

CRITICAL AND MISCELLANEOUS
WRITINGS

OF

T. NOON TALFOURD.

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T. NOON TALFOURD,

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AUTHOR OF "ION."

IN ONE VOLUME.

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TALFORD'S

MISCELLANEOUS WRITINGS.

ON BRITISH NOVELS AND ROMANCES, INTRODUCTORY TO A SERIES
OF CRITICISMS ON THE LIVING NOVELISTS.

[New Monthly Magazine.]

WE regard the authors of the best novels and romances as among the truest benefactors of their species. Their works have often conveyed, in the most attractive form, lessons of the most genial wisdom. But we do not prize them so much in reference to their immediate aim, or any individual traits of nobleness with which they may inform the thoughts, as for their general tendency to break up that cold and debasing selfishness with which the souls of so large a portion of mankind are encrusted. They give to a vast class, who by no means would be carried beyond the most contracted range of emotion, an interest in things out of themselves, and a perception of grandeur and of beauty, of which otherwise they might ever have lived unconscious. Pity for fictitious sufferings is, indeed, very inferior to that sympathy with the universal heart of man, which inspires real self-sacrifice; but it is better even to be moved by its tenderness, than wholly to be ignorant of the joy of natural tears. How many are there for whom poesy has no charm, and who have derived only from romances those glimpses of disinterested heroism, and ideal beauty, which alone "make them less forlorn," in their busy career! The good house-wife, who is employed all her life in the severest

drudgery, has yet some glimmerings of a state and dignity above her station and age, and some dim vision of meek, angelic suffering, when she thinks of the well-thumbed volume of *Clarissa Harlowe*, which she found, when a girl, in some old recess, and read, with breathless eagerness, at stolen times and moments of hasty joy. The careworn lawyer or politician, encircled with all kinds of petty anxieties, thinks of the *Arabian Nights Entertainments*, which he devoured in his joyful school-days, and is once more young, and innocent, and happy. If the sternest puritan were acquainted with Parson Adams, or with Dr. Primrose, he could not hate the clergy. If novels are not the deepest teachers of humanity, they have, at least, the widest range. They lend to genius "lighter wings to fly." They are read where Milton and Shakspeare are only talked of, and where even their names are never heard. They nestle gently beneath the covers of unconscious sophas, are read by fair and glistening eyes, in moments snatched from repose, and beneath counters and shop-boards, minister delights "secret, sweet, and precious." It is possible that, in particular instances, their effects may be baneful; but, on the whole, we are persuaded they are good. The world is not in danger of becoming too romantic. The golden threads of poesy are not too thickly or too closely interwoven with the ordinary web of existence. Sympathy is the first great lesson which man should learn. It will be ill for him if he proceeds no farther; if his emotions are but excited to roll back on his heart; and to be fostered in luxurious quiet. But unless he learns to feel for things in which he has no personal interest, he can achieve nothing generous or noble. This lesson is in reality the universal moral of all excellent romances. How mistaken are those miserable reasoners who object to them as giving false pictures of life—of purity too glossy and ethereal—of friendship too deep and confiding—of love which does not shrink at the approach of ill, but looks on tempests and is never shaken," because with these the world too rarely blossoms! Were these things visionary and unreal, who would break the spell, and bid the delicious enchantment vanish? The soul will not be the worse for thinking too well of its kind, or believing that the highest excellence is within the reach of its exertions. But these things are not

unreal ; they are shadows, indeed, in themselves ; but they are shadows cast from objects stately, and eternal. Man can never imagine that which has no foundation in his nature. The virtues, he conceives, are not the mere pageantry of his thought. We feel their truth—not their historic or individual truth—but their universal truth, as reflexes of human energy, and power. It would be enough for us to prove that the imaginative glories, which are shed around our being, are far brighter than “the light of common day,” which mere vulgar experience in the course of the world diffuses. But, in truth, that radiance is not merely of the fancy, nor are its influences lost when it ceases immediately to shine on our path. It is holy and prophetic. The best joys of childhood—its boundless aspirations and gorgeous dreams, are the sure indications of the nobleness of its final heritage. All the softenings of evil to the moral vision by the gentleness of fancy, are proofs that evil itself shall perish. Our yearnings after ideal beauty show that the home of the soul which feels them, is in a lovelier world. And when man describes high virtues, and instances of nobleness, which rarely light on earth ; so sublime that they expand our imaginations beyond their former compass, yet so human that they make our hearts gush with delight ; he discovers feelings in his own breast, and awakens sympathies in ours, which shall assuredly one day have real and stable objects to rest on !

The early times of England—unlike those of Spain—were not rich in chivalrous romances. The imagination seems to have been chilled by the manners of the Norman conquerors. The domestic contests for the disputed throne, with their intrigues, battles, and executions, have none of that rich, poetical interest, which attended the struggles for the holy sepulchre. Nor, in the golden age of English genius, were there any very remarkable works of pure fiction. Since that period to the present day, however, there has been a rich succession of novels and romances, each increasing the stores of innocent delight, and shedding on human life some new tint of tender colouring.

The novels of Richardson are at once among the grandest and the most singular creations of human genius. They combine an accurate acquaintance with the freest libertinism,

and the sternest professions of virtue—a sporting with vicious casuistry, and the deepest horror of free-thinking—the most stately ideas of paternal authority, and the most elaborate display of its abuses. Prim and stiff, almost without parallel, the author perpetually treads on the very borders of indecorum, but with a solemn and assured step, as if certain that he could never fall. “The precise, strait laced Richardson,” says Mr. Lamb in one of the profound and beautiful notes to his specimens, “has strengthened vice from the mouth of Lovelace, with entangling sophistries, and abstruse pleas against her adversary virtue, which Sedley, Villiers, and Rochester, wanted depth of libertinism sufficient to have invented.” He had, in fact, the power of making any set of notions, however, fantastical, appear as “truths of holy writ,” to his readers. This he did by the authority with which he disposed of all things, and by the infinite minuteness of his details. His gradations are so gentle, that we do not at any one point, hesitate to follow him, and should descend with him to any depth before we perceived that our path had been unequal. By the means of this strange magic, we become anxious for the marriage of Pamela with her base master; because the author has so imperceptibly wrought on us the belief of an awful distance between the rights of an esquire and his servant, that our imaginations regard it in the place of all moral distinctions. After all, the general impression made on us by his works, is virtuous. Clementina is to the soul a new and majestic image, inspired by virtue and by love, which raises and refines its conceptions. She has all the depth and intensity of the Italian character, with all the purity of an angel. She is at the same time one of the grandest of tragic heroines, and the divinest of religious enthusiasts. Clarissa alone is above her. Clementina steps stately in her very madness, amidst “the pride, pomp, and circumstance” of Italian nobility; Clarissa is triumphant, though violated, deserted, and encompassed by vice and infamy. Never can we forget that amazing scene, in which, on the effort of her mean seducer to renew his outrages, she appears in all the radiance of mental purity, among the wretches assembled to witness his triumph, where she startles them by her first appearance, as by a vision from above; and holding the penknife to her breast, with her eyes lifted

to heaven, prepares to die, if her craven destroyer advances, striking the vilest with the deep awe of goodness, and walking placidly at last, from the circle of her foes, none of them daring to harm her! How pathetic, above all other pathos in the world, are those snatches of meditation which she commits to the paper, in the first delirium of her wo! How delicately imagined are her preparations, for that grave in which alone she can find repose! Cold must be the hearts of those who can conceive them as too elaborate, or who can venture to criticise them. In this novel all appears most real; we feel enveloped, like Don Quixote, by a thousand threads; and like him, would we rather remain so for ever, than break one of their silken fibres. *Clarissa Harlowe* is one of the books which leave us different beings from those which they find us. "Sadder and wiser" do we arise from its perusal.

Yet when we read Fielding's novels after those of Richardson, we feel as if a stupendous pressure were removed from our souls. We seem suddenly to have left a palace of enchantment, where we have past through long galleries filled with the most gorgeous images, and illumined by a light not quite human nor yet quite divine, into the fresh air, and the common ways of this "bright and breathing world." We travel on the high road of humanity, yet meet in it pleasanter companions, and catch more delicious snatches of refreshment than ever we can hope elsewhere to enjoy. The mock heroic of Fielding, when he condescends to that ambiguous style, is scarcely less pleasing than its stately prototype. It is a sort of spirited defiance to fiction, on the behalf of reality, by one who knew full well all the strong holds of that nature which he was defending. There is not in Fielding much of that which can properly be called ideal—if we except the character of Parson Adams; but his works represent life as more delightful than it seems to common experience, by disclosing those of its dear immunities, which we little think of, even when we enjoy them. How delicious are all his refreshments at all his inns! How vivid are the transient joys of his heroes, in their chequered course—how full and over-flowing are their final raptures! His *Tom Jones* is quite unrivalled in plot, and is to be rivalled only in his own works for felicitous delineation of character. The

little which we have told us of Allworthy, especially that which relates to his feelings respecting his deceased wife, makes us feel for him, as for one of the best and most revered friends of our childhood. Was ever the "soul of goodness in things evil" better disclosed, than in the scruples and the dishonesty of Black George, that tenderest of gamekeepers and truest of thieves? Did ever health, good-humour, frank-heartedness, and animal spirits hold out so freshly against vice and fortune as in the hero? Was ever so plausible a hypocrite as Blifil, who buys a Bible of Tom Jones so delightfully, and who, by his admirable imitation of virtue, leaves it almost in doubt, whether, by a counterfeit so dexterous, he did not merit some share of her rewards? Who shall gainsay the cherry lips of Sophia Western? The story of Lady Bellaston we confess to be a blemish. But if there be any vice left in the work, the fresh atmosphere diffused over all its scenes, will render it innoxious. Joseph Andrews has far less merit as a story—but it depicts Parson Adams, whom it does the heart good to think on. He who drew this character, if he had done nothing else, would not have lived in vain. We fancy we can see him with his torn cassock, (in honour of his high profession,) his volumes of sermons, which we really wish had been printed, and his Eschylus, the best of all the editions of that sublime tragedian! Whether he longs after his own sermons against vanity—or is absorbed in the romantic tale of the fair Leonora—or uses his ox-like fists in defence of the fairer Fanny, he equally embodies in his person "the homely beauty of the good old cause," of high thoughts, pure imaginations, and manners unspotted by the world.

Smollet seems to have had more touch of romance than Fielding, but not so profound and intuitive a knowledge of humanity's hidden treasures. There is nothing in his works comparable to Parson Adams; but then, on the other hand, Fielding has not any thing of the kind equal to Strap. Partridge is dry, and hard, compared with this poor barber-boy, with his generous overflowings of affection. Roderick Random, indeed, with its varied delineation of life, is almost a romance. Its hero is worthy of his name. He is the sport of fortune rolled about through the "many ways of wretchedness" almost without resistance, but ever catching those

tastes of joy which are every where to be relished by those who are willing to receive them. We seem to roll on with him, and get delectably giddy in his company.

The humanity of the Vicar of Wakefield is less deep than that of Roderick Random, but sweeter tinges of fancy are cast over it. The sphere in which Goldsmith's powers moved, was never very extensive, but, within it, he discovered all that was good, and shed on it the tenderest lights of his sympathizing genius. No one ever excelled so much as he in depicting amiable follies and endearing weaknesses. His satire makes us at once smile at, and love all that he so tenderly ridicules. The good Vicar's trust in Monagomy, his son's purchase of the spectacles, his own sale of his horse, to his solemn admirer at the fair; the blameless vanities of his daughters, and his resignation under his accumulated sorrows, are among the best treasures of memory. The pastoral scenes in this exquisite tale are the sweetest in the world. The scents of the hay field, and of the blossoming hedge-rows, seem to come freshly to our senses. The whole romance is a tenderly-coloured picture, in little, of human nature's most genial qualities.

De Foe is one of the most extraordinary of English authors. His *Robinson Crusoe* is deservedly one of the most popular of novels. It is usually the first read, and always among the last forgotten. The interest of its scenes in the uninhabited island is altogether peculiar; since there is nothing to develop the character but deep solitude. Man, there, is alone in the world, and can hold communion only with nature, and nature's God. There is nearly the same situation in *Philoctetes*, that sweetest of the Greek tragedies; but there we only see the poor exile as he is about to leave his sad abode, to which he has become attached, even with a child-like cleaving. In *Robinson Crusoe*, life is stripped of all its social joys, yet we feel how worthy of cherishing it is, with nothing but silent nature to cheer it. Thus are nature and the soul, left with no other solace, represented in their native grandeur and intense communion. With how fond an interest do we dwell on all the exertions of our fellow-man, cut off from his kind; watch his growing plantations as they rise, and seem to water them with our tears! The exceeding vividness of all the descriptions are more delight-

ful when combined with the loneliness and distance of the scene "placed far amid the melancholy main" in which we become dwellers. We have grown so familiar with the solitude, that the print of man's foot seen in the sand seems to appal us as an awful thing!—The Family Instructor of this author, in which he inculcates weightily his own notions of puritanical demeanour and parental authority, is very curious. It is a strange mixture of narrative and dialogue, fanaticism and nature; but all done with such earnestness, that the sense of its reality never quits us. Nothing, however, can be more harsh and displeasing than the impression which it leaves. It does injustice both to religion and the world. It represents the innocent pleasures of the latter as deadly sins, and the former as most gloomy, austere, and exclusive. One lady resolves on poisoning her husband, and another determines to go to the play, and the author treats both offences with a severity nearly equal!

Far different from this ascetic novel is that best of religious romances, the Fool of Quality. The piety there is at once most deep and most benign. There is much, indeed of eloquent mysticism, but all evidently most heartfelt and sincere. The yearnings of the soul after universal good and intimate communion with the divine nature were never more nobly shown. The author is most prodigal of his intellectual wealth—"his bounty is as boundless as the sea, his love as deep." He gives to his chief characters riches endless as the spiritual stores of his own heart. It is, indeed, only the last which gives value to the first in his writings. It is easy to endow men with millions on paper, and to make them willing to scatter them among the wretched; but it is the corresponding bounty and exuberance of the author's soul, which here makes the money sterling, and the charity divine. The hero of this romance always appears to our imagination like a radiant vision encircled with celestial glories. The stories introduced in it are delightful exceptions to the usual rule by which such incidental tales are properly regarded as impertinent intrusions. That of David Doubtful is of the most romantic interest, and at the same time steeped in feeling the most profound. But that of Clement and his wife is perhaps the finest. The scene in which they are discovered, having placidly lain down to die of hunger together, in gentle

submission to Heaven, depicts a quiescence the most sublime, yet the most affecting. Nothing can be more delightful than the sweetening ingredients in their cup of sorrow. The heroic act of the lady to free herself from her ravisher's grasp, her trial and her triumphant acquittal, have a grandeur above that of tragedy. The genial spirit of the author's faith leads him to exult especially in the repentance of the wicked. No human writer seems ever to have hailed the contrite with so cordial a welcome. His scenes appear overspread with a rich atmosphere of tenderness, which softens and consecrates all things.

We would not pass over, without a tribute of gratitude, Mrs. Radcliffe's wild and wondrous tales. When we read them, the world seems shut out, and we breathe only in an enchanted region, where lovers' lutes tremble over placid waters, mouldering castles rise conscious of deeds of blood, and the sad voices of the past echo through deep vaults and lonely galleries. There is always majesty in her terrors. She produces more effect by whispers and slender hints than ever was attained by the most vivid display of horrors. Her conclusions are tame and impotent almost without example. But while her spells actually operate, her power is truly magical. Who can ever forget the scene in the *Romance of the Forest*, where the marquis, who has long sought to make the heroine the victim of licentious love, after working on her protector, over whom he has a mysterious influence, to steal at night into her chamber, and when his trembling listener expects only a requisition for delivering her into his hands replies to the question of "then—to night, my Lord!" "*Adelaide dies*"—or the allusions to the dark veil in the *Mysteries of Udolpho*—or the stupendous scenes in Spalatro's cottage? Of all romance writers Mrs. Radcliffe is the most romantic.

The present age has produced a singular number of authors of delightful prose fiction, on whom we intend to give a series of criticisms. We shall begin with MACKENZIE, whom we shall endeavour to compare with Sterne, and for this reason we have passed over the works of the latter in our present cursory view of the novelists of other days.

MACKENZIE.

[New Monthly Magazine.]

ALTHOUGH our veneration for Mackenzie has induced us to commence this series of articles with an attempt to express our sense of his genius, we scarcely know how to criticize its exquisite creations. The feelings which they have awakened within us are too old and too sacred almost for expression. We scarcely dare to scrutinize with a critic's ear, the blending notes of that sad and soft music of humanity which they breathe. We feel as if there were a kind of privacy in our sympathies with them—as though they were a part of ourselves, which strangers knew not—and as if in publicly expressing them, we were violating the sanctities of our own souls. We must recollect, however, that our readers know them as well as we do, and then to dwell with them tenderly on their merits, will seem like discoursing of the long cherished memories of friends we had in common, and of sorrows participated in childhood.

The purely sentimental style in which the tales of Mackenzie are written, though deeply felt by the people, has seldom met with due appreciation from the critics. It has its own genuine and peculiar beauties, which we love the more the longer we feel them. Its consecrations are altogether drawn from the soul. The gentle tinges which it casts on human life are shed not from the imagination or the fancy, but from the affections. It represents, indeed, humanity as more tender, its sorrows as more gentle, its joys as more abundant than they appear to common observers. But this is not effected by those influences of the imagination which consecrate whatever they touch, which detect the secret analogies of beauty,

and bring kindred graces from all parts of nature to heighten the images which they reveal. It affects us rather by casting off from the soul, those impurities and littlenesses which it contracts in the world, than by foreign aids. It appeals to those simple emotions which are not the high prerogatives of genius, but which are common to all who are "made of one blood," and partake in one primal sympathy. The holiest feelings, after all, are those which would be the most common if gross selfishness and low ambition froze not "the genial current of the soul." The meanest and most ungifted have their gentle remembrances of early days. Love has tinged the life of the artizan and the cottager with something of the romantic. The course of none has been along so beaten a road that they remember not fondly some resting places in their journeys; some turns of their path in which lovely prospects broke in upon them; some soft plats of green refreshing to their weary feet. Confiding love, generous friendship, disinterested humanity, require no recondite learning, no high imagination, to enable an honest heart to appreciate and feel them. Too often, indeed, are the simplicities of nature, and the native tendernesses of the soul nipped and chilled by those anxieties which lie on them "like an untimely frost." "The world is too much with us." We become lawyers, politicians, merchants, and forget that we are men, and sink in our transitory vocations, that character which is to last for ever. A tale of sentiment—such as those of that honoured veteran whose works we would now particularly remember—awakens all these pulses of sympathy with our kind, of whose beatings we had become almost unconscious. It does honour to humanity by stripping off its artificial disguises. Its magic is not like that by which Arabian enchanters raised up glittering spires, domes, and palaces by a few cabalistic words; but resembles their power to disclose veins of precious ore where all seemed sterile and blasted. It gently puts aside the brambles which overcast the stream of life, and lays it open to the reflexions of those delicate clouds which lie above it in the heavens. It shows to us the soft undercourses of feeling, which neither time nor circumstances can wholly stop; and the depth of affection in the soul, which nothing but sentiment itself can fathom. It disposes us to pensive thought—expands the sympathies—and makes all

the half-forgotten delights of youth "come back upon our hearts again," to soften and to cheer us.

Too often has the sentiment of which we have spoken been confounded with sickly affectations in a common censure. But no things can be more opposite than the paradoxes of the inferior order of German sentimentalists and the works of a writer like Mackenzie. Real sentiment is the truest, the most genuine, and the most lasting thing on earth. It is more ancient as well as more certain in its operations, than the reasoning faculties. We know and feel before we think; we perceive before we compare; we enjoy before we believe. As the evidence of sense is stronger than that of testimony, so the light of our inward eye more truly shows to us the secrets of the heart than the most elaborate process of reason. Riches, honours, power, are transitory—the things which appear, pass away—the shadows of life alone are stable and unchanging. Of the recollections of infancy nothing can deprive us. Love endures, even if its object perishes, and nurtures the soul of the mourner. Sentiment has a kind of divine alchymy, rendering grief itself the source of tenderest thoughts, and far-reaching desires, which the sufferer cherishes as sacred treasures. The sorrows over which it sheds its influence are "ill barter'd for the garishness of joy;" for they win us softly from life, and fit us to die smiling. It endures, not only while fortune changes, but while opinions vary, which the young enthusiast fondly hoped would never forsake him. It remains when the unsubstantial pageants of goodliest hope vanish. It binds the veteran to the child by ties which no fluctuations even of belief can alter. It preserves the only identity, save that of consciousness, which man with certainty retains—connecting our past with our present, being by delicate ties so subtle, that they vibrate to every breeze of feeling; yet so strong that the tempests of life have not power to break them. It assures us that what we have been we shall be, and that our human hearts shall vibrate with their first sympathies, while the species shall endure.

We think that, on the whole, Mackenzie is the first master of this delicious style. Sterne, doubtless, has deeper touches of humanity in some of his works. But there is no sustained feeling—no continuity of emotion—no extended range of

thought, over which the mind can brood in his ingenious and fantastical writings. His spirit is far too mercurial and airy to suffer him tenderly to linger over those images of sweet humanity which he discloses. His cleverness breaks the charm which his feeling spreads, as by magic, around us. His exquisite sensibility is ever counteracted by his perceptions of the ludicrous, and his ambition after the strange. No harmonious feeling breathes from any of his pieces. He sweeps "that curious instrument, the human heart," with hurried fingers, calling forth in rapid succession its deepest and its liveliest tones, and making only marvellous discord. His pathos is, indeed, most genuine while it lasts; but the soul is not suffered to cherish the feeling which it awakens. He does not shed, like Mackenzie, one mild light on the path of life; but scatters on it wild coruscations of ever shifting brightness, which, while they sometimes disclose spots of inimitable beauty, often do but fantastically play over objects dreary and revolting. All in Mackenzie is calm, gentle, harmonious. No play of mistimed wit, no flourish of rhetoric, no train of philosophical speculation, for a moment diverts our sympathy. Each of his best works is like one deep thought, and the impression which it leaves, soft, sweet, and undivided as the summer evening's holiest and latest sigh!

The only exception which we can make to this character, is the *Man of the World*. Here the attempt to attain intricacy of plot disturbs the emotion which, in the other works of the author, is so harmoniously excited. A tale of sentiment should be most simple. Its whole effect depends on its keeping the tenor of its predominant feeling unbroken. Another defect in this story is, the length of time over which it spreads its narrative. Sindall, alone, connects the two generations which it embraces, and he is too mean and uninteresting thus to appear both as the hero and the chorus. When a story is thus continued from a mother to a daughter, it seems to have no legitimate boundary. The painful remembrance of the former interferes with our interest for the latter, and the present difficulties of the last deprive us of those emotions of fond retrospection, which the fate of the first would otherwise awaken. Still there are in this tale scenes of pathos delicious as any which, even the author himself, has drawn. The tender pleasure which the *Man of Feeling* ex-

cites is wholly without alloy. Its hero is the most beautiful personification of gentleness, patience, and meek sufferings, which the heart can conceive. *Julia de Roubigné* however, is, on the whole, the most delightful of the author's works. There is in this tale enough of plot to keep alive curiosity, and sharpen the interest which the sentiment awakens, without any of those strange turns and perplexing incidents which break the current of sympathy. The diction is in perfect harmony with the subject—"most musical, most melancholy"—with "golden cadences" responsive to the thoughts. There is a plaintive charm in the image presented to us of the heroine, too fair almost to dwell on. How exquisite is the description given of her by her maid, in a letter to her friend, relating to her fatal marriage:—"She was dressed in a white muslin night-gown, with striped lilac and white ribands; her hair was kept in the loose way you used to make me dress it for her at Belville, with two waving curls down one side of her neck, and a braid of little pearls. And to be sure, with her dark brown locks resting upon it, her bosom looked as pure white as the driven snow. And then her eyes, when she gave her hand to the count! they were cast down, and you might see her eye-lashes, like strokes of a pencil, over the white of her skin—the modest gentleness, with a sort of sadness too, as it were, and a gentle heave of her bosom at the same time." And yet, such is the feeling communicated to us by the whole work, that we are ready to believe even this artless picture an inadequate representation of that beauty which we never cease to feel. How natural and tear-moving is the letter of Savillon to his friend, describing the scenes of his early love, and recalling, with intense vividness, all the little circumstances which aided its progress! What an idea, in a single expression, does Julia give of the depth and the tenderness of her affection, when describing herself as taking lessons in drawing from her lover, she says that she felt something from the touch of his hand "not the less delightful from carrying a sort of fear along with that delight: it was *like a pulse in the soul!*" The last scenes of this novel are matchless in their kind. Never was so much of the terrific alleviated by so much of the pitiful. The incidents are most tragic; yet over them is diffused a breath of sweetness, which softens away half their anguish, and recon-

ciles us to that which remains. Our minds are prepared long before, for the early nipping of that delicate blossom, for which this world was too bleak. Julia's last interview with Savillon mitigates her doom, partly by the joy her heart has tasted, and which nothing afterwards in life could equal, and partly by the certainty that she must either become guilty or continue wretched. Nothing can be at once sweeter and more affecting than her ecstatic dream after she has taken the fatal mixture, her seraphical playing on the organ, to which the waiting angels seem to listen, and her tranquil recalling the scenes of peaceful happiness with her friend, as she imagines her arms about her neck, and fancies that her Maria's tears are falling on her bosom. Then comes Montaubon's description of her as she drank the poison:—"She took it from me smiling, and her look seemed to lose its confusion. She drank my health! She was dressed in a white silk bedgown, ornamented with pale pink ribands. Her cheek was gently flushed from their reflection; her blue eyes were turned upwards as she drank, and a dark brown ringlet lay on her shoulder." We do not think even the fate of "the gentle lady married to the Moor" calls forth tears so sweet as those which fall for the Julia of Mackenzie!

