exclusive advantage also belonged to the actors in the Atellana ; they retained the right of freemen and the power of enlisting in the army.

The curious account given by Dr. Hurd of the Satyrs, Mimes, and Atellanes, is
worthy

worthy an attentive perusal. He shews us that the latter was an entertainment so called from Atella, a town of the Osci in Campania. The language and characters were both Oscan, and their provincial dialect was a source of pleasantry at Rome.

In these three species the sock was always worn by the performers.

The fourth species, the *Mimus*, was a sort of farce, in which the actors were barefoot.

At the funeral of Vespasian, we find from Suetonius, that his character was represented in a mimic piece according to the Roman custom.

The leading feature of Vespasian's character was avarice, of which a remarkable instance is recorded. A town in Italy was about to erect a statue to him; when he said to the deputies, stretching out his hand, "Gentlemen, here is the basis whereon you must erect your statue."

In allusion to this circumstance, the actor Favor Archimimus, who played the part of the emperor, having asked the directors

rectors of the ceremony, what would be the expence of his interment, and finding that it would amount to some millions of crowns, cried out, "Gentlemen, let me have a hundred thousand crowns, and you may throw my body into the river."

The division of the declamation between two actors took place at a very early period of the Roman drama. The anecdote is somewhat curious. Livius Andronicus, about one hundred and twenty years after the theatres had been opened, was accustomed, like the Grecian writers, to appear as an actor on the stage. The people, applauding some of his speeches, cried out "again" so often, that he became perfectly inaudible by hoarseness, and was obliged to have a slave to recite his verses, while he retained the gesture and the action.

It is said by Macrobius, that Cicero used to contend with Roscius, who should best deliver the same sentiment, each making use of the talent in which he excelled. Roscius exhibited, by a mute action, the sense

sense of the phrase which Cicero composed and recited. Cicero afterwards changed the words and turn of the phrase, without enervating the sense; and Roscius was obliged on his part to express the sense by other gestures, without weakening it by action.

Masks were introduced into Greece by Æschylus; Roscius Gallus was the first actor who wore a mask at Rome, which he did with a view to conceal the defect of squinting. The masks were thought so essential to the character, that they used to prefix to their pieces, together with the *dramatis personæ*, the figure of the mask. The intricacy of the *Amphytrio* and the *Menæchmi*, turning upon the mistake of one person for another, is rendered much more credible when we consider the general use of masks. It was besides customary to make men act female characters, and this mode of concealment was therefore indispensibly necessary.

The masks were also requisite to the immense size of the unroofed theatres.

Within

Within the mouth was an incrustation of horn, to increase the natural found of the voice, that it might be heard by the spectators, some of whom were placed twenty-four yards from the stage.

The Roman actors had enormous salaries. Horace mentions a famous prodigal, who had gained two hundred and fifty thousand pounds by his profession; Pliny says that Roscius received five thousand pounds a year; and Macrobius speaks of his having a salary of forty-five pounds a day entirely for his own use. The greatest number of the actors were born slaves, and subject to a very rigorous apprenticeship. The most eminent of them would never speak a word in a morning before they had methodically unfolded their voice, letting it loose by degrees that they might not hurt their organs. During this exercise they continued in bed; after having acted, they lay down, and in this posture as it were folded up their voice again, raising it to the highest tone they had reached in their declamation, and depressing it afterwards

wards successively to all the other tones, till they sunk it to the lowest.

From the time of Terence, we hear little of any comic writers; and what may appear very remarkable is, that in the Augustan age every species of poetry was in its greatest excellence except the dramatic, and that its substitute the pantomimic art should not only have had its rise in that elegant period, but have become the favourite amusement of the emperor and his accomplished minister.

For above a hundred years the stage could boast the exclusive possession of the Roman poets, and to the degeneracy of the scenic exhibitions Zosimus imputes the corrupt manners of the Roman people, and the misfortunes of the empire.

Pylades and Bathyllus were the first who acted whole plays without any articulation; the former excelled in tragic, the other in comic subjects.

The impudence of these pantomimes may be known by the following anecdote. The spectators one day complaining that
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the gesticulation of Pylades in the representation of the Hercules Furens was extravagant, he took off his mask and cried out, " Don't you know, you fools, that I am acting a greater fool than yourselves?"

The approbation afforded to these masters of gesticulation was as general as it was extravagant. Cassiodorus calls them men whose eloquent hands had a tongue, as it were, on the tip of each finger; men who spoke while they were silent, and who could recite a whole play without opening their mouths; men, in fine, whom Polyhymnia, the muse presiding over music, had created in order to shew that there is no necessity for articulation to convey our thoughts to others.

Seneca the elder, a man of the gravest profession, confesses that his taste for pantomime was a real and irresistible passion. In Italy both ancient and modern, conversation has always been more a business of gesture than in this country; and the language of the Grand Signior's mutes, so well understood by their countrymen,
would

would be unintelligible in the north of Europe.

Lucian, who wrote a century after the Christian æra, was a zealous partisan of these dumb comedians. He says that a king whose dominions bordered on the Euxine sea, happening to be at Rome in the reign of Nero, begged a pantomime of him, to make him his general interpreter in all languages.

In reflecting on this subject, it is impossible not to suppose that the gestures of these actors were far more significant than either our experience or our imagination enables us to conceive. The literati of the Augustan age would probably not have disputed the position of Dr. Hurd, that “to touch the heart by an interesting story is the end of tragedy, to please our curiosity and perhaps our malignity by a faithful representation of manners is the purpose of comedy, and to excite laughter the sole and contemptible aim of farce.” Of a far superior nature must have been that species of entertainment which sub-
sisted

fisted as long as the empire, for they both fell together when Rome was taken and plundered by Totila in five hundred and forty-six ; the fatal epoch which marks the almost entire extinction of science and of art.

SECTION XII.

Roman Tragedy.—*Pacuvius.*—*Accius.*—*Varius.*—*Ovid.*
—*Seneca.*

THE Romans borrowed their tragedy entirely from the Greeks. It was first known to them in the time of the second Punic war, about two hundred and eighteen years before our æra. Dionysius and Hiero had in Sicily been distinguished patrons of Grecian learning; and the conquest of the southern parts of Italy, and above all of Sicily and Syracuse which yielded to the Roman arms, had a few years before begun to familiarise them with the fine arts of poetry and eloquence.

Pacuvius, a native of Brundisium, above two hundred and twenty years before Christ, wrote the first tragedies which the Ædiles thought worthy of their patronage. Few fragments remain, but they were the admiration of his contemporaries and successors.

cessors. Cicero, like Virgil, a lover of antiquity, highly esteemed him, and says that all his verses were ornate and well written; and Horace confers upon him the palm of learning. He lived to a very advanced age; but it does not appear that he ever represented Roman characters or subjects, but such only as had been previously exhibited on the Athenian stage. One tragedy, however, composed on the story of Brutus and Tarquin, is an exception to this remark.

Accius lived about one hundred and thirty-nine years before Christ. His genius is said to have been very great; and his style, although unpolished, exceedingly vigorous and occasionally sublime. He borrowed his subjects from Sophocles; but, as all his productions are lost, we can only presume upon his merits from the casual and brief allusions made to his works by classic authors.

Varius, the companion of Horace in his journey to Brundisium, wrote a play called

led the Thyestes which possessed exquisite merit.

Ovid wrote a Medea, and Cæsar an Ædipus; Cicero turned into Latin verse many pieces of Euripides and Sophocles, of which there are some shreds in his works. But the only entire plays which have come down are under the name of Seneca: their number is ten, all on Greek subjects except his Octavia. The best-informed critics believe that the Ædipus, Hippolytus, Medea, and the Trojans are the work of Seneca the philosopher; who was born about twelve years after the Christian æra, whose works have rendered him so respectable, and whose unhappy end has excited so much compassion. It is thought that the other six plays were the productions of different authors who assumed his name to obtain for them a celebrity which their own would not have conferred, as many comic authors published their works under the signature of Plautus. Before the art of printing was known, this species of fraud was equally common and

easy. The four first tragedies are better than the others, but in them all there is very little conformity to the tragic style. The finest subjects of Euripides and Sophocles evaporate in long declamation and in an inflated style.

Emptiness, bombast, a mass of gigantic descriptions, a clashing of far-fetched antitheses, an involved conciseness of phrase, and an insupportable diffuseness in the thoughts, are the prominent features of these unhappy imitations which have left their authors so far behind their celebrated models. They are not, however, absolutely devoid of every species of merit; they have some beauties, and critics have discerned and acknowledged them: some ingenious, and some bold thoughts; some brilliant traits, eloquent passages, and theatrical ideas are here and there to be found. The love of Phædra for Hippolitus the son of her husband Theseus, is the subject of the best of these tragedies. When rejected by Hippolitus, she accuses him to her husband of having attempted to seduce her.

The

The father listens to the accusation, banishes the supposed seducer, and implores Neptune to punish him. As he flies from Athens, his horses are frightened by a sea monster, who convey him to the shore, and drag him over rocks and precipices, where he is trampled under their feet, and crushed by the wheels of the chariot. When the story is known at Athens, Phædra confesses her crime and hangs herself.

In one respect the play is better conducted by Seneca, than by its original author. The Roman tragedian makes Phædra herself declare her passion for Hippolytus, which the Grecian less adroitly intrusts to the intervention of a nurse. Seneca concludes the piece with the confession of Phædra as to her own guilt; an attestation of the innocence of the prince, and her suicide, are the necessary tributes to poetical justice. Seneca seems to have totally misunderstood the proper office of the chorus. Dr. Hurd has fully illustrated this point in his commentary on Horace's Art of Poetry. In the third act of the Hippolytus, when

“ it ought to have warned against credulity and to have pitied the deluded father,” it declaims on the unequal distribution of good and ill.

This is owing to an injudicious imitation of Euripides, without any attention to character or situation.

French writers have made much use of particular passages from these tragedies, which they found remarkable either for the soundness of their sense or the energy of their expression. Seneca embraced the Epicurean philosophy, which was much studied at Rome; and some of his boldest sentiments have been copied by Lucretius.

In one of his plays the chorus, the moral personage in all the ancient tragedies, chaunts this verse :

“ There is nothing after death, death is even nothing.”

In the *Agrippina* are the two following lines :

“ One hour after my death, my departed soul
Shall be what it was an hour before my birth.”

Liberty

Liberty of opinion at Rome on this subject is indisputable. The laws only required that the established religion should be treated with respect.

The many plagiarisms which have been made from this author, prove him to have been a poet not unworthy of attention nor of praise; but the small reputation which he has as a tragedian, and the paucity of his readers are an evidence of this truth, which writers should ever retain in view, that it is not the scanty merit of some brilliant passages which will attract the regard and veneration of posterity. We may be surpris'd by sparks, but are pleas'd only with rays of light. Labour more intense, and beauties more copiously diffus'd, are required to raise durable monuments of literary fame.

If however while we look for strokes of a fine imagination in Seneca, we are disgust'd with empty conceits, the fault perhaps is to be less imputed to the poet than to the age; for the declamatory modes of the

schools had so vitiated the public taste, as to render it insensible to every beauty except such as depended on the structure of sentences. It is certainly a subject of regret, that the only writer we have of Roman tragedy should present us with so objectionable a style.

The theatres of the Romans, which at first were built of wood, and by no means of expensive architecture, gradually notified a people who set no bounds to their luxury. C. Antonius entertained the city with stage-plays in which the scenes were covered with silver. Julius Cæsar made the whole furniture of solid silver. Pompey's theatre contained forty thousand people, was surrounded by a portico, and had a senate house or court of law adjoining to it adapted to the sitting of the judges; all which were finished at his own expence, and adorned with the sculpture of the finest masters. At one end of it was a temple to Venus, to which her votaries ascended by the seats of the theatre.

Every

Every species of amusement that prize fighters and wild beasts could afford, were furnished as an addition to the more rational entertainment of the drama. The former revolted the refined taste of Cicero, who says of such sport, "that it fatiates while it pleases, and is forgotten as soon as it is over."

We may judge of the immense wealth of individuals at Rome, when we are told that no monarch in modern times could exhibit such shews as some of the principal subjects of that city. The theatres, like those of Greece, were opened at day-break, and the various entertainments usually continued till the evening. Music lent its delightful aid, and Horace complains that the recitation had been stripped of its ancient gravity by the substitution of instruments as large as the trumpet, for the simple flutes which in former times were used at the theatre.

The faults of those who executed the declamatory part, became more evident
in

in proportion as the declamation attained a greater resemblance to finging; and it should seem as if that noble art degenerated into such measures as constitute the recitative of the modern Italian opera.

SECTION XII.

*Roman Satire.—Ennius.—Lucilius.—Varro.—Horace.—
Juvenal.—Persius.*

SATIRE, the produce of the old comedy, was the first sort of poetry that followed the dramatic, and a ^{ci} ~~few~~ ^{plant} ~~on~~ from the same root; but the Roman satirists did not imitate the Greeks, either in the form of their verse or in the nature of their subject.

Satire is a word originally Latin; it signifies a mixture of all sorts of subjects, but has been particularly applied to works which have raillery and pleasantry for their object.

Of the writings of Ennius, which were epic, dramatic, and satirical, nothing remains but a few fragments collected from the quotations of classic authors. He lived about two hundred years before Christ; and the friend of Scipio was honored with an epitaph which may be thus translated:

—The lifeless form of aged Ennius view,
Who your brave ancestors' achievements drew:

Of

Of sighs and tears let none the tribute give,
For still upon the lips of men I live.^m

Lucilius, a Roman knight, was born at Aurunca, about one hundred and forty-nine years before Christ. Although he wrote in the time of Scipio Africanus, he had even in the Augustan age such zealous partizans that they were displeas'd with Horace for comparing his poetry to a stream which rolls down much dirt amidst its native purity. Of thirty satires a few verses only remain; and if by his great superiority to his predeceffors he was considered as the founder of Roman satires, this superiority appears to have proceeded rather from his learning and his boldness, than from his smoothness or elegance. Quintilian, who thinks the judgment of Horace too severe, does not place himself amongst those ardent admirers of Lucilius; who not only preferred him to all writers of satire, but to poets of every description.

The envious and malignant are always willing to allow the bitterness of invective to atone for the want of tenderness in composition.

P. Terentius

P. Terentius Varro was born somewhat less than half a century before Christ. He was a voluminous writer, but none of his satires have reached our time. Quintilian says, there is another and earlier species of satire composed by Varro, the most learned of the Romans. He blended several kinds of verses; and not only intermingled prose with verse, but Greek with Latin.

If an attention to something like chronological order render it proper to allude to those writers whose labours have been lost to posterity; after the perusal of a dull and tedious catalogue of names, we are generally consoled by others who will be holden in universal veneration until the Goths of ignorance shall diffuse a second darkness over the civilized world.

H O R A C E.

Q. Horatius Flaccus was born at Venusia, sixty-five years before Christ. His father, though only a freedman, by some said to have been a collector of taxes, by

others a fishmonger, gave him the most liberal education, and received from him the well-earned tribute of filial gratitude. The rudiments of learning he acquired under the best teachers at Rome; and his education was completed by an attendance on the lectures of the first philosophers at Athens. To talents of the brightest kind, he joined an eager and assiduous application; it is no wonder therefore that we find in him an all-accomplished scholar. Unfortunately for his military, rather than his literary fame, he became a tribune to Brutus; for when he had disgraced himself by his cowardice at the battle of Philippi, he entirely abandoned the profession of arms, and applied himself to the cultivation of poetry. In an age when genius was respected by the great, he was recommended and introduced by Virgil and Varius to the emperor and his minister; and the liberal patronage they afforded him, vindicates the warm panegyric with which he repays their favour.

He died at about the age of fifty-six; and his end was probably accelerated by the loss of Mæcenas, whom he survived only a few weeks, and near whose tomb he was interred. He declared Augustus his heir, but was too weak to be able to affix a signature to his will.

The works of this incomparable author, equally the delight of our early and maturer years, our companion in retirement and our associate at the festive board, have so often been the theme of commentators, paraphrasers, critics, and admirers, that it is not easy to discover a single beauty in them which has at this late period been unexplored. On the present occasion nothing new must be expected; but the contemplation and the praise of acknowledged excellence can scarcely produce fatigue by repetition.

Horace, perceiving that Lucilius had wandered very frequently from his subject, that he was negligent in his composition and incorrect in his metre, aimed to avoid the faults of his predecessor. But the peculiar excellencies

excellencies of his satires, are the utility of his moral precepts and the delicacy of his raillery. If we find in them no poetical harmony, the defect is amply compensated by merit of a superior kind.

With the keenest ridicule they pursue the follies and put to shame the vices of mankind. In this Horace found no model amongst the Greeks, nor any one worthy of imitation amongst his own countrymen. Where shall we meet in a profane writer better instructions how to regulate human desires; to distinguish truth from falsehood; ideas from realities; and to remove all hurtful prejudices from the mind? Whoever reads them without reforming his errors, is in the situation of the invalid who renders his malady incurable by refusing to apply the antidote.

In the common acceptation of the term, Horace was not an epicurean: for moderation in desires, that mother of wisdom; and a pure conscience, the foundation of happiness, he earnestly and frequently exhorts his followers to maintain. To be indulgent to
others

others and severe to ourselves are hinges of his moral precepts. He speaks with rapture of the pleasure of retirement ; of the attractions of friendship ; of the delights of a rural and peaceful life ; and of the love of our country.

In the first book of the satires it is his obvious endeavour to eradicate vice ; and in the second to dispel those prejudices which infest the human mind. Such only is the epicurism of Horace.

The epistles are an appendix to the satires : they not only exhibit a forcible style of writing, but contain a valuable system of ethics. Socrates refuted before he taught, well knowing that the ground ought first to be cleared from weeds before it be sown with corn. The satires are the purifiers of passion, and the epistles are the lessons of virtue to fill up the vacancies in the mind. His addresses to Mæcenas are not the language of a mean parasite, but the effusions of a grateful heart to its benefactor. The minister when dying recommended him to his prince in these few re-

markable words: "Remember Horace, as you would remember me." Augustus in a letter to the poet upbraids him for concealing from posterity in his writings their intimate friendship; and hence he takes occasion to write that fine epistle to him, beginning with the words, "*Cum tot sustineas.*"

By a critic it has been observed, that his epistles are amongst the most valuable productions of antiquity. That except those of the second book, and one or two in the first, they are of the familiar kind, abounding in moral sentiments and judicious observations on life and manners. He had cultivated his judgment with great application; and his taste was guided by an intuitive perception of moral beauty, aptitude, and propriety.

Horace has been accused of being a courtier, but when do we find in him the bustle, the inquietude, the love of place and of power, incident to that character?

It should also be remembered, that those who detested the proscriptions of Octavius, esteemed the government of Augustus: it

would be injustice to Horace and to Virgil to reproach them for having celebrated a reign which for forty years constituted the happiness of Rome, and procured to Augustus, after his death, the fears and regrets of the whole empire.

Horace was particularly introduced here to take his place; and a distinguished one he may claim, amongst the writers of Roman satire; but as it was impossible not to consider him at the same time in the light of a moral teacher, so it may be right to contemplate him as a lyric poet in the present view, rather than under a distinct head. From the foundation of Rome till the time of Augustus, the Romans had no other lyric poetry than their first extemporary essays, the hymns of the Salii, which were a collection of songs chanted by the priests as early as the reign of Numa in honor of great men. He was therefore the first, and, properly speaking, the only lyric poet amongst the Romans; and we cannot sufficiently admire his happy imitations of all the models which the Greeks afforded him. He

resembles, at pleasure, Alcæus, Stesichorus, and Sappho. If he must yield to Pindar, he is unquestionably superior to Anacreon; and his inferiority to the Theban has by some critics been attributed to the defects of the Roman music, which, unlike the Grecian, could not accommodate itself to the proper divisions of the ode. They had no instrument but the flute, the lyre, and the sistrum, lately imported from Egypt.

In Horace are combined the poet, the critic, the moral philosopher, and the man of the world. The ode, which was a short poem composed for the harp and admitted every kind of verse, allowed also every sort of subject.

His odes are pathetic, heroic, and amatory; the seventeenth of the second book is of the first kind, and was written during the last illness of Mæcenas. "*Cur me querelis exanimas tuis?*" It has been well observed of him, that he has given to a rough language the tender and delicate modulations of the eastern song; that in variety of sentiment

sentiment and felicity of expression he is superior to every competitor of either nation. Elegant without affectation, and moral even in the midst of gaiety.

Of the heroic odes, one of the most celebrated is that to Fortune where he invokes her, and recommends Augustus and the Romans to her care. He deploras the civil war and the general corruption of manners. Some ideas contained in this ode, beginning "*O Diva, gratum quæ regis Antium,*" are taken from the twelfth of Pindar's Olympics. The poet seems here divinely inspired. He mounts into the heavens; he descends to the shades below to fly with Fortune around, through, and over the sea. On a sudden he represents her under a formidable appearance, and depicts Necessity with its dreadful engines. Then he gives her a more pleasing retinue, Hope and Fidelity. He exhibits her mourning in the palaces of great men who have been disgraced; he marks the conduct of false friends at her departure, "who watch the

sign to hate ;” and finally he recommends Augustus to her partial care.

Horace has about thirty amorous odes, which evince the fine and delicate taste of which he was possessed. They are original compositions, having no models in other poets: they are chefs-d’œuvres polished by the finest taste. The subject of them is equally pleasing in all languages, and amongst every refined people. In the ode to Pyrrha, “ *Quis multa gracilis, &c.*” there is a mixture of sweetness and reproach, of praise and satire, which has always been the life of this species of commerce, and the basis of the conversation of lovers. Scaliger calls this ode the purest nectar.