We rejoice to know and feel that these delicious tales cannot perish. Since they were written, indeed, the national imagination has been, in a great degree, perverted by strong excitements, and "fed on poisons till they have become a kind of nutriment." But the quiet and unpretending beauties of these works depend not on the fashion of the world. They cannot be out of date till the dreams of young imagination shall vanish, and the deepest sympathies of love and hope shall be chilled for ever. While other works are extolled, admired, and reviewed, these will be loved and wept over. Their author, in the evening of his days, may truly feel that he has not lived in vain. Gentle hearts shall ever blend their thought of him among their remembrances of the benefactors of their youth. And when the fever of the world "shall hang upon the beatings of their hearts," how often will their spirits turn to him, who, as he cast a soft seriousness over the mourning of life, shall assist in tranquillizing its noon-tide sorrows!

“THE AUTHOR OF WAVERLY.”

Here are we in a bright and breathing world.—*Wordsworth.*

[*New Monthly Magazine.*]

WE esteem the productions which the great novelist of Scotland has poured forth with startling speed from his rich treasury, not only as multiplying the sources of delight to thousands, but as shedding the most genial influences on the taste and feeling of the people. These, with their fresh spirit of health, have counteracted the workings of that blasting spell by which the genius of Lord Byron once threatened strangely to fascinate and debase the vast multitude of English readers. Men, seduced by their noble poet, had begun to pay homage to mere energy, to regard virtue as low and mean compared with lofty crime, and to think that high passion carried in itself a justification for its most fearful excesses. He inspired them with a feeling of diseased curiosity to know the secrets of dark bosoms, while he opened his own perturbed spirit to their gaze. His works, and those imported from Germany, tended to give to our imagination an introspective cast, to perplex it with metaphysical subtleties, and to render our poetry “sicklied o’er with the pale cast of thought.” The genius of our country was thus in danger of being perverted from its purest uses to become the minister of vain philosophy, and the anatomist of polluted natures.

“The author of *Waverly*,” (as he delights to be styled) has weaned it from its idols, and restored to it its warm youthful blood and human affections. Nothing can be more opposed to the gloom, the inward revolvings, and morbid speculations, which the world once seemed inclined to esteem as the sole prerogatives of the bard, than his exquisite crea-

tions. His persons are no shadowy abstractions—no personifications of a dogma—no portraits of the author varied in costume, but similar in features. With all their rich varieties of character, whether their heroical spirit touches on the godlike, or their wild eccentricities border on the farcical, they are men fashioned of human earth, and warm with human sympathies. He does not seek for the sublime in the mere intensity of burning passion, or for sources of enjoyment in those feverish gratifications which some would teach us to believe the only felicities worthy of high and impassioned souls. He writes every where with a keen and healthful relish for all the good things of life—constantly refreshes us where we least expected it, with a sense of that pleasure which is spread through the earth “to be caught in stray gifts by whoever will find,” and brightens all things with the spirit of gladness. There is little of a meditative or retrospective cast in his works. Whatever age he chooses for his story lives before us: we become contemporaries of all his persons, and sharers in all their fortunes. Of all men who have ever written, excepting Shakspeare, he has perhaps the least of exclusiveness, the least of those feelings which keep men apart from their kind. He has his own predilections—and we love him the better for them even when they are not ours—but they never prevent him from grasping with cordial spirit all that is human. His tolerance is the most complete, for it extends to adverse bigotries; his love of enjoyment does not exclude the ascetic from his respect, nor does his fondness for hereditary rights and time-honoured institutions prevent his admiration of the fiery zeal of a sectary. His genius shines with an equal light on all—illuminating the vast hills of purple heath, the calm breast of the quiet water, and the rich masses of the grove—now gleaming with a sacred light on the distant towers of some old monastery, now softening the green-wood shade, now piercing the gloom of the rude cave where the old Covenanter lies—free and universal, and bounteous as the sun—and pouring its radiance with a like impartiality “upon a living and rejoicing world.”

We shall not attempt, in this slight sketch, to follow our author regularly through all his rich and varied creations; but shall rather consider his powers in general of natural description—of skill in the delineation of character—and of

exciting high and poetical interest, by the gleams of his fancy, the tragic elevation of his scenes, and the fearful touches which he delights to borrow from the world of spirits.

In the vivid description of natural scenery our author is wholly without a rival, unless Sir Walter Scott will dispute the pre-eminence with him; and, even then, we think the novelist would be found to surpass the bard. The free grace of nature has, of late, contributed little to the charm of our highest poetry. Lord Byron has always, in his reference to the majestic scenery of the universe, dealt rather in grand generalities than minute pictures, has used the turbulence of the elements as symbols of inward tempests, and sought the vast solitudes and deep tranquillity of nature, but to assuage the fevers of the soul. Wordsworth—who, amidst the contempt of the ignorant and of the worldly wise, has been gradually and silently moulding all the leading spirits of the age—has sought communion with nature, for other purposes than to describe her external forms. He has shed on all creation a sweet and consecrating radiance, far other than “the light of common day.” In his poetry the hills and streams appear, not as they are seen by vulgar eyes, but as the poet himself, in the holiness of his imagination has arrayed them. They are peopled not with the shapes of old superstition, but with the shadows of the poet’s thought, the dreams of a glory that shall be. They are resonant—not with the voice of birds, or the soft whisperings of the breeze, but with echoes from beyond the tomb. Their lowliest objects—a dwarf bush, an old stone, a daisy, or a small celandine—affect us with thoughts as deep, and inspire meditations as profound, as the loveliest scene of reposing beauty, or the wildest region of the mountains—because the heart of the poet is all in all—and the visible objects of his love are not dear to us for their own colours or forms, but for the sentiment which he has linked to them, and which they bring back upon our souls. We would not have this otherwise for all the romances in the world. But it gladdens us to see the intrinsic claims of nature on our hearts asserted, and to feel that she is, for her own sake, worthy of deep love. It is not as the richest index of divine philosophy alone that she has a right to our affections; and, therefore, we rejoice that in our author

she has found a votary to whom her works are in themselves "an appetite, a feeling, and a love," and who finds, in their contemplation, "no need of a remoter charm, by thought supplied, or any interest unborrowed from the eye." Every gentle swelling of the ground—every gleam of the water—every curve and rock of the shore—all varieties of the earth, from the vastest crag to the soft grass of the woodland walk, and all changes of the heaven from "morn to noon, from noon to latest eve,"—are placed before us in his works with a distinctness beyond that which the painter's art can attain, while we seem to breathe the mountain air, or drink in the freshness of the valleys. We perceive the change in the landscape at every step of the delightful journey through which he guides us. Our recollection never confounds any one scene with another, although so many are laid in the same region, and are alike in general character. The lake among the hills, on which the cave of Donald Bean bordered—that near which the clan of the M'Gregors combated, and which closed in blue calmness over the body of Maurice—and that which encircled the castle of Julian Avenel—are distinct from each other in the imagination, as the loveliest scenes which we have corporally visited. What in softest beauty can exceed the description of the ruins of St. Ruth; in the lovelily romantic the approach to the pass of Aberfoil; in varied lustre the winding shores of Ellangowan bay; in rude and dreary majesty the Highland scenes, where Ronald of the Mist lay hidden; and in terrific sublimity the rising of the sea on Fairport Sands, and the perils of Sir Arthur Wardour and his daughter? Our author's scene of comparative barrenness are enchanting by the vividness of his details, and the fond delight with which he dwells on their redeeming features. We seem to know every little plot of green, every thicket of copse-wood, and every turn and cascade of the stream in the vale of Glendearg, and to remember each low bush in the barren scene of her skirmish between the Covenanters and Claverhouse, as though we had been familiar with it in childhood. The descriptions of this author are manifestly rendered more vivid by the intense love which he bears to his country—not only to her luxuriant and sublime scenery, but "her bare earth, and mountains bare, and grass in the green field." He will scarcely leave a brook, a

mountain ash, or a lichen on the rocks of her shore, without due honour. He may fitly be regarded as the genius of Scotland, who has given her a poetical interest, a vast place in the imagination, which may almost compensate for the loss of that political independence, the last struggling love for which he so nobly celebrates.

“The author of *Waverly*” is, however, chiefly distinguished by the number, the spirit, and the individuality of his characters. We know not, indeed, where to begin or to end with the vast crowd of their genial and noble shapes which come thronging on our memory. His ludicrous characters are dear to us, because they are seldom merely quaint or strange, the dry oddities of fancy, but have as genuine a kindred with humanity as the most gifted and enthusiastic of their fellows. The laughter which they excite is full of social sympathy, and we love them and our nature the better while we indulge it. Whose heart does not claim kindred with Baillie Nichol Jarvie, while the Glasgow weaver without losing one of his nice peculiarities, kindles into honest warmth with his ledger in hand, and in spite of broad-cloth grows almost romantic? In whom does a perception of the ludicrous for a moment injure the veneration which the brave, stout-hearted and chivalrous Baron of Bradwardine inspires? Who shares not in the fond enthusiasm of Oldbuck for black letter, in his eager and tremulous joy at grasping rare books at low prices, and in his discoveries of Roman camps and monuments which we can hardly forgive Edie Ochiltree for disproving? Compared with these genial persons, the portraits of mere singularity—however inimitably finished—are harsh and cold; of these, indeed, the works of our author afford scarcely more than one signal example—Captain Dalgetty—who is a mere piece of ingenious mechanism, like the automaton chess-player, and with all his cleverness, gives us little pleasure, for he excites as little sympathy. Almost all the persons of these novels, diversified as they are, are really endowed with some deep and elevating enthusiasm, which, whether breaking through eccentricities of manner, perverted by error, or mingled with crime, ever asserts the majesty of our nature, its deep affections, and undying powers. This is true, not only of the divine enthusiasm of Flora Mac Ivor—of the sweet heroism of Jeannie Deans—of the angelic tenderness and

fortitude of Rebecca, but of the puritanic severities and awful zeal of Balfour of Burley, and the yet more frightful energy of Macbriar, equally ready to sacrifice a blameless youth, and to bear without shrinking the keenest of mortal agonies. In the fierce and hunted child of the mist—in the daring and reckless libertine Staunton—in the fearful Elspeth—in the vengeful wife of M'Gregor—are traits of wild and irregular greatness, fragments of might and grandeur, which show how noble and sacred a thing the heart of man is, in spite of its strangest debasements and perversions. How does the inimitable portrait of Claverhouse at first excite our hatred for that carelessness of human misery, that contempt for the life of his fellows, that cold hauteur and finished indifference which are so vividly depicted;—and yet how does his mere soldierly enthusiasm redeem him at last, and almost persuade us that the honour and fame of such a man were cheaply purchased by a thousand lives! We can scarcely class Rob Roy among these mingled characters. He has nothing but the name and the fortune of an outlaw and a robber. He is, in truth, one of the noblest of heroes—a Prince of the hether and the rock—whose very thirst for vengeance is tempered and harmonized by his fondness for the wild and lovely scenes of his home. Indeed the influences of majestic scenery are to be perceived tinging the rudest minds which the author has made to expatiate amidst its solitudes. The passions even of Burley and of Macbriar, borrow a grace from the steep crags, the deep masses of shade, and the silent caves, among which they were nurtured, as the most rapid and perturbed stream which rushes through a wild and romantic region bears some reflection of noble imagery on its impetuous surface. To some of his less stern but unlettered personages, nature seems to have been a kindly instructor, nurturing high thoughts within them, and well supplying to them all the lack of written wisdom. The wild sublimity of Meg Merrilies is derived from her long converse with the glories of creation; the floating clouds have lent to her something of their grace; she has contemplated the rocks till her soul is firm as they, and gazed intently on the face of nature until she has become half acquainted with its mysteries. The old king's beadman has not journeyed for years in vain among the hills and woods; their beauty has sunk into his soul; and

his days seem bound each to each by "by natural piety" which he has learned among them.

That we think there is much of true poetical genius—much of that which softens, refines, and elevates humanity in the works of this author—may be inferred from our remarks on his power of embodying human character. The gleams of a soft and delicate fancy are tenderly cast over many of their scenes—heightening that which is already lovely, relieving the gloomy, and making even the thin blades of barren regions shine refreshingly on the eyes. We occasionally meet with a pure and pensive beauty, as in Pattieson's description of his sensations in his evening walks after the feverish drudgery of his school—with wild yet graceful fantasies, as in the songs of Davie Gellatly—or with visionary and aërial shapes, like the spirit of the House of Avenel. But the poetry of this author is, for the most part, of a far deeper cast;—flowing from his intense consciousness of the mysteries of our nature, and constantly impressing on our minds the high sanctities and the mortal destiny of our being. No one has ever made so impressive a use of the solemnities of life and death—of the awfulness which rests over the dying, and renders all their words and actions sacred—or of the fond retrospection, and the intense present enjoyment, snatched fearfully as if to secure it from fate, which are the peculiar blessings of a short and uncertain existence. Was ever the robustness of life—the mantling of the strong current of joyous blood—the high animation of health, spirits, and a stout heart, more vividly brought before the mind than in the description of Frank Kennedy's demeanour as he rides lustily forth, never to return?—or the fearful change from this hearty enjoyment of life to the chillness of mortality, more deeply impressed on the imagination than in all the minute examinations of the scene of his murder, the traces of the deadly contest, the last marks of the struggling footsteps, and the description of the corpse at the foot of the crag? Can a scene of mortality be conceived more fearful than that where Bertram, in the glen of Dernclugh, witnesses the last agonies of one over whom Meg Merrilies is chaunting her wild ditties to soothe the passage of the spirit? What a stupendous scene is that of the young fisher's funeral—the wretched father writhing in the contortions of agony—the mother silent in

tender sorrow—the motley crowd assembled to partake of strange festivity—and the old grandmother fearfully linking the living to the dead, now turning her wheel in apathy and unconsciousness, now drinking with frightful mirth to many “such merry meetings,” now, to the astonishment of the beholders rising to comfort her son, and intimating with horrid solemnity that there was more reason to mourn for her than for the departed! Equal in terrific power, is the view given us of the last confession and death of that “awful woman”—her intense perception of her long past guilt, with her deadness to all else—her yet quenchless hate to the object of her youthful vengeance, animating her frame with unearthly fire—her dying fancies that she is about to follow her mistress, and the broken images of old grandeur which flit before her as she perishes. These things are conceived in the highest spirit of tragedy, which makes life and death meet together, which exhibits humanity stripped of its accidents in all its depth and height, which impresses us at once with the victory of death, and of the eternity of those energies which it appears to subdue. There are also in these works, situations of human interest as strong as ever were invented—attended too with all that high apparel of the imagination, which renders the images of fear and anguish majestic. Such is that scene in the lone house after the defeat of the Covenanters, where Morton finds himself in the midst of a band of zealots, who regard him as given by God into their hands as a victim—where he is placed before the clock to gaze on the advances of the hand to the hour when he is to be slain, amidst the horrible devotion of his foes. The whole scene is, we think, without an equal in the conceptions which dramatic power has been able to embody. Its startling unexpectedness, yet its perfect probability to the imagination—the high tone and wild enthusiasm of character in the murderers—the sacrificial cast of their intended deed in their own raised and perverted thoughts—the fearful view given to the bodily senses of their prisoner of his remaining moments by the segment of the circle yet to be traversed by the finger of the clock before him, enable us to participate in the workings of his own dizzy soul, as he stands “awaiting till the sword destined to slay him crept out of its scabbard gradually, and, as it were by straw-breadths,” and condemned to drink the

bitterness of death "drop by drop," while his destined executioners seem "to alter their forms and features like the spectres in a feverish dream; their features become larger and their faces more disturbed;" until the beings around him appear actually demons, the walls seem to drop with blood, and "the light tick of the clock thrills on his ear with such loud, painful distinctness, as if each sound were the prick of a bodkin inflicted on the naked nerve of the organ." The effect is even retrospectively heightened by the heroic deaths of the Covenanters immediately succeeding, which give a dignity and a consecration to their late terrific design. The trial and execution of Fergus Mac Ivor are also, in the most exalted sense of the term, tragical. They are not only of breathless interest from the external circumstances, nor of moral grandeur from the heroism of Fergus and his follower, but of poetic dignity from that power of imagination which renders for a time the rules of law sublime as well as fearful, and gives to all the formalities of a trial more than a judicial majesty. It is seldom, indeed, that the terrors of our author offend or shock us, because they are accompanied by that reconciling power which softens without breaking the current of our sympathies. But there are some few instances of unrelieved horror—or of anguish, which overmasters fantasy—as the strangling of Glossin by Dirk Haiteraich, the administering of the torture to Macbriar, and the bloody bridal of Lammermuir. If we compare these with the terrors of Burley in his cave—where with his naked sword in one hand and his Bible in the other, he wrestles with his own remorse, believing it, in the spirit of his faith, a fiend of Satan—and with the sinking of Ravenswood in the sands; we shall feel how the grandeur of religious thought in the first instance, and the stately scenery of nature and the air of the supernatural in the last, ennobles agony, and render horrors grateful to the soul.

We must not pass over, without due acknowledgment, the power of our author in the description of battles, as exhibited in his pictures of the engagement at Preston Pans, of the first skirmish with the Covenanters, in which they overcome Claverhouse, and of the battle in which they were, in turn, defeated. The art by which he contrives at once to give the mortal contest in all its breadth and vastness—to

present it to us in the noblest masses; yet to make us spectators of each individual circumstance of interest in the field, may excite the envy of a painter. We know of nothing resembling these delineations in history or romance, except the descriptions given by Thucydides of the blockade of Plataea, of the Corcyraean massacres, of the attempt to retake Epi-polaë in the night, of the great naval action before Syracuse, of all the romantic events of the Sicilian war, and the varied miseries of the Athenian army in their retreat under Nicias. In the life and spirit, and minuteness of the details—in the intermingling of allusions to the scenery of the contests—and in the general fervour breathed over the whole there is a remarkable resemblance between these passages of the Greek historian, and the narratives of Scottish contests by the author of Waverley. There is too the same patriotic zeal in both; though the feeling in the former is of a more awful and melancholy cast, and that of the latter more light and cheerful. The Scottish novelist may, like the noblest historians, boast that he has given to his country “*Κτήμα ες αϊεις*”—a possession for ever!

It remains that we should say a word on the use made of the supernatural in these romances. There is, in the mode of its employment, more of gusto—more that approaches to an actual belief in its wonders, than in the works of any other author of these incredulous times. Even Shakspeare himself, in his remote age, does not appear to have drank in so deeply the spirit of superstition as our novelist of the nineteenth century. He treats, indeed, all the fantasies of his countrymen with that spirit of allowance and fond regard with which he always touches on human emotions. But he does not seem to have heartily partaken in them as awful realities. His witches have power to excite wonder, but little to chill men's bloods. Ariel, the visions of Prospero's enchanted isle, the “quaint fairies and the dapper elves” of the *Midsummer Night's Dream* glitter on the fancy, in a thousand shapes of dainty loveliness, but never affect us otherwise than as creations of the poet's brain. Even the ghost in *Hamlet* does not appal us half so fearfully as many a homely tale which has nothing to recommend it but the earnest belief of its tremulous reciter. There is little magic in the web of life, notwithstanding all the variety of

its shades, as Shakspeare has drawn it. Not so is it with our author; his spells have manifest hold on himself, and, therefore, they are very potent with the spirits of his readers. No prophetic intimation in his works is ever suffered to fail. The spirit which appears to Fergus—the astronomical predictions of Guy Mannering—the eloquent curses, and more eloquent blessings, of Meg Merrilies—the dying denunciation of Mucklewrath—the old prophecy in the *Bride of Lammermuir*—all are fulfilled to the very letter. The high and joyous spirits of Kennedy are observed by one of the bystanders as intimations of his speedy fate. We are far from disapproving of these touches of the super-human, for they are made to blend harmoniously with the freshest hues of life, and without destroying its native colouring, give to it a more solemn tinge. But we cannot extend our indulgence to the seer in the *Legend of Montrose*, or the *Lady of Avenel*, in the *Monastery*; where the spirits of another world do not cast their shadowings on this, but stalk forth in open light, and “in form as palpable” as any of the mortal characters. In works of passion, fairies and ghosts can scarcely be “simple products of the common day,” without destroying all harmony in our perceptions, and bringing the whole into discredit with the imagination as well as the feelings. Fairy tales are among the most exquisite things in the world, and so are delineations of humanity like those of our author; but they can never be blended without debasing the former into chill substances, or refining the latter into airy nothings.

We shall avoid the fruitless task of dwelling on the defects of this author, on the general insipidity of his lovers, on the want of skill in the development of his plots, on the clumsiness of his prefatory introductions, or the impotence of many of his conclusions. He has done his country and his nature no ordinary service. He has brought romance almost into our own times, and made the nobleness of humanity familiar to our daily thoughts. He has enriched history to us by opening such varied and delicious vistas to our gaze, beneath the range of its loftier events and more public characters. May his intellectual treasury prove exhaustless as the purse of *Fortunatus*, and may he dip into it unsparingly for the delight and the benefit of his species!

GODWIN.

[New Monthly Magazine.]

MR. GODWIN is the most original—not only of living novelists—but of living writers in prose. There are, indeed, very few authors of any age who are so clearly entitled to the praise of having produced works, the first perusal of which is a signal event in man's internal history. His genius is by far the most extraordinary, which the great shaking of nations and of principles—the French revolution—impelled and directed in its progress. English literature, at the period of that marvellous change, had become sterile; the rich luxuriance which once overspread its surface, had gradually declined into thin and scattered productions of feeble growth and transient duration. The fearful convulsion which, agitated the world of politics and of morals, tore up this shallow and exhausted surface—disclosed vast treasures which had been concealed for centuries—burst open the secret springs of imagination and of thought—and left, instead of the smooth and weary plain, a region of deep valleys and of shapeless hills, of new cataracts and of awful abysses, of spots blasted into everlasting barrenness, and regions of deepest and richest soil. Our author partook in the first enthusiasm of the spirit-stirring season—in “its pleasant exercise of hope and joy”—in much of its speculative extravagance, but in none of its practical excesses. He was roused not into action but into thought; and the high and undying energies of his soul, unwasted on vain efforts for the actual regeneration of man, gathered strength in those pure fields of meditation to which they were limited. The power which might have ruled the disturbed nations with

the wildest, directed only to the creation of high theories and of marvellous tales, imparted to its works a stern reality, and a moveless grandeur which never could spring from mere fantasy. His works are not like those which a man, who is endued with a deep sense of beauty, or a rare faculty of observation, or a sportive wit, or a breathing eloquence, may fabricate as the "idle business" of his life, as the means of profit or of fame. They have more in them of acts than of writings. They are the living and the immortal *deeds* of a man who must have been a great political adventurer had he not been an author. There is in "Caleb Williams" alone the material—the real burning energy—which might have animated a hundred schemes for the weal or wo of the species.

No writer of fictions has ever succeeded so strikingly as Mr. Godwin, with so little adventitious aid. His works are neither gay creatures of the element, nor pictures of external life—they derive not their charm from the delusions of fancy, or the familiarities of daily habitude—and are as destitute of the fascinations of light satire and felicitous delineation of society, as they are of the magic of the Arabian Tales. His style has "no figures and no fantasies," but is simple and austere. Yet his novels have a power which so enthralls us, that we half doubt, when we read them in youth, whether all our experience is not a dream, and these the only realities. He lays bare to us the innate might and majesty of man. He takes the simplest and most ordinary emotions of our nature, and makes us feel the springs of delight or of agony which they contain, the stupendous force which lies hid within them, and the sublime mysteries with which they are connected. He exhibits the naked wrestle of the passions in a vast solitude, where no object of material beauty disturbs our attention from the august spectacle, and where the least beating of the heart is audible in the depth of the stillness. His works endow the abstractions of life with more of real presence, and make us more intensely conscious of existence, than any others with which we are acquainted. They give us a new feeling of the capacity of our nature for action or for suffering, make the currents of our blood mantle within us, and our bosoms heave with indistinct desires for the keenest excitements and the strangest

perils. We feel as though we could live years in moments of energetic life, while we sympathize with his breathing characters. In things which before appeared indifferent, we discern sources of the fullest delight or of the most intense anguish. The healthful breathings of the common air seem instinct with an unspeakable rapture. The most ordinary habits which link one season of life to another become the awakeners of thoughts and of remembrances "which do often lie too deep for tears." The nicest disturbances of the imagination make the inmost fibres of the being quiver with agonies. Passions which have not usually been thought worthy to agitate the soul, now first seem to have their own ardent beatings, and their tumultuous joys. We seem capable of a more vivid life than we have ever before felt or dreamed of, and scarcely wonder that he who could thus give us a new sense of our own vitality, should have imagined that mind might become omnipotent over matter, and that he was able, by an effort of the will, to become corporeally immortal!

The intensity of passion which is manifested in the novels of Godwin is of a very different kind from that which burns in the poems of a noble bard, whom he has been sometimes erroneously supposed to resemble. The former sets before us mightiest realities in clear vision; the latter embodies the phantoms of a feverish dream. The strength of Godwin is the pure energy of unsophisticated nature; that of Lord Byron is the fury of disease. The grandeur of the last is derived from its transitoriness; that of the first from its eternal essence. The emotion in the poet receives no inconsiderable part of its force from its rebound from the dark rocks and giant barriers which seem to confine its rage within narrow boundaries; the feeling in the novelist is in its own natural current deep and resistless. The persons of the bard feel intensely, because they soon shall feel no more; those of the novelist glow, and kindle, and agonize, because they shall never perish. In the works of both, guilt is often associated with sublime energy; but how dissimilar are the impressions which they leave on the spirit! Lord Byron strangely blends the moral degradation with the intellectual majesty; so that goodness appears tame, and crime only is honoured and exalted. Godwin, on the other hand, only teaches us bitterly to mourn the evil which has been cast on

a noble nature, and to regard the energy of the character not as inseparably linked with vice, but as destined ultimately to subdue it. He makes us every where feel that crime is not the native heritage, but the accident, of the species of which we are members. He impresses us with the immortality of virtue; and while he leaves us painfully to regret the stains which the most gifted and energetic characters contract amidst the pollutions of time, he inspires us with hope that these shall pass away for ever. We drink in unshaken confidence the good and the true, which is ever of more value than hatred or contempt for the evil!