In his address to Venus, “ *O Venus, regina Cnidi Paphique,*” the poet displays the transcendency of his talents in a few lines beautiful and delectable beyond a parallel.

“ *Cum tu, Lydia, Telephi,*” has the spirit and softness of Sappho; and the dialogue between Horace and Lydia is a poem consecrated to the Graces.

Horace

Horace can equally inflame the mind by his enthusiasm, and calm it by his philosophy. Whence can stronger arguments for contentment be drawn than are contained in his admirable ode to Dellius? In no uninspired writer was the shortness of life ever depicted in more striking colours. It contains the disparagement of wealth and the consolation of poverty; and if perfect equanimity could be attained by reason and reflection, the sweet strains of the poet would infallibly produce it.

His hymn to the praise of the gods and of illustrious men is dictated by the purest inspiration; and the ode written at the celebration of the secular games by the command of the emperor, when three whole days and nights were devoted to the festival, may claim the palm when put in competition with the finest compositions of the Greeks.

In the Art of Poetry, which has been so ably criticised that I forbear to add an opinion which would have no weight,

Horace vindicates his choice of lyric poetry while he gives rules for the conduct of the drama. In this poem some readers have found an “unity of design and accuracy of composition, while others consider it as containing only an unconnected set of precepts written with a view to reform the Roman stage.”

Upon the whole he seems to unite in himself the excellencies of Anacreon and of Pindar: he has the gaiety of the one and the enthusiasm of the other. The Theban bard, by dwelling for ever on the same subject, retains always the same tone; but Horace has all tones, and every one in perfection. When he takes his lyre, and is seized with the poetic spirit, he is at once either transported into the council of the gods, to the ruins of Troy, or to the summit of the Alps; and his muse always rises to the subject which inspires it. He is majestic in Olympus and charming with his mistress. It costs him no more to paint with traits sublime the soul of Cato or of Regulus, than enchantingly to sing
2 the

the careffes of Lalagé or the coquetries of Pyrrha.

Such was Horace, the delight of his contemporaries and of every man of learning and of taste in every fubfequent age.

He is the author of all antiquity who feems to have made the happieft union of the gentleman and the fcholar, whose genius was expanded by culture, and whose excellent education would have availed little but for the transcendency of his natural endowments.

If the parent of a numerous family were to perceive his houfe on fire, and that he had the power to fave only one child from deftruction, his equal affection would forbid difcrimination or choice, and the firft who prefented himfelf to his arms would be feure of his protection. But if the art of printing had not happily precluded the poffibility of a fimilar accident ever happening to the works of the ancients, and a conflagration more terrible than that of Alexandria fhould threaten to
involve

involve them in one general ruin, where is the scholar of taste who would not pass by a crowd of poets, orators, and historians with all the voluminous lumber of commentators and critics in order to rescue his favourite Horace from the flames?

JUVENAL.

There is no poet of whose life fewer accounts have reached us than of Juvenal.

He is said to have been born at Aquinum, fifty years after our Saviour; and that like every other man of letters he eagerly repaired to Rome. He was a declaimer and a satirist; and both his speeches and his writings exhibited the boldness rather than the prudence of his character.

That he should unreservedly reprove the vices of such an emperor as Nero, excites in us a great degree of surprize; a still greater, that he did it with impunity.

During the life of the tyrant he remained unmolested. His successor, Domitian, sent him

him into exile under the pretence of appointing him governor of a province on the confines of Egypt. The toils of office were irksome to a man nearly four-score years of age; and it was with extreme joy that he returned to Rome in the reign of Trajan, where he died about the year one hundred and twenty-eight.

He is the only poet of his time who was endued with a republican soul. The writers of the Augustan age acquiesce willingly in the extinction of liberty, and freely enjoy the blessings conferred upon them by the partiality of an arbitrary prince.

For this indeed they might plead some apology. The bloody revolution which stifled the last sighs of Roman freedom, had not yet absolutely corrupted the soul. While the cruel but politic Octavius had strewn the road to despotism with flowers, the public manners were by no means so depraved as in the reigns of Tiberius, Caligula, and Nero. It happened at Rome as it seems to have done in recent times, that the remembrance of the horrors attendant on
civil

civil discord made them adore the author of the new calm. They derived a species of happiness from no longer dreading to find their names in tables of proscription; and amidst the amusements of the amphitheatre and the circus they forgot to vindicate the privileges of a citizen, of which for many ages their fathers had been so zealous.

If any one of a more daring spirit were desirous to ask of Augustus by what right he erected himself a master of the world, one look from the usurper would frown him into silence. But the atrocities of the reign of Nero, and the unconquerable temper of Juvenal forbade him to sink into indifference or lethargy; nor were there, as in the former period, any enjoyments to counterbalance the misfortunes and the miseries of the times. Juvenal commenced his career therefore by doing that for morals and for liberty, which Horace did for decorum and good taste. He professed himself their champion and friend. He equally declaimed against the public vices, and against
usurped

usurped power; and recalled to the minds of the Romans the happy days of their virtue and independence.

His muse was as vigorous as his mind; but the attempt to abolish vice was an enterprise as useless as it was bold.

He lived in an age when all patriot ardor was extinct. The citizens were not only become slaves, but enervated by all the crimes which luxury numbers in her train.

The executioner was then more required than the censor or the satirist. The sacred name of liberty was never mentioned; and the history of that period is but a catalogue of perfidies, imprisonments, and assassinations.

In conjunctures like these, Juvenal despised the light armour of ridicule, so familiar and becoming to his predecessor: he brandishes the broad sword of invective, and, running from the throne to the tavern, he strikes at every one whom he perceives to be a traitor to virtue. Austere and constant to his principles, he sometimes rises even to the tone of tragedy; and if he laugh, his
 laugh

laugh is even more formidable than his rage.

“ Seldom he smiles, and smiles in such a sort
As if he mocked himself ;
And scorned his spirit that could be moved
To smile at any thing.”

SHAKSPEARE.

He concerns himself only about vice and virtue, servitude and freedom, folly and wisdom. To truth he sacrifices all meaner views. The dictates of urbanity and the views of policy he considered dear only to those whose morals are but external appearances. His plan was certainly of the noblest kind, to exhibit the degradation of human nature when guided solely by its desires. The spirit which dictated his satire was a regard for the public good ; and when in his rage he immolates his victims, they are so odious and deformed that we cannot lament their fate. When he has combated wickedness, he mounts to the source of evil and dissipates the delusion of fictitious virtues. His fine harangues against our vain prejudices are stronger than any arguments,

arguments, and seem to have been animated and fortified by the habit of those scholastic disputations which had occupied his youth.

His panegyrics assert that the blemishes which stain his writings belong rather to his age than to the author, yet a slight recurrence to them will probably convince his readers, that severity was congenial to the constitution of his mind. His zeal sometimes appears excessive, and his attacks unpardonable, because they were indiscriminate.

Some of his satires were written under Trajan, some under Adrian, one only under Domitian, and him he had the temerity to praise.

His general tone is equally bitter in all these reigns; and it is a solecism in his history, and a blot in his reputation that he had no eulogy for Trajan, that model of good princes: who could condescend to praise Domitian, that monster of mankind.

An opposite conduct would have given him celebrity as a writer as well as a moralist:

list: but he seems never to have known what Tacitus well understood, that contrast bestows on style as it does on painting; its interest, its charms and its variety.

One therefore of the faults of Juvenal is a monotony, which often revolts and sometimes fatigues the reader. It has been objected to him, and not entirely without reason, that he sees nothing but monsters, and paints nothing but objects of deformity; that he always disgusts and never consoles, allowing not his reader to repose for an instant on a single soft and agreeable sentiment. His censure of the female character is certainly without excuse, because it does not balance their virtues against their faults, but is an indiscriminate libel against the whole sex. In Pliny, a contemporary ^{writer} monument, some are mentioned who professed morals, humanity, the love of talents and of merit. A young man once abusing women as an abandoned race; one of them sensibly observed that he had certainly forgotten that he had a mother.

Objections

Objections likewise have been made to his style. He has been accused of a painful harshness of diction; blamed for the use of accumulated and extravagant metaphors; for verses replete with scientific epithets, and so thickly set with Greek words as to render the construction particularly difficult.

Other critics however, and amongst them Mr. Gibbon, have thought very differently of his style; they have considered his versification superior to most of the Latin poets, and particularly suited to his subject and his disposition, often smooth, harmonious, and animated, although he never sacrifices sense to sound.

If he be sometimes a caricaturist, he is frequently a just painter; his satire on the nobles is very fine; and his description of the courtiers of Domitian, in the fourth book, has perhaps unrivalled excellence.

His tenth satire on the vanity of human wishes possesses very distinguished beauties, but the arguments he would draw from it are not quite conclusive; nor are all the examples an illustration of the sentiment:

it is not true that great talents, long life, and high station are not proper objects of our desire, because they have sometimes disappointed the expectations, and sometimes been injurious to the felicity of their possessors; and Mr. Gibbon has well observed, that though Sejanus furnish an instance of popular inconstancy, yet Alexander is certainly not an instance in point; that, "Here the poet has failed to distinguish between those wishes, the accomplishment of which could not fail to make us miserable, and those whose accomplishment might fail to make us happy. Absolute power is of the first kind, long life of the second." The misfortune of Alexander consisted in being cut off in the midst of his success.

It has been thought by some, that the gross manner in which Juvenal exposes vice to ridicule, rather encourages than disarms the licentious and the debauched.

But as the avowed advocate for virtue, he considered his provocations great, and revenged them accordingly. In some in-

stances, the two great Roman satirists have fallen on the same subjects; and where Horace is pleasant, Juvenal is severe; the one only laughs at vice, the other crushes it under his feet; the one is the comic, the other the tragic satirist.

In versification and numbers, Juvenal has the advantage over his predecessor. While the sentiments are just, manly, and elevated, the expressions and the verse are noble, and well adapted to the sublimity of the thoughts. To the brightest talents, he added the purest morals; and the reader who respects the clearness of his head, cannot fail to revere the goodness of his heart.

He may perhaps be called the last of the Roman poets. After his time the decline of genius was followed by the corruption of taste. The sophists usurped the name of orators and the place of poets, and compilers and commentators darkened the face of learning. The Romans might then fairly be called by the name which they

applied to all the world except the Greeks, barbarians.

When the fierce giants of the north invaded the Roman empire, they mended the puny breed. They restored a manly spirit of freedom, and after the revolution of ten centuries, this spirit infligated inquiry, and freedom became the happy parent of science and of taste.

PERSIUS.

Aulus Persius Flaccus was a native of Volaterræ, and born about thirty years after Christ. His family was equestrian, and his fortune was considerable. When twelve years old he was sent for education to Rome, where he studied philosophy under the stoic Cornutus, the ablest preceptor of his time, and became accomplished in all the learning of his age. What is usually called science was at that period little known. The laws of the solar system were not yet investigated, and small progress

gress was made in the knowledge of nature. The teachers of the various sects deviated into specious discussions more ingenious than useful; into subjects too abstruse to have any influence on life and manners.

Perfius died at a very early period, but the six satires he has left are not a very copious production of thirty years.

The warmest friendship subsisted between him and Cornutus, and when the latter presented to the sisters of his pupil a large sum of money which Perfius had left to himself, his conduct attested the generosity of his mind, rather than the fraternal affection of his friend.

The subjects treated of by Perfius are; the vanity of the poets of his time; the unwillingness of youth to acquire the knowledge and the practice of morals; the badness of the government of Nero, obliquely rather than directly attacked. The manner of his writing has been generally censured by modern critics; but we should remember that he was read with avidity

by his contemporaries, and that from their tribunal an appeal will scarcely be allowed.

At this remote period we lose much of the pleasure which the perusal of him might otherwise afford, from our ignorance of the characters which he describes. The portraits were drawn from nature, and recognised by those who could trace their similitude to the originals.

His peculiar attributes are, gravity of style, severity of morals, great good sense, and much conciseness. The excess of these virtues becomes a defect: he that is only just is apt to be harsh; he that is always sage is occasionally severe: the conciseness of Juvenal is one cause of his obscurity. A father of the church is said to have thrown his satires on the ground, saying, "Since you will not be understood, remain there." Another threw them into the fire with this jest; "Let us burn them to make them clear."

While some critics disallow him any merit, others place him above Horace and

Juvenal:

Juvenal: truth lies between these extremes. Quintilian says of him that he has deserved much true glory: his expressions are sometimes very happy, his precepts generally those of a wise man, and they were committed to the memory as moral proverbs: but still he has the fault of obscurity; and clearness is the first merit of every writer.

It has been said for him, that, wishing to attack Nero and not daring to do it openly, he concealed his meaning by design. But obscurity, his prominent fault, is apparent throughout his whole work: still it is not the effect of a confused apprehension, nor of a search for recondite ideas; it proceeds from the multitude of ellipses, the suppression of intermediate members of the sentence, the frequent use of the boldest figures, which crowd into a single verse too great a number of circumstances more or less separated the one from the other, and offer to the understanding too many objects to be embraced at one time.

The structure of his dialogue is so imperfect, that it requires a painful attention to follow the speakers, to fill up the connection, and to join a thread which is perpetually broken. When this is done we perceive that all is just and consequential, and only complain that he seems to think intelligibility too common a quality of style, and appears to wish that his meaning should rather be conjectured than intuitive.

His *Prosopopeïa* of Avarice and Pleasure, the one awakening the man, the other exhorting him to sleep, so that the unhappy wretch knows not which to attend to, is extremely fine. It is much to the credit of *Perfius* that he was a real admirer of *Horace*: he characterises him in his satires, often avails himself of his ideas, and shews that his works were entirely familiar to him.

In a satire addressed to his tutor, he paints with noble and tender traits the sincerity of his regard for him.

In this satire it has been well observed, that “ there is a more agreeable picture
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of domestic comfort than might be expected in the family of a Stoic."

How blest with thee to pass the livelong day,
With thee at eve the frugal board to share,
In toil and rest our kindred minds display,
While modest meals unbend the brow of care.

His kind monitor restrained him from publishing his satires during the life of Nero, but this caution did not secure him from a premature death. He was executed by order of the government.

Cesius Bassus, a lyric poet, to whom Persius addressed one of his satires, was more bold and more fortunate. He was the publisher of his works, and yet his temerity remained unpunished. To complete the eulogium of Persius in respect to the moral part of his character, it ought to be remembered that he was the friend of Thrasea, of whom Tacitus said, that Nero determined to destroy him, when he wished to attack virtue itself.

SECTION XIII.

Latin Epic Poetry.—Lucretius.—Virgil.—Ovid.—Lucan.—Silius Italicus.—Valerius Flaccus.—Statius.

ABOUT ninety years before our æra, T. Lucretius Carus was born at Rome, but received the principal part of his education at Athens. He was a disciple of the sect of Epicurus, and the first writer amongst the Romans who united philosophy with poetry.

The tradition which declares him to have written his poetry in the lucid intervals of a delirium, is scarcely credible; but when it is said that a weariness of life impelled him to suicide so early as in his forty-fourth year, the tenets of his master which vindicated his conduct will command our belief of the fact.

His philosophical opinions are contained in a work intitled, "*De Rerum Naturâ*,"
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the language of which has by some critics been considered superior to that of every other Latin author. They assert that, when his subject will allow it, he exhibits more life and fire than Virgil; that he then breaks out like lightning from a dark cloud with unequalled force and brightness. It has been well observed, that a mixture of obsolete words gives him an air of solemnity, and that the resolution of diphthongs infils into the Latin the melody of the Greek language.

The Mantuan bard has certainly no lines more forcible than are contained in the episode of Cacus, which are elegant and harmonious. The descriptions of a pestilence and of the delights of love are the most distinguished parts of the poem, and no one has more highly coloured both the frightful and attractive in nature. The conclusion of the third book, where Nature upbraids her ungrateful children for their impious discontent, ^{forms a fine contrast} is a fine relic from the elaborate disputations that precede it. Towards the end of the fifth book, every reader

reader is charmed with the delicious scenes there unfolded, and the description of the commencement and refinement of art. Lucretius well describes rural simplicity, and the domestic happiness of innocent and contented poverty.

Virgil in his *Georgics* has been his imitator, and Ovid thought his poem would endure till the dissolution of the earth. Many modern poets have imitated Lucretius, and the same monk of Florence, Poggio Bracciolini, who rescued the invaluable institutes of Quintilian from destruction, has by some persons been considered to have conferred an incalculable favour on posterity when he preserved the disciple of Epicurus. Dr. Warton calls him a sculptor-poet, from the bold relief of his images; and indeed his luminous style has obtained him more panegyrist than his sentiments deserve.

He is the avowed advocate of atheism and impiety. Adopting for his basis the atoms of Democritus, the fortuitous formation

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tion of the world, he disgusts the votaries of true religion and of sound philosophy.

The sluggard gods of Epicurus, sunk in the calm of a perpetual lethargy, are as repugnant to our better notions of a Supreme Intelligence, as the vicious deities which constituted the popular superstition of Greece and Rome.

False philosophy has ever been mingled with false religion; the doctrine of gravitation was not unknown to Lucretius, and he strenuously attempts in his first book to refute the idea that the universe has a centre to which every thing tends by the great law of nature.

Perhaps the moral tenets of Epicurus have been misunderstood, and Lucretius may have been less read than he deserves, from a general misapprehension of the tendency of his tenets.

The author of the sect taught that happiness could only proceed from the cultivation of the mental powers, and from a strict attention to virtue. This is what he denominated pleasure, and his accomplished
disciple,

disciple, in conformity to his institution, uses every rational diffusive against vice, and every incentive to virtue: but the foundation of all morals, the active superintendence of an omnipresent being finds no place in his system of nature.

Lucretius says, that his work is written in verse from the same motive as actuates physicians who, when they give wormwood to children, smear the outside of the cup with honey.

But Quintilian observes, that there is some cause to fear lest the wormwood should predominate. The masterly genius of the poet is every where conspicuous, and, had he lived under Augustus, he would perhaps have chosen a happier subject, and proved a formidable rival to the best poets of that illustrious age.

AUGUSTAN AGE:

At the head of the writers of this most distinguished period, it is to be lamented that we cannot place the Emperor and his
minister

minister but by the testimony of ancient authors. Were we in possession of the records of their literary fame, they might have consoled us in some degree in our reflections on cruelty and arbitrary power. Learning would have boasted of its triumph when it perceived a tyrant seeking for repose in the bosom of literature, as well as endeavouring to atone for proscriptions and massacres by calling forth talents, and by patronising merit. Suetonius informs us that Augustus wrote both verse and prose, and that Mæcenas was an author on a variety of subjects, dramatic and biographical.

The temper of the former was probably mollified by the entire defeat of his enemies and the acquisition of unlimited power; and it was no less grateful to the vanity than to the taste of both, to countenance such poets as would present them with that poison which is so "sweet to the age's tooth."

VIRGIL.

About seventy years before Christ, the birth of Publius Virgilius Maro gave celebrity to Andes, a small village near Mantua. His education was begun at the neighbouring town of Cremona, a place remarkable for the formation of taste and the exercise of talents, and completed at Milan, the distinguished seat of all the ingenuous arts.

When the republican forces under Brutus and Cassius had experienced a fatal defeat at Philippi, and lands were divided amongst the soldiers of the conquerors, all the property of Virgil was included in the forfeiture.

This apparently unfortunate event was the cause of his future prosperity and eminence. In his distress he wisely repaired to Rome, solicited and obtained the patronage of Mæcenas, by whose means and those of Asinius Pollio he obtained an introduction to the Emperor Augustus, and

was shortly after favoured with the restoration of his estate. By the liberality of his imperial patron and his courtiers, his circumstances soon became affluent.

It is almost unnecessary to observe of a writer who is in the hand of every school-boy, that his works are pastoral, agricultural, and epic.

In all his poems, critics have declared him to be a plagiarist. Besides his acknowledged imitations of Homer, they have accused him of borrowing from Ennius, Pacuvius, and Accius, as well as from his contemporaries Lucretius, Catullus, and Varius. Macrobius says, that his second book of the *Æneid*, which contains the fine description of the sack of Troy, was borrowed almost word for word from a Greek poet whose works are lost, and whose name was Pisander.

The first production of Virgil was his *Bucolics*, consisting of ten eclogues, written in imitation of the *Idyllia* of Theocritus, begun in the twenty-ninth year of his age, and completed in three years.

It has been observed, that there is such an incongruity between the simple ideas of the swain and the polished language of the courtier, as to render it very difficult to reconcile them by any arts of composition; that the Doric dialect of Theocritus must ever give to the Sicilian bard a pre-eminence in this species of poetry; that there are in the Bucolics of Virgil the native manners and ideas without any of the rusticity of pastoral life.

Those critics who give the preference to Virgil have said, that as he is more varied, he is also more elegant than Theocritus; that his shepherds have more spirit without ever having too much, that his harmony has an inexpressible charm, a mixture of sweetness and of art, which Horace considers with reason as a particular present which the Muses have made to him; that he interests more than the Sicilian poet in the sports and amours of his rustics, and has no negligence or languor; that it is impossible to read these poems without committing them to memory, or at least without

without desiring to read them over and over again.

In attestation of the excellence of the Bucolics, we are told that the Romans were so enamoured of them that they were frequently recited upon the stage, and that Cicero, hearing some of them, exclaimed, *Magnæ spes altera Romæ!*

His next composition was the Georgics, the idea of which was taken from the Works and Days of Hesiod; but there is no other similarity than that of their common subject. Hesiod delivers his precepts of agriculture with the utmost simplicity: Virgil has embellished his work with all the dignity which sublime versification can bestow. It is addressed to Mæcenas, at whose request it was undertaken, and divided into four books. The first treats of ploughing; the second of planting; the third of cattle; and the fourth of bees, their food, polity, and diseases. The whole concludes with the beautiful episode of Aristæus and Eurydice. The Georgics were written at Naples, and employed him seven years.