“Caleb Williams,” the earliest, is also the most popular of our author’s romances, not because his latter works have been less rich in sentiment and passion, but because they are, for the most part, confined to the development of single characters; while in this there is the opposition and death-grapple of two beings, each endowed with poignant sensibilities and quenchless energy. There is no work of fiction which more rivets the attention—no tragedy which exhibits a struggle more sublime, or sufferings more intense, than this; yet to produce the effect, no complicated machinery is employed, but the springs of action are few and simple. The motives are at once common and elevated, and are purely intellectual, without appearing for an instant inadequate to their mighty issues. Curiosity, for instance, which generally seems a low and ignoble motive for scrutinizing the secrets of a man’s life, here seizes with strange fascination on a gentle and ingenuous spirit, and supplies it with excitement as fervid, and snatches of delight as precious and as fearful, as those feelings create which we are accustomed to regard as alone worthy to enrapture or to agitate. The involuntary recurrence by Williams to the string of frenzy in the soul of one whom he would die to serve—the workings of his tortures on the heart of Falkland till they wring confidence from him—and the net thenceforth spread over the path of the youth like an invisible spell by his agonized master, surprising as they are, arise from causes so natural and so adequate, that the imagination at once owns them as authentic. The mild beauty of Falkland’s natural character, contrasted with the guilt he has incurred, and his severe purpose to lead a long life of agony and crime, that his fame

may be preserved spotless, is affecting almost without example. There is a rude grandeur even in the gigantic oppressor Tyrel, which all his disgusting enormities cannot destroy. Independently of the master-spring of interest, there are in this novel individual passages which can never be forgotten. Such are the fearful flight of Emily with her ravisher—the escape of Caleb Williams from prison, and his enthusiastic sensations on the recovery of his freedom, though wounded and almost dying without help—and the scenes of his peril among the robbers. Perhaps this work is the grandest ever constructed out of the simple elements of humanity, without any extrinsic aid from imagination, wit, or memory.

In “St. Leon,” Mr. Godwin has sought the stores of the supernatural;—but the “metaphysical aid” which he has condescended to accept is not adapted to carry him farther from nature, but to ensure a more intimate and wide communion with its mysteries. His hero does not acquire the philosopher’s stone and the elixir of immortality to furnish out for himself a dainty solitude, where he may dwell soothed with the music of his own undying thoughts, and rejoicing in his severance from his frail and transitory fellows. Apart from those among whom he moves, his yearnings for sympathy become more intense as it eludes him, and his perceptions of the mortal lot of his species become more vivid and more fond, as he looks on it from an intellectual eminence which is alike unassailable to death and to joy. Even in this work, where the author has to conduct a perpetual miracle, his exceeding earnestness makes it difficult to believe him a fabulist. Listen to his hero, as he expatiates in the first consciousness of his high prerogatives:

“I surveyed my limbs, all the joints and articulations of my frame, with curiosity and astonishment. What! exclaimed I, these limbs, this complicated but brittle frame shall last for ever! No disease shall attack it; no pain shall seize it; death shall withhold from it for ever his abhorred grasp! Perpetual vigour, perpetual activity, perpetual youth, shall take up their abode with me! Time shall generate in me no decay, shall not add a wrinkle to my brow, or convert a hair of my head to gray! This body was formed to die; this edifice to crumble into dust; the principles of corruption

and mortality are mixed up in every atom of my frame. But for me the laws of nature are suspended, the eternal wheels of the universe roll backward; I am destined to be triumphant over Fate and Time! Months, years, cycles, centuries! To me these are but as indivisible moments. I shall never become old; I shall always be, as it were, in the porch and infancy of existence; no lapse of years shall subtract any thing from my future duration. I was born under Louis the Twelfth; the life of Francis the First now threatens a speedy termination; he will be gathered to his fathers, and Henry, his son, will succeed him. But what are princes, and kings, and generations of men to me! I shall become familiar with the rise and fall of empires; in a little while the very name of France, my country, will perish from off the face of the earth, and men will dispute about the situation of Paris, as they dispute about the site of ancient Nineveh, and Babylon, and Troy. Yet I shall still be young. I shall take my most distant posterity by the hand; I shall accompany them in their career; and, when they are worn out and exhausted, shall shut up the tomb over them, and set forward."

This is a strange tale, but it tells like a true one! When we first read it, it seemed as though it had itself the power of alchemy to steal into our veins, and render us capable of resisting death and age. For a short—too short! a space, all time seemed opened to our personal view—we felt no longer as of yesterday; but the grandest parts of our knowledge of the past seemed mightiest recollections of a far-off childhood.

"The wars we too remembered of King Nine,
And old Assaracus, and Ibycus divine."

This was the happy extravagance of an hour; but it is ever the peculiar power of Mr. Godwin to make us feel that there is something within us which cannot perish!

"Fleetwood" has less of our author's characteristic energy than any other of his works. The earlier parts of it, indeed, where the formation of the hero's character, in free roving amidst the wildest of nature's scenery, is traced, have a deep beauty which reminds us of some of the holiest imagina-

tions of Wordsworth. But when the author would follow him into the world—through the frolics of college, the dissipations of Paris, and the petty disquietudes of matrimonial life—we feel that he has condescended too far. He is no graceful trifler; he cannot work in these frail and low materials. There is, however, one scene in this novel most wild and fearful. This is where Fleetwood, who has long brooded in anguish over the idea of his wife's falsehood, keeps strange festival on his wedding-day—when, having procured a waxen image of her whom he believes perfidious, and dressed a frightful figure in a uniform to represent her imagined paramour, he locks himself in an apartment with these horrid counterfeits, a supper of cold meats, and a barrel-organ, on which he plays the tunes often heard from the pair he believes guilty, till his silent agony gives place to delirium, he gazes around with glassy eyes, sees strange sights and dallies with frightful mockeries, and at last tears the dreadful spectacle to atoms, and is seized with furious madness. We do not remember, even in the works of our old dramatists, any thing of its kind comparable to this voluptuous fantasy of despair.

“Mandeville” has all the power of its author's earliest writings; but its main subject—the development of an engrossing and maddening hatred—is not one which can excite human sympathy. There is, however, a bright relief to the gloom of the picture, in the angelic disposition of Clifford, and the sparkling loveliness of Henrietta, who appears “full of life, and splendour and joy.” All Mr. Godwin's female heroines have a certain airiness and radiance—a visionary grace, peculiar to them, which may at first surprise by their contrast to the robustness of his masculine creations. But it will perhaps be found that the more deeply man is conversant with the energies of his own heart, the more will he seek for opposite qualities in woman.

Of all Mr. Godwin's writings the choicest in point of style is a little essay “on Sepulchres.” Here his philosophic thought, subdued and sweetened by the contemplation of mortality, is breathed forth in the gentlest tone. His “Political Justice,” with all the extravagance of its first edition, or with all the inconsistencies of its last, is a noble work, replete with lofty principle and thought, and often leading to the most striking results by a process of the severest reasoning.

Man, indeed, cannot and ought not to act universally on its leading doctrine—that we should in all things seek only the greatest amount of good without favour or affection; but it is at least better than the low selfishness of the world. It breathes also a mild and cheerful faith in the progressive advances and the final perfection of the species. It was this good hope for humanity which excited Mr. Malthus to affirm, that there is in the constitution of man's nature a perpetual barrier to any extensive improvement in his earthly condition. After long interval, Mr. Godwin has announced a reply to this popular system—a system which reduces man to an animal, governed by blind instinct, and destitute of reason, sentiment, imagination, and hope, whose most mysterious instincts are matter of calculation to be estimated by rules of geometrical series!—Most earnestly do we desire to witness his success. To our minds, indeed, he sufficiently proves the falsehood of his adversary's doctrines by his own intellectual character. His works are, in themselves, evidences that there is power and energy in man which have never yet been fully brought into action, and which were not given to the species in vain. He has lived himself in the soft and mild light of those peaceful years, which he believes shall hereafter bless the world, when force and selfishness shall disappear, and love and joy shall be the unerring lights of the species.

MATURIN.

[New Monthly Magazine.]

THE author of Montorio and of Bertram is unquestionably a person gifted with no ordinary powers. He has a quick sensibility—a penetrating and intuitive acuteness—and an unrivalled vigour and felicity of language, which enable him at one time to attain the happiest condensation of thought, and at others to pour forth a stream of eloquence rich, flowing, and deep, chequered with images of delicate loveliness, or darkened by broad shadows cast from objects of stern and adamantine majesty. Yet, in common with many other potent spirits of the present time, he fails to excite within us any pure and lasting sympathy. We do not, on reading his works, feel that we have entered on a precious and imperishable treasure. They dazzle, they delight, they surprise, and they weary us—we lay them down with a vague admiration for the author, and try to shake off their influence as we do the impressions of a feverish dream. It is not thus that we receive the productions of genuine and holy bards—of Shakspeare, of Milton, of Spencer, or of Wordsworth—whose far-reaching imaginations come home to our hearts, who become the companions of our sweetest moods, and with whom we long to “set up our everlasting rest.” Their creations are often nearest to our hearts when they are farthest removed from the actual experience of our lives. We travel on the bright tracts which their genius reveals to us as safely and with as sure and fond a tread as along the broad highway of the world. When the regions which they set before us are the most distant from our ordinary perceptions, we yet seem at home in them, their wonders are strangely familiar to us, and the scene, overspread with

a consecrating and lovely lustre, breaks on us, not as a wild fantastic novelty, but as a revived recollection of some holier life, which the soul rejoices thus delightfully to recognise.

Not thus do the works of Mr. Maturin—original and surprising as they often are—affect us. They have no fibres in them which entwine with the heartstrings, and which keep their hold until the golden chords of our sensibility and imagination themselves are broken. They pass by us sometimes like gorgeous phantoms, sometimes like “horrible shadows and unreal mockeries,” which seem to elude us because they are not of us. When we follow him closest, he introduces us into a region where all is unsatisfactory and unreal—the chaos of principles, fancies, and passions—where mightiest elements are yet floating without order, where appearances between substance and shadow perpetually harass us, where visionary forms beckon us through painful avenues, and on approach sink into despicable realities, and pillars which looked ponderous and immoveable at a distance, melt at the touch into air, and are found to be only masses of vapour and of cloud. He neither raises us to the skies, nor “brings his angels down,” but astonishes by a phantasmagoria of strange appearances, sometimes scarcely distinguishable in member, joint, or limb, but which when most clearly defined come not near us, nor claim kindred by a warm and living touch. This chill remoteness from humanity is attended by a general want of harmony and proportion in the whole—by a wild excursiveness of sensibility and thought—which add to its ungenial influence, and may be traced to the same causes.

If we were disposed to refer these defects to one general source, we should attribute them to the want of an imagination proportionate to sensibility and to mastery of language in the writer's mind, or to his comparative neglect of that most divine of human faculties. It is edifying to observe how completely the nature of this power is mistaken by many who profess to decide on matters of taste. They regard it as something wild and irregular, the reverse of truth, nature, and reason, which is divided from insanity only by “a thin partition,” and which, uncontrolled by sterner powers, forms the essence of madness. They think it abounds in speeches crowded with tawdry and superfluous epithets—

in the discourses of Dr. Chalmers, because they deal so largely in infinite obscurities that there is no room for a single image—and in the poems of Lord Byron, because his characters are so unlike all beings which have ever existed. Far otherwise thought Spencer when he represented the laurel as the meed—not of poets insane—but “of poets SAGE.” True imagination is, indeed, the deep eye of the profoundest wisdom. It is opposed to reason, not in its results, but in its process; it does not demonstrate truth only because it sees it. There are vast and eternal realities in our nature, which reason proves to exist—which sensibility “feels after and finds”—and which imagination beholds in clear and solemn vision, and pictures with a force and vividness which assures their existence even to ungifted mortals. Its subjects are the true, the universal, and the lasting. Its distinguishing property has no relation to dimness, or indistinctness, or dazzling radiance, or turbulent confusedness, but is the power of setting all things in the clearest light, and bringing them into perfect harmony. Like the telescope it does not only magnify celestial objects, but brings them nearer to us. Of all the faculties it is the severest and the most unerring. Reason may beguile with splendid sophistry; sensibility may fatally misguide; but if imagination exists at all, it must exhibit only the real. A mirror can no more reflect an object which is not before it, than the imagination can show the false and the baseless. By revealing to us its results in the language of imagery, it gives to them almost the evidence of the senses. If the analogy between an idea and its physical exponent is not complete, there is no effort of imagination—if it is, the truth is seen, and felt, and enjoyed, like the colours and forms of the material universe. And this effect is produced not only with the greatest possible certainty, but in the fewest possible words. Yet even when this is done—when the illustration is not only the most enchanting, but the most convincing, of proofs—the writer is too often contemptuously depreciated as *flourery*, by the advocates of mere reason. Strange chance! that he who has embodied truth in a living image, and thus rendered it visible to the intellectual perceptions, should be confounded with those who conceal all sense and meaning beneath mere *verbiage* and fragments of disjointed metaphor!

Thus the products of genuine imagination are "all compact." It is, indeed, only the compactness and harmony of its pictures which give to it its name or its value. To discover that there are mighty elements in humanity—to observe that there are bright hues and graceful forms in the external world—and to know the fitting names of these—is all which is required to furnish out a rich stock of spurious imagination to one who aspires to the claim of a wild and irregular genius. For him a dictionary is a sufficient guide to Parnassus. It is only by representing those intellectual elements in their finest harmony—by combining those hues and forms in the fairest pictures—or by making the glorious combinations of external things the symbols of truth and moral beauty—that imagination really puts forth its divine energies. We do not charge on Mr. Maturin that he is destitute of power to do this, or that he does not sometimes direct it to its purest uses. But his sensibility is so much more quick and subtle, than his authority over his impressions is complete; the flow of his words so much more copious and facile than the throng of images on his mind; that he too often confounds us with unnumbered snatches and imperfect gleams of beauty, or astonishes us by an outpouring of eloquent bombast, instead of enriching our souls with distinct and vivid conceptions. Like many other writers of the present time—especially of his own country—he does not wait until the stream which young enthusiasm sets loose shall work itself clear, and calmly reflect the highest heavens. His creations bear any stamp but that of truth and soberness. He sees the glories of the external world, and the mightier wonders of man's moral and intellectual nature, with a quick sense, and feels them with an exquisite sympathy—but he gazes on them in "very drunkenness of heart," and becomes giddy with his own indistinct emotions, till all things seem confounded in a gay bacchanalian dance, and assume strange fantastic combinations; which, when transferred to his works, startle for a moment, but do not produce that "sober certainty of waking bliss" which real imagination assures. There are two qualities necessary to form a truly imaginative writer—a quicker and an intenser feeling than ordinary men possess for the beautiful and the sublime, and the calm

and meditative power of regulating, combining, and arranging its own impressions, and of distinctly bodying forth the final results of this harmonizing process. Where the first of these properties exists, the last is, perhaps, attainable by that deep and careful study which is more necessary to a poet than to any artist who works in mere earthly materials. But this study many of the most gifted of modern writers unhappily disdain; and if mere sale and popularity are their objects, they are right; for in the multitude the wild, the disjointed, the incoherent, and the paradoxical, which are but for a moment, necessarily awaken more immediate sensation than the pure and harmonious, which are destined to last while nature and the soul shall endure.

It is easy to perceive how it is that the imperfect creations of men of sensibility and of eloquence strike and dazzle more at the first, than the completest works of truly imaginative poets. A perfect statue—a temple fashioned with exactest art—appear less, at a mere glance, from the nicety of their proportions. The vast majority of readers, in an age like ours, have neither leisure nor taste to seek and ponder over the effusions of holiest genius. They must be awakened into admiration by something new, and strange, and surprising; and the more remote from their daily thoughts and habits—the more fantastical and daring—the effort, the more will it please, because the more it will rouse them. Thus a man who will exhibit some impossible combination of heroism and meanness—of virtue and of vice—of heavenly love and infernal malignity and baseness—will receive their wonder and their praise. They call this *POWER*, which is in reality the most pitiable weakness. It is because a writer has not imagination enough to exhibit in new forms the universal qualities of nature and the soul, that he takes some strange and horrible anomaly as his theme. Incompetent to the divine task of rendering beauty “a simple product of the common day,” he tries to excite emotion by disclosing the foulest recess of the foulest heart. As he strikes only one feeling, and that coarsely and ungently, he appears to wield a mightier weapon than he whose harmonious beauty sheds its influence equably over the whole of the sympathies. That which touches with strange commotion, and mere violence

on the heart, but leaves no image there, seems to vulgar spirits more potent than the faculty which applies to it all perfect figures, and leaves them to sink gently into its fleshly tablets to remain there for ever. Yet, surely, that which merely shakes is not equal even in power to that which impresses. The wild disjointed part may be more amazing to a diseased perception than the well-compacted whole; but it is the nice balancing of properties, the soft blending of shades, and the all-pervading and reconciling light shed over the harmonious imagination, which take off the sense of rude strength that alone is discernible in its naked elements. Is there more of heavenly power in seizing from among the tumult of chaos and eternal night, strange and fearful abortions, or in brooding over the vast abyss, and making it pregnant with life, and glory, and joy? Is it the higher exercise of human faculties to represent the frightful discordances of passion, or to show the grandeurs of humanity in that majestic repose which is at once an anticipation and a proof of its eternal destiny? Is transitory vice—the mere accident of the species—and those vices too which are the rarest and most appalling of all its accidents—or that good which is its essence and which never can perish, fittest for the uses of the bard? Shall he desire to haunt the caves which lie lowest on the banks of Acheron, or the soft bowers watered by “Siloa’s brook that flows fast by the oracle of God?”

Mr. Maturin gave decisive indications of a morbid sensibility and a passionate eloquence out-running his imaginative faculties, in the commencement of his literary career. His first romance, the “Family of Montorio,” is one of the wildest and strangest of all “false creations proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain.” It is for the most part a tissue of magnificent yet unappalling horrors. Its great faults as a work of amusement, are the long and unrelieved series of its gloomy and marvellous scenes, and the unsatisfactory explanation of them all, as arising from mere human agency. This last error he borrowed from Mrs. Ratcliffe, to whom he is far inferior in the economy of terrors, but whom he greatly transcends in the dark majesty of his style. As his events are far more wild and wondrous than hers, so his development is

necessarily far more incredible and vexatious. There is, in this story, a being whom we are long led to believe is not of this world—who speaks in the tones of the sepulchre, glides through the thickest walls, haunts two distant brothers in their most secret retirements through their strange wanderings, leads one of his victims to a scene which he believes infernal, and there terrifies him with sights of the wildest magic—and who after all this, and after really vindicating to the fancy his claim to the supernatural by the fearful cast of his language—is discovered to be a low impostor, who has produced all by the aid of poor tricks and secret passages! Where is the policy of this! Unless by his power, the author had given a credibility to magic through four-fifths of his work, it never could have excited any feeling but that of impatience or of scorn. And when we have surrendered ourselves willingly to his guidance—when we have agreed to believe impossibilities at his bidding—why does he reward our credence with derision, and tacitly reproach us for not having detected his idle mockeries? After all, too, the reason is no more satisfied than the fancy; for it would be a thousand times easier to believe in the possibility of spiritual influences, than in a long chain of mean contrivances, no one of which could ever succeed. The first is but one wonder, and that one to which our nature has a strange leaning; the last are numberless, and have nothing to reconcile them to our thoughts. In submitting to the former we contentedly lay aside our reasoning faculties; in approaching the latter our reason itself is appealed to at the moment when it is insulted. Great talent is, however, unquestionably exhibited in this singular story. A stern justice breathes solemnly through all the scenes in the devoted castle. “Fate sits on its dark battlements, and frowns.” There is a spirit of deep philosophy in the tracing of the gradual influence of patrieidal thoughts on the hearts of the brothers, which would finally exhibit the danger of dallying with evil fancies, if the subject were not removed so far from all ordinary temptations. Some of the scenes of horror, if they were not accumulated until they wear out their impression, would produce an effect inferior to none in the works of *Ratcliffe* or of *Lewis*. The scene in which *Filippo* escapes from the assassins, deserves to be ranked with the robber-scenes in the *Monk* and *Count Fathom*. The

diction of the whole is rich and energetic—not, indeed, flowing in a calm beauty which may glide on for ever—but impetuous as a mountain torrent, which, though it speedily passes away, leaves behind it no common spoils—

“ Depositing upon the silent shore
Of memory, images and gentle thoughts
Which cannot die, and will not be destroyed.”

“The Wild Irish Boy” is, on the whole, inferior to Montorio, though it served to give a farther glimpse into the vast extent of the author’s resources. “The Milesian” is, perhaps, the most extraordinary of his romances. There is a bleak and misty grandeur about it, which, in spite of its glaring defects, sustains for it an abiding-place in the soul. Yet never, perhaps, was there a more unequal production—alternately exhibiting the grossest plagiarism and the wildest originality—now swelling into offensive bombast, and anon disclosing the simplest majesty of nature, fluctuating with inconstant ebb between the sublime and the ridiculous, the delicate and the revolting. “Women, or Pour et Contre,” is less unequal, but we think, on the whole, less interesting than the author’s earlier productions. He should not venture, as in this work he has done, into the ordinary paths of existence. His persons, if not cast in a high and heroic mould, have no stamp of reality upon them. The reader of this work, though often dazzled and delighted, has a painful feeling that the characters are shadowy and unreal, like that which is experienced in dreams. They are unpleasant and tantalizing likenesses, approaching sufficiently near to the true to make us feel what they would be and lament what they are. Eva, Zaira, the maniac mother, and the group of Calvinists, have all a resemblance to nature—and sometimes to nature at its most passionate or its sweetest—but they look as at a distance from us, as though between us and them there were some veil, or discolouring medium, to baffle and perplex us. Still the novel is a splendid work; and gives the feeling that its author has “riches fineless” in store, which might delight as well as astonish the world, if he would cease to be their slave, and become their master.

In the narrow boundaries of the Drama the redundancies

of Mr. Maturin have been necessarily corrected. In this walk, indeed, there seems reason to believe that his genius would have grown purer, as it assumed a severer attitude; and that he would have sought to attain high and true passion, and lofty imagination, had he not been seduced by the admiration unhappily lavished on Lord Byron's writings. The feverish strength, the singular blending of good and evil, and the spirit of moral paradox, displayed in these works, were congenial with his tastes, and aroused in him the desire to imitate. "Bertram," his first and most successful tragedy, is a fine piece of writing, wrought out of a nauseous tale, and rendered popular, not by its poetical beauties, but by the violence with which it jars on the sensibilities, and awakens the sluggish heart from its lethargy. "Manuel," its successor, feebler, though in the same style, excited little attention, and less sympathy. In "Fredolpho," the author as though he had resolved to sting the public into a sense of his power, crowded together characters of such matchless depravity, sentiments of such a demoniac cast, and events of such gratuitous horror, that the moral taste of the audience, injured as it had been by the success of similar works, felt the insult, and rose up indignantly against it. Yet in this piece were passages of a soft and mournful beauty, breathing a tender air of romance, which led us bitterly to regret that the poet chose to "embower the spirit of a fiend, in mortal paradise of such sweet" song.

We do, not, however, despair even yet of the regeneration of our author's taste. There has always been something of humanity to redeem those works in which his genius has been most perverted. There is no deliberate sneering at the disinterested and the pure—no cold derision of human hopes—no deadness to the lonely and the loving, in his writings. His error is that of a hasty trusting to feverish impulses, not of a malignant design. There is far more of the soul of goodness in his evil things, than in those of the noble bard whose example has assisted to mislead him. He does not, indeed, know so well how to place his unnatural characters in imposing attitudes—to work up his morbid sensibilities for sale—or to "build the lofty rhyme" on shattered principles, and the melancholy fragments of hope. But his diction is more rich, his fancy is more fruitful, and his com-

pass of thought and feeling more extensive. Happy shall we be to see him doing justice at last to his powers—studying not to excite the wonder of a few barren readers or spectators, but to live in the hearts of the good of future times—and, to this high end, leaving discord for harmony, the startling for the true, and the evil which, however potent, is but for a season, for the pure and the holy which endure for ever!

REVIEW OF RYMER'S WORKS ON TRAGEDY.

[Retrospective Review.]

THESE are very curious and edifying works. The author (who was the compiler of the *Fœdera*) appears to have been a man of considerable acuteness, maddened by a furious zeal for the honour of tragedy. He lays down the most fantastical rules for the composition which he chiefly reverses, and argues on them as "truths of holy writ." He criticizes Shakspeare as one invested with authority to sit in judgment on his powers, and passes on him as decisive a sentence of condemnation, as ever was awarded against a friendless poet by a Reviewer. We will select a few passages from his work, which may be consolatory to modern authors, and useful to modern critics.

The chief weight of Mr. Rymer's critical vengeance is wreaked on *Othello*. After a slight sketch of the plot, he proceeds at once to speak of the *moral*, which he seems to regard as of the first importance in tragedy.

"Whatever rubs or difficulty may stick on the bark, the moral use of this fable is very instructive. First, this may be a caution to all maidens of quality, how, without their parents' consent, they run away with blackamoors. Secondly, this may be a warning to all good wives, that they look well to their linen. Thirdly, this may be a lesson to husbands, that before their jealousy be tragical, the proofs may be mathematical."

Our author then proceeds happily to satirize Othello's

colour. He observes, that "Shakspeare was accountable both to the eyes and to the ears." On this point we think his objection is not without reason. We agree with an excellent modern critic in the opinion, that though a reader may sink Othello's colour in his mind, a spectator can scarcely avoid losing the mind in the colour. But Mr. Rymer proceeds thus to characterize Othello's noble account to the Senate of his whole course of love.

"This was the charm, this was the philtre, the love-powder that took the daughter of this noble Venetian. This was sufficient to make the Blackamoor white, and reconcile all, though there had been a cloven foot into the bargain. A meaner woman might as soon be taken by Aqua Tetrachymaggon."

The idea of Othello's elevation to the rank of a general, stings Mr. Rymer almost to madness. He regards the poet's offence as a kind of misprision of treason.