Considered as didactic poems, and adapted to the climate of Italy, they have the highest claim to merit. As poetical compositions, their elevated style, the beauty of their similes, the sentiments interspersed in them, and the elegance of their diction, excite the admiration of every judicious reader. During four days which Augustus passed at Atella on his return to Rome, to refresh himself from fatigue after the battle of Actium, the Georgics were read to him by the author, who was occasionally relieved in his task by his friend Mæcenas.

It is suggested by Mr. Gibbon, that Augustus was highly delighted with the Georgics from a motive less creditable both to himself and to the bard, than that of sound criticism and good taste. That he rejoiced in every thing which could reconcile his soldiers to a peaceful life; and that the description given by Virgil of the repose and happiness of the country gratified him as a politician, when he perceived the effect which it produced on the veterans of his army.

They

They insensibly became enamoured of the innocent and useful employments of agriculture, and waited with patience for a long course of years, before the Emperor had established a treasury to repay them for their military toils.

In this instance, poetry like music had “charms to sooth the savage breast;” and while it conveyed the soundest precepts of a useful art, was subservient to the most important purposes of the state.

The poems of Homer, and the laws of the epics which had been so ably formed and promulgated by Aristotle, were an advantage to Virgil in his composition of the *Æneid*, which few poets have had so favourable an opportunity to enjoy.

The *Æneid* was written at the particular desire of Augustus, who was ambitious of having the Julian family represented as lineal descendants of the Trojan *Æneas*. The character of the hero of the poem has been said to be faulty on account of its coldness; that he is never warmed or impassioned, although perpetually in tears

or at prayers ; that his desertion of Dido is neither gallant nor heroic ; that the description of the sports in the fifth book refrigerates the reader ; and that the last six books deserve to be generally condemned. The foundation of a state which was to be the cradle of Rome, and the arrival of a stranger announced by ancient oracles, who disputed with a prince for the daughter of a king to whom that prince was betrothed, are the subjects of them. The different people of Italy divide between the two rivals, and raise in the reader an expectation of action and of interest. But what is the result? In place of these, we find a monarch who is not master of his house, and has not a will of his own, who, after having received the Trojans with cordiality, permits his queen and intended son-in-law to carry on the war against them, and shuts himself up in his palace that he may take no part in it ; Lavinia too, a mere mute, although the deadly contest is on her account ; and the queen after the defeat of the Latins commits suicide, but excites no
6 pity.

pity. Turnus is killed by Æneas, without producing the least interest in the victory of the one, or in the fall of the other. That the battles are an abridgement of those of Homer, with less diffusiveness, but with less fire also, and resemble petty skirmishes amidst barbarous colonies. That in the seventh book the poet carries us into a new world, and introduces us to personages absolutely unknown: Ufens, Tarchon, and Mezentius are very different from Ajax, Hector, and Diomed; and the antiquities of Italy, which flattery induced him to penetrate, are as obscure as those of Greece are illustrious. That the transient interest we feel in favour of the young Pallas the son of Evander, of Lausus the son of Mezentius, of Camilla the queen of the Volscians, cannot compensate for the want of that general interest which ought to move the whole machine of the epic.

If posterity, severely just, take cognisance of these defects; still sufficient merit remains in the Æneid to entitle its author to the appellation of the prince of Latin poets,

which his contemporaries bestowed upon him.

The second, fourth, and sixth books are universally regarded as the most finished performances which epic poetry ever produced in any nation.

The filial piety and misfortunes of Æneas, after the catastrophe of Troy, strongly interest the reader in his subsequent adventures. The picture of that city in flames can never be enough admired.

The character of Dido appertains entirely to the author, and has no model in all antiquity.

The prophetic rage of the Cumæan Sibyl displays the enthusiasm of the poet.

The episode of Nisus and Euryalus, that of the funeral of Pallas, and that of the buckler of Æneas, are the perfection of the art of painting.

Virgil is not more conspicuous for strength of description than propriety of sentiment, and when he takes a hint from the Grecian bard, he does not fail to improve upon it.

One instance may suffice.

In the sixth book of the Iliad, while the Greeks are making great slaughter amongst the Trojans, Hector, by the advice of Helena, retires into the city to desire that his mother would offer up prayers to the goddess Pallas, and promise her a noble sacrifice if she would drive Diomed from the walls of Troy. Immediately before his return to the field of battle, Hector has his last interview with Andromache, whom he meets with his infant son, Astyanax. Here occurs one of the most beautiful scenes in the Iliad, where the hero takes the boy in his arms, and pours forth a prayer that he may one day be superior in fame to his father. In the same manner Æneas, having armed himself for the decisive combat with Turnus, addresses his son Ascanius in a beautiful speech, which, while it is expressive of the strongest paternal affection, contains a noble and emphatic admonition suitable to a youth who had nearly attained the period of manhood.

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He certainly owed much of his excellence to the wonderful powers of Homer. His susceptible imagination was captivated by amiable traits of the *Odyſſey*, and warmed by the fire of the *Iliad*. Improving the characters of the gods, he ſuſtains their dignity with ſo uniform a luſtre that they ſeem truly divine.

Mr. Gibbon obſerves, “ that the more we know antiquity, the more we admire the art of this poet. His ſubject was narrow. The flight of a band of exiles, the combat of ſome villagers, the eſtabliſhment of an ill-fortified town; theſe are the travels, ſo much vaunted, of the pious *Æneas*. But the poet has ennobled them, and he well knew by ennobling them how to render them the more intereſting. He embellished the manners of the heroic ages, but he embellished without diſguiſing them. Father *Latinus* and the ſeditious *Turnus* are transformed into powerful monarchs. All Italy feared for its liberty. *Æneas* triumphs over men and gods.

He

“ He never seems more master of his art, than when descended to the shades below with his hero: his imagination appears to be enfranchised: Romulus and Brutus, Scipio and Cæsar, shew themselves there such as Rome admired or feared them.”

It adds much to the celebrity of Homer, that he wrote in an age when the intellect was not generally improved by cultivation, and that he was indebted for his inexhaustible resources to the capacity of his own mind.

Virgil, on the contrary, lived in a period when literature had attained to a high state of improvement. Perhaps Homer lived and died in a state of poverty; Virgil was enabled by the affluence of his circumstances to allot twelve years to the composition of his *Æneid*, which even at his death was unfinished, and, by a pious neglect of the dying injunctions of its author, rescued from the destruction to which he destined it. The wish of the poet for the destruction of his work probably arose from his perceiving it to want uniformity and

and unity. Had he lived, he would either have connected or obliterated the detached parts of the latter books.

A remarkable circumstance respecting the character of Virgil as a poet is the equable perfection of his style. It is at once the delight and the despair of all who esteem and cultivate Latin poetry.

Where is the scholar, mature in years and judgment, who does not admire the colouring and the variety of his pictures, and that unvaried harmony, which does not only play upon the ear but penetrates to the soul? If he do not equal Homer in invention or in the richness of imagination in the aggregate, it has by some been contended that he surpasses him in the splendour of certain passages, in correctness, and in taste.

In the perusal of this fine poem, there is no part which strikes the reader more forcibly than the descent of Æneas to the shades below; and the effect it produces on the mind would be much less powerful, if we were to assent to the hypothesis of a very learned critic, Dr. Warburton, that it is
only

only a figurative description of the initiation into the Eleusinian mysteries.

Every one of the circumstances of the descent convinces Mr. Gibbon, that Virgil describes a real not a mimic world; and that the scene lay in the infernal regions, and not in the temple of Ceres. The singularity of the Cumean shores, the lake Avernus, the black woods which surrounded it when Virgil came to Naples, were suited to gratify the superstition of the people. It was generally believed that this dreadful flood was the entrance of Hell, and an oracle was established on its banks, which pretended by magic rites to call up the departed spirits. The conversation between Æneas and the priests may convince us that this was a descent to the shades, and not an initiation. "*Facilis descensus Averni,*" &c.

That every step may lead us to the grave is a truth, but the mysteries were open only a few days in the year. The descent of the mysteries was laborious and dangerous; the return to light easy and

certain ; but in real death this order is inverted. If we consider the awful scene as a mimic show exhibited in the temple of Ceres by the contrivance of the priest or the legislator, all that was terrible or pathetic disappears at once ; the melancholy Palinurus, the wretched Deiphobus, the indignant Dido, and the venerable Anchises,—“ *tenuem sine viribus umbram.*”

The strictures of that able critic Mr. Gibbon, on the fanciful and ingenious position of the bishop contained in his miscellaneous tracts, are worthy the attention of every scholar ; and there will probably be few readers whom he does not convince, that the opinion which is opposite to his own would deprive the Mantuan bard of a large portion of his deserved praise, as it would tend to make the spirit of one of the finest parts of the *Æneid* entirely evaporate in lifeless allegory.

Virgil is said to have received two thousand pounds from Octavia, the sister of the emperor, for the incomparable verses in which he introduces the name of her son
Marcellus,

Marcellus, whom she had lately lost. If this were the conduct of a courtier, how untrue is he to himself when he represents his hero assisting the Etruscans to punish their former tyrant Mezentius: Mr. Gibbon thinks that "such opinions, published by one who has been esteemed the creature of Augustus, shew that, though the republic was subverted, the minds of the Romans were still republican." He is also of opinion that, had this part of the work been recited before the court, the reward given him for his former compliments to the reigning family would have been withheld.

In every point of view Virgil appears to advantage as a writer; it is undeniable, that he does not merely recite the labours of rustics or an uninteresting story of travels, but is a new Orpheus, whose lyre induces savages to depose their ferocity, and whose hero unites them by the ties of manners and of laws.

Æneas is the minister of celestial vengeance, the protector of oppressed nations,
 who

who launches thunder on the head of the guilty tyrant, but is softened by the unfortunate victim of his fury; the young and pious Lausus, worthy of a better father and a more propitious destiny.

Virgil determined to correct his poem, which he polished with a scrupulous and painful accuracy at Athens, the renowned seat of eloquence and philosophy. In the delightful gardens of Epicurus, he conceived that he should have full leisure to complete an immortal work, but the arrival of Augustus from the east frustrated his design; and on his return to Rome with his imperial patron, he was seized with sickness at Megara, and expired at Brundisium in the fifty-second year of his age. The place of his education he desired to be the place of his interment; and his tomb still exists within two miles of Naples near the road to Puteoli.

He is said to have written an inscription for his monument, which in two simple lines tells the place of his nativity and his burial, together with the subject of his poems.

poems. But the verses are so unworthy of his muse that they probably are spurious.

His fortune he divided between the emperor and his minister, and his friends Varius, Plotius, and Tucca. These bequests, the unsuspecting testimonies of gratitude and friendship, evince the goodness of his heart; and the proofs which posterity have received of the excellence of his understanding, and the correctness of his taste, will be acknowledged by them as long as learning shall be hallowed, and superior talents regarded with admiration.

OVID.

Publius Ovidius Naso was descended from an Equestrian family, and born at Sulmo about forty-two years before the Christian æra. No expence was spared to render his education complete. He acquired the first rudiments of it at Rome, and when he was qualified to assume the manly gown, Athens numbered him amongst her illustrious scholars. The high reputation acquired by the great orators of his time

was a strong inducement with his father to destine him for the profession of the law; but nature, which in a few instances, and probably in a very few, gives an irresistible bias to the mind, reversed the destiny. Like Pope, he seems to have been born a poet, and his own declaration to this effect may be translated by the well-known line of the British bard:

“ I lisped in numbers, for the numbers came.”

He could boast that all the literati of that enlightened age were his friends, and, for a while, that the emperor was his munificent patron: but a fatal cloud hung over his head; he was suddenly disgraced at court, and banished for life to Tomos, the capital of the lower Mæsia. The nature of his offence still remains a mystery; the pretence was that his verses tended to corrupt the morals of the Roman youth.

The sentence, which was passed by Augustus, Tiberius confirmed; and the plaintive

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tive tone of many of his compositions is to be referred to the habitual melancholy which attended his exile. He scarcely survived it eight years, and was interred at Tomos before he had attained the sixtieth year of his age.

His *Metamorphoses*, the first amusement of our juvenile years, comprised in fifteen books, is one of the handsomest presents which antiquity has made to us. Every thing in this work is attractive to the youthful mind, from the separation of the elements which are in the place of Chaos, to the splendid apotheosis of the Emperor Augustus. It is impossible to admire too much the flexibility of his imagination and of his style in taking successively every tone, closely adapting himself to the nature of his subject, and by his art diversifying the catastrophe, of which the foundation is always the same, namely, a transmutation of form. How admirable is the variety of his colours, always well suited to the different pictures which he draws! His expressions are sometimes exalted to sublimity,

sometimes simple even to familiarity; now horrible and terrific, now tender, gay, smiling, and sweet. He raises, softens, affrights the mind, as he represents the palace of the sun, the complaints of love, the fury of jealousy, and the terrors of vice. He describes with equal ease and accuracy combats as amusements, heroes as shepherds, the cave of Envy as the cottage of Philemon. Every reader is charmed with the delightful poem of Pyramus and Thisbe. Its beauties are ever pleasing because they are natural, and the catastrophe of the unfortunate lovers fails not to excite universal sympathy; a tale so hapless in strains so delightful was surely never told! If there be any reader whom the perusal of this incomparable poem does not affect, he is neither to be envied for the vivacity of his feelings, nor for the soundness of his judgment.

Mythology furnished her richest stores to Ovid, an unrivalled advantage which was possessed by the ancients. It added the brightest plumes to pagan writers, and

enabled them to soar to empyrean heights on the wings of superstition. But a purer religion, and a more refined taste, have restrained the flight of modern bards; and reason and truth, the best guides of the orator and the historian, have been found to damp the ardour of poetic enthusiasm.

The style of Ovid has been accused of gaudiness, but it is the exuberance of real richness; for his ornaments are not produced by labour nor by effort. Spirit, gaiety, and facility, three qualities which never abandon him, conceal occasional negligence and trifling; and it may more truly be said of him than of Seneca, that he is "graced by defect," and pleases even by his faults.

His three books of amours, the production of his youth, have all the freshness of the age when they were composed. Though he has not the sensibility, nor the elegance, nor the precision of Tibullus, nor the passion of Propertius; though he may be reproached with a frequent repetition of the same ideas, and sometimes with bad taste

at a crowd of ingenious

thoughts and agreeable images do they contain! Corinna was the feigned name of his mistress, and some have believed that this Corinna was no other than Julia the daughter of Augustus. What pathos is there in his complaints, what protestations and what oaths!

The next piece, which probably was sent with the other, is addressed to the chambermaid of whom Corinna was justly jealous: he accuses her of having given occasion to the suspicion of her mistress; he reproaches her with blushing like a child while he gazes at her; he recalls to her memory with what sang-froid he knows how to lie, with what intrepidity he perjures himself when under the necessity of producing a justification, and finishes by requesting a meeting with her. In these poems he displays his real character. When he promises his mistress to be constant, he does not mean to deceive her, but is himself deceived. He is a general lover, and his infidelities are as numerous as the objects of his passion. But th^{is} amusing
 passage

passage of the work is where he complains with an apparent seriousness of his irresistible propensity to love.

The Art of Love is another well known production of this author. In the first book he treats of the choice of a mistress, in the second the means of pleasing and attaching her. Ovid, so ardent in his amours, is cold and erroneous in his theory. It is less difficult to succeed in detached pieces than in a regular poem, where the plan must be preserved from the beginning to the end, and where the spirit ought to be sustained throughout.

In the first book, a thousand verses are spent in teaching his disciples how to search for a mistress. The heart immediately replies, that she is found without a search, and that such an arrangement was never made but in the head of a poet. Ovid sends them into public places, temples, spectacles, the town, the country, the baths, to find some one to whom they may express their partiality. She will not fall from the clouds, he says; you must seek for

her. Many trifling circumstances are introduced, and several insipid episodes unworthy of a didactic poem. The rape of the Sabines, and the fable of Pasiphaë, are no very decent examples in proof of the affection of the female sex. The serious question which he agitates, about being at once the lover of the chambermaid and her mistress, shews that his precepts are in conformity with his example. As a poetical fally which evaporates in words, such opinions may be excused; but to reduce them into practical doctrines, is to insult the moral sense of decency and decorum. Upon the whole, this part of the work is but a measured warbling, and discovers the facility of saying nothing in feeble and negligent verses.

The second canto begins with a long episode on the adventure of Dædalus and Icarus, as ill-drawn as those which precede it. There is here a question about the art of pleasing, in which it must be confessed that Ovid does not appear in his novitiate. Then follows an episode of
Venus

Venus surpris'd with the god Mars, the only one which is to the point, but its beauties are sullied by the objectionable nature of the subject.

The third book of the Art of Love is professedly written for the instruction of the fair sex, of whom he wishes to ask pardon for his infidelities. He teaches them the whole art of deception; observes that they are less deceitful than men; and adds, that as they give us arms against themselves, it is but just to furnish them with weapons of defence; that he gives this advice by the order of Venus herself. He advises them about their dress, exhausts the whole science of the toilet, prescribes bounds to their laughter in subservience to the state of their teeth, and is remarkably great and deep in trifles. It is, however, impossible not to render homage to the fertile variety of a writer who applies himself to so many kinds of writing with considerable success.

His *Fasti* originally consisted of twelve books, of which only half the number are in our possession. They contain a beautiful
description

description of the ceremonial transactions of the Romans: and the loss of the other books has been very generally lamented by scholars.

The most pleasing passages have been said to be the origin of sacrifices, the adventure of Lucretia, the festival of Anna Perenna, the origin of the name of May, and the dispute of the goddesses for that of June.

His Heroics are a sort of amorous epistles, twenty-one in number; they have a high degree of poetical enthusiasm, but are indecorous in the general turn of the thought, and grow tiresome from the identity of the subject.

Whether it be Penelope to Ulysses, Dido to Æneas, Sappho to Phaon, it is the same as when Phillis complains of Demophon, and other mistresses of their inconstant lovers. Complaints, reproaches, and regrets are expressed in very elegant language, but the ear grows weary of the repetition of such whining sentiments as have no power to reach and interest the heart.

His

His *Tristia*, composed during his exile, prove that, though his vivacity was gone, he retained his genius for poetry. In melancholy but harmonious strains he bewails his unhappy situation, and deprecates the rage of the inexorable Augustus. His elegies are of a similar description, and that on the death of Tibullus will be esteemed as long as the works of both the authors shall be read.

His tragedy of *Medea*, of which only fragments remain, is mentioned by Quintilian as a proof of what his genius could have effected had it been restrained within the bounds of decorum.

Upon the whole, his praise is that of talents, learning, and elegance; his defects, indecency of expression, forced conceits, and a profusion of ornament.

Such is the poetical character of Ovid in the abstract; but when placed in contrast with Virgil, Horace, and Tibullus, these faults are so conspicuous as to mark the first decline of genuine taste amongst the Romans,

LUCAN.

LUCAN.

M. Annæus Lucanus was a Spaniard, a native of Corduba, and born before the middle of the first century.

If it be believed that his talents first recommended him to the notice of the Emperor Nero, it was probably his flattery of him that facilitated his admission to office. Before the time limited by law, he was appointed augur and quæstor. Buoyed up by this unprecedented success, and forgetting that tyrants can no more tolerate a superior in intellectual attainments than in power, he engaged in a literary contest with his patron.

Nero wrote a poem on the subject of Niobe, Lucan upon that of Orpheus, and his victory over his imperial master was the cause of his ruin. Perceiving himself the destined victim of resentment, he weakly resolved to furnish an apology for it, and joined in a hopeless conspiracy with Piso, a man whose virtues attracted the good, and
whose

whose pliant temper rendered him dear to the voluptuous.

After the defeat of Piso, which terminated in his suicide, Lucan had no favour allowed to him but the choice of his death. His veins were opened in a warm bath, and he met his fate with philosophical intrepidity, at the early period of twenty-six years, when health and life are in their meridian.

The only relic of his literary reputation is contained in a work written on a subject better adapted for an epic poem than most others, and denominated *Pharsalia*, from the battle which terminated the deadly contest between Cæsar and Pompey.

By some critics Lucan has been said to possess beauties peculiar to himself, and of a consummate lustre; that he was versed in all the learning of his age, and second to none in eloquence; that his choice of words is happy, and his expression bold and animated; that there is a dignified tone of gravity and authority in his poem; that his strength is equalled by his imagination,

for

for that the natural warmth and impetuosity of his temper stamp an interesting character on a great part of his work; that he is very fortunate in affecting and engaging the passions; that his descriptions are sublime images of the things they represent; that where he is concise he is happily sententious; where diffuse, elegant to a great degree.

A closer and more accurate perusal of Lucan will probably not justify so splendid an encomium. His poem so often deviates from the dignity of the epic, that it may rather be considered as a history in verse, written certainly with considerable talent. It is owing to partial traits of force and grandeur rather than of general excellence, that it has been saved from oblivion.

While we read Virgil in continuation, it is difficult to read a single book of Lucan.

With much spirit, and even with much genius, it is possible that an author may be deficient in that art of writing, which has

its origin in a natural taste, and is brought to maturity by labour and by time. Why is Lucan so little esteemed, notwithstanding the praise which is generally, and therefore justly, given to certain parts of the *Pharsalia*? It is that his imagination, which is always in search of the sublime, is often mistaken in the choice. It is, that it is wholly unaccompanied by that sound judgment which prevents exaggeration in the painting, inflation in the ideas, languor and superfluity in the details.