"The character of the state (of Venice) is to employ strangers in their wars; but shall a poet thence fancy that they will set a Negro to be their general; or trust a Moor to defend them against the Turk? With us, a Blackamoor might rise to be a trumpeter, but Shakspeare would not have him less than a lieutenant-general.—With us, a Moor might marry some little drab or small-coal wench; Shakspeare would provide him the daughter and heir of some great lord, or privy counsellor; and all the town should reckon it a very suitable match: yet the English are not bred up with that hatred and aversion to the Moors as the Venitians, who suffer by a perpetual hostility from them,

"Littora littoribus contraria."

Our author is as severe on Othello's character, as on his exaltation and colour.

"Othello is made a Venetian general. We see nothing done by him, nor related concerning him, that comports with the condition of a general, or, indeed, of a man, unless the killing himself to avoid a death the law was about to inflict

upon him. When his jealousy had wrought him up to a resolution of his taking revenge for the supposed injury, he sets Iago to the fighting part to kill Cassio, and chooses himself to murder the silly woman his wife, that was like to make no resistance."

Mr. Rymer next undertakes to resent the affront put on the army by the making Iago a soldier.

"But what is most intolerable is Iago. He is no Blackamoor soldier, so we may be sure he should be like other soldiers of our acquaintance; yet never in tragedy, nor in comedy, nor in nature, was a soldier with his character;—take it in the author's own words:

————— some eternal villain,
Some busie and insinuating rogue,
Some cogging, cozening slave, to get some office.

"Horace describes a soldier otherwise,—*Impyger, iracundus, inexorabilis, acer.*

"Shakspeare knew his character of Iago was inconsistent. In this very play he pronounces,

"If thou deliver more or less than truth,
'Thou art no soldier.—"

"This he knew, but to entertain the audience with something new and surprising against common sense and nature, he would pass upon us a close, dissembling, false, insinuating rascal, instead of an open hearted, frank, plain dealing soldier, a character constantly worn by them for some thousands of years in the world."

Against "the gentle lady married to the Moor," Mr. Rymer cherishes a most exemplary hatred. He seems to labour for terms strong enough to express the antipathy and scorn he bears her. The following are some of the daintiest:

"There is nothing in the noble Desdemona, that is not below any country kitchen-maid with us."—"No woman bred out of a pig-stye could talk so meanly."

Yet is Mr. Rymer no less enraged at her death than at her life.

“Here (he exclaims in an agony of passion) a noble Venetian lady is to be murdered by our poet, in sober sadness, purely for being a fool. No pagan poet but would have found some machine for her deliverance. Pegasus would have strained hard to have brought old Perseus on his back, time enough to rescue this Andromeda from so foul a monster. Has our Christian poetry no generosity, no bowels? Ha, ha, Sir Launcelot! Ha, Sir George! Will no ghost leave the shades for us in extremity, to save a distressed damsel?”

On the *expression*,” that is, we presume, the poetry of the work, Mr. Rymer does not think it necessary to dwell; though he admits that “the verses rumbling in our ears, are of good use to help off the action.” On those of Shakspeare he passes this summary judgment: “In the neighing of a horse, or in the growling of a mastiff, there is a meaning, there is as lively expression, and may I say more humanity, than many times in the tragical flights of Shakspeare.” Having settled this trivial point, he invites the reader “to step among the scenes, to observe the conduct on this tragedy.”

In examining the first scene of *Othello*, our critic weightily reprehends the sudden and startling manner in which Iago and Roderigo informs Brabantio of his daughter's elopement with the Moor. He regards their abruptness as an unpardonable violation of decorum, and by way of contrast to its rudeness, informs us, that

“In former days there wont to be kept at the courts of princes somebody in a fool's coat, that in pure simplicity might let slip something, which made way for the ill news, and blunted the shock, which otherwise might have come too violent on the party.”

Mr. Rymer shows the council of Venice no quarter. He thus daringly scrutinizes their proceedings.

“By their conduct and manner of talk, a body must strain hard to fancy the scene at Venice, and not rather at some of our Cinque ports, where the baily and his fishermen are knocking their heads together on account of some whale; or some terrible broil on the coast. But to show them true Venetians, the maritime affairs stick not on their hand; the public may sink or swim. They will sit up all night to hear a Doctors’ Commons matrimonial cause; and have the merits of the cause laid open to ’em, that they may decide it before they stir. What can be pleaded to keep awake their attention so wonderfully.”

Here the critic enters into a fitting abuse of Othello’s defence to the senate; expresses his disgust at the “eloquence which kept them up all night,” and his amaze at their apathy, notwithstanding the strangeness of the marriage. He complains, that

“Instead of starting at the prodigy, every one is familiar with Desdemona, as if he were her own natural father; they rejoice in her good fortune, and wish their own daughters as hopefully married. Should the poet (he continues) have provided such a husband for an only daughter of any peer in England, the Blackamoor must have changed his skin to look our House of Lords in the face.”

Our critic next complains, that, in the second Act, the poet shows the action, (he “knows not how many leagues off”) in the island of Cyprus, without “our Bayes,” (as he pleasantly denominates Shakspeare) having made any provision of transport ships for the audience. The first scene in Cyprus is then “cut up” in a way, which might make the most skilful of modern reviewers turn pale with envy. After noticing the preliminary dialogue, Mr. Rymer observes, “now follows a long rabble of Jack Pudden farce between Iago and Desdemona, that runs on with all the little plays, jingle, and trash, below the patience of any country kitchen maid with her sweet-heart. The Venetian Donna is hard put to it for pastime; and this is all when they are newly got on shore from a dismal tempest, and when every moment she might expect to hear her Lord, (as she calls him,) that she

runs so mad after, is arrived or lost." Our author, therefore, accuses Shakspeare of "unhallowing the theatre, profaning the name of tragedy, and instead of representing men and manners, turning all morality, good-sense, and humanity, into mockery and derision."

Mr. Rymer contends, that Desdemona's solicitations for Cassio were in themselves more than enough to rouse Othello's jealousy. "Iago can now, (he observes,) only *actum agere*, and vex the audience with a nauseous repetition." This remark introduces the following criticism on the celebrated scene in the third act, between Othello and Iago, which is curious, not only as an instance of perverted reasoning, but as it shows, that in the performance, some great histrionic power must have been formerly exerted, not unlike the energy of which we, in witnessing this tragedy, have been spectators.

"Whence comes it then, that this is the top scene; the scene that raises *Othello* above all other tragedies at our theatres? It is purely from the *action*; from the mops and the mows, the grimace, the grins, and gesticulation. Such scenes as this have made all the world run after Harlequin and Scaramoucio.

"The several degrees of *action* were amongst the ancients distinguished by the cothurnus, the soccus, and the planipes. Had this scene been represented at Old Rome, Othello and Iago must have quitted their buskins; they must have played *barefoot*: for the spectators would not have been content without seeing their podometry; and the jealousy work out at the very toes of them. Words, be they Spanish or Polish, or any inarticulate sound, have the same effect, they can only serve to distinguish, and, as it were, beat time to the action. But here we see a known language does wofully encumber and clog the operation; as either forced, or heavy, or trifling, or incoherent, or improper, or most improbable. When no words interpose to spoil the conceit, every one interprets, as he likes best; so in that memorable dispute between Panurge and our English philosopher in *Rabelais*, performed without a word speaking, the theologians, physicians, and surgeons, made one inference; the law-

yers, civilians, and canonists, drew another conclusion more to their mind."

Mr. Rymer thus objects to the superlative villainy of Iago, on his advising Desdemona's murder.

"Iago had some pretence to be discontent with Othello and Cassio, and what passed hitherto was the operation of revenge. Desdemona had never done him any harm; always kind to him, and to his wife; was his countrywoman, a dame of quality. For him to abet her murder, shows nothing of a soldier, nothing of a man, nothing of nature in it. The ordinary of Newgate never had the like monster to pass under his examination. Can it be any diversion to see a rogue beyond what the devil ever finished! or would it be any instruction to an audience? Iago could desire no better than to set Cassio and Othello, his two enemies, by the ears together, so that he might have been revenged on them both at once; and choosing for his own share the murder of Desdemona, he had the opportunity to play booty, and save the poor harmless wretch. But the poet must do every thing by contraries; to surprise the audience still with something horrible and prodigious, beyond any human imagination. At this rate, he must outdo the devil, to be a poet in the rank with Shakspeare."

Mr. Rymer is decorously enraged, to think that the tragedy should turn on a handkerchief. "Why," he asks in virtuous indignation, "was not this called the tragedy of the handkerchief? what can be more absurd than (as Quintilian expresses it) *in parvibus (sic) libris has tragedias movere?* We have heard of Fortunatus, his purse, and of the invisible cloak long ago worn thread-bare, and stowed up in the wardrobe of obsolete romances; one might think that were a fitter place for this handkerchief than that it, at this time of day, be worn on the stage, to raise every where all this clutter and turmoil." And again, "the handkerchief is so remote a trifle, no booby on this side Mauritania could make any consequence from it."

Our author suggests a felicitous alteration of the catastrophe of *Othello*. He proposes, that the handkerchief, when

lost, should have been folded in the bridal couch; and when Othello was stifling Desdemona,

“The fairy napkin might have started up to disarm his fury, and stop his ungracious mouth. Then might she (in a trance for fear) have lain as dead. Then might he (believing her dead) touched with remorse, have honestly cut his own throat, by the good leave, and with the applause, of all the spectators; who might thereupon have gone home with a quiet mind, admiring the beauty of providence, fairly and truly represented on the theatre.”

The following is the summing up and catastrophe of this marvellous criticism:

“What can remain with the audience to carry home with them from this sort of poetry, for their use and edification? How can it work, unless (instead of settling the mind and purging our passions) to delude our senses, disorder our thoughts, addle our brain, pervert our affections, hair our imaginations, corrupt our appetite—and fill our head with vanity, confusion, *tintamarre*, and jingle-jangle, beyond what all the parish clerks of London, with their Old Testament farces and interludes, in Richard the Second's time, could ever pretend to? Our only hopes, for the good of their souls, can be that these people go to the play-house as they do to church—to sit still, look on one another, make no reflection, nor mind the play more than they would a sermon.”

“There is in this play some burlesque, some humour, and ramble of comical wit, some show, and some *mimicry* to divert the spectators; but the tragical part is clearly none other than a bloody farce, without salt or savor.”

Our author's criticism on *Julius Cæsar* is very scanty, compared with that of *Othello*, but it is not less decisive. Indeed, his classical zeal here sharpens his critical rage; and he is incensed against Shakspeare, not only as offending the dignity of the tragic muse, but the memory of the noblest Romans. “He might,” exclaims the indignant critic, “be familiar with Othello and Iago, as his own natural

acquaintance, but Cæsar and Brutus were above his conversation; to put them in fools' coats, and make them Jack Puddens in the Shakspeare dress, is a sacrilege beyond any thing in Spelman. The truth is, this author's head was full of villanous unnatural images—and history has furnished him with great names, thereby to recommend them to the world, by writing over them—*This is Brutus, this is Cicero, this is Cæsar.*" He affirms, "that the language Shakspeare puts into the mouth of Brutus would not suit or be convenient, unless from some son of the shambles, or some natural offspring of the butchery." He abuses the poet for making the conspirators dispute about day-break—seriously chides him for not allowing the noble Brutus a watch-candle in his chamber on this important night, rather than puzzling his man, Lucius, to grope in the dark for a flint and tinder-box to get the taper lighted"—speaks of the quarrel scene between Brutus and Cassius, as that in which "they are to play a prize, a trial of skill in huffing and swaggering, like two drunken Hectors of a two-penny reckoning." And finally, alluding to the epilogue of Laberius, forced by the emperor to become an actor, he thus sums up his charges:

"This may show with what indignity our poet treats the noblest Romans. But there is no other cloth in his wardrobe. Every one must wear a fool's coat that comes to be dressed by him; nor is he more civil to the ladies—Portia, in good manners, might have challenged more respect; she that shines a glory of the first magnitude in the gallery of heroic dames, is with our poet scarce one remove from a natural; she is the own cousin-german of one piece, the very same impertinent silly flesh and blood with Desdemona. Shakspeare's genius lay for comedy and humour. In tragedy he appears quite out of his element; his brains are turned—he raves and rambles without any coherence, any spark of reason, or any rule to control him, to set bounds to his phrenzy."

One truth, though the author did not understand it, is told in this critic on *Julius Cæsar*; that Shakspeare's "senators and his orators had their learning and education at the

same school, be they Venetians, Ottamites, or noble Romans." They drew, in their golden urns, from the deep fountain of humanity, those living waters which lose not their sweetness in the changes of man's external condition.

These attacks on Shakspeare are very curious, as evincing how gradual has been the increase of his fame. Their whole tone shows that the author was not advancing what he thought the world would regard as paradoxical or strange. He speaks as one with authority to decide. We look now on his work amazedly; and were it put forth by a writer of our times, should regard it as "the very ecstasy of madness." Such is the lot of genius. However small the circle of cotemporary admirers, it must "gather fame" as time rolls on. It appeals to feelings which cannot alter. The minds who once have deeply felt it, can never lose the impression at first made upon them—they transmit it to others, by whom it is extended to those who are worthy to treasure it. Its stability and duration at length awaken the attention of the world which thus acknowledges the sanction of time, and professes an admiration for the author, which it only feels for his name. We should not, however, have thus dwelt on the attacks of Rymer, had we regarded them merely as objects of wonder, or as proofs of the partial influence of Shakspeare's genius. They are far from deserving unmingled scorn. They display, at least, an honest, unsophisticated hatred, which is better than the maudlin admiration of Shakspeare, expressed by those who were deluded by Ireland's forgeries. Their author has a heartiness, an earnestness almost romantic, which we cannot despise, though directed against our idol. With a singular obtuseness to poetry, he has a chivalric devotion to all that he regards as excellent, and grand. He looks on the supposed errors of the poet as moral crimes. He confounds fiction with fact—grows warm in defence of shadows—feels a violation of poetical justice, as a wrong conviction by a jury—moves a Habeas Corpus for all damsels imprisoned in romance—and if the bard kills those of his characters who deserve to live, pronounces judgment on him as in case of felony, without benefit of clergy. He is the Don Quixote of criticism. Like the hero of Cervantes, he is roused to avenge fictitious injuries, and would demolish the scenic exhibition in his disinterested rage. In one

sense he does more honour to the poet than any other writer, for he seems to regard him as an arbiter of life and death—responsible only to the critic for the administration of his powers.

Mr. Rymer has his own stately notions of what is proper for tragedy. He is zealous for poetical justice; and as he thinks that vice cannot be punished too severely, and yet that the poet ought to leave his victims objects of pity, he protests against the introduction of very wicked characters. "Therefore," says he, "among the ancients we find no malefactors of this kind; a wilful murderer is, with them, as strange and unknown as a parricide to the old Romans. Yet need we not fancy that they were squeamish, or unacquainted with many of those great *lumping* crimes in that age: when we remember their *Œdipus*, *Orestes*, or *Medea*. But they took care to wash the viper, to cleanse away the venom, and with such art to prepare the morsel: they made it all junket to the taste, and all physic in the operation."

Our author understands exactly the balance of power in the affections. He would dispose of all the poet's characters to a hair, according to his own rules of fitness. He would marshal them in array as in a procession, and mark out exactly what each ought to do or suffer. According to him, so much of presage and no more should be given—such a degree of sorrow, and no more ought a character endure; vengeance should rise precisely to a given height, and be executed by a certain appointed hand. He would regulate the conduct of fictitious heroes as accurately as of real beings, and often reasons well on his own poetic decalogue. "*Aminator*," says he, (speaking of a character in the *Maid's Tragedy*) "should have begged the king's pardon; should have suffered all the racks and tortures a tyrant could inflict; and from *Perillus's* bull should have still bellowed out that eternal truth, that *his promise was to be kept*—that he is true to *Aspatia*, that he dies for his mistress! Then would his memory have been precious and sweet to after ages; and the midsummer maidens would have offered their garlands all at his grave.

Mr. Rymer is an enthusiastic champion for the poetical prerogatives of kings. No courtier ever contended more strenuously for their divine right in real life, than he for their

pre-eminence in tragedy. "We are to presume," observes he gravely, "the greatest virtues, where we find the highest rewards; and though it is not necessary that all heroes should be kings, yet undoubtedly all crowned heads, by poetical right, are heroes. This character is a flower, a prerogative, so certain, so indispensably annexed to the crown, as by no poet, or parliament of poets, ever to be invaded." Thus does he lay down the rules of life and death for his regal domain of tragedy: "If I mistake not, in poetry no woman is to kill a man, except her quality gives her the advantage above him; nor is a servant to kill the master, nor a private man, much less a subject to kill a king, nor, on the contrary. Poetical decency will not suffer death to be dealt to each other, by such persons whom the laws of duel allow not to enter the lists together." He admits, however, that, "there may be circumstances that alter the case: as where there is sufficient ground of partiality in an audience, either upon the account of religion (as Rinaldo or Riccardo in Tasso, might kill Soliman, or any other Turkish king or great Sultan) or else in favour of our country, for then a private English hero might overcome a king of some rival nation." How pleasant a master of the ceremonies is he in the regions of fiction—regulating the niceties of murder like the decorums of a dance—with an amiable preference for his own religion and country!

These notions, however absurd, result from an indistinct sense of a peculiar dignity and grandeur essential to tragedy—and surely this feeling was not altogether deceptive. Some there are, indeed, who trace the emotions of strange delight which tragedy awakens, entirely to the love of strong excitement, which is gratified by spectacles of anguish. According to their doctrine, the more nearly the representation of sorrow approaches reality, the more intense will be the gratification of the spectator. Thus Burke has gravely asserted, that if the audience at a tragedy were informed of an execution about to take place in the neighbourhood, they would leave the theatre to witness it. We believe that experience does not warrant a speculation so dishonourable to our nature. How few, except those of the grossest minds, are ever attracted by the punishment of capital offenders! Even of those whom the dreadful infliction draws together,

how many are excited merely by curiosity, and a desire to view the last mortal agony, which in a form more or less terrible all must endure! We think that if, during the representation of a tragedy, the audience were compelled to feel vividly that a fellow-creature was struggling in the agonies of a violent death, many of them would retire—but not to the scene of horror. The reality of human suffering would come too closely home to their hearts, to permit their enjoyment of the fiction. How often, during the scenic exhibition of intolerable agony—unconsecrated and unredeemed—have we been compelled to relieve our hearts from a weight too heavy for endurance, by calling to mind that the woes are fictitious! It cannot be the highest triumph of an author, whose aim is to heighten the enjoyments of life, that he forces us, in our own defence, to escape from his power. If the pleasure derived from tragedy were merely occasioned by the love of excitement, the pleasure would be in proportion to the depth and the reality of the sorrow. Then would *The Gamester* be more pathetic than *Othello*, and *Isabella* call forth deeper admiration than *Macbeth* or *Lear*. Then would *George Barnwell* be the loftiest tragedy, and the *Newgate Calendar* the sweetest collection of pathetic tales. To name those instances, is sufficiently to refute the position on which they are founded.

Equally false is the opinion, that the pleasure derived from tragedy arises from a source of individual security, while others are suffering. There are no feelings more distantly removed from the selfish, than those which genuine tragedy awakens. We are carried at its representation out of ourselves, and “the ignorant present time,”—by earnest sympathy with the passions and the sorrows, not of ourselves, but of our nature. We feel our community with the general heart of man. The encrustments of selfishness and low passion are rent asunder, and the warm tide of human sympathies gushes triumphantly from its secret and divine sources.

It is not, then, in bringing sorrow home in its dreadful realities to our bosoms, nor in painting it so as to make us cling to our selfish gratifications with more earnest joy, that the tragic poet moves and enchants us. Grief is but the means—the necessary means indeed—by which he accom-

plishes his lofty purposes. The grander qualities of the soul cannot be developed—the deepest resources of comfort within it cannot be unveiled—the solemnities of its destiny cannot be shadowed forth—except in peril and in suffering. Hence peril and suffering become instruments of the Tragic Muse. But these are not, in themselves, those things which we delight to contemplate. Various, indeed, yet most distinct from these, are the sources of that deep joy that tragedy produces. Sometimes we are filled with a delight not dissimilar to that which the Laocoon excites—an admiration of the more than mortal beauty of the attitudes and of the finishing—and even of the terrific sublimity of the folds in which the links of fate involve the characters. When we look at that inimitable group, we do not merely rejoice in a sympathy with extreme suffering—but are enchanted with tender loveliness, and feel that the sense of distress is softened by the exquisite touches of genius. Often in tragedy, our hearts are elevated by thoughts “informed with nobleness”—by the view of heroic greatness of soul—by the contemplation of affections which death cannot conquer. It is not the depth of anguish which calls forth delicious tears—it is some sweet piece of self-denial—some touch of human gentleness, in the midst of sorrow—some “glorious triumph of exceeding love,” which suffuses our “subdued eyes,” and mellows our hearts. Death itself often becomes the source of sublime consolations: seen through the poetical medium, it often seems to fall on the wretched “softly and lightly, as a passing cloud.” It is felt as the blessed means of re-uniting faithful and ill-fated lovers—it is the pillow on which the long struggling patriot rests. Often it exhibits the noblest triumph of the spiritual over the material part of man. The intense ardour of a spirit that “o’er-inform’d its tenement of clay”—yet more quenchless in the last conflict, is felt to survive the struggle, and to triumph even in the victory which power has achieved over its earthly frame. In short, it is the high duty of the tragic poet to exhibit humanity sublimest in its distresses—to dignify or to sweeten sorrow—to exhibit eternal energies wrestling with each other, or with the accidents of the world—and to disclose the depth and the immortality of the affections. He must represent humanity as a rock, beaten, and sometimes overspread, with the mighty waters

of anguish, but still unshaken. We look to him for hopes, principles, resting places of the soul—for emotions which dignify our passions, and consecrate our sorrows. A brief retrospect of tragedy will show, that in every age when it has triumphed, it has appealed not to the mere love of excitement, but to the perceptions of beauty in the soul—to the yearnings of the deepest affections—to the aspirations after grandeur and permanence, which never leave man even in his errors and afflictions.

Nothing could be more dignified than the old tragedy of the Greeks. Its characters were demi-gods, or heroes; its subjects were often the destinies of those lines of the mighty, which had their beginning among the eldest deities. So far, in the development of their plots, were the poets from appealing to mere sensibility, that they scarcely deigned to awaken an anxious throb, or draw forth a human tear. In their works, we see the catastrophe from the beginning, and feel its influence at every step, as we advance majestically along the solemn avenue which it closes. There is little struggle; the doom of the heroes is fixed on high, and they pass, in sublime composure, to fulfill their destiny. Their sorrows are awful,—their deaths religious sacrifices to the power of Heaven. The glory that plays about their heads, is the prognostic of their fate. A consecration is shed over their brief and sad career, which takes away all the ordinary feelings of suffering. Their afflictions are sacred, their passions inspired by the gods, their fates prophesied in elder time, their deaths almost festal. All things are tinged with sanctity or with beauty in the Greek tragedies. Bodily pain is made sublime; destitution and wretchedness are rendered sacred; and the very grove of the Furies is represented as ever fresh and green. How grand is the suffering of Prometheus,—how sweet the resolution of Antigone,—how appalling, yet how magnificent, the last vision of Cassandra,—how reconciling and tender, yet how awful, the circumstances attendant on the death of *Œdipus*! And how rich a poetic atmosphere do the Athenian poets breathe over all the creations of their genius! Their exquisite groups appear, in all the venerableness of hoar antiquity; yet in the distinctness and in the bloom of unfading youth. All the human figures are seen, sublime in attitude, and exquisite in finish-

ing; while, in the dim back ground, appear the shapes of eldest gods, and the solemn abstractions of life, fearfully embodied—"Death the skeleton, and time the shadow!"—Surely there is something more in all this, than a vivid picture of the sad realities of our human existence.

The Romans failed in tragedy, because their love of mere excitement was too keen to permit them to enjoy it. They had "supped full of horrors." Familiar with the thoughts of real slaughter, they could not endure the philosophic and poetic view of distress in which it is softened and made sacred. Their imaginations were too practical for a genuine poet to affect. Hence, in the plays which bear the name of Seneca, horrors are heaped on horrors—the most displeasing of the Greek fictions (as that of Medea) are re-written and made ghastly—and every touch that might redeem is carefully effaced by the poet. Still the grandeur of old tragedy is there—still "the gorgeous pall comes sweeping by"—still the dignity survives, though the beauty has faded.

In the productions of Shakspeare, doubtless tragedy was divested of something of its external grandeur. The mythology of the ancient world had lost its living charm. Its heroic forms remained, indeed, unimpaired in beauty or grace, in the distant regions of the imagination, but they could no longer occupy the foreground of poetry. Men required forms of flesh and blood, animated by human passion, and awakening human sympathy. Shakspeare, therefore, sought for his materials nearer to common humanity than the elder bards. He took also, in each play, a far wider range than they had dared to occupy. He does not, therefore, convey so completely as they did one grand harmonious feeling, by each of his works. But who shall affirm, that the tragedy of Shakspeare has not an elevation of its own, or that it produces pleasure only by exhibiting spectacles of varied anguish? The reconciling power of his imagination, and the genial influences of his philosophy, are ever softening and consecrating sorrow. He scatters the rainbow hues of fancy over objects in themselves repulsive. He nicely develops the "soul of goodness in things evil" to console and delight us. He blends all the most glorious imagery of nature with the passionate expressions of affliction. He sometimes in a single image expresses an intense sentiment in all

its depth, yet identifies it with the widest and the grandest objects of creation. Thus he makes Timon, in the bitterness of his soul, set up his tomb on the beached shore, that the wave of the ocean may once a day cover him with its embossed foam—expanding an individual feeling into the extent of the vast and eternal sea; yet making us feel it as more intense, from the very sublimity of the image. The mind can always rest without anguish on his catastrophes, however mournful. Sad as the story of Romeo and Juliet is, it does not lacerate or tear the heart, but relieves it of its weight by awakening sweet tears. We shriek not at their tomb, which we feel has set a seal on their loves and virtues, but almost long with them there “to set up our everlasting rest.” We do not feel unmingled agony at the death of Lear;—when his aged heart, which has been beaten so fearfully, is at rest—and his withered frame, late o’er-informed with terrific energy, reposes with his pious child. We are not shocked and harrowed even when Hamlet falls; for we feel that he is unfit for the bustle of this world, and his own gentle contemplations on death have deprived it of its terrors. In Shakspeare, the passionate is always steeped in the beautiful. Sometimes he diverts sorrow with tender conceits, which, like little fantastic rocks, break its streams into sparkling cascades and circling eddies. And when it must flow on, deep and still, he bends over it branching foliage and graceful flowers—whose leaves are seen in its dark bosom, all of one sober and harmonious hue—but in their clearest form and most delicate proportions.