It has been said of Lucan, that "he is like the soldier in the ninth book of his *Pharsalia*, who in passing the sandy deserts of Africa was bitten by a serpent, and swelled so much as to be lost in the tumours of his own body."

When to this it is added, that his verses are all turned in the same mould, he may be said to be equally monotonous to the ear and to the understanding. His beauties are so surrounded and inclosed by his faults, that the reader denies himself the pain of searching for the one on account of
the

the disgust which is excited by the other. This assertion may be corroborated by our recurring to a very remarkable sentence, when Cæsar, on his passage from Epirus to Italy, is assailed by a tempest, and pronounces this famous sentence, addressed to the trembling pilot: “ Why are you afraid; you carry Cæsar and his fortune?”

The sentiment is so truly grand and elevated, that an accumulation of words can only serve to weaken it. The poet, on this fine occasion for sublimity, by extravagant hyperboles, and an intolerable prolixity of detail, destroys the whole effect of the sentence, and disgusts every reader of taste and feeling. He describes a ridiculous combat of the winds, coldly and unseasonably personified in gigantic bombast, which is opposite both to reason and to truth. What can be more out of place than that verbose boasting of Cæsar, which is substituted for the noble expression that history makes him pronounce?

To

To shake heaven and earth, to raise all the seas of the globe, to make nature fearful of falling into chaos, and all this on account of a boat beaten about on the little sea of Epirus, is a description absolutely false in nature, and an unpardonable abuse of figurative language. The tedious relation compels us to forget Cæsar, and it is Cæsar who should exclusively occupy our attention. When the fleet of Æneas is assailed by a tempest, twelve verses is sufficient for Virgil to give the most lively and striking account of it.

A storm described with the same conciseness, energy, and truth, had made every reader tremble for the fate of a great man on the point of seeing one moment of imprudence annihilate the highest destinies. Perhaps the picture had been more agreeable, if Lucan had employed a species of fiction of which he was always too sparing; if he had represented Olympus attentive and divided; the gods observing whether the soul of Cæsar could sustain a moment of danger and of trial, uncertain if the

waves would not engulf the threatened master of the world, and if Neptune would not efface from the book of fate the day of Pharsalia, and the slavery of Rome.

As no subject can be conceived more capable of elevating the mind, it would have permitted fiction without injuring the veracity of history. Could not the gods and the Romans have acted together in the same scene, and been worthy one of the other? Could not destiny have been introduced where the fate of the world was concerned?

The phantom of his country in tears, which appeared to Cæsar on the banks of the Rubicon; this fine fiction, unhappily the only one found in the poem, sufficiently proves what assistance he could have drawn from fable.

Lucan has, however, certain pre-eminent beauties in his description of characters. Such is the funeral eulogy of Pompey, pronounced by Cato: such is the portrait of Cato himself, and the account of his

marriage

marriage with Marcia; his march amongst the Africans; and his fine answer to the noble speech of Latinus upon the oracle of Jupiter Ammon. But nothing can exceed the portraits of Cæsar and Pompey, put in opposition in the first book, which are written with incomparable taste. The merit exhibited in these portions of the work are great, and has rendered him worthy the regard of posterity.

Quintilian says that Lucan is to be ranked amongst orators rather than poets. This eulogium on his speeches is in a great degree just; for though they are not wholly exempt from that declamation which injures his style, yet they possess real grandeur, and excite sympathetic emotion.

His subject presents him with many circumstances which are susceptible of the pathetic, but the stiffness of his style refuses to admit it. The separation of Pompey and Cornelia, when he sends her into the Isle of Lesbos, and the discourse which accompanies their adieu, are almost

the only instances in which the poet makes the epic approach for a moment to dramatic interest. His character of Cæsar, at first so ably drawn, is disfigured as the poem proceeds; which cannot be excused by his hatred to the oppressor of liberty. A republican could not pardon Cæsar for the foundation of an empire which Nero inherited; but he might have confined himself to deploring the perverted use of extraordinary talents, which he turned against his country, after having exerted them in its defence. Had he sent back his army before he passed the Rubicon, he would certainly have been lost. The hatred of his enemies assisted the fortune which led him on. The blind partiality of the senate in favour of Pompey, the weakness of Cæsar in supporting the idol whom he had raised, the long hatred of the austere Cato against the voluptuous Cæsar, brought into action the best troops of the republic, whose every proceeding was an error. The senate inconsistently consented to flatter the pride of Pompey, who wished to
be

be the first in the state, while they condemned the arrogance of Cæsar, who refused to be the second. This could only end in giving a master to Rome.

The preference manifested by the senators in favour of Pompey, arose, probably, from their political dislike to a leader of the people. The remembrance of the quarrels between Marius and Sylla ought to have animated them in a desire for liberty, and inspired them with a hatred to tyrants.

All the proposals made by Cæsar before he passed the Rubicon had very plausible pretences: to establish equality, and to secure himself against his enemies. It is not always that political men are serious in overtures of accommodation. Cæsar probably wished his proposals to be refused, and might secretly have formed his determination to reign; but he offered to lay down his arms if they would confer upon him the consulship and a triumph. Both he had deserved, and the post was without question necessary for his security.

The jealousy of Pompey, and the pusillanimity of the senate, concurred in refusing his reasonable demands ; and the important result is known to every one in the least acquainted with the Roman story.

The victory of Dyrrachium encouraged Pompey to fight the fatal battle of Pharsalia. Had he pushed his victory over the veteran legions, Cæsar allowed that he would have been undone ; but when in the last action he quitted the heights, and descended into the plain to engage his adversary, this one mistake forfeited forty years of glory.

Lucan is unjust to the personal character of Cæsar. History has recorded his clemency to the Romans who surrendered to him ; but the poet represents him as a ferocious and sanguinary tyrant. Lucan perpetually calls for arms against despotism, and implores civil war, as being far preferable to slavery. Poetry is in general less fearful of arbitrary power than eloquence. Its voice is usually more consecrated to pleasure than to instruction ; to
illusion

illusion than to truth; and its charms may even have attractions for despots who have taste. Virgil has prudently abstained from the praises of liberty, and fatal was the effect of the temerity of Lucan.

Let us not, however, imagine that the slavery of Rome gave the final blow to poetry as it did to eloquence. Its decline was the inevitable consequence of its maturity. A corruption of genuine taste and of sound principles was the necessary effect of the inquietude and the feebleness of the human mind, which is not willing to rest contented with what is good, but deviates into boundless error, from a fruitless search after visionary perfection.

The reign of good emperors, from Nerva to the Antonines, in some degree revived the spirit of poetry; and some few epic writers give a certain degree of celebrity to their age.

C. SILIUS ITALICUS was a lawyer of great eminence, who voluntarily retired from his lucrative profession, to pay his adoration at the shrine of the Muses.

He was consul in the sixty-eighth year of the first century, but afterwards lived in privacy, and composed a Poem, which has reached posterity, on the second Punic war, in seventeen books. In this work, he scrupulously pursues the order and the detail of facts from the siege of Saguntum to the defeat of Hannibal, and the submission of Carthage. He exhibits Juno with her inveterate hatred against the descendants of Æneas, and her ancient love for the rival of Rome.

The style of this writer is pure, but so feeble as never to rise to excellence. He has but few verses worthy to be retained in the memory, and his best sentiments are but transcripts from Livy.

It has been observed, that “ his subject was well chosen, and that he possessed a considerable share of learning, and much knowledge of the human heart. He has also shewn much judgment in the plan and conduct of his work, but he wanted power for the execution.” The fire of poetry evaporates with the advance of life, and
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the old man could not rekindle the Promethean heat which is necessary to an epic poem.

If he creeps on the ground, he is free from affectation, or obscurity, or bombast; and it has been well observed, that the poet, who annually sacrifices at the tomb of Virgil, would have attained a higher reputation could he have imbibed a portion of the spirit which belonged to his idol.

To avert the evils of a lingering disease, he starved himself in the seventy-fifth year of his age; and his memory is regarded with that respect which is bestowed on mediocrity of talents.

VALERIUS FLACCUS.

In the reign of Vespasian flourished Valerius Flaccus, who has left nearly eight books of a poem, on the subject of the Argonauts. His early death prevented his finishing a work, which has by some critics been considered as next to the *Æneid* of Virgil. As a writer, he has more animation than Silius, more correctness than

than Statius, and less bombast than Lucan. He has been blamed for having almost translated the Argonautics of Apollonius Rhodius; wherever he has quitted his original, he displays a genius superior to the Greek; and it is to be lamented, that he who could have invented a plan, would condescend to imitate an inferior. The ruggedness of some of his verses is compensated by the harmony of others. His composition probably wanted only revision, to have possessed an equal share of merit, and to have conferred on its author a higher place amidst the poets of Rome.

STATIUS.

Near the termination of the first century, and in the reign of Domitian, Papinius Statius was born at Naples. Time, which has devoured many of the inestimable works of the Greek tragedians and the Roman historians, has been more favourable than just to the works of this author. His Thebaid, in twelve books, is on the subject
of

of the quarrel between Eteocles and Poly-
nices, which terminated in the murder of
each other.

It is well known that they were the
fruit of the unhappy marriage of Ædipus
with his mother Jocasta, and that it was
agreed between them, that, after the death
of their father, each should reign alter-
nately for a year. That Eteocles, at the
expiration of that period, refused to resign
the empire to his brother. That after
much bloodshed between the supporters of
each party, it was agreed that they should
decide the dispute by single combat. In
this they both fell; and fable tells that their
ashes separated themselves on the burning
pile as if incapable of reconciliation. These
wicked men thus accomplished by their
crimes that malediction of their father
which they merited.

Statius wrote also another epic poem
called the Achilleid; of which two books
are extant, but which were unfinished at
his death. It is better written than the
Thebaid, and his description of the beha-
viour

viour of Achilles at the feast made by Lycomedes for the Grecian ambassadors has been generally admired. Four books of poems, under the denomination of *Sylvæ*, have likewise descended to posterity; they are sometimes natural, elegant and easy, but they are in general debased by florid language, and by a false glare.

Through a long course of ages of ignorance, chance has preserved some inferior productions from that dust which still covers, and perhaps will eternally cover, many of the most valuable works of antiquity. On account of his inflated style, and his bad taste, it is more painful to read Statius than Silius Italicus, though he certainly has more poetical fancy, and though, in the midst of his trifles, there are some traits of brilliancy. The best part of the *Thebaid* is the combat between the two brothers, and the other parts of the eleventh book. This poet enjoyed, during his life, a great reputation. The art of writing verses is said to have been an heir-loom in his family; that he received it from his father,

father, and lived to see his son receive the laurel crown at the Alban games, as he had done himself.

Martial tells us, that the whole city was in motion to go and hear him when he repeated his verses, and that the recital of the *Thebaid* was a festival for the Romans.

But at that period, the public taste was much depraved; for, though he has many beautiful expressions and strokes of genius, his style is in general a tissue of affectation and bombast.

The writings of Statius are at this day known only to a few men of letters, whose curiosity renders them solicitous to be acquainted with all that the ancients have left them.

At the conclusion of the *Thebaid*, the poet addresses his Muse, and desires her not to pretend an equality with the divine *Æneid*, but to follow at a respectful distance, and adore the footsteps of its author. His Muse certainly obeyed him; but still he promises himself immortality, and reckons much on the honor which posterity will

will render him. It would have been more wise in him to rest contented with the applause of his own age, than to have appealed to future ones.

But he had not sufficient perspicuity to see that he lived in the decline of learning, and his vanity prompted him to believe, that the shout of ignorance was the trumpet of fame.

SECTION XIV.

Latin Elegy. Ovid.—Catullus.—Tibullus.—Propertius.

THE Romans, in elegy and love-verses, were the imitators of the Greeks; but the originals are unfortunately lost, while the imitations remain.

We know very little of the elegies of Callimachus, and nothing of those of Philletas and Mimnermus, but by the reputation which they had amongst the ancients, and by the favourable testimonies of the best critics of antiquity. Although the word is of Greek derivation, and signifies complaint or lamentation, it has not always been plaintive, but destined sometimes to the celebration of the gods, sometimes to that of the return or the birth-day of a friend. It has been before mentioned, that the best elegy extant is that of Ovid on the death of Tibullus; but both happy and un-

happy lovers have made it the vehicle of their sensations.

In this class of writers, **QUINTUS VALERIUS CATULLUS** is distinguished. He was born at Verona early in the century which preceded the nativity of our Saviour; he died in his forty-sixth year, and numbered amongst his acquaintance and friends the most celebrated literary characters of the age.

It has been said that he borrowed so largely from Callimachus, as to render it fortunate for his fame that the works of the Grecian poets are now only fragments. The late invention of the art of printing, which we have so much reason to deplore, may have prevented the detection of many plagiarisms of which we are not aware. Catullus sometimes professedly translated from Callimachus. The translation of the *Coma Berenice* has been said to retain all the spirit and to convey all the beauties of the original poem. His epigrams have by some been thought to possess particular excellence, and to surpass those of Martial, and every other writer of that inferior species

cies of poetry. By others they have been considered as unworthy of his talents; and as a proof of the assertion, it has been recorded that Cæsar took no other revenge on him for an attack upon himself than by inviting him to supper. This argument, however, seems not to possess any considerable weight, since the motive which actuated the inviter is at least problematical.

The verses on Lesbica's sparrow, and the epithalamium of Thebes and Peleus, shew that the genius of Catullus, which excelled in graceful subjects, could elevate itself to the sublime of passion. The episode of Ariadne abandoned by the ungrateful Theseus in the isle of Naxos, is among the few pieces of the ancients in which not the lover but love itself is made to speak. The author of the *Æneid* has from this poem borrowed not only ideas and expressions, but even entire verses; and Ariadne has been the handmaid who has decorated the Dido of Virgil. Such a writer would have reached the summit of Parnassus, had he

been endued with a sufficient share of patience to struggle for fame by the rugged acclivities of labour.

But Catullus was fond of pleasure and of travel, both which are hostile to the leisure and the retirement so necessary to men of letters.

On the marriage of his friend Manlius he wrote a charming poem, which is an instance to prove that however common or trite the subject, genius makes every thing appear comely and new. Catullus was born in poverty, but the generosity of friends exalted him to affluence. His writings which have reached us are few; but less than a hundred pages dictated by such talents, have served to render their author a respectable classic. His compositions, at once simple but elegant, are the offspring of the most luxuriant imagination; and the successful imitator of the Greek writers would have obtained a higher reputation, had the delicacy of his expressions always corresponded with the purity of his style.

TIBULLUS.

Aulus Albius Tibullus was a Roman knight, the contemporary and friend of Ovid, who willingly resigned the toils of war for the indulgence of literary ease and indolence.

Poets are not always remarkable for prudence. Had he imitated the pliability of Virgil, his lands forfeited under the triumvirate might perhaps have been restored to him by Augustus. He has left four books of elegies, which announce him as the poet of sentiment, and the prince of that species of verse. His style is so elegant, his taste so pure, and his composition so irreproachable as to render him superior to all his rivals. He has also a secret charm of expression which translation cannot reach, but which can only be understood by the heart.

He had a particular taste for those rural delights which so well accord with the passion of love. Tibullus sings of more

than one mistress; Delia is the first object of his affection, and inspires the sweetest of his songs; but Nemesis and Neæra replace her in their turns. He had the happy art of attaching those to whom he was himself attached; the two former attended his funeral, and exhibited unequivocal testimonies of genuine sorrow: they were both courtezans; but at Athens and at Rome there were some of this description who held a distinguished rank, not only by their understanding, but by their fidelity to a single object.

It has been said, that “a gentle solemnity, a pleasing languor, and an indulgence in melancholy, are the true and genuine spirit of elegy; complaint is almost its natural language, and if love under whatever circumstances commands its voice, it is because love is the softest of all passions, and is too often unhappy.”

If this be a true definition of elegy, Tibullus deserves the palm of unrivalled excellence. Though gentle, he is not dull; though humble, he is not mean. The
sympathy

sympathy of the reader ever attends him; and the labour of production was to him a new enjoyment, because it was the delightful task of painting the scenes through which he had passed. He speaks to our souls when he describes his own, and is almost the only poet who has been able to arrive at fame by singing of his pleasures.

PROPERTIUS.

The third candidate for fame as a writer of elegies amongst the Romans was Sextus Amelius Propertius, descended from an Equestrian family, and resembling Virgil in being admitted to the favour of the emperor, although his father had been the friend of Antony.

Propertius was a man of considerable learning, and in the four books of elegies which have reached posterity, he has been blamed for such a perpetual use of mythology, that his citations from fable are said to resemble more the common-places of a poet than the addresses of a lover. One

thing is remarkable in his works, that he is the only writer of amatory verses who has celebrated but one mistress. He often tells Cynthia, who was a Roman lady of distinguished beauty, that she shall ever be the object of his songs, and he keeps his word with her.

Not that his heart was as constant as his Muse; for, like Ovid, he avows himself in practice to be a general lover: he even confesses to Cynthia, that he has some partiality for Lycinna; but so little, so very little, that it is not worth the mentioning.

If we are to judge of Cynthia by the portrait which he draws of her, it must be confessed that she does not appear to deserve much fidelity. No woman surely had ever so eager a disposition to torment a lover, and no lover ever appeared so unhappy, or so much lamented his fate, as Propertius. But his character, as it respects his attachment, is sometimes found in common life; for after all the reproaches with which he loads his mistress for her pride, her cruelty, and caprice, he always concludes

concludes with an entire resignation to her will. He murmurs at the yoke, but still it is so dear to him that he wishes to sustain it for ever.

His constant alternations of praise and of reproach shew us that the different feelings of his mind were in complete subservience to the fickleness of her conduct. Sometimes she is a goddess, at other times far below humanity. Now he attributes to her all the freshness of youth; now he tells her she is already antiquated. After five years of impatient endurance of her tyranny he breaks his chains, and his adieus are imprecations in every possible form. The reader doubts, and the lady probably doubted the sincerity of his disgust, for indifference is never violent.

This resolution, however, closes the third book, but Cynthia re-appears in the fourth; and confident of her power, comes to search for her slave at a country house where he was at supper with two of his rivals. Her fury terrifies his companions, who leave him to settle the quarrel with-

out their assistance. Cynthia having beaten him well, consents to pardon him only on these hard conditions: that he will never walk under Pompey's portico; that he will not go into the country in an open carriage; and that at the public spectacles, he will always keep his eyes fixed on the ground. To all this Propertius subscribes; and the amorous slave only revenges himself by new and vain imprecations.

The distinguishing quality of his verse is spirit, and Ovid has well characterised it when he talks of the fires of Propertius. "No man was ever such a lover; he burns in every line; his passion is as earnest and vehement as that of Tibullus is soft and gentle. But he cannot be entitled to the prize which was contended for by the three writers of Roman elegy; for his learning sometimes renders him abstruse, and his style is by no means devoid of affectation."

Forty years were an early but not a premature termination of a life so harassed by the ferocity and absurdities of an arbitrary woman.

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The verses which describe these tumults of passion have sufficient merit to gratify our curiosity; but as they produce no respect for the virtues of the imperious mistress, they excite no pity for the misfortunes of the pusillanimous lover.

SECTION XV.

Martial.—Aufonius.—Claudian.

MARTIAL was a Spaniard, and born at Bilbilis about thirty years after Christ. As soon as he arrived at manhood he repaired to Rome. By his talents and flattery he recommended himself to the Emperor Domitian. After his death he satirized his benefactor; and being disappointed in his hope of gaining the favour of his successor he returned to his native country, and died there at the age of seventy-five.

He has left fourteen books of epigrams; and so prolific was his muse, that she is said to have produced no fewer than twelve hundred, three-fourths of which might well have been suppressed.

They have come down to us in the best order, as he himself arranged them; and
they

they retain the dedications at the head of each book. If this be a subject of congratulation to the learned, it will certainly not console them for the loss of so many of the works of Livy, Sallust, and Tacitus.

Epigram is styled by Dryden the lowest sort of poetry; and it has been said that Martial, at the bottom of the hill, diverts himself with gathering flowers, and following insects very prettily. If he made a new year's gift, he sent with it a distich. If a friend died, he wrote an epitaph. If a statue was erected, he wrote an inscription. If he wished to please the great, his style was turned to panegyric.

The first book is indeed entirely a panegyric on Domitian, against whom it would be more agreeable to peruse a satire. Then follow extravagant praises on the wonderful spectacles which he exhibited to the people. This shews what importance the Romans attached to this species of magnificence, and at the same time how difficult it was to flatter this master passion of the emperor.

ror. Martial is often extremely reprehensible in the choice of his subject, and gives scope to an imagination not restrained by judgment or decorum. Sometimes he wearies the reader with the prolixity or ambiguity of his preambles. In giving praise and censure he appears to be governed more by prejudice or policy than by justice and truth; and he is more attentive to wit than to morals. But his composition has extraordinary merit. It is in general both correct and elegant; and his fancy is prolific of beautiful images. In attic wit he surpasses every other writer, and is familiar with every kind of verse.

Pliny the younger observes of him, that perhaps his writings may not obtain immortality, but that he wrote as if he was convinced that they deserve it.

The opinion of critics on the subject of Roman poetry has been this—that from the first Punic war to the time of Augustus, that is, in the days of its youth, it was
strong

strong and nervous, but not beautiful; in the Augustan age it combined both, was manly and polite; from the beginning of Nerva's reign to the end of Adrian's, tawdry and feeble.

It is a sufficient proof of the decline of learning, and of taste in the latter period, when we are told that Virgil and Horace were dethroned from their legitimate seat of empire in the public opinion, and that Lucan and Persius were the usurpers, who seized the sceptre, and reigned without controul in their stead.

AUSONIUS.

Ausonius lived in the fourth century, and was preceptor to Gratian. By the interest of his royal pupil he was advanced to the consulship. In ancient times the poet and the statesmen were frequently combined, but in modern ones the phenomenon would be very extraordinary.

No one excels Ausonius in imagination or invention, in strength of language or

in keenness of wit. But his faults at least counterbalance his merit; for his fancy, which is inexhaustible, is never chastised by a sense of propriety or decorum. His language is inelegant, and the inequality of his pieces is the consequence of negligence, an unpardonable fault in a writer. He who presumes to solicit the public attention, ought certainly to omit no means in his power to deserve it; and the useful qualities of diligence and accuracy, give respectability to moderate talents and atone for many defects in composition.

It should seem as if it had been impossible to corrupt the chastity of Virgil's muse; but the ill-placed industry of Ausonius has effected this unjustifiable purpose, and his *Cento Nuptialis* will be an eternal monument of his disgrace.

CLAUDI AN.

Towards the end of the fourth century, and in the reign of Honorius and Arcadius, Claudian wrote several poems, which

which are scarcely worthy the name of epic. His Rape of Proserpine stood highest in his own esteem, and the opinion of critics has confirmed the judgment which he formed of it. But genius not under the guidance of discretion, is ever found to be equally dangerous in writing and in conduct. His flights are often extravagant although beautiful, and his figures are too bold to be endured by the lovers of correct composition.

The purity of his language and the melody of his numbers, obtained him the praise of Scaliger. Of wit he has the happiest vein; and it is a subject both of surprise and concern, that as the latter part of his life was passed in retirement and literary ease, he did not employ it in correcting the inequalities of his work, and weighing them by that standard of taste of which, from his admiration of Virgil, he had formed no incompetent idea.

He would then perhaps have possessed much of the majesty of the Mantuan bard, and might have claimed the distinguished
honour

honour of exhibiting an exception to the corrupted style which deforms all the poetry, not only of his own age, but of the three centuries which preceded him.

SECTION XVI.

Roman Oratory.—The Gracchi.—Cato.—Cicero.

ORATORY, though long cultivated, had not made any remarkable progress at Rome, until the time of Cato the censor and the Gracchi. No clear idea is left us of their predecessors, except that they were far from reaching perfection; for although they possessed genius, it was neither under the direction of art, nor polished by the refining influence of taste. But they were destitute of that elegance, that harmony, that method of arranging words and constructing periods, all which occupy so distinguished a place in the business of an orator, who is no less obliged than the poet to consider the ear as the avenue to the heart. Vehemence and pathos were the characteristics of the Gracchi, gravity and energy those of Cato. The Gracchi appear to have been in the number of those who

were first instructed in Greek learning. This accomplishment they owed to the care of their mother Cornelia, the daughter of Scipio Africanus, a woman whose name will be venerated in every age, as long as learning shall be honoured, and virtue shall be loved.

But still the Latin language was not then brought to perfection, nor did it approach its acme till the seventh century of Rome, an epoch dignified by Antony, Crassus, Scævola, Sulpitius, and Cotta, who sustain so distinguished a part in the dialogue of Cicero de Oratore.

Of these celebrated characters, and of the whole history of Roman eloquence, no monuments remain, but such as are contained in the writings of Cicero.

MARCUS TULLIUS CICERO was born at Arpinum, a city of the Sabines, now part of the kingdom of Naples, about one hundred and ten years before Christ. He was of equestrian origin; but the term of *new man* was applied to him, because he was
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the first of his family who had borne any office in the state.

The leading circumstance which strikes every attentive peruser of the life of this great man, is the wonderful care which was taken of his education by his father, and the zeal with which the ingenuous youth seconded his efforts.

The Gracchi were not more indebted for their acquirements to the institution of their noble mother, than was Cicero for his unrivalled accomplishments to the never-ceasing attention of his parent. That wise and tender parent quitted his elegant retreat at Arpinum, in order that his son might attend, during the day, a public school at Rome, over which a Greek master of eminence presided. The progress he made in his learning astonished his school-fellows; and so rapid was the diffusion of his fame, that many of their parents came to see the extraordinary youth.

When Cicero assumed the manly gown, at the age of sixteen, he was placed under the care of Q. Mucius Scævola the augur,

the principal lawyer and statesman of his age. This was an advantage of incalculable value, and entirely unknown to modern times. In Rome, boys became proficient in the laws of their country by learning the twelve tables by heart, at the same time that they acquired an easy and perfect knowledge of the Greek language, by reading it without the pernicious aid of a translation,—a practice which always retards, and in this country, too frequently prevents the acquirement of it altogether. Cicero, when a boy, would sustain a dispute on any legal subject with the greatest lawyers of his age. He also attended the pleadings at the bar, and the public speeches of the magistrates, still reading and taking notes at home, and translating the orations of the best Greek orators.

His imagination was constantly excited by the practice of poetry, and his understanding enlarged by the researches of philosophy. As armies were placed under the command of statesmen, Cicero made a campaign, in the social war, with the Consul A. Pompeius Strato, the father of Pompey

the Great. But the greatest excitements to his industry were the fame and splendour of Hortensius, a celebrated orator, whom he mentions in the warmest language of encomium. An active and laudable emulation exercised him, day and night, in logical disputes, in Greek and Latin declamations, and in every possible form of oratory: when to this was added the conversation of the learned and polite, the result was such, that at the age of twenty-six he appeared at the bar, possessed of unexampled accomplishments.

This account which is given to us of the early years of Cicero, equally creditable to his father, his tutors, and himself, will evince the efficacy of classical education, by an instance where it produced the wonder of his age. He was indeed so far from placing any implicit confidence in his natural talents, that he applied as diligently, and cultivated them as assiduously, as if they had been of an inferior description.

This is an useful lesson to those who, trusting to a certain quickness of parts with which nature has endowed them, disdain

the drudgery of application, that is requisite to the accomplishment of the scholar, however bright and distinguished his genius.

When Cicero first appeared as a lawyer, Hortensius was denominated the king of the bar; he had the honor therefore of contending with this formidable adversary, and the glory of obtaining the esteem of him, whom he excelled. But it appears, that the eloquence of his rival wanted that solid foundation of close reasoning, which is one of the requisites of an able pleader. Splendour and ornament constituted the principal merit of his speeches; and his action was more suited to the stage than to the bar. What pleased in youth had fewer attractions in mature age, when a judicious audience expects all the weight and dignity which belong to knowledge and experience. The truth seems to be this, that Hortensius declined in the opinion and favour of the public in proportion as Cicero was elevated. This unequal contest clouded their intimacy. The latter thought

he had reason to complain of the conduct of his rival during his exile; but at his death he paid him a sincere tribute of regret.

The first public or criminal cause in which Cicero engaged, was in the defence of Roscius, charged with the murder of his father, by two of his relations who had actually assassinated him.

Amidst the proscriptions of Sylla, they hoped to secure the estate of Roscius, which they had bought for a trifle, by a charge of parricide.

In this cause, the avenue to his future fame, Cicero shewed an intrepidity which was highly creditable to him; for, through fear of the dictator, all the great lawyers had, with a pusillanimous concurrence, refused to undertake the defence of the accused.

It is our happy lot to live in an age and in a country, when in state questions, not only innocence is sure of a defender, but even guilt will find an advocate to urge its extenuations.

Such were not the times, when Chrysgonus, the freed-man of Sylla, and the partaker of his plunder, unexpectedly found one lawyer who dared to expose himself to the resentment of a most powerful enemy.

When all the world were mute, Cicero ventured to speak. The ardour of virtue animated the first efforts of his youth, and exhibited a fine contrast to that timid and paltry caution, which refrigerates maturer years.

This noble conduct was one of the best recollections, that consoled him in his subsequent misfortunes. He mentions it to his son with pleasure; and cites his own example as a lesson of that generous spirit, which thinks no more of danger, whilst it is engaged in the protection of innocence.

Having passed two years in the practice of his profession, he repaired to Athens, and there he lived in the society, and availed himself of the instruction of scholars in every department of science; there commenced his friendship with Atticus, and that

that honorable connexion was severed but by death; there he acquired that tempered action, that chastised fancy, and that strength of voice, which accomplished him as an orator; and there he cherished those patriotic sentiments which on many occasions gave a colour to his future life.

These were the sentiments which actuated him in his accusation of Verres. It is true that he carried into this cause very great advantages; he was in the flower of his age, and in the full career of his honors; he had exercised the quæstorship in Sicily with credit, and had been elected Edile. The Roman people, charmed with his eloquence, and persuaded of his integrity, lavished upon him, on all occasions, the most marked eulogiums. But in attacking Verres, he had formidable obstacles to encounter, for the culprit was supported by the credit of every thing most powerful in the state. The great, who considered it one of their privileges to entrench themselves in the government of the provinces by the most alarming extortions, made a common cause with
with

with him ; and foreseeing in his punishment an example to terrify themselves, employed all the methods in their power to withdraw him from the severity of the laws. Cicero, to whom the Sicilians had addressed themselves, as to the natural protector of a province, to which he had been Quæstor, repaired to Sicily, to obtain the evidence which he required against the accused. He had demanded more than three months for his voyage ; but having learned that it was determined to protract the trial until the following year, when Metellus should be Prætor, and Q. Metellus and Hortensius consuls, all defenders of Verres, he collected his information in fifty days, and returned to Rome at the moment when they least expected him.

Considering that the pleadings would occupy many hearings and much valuable time, he proceeds immediately to the testimonial proof, in which for every fact he cites the witnesses, that Hortensius might examine them.

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The evidence was so clear, the depositions so concurrent, the sentiments of the assembled multitude so unanimous, that Hortensius dared not reply, but advised Verres to exile himself previous to the passing of the sentence.

This circumstance was the reason that, of the seven speeches written by Cicero against the delinquent, only two were spoken. He left the rest as a model of the manner in which an accusation ought to be sustained. The two last speeches are generally regarded as examples of perfection. They have for their object, the one the robberies and the rapines of Verres, the other his cruelties and barbarities. The first is remarkable for a variety and richness of detail, by which a crowd of robberies are recounted, without producing satiety to the reader; the second is admirable for its vehemence and pathos, by which Cicero excites pity in favour of the oppressed, and indignation against the criminal. Whilst these speeches display the incomparable powers of the orator, they
likewise

likewise exhibit a horrid picture of arbitrary authority exercised by the Roman governors in their provinces, and of the abuses which were practised when corruption of manners prevailed over the wisdom of the laws. In this view they are a lesson to statesmen, and a warning to every nation that yet retains its freedom. When we read a detail of atrocious and innumerable crimes, a single one of which deserved death, we reflect with indignation on the defect of the Roman jurisprudence, which had more regard for the name of citizen than for that distributive justice which proportions punishments to offences.

This code of laws, worthy of eulogy in many other respects, allowed that a Roman citizen who condemned himself to exile, should be considered as sufficiently punished. Verres, having in his exile led a miserable life, returned during the proscriptions of Octavius and Antony; but imprudently refusing to present the latter with the beautiful Corinthian vases and Grecian statues, the relics of his Sicilian plunder,

plunder, he was placed amidst the number of the proscribed, and perished together with the innocent and virtuous.

The history of the Catiline conspiracy is so well known, that perhaps weariness may attend the repetition of it; but if we would thoroughly appreciate the speeches of Cicero, we must recur to the situation of the republic at the time.

The ancient spirit of Rome no longer existed. The degradation of the mind followed the corruption of the manners. Marius and Sylla had proved, that the Romans could endure tyrants. Love of liberty, and the laws founded on equality, could not subsist with that monstrous power, and those enormous riches of which the conquest of so many countries had put the Romans in possession. Julius Cæsar, suspected of being a party in the conspiracy, hurt at the pre-eminence of Pompey, and the predilection, which the senate had shewn him, thought only of reviving the spirit of Marius. Pompey, without aspiring publicly to the tyranny, wished that the
troubles,

troubles and disorders arising from the factious disposition, which reigned throughout the state, might reduce the Romans to the necessity of placing themselves under his protection, by naming him Dictator.

The great, to whom the spoils of the three parties were insufficient for their luxury and desires, feared every thing that might repress their exactions, and raise the authority of the laws. A small number of citizens, with Cicero at their head, sustained the republic when on the brink of ruin, and became the objects of declared or concealed hatred to all, who were interested in the overthrow of the state.

In this fortunate conjuncture, Catiline formed his well-known project. Of the four speeches of Cicero against him, there are two particularly deserving our admiration, since it is evident from the circumstances, that the orator had scarcely any time to prepare them. Historians tell us in what way he preserved his speeches, which were made upon the spur of the occasion.

caſion. He was accuſtomed to place ſhort-hand writers in the ſenate, who wrote almoſt as faſt as he ſpoke. That art, ſo early invented, was afterwards loſt; but the invention, renewed in our days, belongs to Cicero.

Some perſons not well acquainted with Roman manners and the hiſtory of the times, have been ſurpriſed that the Conſul did not immediately arreſt Catiline, after the clear information of the conſpiracy given him by Fulvia. The decree of the ſenate had furniſhed him with the power; but the whole body of the nobles, jealous to an exceſs of their privileges, would have revolted, if he had deprived a patrician of his liberty, not only unconvicted but unaccuſed. In his addreſs to the criminal in the ſenate, “ How long, O! Catiline, will you abuſe our patience?” we recognize the orator and the ſtateſman.

It is a moſt pleaſing reflection to the hiſtorian, whenever an inſtance occurs in which the delineation of genius is at the
ſame

same time the record of virtue; but the honour apparently attributable to Cicero is in no small degree sullied, when we recollect that there was a time, when he had resolved to defend Catiline, in order to obtain the consulship the more easily; "That if he obtained his acquittal, he might be the more ready to serve him in their common petition."

When, however, Cicero had determined to take the better part, his conduct in a difficult conjuncture is worthy of the greatest praise.

Sallust, whose enmity to him is evident, speaks of the elegant speech pronounced on the occasion by Cicero, which he afterwards published. This procured an almost unanimous sentence of death to be given by the senate against the conspirators, which was executed immediately.

"They have lived," were the few words which were used by the consul to the assembled partizans of the conspirators, by which he for ever damped all their
hopes

hopes of successful rebellion, and dispersed them in an instant with amazement and terror.

It was night, and Cicero was conducted home by the principal men of the city, and amidst the acclamations of all the people. They placed flambeaux at the gates of their houses to light him on his way. The women from the windows shewed him to their children as he passed. Some time after, Cato before the people, and Catulus in the senate decreed him the name of "Father of his country;" a glorious title, which, in after-times, adulation attached to the imperial dignity, but which Rome, while free, says Juvenal, gave to no one but Cicero.

It would be a fruitless task to refer to his various orations, of which the text carries its own comment to scholars, and which the industry and talents of Middleton have placed in so favourable a light before the English reader; but it is impossible not to hint at his defence of Muræna,

which not only shews the flexibility of his genius, displays the ardour of his friendship, and the purity of his eloquence, but strikes us with astonishment, if we consider the moment, when it was undertaken.

At a period, when one should think, that the danger of the state would fully occupy his mind, since he was engaged in watching every step of the conspiracy so closely, that he could with difficulty allow himself any hours of sleep, did he find leisure to oppose Cato and Sulpicius, and to become the strenuous and successful advocate of Muræna.

While we see the great orator, passing from the sublime to the simple, and exhibiting so adroitly all the characteristics proper to that kind of composition, his art of discussion, his choice of examples, his agreeableness of turn, his delicacy and pleasantry, are infinitely more worthy our admiration, if we consider, that they were displayed amidst forced intervals and pauses
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of anxiety and apprehension for the existence of the republic.

Cicero exhibited much resolution in his speeches against Antony, who was no less an enemy of the state than of himself. They were fourteen in number, and he called them Philippics, because they had it for their object to animate the Romans against Antony, as Demosthenes animated the Athenians against Philip.

The second was particularly famous amongst the Romans, and passed for a divine work, for so Juvenal denominates it. Although never spoken, it was published in Rome and Italy, and read with avidity. Antony never pardoned the author, and this was the principal cause of his death.

Cicero cannot be reproached with being wanting to his duty at the truly lamentable period, when Antony was all-powerful.

“ When young, I defended the republic; I will not abandon it in my old age. I have braved the sword of Catiline; I will not tremble at yours !”

But intrepidity was not his permanent characteristic. When the enmity of Clodius produced his banishment, even his panegyrists blush at his pusillanimous despondence. He, who had eagerly stolen every moment in his power from his professional pursuits to refresh himself with the elegant repast afforded him by the perusal of the Greek authors, might surely in his misfortunes have derived from them the same rational entertainment: he who, when at Athens, said, that there were many things, which he never could have borne, had he not taken refuge in the port of Philosophy, with his friend Atticus, the companion and partner of his studies, ought surely, in his solitude, to have drawn consolation from similar researches: but his mind was destitute of that firmness which renders men superior to adverse fortune; and in a letter to Terentia during his exile, he bewails his unhappiness, and confesses, that it is the effect of his cowardice.

In the civil war between Pompey and Cæsar, the same imbecility disgraced him.

His irresolution, in his letters to Atticus, is in no small degree reproachful to him: for who, that pretends to the character of a patriot should hesitate in the choice of his party, when he perceives, that on the one side is all the justice, and on the other all the power? His attachment to Pompey was undoubted; and it is no apology for repairing so late to his camp, that he had perspicacity enough to foresee the issue of the contest.

When the day of Pharsalia decided the victory against his friends, prudence might induce him to abstain from any farther unavailing opposition to the conqueror: but it furnishes no eulogium upon a man, whose life was already turned of sixty, that he composed a poem in honour of Cæsar, for the paltry purpose of retaining the provinces of the Gauls. How feeble was the energy of that virtue which could not repress the prostitution of his talents, but evaporated in a dishonourable confession, "that he found it difficult to digest the meanness of recantation!"

With just sentiments, but wavering resolution, no one in high stations can be truly great. Cicero is not a single instance to prove the truth of this assertion. The future historian of our own country may find perhaps a parallel example, and perceive that, in less perilous conjunctures, personal intrepidity has been sometimes wanted to give dignity and respect to genius the most refined and attainments the most extensive.

Allow to Cicero all the attraction in the character of Cæsar, arising from a similarity in their taste, as men of letters, or a stronger argument deducible from his artful and mild demeanour, which might excite some hope, that he would restore the republic; yet if these would have furnished a vindication of forbearance, they will not sustain any apology for adulation.

If this question did not bring its own solution, the disposition of Cicero is clearly evinced, when placed in contrast with that of Brutus, by a reference to their correspondence

respondence respecting Octavius. In this it must be confessed, that the one discovers himself a time-serving politician, the other a bold and unyielding republican.

If honesty be policy, cunning is not wisdom ; Octavius felt no scruple to give up dubious adherent to the resentment of a powerful colleague ; and the fugitive could scarcely hope to redeem the errors of a life, advanced to its grand climacteric, by meeting with apparent calmness the irresistible stroke of the assassin.

If the conduct of Cicero be a proof of the weakness of human nature, his works are a splendid attestation of the powers of the human mind. Livy says that, to praise Cicero, the panegyrist must be another Cicero ; and in the time of Quintilian, his name was given to any one whom they wished to designate as supremely eloquent. Ages have ratified the custom, and immortalized the orator.

It would be absurd to revive the much-contested question respecting the superiority of the Greek or Roman orator, which

at last will be decided by the varying taste of different readers. We cannot judge by the instantaneous effects of their eloquence upon the audience; but Philip and Æschines, Antony and Catiline, best knew its force. Both had the same success, both exercised the same empire over the soul. Perhaps the powers of each were best suited to the conjunctures, which called them into action. It is a melancholy, but an incontestable truth, that the troubles of a state are favourable to the orator: but, as the art of medicine would be of no avail but for diseases; so, if eloquence be subservient to the passions, it is eloquence alone which can combat them.

The different character of the Greeks and Romans may furnish us with an argument to evince the parallel merit of Demosthenes and Cicero in the mode of speaking, which each of them adopted. In Athens there was but one power, that of the people: it was an absolute democracy. The Athenians were fickle, careless, fond of repose, idolaters of pleasure, confident of
their

their power, and jealous of their glory. They required to be strongly excited; and the natural talents of Demosthenes were of necessity modified by the knowledge, which he had of his hearers. His object, therefore, was to strike the inattentive multitude with violence, well knowing that if he gave them time to breathe, or to repose on the agreeableness of style, or the beauties of diction, all would be lost. "By the advice of Demosthenes, the people of Athens resolve and decree," is the common formulary preserved in the historians of Greece.

It was not the same at Rome; there was a diversity of powers, and a complication of interests to be managed. Although the sovereignty resided, in fact, in the people, without being so established in theory, the administration was in the senate, except where the tribunes carried an affair before the assembled people and caused a plebiscitum to pass.

As law required the concurrence of the two orders, hence frequent disputes arose between them. The Romans were more
serious,

serious, more reflecting, more moral, than the Athenians; at no time would they have borne the reproofs which Demosthenes lavished without scruple. Cato alone indulged himself in them, and they excused it on account of his stoicism and his virtue. A difference in the auditory must produce a difference in eloquence.

The two characteristics of Cicero, as an orator, are insinuation and ornament, for he had to manage both the senate and the people. Quintilian calls him the great commander of the human affections. Pliny admires the man who could persuade the multitude to give up their bread, their pleasure, and their injuries, to the charms of his eloquence.

After the conquest of Greece, an ornate style acquired irresistible attractions at Rome, in proportion as taste and luxury began to prevail. They attached a great value to diction above all other qualities at the bar, where the pleadings were prolonged as much for the amusement as for the instruction of the audience; so that

Cicero

Cicero applied more care than Demosthenes to richness of expression, because it was expected of him. Lovers of Atticism have reproached him with a profusion of ornament, and Quintilian, his passionate admirer, felt himself obliged to justify him on that point.