The other dramatists of Shakspeare’s age, deprived like him of classical resources, and far inferior to him in imagination and wisdom, strove to excite a deep interest by the wildness of their plots, and the strangeness of the incidents with which their scenes were crowded. Their bloody tragedies are, however, often relieved by passages of exquisite sweetness. Their terrors, not humanized like those of Shakspeare, are yet far removed from the vulgar or disgusting. Sometimes, amidst the gloom of continued crimes, which often follow each other in stern and awful succession, are fair pictures of more than earthly virtue, tinted with the dews of heaven, and encircled with celestial glories. The scene in *The Broken Heart*, where Calantha amidst the

festal crowd, receives the news of the successive deaths of those dearest to her in the world, yet dances on—and that in which she composedly settles all the affairs of her empire, and then dies smiling by the body of her contracted lord—are in the loftiest spirit of tragedy. They combine the dignity and majestic suffering of the ancient drama, with the intensity of the modern. The last scene unites beauty, tenderness, and grandeur, in one harmonious and stately picture—as sublime as any single scene in the tragedies of Æschylus or Shakspeare.

Of the succeeding tragedians of England, the frigid imitators of the French Drama, it is necessary to say but little. The elevation of their plays is only on the stilts of declamatory language. The proportions and symmetry of their plots are but an accordance with arbitrary rules. Yet was there no reason to fear that the sensibilities of their audience should be too strongly excited, without the alleviations of fancy or of grandeur, because their sorrows are unreal, turgid, and fantastic. *Cato* is a classical petrification. Its tenderest expression is, “Be sure you place his urn near mine,” which comes over us like a sentiment frozen in the utterance. Congreve's *Mourning Bride* has a greater air of magnificence than most tragedies of his or of the succeeding time; but its declamations fatigue, and its labyrinthine plot perplexes. *Venice Preserved* is cast in the mould of dignity and of grandeur; but the characters want nobleness, the poetry coherence, and the sentiments truth.

The plays of Hill, Hughes, Philips, Murphy, and Rowe, are dialogues, sometimes ill and sometimes well written—occasionally stately in numbers, but never touching the soul. It would be unjust to mention Young and Thomson as the writers of tragedies.

The old English feeling of tender beauty has at last begun to revive. Lamb's *John Woodvil*, despised by the critics, and for a while neglected by the people, awakened those gentle pulses of deep joy which had long forgotten to beat. Here first, after a long interval, instead of the pompous swelling of inane declamation, the music of humanity was heard in its sweetest tones. The air of freshness breathed over its forest scenes, the delicate grace of its images, its nice disclosure of consolations and venerablenesses in the nature of

man, and the exquisite beauty of its catastrophe, where the stony remorse of the hero is melted into child-like tears, as he kneels on the little hassock where he had often kneeled in infancy, are truly Shakspearian. Yet this piece, with all its delicacies in the reading, wants that striking scenic effect, without which a tragedy cannot succeed on the stage. The *Remorse* of Coleridge, is a noble poem; but its metaphysical clouds, though fringed with golden imaginations, brood too heavily over it. In the detached scenes of Barry Cornwall, passages of the daintiest beauty abound—the passion is every where breathed tenderly forth, in strains which are “silver sweet”—and the sorrow is relieved by tenderness the most endearing. Here may be enjoyed “a perpetual feast of nectar’d sweets, where no crude surfeit reigns.”—In these—and in the works of Shiel, and even of Maturin—are the elements whence a tragedy more noble and complete might be moulded, than any which has astonished the world since *Macbeth* and *Lear*. We long to see a stately subject for tragedy chosen by some living aspirant—the sublime struggle of high passions for the mastery, displayed—the sufferings relieved by glorious imaginations, yet brought home to our souls—and the whole conveying one grand and harmonious impression to the general heart. Let us hope that this triumph will not long be wanting, to complete the intellectual glories of our age.

REVIEW OF CIBBER'S APOLOGY FOR HIS LIFE.

[Retrospective Review, No. 2.]

THERE are, perhaps few individuals, of intense personal conciseness, whose lives, written by themselves, would be destitute of interest or of value. Works of this description enlarge the number of our intimacies without inconvenience; awaken, with a peculiar vividness, pleasant recollections of our own past career; and excite that sympathy with the little sorrows, cares, hopes, and enjoyments of others, which infuses new tenderness into all the pulses of individual joy. The qualification which is most indispensable to the writer of such auto-biographies, is vanity. If he does not dwell with gusto on his own theme, he will communicate no gratification to his reader. He must not, indeed, fancy himself too outrageously what he is not, but should have the highest sense of what he is, the happiest relish for his own peculiarities, and the most confident assurance that they are matters of great interest to the world. He who feels thus, will not chill us by cold generalities, but trace with an exquisite minuteness all the felicities of his life, all the well remembered moments of gratified vanity, from the first beatings of hope and first taste of delight, to the time when age is gladdened by the reflected tints of young enterprize and victory. Thus it was with Colley Cibber; and, therefore, his Apology for his own life is one of the most amusing books that have ever been written. He was not, indeed, a very wise or lofty character—nor did he affect great virtue or wisdom—but openly derided gravity, bade defiance to the serious pursuits of life, and honestly preferred his own lightness of heart and

of head, to knowledge the most extensive or thought the most profound. He was vain even of his vanity. At the very commencement of his work, he avows his determination not to repress it, because it is part of himself, and therefore will only increase the resemblance of the picture. Rousseau did not more clearly lay open to the world the depths and inmost recesses of his soul, than Cibber his little foibles and minikin weaknesses. The philosopher dwelt not more intensely on the lone enthusiasm of his spirit, on the alleviations of his throbbing soul, on the long draughts of rapture which he eagerly drank in from the loveliness of the universe, that the player on his early aspirings for scenic applause, and all the petty triumphs and mortifications of his passion for the favour of the town. How real and speaking is the description which he gives of his fond desires for the bright course of an actor—of his light-hearted pleasure, when, in the little part of the Chaplain, in *The Orphan*, he received his first applause—and of his highest transport, when, the next day Goodman, a retired actor of note, clapped him on the shoulder at a rehearsal, exclaimed, with an oath, that he must make a good actor, which almost took away his breath, and fairly drew tears into his eyes! The spirit of gladness which gave such exquisite keenness to his youthful appetite for praise, sustained him through all the changes of his fortune, enabling him to make a jest of penury, assisting him to gather fresh courage from every slight, adding zest to every success, until he arrived at the high dignity of "Patentee of the Theatre Royal." When "he no revenue had but his good spirits to feed and clothe him," these were ample. His vanity was to him a kingdom. The airiest of town butterflies, he sipped of the sweets of pleasure wherever its stray gifts were found; sometimes in the tavern among the wits, but chiefly in the golden sphere of the theatre,—that magic circle whose majesties do not perish with the chances of the world. In reading his life, we become possessed of his own feathery lightness, and seem to follow the course of the gayest and the emptiest of all the bubbles, that, in his age of happy trifling, floated along the shallow but glittering stream of existence.

The Life of Cibber is peculiarly a favourite with us, not only by reason of the superlative coxcombry which it exhi-

bits, but of the due veneration which it yields to an art too frequently under-rated, even among these to whose gratification it ministers. If the degree of enjoyment and of benefit produced by an art be any test of its excellence, there are few indeed, which will yield to that of the actor. His exertions do not, indeed, often excite emotions so deep or so pure as those which the noblest poetry inspires, but their genial influences are far more widely extended. The beauties of the most gifted of bards, find in the bosoms of a very small number an answering sympathy. Even of those who talk familiarly of Spencer and Milton, there are few who have fairly read, and still fewer who truly feel, their divinest effusions. It is only in the theatre, that any image of the real grandeur of humanity—any picture of generous heroism and noble self-sacrifice—is poured on the imaginations, and sent warm to the hearts of the vast body of the people. There, are eyes, familiar through months and years only with mechanic toil, suffused with natural tears. There, are the deep fountains of hearts, long encrusted by narrow cares, burst open, and a holy light is sent in on the long sunken forms of the imagination, which shone fair and goodly in boyhood by their own light, but have since been sealed and forgotten in their “sunless treasuries.” There, do the lowest and most ignorant catch their only glimpse of that poetic radiance which sheds its glory around our being. While they gaze, they forget the petty concerns of their own individual lot, and recognise and rejoice in their kindred with a nature capable of high emprise, of meek suffering, and of defiance to the powers of agony and the grave. They are elevated and softened into men. They are carried beyond the ignorant present time; feel the past and the future on the instant, and kindle as they gaze on the massive realities of human virtue, or on those fairy visions which are the gleaming fore-shadows of golden years, which hereafter shall bless the world. Their horizon is suddenly extended from the narrow circle of low anxieties and selfish joys, to the farthest boundaries of our moral horizon; and they perceive, in clear vision, the rocks of defence for their nature, which their fellow men have been privileged to raise. While they feel that “which gives an awe of things above them,” their souls are expanded in the heartiest sympathy with the vast body

of their fellows. A thousand hearts are swayed at once by the same emotion, as the high grass of the meadow yields, as a single blade, to the breeze which sweeps over it. Distinctions of fortune, rank, talent, age, all give way to the warm tide of emotion, and every class feel only as partakers in one primal sympathy, "made of one blood," and equal in the sanctities of their being. Surely the art that produces an effect like this—which separates, as by a divine alchemy, the artificial from the real in humanity—which supplies to the artisan in the capital, the place of those woods and free airs and mountain streams, which insensibly harmonize the peasant's character—which gives the poorest to feel the old grandeur of tragedy, sweeping by with sceptred pall—which makes the heart of the child leap with strange joy, and enables the old man to fancy himself again a child—is worthy of no mean place among the arts which refine our manners, by exalting our conceptions!

It has sometimes been objected to the theatrical artist, that he merely repeats the language and embodies the conceptions of the poet. But the allegation, though specious, is unfounded. It has been completely established, by a great and genial critic of our own time, that the deeper beauties of poetry cannot be shaped forth by the actor,* and it is equally true, that the poet has little share in the highest triumphs of the performer. It may, at first, appear a paradox, but is nevertheless, proved by experience, that the fanciful cast of the language has very little to do with the effect of an acted tragedy. Mrs. Siddons would not have been less than she is, though Shakspeare had never written. She displayed genius as exalted in the characters drawn by Moore, Southern, Otway, and Rowe, as in those of the first of human bards. Certain great situations are all the performer needs, and the grandest emotions of the soul all that he can embody. He can derive little aid from the noblest imaginations or the richest fantasies of the author. He may, indeed, by his own genius,—like the matchless artist

* See Mr. Lamb's Essay on the Tragedies of Shakspeare, as adapted to representation on the stage—a piece, which combines more of profound thought, with more of deep feeling and exquisite beauty, than any criticism with which we are acquainted.

to whom we have just alluded—consecrate sorrow, dignify emotion, and kindle the imagination as well as awaken the sympathies. But this will be accomplished, not by the texture of the words spoken, but by the living magic of the eye, of the tone, of the action; by all those means which belong exclusively to the actor. When Mrs. Siddons cast that unforgettable gaze of blank horror on the corpse of Beverley, was she indebted to the play-wright for the conception? When, as Arpasia, in *Tamerlane*, she gave that look of inexpressible anguish, in which the breaking of the heart might be seen, and the cold and rapid advances of death traced—and fell without a word, as if struck by the sudden blow of destiny—in that moment of unearthly power, when she astonished and terrified ever her oldest admirers, and after which, she lay herself really senseless from the intensity of her own emotion—where was the marvellous stage-direction, the pregnant hint in the frigid declamatory text, from which she wrought this amazing picture, too perilous to be often repeated? Do the words “I’m satisfied,” in *Cato*, convey the slightest image of that high struggle—that contest between nature long repressed and stoic pride—which Mr. Kemble in an instant embodied to the senses, and impressed on the soul for ever? Or, to descend into the present time and the lowlier drama, does the perusal of *The School of Reform* convey any vestige of that rough sublimity which breathes in the Tyke of Emery? Are Mr. Liston’s looks out of book, gotten by heart, invented for him by writers of farces? Is there any fancy of invention in its happiest mood—any tracings of mortal hand in books—like to the marvellous creations which Munden multiplies at will? These are not to be “constrained by mastery” of the pen, and defy not only the power of an author to conceive, but to describe them. The best actors indeed, in their happiest efforts, are little more indebted to the poet, than he is to the graces of nature which he seizes, than the sculptor to living forms, or the grandest painters to history.

Still less weight is there in the objection, that part of the qualities of an actor, as his form and voice, are the gifts of nature which imply no merit in their possessor. They are no more independent of will, than the sensibility and imagination of the bard. Our admiration is not determined

by merit, but by beauty; we contemplate angelic purity of soul with as tender a love as virtue, which has been reared with intense labour among clouds and storms, and follow with as delighted a wonder the quick glances of intuition as the longest and most difficult researches. The actor exhibits as high a perception of natural grace, as fine an acquaintance with the picturesque in attitude, as the sculptor. If the forms of his imagination do not stand for ages in marble, they live and breathe before us while they last—change with all the variations of passion—and “discourse most eloquent music.” They sometimes, as in the case of Mr. Kemble’s Roman characters, supply the noblest illustrations of history. The story of Coriolanus is to us no dead letter; the nobleness of Cato is an abstract idea no longer. We seem to behold even now the calm approaches of the mighty stoic to his end—to look on him, maintaining the forms of Roman liberty to the last, as though he would grasp its trembling relics in his dying hands—and to listen to those solemn tones, now the expiring accents of liberty passing away, and anon the tremulous breathings of uncertain hope for the future. The reality with which these things have been presented to our youthful eyes is a possession for ever—quickenning our sympathy with the most august instances of human virtue, and enriching our souls with palpable images of the majesty of old.

It may be said, that if a great actor carries us into times that are past, he rears up no monument which will last in those which are to come. But there are many circumstances to counterbalance and alleviate the shortness of his fame. The anxiety for posthumous renown, though there is something noble in it as abstracted from mere personal desires, is scarcely the loftiest of human emotions. The Homeric poets, who breathed forth their strains to untutored ears, and left no visible traces of their genius, could scarcely anticipate the duration of their works. Shakspeare seems to have thought little in his life-time of those honours which through all ages will accumulate on his memory. The best benefactors of their race have left the world nothing but their names, and their remembrances in grateful souls. The true poet, perhaps, feels most holily when he thinks only of sharing in the immortality of nature, and “owes no allegiance but

the elements." Some feeling, not unallied to this, may solace the actor for the short-lived remembrance of his exertions. The images which he vivifies are not traced in paper, nor diffused through the press, nor extant in marble; but are engraven on the fleshly tables of the heart, and last till "life's idle business" ceases. To thousands of the young has he given their "first mild touch of sympathy and thought," their first sense of communion with their kind. As time advances, and the ranks of his living admirers grow thin, the old tell of his feats with a tenderer rapture, and give such vivid hints of his excellence as enable their hearers richly to fancy forth some image of grandeur or delight, which, in their minds at least, is like him. The sweet lustre of his memory thus grows more sacred as it approaches its close, and tenderly vanishes. His name lives still—ever pronounced with happiest feelings and in the happiest hours—and excites us to stretch our thoughts backward into the gladnesses of another age. The grave-maker's work, according to the Clown, in *Hamlet*, outlasts all others, even "till doomsday," and the actor's fades away before most others, because it is the very reverse of his gloomy and durable creations. The theatrical picture does not endure because it is the warmest, the most living of the works of art; it is short as human life, because it is as genial. Those are the intensest enjoyments which soonest wither. The fairest graces of nature—those touches of the ethereal scattered over the universe—pass away while they ravish us. Could we succeed in giving permanence to the rainbow, to the delicate shadow, or to the moon-beam on the waters, their light and unearthly charm would be lost for ever. The tender hues of youth would ill exchange their evanescent bloom for an enamel which ages would not destroy. And if "these our actors" must "melt into air, thin air," leaving but soft tracings in the hearts of living admirers—if their images of beauty must fade into the atmosphere of town gaiety, until they only lend some delicate graces to those airy clouds which gleam in its distance, and which are not recognised as theirs, they can scarcely complain of the transitoriness which is necessarily connected with the living grace which belongs to no other order of artists.

The work before us, however, may afford better consola-

tion than we can render to actors; for it redeems not the names, but the vivid images of some of the greatest artists of a century ago, from oblivion. Here they are not embalmed, but kept alive—and breathe, in all the glory of their meridian powers, before us. Here Betterton's tones seem yet to melt on the entranced hearer—Nokes yet convulses the full house with laughter on his first appearance—and Mrs. Monfort sinks with her dainty, diving body to the ground, beneath the conscious load of her own attractions. The theatrical portraits in this work are drawn with the highest gusto, and set forth with the richest colouring. The author has not sought, like some admirable critics of this age of criticism, to say as many witty or eloquent things on each artist as possible, but simply to form the most exact likeness, and to give to the drapery the most vivid and appropriate hues. We seem to listen to the prompter's bell—to see the curtain rise—and behold on the scene the goodly shapes of the actors and actresses of another age, in their antique costume, and with all the stately airs and high graces which the town knows no longer.

Betterton is the chief object of our author's admiration; but the account of his various excellencies is too long to extract entire, and perhaps, on account of the spirit of boundless eulogy in which it is written, has less of that nicety of touch, which gives so complete an individuality to his pictures of other performers.

The following are perhaps the most interesting parts of the description :

“ You have seen a Hamlet perhaps, who, on the first appearance of his father's spirit, has thrown himself into all the straining vociferation requisite to express rage and fury, and the house has thundered with applause; though the misguided actor was all the while (as Shakspeare terms it) tearing a passion into rags.—I am the more bold to offer you this particular instance, because the late Mr. Addison, while I sat by him, to see this scene acted, made the same observation, asking me with some surprise, if I thought Hamlet should be in so violent a passion with the Ghost, which though it might have astonished, it had not provoked him? for you may observe that in this beautiful speech, the passion never

rises beyond an almost breathless astonishment, or an impatience, limited by filial reverence, to inquire into the suspected wrongs that may have raised him from his peaceful tomb! and a desire to know what a spirit so seemingly distressed, might wish or enjoin a sorrowful son to execute towards his future quiet in the grave? This was the light into which Betterton threw this scene; which he opened with a pause of mute amazement! then rising slowly, to solemn, trembling voice, he made the Ghost equally terrible to the spectator, as to himself! and in the descriptive part of the natural emotions which the ghastly vision gave him, the boldness of his expostulation was still governed by decency, manly, but not braving; his voice never rising into that seeming outrage, or wild defiance of what he naturally revered. But alas! to preserve this medium, between mouthing, and meaning too little, to keep the attention more pleasingly awake, by a tempered spirit, than by mere vehemence of voice, is of all the master-strokes of an actor, the most difficult to reach. In this none yet have equalled Betterton."

"A farther excellence in Betterton, was, that he could vary his spirit to the different characters he acted. Those wild impatient starts, that fierce and flashing fire, which he threw into Hotspur, never came from the unruffled temper of his Brutus; (for I have, more than once seen a Brutus as warm as Hotspur) when the Betterton Brutus was provoked, in his dispute with Cassius, his spirit flew only to his eye; his steady look alone supplied that terror, which he disdained an intemperance in his voice should rise to. Thus, with a settled dignity of contempt, like an unheeding rock, he repelled upon himself the foam of Cassius. Perhaps the very words of Shakspeare will better let you into my meaning:

Must I give way, and room, to your rash choler?
Shall I be frighted when a madman stares?

And a little after;

There is no terror, Cassius, in your looks! &c.

Not but in some parts of this scene, where he reproaches Cassius, his temper is not under his suppression, but opens

into that warmth which becomes a man of virtue; yet this is that hasty spark of anger, which Brutus himself endeavours to excuse."

The account of Kynaston, who, in his youth, before the performance of women on the stage, used to appear in female characters, is very amusing. He was particularly successful in Evadne, in *The Maid's Tragedy*, and always retained "something of a formal gravity in his mien, which was attributed to the stately step he had been so early confined to" in his female attire: the ladies of quality, we are told, used to pride themselves in taking him with them in their coaches to Hyde Park, in his theatrical habit, after the play, which then used to begin at the early hour of four. There was nothing, however, effeminate in his usual style of acting. We are told, that

"He had a piercing eye, and in characters of heroic life, a quick imperious vivacity in his tone of voice, that painted the tyrant truly terrible. There were two plays of Dryden in which he shone, with uncommon lustre; in *Aurenge-Zebe* he played Morat, and in *Don Sebastian*, Muley Moloch; in both these parts, he had a fierce lion-like majesty in his port and utterance, that gave the spectator a kind of trembling admiration."

The following account of this actor's performance in the now neglected character of Henry the Fourth, gives us the most vivid idea of the grave yet gentle majesty and kingly pathos, which the part requires:

"But above this tyrannical, tumid superiority of character, there is a grave and rational majesty in Shakspeare's Harry the Fourth, which though not so glaring to the vulgar eye, requires thrice the skill and grace to become and support. Of this real majesty, Kynaston was entirely master; here every sentiment came from him, as if it had been his own, as if he had himself, that instant, conceived it, as if he had lost the player, and were the real king he personated! a perfection so rarely found, that very often, in actors of good repute, a certain vacancy of look, inanity of voice, or super-

fluous gesture, shall unmask the man to the judicious spectator ; who from the least of those errors plainly sees the whole but a lesson given him, to be got by heart, from some great author, whose sense is deeper than the repeater's understanding. This true majesty Kynaston had so entire a command of, that when he whispered the following plain line to Hotspur,

Send us your prisoners, or you'll hear of it !

he conveyed a more terrible menace in it, than the loudest intemperance of voice could swell to. But let the bold imitator beware, for without the look, and just elocution that waited on it, an attempt of the same nature may fall to nothing.

“But the dignity of this character appeared in Kynaston still more shining, in the private scene between the King, and Prince his son: there you saw majesty, in that sort of grief, which only majesty could feel! there the paternal concern, for the errors of the son, made the monarch more revered and dreaded: his reproaches so just, yet so unmixed with anger (and therefore the more piercing) opening as it were the arms of nature, with a secret wish, that filial duty, and penitence awaked, might fall into them with grace and honour. In this affecting scene, I thought Kynaston showed his most masterly strokes of nature; expressing all the various motions of the heart, with the same force, dignity, and feeling, they are written; adding to the whole, that peculiar and becoming grace, which the best writer cannot inspire into any actor, that is not born with it.”

How inimitably is the varied excellence of Monfort depicted in the following speaking picture :

“Monfort a younger man by twenty years, and at this time in his highest reputation, was an actor of a very different style: of person he was tall, well made, fair, and of an agreeable aspect: his voice clear, full, and melodious: in tragedy he was the most affecting lover within my memory. His addresses had a resistless recommendation from the very

tone of his voice, which gave his words such a softness, that, as Dryden says,

—Like flakes of feather'd snow,
They melted as they fell!

All this he particularly verified in that scene of Alexander, where the hero throws himself at the feet of Statira for pardon of his past infidelities. There we saw the great, the tender, the penitent, the despairing, the transported, and the amiable, in the highest perfection. In comedy, he gave the truest life to what we call the Fine Gentleman; his spirit shone the brighter for being polished with decency: in scenes of gaiety, he never broke into the regard, that was due to the presence of equal or superior characters, though inferior actors played them; he filled the stage, not by elbowing, and crossing it before others, or disconcerting their action, but by surpassing them, in true and masterly touches of nature. He never laughed at his own jest, unless the point of his raillery upon another required it.—He had a particular talent, in giving life to bons mots and repartees: the wit of the poet seemed always to come from him extempore, and sharpened into more wit, from his brilliant manner of delivering it; he had himself a good share of it, or what is equal to it, so lively a pleasantness of humour, that when either of these fell into his hands upon the stage, he wantoned with them, to the highest delight of his auditors. The agreeable was so natural to him, that even in that dissolute character of the Rover he seemed to wash off the guilt from vice, and gave it charms and merit. For though it may be a reproach to the poet, to draw such characters, not only unpunished, but rewarded, the actor may still be allowed his due praise in his excellent performance. And this is a distinction which, when this comedy was acted at Whitehall, King William's Queen Mary was pleased to make in favour of Monfort, notwithstanding her disapprobation of the play.

“He had besides all this, a variety in his genius, which few capital actors have shown, or perhaps have thought it any addition to their merit to arrive at; he could entirely change himself; could at once throw off the man of sense,

for the brisk, vain, rude, and lively coxcomb, the false, flashy pretender to wit, and the dupe of his own sufficiency: of this he gave a delightful instance in the character of Sparkish in Wycherly's Country Wife. In that of Sir Courtly Nice his excellence was still greater: there, his whole man, voice, mien, and gesture, was no longer Monfort, but another person. There, the insipid, soft civility, the elegant and formal mien, the drawling delicacy of voice, the stately flatness of his address, and the empty eminence of his attitudes, were so nicely observed and guarded by him, that had he not been an entire master of nature, had he not kept his judgment, as it were, a centinel upon himself, not to admit the least likeness of what he used to be, to enter into any part of his performance, he could not possibly have so completely finished it."

Our author is even more felicitous in his description of the performers in low comedy and high farce. The following critic brings Nokes—the Liston of his age—so vividly before us, that we seem almost as well acquainted with him, as with his delicious successor.