The gravity of senatorial debate would not bear all that vehemence, which was necessary to Demosthenes, in his harangues before the people, to fix their attention; and the Philippics of Cicero are, on this account, less animated than those of the Greek orator.

Except in a few instances, he reserved the thunders of his eloquence for the judicial contests. There he had a career proportioned to the abundance and the variety of his means. This was the triumph of his talents. But even in this point he differed from Demosthenes, who flew directly at his enemy, always attacking and striking; in lieu of which, Cicero makes a formal siege, prepares himself for all events, and surrounds

furrounds his enemy on every side, until he crushes him.

It has been observed by Dr. Middleton, “ that his treatise on the complete orator is a standing monument of his abilities, and that it marks the way, by which he forms himself to that character, which will never be equalled till there be found united in any man the same parts and the same industry.” In his government in Asia, he was always up before day-break, walking in his hall, with his doors open, as he used to do when a candidate at Rome, which he says was not at all troublesome to him from his old habit and discipline. When the civil war removed him from the government, in his elegant retreats he substituted the delights of philosophy for the labours of eloquence and of office. At this period he composed those works, of which a part is lost, but which formed a complete course of the philosophy of the Greeks. They were the produce of five laborious years, written amidst the storms, which often threw him
into

into the waves of public discord, and in which, together with the Roman liberty, he was at length engulfed. The object of five dissertations in dialogue, which he calls the *Tusculan Questions*, because the scene is laid at Tusculum, one of his country houses, is to inquire into the constituents of happiness: and he has remarked five;—contempt of death; patience under pain; firmness in the different trials of life; a habit of combating the passions; finally, the persuasion that virtue ought not to seek any recompence, but in herself. This theory is taken from the doctrines of the academy and the portico, adorned and corrected by Cicero. All that philosophy possesses, worthy of regard in metaphysics and in morals, is here embellished by eloquence; and whatever is defective must not be imputed to the author, when we recollect, that revelation alone has supplied it to us.

Cicero offers very plausible arguments for the immortality of the soul, and memory appears to him to be a wonderful faculty

faculty, which cannot belong to matter. To those, who deny the immortality of the soul, because they do not conceive what it can be, when separated from the body, he gives this rational answer: And do you understand better what it is in its union with the body? I think; therefore I exist; says Descartes.

The veneration of Cicero for the divine Plato was profound; it is therefore no wonder, that he should concur with him on this most important subject.

In his excellent treatise on the nature of the Gods, the intention is to prove the existence of a Providence, and to justify his ways; to ridicule and refute all the dogmas of those philosophers, who either disbelieved the creative power of a Supreme Being, or who pourtrayed their deities, more absurd and more vicious than human beings.

Amongst the ancient moral treatises, none is better adapted to the perusal of youth than that on the various duties of man. His treatises on old age and friendship meet a panegyrist in every reader. The

former is most particularly attractive, and would almost make old age desirable. Cicero was, and had a friend; his letters to Atticus attest this truth. Here we find the characteristics of true friendship accurately traced, the best precepts for the preservation of it inculcated, and the odious sentiment of an ancient exposed, who said, that "we ought to love, as if we must one day hate."

Cicero carried his researches into the regions of philosophy, and ably conducted the most abstruse questions of moral and metaphysical science. As a philosopher, his mind was clear, capacious, penetrating, and insatiable of knowledge. As a writer, he was endowed with every talent that could captivate either the taste or the judgment. The being of a God, the immortality of the soul, a future state of rewards and punishments, and the eternal distinction of good and ill, these were the subjects of his inquiries, and he has placed them in a more convincing point of view than they were ever represented to the Pagan world. His arguments, diction, zeal, and eloquence,
place

place him on the summit of human celebrity.

“ The letters of Cicero, of which there are four hundred to Atticus, are all written in the genuine spirit of the best epistolary composition; familiar, but elevated, easy but elegant, they display him in the social relations,—a warm friend, a zealous patron, a tender husband, affectionate brother, indulgent father, and a kind master; they exhibit an ardent love of liberty and the constitution of his country, much interesting description of private life, and of public transactions and characters.”

To the lover of eloquence copious and diffuse, Cicero will stand without a rival; to him, whom a style of energy and compression captivates, the Grecian orator will appear transcendent in dignity and in fame: but every candid critic, and every man of modesty and decorum will allow, that egotism and vanity have debased the high attainments, and sullied the splendid pages of the Roman orator.

SECTION XVII.

*Roman Moralists and didactic Writers.—Seneca.—
Quintilian.—Pliny the Younger.*

ROMAN eloquence, precipitated in the fate of Roman liberty, was deprived of its dignity, elevation, energy, boldness, and importance. It would not shew itself in the assemblies of a people, who had no longer any power; and in the deliberations of the senate, it could only be displayed in humility and adulation.

The tribunals of justice were no longer worthy of its voice, since the public judgments had lost their credit and their majesty, where they discussed only petty interests, and where all the rest depended upon the will of an individual.

A free state is the proper field of eloquence. It produces antagonists, contests, dangers, and triumphs. Men take

their rank according to their faculties and their merit. Under an arbitrary government, civil and political life cannot be compared to a broad road, where every man may endeavour to out-strip his competitor; but to a narrow defile, where every one marches in silence and with cautious steps.

Such was the condition of the Romans after the time of Augustus; whose reign afforded a brilliant epoch of the perfection of taste in language, and in the fine arts, but saw true eloquence expire with the republic and with Cicero.

SENECA.

There are generally reckoned three ages in Latin letters: that of Ennius, Accius, Pacuvius, and Cato the censor, when the language was yet rude, as the manners of the people were gross; that of the Gracchi, who were the first, that tempered the Roman rusticity by the politeness of Greek learning; and finally, that of Cicero, in
which

which are comprized Crassus, Antony, Cæsar, and Hortensius, but the great orator gives a name and celebrity to the epoch.

L. ANNÆUS SENECA was a Spaniard, educated at Rome, where his father became one of the equestrian order. He was a lawyer of considerable eloquence, but, from a fear of the jealousy of the emperor Caligula, relinquished his profession; and, after he had been chosen Quæstor, was banished to Corsica, on a charge of too great intimacy with Julia Livilla the daughter of Germanicus and Agrippina.

After the death of the former, and the marriage of the latter with the Emperor Claudius, Seneca was recalled, and appointed preceptor to her son Nero.

In such a reign, it is not likely that the precepts of a philosopher could be tolerated. An idle pretence of his having engaged in a conspiracy enabled his pupil, then become Emperor, to command him to destroy himself; and the calmness with which he received the mandate, and the consolation, with which he encouraged his friends du-

ring the lingering process of his death, first unsuccessfully attempted by the opening of his veins, then by a draught of poison, and at last effected by the suffocation of a stove, have rendered him an object of pity and respect. He died before he had completed the fifty-third year of his age. His writings are on moral topics; and he is justly admired for his refined sentiments and virtuous precepts.

It is said by a panegyrist, "that no man ever produced greater or juster maxims. His conciseness imprints them on the memory, and their number is not superior to their value. In the character of a true moralist, he surpasses all the heathens." His first work is on Anger, addressed to Novatus; he argues strenuously against it, in opposition to the Peripatetics, and urges the restraining of it. His second treatise is on Consolation, addressed to his mother Helvia, in his banishment, suggesting every possible argument in its favour. A treatise on Providence, in which he vindicates its exist-

ence and the existence of evil, is conducted with great force of argument. The tract on Tranquillity of Mind, though confused in the arrangement, contains a variety of just observations. The discourse on the Constancy of a Wise Man is his best. That on Clemency, addressed to the Emperor, is worthy of a perusal; and those on the Shortness of Human Existence and on a Happy Life, are truly admirable. He had originally been a disciple of the stoic philosophy; but a fear of personal safety, which was endangered by the threats of Tiberius against all those who abstained from the use of meat, induced him to relax in his severity. As long as adulation could serve his purpose, Seneca practised it without bounds; but found, as flatterers have often done, that tyrants are not only cruel but capricious.

Nothing perhaps is more dangerous in a writer than genius without genuine taste.

The rays of light which he casually emits strike every beholder. The mists which obscure him are remarked but by a few.

As Seneca was endowed by nature with more spirit than genuine talents, he was more interested in decrying ancient eloquence than in endeavouring to excel it. He did not cease, says Quintilian, to declaim against those great models; because he perceived that his own manner of writing was very different from theirs, and that his glittering sententious style, possessing the charm of novelty, had a prodigious vogue with the Romans while his favour at court and his fortune continued to encrease. To be in the fashion it was necessary to write like Seneca.

His letters to Lucilius on moral and philosophical subjects have nothing of epistolary ease, but are replete with rhetorical, and sometimes with puerile declamation.

The turn of his thoughts is frequently forced, obscure, tortured, and affected. All these vicious qualities are to be found in his pages; but still the thoughts are ingenious, and the moral, like that of the stoics, is noble and elevated. It teaches
a con-

a contempt both of life and death, tends to exalt human beings above transitory objects, and to place virtue above all things.

But still the warmth of Seneca is that of the head, rather than of the heart. He is the rhetorician of the portico; Cicero the orator of morality. Their object is the same, and their principles are coincident; but, such is the disparity in their manner, that the academician has more real effect than the stoic. The sage of Cicero is a man, that of Seneca a chimera.

In his philosophical notions, there is neither connexion, clearness, nor precision. He is a stoic who acknowledges no other good than virtue; he is a materialist who declares that good to be a body. The passions alter the features of the countenance, and therefore the passions are corporeal. The virtues act by contact with the body; courage impels, moderation restrains: therefore the virtues are mechanism, and mechanism is body. The good of the body is corporeal, the good of man is the good of the body; therefore good is

corporeal. Such is the inconsequential reasoning of Seneca.

It is strange that a man who had access to the writings of Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero; who might have learned even from Pythagoras, that the soul in us is like harmony in instruments, the result of sounds, of measure and motion, should have profited so little by lights which had been so generally diffused.

The most accredited philosophers had believed that spirit and matter, the soul and the body, were two substances necessarily heterogeneous. Four hundred years had elapsed since Aristotle had distinguished the substances and the modes, the subjects and the attributes of being; and the ignorance of Seneca on this subject cannot therefore be excused like his ignorance in physics, which has its apology in the small progress that science had made at that period.

Seneca has, however, a species of energetic diction occasionally, of which the following passage is an example:

“ The death of Callisthenes is an eternal stain upon Alexander, which neither
his

his courage nor his military exploits will ever efface. When they say that he has destroyed thousands of Persians; we will answer, and Callisthenes: when they say that he has destroyed Darius, the sovereign of a powerful empire; we will answer, but he has killed Callisthenes: when they say that he has subjected every thing even to the ocean, that he has covered the ocean itself with new vessels, that he has extended his empire from an obscure corner of Thrace to the limits of the east; we will answer, but he has killed Callisthenes: when he shall even have eclipsed the glory of all the Kings and all the Heroes his predecessors; he has done nothing so great, as the crime of having killed Callisthenes."

The repetition is oratorical, and gives considerable effect to the sentences.

But Alexander did not kill Darius; and the murder of the philosopher was not a crime of a deeper dye than that of the noble Clitus, or the innocent and aged Parmenio. To his panegyrist it may be truly urged,
that

that he is less moral than Cicero or Plutarch; that instead of an abundance of thoughts, he has only an abundance of phrases turned into apothegms, to repeat the same idea; that his style is deformed by forced turns and flashes of wit, which may sometimes dazzle for an instant, but the futility of which strikes every attentive spectator.

He says, well and happily, That the funerals of children are always premature when mothers assist at them. He says to Nero, to whom his treatise on Clemency is addressed, The most galling servitude of grandeur is not to be able to descend from it, but this necessity is common to you with the gods. Heaven is their prison. He says that the gods do not suffer prosperity to fall upon any but abject and vulgar souls. Seneca, who was very rich, and for a long time powerful and honoured, might have been asked, if he thought himself abject before the Gods?

His morals are sometimes imperfect; as when he says, "I do not propose to equal
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equal the most virtuous, but to surpass the wicked.”

The ideas of ancient philosophy on the divinity were often absurd. The best of all are not exempt from error, and on this subject natural instinct has sometimes surpassed them.

Quintilian, while he renders justice to the spirit, the talents, and the knowledge of Seneca, says, that his style is throughout corrupt, and his example dangerous. He certainly contributed more than any writer to injure the public taste; for he had seduced the youth by the attractions of a tinsel-led style, of which they did not perceive the defects. He seems, indeed, to have erred by mistaking conciseness for precision. The former consists in confining the thoughts within the smallest possible space; and by that means becomes inaccurate, obscure, and equivocal: the latter consists, in an exact proportion between the idea and the expression; it adds to the force of language, but does not at all detract from its clearness or its beauty.

QUINTILIAN.

If any thing could give additional value to the writings of Quintilian, it is the epoch in which they were composed.

Marcus Fabius Quintilianus was a Spaniard, born during the reign of the Emperor Claudius, in the first christian century, and appointed by the government of Rome a public teacher of rhetoric: he was also a barrister of great eminence; and after the laborious exercise of his twofold office for the space of twenty years, he gave lasting celebrity to retirement by the composition of an immortal work.

All his promised visions of happiness were, however, quickly dissipated by the loss of his wife and two sons; and he died in the year ninety-five, dejected in spirit, and poor in circumstances.

For fifty years the world were not in possession of his institutes, which were discovered by a monk of Florence in the tower of a monastery.

Quintilian

Quintilian is as praise-worthy for his resolution, as he is respectable for his talents. In a degenerate age he conceived the bold project of reviving sound eloquence, and of restoring it to its ancient rights.

He did this first by his example; for his pleadings, which are unfortunately lost, are said to have been the only ones that recalled the age of Augustus. He saw the pure eloquence of Cicero and Hortensius, although for a while sustained by Messala and Pollio, soon precipitated to its fall by a crowd of rhetoricians who every where opened schools for the art which they had disgraced. He became the restorer of learning; and received the consular fasces from the Emperor Domitian, as a reward for the instruction which he had given to his nephews.

His institutes were written when he was sixty years of age; and though antiquity has transmitted his name to us with unbounded praise, and Martial calls him the glory of the Roman toga, still his invaluable

luable work on the subject of oratory contains his most splendid eulogium.

It is divided into twelve books; and comprehends not only a perfect system for the contemplation of the orators, but an able criticism on the works of the Greek and Roman classics. The general purport of the two first books, are precepts worthy the attention both of parents and of tutors. He shews the advantages of early application to study, and the preference of public to private education, on the ground, that it better qualifies youth to live in society, for which they were destined. A lecture may be of more avail when given to an individual; but the form of public schools, and the habit of public and similar exercises, in his opinion excite genius by the spur of emulation. The sensations are more lively when they are not solitary, and learning in public schools is diffused by contagion.

Quintilian conducts the young scholar through the instruction of his early years, to the study of eloquence; and in addition

to languages and grammar, he recommends music and geometry, as the one forms the ear and gives him the sentiment of harmony, the other accustoms him to accuracy and method. He requires from him who prepares himself for eloquence, what Cicero recommends in his treatise "On a perfect Orator." The peroration of his first book is a noble instance of the enthusiasm of an accomplished scholar. Youth are so susceptible of false taste, that he exhorts them to adhere to the perusal of the best authors; recommends Livy in preference to Sallust, but places Cicero before all others.

When he enters upon the subject of eloquence, he discusses all the frivolous questions which were then in vogue, and which are very uninteresting to us. He denies what we consider as a truth, that eloquence is the art of persuasion; and asserts what we probably may deny, that the name of orator does not belong to him, who is not at the same time eloquent and virtuous. With respect to the first
question

question he says, the definition is incorrect, since eloquence is not the only thing that persuades, for that beauty, and tears, and mute supplications, persuade also. When Antony the orator, pleading for Aquilius, suddenly tears off the habit of the accused and exhibits the wounds he had received in fighting for his country; the Roman people cannot resist the spectacle, but absolve the criminal. The answer seems easy and obvious; the Roman people were not persuaded, they were moved: and to speak correctly, beauty charms, tears soften, but eloquence persuades.

With respect to his second objection, the instance of Cæsar may refute it. Cæsar, in the opinion of Cicero, was a very great orator, but he certainly would not have allowed him to be a virtuous character.

All the world will agree with Quintilian when he exalts the art of speaking, and shews the pre-eminence which it gives to man above all other animals; and a more attentive perusal of the writings of Cicero
and

and Quintilian on the subject might probably tend to supply the great desideratum in an English education.

The art of eloquence, like other arts, is the effect of habit; and in so enlightened an age and country, it seems strange that an accomplished orator should still be regarded as a phenomenon. Whenever it shall become a fashionable part of the education of youth to learn to convey their ideas with as much care as they have acquired them, the wise senator and the able speaker will more frequently be found in the same person; and no long exercise is required to evince the assertion of Horace, "That if the subject be well understood, words will spontaneously present themselves."

Quintilian, like Aristotle, mentions three kinds of oratorical composition, the demonstrative, the deliberative, and the judicial.

Funeral orations are of the first kind; amongst the ancients, these were delivered by the relations of the deceased.

Julius Cæsar, in pronouncing an eulogy on his aunt Julia, deduced their mutual origin from the goddess Venus on the one side, and from Ancus Martius, the fourth king of Rome, on the other. Thus, said he, you will find in my family the sanctity of kings, who are the masters of men; and the majesty of the gods, who are the masters of kings.

Marcellus had been one of the greatest enemies of Cæsar. Since the battle of Pharsalia he had retired to Mitylene, where he cultivated in peace that literature which he passionately loved. In an assembly of the people, his brother Caius threw himself at the feet of the dictator to obtain his return. Cæsar desired that the suffrages of the senators should be taken individually. He wished to hear Cicero on a question which might exhibit the sensibility of his friendship, and he was not deceived.

In place of a simple form of compliment, Cicero addressed to the dictator the most noble, the most pathetic, and at the same time the most patriotic speech, that gratitude,
friendship,

friendship, and virtue, could dictate to an elevated soul. It is impossible to read it without admiration and emotion.

Blame is the predominant feature of another species of demonstrative eloquence, of which the first oration against Catiline, cited in a former page, furnishes a specimen.

The deliberative eloquence is found in the writings of the historians, in the Philippics of Demosthenes, and in the orations of Cicero for the Manilian, and against the Agrarian law.

It may not be inopportune to observe, that these Agrarian laws never were intended to attach upon private property, but only to divide certain conquered lands amongst a number of the poorer citizens. It was never a question, whether all the lands of the state should be equally divided amongst them, until the barbarians of the north enslaved all the polished countries of Europe. The most celebrated banditti of Rome, even the cut-throats of Catiline, did not conceive this plan. When the

tribune Rullus endeavoured to revive a law which was the stalking-horse of ambitious citizens, Cicero invited him to contest the point with him in public; and nothing more was heard of that bugbear with which the tribunes had always been accustomed to terrify the senate.

The judicial kind of eloquence comprehends all the affairs which are brought before courts of justice. The most remarkable of this species was the dispute, mentioned in a former part of these Commentaries, between Æschines and Demosthenes; and the defence of the latter is considered as the highest of the judicial kind.

In the Areopagus, a court remarkable for its purity, a crier was charged to interrupt the pleader, who wandered from his subject to endeavour to move the pity of the judges. In other courts, it was permitted the orator to assist himself with all his weapons; and in this art, Quintilian is of opinion that Cicero surpasses the Grecian orator.

In theory it seems either absurd or improper to attempt to make an impression upon a judge, who either is, or ought to be an impassible being. Demonstrative eloquence is, in the opinion of Quintilian, susceptible of all the ornaments of art. Deliberative eloquence ought to be more severe and dignified; judicial eloquence, strong in proof and convincing in argument, free in expression, impetuous and impassioned, and, lastly, powerful in exciting emotions in the judges. Of its five distinct parts, the exordium is to render the judges favourable and attentive, the narration to explain the fact, the confirmation to establish it by evidence, the refutation to destroy the arguments of the adverse party, the peroration to resume the substance of the discourse, and to engrave on the minds of the judges the impressions which it is most necessary to give them.

In this part of an oration, sensible objects were found to have the greatest effect. We see a tremendous example of it when Antony placed before the eyes of the Ro-

man people the bloody robe of Cæsar. Quintilian mentions some instances in which the absurd exercise of this art entirely defeated its intention and its use. An advocate, pleading for a young woman whose husband had been assassinated, expected that a great effect would be produced if his portrait were exhibited to the judges at the peroration; but the persons to whom the office was entrusted, not knowing which was the peroration, every time the orator turned his head their way, failed not to hold out the portrait; which when the spectators beheld, they found that he whom the widow lamented so much was nothing but an old cripple. They immediately burst into laughter, and thought no more of the pleader.

A certain person of the name of Glycon had brought a child into the court, with the hope that his tears and cries might soften his judges, and placed his tutor behind him to prompt him when he ought to begin. Glycon, full of confidence, addressed him at the critical period, and asked him why he
wept?

wept? It is because my tutor pinches me!" exclaimed the child. Thus ended all the hopes of the orator.

The business of a speaker is threefold, to instruct, to move, and to please. He instructs by reasoning, he moves by the pathetic, he pleases by elocution. In the latter are three predominant qualities, clearness, correctness, and ornament. Quintilian treats of the arrangement of words, of numbers, and harmony of periods. Every scholar, senator, and public speaker, will read him with pleasure and advantage; and although his object was to form his disciples for the Roman bar, and his work is more particularly applicable to their tribunals, yet it will open a wide field of instruction to every one who shall pursue the profession of the law in any age and in any country.

PLINY THE YOUNGER.

From Quintilian, the transition to Caius Plinius Secundus, his pupil, is easy. He

was born in Infubria about sixty years after our Saviour, and very early distinguished himself as a pleader at the Roman bar.

Enriched by a fucceffion to the eftate of L. Plinius Secundus his uncle, he refufed every reward for the defence of the innocent beyond the pleasure it afforded ; and, had his fpeeches been preferved, they would probably have refuted a modern maxim, that a legal opinion, not paid for, is not worth obtaining.

In addition to a mind which was captivated by the love and fuccefsfully engaged in the cultivation of letters, he poffeffed a heart in which all the charities refided. He was amiable to his acquaintance, and he was benevolent to all. Had a longer life than that of little more than half a century been granted to him, it is probable that pofterity would have received more testimonies of his genius and his virtues. His panegyric on Trajan is the language equally of praife and of truth, and is perhaps the only work which may ferve as an
object

object of comparison with the style of the preceding age. It was not published for many years after he had returned thanks to the emperor for appointing him consul. Praise to benefactors, when extended to topics of general character, is often extravagant, and sometimes unjust; yet in this instance, it had the rare advantage of being grounded on incontestible facts. History accords with his eulogium, and, when with the portrait of a virtuous prince he contrasts that of the tyrants who had preceded him, the contrast renders it more striking and valuable. Pliny says, his first object is to render to a great prince the homage that is due to his virtues; then to present to his successors not rules of conduct, but a model which may teach them to deserve an equal share of glory by the same means: that to dictate to sovereigns what they ought to be, is painful and presumptuous; to praise him who acts well, in such a manner that the eulogium may serve as a lesson to others, and be a light to conduct them on their way,

way, is an enterprize not less useful and much more modest.

After having stigmatized the baseness and unworthiness of those Emperors who only checked the incursions of the barbarians by pecuniary donations, and the purchase of captives to be the ornaments of an illusory triumph, he exhibits a very different conduct in his illustrious hero.

Every Emperor, at his inauguration, had a custom of distributing money amongst the people. The orator here expresses himself nobly and with interest on the circumstances which accompanied the liberality of Trajan. Another proof of the magnificence of the emperors, were the spoils and spectacles which they gave to the Roman people, who were idolaters of them. If any thing could produce a distaste for such representations, it would have been the atrocity of the tyrants named the Cæsars, who still found, in the amusements of the theatre and the combats of the circus, an occasion to make their subjects
more

more sensible of their despotism and their cruelty. Such was their attachment to a particular charioteer or gladiator, that they never scrupled to sacrifice those who espoused the opposite party. Under the Greek Emperors, this insensate rage was pushed to such an excess, that the faction of the Blues and the Greens, called so from the liveries of the circus, occasioned more than once the most horrible massacres in Constantinople. Before the time that Pliny wrote, Caligula, Nero, and Domitian had signalized their foolish passion for gladiators and pantomimes, by the most monstrous excesses. The sports given by Trajan seemed to have had another character; and this part of the panegyric, followed by an account of the punishment of informers, displays such beauties, that if Pliny had always written in this style, he might well have been compared to Cicero. He felicitates the emperor on putting an end to informers, who had, by false accusations of treason, deprived the state of many valuable citizens, and enriched

riched the imperial coffers with the spoil of the victims.

Trajan had lived a long time in a private condition. In that best situation for a reflecting mind, he had marked the abominable reign and tragic end of Domitian.

Adopted by Nerva, whose reign was extremely short, Trajan appeared to the desponding empire as a being of superhuman excellence. A man of such spirit, as Pliny, could not fail to seize this circumstance, so fortunate in its kind; and the observations he makes upon it are worthy of our perusal. With energy and elevation he justifies the manner in which he speaks of the tyrants who had oppressed Rome, and of the happiness which the subject of his panegyric had diffused.

In the letters of Pliny, we search in vain for that familiar ease and that disclosure of the heart, which are the proper characteristics of epistolary correspondence. It is much to be regretted, that we have only such letters as were written for posterity; however varied and agreeable their man-

ner,

ner, in however amiable a light they exhibit the author, they are not a faithful image of his mind. Ten books of them were selected by him, and prepared for the public. The names of the persons to whom they are addressed are those of his contemporaries most celebrated for their talents and their virtues; and the sentiments he expresses are worthy of such connexions. He interests us equally for the friends whose loss he regrets—the victims of Domitian, and for those who participated with him the blessings of his patron's reign.

But times of tranquillity do not affect the reader like the violent revolutions of the age which Cicero describes. They possess a higher attraction for the imagination, and furnish a richer aliment to the curiosity. In history, as on the theatre, nothing is less interesting than a happy people. Middleton, in his life of Cicero, allows that the “ Letters of Pliny are justly admired by men of taste, and that they shew the scholar, the wit, and the gentleman; but that their poverty and barrenness be-

tray the awe of a master. All his stories terminate in private life; there is nothing important in politics; no great affairs explained; no account of the motives of public councils. He had borne all the same offices with Cicero, whom in all points he affected to emulate; yet his honours were in effect but nominal, conferred by a superior power, and administered by a superior will, and with the old titles of consul and proconsul. We still want the statesman, the politician, and the magistrate. In his provincial command, where Cicero governed all things with a supreme authority, and had kings attendant on his orders, Pliny durst not venture to repair a bath or punish a fugitive slave, till he had first consulted and obtained the leave of Trajan.

SECTION XVIII.

*Roman Historians.—Julius Caesar.—Sallust.—Livy.—
Tacitus.—Quintus Curtius.*

THE Roman people were long celebrated for the prowess of their arms and the wisdom of their government, before any writer appeared amongst them. Literature did not commence with them, until the Roman spirit had been formed for ages: it exhibited therefore not only a different character, but a totally different object, from that which it had in Greece, where it was first excited by the imagination. The Romans despised the belles-lettres until the very moment when their philosophers, orators, and historians, rendered the talent of writing useful to the state: so that theirs is the only learning that in its origin was connected with politics.

We may remark certain characteristic differences in the three epochs of the literary history of Rome; that which preceded the reign of Augustus, the one which bears the name of that emperor, and that which may be reckoned from his death to the reign of the Antonines. Although Cicero died under the triumvirate, his genius appertains entirely to the republic. Though Ovid, Virgil, and Horace, were born during the republic, yet their writings are replete with monarchical influence. Even under the reign of Augustus, some authors, and particularly Livy, exhibit, in their manner of writing history, a republican spirit: but these are exceptions to the general observation, that the works of authors receive a colour from the existing form of the government.

Although the Romans were less early addicted to learning than the Greeks, and less captivated by works of the imagination, they are by some critics considered as their superiors in the depth and soundness of their understanding; and Quintilian has
been

been thought to have made too great concessions when he compared Livy to Herodotus, and Sallust to Thucydides; that we, who are equally indebted to both those nations, ought in this instance to differ from this judicious critic; that the Latin historians are better painters and better orators than those of Greece, with whom they have been compared; that the colours of Livy are brighter, and those of Sallust stronger; that the one excites more admiration by his brilliancy, the other by his energy.

JULIUS CÆSAR.

It is said, I think by Mr. Gibbon, that we are in want of a good life of Julius Cæsar. The leading incidents of it are too well known to require repetition, and the nature of this work calls for a reference rather to his literary than his political character.

In perusing his commentaries on the Gallic and civil wars, we feel a considerable

able interest from the circumstance of his relating events, in which himself was personally concerned, and in the account of which he has always been acquitted of partiality. He is circumstantial in the detail of facts, and he is delicate to a great degree in attributing to himself the merit he deserves. No one can be placed in a higher class as a credible historian. To have fought and to have written so well has happened to no one but Cæsar. His style is formed on that of Xenophon, and it possesses all the plainness and perspicuity of his model. It is the purest Latin, elegant without affectation, and beautiful without ornament. Where eloquence is at all necessary, Cæsar is eloquent, for he was an orator before he became an author. Hence some of his panegyriste have observed, that it was the heat of his eloquence which raised a suspicion of his being connected with the Catiline conspiracy.

If the commentaries may be considered only as notes or outlines of an history; what would have been the admiration of
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the literary world, had the author completed his work, since the first draught exhibits the general, the orator, the historian, and the scholar!

SALLUST.

About eighty years before the Christian æra, Crispus Sallustius was born in the country of the Sabines. He received his education at Rome, where he engaged in all the dissipation of the city, and exhibited a remarkable instance of dissolute conduct.

The contemplation of his writings is far more agreeable than that of his life. His preceptor, whose name was Pretexatus, perceiving that his scholar shewed a predilection for history, gave him a summary of the whole Roman history, to choose the particular parts which he wished to treat of. He composed the history of the civil wars of Marius and Sylla until the death of Sertorius, and of the temporary troubles

excited by Lepidus after the death of the dictator.

Nearly the whole of this work is lost, and all we have to boast are the Catiline conspiracy and the Jugurthine war.

His fame as an historian, in the former work, is sullied by his evident prejudice against Cicero, who ought to have appeared the prominent figure on the canvass. It is the duty of a faithful narrator not only not to say any thing that is false, but also not to omit any thing that is true.

The senate decreed thanks to Cicero for having delivered the state from imminent danger, without effusion of blood. This was a public act, mentioned by all the other historians: Sallust does not mention it. Catulus and Cato gave to Cicero the glorious name of father of his country, which Pliny and Juvenal have reported: Sallust does not mention it. The magistrates of Capua, the first municipal town in Italy, decreed a statue to Cicero for having saved Rome during his consulate: Sallust does not mention

it. The senate granted him an unprecedented honor; it ordained what they called supplications in the temples, which had never been granted but to those who triumphed: Sallust does not mention it. In the Catiline war, every thing is accurately detailed except the actions of Cicero. The fidelity of an historian is concerned not only in exhibiting the punishment of crimes, but the conduct and the reward of virtue.

But he had married Terentia, the repudiated wife of Cicero, and his personal enmity prevailed over his candour and his justice. Indeed he owed his situation to a fortunate election of his party. When his debaucheries had ejected him from the senate, he became a partizan of Cæsar, and by his power was restored to his seat. When governor of Numidia, he enriched himself by peculation, but the same circumstance preserved him from punishment; and Cæsar affords an additional example to that which is daily before our eyes, that

the head of a party is seldom scrupulous in the choice of his associates.

It is said that, when the people accused him to the dictator, Sallust was excused from making his defence, by giving to the master whom he had served a part of the money which he had stolen, and so secured to himself the peaceable possession of that magnificent house and those beautiful gardens at Rome, which still retain the name of their former owner, and which he enjoyed till he was fifty years of age, the period of his death. When the general demeanour of Sallust is recalled to our memory, it excites a smile in the reader, who finds him so loudly declaiming against the depravity of his age, and so anxiously wishing for the revival of ancient manners.

Sallust has been accused of endeavouring to impose upon posterity by affecting great austerity in his sentiments, and by holding out a moral which did not spring from the heart: that he searched for antiquated expressions only to establish a belief that
his

his principles, as well as his style, had the virtuous severity of the first ages of the republic: that he borrowed the terms of Cato the censor, in order to make it appear that he in some measure resembled that model of virtue, to whom, in every respect, he was directly the opposite.

In every thing that respects talents, Salust is eminently great. He exhibits not only a thorough acquaintance with the vices of Rome, but a deep and accurate knowledge of human nature. He is every where correct in his relation of events, and, except in a single instance, just in his delineation of characters. He fathoms the depths of human policy, and not only describes actions, but developes motives. In that respect he is sagacious as well as faithful, and executes with great ability the highest part of the historian's office.

The reader is always gratified when he is enabled to trace effects to their causes, is admitted to the cabinet as well as the camp, and obtains a clue which will open to him a way through the mazes of political life.

Thucydides was his model ; but in nerve and force he is thought to be his superior.

Seneca says, that in the Greek historian you may retrench somewhat without diminishing the merit of the diction, much less the plenitude of the thoughts. In Sallust, a single word suppressed, the sense is destroyed. While he is equally concise, energetic, and perspicuous, his sentences are less broken, less harsh, and more elegantly constructed than those of Thucydides. His descriptions are uncommonly correct, and his speeches are particularly animated. Who has ever read the speech of Catiline to the conspirators, beginning with the words " Ni Virtus," without being struck with admiration at the great ability of the writer? It would indeed have enhanced his fame, had he transmitted to posterity the noble and patriot address of Cicero to the rebel, when he was about to seat himself amongst the senators. The memorable exordium, " How long, O Catiline, will you abuse our patience?" rushes upon the subject with all the fire of Pindaric

Pindaric poetry, and the relation would have furnished an eulogium on the taste as well as the justice of the historian.

Sallust has been censured for the length of his harangues. Rapin says, that soldiers do not declaim like orators. But his speeches are those of eminent men, perfectly capable by education and talents to deliver them; and they are appropriate both to the occasion and to the speakers.

Though Sallust be concise in the narrative part of his history, he is completely accurate, and equally celebrated for brevity and for fire. The tediousness of his introductions is the only alloy to the excellence of his works. They are circuitous to no useful purpose, for they do not conduce to the main design, and are frequently as irrelative as they are prolix. It may probably have happened to many an impatient reader, to have relinquished the pleasure which this author would have afforded him, from the disgust, which he must have experienced at the outset. But the diligent scholar will not so soon give up the pursuit :

suit : he resembles the labourer, who exerts himself, with unabated vigour, to remove a ponderous and useless mass of earth, from the confident expectation that it covers a vein of rich and valuable metal.

LIVY.

About the middle of the century which preceded the birth of Christ, Titus Livius, a native of Padua, appeared at Rome to give celebrity to the Augustan age.

We have very little account of his life, but the defect is supplied by the possession of a work which has no rival amongst the ancients. When in its complete state, it was composed of one hundred and forty books, and embraced the whole history of the Roman empire, from its foundation to the death of Drusus, who was adopted by Augustus.

Of this inestimable performance, only thirty-five books remain. This loss, it is to be feared, is now irretrievable. Time and bigotry have probably concurred in
destroying

destroying this invaluable store of learning. The latter has been a restless, violent, and too successful enemy to learning; and many of the pages of this author have haply been obliterated to make room for the tales of a legendary saint or the masses of a superstitious monk.

So great was the reputation of Livy, and so extensively diffused, that an inhabitant of Cadiz, a place at that time entirely out of the world, went from his country for the sole purpose of seeing so distinguished a man, and returned as soon as his curiosity had been gratified. Upon this subject, it was well observed by St. Jerom, that it is a very extraordinary circumstance, that a stranger, entering a city such as Rome, should wish to see any thing there but Rome itself.

It is very remarkable, that, although patronized by Augustus, Livy dared to confer praise on the republican party, on Brutus, Cassius, and particularly on Pompey, inso-much that Augustus named him the Pompeian.

In

In the next reign, the conduct of government to authors was so changed, that Cremutius Cordus, fearful of the resentment of Tiberius, starved himself to death for having denominated Cassius the last of the Romans. Livy extols the rising state of Rome as if she had then been the mistress of the world; and perhaps in real grandeur and glory she more excelled, when she fought against Pyrrhus and against Carthage, than when her widely extended empire emboldened her to assume that imperious title. At the former periods, the republic appeared in the ascendant, when fortitude, patriotism, and probity, gave the truest dignity, and the brightest lustre to its name.

Livy has been accused of being a fabulous writer; but the prodigies he speaks of are only represented as traditional, and formed part of an empire where all was presage and divination. The bulk of the people were superstitious, and government turned this superstition to the public advantage. Irreligion alone has been found essentially hostile to social and moral order.

The

The books of the Sibyls were always holden sacred, and consulted as occasions required. Perhaps even the fine genius of Livy might be tinctured with the popular creed as to fatalism and divination. It has also been objected to this writer, that his history, in point of the speeches it contains, resembles a romance. It is sufficient to support the veracity of an history, if it gives the substance of what an eloquent man did or might be supposed to say on a certain occasion. At Rome, no one could aspire to office without being obliged sometimes to address three or four hundred senators, sometimes an assembled and tumultuous people. Legal accusations and defences were the great vehicles of eloquence. The most considerable members of the state were orators. Trifling discussions were carried before the prætors, at an inferior tribunal; but all important causes were heard before a certain number of Roman knights, in a vast forum, filled by an attentive multitude; so that he who exposed himself to this perilous proof, required to
be

be very sure of his talents and his firmness. Eloquence, a rare quality in monarchies; was rendered by habit a common one in the republics both of Greece and Rome. In those states, the art of persuasion carried with it a power, inconceivable by those, who live in countries, where it is the creature either of authority or of influence. The historian therefore has not too highly coloured the sentiments of the speaker, though perhaps he has varied or dilated the language, in which they were conveyed. If any one doubt whether the harangues given by Livy suit the character and circumstances of the speakers; amongst many, that would tend to solve the doubt, let him peruse the discourse which Quintus Capitolinus, one of the greatest men of his time, and, what meant the same thing when greatness and virtue were synonymous, one of the best citizens, addressed to the Roman people, when the animosity of the two orders made them forget their common interest, and be regardless of their common danger. The
Æqui

Aequi and Volsci were at their gates, about three hundred years after the building of the city, and there was no preparation or disposition to oppose them. On this occasion, Quintius mounts the tribune, and addresses the people in a speech, wherein are assembled all the means of persuasion, which the art of oratory possesses. The tone is noble, the style pathetic, the diction elegant and harmonious.

Quintilian speaks of the *laetea ubertas* of Livy. He is indeed a model of imitation to all, who would compose in Latin, for his narration has sweetness, purity, and eloquence. The high rank he holds amongst his contemporaries will always be sustained; he is ever intelligible, diffusive without tediousness, and argumentative without pedantry.

The cause of truth and virtue he uniformly defends: and as the life of a scholar is rarely replete with incidents, although that of Livy was extended to his sixty-seventh year, yet tradition has told us so little of him, that his works, which on every

account may be recommended to the study of youth, are the best comment on his character. The historical merit of this writer is the majestic flow of his narrative ; in which, events follow each other with rapidity, yet without hurry or confusion : to this may be added, the continual beauty and energy of his style, by which his readers are transported from their closet to the theatre of action.

The taste, the judgment, the eloquence of the Augustan age are no where more happily combined than in the pages of Livy. Be his subject what it may, whether it require force or delicacy, whether an army is to be inspirited to some great achievement, or a senate to be softened into compliance, he touches it with a master-hand. Each, for the time, appears his characteristic, till a sudden transition shews him equally possessed of the opposite.

Longinus says of the sublime, that it pleases every body, and pleases at all times. The Roman historian answers completely to this definition.

Nearly

Nearly two thousand years can attest the general approbation, with which he had been read. Sublimer thoughts are found in no historian, yet those of Livy are always unconstrained and natural to the person, who utters them.

It has been observed, that the writers of tragedy diversify their scenes by art; and after the mind has been kept long upon the stretch, by the representation of some great action, they throw in something of less importance to relax it.

Livy is said to have adopted their plan; and when he has excited all the pain and sorrow his readers can bestow, he soothes them by some engaging circumstance, that relieves the mind by diverting the attention.

Judgment is a predominant quality in him. It is equally evident in his selection of words, and in his delineation of characters. Not only are his Romans distinguished from the inhabitants of other countries by their opinions and their manners, but from themselves at the different

æras and under the different forms of their government.

This quality it is, which enables him to discern what is proper to every character, and to temper the fire of genius by discretion. This warrants his panegyrists in their warm eulogium, that “No man was ever great with so much ease, none was ever familiar with so much dignity.”

TACITUS.

“There yet remains to us,” says Quintilian, “a man who enhances the glory of our age, and is worthy to be remembered by posterity; whose name will be dear to them, although now I do not mention it. He has many admirers, but no imitators; for his love of liberty has injured him, though he has obliterated many things he had written. But you may discern his highly exalted spirit and his bold opinions, even in those, which remain. He is indeed a truly philosophical historian.”

“His

“ His Roman voice in base degenerate days,
Spoke to imperial pride in freedom’s praise ;
And with indignant hate, severely warm,
Shewed to gigantic guilt his ghastly form.”

HAYLEY.

In the first christian century and in the reign of Nero, Tacitus was born of an honorable family. His father was a knight, and the Governor of Belgic Gaul ; and himself passed through the gradation of civil offices, till, under the reign of Nerva, he was appointed Consul. His works are a remnant of the Roman history, of which twenty-seven years were completed by him, extending from the sixty-ninth to the ninety-sixth year of Christ, but of which only the first and part of the second year have reached posterity. He had written complete annals of Tiberius, Caius, Claudius, and Nero ; the whole of those of Caius, and the beginning of those of Claudius, are lost. Of thirty books we have only sixteen of this work, and five of his history.

We are, however, in possession of two inestimable compositions of Tacitus; the one, a treatise on the manners of the ancient Germans; the other, a life of Agricola, whose daughter he had married, and who had been governor of our island in the time of Domitian. Gibbon says of Britain, that “it submitted to the Roman yoke after a war of forty years, undertaken by Claudius the most stupid, maintained by Nero the most dissolute, and terminated by Domitian the most timid of all the Emperors.” Before we consider the writings of Tacitus, it may be proper to recur to the times, in which he lived. His infancy was passed amidst the horrors of the reign of Nero; he lived during the atrocities of Galba, the drunkenness of Vitellius, and the robberies of Otho; but having respired somewhat a purer air under Vespasian and Titus, was obliged in his manhood to sustain the hypocritical tyranny of Domitian.

Perhaps he may be said to have lived at a time, when the condition of the human race was more unhappy than at any other in
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the annals of the world. During four-score years, excepting only the short and doubtful respite of Vespasian's reign, Rome, says Mr. Gibbon, groaned beneath an unremitting tyranny, which exterminated the ancient families of the republic, and was fatal to almost every virtue and every talent, that arose in that unhappy period.