"Nokes was an actor of quite a different genius from any I have ever read, heard of, or seen, since or before his time; and yet his general excellence may be comprehended in one article, viz. a plain and palpable simplicity of nature, which was so utterly his own, that he was often as unaccountably diverting in his common speech, as on the stage. I saw him once, giving an account of some table-talk, to another actor behind the scenes, which, a man of quality accidentally listening to, was so deceived by his manner, that he asked him, if that was a new play he was rehearsing? It seems almost amazing, that this simplicity, so easy to Nokes, should never be caught by any one of his successors. Leigh and Underhil have been well copied, though not equalled by others. But not all the mimical skill of Estcourt (famed as he was for it) though he had often seen Nokes, could scarce give us an idea of him. After this, perhaps, it will be saying less of him, when I own, that though I have still the sound of every line he spoke, in my ear, (which used not to be thought a bad one) yet I have often tried, by myself, but in vain, to reach the least distant likeness of the *vis comica* of Nokes. Though

this may seem little to his praise, it may be negatively saying a good deal to it, because I have never seen any one actor, except himself, whom I could not, at least so far imitate, as to give you a more than tolerable notion of his manner. But Nokes was so singular a species, and was so formed by nature, for the stage, that I question if (beyond the trouble of getting words by heart) it ever cost him an hour's labour to arrive at that high reputation he had, and deserved.

“The characters he particularly shown in were Sir Martin Marr-all, Gomez, in the Spanish Friar, Sir Nicolas Cully, in Love in a Tub, Barnaby Brittle, in the Wanton Wife, Sir Davy Dunce, in the Soldier's Fortune, Sosia, in Amphytrion, &c. &c. &c. To tell you how he acted them, is beyond the reach of criticism: but, to tell you what effect his action had upon the spectator, is not impossible: this, then is all you will expect from me, and from hence I must leave you to guess at him.

“He scarce ever made his first entrance in a play, but he was received with an involuntary applause, not of hands only, for those may be, and have often been partially prostituted, and bespoken; but by a general laughter, which the very sight of him provoked, and nature could not resist; yet the louder the laugh, the graver was his look upon it; and sure, the ridiculous solemnity of his features were enough to have set a whole bench of bishops into a titter, could he have been honoured (may it be no offence to suppose it) with such grave and right reverend auditors. In the ludicrous distresses, which by the laws of comedy, Folly is often involved in; he sunk into such a mixture of piteous pusillanimity, and a consternation so ruefully ridiculous and inconsolable, that when he had shook you, to a fatigue of laughter, it became a moot point, whether you ought not to have pitied him. When he debated any matter by himself, he would shut up his mouth with a dumb studious pout, and roll his full eye into such a vacant amazement, such a palpable ignorance of what to think of it, that his silent perplexity (which would sometimes hold him several minutes) gave your imagination as full content, as the most absurd thing he could say upon it. In the character of Sir Martin Marr-all, who is:

always committing blunders to the prejudice of his own interest, when he had brought himself to a dilemma in his affairs, by vainly proceeding upon his own head, and was afterwards afraid to look his governing servant and counselor in the face; what a copious and distressful harangue have I seen him make with his looks (while the house has been in one continued roar, for several minutes) before he could prevail with his courage to speak a word to him! Then might you have, at once, read in his face *vexation*, that his own measures, which he had piqued himself upon, had failed;—*envy*, of his servant's superior wit;—*distress*, to retrieve the occasion he had lost;—*shame*, to confess his folly;—and yet a sullen desire, to be reconciled and better advised for the future! What tragedy ever showed us such a tumult of passions, rising, at once in one bosom? or what buskined hero, standing under the load of them, could have more effectually moved his spectators, by the most pathetic speech, than poor miserable Nokes did, by this silent eloquence, and piteous plight of his features?

“His person was of the middle size, his voice clear, and audible; his natural countenance grave, and sober; but the moment he spoke, the settled seriousness of his features was utterly discharged, and a dry, drolling, or laughing levity took such full possession of him, that I can only refer the idea of him to your imagination. In some of his low characters, that became it, he had a shuffling shamble in his gait, with so contented an ignorance in his aspect, and an awkward absurdity in his gesture, that had you not known him, you could not have believed, that naturally he could have had a grain of common sense. In a word, I am tempted to sum up the character of Nokes, as a comedian, in a parody of what Shakspeare's Mark Antony says of Brutus as a hero:

‘ His life was laughter, and the ludicrous
So mixed in him, that Nature might stand up,
And say to all the world—‘This was an actor.’ ”

The portrait of Underhil has not less the air of exact resemblance, though the subject is of less richness.

“Underhil was a correct and natural comedian; his parti-

cular excellence was in characters, that may be called still-life, I mean the stiff, the heavy, and the stupid: to these he gave the exactest and most expressive colours, and in some of them, looked, as if it were not in the power of human passions to alter a feature of him. In the solemn formality of Obadiah in the Committee, and in the boobily heaviness of Lolpoop, in the Squire of Alsatia, he seemed the immovable log he stood for! a countenance of wood could not be more fixed than his, when the blockhead of a character required it: his face was full and long; from his crown to the end of his nose, was the shorter half of it, so that the disproportion of his lower features, when soberly composed, with an unwandering eye hanging over them, threw him into the most lumpish, moping mortal, that ever made beholders merry! not but, at other times, he could be awakened into spirit equally ridiculous.—In the coarse, rustic humour of Justice Clodpate, in Epsome Wells, he was a delightful brute! and in the blunt vivacity of Sir Sampson, in Love for Love, he showed all that true perverse spirit, that is commonly seen in much wit and ill-nature. This character is one of those few so well written, with so much wit and humour, that an actor must be the grossest dunce, that does not appear with an unusual life in it: but it will still show as great a proportion of skill, to come near Underhil in the acting it, which (not to undervalue those who came soon after him) I have not yet seen. He was particularly admired too, for the Grave-digger, in Hamlet. The author of the Tatler recommends him to the favour of the town, upon that play's being acted for his benefit, wherein, after his age had some years obliged him to leave the stage, he came on again, for that day, to perform his old part; but, alas! so worn and disabled, as if himself was to have lain in the grave he was digging: when he could no more excite laughter, his infirmities were dismissed with pity: he died soon after, a superannuated pensioner, in the list of those, who were supported by the joint sharers, under the first patent granted to Sir Richard Steele."

We pass reluctantly over the account of Mrs. Barry, Mrs. Betterton, and others of less note, to insert the following ex-

quisite picture of one who seems to have been the most exquisite of actresses :

“ Mrs. Monfort, whose second marriage gave her the name of Verbruggen, was mistress of more variety of humour, than I ever knew in any one actress. This variety, too, was attended with an equal vivacity, which made her excellent in characters extremely different. As she was naturally a pleasant mimic, she had the skill to make that talent useful on the stage, a talent which may be surprising in a conversation, and yet be lost when brought to the theatre, which was the case of Estcourt already mentioned: but where the elocution is round, distinct, voluble, and various, as Mrs. Monfort's was, the mimic, there, is a great assistant to the actor. Nothing, though ever so barren, if within the bounds of nature, could be flat in her hands. She gave many heightening touches to characters but coldly written, and often made an author vain of his work, that in itself had but little merit. She was so fond of humour, in what low part soever to be found, that she would make no scruple of defacing her fair form, to come heartily into it; for when she was eminent in several desirable characters of wit and humour, in higher life, she would be in as much fancy, when descending into the antiquated Abigail, of Fletcher, as when triumphing in all the airs, and vain graces of a fine lady; a merit, that few actresses care for. In a play of D'Urfey's, now forgotten, called *The Western Lass*, which part she acted, she transformed her whole being, body, shape, voice, language, look, and features, into almost another animal; with a strong Devonshire dialect, a broad laughing voice, a poking head, round shoulders, an unconceiving eye, and the most bedizening, dowdy dress, that ever covered the untrained limbs of a Joan Trot. To have seen her here, you would have thought it impossible the same creature could ever have been recovered, to what was as easy to her, the gay, the lively, and the desirable. Nor was her humour limited to her sex; for, while her shape permitted, she was a more adroit pretty fellow, than is usually seen upon the stage: her easy air, action, mien, and gesture, quite changed from the quiff, to the cocked hat, and cavalier in fashion. People were so fond of

seeing her a man, that when the part of Bays in the Rehearsal, had, for some time, lain dormant, she was desired to take it up, which I have seen her act with all the true, cox-combly spirit and humour that the sufficiency of the character required.

“ But what found most employment for her whole various excellence at once, was the part of Melantha, in Marriage-Alamode. Melantha is as finished an impertinent, as ever fluttered in a drawing-room, and seems to contain the most complete system of female foppery, that could possibly be crowded into the tortured form of a fine lady. Her language, dress, motion, manners, soul, and body, are in a continual hurry, to be something more than is necessary or commendable. And though I doubt it will be a vain labour, to offer you a just likeness of Mrs. Monfort's action, yet the fantastic impression is still so strong in my memory, that I cannot help saying something, though fantastically, about it. The first ridiculous airs that break from her, are, upon a gallant, never seen before, who delivers her a letter from her father, recommending him to her good graces, as an honourable lover. Here now, one would think she might naturally show a little of the sex's decent reserve, though never so slightly covered! No, sir; not a tittle of it; modesty is the virtue of a poor-souled country gentlewoman; she is too much a court lady, to be under so vulgar a confusion! she reads the letter, therefore, with a careless, dropping lip, and an erected brow, humming it hastily over, as if she were impatient to outgo her father's commands, by making a complete conquest of him at once; and that the letter might not embarrass her attack, crack! she crumbles it at once, into her palm, and pours upon him her whole artillery of airs, eyes, and motion; down goes her dainty, diving body, to the ground, as if she were sinking under the conscious load of her own attractions; then launches into a flood of fine language, and compliment, still playing her chest forward in fifty falls and risings, like a swan upon waving water; and, to complete her impertinence, she is so rapidly fond of her own wit, that she will not give her lover leave to praise it; silent assenting bows, and vain endeavours to speak, are all the share of the conversation he is admitted to, which, at last, he is

relieved from, by her engagement to half a score visits, which she swims from him to make, with a promise to return in a twinkling."

In this work, also, the reader may become acquainted, on familiar terms, With Wilkes and Dogget, and Booth—fall in love with Mrs. Bracegirdle, as half the town did in days of yore—and sit amidst applauding whigs and Tories on the first representation of *Cato*. He may follow the actors from the gorgeous scene of their exploits to their private enjoyments, share in their jealousies, laugh with them at their own ludicrous distresses, and join in their happy social hours. Yet with all our admiration for the theatrical artists, who yet live in *Cibber's Apology*, we rejoice to believe that their high and joyous art is not declining. Kemble, indeed, and Mrs. Siddons, have forsaken that stateliest region of tragedy which they first opened to our gaze. But the latter could not be regarded as belonging to any age; her path was lonely as it was exalted, and she appeared, not as highest of a class which existed before her, but as a being of another order, destined "to leave the world no copy," but to enrich its imaginations for ever. Yet have we, in the youngest of the Kemble line, at once an artist of antique grace in comedy, and a tragedian of look the most chivalrous and heroic—of "form and moving most express and admirable"—of enthusiasm to give vivid expression to the highest and the most honourable of human emotions.—Still, in Macready, can we boast of one, whose rich and noble voice is adapted to all the most exquisite varieties of tenderness and passion—one, whose genius leads him to embody characters the most imaginative and romantic—and who throws over his grandest pictures tints so mellow and so nicely blended that, with all their inimitable variety, they sink in perfect harmony into the soul.—Still, in Kean, have we a performer of intensity never equalled—of pathos the sweetest and the most profound—whose bursts of passion almost transport us into another order of being, and whose flashes of genius cast a new light on the darkest caverns of the soul. If we have few names to boast in elegant comedy, we enjoy a crowd of the richest and most original humourists, with Munden—that actor of a

myriad unforgotten faces—at their head. But our theme has enticed us beyond our proper domain of the past; and we must retire. Let us hope for some Cibber, to catch the graces of our living actors before they perish, that our successors may fix on them their retrospective eyes unblamed, and enrich with a review of their merits some number of our work, which will appear, in due course, in the twenty-second century!

REVIEW OF JOHN DENNIS'S WORKS.

[Retrospective Review, No. 2.]

JOHN DENNIS, the terror or the scorn of that age, which is sometimes honoured with the title of Augustan, has attained a lasting notoriety, to which the reviewers of our times can scarcely aspire. His name is immortalized in the *Dunciad*; his best essay is preserved in Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*; and his works yet keep their state in two substantial volumes, which are now before us. But the interest of the most poignant abuse and the severest criticism quickly perishes. We contemplate the sarcasms and the invectives which once stung into rage the irritable generation of poets, with as cold a curiosity as we look on the rusty javelins or stuffed reptiles in the glass cases of the curious. The works of Dennis will, however, assist us in forming a judgment of the criticism of his age, as compared with that of our own, and will afford us an opportunity of investigating the influences of that popular art, on literature and on manners.

But we must not forget, that Mr. Dennis laid claims to public esteem, not only as a critic, but as a wit, a politician, and a poet. In the first and the last of these characters, he can receive but little praise. His attempts at gaiety and humour are weighty and awkward, almost without example. His poetry can only be described by negatives; it is not inharmonious, nor irregular, nor often turgid—for the author, too nice to sink into the mean, and too timid to rise into the bombastic, dwells in elaborate “decencies for ever.” The climax of his admiration for Queen Mary—“Mankind extols the king—the king admires the queen”—will give a fair specimen of his architectural eulogies. He is entitled to more respect as an honest patriot. He was, indeed, a true-

hearted Englishman—with the legitimate prejudices of his country—warmly attached to the principles of the revolution, detesting the French, abominating the Italian opera, and deprecating as heartily the triumph of the Pretender, as the success of a rival's tragedy. His political treatises, though not very elegantly finished, are made of sturdy materials. He appears, from some passages in his letters, to have cherished a genuine love of nature, and to have turned, with eager delight, to deep and quiet solitudes, for refreshment from the feverish excitements, the vexatious defeats, and the barren triumphs, of his critical career. He admired Shakspeare, after the fashion of his age, as a wild irregular genius, who would have been inconceivably greater, had he known and copied the ancients. The following is a part of his general criticism on this subject, and a fair specimen of his best style :

“ Shakspeare was one of the greatest geniuses that the world ever saw, for the tragic stage. Though he lay under greater disadvantages than any of his successors, yet had he greater and more genuine beauties than the best and greatest of them. And what makes the brightest glory of his character, those beauties were entirely his own, and owing to the force of his own nature; whereas, his faults were owing to his education, and to the age he lived in. One may say of him as they did of Homer, that he had none to imitate, and is himself inimitable. His imaginations were often as just, as they were bold and strong. He had a natural discretion which never could have been taught him, and his judgment was strong and penetrating. He seems to have wanted nothing but time and leisure for thought, to have found out those rules of which he appears so ignorant. His characters are always drawn justly, exactly, graphically, except where he failed by not knowing history or the poetical art. He had, for the most part, more fairly distinguished them than any of his successors have done, who have falsified them, or confounded them, by making love the predominant quality in all. He had so fine a talent for touching the passions, and they are so lively in him, and so truly in nature, that they often touch us more, without their due preparations, than those of other tragic poets, who have all the beauty of de-

sign and all the advantage of incidents. His master passion was terror, which he has often moved so powerfully and so wonderfully, that we may justly conclude, that if he had had the advantage of art and learning, he would have surpassed the very best and strongest of the ancients. His paintings are often so beautiful and so lively, so graceful and so powerful, especially where he uses them in order to move terror, that there is nothing, perhaps, more accomplished in our English poetry. His sentiments, for the most part, in his best tragedies, are noble, generous, easy, and natural, and adapted to the persons who use them. His expression is, in many places, good and pure, after a hundred years; simple though elevated, graceful though bold, easy though strong. He seems to have been the very original of our English tragical harmony; that is, the harmony of blank verse, diversified often by dissyllable and trissyllable terminations. For that diversity distinguishes it from heroic harmony, and, bringing it nearer to common use, makes it more proper to gain attention, and more fit for action and dialogue. Such verse we make when we are writing prose; we make such verse in common conversation.

“If Shakspeare had these great qualities by nature, what would he not have been, if he had joined to so happy a genius learning and the poetical art. For want of the latter, our author has sometimes made gross mistakes in the characters which he has drawn from history, against the equality and conveniency of manners of his dramatical persons. Witness Menenius in the following tragedy, whom he has made an arrant buffoon, which is a great absurdity. For he might as well have imagined a grave majestic Jack Pudding, as a buffoon in a Roman senator. Aufidius, the general of the Volscians, is shown a base and a profligate villain. He has offended against the equality of the manners even in the hero himself. For Coriolanus, who in the first part of the tragedy is shown so open, so frank, so violent, and so magnanimous, is represented in the latter part by Aufidius, which is contradicted by no one, a flattering, fawning, cringing, insinuating traitor.”

Mr. Dennis proceeds very generously to apologize for Shakspeare's faults, by observing that he had neither friends

to consult, nor time to make corrections. He, also, attributes his lines "utterly void of celestial fire," and passages "harsh and unmusical," to the want of leisure to wait for felicitous hours and moments of choicest inspiration. To remedy these defects—to mend the harmony and to put life into the dullness of Shakspeare—Mr. Dennis has assayed, and brought his own genius to the alteration of *Coriolanus* for the stage, under the lofty title of the "Invader of his Country, or the Fatal Resentment." In the catastrophe, *Coriolanus* kills *Aufidius*, and is himself afterwards slain, to satisfy the requisitions of poetical justice; which, to Mr. Dennis's great distress, Shakspeare so often violates. It is quite amusing to observe, with how perverted an ingenuity all the gaps in Shakspeare's verses are filled up, the irregularities smoothed away, and the colloquial expressions changed for stately phrases. Thus, for example, the noble wish of *Coriolanus* on entering the forum—

"The honoured gods
Keep Rome in safety, and the chairs of justice
Supplied with worthy men! plant love among us!
Through our large temples with the shows of peace,
And not our streets with war"—

is thus elegantly translated into classical language:

"The great and tutelary gods of Rome
Keep Rome in safety, and the chairs of justice
Supplied with worthy men: plant love among you.
Adorn our temples with the pomp of peace,
And, from our streets, drive horrid war away."

The conclusion of the hero's last speech on leaving Rome—

"Thus I turn my back: there is a world elsewhere,"

is elevated into the following heroic lines:

"For me, thus, thus, I turn my back upon you,
And make a better world where'er I go."

His fond expression of constancy to his wife—

“That kiss
I carried from thee, *dear* ; and my true lip,
Hath virgined it e'er since,”—

is thus refined :

“That kiss
I carried from *my love*, and my true lip
Hath ever since preserved it like a virgin.”

The icicle, which was wont to “hang on Dian's temple,” here more gracefully “hangs upon the temple of Diana.” The burst of mingled pride, and triumph of Coriolanus, when taunted with the word “boy,” is here exalted to tragic dignity. Our readers have, doubtless, ignorantly admired the original.

“Boy ! False hound !
If you have writ your annals true, 'tis there,
That, like an eagle in a dove cote, I
Fluttered your Volsces in Corioli.
Alone I did it—Boy !”

The following is the improved version :

“This boy, that, like an eagle in a dove court,
Flutter'd a thousand Volsces in Corioli,
And did it without second or acquittance,
Thus sends their mighty chief to mourn in hell !”

Who does not now appreciate the sad lot of Shakspeare—so feelingly bewailed by Mr. Dennis—that he had not a critic, of the age of King William by his side, to refine his style and elevate his conceptions ?

It is edifying to observe, how the canons of Mr. Dennis's criticism, which he regarded as the imperishable laws of genius, are now either exploded, or considered as matters of subordinate importance, wholly unaffecting the inward soul of poetry. No one now regards the merits of an Epic poem, as decided by the subservience of the fable and the action to the moral—by the presence or the absence of an allegory—by the fortunate or unfortunate fate of the hero—or by any other rules of artificial decorum, which the critics of for-

mer times thought fit to inculcate. We learn from their essays, whether the works which they examine are constructed, in externals, according to certain fantastic rules; but, whether they are frigid or impassioned, harmonious or prosaic, filled with glorious imaginations, or replete with low commonplaces;—whether, in short, they are works of genius or of mere toil—are questions entirely beneath their concern. The critic on the tragedy of Cato, ingenious and just as it is, omits one material objection to that celebrated piece—that it is good for nothing, and would be so if all the faults selected for censure could be, in an instant, corrected. There is a French essay on Telemachus, framed on the same superficial principles of criticism, which, after a minute examination of the moral, fable, characters, allegory, and other like requisites of excellence, triumphantly proves its claim to be ranked with, if not above, the great poems of Homer and of Virgil. Mr. Dennis seems, in general, to have applied the rules of criticism, extant in his day, to the compositions on which he passed judgment; but there was one position respecting which his contemporaries were not agreed, and on which he combated with the spirit of a martyr. This disputed point, the necessity of observing poetical justice in works of fiction, we shall briefly examine, because we think that it involves one of those mistakes in humanity, which it is always desirable to expose. But first we must, in fairness, lay one of our author's many arguments, on this subject, before our readers.

“The principal character of an epic poem must be either morally good or morally vicious; if he is morally good, the making him end unfortunately will destroy all poetical justice, and, consequently, all instruction: such a poem can have no moral, and, consequently, no fable, no just and regular poetical action, but must be a vain fiction and an empty amusement. Oh, but there is a retribution in futurity! But I thought that the reader of an epic poem was to owe his instruction to the poet, and not to himself: well then, the poet may tell him so at the latter end of his poem: ay, would to God I could see such a latter end of an epic poem, where the poet should tell the reader, that he has cut an honest man's throat, only that he may have an opportunity to send him to heaven; and that, though this would be but an indif-

ferent plea upon an indictment for murder at the Old Baily, yet that he hopes the good-natured reader will have compassion on him, as the gods have on his hero. But raillery apart, sir, what occasion is there for having recourse to an epic poet to tell ourselves by the bye, and by the occasional reflection, that there will be a retribution in futurity, when the Christian has this in his heart constantly and directly, and the Atheist and Free-thinker will make no such reflection? Tell me truly, sir, would not such a poet appear to you or me, not to have sufficiently considered what a poetical moral is? And should not you or I, sir, be obliged, in order to make him comprehend the nature of it, to lay before him that universal moral, which is the foundation of all morals, both epic and dramatic, and is inclusive of them all, and that is, That he who does good, and perseveres in it, shall always be rewarded; and he who does ill, and perseveres in it, shall always be punished? Should we not desire him to observe, that the foresaid reward must always attend and crown good actions, not sometimes only, for then it would follow, that sometimes a perseverance in good actions has no reward, which would take away all poetical instruction, and, indeed, every sort of moral instruction, resolving Providence into chance or fate. Should we not, sir, farther put him in mind, that since whoever perseveres in good actions, is sure to be rewarded at the last, it follows, that a poet does not assert by his moral, that he is always sure to be rewarded in this world, because that would be false, as you have very justly observed, p. 60; and, therefore, never can be the moral of an epic poem, because what is false may delude, but only truth can instruct. Should we not let him know, sir, that this universal moral only teaches us, that whoever perseveres in good actions, shall be always sure to be rewarded either here or hereafter; and that the truth of this moral is proved by the poet, by making the principal character of his poem, like all the rest of his characters, and like the poetical action, at the bottom, universal and allegorical, even after distinguishing it by a particular name, by making this principal character at the bottom, a mere political phantom of a very short duration, through the whole extent of which duration we can see at once, which continues no longer than the reading of the poem, and that being over, the phantom is to us nothing,

so that unless our sense is satisfied of the reward that is given to this poetical phantom, whose whole duration we see through from the very beginning to the end; instead of a wholesome moral, there would be a pernicious instruction, viz: 'That a man may persevere in good actions, and not be rewarded for it through the whole extent of his duration, that is, neither in this world nor in the world to come.'

It may be sufficient to answer to all this—and to much more of the same kind which our author has adduced—that little good can be attained by representations which are perpetually at variance with our ordinary perceptions. The poet may represent humanity as mightier and fairer than it appears to a common observer. In the mirror which he "holds up to nature," the forms of might and of beauty may look more august, more lovely, or more harmonious, than they appear, in the "light of common day," to eyes which are ungifted with poetic vision. But if the world of imagination is directly opposed to that of reality, it will become a cold abstraction, a baseless dream, a splendid mockery. We shall strive in vain to make men sympathize with beings of a sphere purely ideal, where might shall be always right, and virtue its own present as well as exceeding great reward. Happily, the exhibition is as needless for any moral purposes, as it would be inadequate to attain them. Though the poet cannot make us witnesses of the future recompense of that virtue, which here struggles and suffers, he can cause us to feel, in the midst of its very struggles and sufferings, that it is eternal. He makes the principle of immortality manifest in the meek submission, in the deadly wrestle with fate, and even in the mortal agonies of his noblest characters. What, in true dignity, does virtue lose, by the pangs which its clay tenement endures, if we are made conscious of its high prerogatives, though we do not actually behold the immunities which shall ultimately be its portion? Hereafter it *may* be rewarded; but *now* it is triumphant. We require no dull epilogue to tell us, that it shall be crowned in another and happier state of being; for our souls gush with admiration and sympathy with it, amidst its sorrows. We love it, and burn to imitate it, for its own loveliness, not for its gains. Surely it is a higher

aim of the poet to awaken this emotion—to inspire us with the awe of goodness, amidst its deepest external debasements, and to make us almost desire to share in them, than to invite us to partake in her rewards, and to win us by a calculating sympathy. The hovel or the dungeon does not, in the pictures of a genuine poet, give the colouring to the soul which inhabits it, but receives from its majesty a consecration beyond that of temples, and a dignity statelier than that of palaces. For it is his high prerogative to exhibit the spiritual part of man triumphant over that about him, which is mortal—to show, in his far-reaching hope, his moveless constancy, his deep and disinterested affections, that there is a spirit within him, which death cannot destroy. Low, indeed, is the morality which aspires to affect men by nothing beyond the poor and childish lesson, that to be virtuous is to be happy. Virtue is no dependant on earthly expediencies for its excellence. It has a beauty to be loved, as vice has a deformity to be abhorred, which are unaffected by the consequences experienced by their votaries. Do we admire the triumph of vice, and scoff at goodness, when we think on the divine Clarissa, violated, imprisoned, heart-broken, dying? Must Parson Adams receive a mitre, to assure us that we should love him? Our best feelings and highest aspirations are not yet of so mercantile a cast, as those who contend for “poetical justice” would imagine. The mere result, in respect of our sympathies, is as nothing. The only real violation of poetical justice is in the violation of nature in the clothing. When, for example, a wretch, whose trade is murder, is represented as cherishing the purest and the deepest love for an innocent being—when chivalrous delicacy or sentiment is conferred on a pirate, tainted with a thousand crimes—the effect is immoral, whatever doom may, at last, await him. If the barriers of virtue and of evil are melted down by the current of spurious sympathy, there is no catastrophe which can remove the mischief; and while these are preserved in our feelings, there is none which can truly harm us.

The critics of the age of Dennis held, a middle course between their predecessors of old time, and their living successors. The men who first exercised the art of criticism, imbued with personal veneration for the loftiest works of

genius, sought to deduce rules from them, which future poets should observe. They did not assume the right of passing individual judgments on their contemporaries—nor did they aim at deciding even abstract questions of taste on their own personal authority—but attempted, by fixing the laws of composition, to mark out the legitimate channels in which the streams of thought, passion, and sentiment, should be bounded through all ages. Their dogmas, therefore, whether they contained more or less of truth, carried with them no extrinsic weight, were influenced by no personal feelings, excited no personal animosities, but simply appealed, like poetry itself, to those minds which alone could give them sanction. In the first critical days of England—those of the Rymers and the Dennises—the professors of the art began to regard themselves as judges, not merely of the principles of poetry, but of their application by living authors. Then commenced the arrogance on the side of the supervisors, and the impatience and resentment on that of their subjects, which contemporary criticism necessarily inspires. The worst passions of man are brought into exercise in reference to those pure and ennobling themes, which should be sacred from all low contentions of “the ignorant present time.” But the battle was, at least, fair and open. The critic still appealed to principles, however fallacious or imperfect, which all the world might examine. His decrees had no weight, independent of his reasons, nor was his name, or his want of one, esteemed of magical virtue. He attacked the poets on equal terms—sometimes, indeed, with derision and personal slander—but always as a foe to subdue, not as a judge to pass sentence on them. Criticism, in our own times, has first assumed the air of “sovereign sway and masterdom” over the regions of fantasy. Its professors enforce not established laws, contend no longer for principles, attack poets no more with chivalrous zeal, as violating the cause of poetic morals, or sinning against the regularities of their art. They pronounce the works, of which they take cognizance, to be good or bad—often without professing to give any reason for their decision—or referring to any standard, more fixed or definite than their own taste, partiality, or prejudice. And the public, without any knowledge of their fitness for their office—without even knowing their names—receive them

as the censors of literature, the privileged inspectors of genius! This strange supremacy of criticism, in our own age, gives interest to the investigation of the claims, which the art itself possesses to the respect and gratitude of the people. If it is, on the whole, beneficial to the world, it must either be essential to the awakening of genius—or necessary to direct its exertions—or useful in repressing abortive and mistaken efforts—or conducive to the keeping alive and fitly guiding admiration to the good and great. On each of these grounds, we shall now very briefly examine its value.

1. It is evident, that the art of criticism is not requisite to the development of genius, because, in the golden ages of poetry it has had no portion. Its professors have never even constructed the scaffolding to aid the erection of the cloud-capped towers and solemn temples of the bard. By his facile magic he has called them into existence, like the palace of Aladdin, as complete in the minutest graces of finishing as noble in design. Long before the art of criticism was known in Greece, her rhapsodists had attained the highest excellencies of poetry. No fear of a critic's scorn, no desire of a critic's praise, influenced these consecrated wanderers. Nature alone was their model, their inspirer, and their guide. From her did they drink in the feeling, not only of permanence and of grandeur, but of ærial grace, and roseate beauty. The rocks and hills gave them the visible images of lasting might—the golden clouds of even, "sailing on the bosom of the air," sent a feeling of evanescent loveliness into their souls—and the delicate branchings of the grove, reflected in the calm waters, imbued them with a perception of elegance beyond the reach of art. No pampered audiences thought themselves entitled to judge them; to analyze their powers; to descant on their imperfections; to lament their failures; or to eulogize their sublimities, as those who had authority to praise. Their hearers dwelt on their accents with rapturous wonder, as nature's living oracles. They wandered through the every where communicating joy, and every where receiving reverence—exciting in youth its first tearful ecstasy, and kindling fresh enthusiasm amidst the withered affections of age. They were revered as the inspired chroniclers of heroic deeds—the inspirers of national glory and virtue—the depositories of the mysteries and the

philosophic wisdom of times which even then were old. They trusted not to paper or the press for the preservation of their fame. They were contented, that each tree beneath which they had poured forth their effusions, should be loved for their sake—that the forked promontory should bear witness of them—and the “brave o'er-hanging firmament, fretted with golden fire,” tell of those who had first awakened within the soul a sense of its glories. Their works were treasured up no where but in the soul—spread abroad only by the enthusiasm of kindred reciters—and transmitted to the children of other generations, while they listened with serious faces to the wondrous tales of their fathers. Yet these poems, so produced, so received, so preserved, were not only instinct with heavenly fire, but regular as the elaborate efforts of the most polished ages. In these products of an era of barbarism, have future bards not only found an exhaustless treasury of golden imaginations, but critics have discovered all those principles of order which they would establish as unalterable laws. The very instances of error and haste in their authors have been converted into figures of rhetoric, by those men, who represent nature herself as irregular and feeble, and a minute attention to rules as essential to the perfection of genius.

As criticism had no share in producing the Homeric poems, so also did it contribute nothing to the perfection of the Greek tragedies. For those works—the most complete and highly finished, if not the most profound, of all human creations—there was no more *previous warrant*, than for the wildest dream of fantasy. No critic fashioned the moulds in which those exquisite groups were cast, or inspired them with Promethean life. They were struck off in the heat of inspiration—the offsprings of moments teeming for immortality—though the slightest limb of each of the figures is finished as though it had been the labour of a life. These eternal works were complete—the spirit which inspired their authors was extinct—when Aristotle began to criticize. The development of the art of poetry, by that great philosopher, wholly failed to inspire any bard, whose productions might break the descent from the mighty relics of the preceding years. After him, his disciples amused themselves in refining on his laws—in cold disputations and profitless scrutinies.

The soil, late so fertile with the stateliest productions of nature, was overgrown with a low and creeping underwood, which, if any delicate flower struggled into day, oppressed and concealed it from view beneath its briary and tangled thickets.

2. The instances already given refute not only the notion, that criticism is requisite to prepare the way for genius, but also the opinion that it is necessary to give it a right direction and a perfect form. True imagination is in itself "all compact." The term irregular, as absolutely applied to genius, is absurd, and applied relatively, it means nothing but that it is original in its career. There is properly no such thing as irregular genius. A man endowed with "the vision and the faculty divine," may choose modes of composition unsuited to the most appropriate display of his powers;—his images may not be disposed in the happiest arrangement, or may be clustered around subjects, in themselves, dreary or mean, but these fantasies must be in themselves harmonious, or they would not be beautiful, would not be imaginations. Genius is a law unto itself. Its germs have, within them, not only the principles of beauty, but the very form into which the flower in its maturity must expand. As a wavy gleam of fire rises from the spark, in its own exquisite shape, so does imagination send forth its glories, perfect by the felicitous necessity of their nature, exquisite in form by the same impulse, which gives them brightness and fervour. But how can the critic, in reality, acquire any jurisdiction over the genuine poet? Where are the lines by which he can fathom the depths of the soul; where the instrument by which he can take the altitude of "the highest heaven of invention?" How can he judge of thoughts which penetrate the mysteries of humanity, of fancies which "in the colours of the rainbow live, and play in the plighted clouds," of anticipations and foretastes by which the bard already "breathes in worlds, to which the heaven of heavens is but a veil?" Can he measure a sun-beam, or constrain a cloud, or count the steps of the bounding stag, of the forest, to judge whether they are graceful? Has he power even to define those gigantic shadows reflected on the pure mirror of the poet's imagination, from the eternal things which mortal eyes cannot discern? At best, he can but reason from what has been to

what should be ; and what can be more absurd than this course in reference to poetic invention ? A critic can understand no rules of criticism except what existing poetry has taught him. There was no more reason, after the production of the *Iliad*, to contend that future poems should in certain points resemble it, than there was before the existence of that poem to lay down rules which would prevent its being what it is. There was antecedently no more probability that the powers of man, harmoniously exerted, could produce the tale of Troy divine, than that, after it, the same powers would not produce other works equally marvellous and equally perfect, yet wholly different in their colouring and form. The reasons which would prevent men from doing any thing unlike it, would also have prevented its creation, for it was doubtless unlike all previous inventions. Criticism can never be prospective, until the resources of man and nature are exhausted. Each new world of imagination resolves on itself, in an orbit of its own. Its beauties create the taste which shall relish them, and the very critics which shall extol their proportions. The first admirers of Homer had no conception that the Greek tragedies would start into life and become lasting as their idol. Those who lived after the times when these were perfected, asserted that no dramas could be worthy of praise, which were not fashioned according to their models and composed of similar materials. But, after a long interval, came Shakspeare—at first, indeed, considered by many as barbarous and strange—who, when his real merits are perceived, is felt to be, at the least, equal to his Greek predecessors, though violating every rule drawn from their works. Even in our short remembrance, we can trace the complete abolition of popular rules of criticism, by the new and unexpected combinations of genius. A few years ago, it was a maxim gravely asserted by Reviews, Treatises, and Magazines, that no interesting fiction could effectively be grafted on history. But “mark how a plain tale” by the author of *Waverly* “puts down” the canon for ever ! In fact, unless with more than angel’s ken a critic could gaze on all the yet unpossessed regions of imagination, it is impossible that he should limit his discoveries which yet await the bard. He may perceive, indeed, how poets of old have by their magic divided the clouds which bound man’s ordinary vision, and

may scan the regions which they have thus opened to our gaze. But how can he thus anticipate what future bards may reveal—direct the proportions, the colours and the forms, of the realities which they shall unveil—fix boundaries to regions of beauty yet unknown; determine the height of their glory-stricken hills; settle the course of their mighty waters; or regulate the visionary shapes of super-human grace, which shall gleam in the utmost distance of their far perspectives?

3. But it may be urged, that criticism is useful in putting down the pretensions of those who aspire, without just claim, to the honours of genius. This, indeed, in so far as it is unfavourable, is its chief object in modern times. The most celebrated of literary tribunals takes as the motto of its decrees, “*Judex damnatur cum nocens absolvitur* ;” assuming that to publish a dull book is a *crime*, which the public good requires should be exposed, whatever laceration of the inmost soul may be inflicted on the offender in the process. This damnatory principle is still farther avowed in the following dogma of this august body, which deserves to be particularly quoted as an explicit declaration of the spirit of modern criticism :

“There is nothing of which nature has been more bountiful than poets. They swarm like the spawn of the cod-fish, with a vicious fecundity that invites and requires destruction. To publish verses is become a sort of evidence that a man wants sense; which is repelled, not by writing good verses, but by writing excellent verses;—by doing what Lord Byron has done;—by displaying talents great enough to overcome the disgust which proceeds from satiety, and showing that all things may become new under the reviving touch of genius.” *Ed. Rev. No. 43, p. 68.*

It appears to us, that the crime and the evil denounced in this pregnant sentence are entirely visionary and fantastic. There is no great danger, that works without talent should usurp the admiration of the world. Splendid error may mislead; vice linked to a radiant angel, by perverted genius, may seduce; and the union of high energy with depravity of soul may teach us to respect where we ought to shudder. But men will not easily be dazzled by insipidity, enchanted by discord, or awed by weakness. The mean and base,

even if left to themselves unmolested, will scarcely grow immortal by the neglect of the magnanimous and the wise. He who cautions the public against the admiration of feeble productions, almost equals the wisdom of a sage, who should passionately implore a youth not imprudently to set his heart on ugliness and age. And surely our nerves are not grown so finely tremulous, that we require guardians who may providently shield us from glancing on a work which may prove unworthy of perusal. It is one high privilege of our earthly lot, that the best pleasures of humanity are not balanced by any painful sensations arising from their contraries. We drink in joy too deep for expression, when we penetrate the vast solitudes of nature, and gaze on her rocky fortresses, her eternal hills, her regions "consecrate to eldest time." But we feel no answering agony while we traverse level and barren plains; especially if we can leave them at pleasure.— Thus, while we experience a thrilling delight, in thinking on the divinest imaginations of the poet, we are not plunged by the dullest author into the depths of sorrow. At all events, we can throw down the book at once; and we must surely be very fastidious if we do not regard the benefit conferred on printers and publishers, and the gratification of the author's innocent and genial vanity, as amply compensating the slight labour which we have taken in vain.

But, perhaps, it is the good of the aspirants themselves rather than of their readers which the critic professes to design. Here, also, we think he is mistaken. The men of our generation are not too prone to leave their quest after the substantial blessings of the world, in order to pursue those which are ærial and shadowy. The very error of the mind which takes the love for the power of poetry, is more goodly than common wisdom. But there are certain seasons, we believe, in life—some few golden moments at least—in which all men have really perceived, and felt, and enjoyed, as poets. Who remembers not an hour of serious ecstasy, when, perhaps, as he lay beneath some old tree and gazed on the setting sun, earth seemed a visionary thing, the glories of immortality were half revealed, and the first notes a universal harmony whispered to his soul?—some moment, when he seemed almost to realize the eternal, and could have been well contented to yield up his mortal being?—

some little space, populous of high thoughts and disinterested resolves—some touch upon that “line of limitless desires,” along which he shall live in a purer sphere?—And if that taste of joy is not to be renewed on earth, the soul will not suffer by an attempt to prolong its memory. It is a mistake, to suppose that young beginners in poetry are always prompted by a mere love of worldly fame. The sense of beauty and the love of the ideal, if they do not draw all the faculties into their likeness, still impart to the soul something of their rich and unearthly colouring. Young fantasy spreads its golden films, slender though they be, through the varied tenour of existence. Imagination, nurtured in the opening of life, though it be not developed in poetic excellence, will strengthen the manly virtue, give a noble cast to the thoughts, and a generous course to the sympathies. It will assist to crush self-love in its first risings, to mellow and soften the heart, and prepare it for its glorious destiny. Even if these consequences did not follow, surely the most exquisite feelings of young hope are not worthy of scorn. They may truly be worth years of toil, of riches, and of honour. Who would crush them at a venture—short and uncertain as life is—and cold and dreary as are often its most brilliant successes? What, indeed, can this world offer to compare with the earliest poetic dreams, which our modern critics think it sport or virtue to destroy?

“Such views the youthful bard allure
As, mindless of the following gloom,
He deems their colours shall endure
'Till peace go with him to the tomb.

And let him nurse his fond deceit,
And what if he must die in sorrow;—
Who would not cherish dreams so sweet,
Though care and grief should come to-morrow?

But, supposing for a moment that it were really desirable to put down all authors who do not rise into excellence, at any expense of personal feeling, we must not forget the risk which such a process involves of crushing undeveloped genius. There are many causes which may prevent minds, gifted with the richest faculties, from exerting them at the

first with success. The very number of images, crowding on the mirror of the soul, may for a while darken its surface, and give the idea of inextricable confusion. The young poet's holiest thoughts must often appear to him too sacred to be fully developed to the world. His soul will half shrink at first from the disclosure of its solemn immunities and strange joys. He will thus become timid and irresolute—tell but a slight part of that which he feels—and this broken and disjointed communication will appear senseless or feeble. The more deep and original his thoughts—the more dazzling his glimpses into the inmost sanctuaries of nature,—the more difficult will be the task of embodying these in words, so as to make them palpable to ordinary conceptions. He will be constantly in danger, too, in the fervour of his spirit, of mistaking things which in his mind are connected with strains of delicious musing, for objects, in themselves, stately or sacred. The seeming common-place, which we despise, may be to him the index to pure thoughts and far-reaching desires. In that which to the careless eye may seem but a little humble spring—pure, perhaps, and sparkling, but scarce worthy of a glance—the more attentive observer may perceive a depth which he cannot fathom, and discover that the seeming fount is really the breaking forth of a noble river, winding its consecrated way beneath the soil, which, as it runs, will soon bare its bosom to the heavens, and gilde in a cool and fertilizing majesty. And is there not some danger that souls, whose powers of expression are inadequate to make manifest their inward wealth, should be sealed for ever by the hasty sentences of criticism? The name of Lord Byron is rather unfortunately introduced by the celebrated journal which we have quoted, into its general denunciation against youthful poets. Surely the critics must for the moment have forgotten, that at the outset of the career of that bard, to whose example they now refer, as most illustriously opposed to the mediocrity which they condemn, they themselves poured contempt on his endeavours! Do they now wish that he had taken their counsel? Are they willing to run the hazard, for the sake of putting down a thousand pretenders a few months before their time, of crushing another power such as they esteem his own? Their very excuse—that, at the time, his verses were all which they adjudged them—is the very

proof of the impolicy of such censures. If the object of their scorn has, in this instance, risen above it, how do we know that more delicate minds have not sunk beneath it? Besides, although Lord Byron was not repelled, but rather excited by their judgment, he seems to have sustained from it scarcely less injury. If it stung him into energy, it left its poison in his soul. It first instigated his spleen;—taught him that spirit of scorn which debases the noblest faculties—and impelled him, in his rage, to attack those who had done him no wrong, to scoff at the sanctities of humanity, and to pretend to hate or deride his species!

And, even, if genius is too deep to be suppressed, or too celestial to be perverted, is it nothing that the soul of its possessor should be wrung with agony? For a while, criticism may throw back poets whom it cannot annihilate, and make them pause in their course of glory and of joy, “confounded though immortal.” Who can estimate those pangs which on the “purest spirits” are thus made to prey

“as on entrails, joint, and limb,
With answerable pains but more intense?”

The heart of a young poet is one of the most sacred things on earth. How nicely strung are its fibres—how keen its sensibilities—how shrinking the timidity with which it puts forth its gentle conceptions! And shall such a heart receive rude usage from a world which it only desires to improve and to gladden? Shall its nerves be stretched on the rack, or its apprehensions turned into the instruments of its torture? All this, and more, has been done towards men of whom “this world was not worthy.” Cowper, who, first of modern poets, restored to the general heart the feeling of healthful nature—whose soul was without one particle of malice or of guile—whose susceptible and timorous spirit shrunk tremblingly from the touch of this rough world—was chilled, tortured, and almost maddened, by some nameless critic’s scorn. Kirke White—the delicate beauties of whose mind were destined scarcely to unfold themselves on earth—in the beginning of his short career, was cut to the heart by the cold mockery of a stranger. A few sentences, penned, perhaps, in mere carelessness, almost nipped the young blos-

soms of his genius "like an untimely frost;" palsied for awhile all his faculties—embittered his little span of life—haunted him almost to the verge of his grave, and heightened his dying agonies! Would the annihilation of all the dullness in the world compensate for one moment's anguish inflicted on hearts like these?

We have been all this time considering not the possible abuses, but the necessary tendencies, of contemporary criticism. All the evils we have pointed out may arise, though no sinister design pervert the Reviewer's judgment—though no prejudice even unconsciously warp him—and, even, though he may decide fairly "from the evidence before him." But it is impossible that this favourable supposition should be often realized in an age like ours. Temper, politics, religion, the interests of rival poets, or rival publishers—a thousand influences, sometimes recognised, and sometimes only felt—decide the sentence on imaginations the most divine. The very trade of the critic himself—the necessity of his being witty, or brilliant, or sarcastic, for his own sake—is sufficient to disqualify him as a judge. Sad thought!—that the most sensitive, and gentle, and profound of human beings, should be dependant on casual caprice, on the passions of a bookseller, or on the necessities of a period!

4. It may be perceived, from what we have already written, that we do not esteem criticism as a guide more than as a censor. The general effect on the public mind is, we fear, to dissipate and weaken. It spoils the freshest charms even of the poetry which it praises. It destroys all reverence for great poets, by making the world think of them as a species of culprits, who are to plead their genius as an excuse for their intrusion. Time has been when the poet himself—instead of submitting his works to the public as his master—called around him those whom he thought worthy to receive his precepts, and pointed out to them the divine lineaments, which he felt could never perish. They regarded him, with reverence, as most favoured of mortals. They delighted to sit in the seat of the disciple, not in that of the scorner. How much enjoyment have the people lost by being exalted into judges! The ascent of literature has been rendered smooth and easy, but its rewards are proportionably lessened in value. With how holy a zeal did the aspirant once gird

himself to tread the unworn path; how delectably was he refreshed by each plant of green; how intensely did he enjoy every prospect, from the lone and embowered resting places of his journey! Now, distinctions are levelled—the zest of intellectual pleasures is taken away; and no one hour, like that of Archimedes, ever repays a life of toil. The appetite, satiated with luxuries cheaply acquired, requires new stimulants—even criticism palls—and private slander must be mingled with it to give the necessary relish. Happily, these evils will, at last, work out their own remedy. Scorn, of all human emotions, leaves the frailest monuments behind it. That light which now seems to play around the weapons of periodical criticism, is only like the electrical flame which, to the amazement of the superstitious, wreathes the sword of the Italian soldier on the approach of a storm, vapourish and fleeting. Those mighty poets of our time—who are now overcoming the derision of the critics—will be immortal witnesses of their shame. These will lift their heads, “like mountains when the mists are rolled away,” imperishable memorials of the true genius of our time, to the most distant ages.

MODERN PERIODICAL LITERATURE.

[New Monthly Magazine.]

LITTLE did the authors of the Spectator, the Tattler, and the Guardian think, while gratifying the simple appetites of our fathers for our periodical literature, how great would be the number, and how extensive the influence, of their successors in the nineteenth century. Little did they know that they were preparing the way for this strange era in the world of letters, when Reviews and Magazines supersede the necessity of research or thought—when each month they become more spirited, more poignant, and more exciting—and on every appearance awaken a pleasing crowd of turbulent sensations in authors, contributors, and the few who belong to neither of these classes, unknown to our laborious ancestors. Without entering, at present, into the inquiry whether this system be, on the whole, as beneficial as it is lively, we will just lightly glance at the chief of its productions, which have such varied and extensive influences for good or for evil.

The *Edinburgh Review*—though its power is now on the wane—has perhaps, on the whole, produced a deeper and more extensive impression on the public mind than any other work of its species. It has two distinct characters—that of a series of original essays, and a critical examination of the new works of particular authors. The first of these constitutes its fairest claim to honourable distinction. In this point of view, it has one extraordinary merit, that instead of partially illustrating only one set of doctrines, it contains disquisitions equally convincing on almost all sides of almost all questions of literature or state policy. The “bane and anti-

dote" are frequently to be found in the ample compass of its volumes, and not unfrequently from the same pen. Its Essays on Political Economy display talents of a very uncommon order. Their writers have contrived to make the driest subjects enchanting, and the lowest and most debasing theories beautiful. Touched by them, the wretched dogmas of expediency have worn the air of venerable truths, and the degrading speculations of Malthus have appeared full of benevolence and of wisdom. They have exerted the uncommon art, while working up a sophism into every possible form, to seem as though they had boundless store of reasons to spare—a very exuberance of proof—which the clearness of their argument rendered it unnecessary to use. The celebrated Editor of this work, with little imagination—little genuine wit—and no clear view of any great and central principles of criticism, has contrived to dazzle, to astonish, and occasionally to delight, multitudes of readers, and, at one period, to hold the temporary fate of authors at his will. His qualities are all singularly adapted to his office. Without deep feeling, which few can understand, he has a quick sensibility with which all sympathize; without a command of images, he has a glittering radiance of words which the most superficial may admire; neither too hard-hearted always to refuse his admiration, nor too kindly to suppress a sneer, he has been enabled to appear most witty, most wise, and most eloquent, to those who have chosen him for their oracle. As Reviewers, who have exercised a fearful power over the hearts and the destinies of young aspirants to fame, this gentleman, and his varied coadjutors have done many great and irreparable wrongs. Their very motto, "Judex damnatur cum nocens absolvitur," applied to works offending only by their want of genius, asserted a fictitious crime to be punished by a voluntary tribunal. It implied that the author of a dull book was a criminal, whose sensibilities justice required to be stretched on the rack, and whose inmost soul it was a sacred duty to lacerate! They even carried this atrocious absurdity farther—represented youthful poets as *prima facie* guilty; "swarming with a vicious fecundity which invited and required destruction;" and spoke of the publication of verses as evidence, in itself, of want of sense,

to be rebutted only by proofs of surpassing genius.* Thus the sweetest hopes were to be rudely broken—the loveliest visions of existence were to be dissipated—the most ardent and most innocent souls were to be wrung with unutterable anguish—and a fearful risk incurred of crushing genius too mighty for sudden development, or of changing its energies into poison—in order that the public might be secured from the possibility of worthlessness becoming attractive, or individuals shielded from the misery of looking into a work which would not tempt their farther perusal! But the Edinburgh Review has not been contented with deriding the pretensions of honest but ungifted aspirants; it has persued with misrepresentation and ridicule the loftiest and the gentlest spirits of the age, and has perverted the world, for a little season, from recognising and enjoying their genius. One of their earliest numbers contained an elaborate tissue of gross derision on that delicate production of feeling and of fancy—that fresh revival of the old English drama in all its antique graces—that piece of natural sweetness and of wood-land beauty—the tragedy of *John Woodvil*. They directed the same species of barbarous ridicule against the tale of *Cristabel*, trying to excite laughter by the cheap process of changing the names of its heroines into Lady C. and Lady G. and employing the easy art of transmuting its romantic incidents into the language of frivolous life, to destroy the fame of its most profound and imaginative author. The mode of criticism adopted on this occasion might, it is obvious, be used with equal success, to give to the purest and loftiest of works a ludicrous air. But the mightiest offence of the Edinburgh Review is the wilful injustice which it has done to Wordsworth, or rather to the multitude whom it has debarred from the noblest stock of intellectual delights to be found in modern poetry, by the misrepresentation and the scorn which it has poured on his effusions. It would require a far longer essay than this to expose all the arts (for *arts* they have been) which the Review has employed to depreciate this holiest of living bards. To effect this malignant design, Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey, have been constantly repre-

* See Ed. Rev. No. 43, p. 68.

sented as forming one perverse school or band of innovators—though there are perhaps no poets whose whole style and train of thought more essentially differ. To the same end, a few peculiar expressions—a few attempts at simplicity of expression on simple themes—a few extreme instances of naked language, which the fashionable gaudiness of poetry had incited—were dwelt on as exhibiting the poet's intellectual character, while passages of the purest and most majestic beauty, of the deepest pathos, and of the noblest music, were regarded as unworthy even to mitigate the critic's scorn. To this end, Southey—who with all his rich and varied accomplishments, has comparatively but a small portion of Wordsworth's genius—and whose “wild and wondrous lays” are the very antithesis to Wordsworth's intense musings on humanity, and new consecrations of familiar things—was represented as redeeming the school which his mightier friend degraded. To this end, even Wilson—one who had delighted to sit humbly at the feet of Wordsworth, and who derived his choicest inspirations from him—was praised as shedding unwonted lustre over the barrenness of his master. But why multiply examples? Why attempt minutely to expose critics, who in “thoughts which do often lie too deep for tears” can find matter only for jesting—who speak of the high, imaginative conclusion of the White Doe of Rylston as a fine compliment of which they do not know the meaning—and who begin a long and laborious article on the noblest philosophical poem in the world with—“*This will never do?*”

The *Quarterly Review*, inferior to the Edinburgh in its mode of treating matters of mere reason—and destitute of that glittering eloquence of which Mr. Jeffrey has been so lavish—is far superior to it in its tone of sentiment, taste, and morals. It has often given intimations of a sense that there are “more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in the philosophy” of the Northern Reviewers. It has not regarded the wealth of nations as every thing and the happiness of nations as nothing—it has not rested all the foundations of good on the shifting expediences of time—it has not treated human nature as a mere problem for critics to analyze and explain. Its articles on travels have been richly tinged with a spirit of the romantic. Its views of religious

sectarianism—unlike the flippant impieties of its rival—have been full of real kindness and honest sympathy. Its disquisitions on the State of the Poor have been often replete with thoughts “informed by nobleness,” and rich in examples of lowly virtue which have had power to make the heart glow with a genial warmth which Reviews can rarely inspire.