Tacitus was constrained to bend the loftiness of his soul and to relax the firmness of his principles, not to the debasement of a courtier, but to the compliance of a subject who dared not to complain. Incapable of deserving the friendship of Domitian, he could not but deserve his hatred. His disgust he was obliged to conceal, and in secret to lament the massacre of innocent citizens and the wounds of his much-loved country. Prevented from giving vent to his feelings, Tacitus, in the delightful retreat which literature always affords to the virtuous in their disappointments, poured forth a torrent of complaint and indignation, which alone could tend to console him. This is what

renders him so interesting and so animated a writer. When he inveighs, he does not declaim. A man seriously and deeply affected cannot do so. He paints, in colours most vivid, and most true, all that slavery has to disgust, all that despotism and cruelty possess to terrify.

The hopes and the successes of vice, the depression of innocence and the abasement of virtue, all that he had seen, and all that he had suffered,—he describes in such a manner, that his readers are rendered spectators and almost fellow-sufferers with himself. Tacitus has been sometimes called a general calumniator. But did not he who has so feelingly traced the last moments of Germanicus, and who has left so unqualified a panegyric on Agricola, discern virtue where it existed, and bestow upon it a splendid and a willing encomium? Tacitus was an orator of great eminence. He delivered a funeral oration on the death of Virginius, whom he succeeded in the consulship; and together with the younger Pliny, who was his bosom friend, he conducted the famous
cause

cause of the Africans against Marcus Priscus, accused, as Pro-consul, of having received bribes in his office. He was sentenced to pay three hundred thousand sesterces as a penalty, and to be banished from Italy.

Tacitus deservedly holds a very high rank amongst the historians of Greece and Rome. His summary view of those disastrous times, is an awful picture of civil commotion and the wild distraction of a frantic people. All legitimate government, and of course all liberty, were at an end, when the Prætorian bands, the armies of Germany, and the legions of Syria assumed the right of electing Emperors without the authority of the senate.

Tacitus probably survived his friend Pliny, and died in the reign of Trajan. Although they differed in politics, they were the ornaments of their age, men of distinguished talents, encouragers of literature, and patrons of virtue. Tacitus had read mankind as well as books. He had all the powers that constitute a fine genius ;

he had a thorough knowledge of all the modes of government then known in the world, was versed in all civil affairs, and intimately acquainted with the policy of statesmen. What a picture does he give of Tiberius! how are his art and treachery developed! and how much does the narration evince the propriety of a maxim, not always admitted, that truth only should be spoken of the dead! What painter can so well pourtray the destruction of the legions under Varus? How is the light contrasted with the shade, when he exhibits the amiable portrait of Germanicus; his death in Syria; and the appearance of his wife Agrippina at the port of Brundisium, when she quits the ship, leading her children and sustaining the urn of her deceased and murdered husband!

In the lively description of the historian, Messalina dying becomes almost an object of compassion. His annals have been called an Historical Picture-gallery; and those, who have denominated him a misanthrope, had they recollected that he had "fallen

on evil times" ought rather to have distinguished him as the anatomist of the human heart.

His life of Agricola is a perfect model of biography; a mode of writing cultivated in the time of the old republic, but entirely disused under the Emperors. This general, having carried his victorious arms from the south of Britain to the Grampian Hills, was recalled by Domitian through envy of his fame, and lived for a few years, the remainder of his life, in the calm delights of a peaceful retirement. The historian has written the life of his father-in-law, in language celebrated for its purity and elegance; and this performance has always been distinguished for the many excellent instructions and important truths, which it contains.

The style of the Annals, the work of his old age, consists of stately periods and much pomp of expression; that of the History is more subdued and temperate, sparing of words and replete with sentiment. Tacitus has been reproached with
falling

falling into the error, mentioned by Horace, of becoming obscure by attempting to be concise. He admits many Græcisms into his language; and in imitation of the manner, introduced by Seneca, is sometimes florid and poetical. His treatise, on the manners of the Germans, is a composition justly admired for the fidelity and exactness with which it is executed; and here the objections to his diction do not seem to have a place. His general language has been censured as being rather laboured than lofty, and his figures rather bold than just. It is however confessed, that his faults arise not from a want of power but of moderation; not from a deficiency of genius but of judgment; that when he chooses to descend from his exaltation, there is no author among the Romans, who writes with greater purity.

If a certain obscurity or affectation be found to deform his style and render it a dangerous model for the imitation of youth, exhibiting rather a misapplication than a display of talents; yet such is the dignity
and

and such the justness of his sentiments, such the profoundness of his understanding and apparent goodness of his heart, as to render him at least the equal of any historian of any country.

QUINTUS CURTIUS.

Amongst the historians of the first class, we may place Quintus Curtius; of whose life very little is recorded, but who probably wrote in the first century of our æra under the Emperor Vespasian. He has written in a short volume, divided into ten books, the life of Alexander the Great. Frenshemius has supplied very ably, the loss of the two first and one part of the last book. The style of this writer is very flowery and ornamented; but it well agrees with its subject, for he wrote the life of a very extraordinary man. Curtius particularly excels in his description of battles, but in his speeches the author is generally too prominent a figure. The speech of the Scythians, is however an exception. It is
 always

always read with pleasure, and has always been mentioned with praise.

He has been justly charged with geographical errors, and these have been rectified by Arrian. The accusation of having admitted much romance into his history, is not correctly stated; for Alexander does not appear to be a less singular character in other authors, than in Quintus Curtius.

The praises, which he lavishes on his hero, proceed from a congenial spirit of bold enterprise. Intrepidity and fire are with him the sovereign qualities of a man; for he had not sufficient coolness of judgment to enable him to distinguish the utility resulting from caution and from prudence. The story of the "World's great Victor," is perfectly suited to the genius of the historian. They are equally warm, and violent, and rash.

Curtius, however, though an ardent panegyrist, is not so entirely estranged from justice as to disguise the faults of Alexander altogether. After he has raised him above the highest of his species, he makes
some

some retribution to them, by occasionally depressing him beneath the lowest.

His style has freedom, life, and pleasantry; but is too lofty and declamatory. He wants simplicity, a distinguished excellence in writing; and notwithstanding the elegance of his orations and the fine flow of his language, the reader of Quintus Curtius will return with redoubled eagerness to the perusal of Livy.

SECTION XIX.

*Latin Historians of the second Class.—Trogus Pompeius.
—Justin.—Florus.—Velleius Paterculus.—Cornelius
Nepos.—Suetonius.*

THESE are biographers or abbreviators. The three most distinguished of the first kind are Justin, Florus, and Paterculus.

In the reign of Antoninus Pius, about one hundred and fifty years after Christ, Justin epitomized the universal history of Trogus Pompeius. This had contained all the great events from the beginning of the world to the age of Augustus; and as the earliest specimen of the mode of writing on so copious a subject, the loss of the original work is much to be regretted. Justin is not a painter of the manners, but a good narrator of events. He has however some traits of beauty; and the portrait of Philip of Macedon, and the comparison of

that prince with his son Alexander, claim and reward our attention.

Philip, says Justin, took more pains and had more pleasure in the preparation of a battle than in the arrangement of a feast. Money was with him only a sinew of war. He knew better how to acquire riches, than how to preserve them; and living on plunder, was always poor. It cost him no more to pardon than to deceive. His conversation was sweet and alluring. He was prodigal of promises, which he did not keep; and whether he were serious or gay, he had always a design at the bottom. His constant maxim was, to careſs thoſe whom he hated, to infligate quarrels between thoſe who loved him, and ſeparately to flatter each party, whom he had alienated from the other. He was poſſeſſed of eloquence, had a ready apprehenſion, and a graceful delivery. He had for his ſucceſſor his ſon Alexander, who had greater virtues and greater vices than himſelf. Both triumphed over their enemies, although by different means.

means. The one employed open force only; the other had recourse to artifice. The one congratulated himself, when he had deceived his enemies, the other when he had conquered them. Philip had more policy, Alexander more dignity. The father knew how to dissemble his rage, and sometimes to conquer it; the son in his vengeance knew neither delay nor bounds. Both loved wine too well; but drunkenness, which opens the heart, produced different effects in them. Philip in going from a feast, went to seek for danger and exposed himself with temerity; Alexander turned his rage against the associates of his rivalry. The one often returned from battle, covered with wounds, received from his enemies; the other rose from table, defiled with the blood of his friends. The father wished to be loved; the son desired only to be feared. Both cultivated letters, the former through policy, the latter through taste. The one affected more moderation to his enemies, the other had in reality more clemency and good faith. It was with

these different qualities, that the father laid the foundation of the empire of the world, and that the son had the glory of completing the illustrious achievement.

The little work of Justin contains the history of two thousand years. It begins with Ninus, the founder of the Assyrian empire; and the account of those early periods is much more dilated than the size of the volume would induce us to expect.

If he approach the best Roman writers in purity and elegance, he is inaccurate as a chronologer; and when he mentions the Jews, he is a prejudiced historian. Excellence of style will not atone for the defect of fidelity; as talents, however distinguished, cannot excuse the absence of virtue.

FLORUS.

L. Annæus Julius Florus was born a little more than a century after our Saviour, and composed an abridgement of the Roman history till the time of Augustus.

He has the singular merit of having included in one small volume, in four books, the annals of seven hundred years, without having omitted a single important fact. The conspiracy of Catiline is recounted in two pages, and yet nothing essential is omitted. His style is so florid as to have the appearance of poetry in deranged measure. He has all the declamation of an orator; and when we look for a correct recital of the history of the Romans, we find a warm panegyric on many of their achievements.

On this account Florus must be read without that confidence, which we repose in many other authors. He is careless in chronology; and, being desirous of stating such circumstances as ought to have occurred on particular occasions, he sometimes deviates from the scrupulous accuracy of historical truth.

VELLEIUS PATERCULUS.

Velleius Paterculus lived in the time of Tiberius, was of a respectable family, and served several campaigns under the emperor. He wrote a compendium of the history of Greece and Rome, from the earliest period to his own age. He is a useful author, and not deficient in ease or elegance of style. He is remarkably mild in his censures, but most unaccountably extravagant in his praise of the Cæsars. Augustus is a god; and Sejanus, the fawning and cruel minister of Tiberius, is extolled with encomiums, which are due only to virtue. The objection to his partiality is confined to the latter part of his work, and is common to many historians, whose prejudices or whose fears disguise or suppress their opinions. Paterculus has a happy and beautiful brevity of narration, which in a small compass contains all the graces of style, and is embellished with wise maxims and useful morals.

Whatever other historians have recorded will be found in this writer, who possesses in a singular degree the merit of perspicuity.

CORNELIUS NEPOS.

Of Cornelius Nepos we have received no authentic account, except that he was born at Hostilia, near the banks of the river Po, in the reign of Augustus, and, amongst other literary characters, was honoured by the Imperial patronage. The work which has reached posterity is his Lives of Illustrious Greeks and Romans. The style of it displays the elegance of the age in which he lived; and while it contains a summary of their principal actions, it is replete with judicious reflections upon them. He abounds in taste, but not in force and strength. In reporting events, he does not enter into the details, which mark the characteristic traits of the actors, and which distinguish the perspicacity of the historian.

Rome had not yet its Plutarch.

SUETONIUS.

Somewhat more than a century after the Christian æra, C. Tranquillus Suetonius was the secretary of the Emperor Adrian. He has left a history of the twelve Cæsars, and is considered scrupulously exact and methodical. He omits nothing, which concerns the person whose life he writes; and is a reporter of actions, but not a painter of the manners. He is a pleasant author to consult, for he is a detailer of anecdotes. In reflections he is very sparing, contenting himself with recounting events without feeling or exciting any emotion. The office of a narrator satisfies his ambition; and from the little interest he takes respecting the conduct of his heroes, he has attained the praise of strict impartiality.

The character of the emperors is nowhere more justly represented, but the description of their vices has been thought unnecessarily minute.

The language of Suetonius is elegant; his narration easy and perspicuous.

Nature had been kind to him in her endowments, and he acknowledged her kindness by the industry with which he applied to his education.

An acquaintance with these minor historians is expected of the general scholar.

Some beauties will please, and some information will instruct him in them all; but after he has consulted them for the gratification of his curiosity, or the refreshment of his memory as to particular facts, he will perceive, that his taste can alone be duly formed, and his knowledge sufficiently amplified, by a frequent and attentive perusal of the three accomplished historians of Rome,

SECTION XX.

Conclusion.

IN reviewing the pages of these commentaries, whatever defects I have perceived in the execution of my plan, I am still willing to flatter myself that the sovereign utility of classical learning has not been rendered problematical by an inadequate defence.

It did not form a part of my intention to extend my view beyond the works of the ancient poets, orators, and historians; much less to attempt a delineation of the several systems of philosophy, which reigned in Athens. But it is impossible not to reflect upon the gardens of the Lyceum, where truth and error maintained a divided sway, but where learning was fostered in the bosom of retirement, and kept sacred from the invasion of its ancient enemies, business and pleasure.

On

On the banks of the Ilyffus, an alley of olives, or a grove of myrtles, separated systems, and served as the boundary of the empire of Opinion. There the sanctuary of Wisdom was never closed, and the sacred fire was never extinguished. In that happy shade, far from the importunity of vulgar cares, Greece formed so many great men, of whom a single one might give celebrity to a nation. When the youths had learned the gymnastic exercises, they passed successively under the care of the grammarians, critics, and geometricians; and after these essays, commenced their rural life. There they exerted prodigious efforts; and it was almost as painful to achieve a course of philosophy, as to accustom themselves to the hard exercises of pugilism. There as much emulation was excited as if it were a question of becoming an Arcopagite or a demagogue.

In our own country, even in the heart of a city devoted to business, to politics, and to pleasure, learning still may boast of more than one sacred asylum. On the
banks

banks of the Thames and of the Itchen, the polished language of Athens still captivates its votaries, and a purer philosophy than was taught in the Lyceum or the Academy still resounds from those hallowed domes, which are washed by the streams of the Isis and the Cam. May the day be far distant, if it ever be destined to appear, when the historian of our isle shall have to record a similar catastrophe to that, which desolated Athens! When Greece fell under the Christian yoke, Libanius says that he saw whole troops of priests and monks, armed with hatchets and flambeaux, running through the country, burning the temples, breaking the statues, and leaving in their passage only the smoking wrecks of ashes and of ruins. At the sight of these fanatics, philosophy abandoned Greece to return thither no more.

Classical learning is intimately connected with the preservation of religion and of the laws, and those who decry its value are the persons most decidedly hostile to both.

While the anarchist, by subtle disparagement of moral ties, undermines the pillars of society, the fanatic and the bigot, by an outcry against literary attainments, engage in the same cause, and are daily bringing their engines to the attack:

Under circumstances of so serious a kind, and in that leisure for reflection, which is afforded by the suspension of the horrors of war, the interest of our country might perhaps be consulted by the revival of those golden days, in which an Oxford was at once the pilot of the state and the tutelary guardian of learning. Fostered by the rays of favour, the vigorous plant will flourish, though myriads be envious of its growth. While, under its branches, genius ought to find a shelter from the ills of life, to the same shade grandeur might retire for a temporary repose from the toils of pleasure or the tumults of ambition. If it be permitted us to cultivate the arts, and to enjoy the blessings of peace; what can better deserve the patronage of statesmen than that knowledge, which strengthens
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the bands of the community, while it polishes and enlarges the minds of its members; which calls forth the brightest talents in an active display of loyalty to a free constitution, and furnishes them with an armour of proof in the defence of social order and of public liberty?

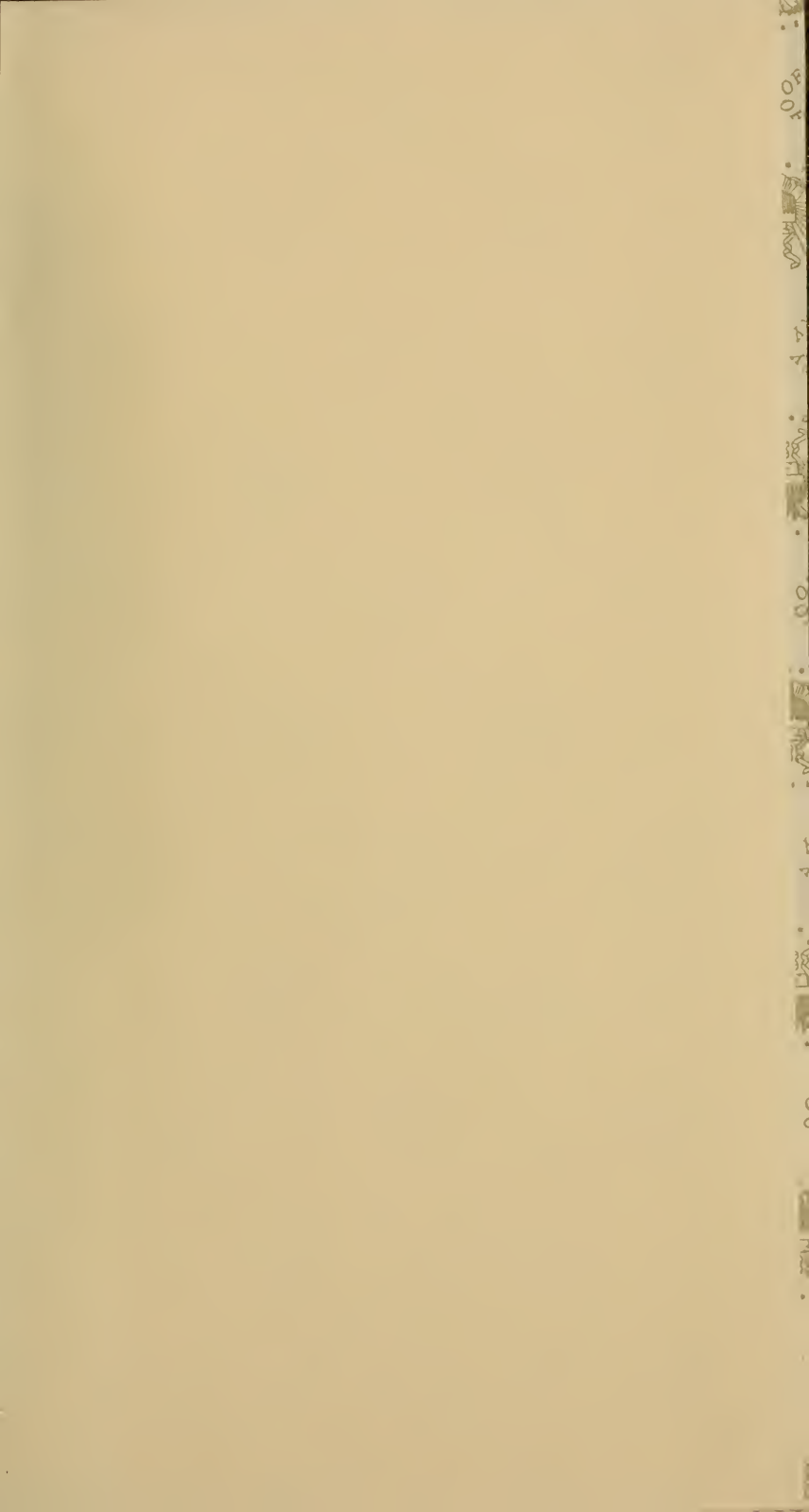
THE END.

ERRATA.

<i>Page</i>	<i>Line</i>	
22	1	<i>read improved</i>
32	10	<i>after possessed himself insert of</i>
44	24	<i>put a period after ear</i>
45	6	<i>after Demosthenes put a mark of Interrogation</i>
94	3	<i>insert inverted commas after observation</i>
104	21	<i>for Athenceus read Athenæus</i>
152	20	<i>insert inverted commas</i>
153	16	<i>for shed read fled</i>
154	8	<i>erase inverted commas after wit</i>
177	20	<i>for in the read with</i>
181	28	<i>for racking read raking</i>
209	7	<i>after difficulties insert a comma</i>
210	8	<i>for they do read it does</i>
219	14	<i>after Dionysius insert of</i>
220	1	<i>for euthymemes read enthymemes</i>
234	21	<i>after expressions erase comma</i>
247	13	<i>for revolts read disgusts</i>
250	11	<i>for God read Gods</i>
—	17	<i>for reassumes read reassumed</i>
252	3	<i>for armor, armor read armour, armour</i>
253	18	<i>for throws read threw</i>
256	15	<i>read Herodotus</i>
270	1	<i>for display read produce</i>
294	3	<i>erase inverted commas before Mcree</i>
—	10	<i>erase inverted commas after foes</i>
300	3	<i>erase inverted commas before The</i>
—	6	<i>erase inverted commas after tone</i>
302	24	<i>erase that</i>
303	3	<i>for Amphitryon read Amphitryo</i>
324	21 and 24	<i>for Hyppolitus read Hippolytus</i>
325	14 and 25	<i>for Hyppolitus read Hippolytus</i>
331	5	<i>for seyon read cion, and for root read plant</i>
—	21	<i>erase inverted commas before The</i>
339	5	<i>for fears read tears</i>
352	3	<i>erase semicolon after painting</i>
—	18	<i>for monument read writer</i>
363	23	<i>for is a fine relic from read forms a fine contrast with</i>
377	5	<i>for Helena read Helenus</i>
401	12	<i>for is read are</i>
409	7	<i>for sacrifice's read sacrificed</i>
416	13	<i>for poets read poet</i>
417	12	<i>for Thebes read Thetis.</i>

H 51 88

LBFe20





Deacidified using the Bookkeeper process
Neutralizing agent: Magnesium Oxide
Treatment Date: July 2006

Preservation Technologies
A WORLD LEADER IN PAPER PRESERVATION

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(724) 779-2111



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