Its attack on Lady Morgan, whatever were the merits of her work, was one of the coarsest insults ever offered in print by man to woman. But perhaps its worst piece of injustice was its laborious attempt to torture and ruin Mr. Keats, a poet then of extreme youth, whose work was wholly unobjectionable in its tendencies, and whose sole offence was a friendship for one of the objects of the Reviewer's hatred, and his courage to avow it. We can form but a faint idea of what the heart of a young poet is when he first begins to exercise his celestial faculties—how eager and tremulous are his hopes—how strange and tumultuous are his joys—how arduous is his difficulty of embodying his rich imaginings in mortal language—how sensibly alive are all his feelings to the touches of this rough world! Yet we can guess enough of these to estimate, in some degree, the enormity of a cool attack on a soul so delicately strung—with such aspirations and such fears—in the beginning of its high career. Mr. Keats—who now happily has attained the vantage-ground whence he may defy criticism—was cruelly or wantonly held up to ridicule in the Quarterly Review—to his transitory pain, we fear, but to the lasting disgrace of his traducer. Shelley has less ground of complaining—for he who attacks established institutions with a martyr's spirit, must not be surprised if he is visited with a martyr's doom. All ridicule of Keats was unprovoked insult and injury—an attack on Shelley was open and honest warfare, in which there is nothing to censure but the mode in which it was conducted. To deprecate his principles—to confute his reasonings—to expose his inconsistencies—to picture forth vividly all that his critics believed respecting the tendencies of his works—was just and lawful; but to give currency to slanderous stories respecting his character, and above all, darkly to insinuate guilt which they forbore to develope, was unmanly, and could only serve to injure an honourable cause. Scarcely less disgraceful to the Review is the late elaborate piece of abuse against

that great national work, the new edition of Stephens's Greek Thesaurus. It must, however, be confessed, that several articles in recent numbers of the Review have displayed very profound knowledge of the subjects treated, and a deep and gentle spirit of criticism.

The *British Review* is, both in evil and good, far below the two great Quarterly Journals. It is, however, very far from wanting ability, and as it lacks the gall of its contemporaries, and speaks in the tone of real conviction, though we do not subscribe to all its opinions, we offer it our best wishes.

The *Pamphleteer* is a work of very meritorious design. Its execution, depending less on the voluntary power of its editor than that of any other periodical work, is necessarily unequal. On the whole, it has embodied a great number of valuable essays—which give a view of different sides of important questions, like the articles of the Edinburgh, but without the alloy which the inconsistency of the writers of the last mingle with their discussions. It has, we believe, on one or two occasions, suggested valuable hints to the legislature—especially in its view of the effects arising from the punishment of the pillory—which, although somewhat vicious and extravagant in its style, set the evils of that exhibition in so clear a light, that it was shortly after abolished, except in the instance of perjury. As the subject had not been investigated before, and the abolition followed so speedily, it may reasonably be presumed that this essay had no small share in terminating an infliction in which the people were, at once, judges and executioners—all the remains of virtue were too often extinguished—and justice perpetually insulted in the execution of its own sentences.

The *Retrospective Review* is a bold experiment in these times, which well deserves to succeed, and has already attained far more notice than we should have expected to follow a periodical work which relates only to the past. To unveil with a reverent hand the treasures of other days—to disclose ties of sympathy with old time which else were hidden—to make us feel that beauty and truth are not things of yesterday—is the aim of no mean ambition, in which success will be without alloy, and failure without disgrace. There is an air of youth and inexperience doubtless about some of the articles; but can any thing be more pleasing

than to see young enthusiasm, instead of dwelling on the gauds of the "ignorant present," fondly cherishing the venerableness of old time, and reverently listening to the voices of ancestral wisdom? The future is all visionary and unreal—the past is the truly grand, and substantial and abiding. The airy visions of hope vanish as we proceed; but nothing can deprive us of our interest in that which has been. It is good, therefore, to have one periodical work exclusively devoted to "auld lang syne." It is also pleasant to have one which, amidst an age whose literature is "rank with all unkindness," is unaffected by party or prejudice, which feeds no depraved appetite, which ministers to no unworthy passion, but breathes one tender and harmonious spirit of revering love for the great departed. We shall rejoice, therefore, to see this work "rich with the spoils of time," and gradually leading even the mere readers of periodical works, to feel with the gentle author of that divine sonnet, written in a blank leaf of Dugdale's *Monasticon*:—

"Not harsh nor rugged are the winding ways
Of hoar antiquity, but strewn with flowers."

These, we believe, are all the larger periodical works of celebrity not devoted to merely scientific purposes. Of the lesser Reviews, the *Monthly*, as the oldest claims the first notice; though we cannot say much in its praise. A singular infelicity has attended many of its censures. To most of those who have conduced to the revival of poetry it has opposed its jeers and its mockeries. Cowper, who first restored "free nature's grace" to our pictures of rural scenery—whose timid and delicate soul shrunk from the slightest encounter with the world—whose very satire breathed gentleness and good-will to all his fellows—was agonized by its unfeeling scorn. Kirk White, another spirit almost too gentle for earth—painfully struggling by his poetical efforts to secure the scanty means of laborious study, was crushed almost to earth by its pitiable sentence, and his brief span of life filled with bitter anguish. This Review seems about twenty years behind the spirit of the times; and this, for a periodical work, is fully equal to a century in former ages.

Far other notice does the *Eclectic Review* require. It is,

indeed, devoted to a party; and to a party whose opinions are not very favourable to genial views of humanity, or to deep admiration of human genius. But not all the fiery zeal of sectarianism which has sometimes blazed through its disquisitions—nor all the straight-laced nicety with which it is sometimes disposed to regard earthly enjoyments—nor all the gloom which its spirit of Calvinism sheds on the mightiest efforts of virtue—can prevent us from feeling the awe-striking influences of honest principle—of hopes which are not shaken by the fluctuations of time—of faith which looks to “temples not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” The Eclectic Review, indeed, in its earliest numbers, seemed resolved to oppose the spirit of its religion to the spirit of intellect and humanity, and even went to the fearful excess of heaping the vilest abuse on Shakspeare, and of hinting that his soul was mourning in the torments of hell, over the evils which his works had occasioned in the world.*

* This marvellous effusion of bigotry is contained in an article on Twiss's Index to Shakspeare in the third volume of the Review, p. 75. The Reviewer commences with the following tremendous sentence:—

“If the compiler of these volumes had been properly sensible of the value of time, and the relation which the employment of it bears to his eternal state, we should not have had to present our readers with the pitiable spectacle of a man advanced in years consuming the embers of vitality in making a complete verbal Index to the Plays of Shakspeare.”

After acknowledging the genius of Shakspeare, the Reviewer observes, “He has been called, and justly too, the ‘Poet of Nature.’ A slight acquaintance with the religion of the Bible will show that it is of human nature in its worst shape, deformed by the basest passions, and agitated by the most vicious propensities, that the poet became the priest; and the incense offered at the altar of his goddess will spread its poisonous fumes over the hearts of his countrymen, till the memory of his works is extinct. Thousands of unhappy spirits, and thousands yet to increase their number, will everlastingly look back with unutterable anguish on the nights and days in which the plays of Shakspeare ministered to their guilty delights.”—The Reviewer farther complains of the inscription on Garrick's tomb (which is absurd enough, though on far different grounds)—as “the absurd and impious epitaph upon the tablet raised to *one of the miserable retailers of his impurities!*” “We commiserate,” conti-

But its conductors have since changed, or have grown wiser. Their Reviews of poetry have been, perhaps, on the whole, in the purest and the gentlest spirit of any which have been written in this age of criticism. Without resigning their doctrines, they have softened and humanized those who profess them, and have made their system of religion look smilingly, while they have striven to preserve it unspotted from the world. If occasionally they introduce their pious feelings where we regard them as misplaced, we may smile, but not in scorn.* Their zeal is better than heartless indif-

ferences the critic, "the heart of the man who can read the following lines without indignation:—

' And till eternity, with power sublime,
Shall mark the mortal hour of hoary time,
Shakspeare and Garrick, like twin stars, shall shine,
And each irradiate with a beam divine.'

"*Par nobile fratrum!* Your fame *shall* last during the empire of vice and misery, in the extension of which you have *acted* so great a part! We make no apology for our sentiments, unfashionable as they are. Feeling the importance of the condition of man as a moral agent, accountable not merely for the direct effects, but also for the remotest influence of his actions, *while we execrate the names, we cannot but shudder at the state of those who have opened fountains of impurity at which fashion leads its successive generations greedily to drink.*"—Merciful Heaven!

* We will give an instance of this—with a view to exhibit the peculiarities into which exclusive feelings lead; for observation, not for derision. In a very beautiful article on Wordsworth's Excursion, the critic notices a stanza, among several, on the death of Fox, where the poet—evidently not referring to the questions of immortality and judgment, but to the deprivations sustained by the world in the loss of the objects of its admiration—exclaims,

" A power is passing from the earth
To breathless nature's vast abyss;
But when the mighty pass away,
What is it more than this,
That man, who is from God sent forth,
Doth yet to God return?
Such ebb and flow will ever be,
Then wherefore shall we mourn?"

On which the Reviewer observes; "The question in the last two lines needs no answer: to that in the four preceding ones we must reply distinctly, 'It is appointed to men once to die, but *after* this the JUDGMENT.'"—Heb. ix. v. 27.

ference—their honest denunciations are not like the sneers of envy or the heartless jests which a mere desire of applause inspires. It is something to have real principle in times like these—a sense of things beyond our frail nature—even where the feeling of the eternal is saddened by too harsh and exclusive views of God, and of his children: for, as observed by one of our old poets,

—“ Unless above himself he can
Erect himself, how poor a thing is man! ”*

The *British Critic* is a highly respectable work, which does not require our praise, or offer any marks for our censure. It is, in a great measure, devoted to the interests of the church and of her ministers. It has sometimes shown a little sourness in its controversial discussions—but this is very different, indeed, from using cold sneers against unopposing authors. Its articles of criticism on poetry—if not adorned by any singular felicity of expression—have often been, of late, at once clear-sighted and gentle.

The *Edinburgh Monthly Review* is, on the whole, one of the ablest and fairest of the Monthly Reviews, though somewhat disproportionably filled with disquisitions on matters of state policy.

Few literary changes within the late changeful years have been more remarkable than the alteration in the style and spirit of the magazines. Time was when their modest ambition reached only to the reputation of being the “abstracts and brief chronicles” of passing events—when they were well pleased to afford vent to the sighs of a poetical lover, or to give light fluttering for a month to an epigram on a lady’s fan—when a circumstantial account of a murder, or an authentic description of a birth-day dress, or the nice development of a family receipt, communicated, in their pages, to maiden ladies of a certain age an incalculable pleasure—and when the learned decyphering of an inscription on some rusty coin sufficed to give them a venerableness in the eyes of the old. If they then ever aspired to criticism, it was in mere kindness—to give a friendly greeting to the young ad-

* Daniel.

venturer, and afford him a taste of unmingled pleasure at the entrance of his perilous journey. Now they are full of wit, satire, and pungent remark—touching familiarly on the profoundest questions of philosophy as on the lightest varieties of manners—sometimes overthrowing a system with a joke, and destroying a reputation in the best humour in the world. One magazine—the *Gentleman's*—almost alone retains “the homely beauty of the good old cause,” in pristine simplicity of style. This periodical work is worthy of its title. Its very dulness is agreeable to us. It is as destitute of sprightliness and of gall as in the first of its years. Its antiquarian disquisitions are very pleasant, giving us the feeling of sentiment without seeming to obtrude it on us, or to be designed for a display of the peculiar sensibility of their authors. We would not on any account lose the veteran Mr. Urban—though he will not, of course, suffice as a substitute for his juvenile competitors—but we heartily wish that he may go flourishing on in his green old age and honest self-complacency, to tell old stories, and remind us of old times, undisturbed by his gamesome and ambitious progeny!

Yet we must turn from his gentle work to gaze on the bright Aurora Borealis, the new and ever-varying Northern Light—*Blackwood's Magazine*. We remember no work of which so much might be truly said, both in censure and in eulogy—no work, at some times so profound, and at others so trifling—one moment so instinct with noble indignation, the next so pitifully falling into the errors it had denounced—in one page breathing the deepest and the kindest spirit of criticism, in another condescending to give currency to the lowest calumnies. The air of young life—the exuberance both of talent and of animal spirits—which this work indicates, will excuse much of that wantonness which evidently arises from the fresh spirit of hope and of joy. But there are some of its excesses which nothing can palliate, which can be attributed to nothing but malignant passions, or to the baser desire of extending its sale. Less censurable, but scarcely less productive of unpleasant results, is its practice of dragging the peculiarities, the conversation, and domestic habits of distinguished individuals into public view, to gratify a diseased curiosity at the expense of men by whom its authors have been trusted. Such a course,

if largely followed would destroy all that is private and social in life, and leave us nothing but our public existence. How must the joyous intercourses of society be chilled, and the free unbosoming of the soul be checked, by the feeling that some one is present who will put down every look and word and tone in a note-book, and exhibit them to the common gaze! If the enshading sanctities of life are to be cut away as in Peter's Letters, or in the Letters from the Lakes—its joys will speedily perish. When they can no longer nestle in privacy, they will wither. We cannot however refuse to Blackwood's contributors the praise of great boldness in throwing away the external dignities of literature, and mingling their wit and eloquence and poetry with the familiarities of life, with an ease which nothing but the consciousness of great and genuine talent could inspire or justify. Most of their jests have, we think, been carried a little too far. The town begins to sicken of their pugilistic articles; to nauseate the blended language of Olympus and St. Giles's; to long for inspiration from a purer spring than Belsher's tap; and to desire sight of Apollo and the Muses in a brighter ring than that of Moulsey-hurst. We ought not to forget the debt which we owe to this magazine for infusing something of the finest and profoundest spirit of the German writers into our criticism, and for its "high and hearted" eulogies of the greatest, though not the most popular of our living poets.

We have thus impartially, we think, endeavoured to perform the delicate task of characterizing the principal contemporaries and rivals of the New Monthly Magazine;—of which our due regard to the Editor's modesty forbids us to speak.

ON THE GENIUS AND WRITINGS OF
WORDSWORTH.

[New Monthly Magazine.]

How charming is divine Philosophy !
Not harsh nor crabbed, as dull fools suppose,
But musical as is Apollo's lute!—*Milton.*

Blessings be on him and immortal praise,
Who gave us nobler loves and nobler cares,
The *Poet* who on earth hath made us heirs
Of truth and pure delight by heavenly lays!—*Wordsworth.*

OUR readers will be disappointed if they expect to find in this article any of the usual flippancies of criticism. Were we accustomed to employ them, its subject would utterly confound us. Strange is their infatuation who can fancy that the merits of a great poet are *subjected* to their decision, and that they have any authority to pass judicial censures, or confer beneficent praises, on one of the divinest of intellects ! We shall attempt to set forth the peculiar immunities and triumphs of Wordsworth's genius, not as critics, but as disciples. To him our eulogy is nothing. But we would fain induce our readers to follow us "where we have garnered up our hearts," and would endeavour to remove those influences by which malignity and prejudice have striven to deter them from seeking some of the holiest of those living springs of delight which poets have opened for their species.

A minute discussion of Wordsworth's *system* will not be necessary to our design. It is manifestly absurd to refer to it as a test of his poetical genius. When an author has given

numerous creations to the world, he has furnished positive evidence of the nature and extent of his powers, which must preclude the necessity of deducing an opinion of them from the truth or falsehood of his theories. One noble imagination—one profound and affecting sentiment—or one new gleam cast on the inmost recesses of the soul, is more than a sufficient compensation for a thousand critical errors. False doctrines of taste can endure only for a little season, but the productions of genius are “for all time.” Its discoveries cannot be lost—its images will not perish—its most delicate influences cannot be dissipated by the changes of times and of seasons. It may be a curious and interesting question, whether a poet laboriously builds up his fame with purpose and judgment, or, as has most falsely been said of Shakespeare, “grows immortal in his own despite;” but it cannot affect his highest claims to the gratitude and admiration of the world. If Milton preferred *Paradise Regained* to *Paradise Lost*, does that strange mistake detract from our revering love? What would be our feeling towards critics, who should venture to allude to it as a proof that his works were unworthy of perusal, and decline an examination of those works themselves on the ground that his perverse taste sufficiently proved his want of genius? Yet this is the mode by which popular Reviewers have attempted to depreciate Wordsworth—they have argued from his theories to his poetry, instead of examining the poetry itself—as if their reasoning was better than the fact in question, or as if one eternal image set up in the stateliest region of poesy, had not value to outweigh all the truths of criticism, or to atone for all its errors?”

Not only have Wordsworth's merits been improperly rested on his system, but that system itself has been misrepresented with no common baseness. From some of the attacks directed against it, a reader might infer that it recommended the choice of the meanest subjects, and their treatment in the meanest way; and that it not only represented poetry as fitly employed on things in themselves low and trivial, but that it forbad the clustering and delicate fancies about them, or the shedding on them any reconciling and softening lustre. Multitudes, indeed, have wondered as they read, not only that any persons should be deluded by its

perverse insipidities, but that critics should waste their ridicule on an author who resigned at once all pretensions to the poetic art. In reality, this calumniated system has only reference to the diction, and to the subjects of poetry. It has merely taught, that the *diction* of poetry is not different from that of prose, and suggested that themes hitherto little dwelt on, were not unsuited to the bard's divinest uses. Let us briefly examine what ground of offence there is in the assertion or application of these positions.

Some have supposed that by rejecting a diction as peculiar to poetry, Wordsworth denied to it those qualities which are its essence, and those "harmonious numbers" which its thoughts "voluntarily move." Were his language equivocal, which it is not, the slightest glance at his works would show that he could have no design to exclude from it the stateliest imaginings, the most felicitous allusions, or the choicest and most varied music. He objected only to a peculiar phraseology—a certain hacknied strain of inversion—which had been set up as distinguishing poetry from prose, and which, he contended, was equally false in either. What is there of pernicious heresy in this, unless we make the crafty politician's doctrine, that speech was given to man to conceal his thoughts, the great principle of poetry? If words are fitly combined only to convey ideas to the mind, each word having a fixed meaning in itself, no different mode of collocation can be requisite when the noblest sentiment is to be embodied, from that which is proper when the driest fact is to be asserted. Each term employed by a poet has as determinate an office—as clearly means one thing as distinguished from all others—as a mathematician's scientific phrases. If a poet wishes lucidly to convey a grand picture to the mind, there can be no reason why he should resort to another mode of speech than that which he would employ in delivering the plainest narrative. He will, of course, use other and probably more beautiful words, because they properly belong to his subject; but he will not use any different order in their arrangement, because in both cases his immediate object is the same—the clear communication of his own idea to the mind of his reader. And this is true not only of the chief object of the passage, but of every hinted allusion, or nice shade of feeling, which may adorn it. If by "poetic diction" is in-

tended the vivid expression of poetic thoughts, to annihilate it, is to annihilate poetry; but if it means certain ornamental phrases and forms of language not necessary to such expression, it is, at best, but a splendid error. Felicity of language can never be other than the distinct expression of felicitous thought. The only art of diction in poetry, as in prose, is the nice bodying forth of each delicate vibration of the feelings, and each soft shade of the images, in words which at once make us conscious of their most transient beauty. At all events, there was surely no offence in an individual's rejecting the aid of a style regarded as poetic, and relying for his fame on the naked majesty of his conceptions. The triumph is more signal when the Poet uses language as a mirror, clear, and itself invisible, to reflect his creations in their native hues,—than when he employs it as a stained and fallacious medium to exhibit its own varieties of tint, and to show the objects which it partially reveals in its own prismatic colouring.

But it is said that the subjects of Wordsworth's poetry are not in themselves so lofty as those which his noblest predecessors have chosen. If this be true, and he has yet succeeded in discovering within them poetical affinities, or in shedding on them a new consecration, he does not surely deserve ill of his species. He has left all our old objects of veneration uninjured, and has enabled us to recognise new ones in the peaceful and familiar courses of our being. The question is not whether there are more august themes than those which he has treated, but whether these last have any interest, as seen in the light which he has cast around them. If they have, the benefits which he has conferred on humanity are more signal, and the triumph of his own powers is more undivided and more pure, than if he had treated on subjects which we have been accustomed to revere. We are more indebted to one who opens to us a new and secluded pathway in the regions of fantasy with its own verdant inequalities and delicate overshadowings of foliage, than if he had stepped majestically in the broad and beaten highway to swell the triumphant procession of laurelled bards. Is it matter of accusation that a poet has opened visions of glory about the ordinary walks of life—that he has linked holiest associations to things which hitherto have been regarded without emotion

—that he has made beauty “a simple product of the common day?” Shall he be denied the poetic faculty who without the attractions of story—without the blandishments of diction—without even the aid of those associations which have encrusted themselves around the oldest themes of the poet, has for many years excited the animosities of the most popular critics, and mingled the love and admiration of his genius with the life-blood of hearts neither unreflecting nor ungentle?

But most of the subjects of Mr. Wordsworth, though not arrayed in any adventitious pomp, have a real and innate grandeur. True it is, that he moves not among the regalities, but among the humanities of his art. True it is, that his poetry does not “make its bed and procreant cradle” in the “jutting, frieze, cornice, or architrave” of the glorious edifices of human power. The universe, in its naked majesty, and man in the plain dignity of his nature, are his favourite themes. And is there no might, no glory, no sanctity in these? Earth has her own venerablenesses—her awful forests, which have darkened her hills for ages with tremendous gloom; her mysterious springs pouring out everlasting waters from unsearchable recesses; her wrecks of elemental contests; her jagged rocks, monumental of an earlier world. The lowliest of her beauties has an antiquity beyond that of the pyramids. The evening breeze has the old sweetness which it shed over the fields of Canaan, when Isaac went out to meditate. The Nile swells with its rich waters towards the bul-rushes of Egypt, as when the infant Moses nestled among them, watched by the sisterly love of Miriam. Zion’s hill has not passed away with its temple, nor lost its sanctity amidst the tumultuous changes around it, nor even by the accomplishment of that awful religion of types and symbols which once was enthroned on its steeps. The sun to which the poet turns his eye is the same which shone over Thermopylæ; and the wind to which he listens swept over Salamis, and scattered the armaments of Xerxes. Is a poet utterly deprived of fitting themes, to whom ocean, earth, and sky, are open—who has an eye for the most evanescent of nature’s hues, and the most ethereal of her graces—who can “live in the rainbow and play in the plighted clouds,” or send into our hearts the awful loneliness of re-

gions "consecrate to eldest time?" Is there nothing in man, considered abstractedly from the distinctions of this world—nothing in a being who is in the infancy of an immortal life—who is lackeyed by "a thousand liveried angels"—who is even "splendid in ashes and pompous in the grave"—to awaken ideas of permanence, solemnity, and grandeur? Are there no themes sufficiently exalted for poetry in the midst of death and of life—in the desires and hopes which have their resting-place near the throne of the Eternal—in affections, strange and wondrous in their working, and unconquerable by time, or anguish, or destiny? How little comparatively of allusion is there even in Shakspeare, whose genius will not be regarded as rigid or austere, to other venerablenesses than those of the creation, and to qualities less common than the human heart! The very luxuries which surround his lovers—the pensive sweetnesss which steal away the sting from his saddest catastrophes—are drawn from man's universal immunities, and the eldest sympathies of the universe. The divinity which "hedges his kings" is only humanity's finer essence. Even his Lear is great only in intellectual might and in the terrible strangeness of his afflictions. While invested with the pomp and circumstance of his station, he is froward, impatient, thankless—less than a child in his liberality and in his resentments; but when he is cast abroad to seek a lodging with the owl and to endure the fury of the elements, and is only a poor and despised old man, the exterior crust which a life of prosperity had hardened over his soul is broken up by the violence of his sorrows, his powers expand within his worn and wasted frame, his spirit awakens in its long-forgotten strength, and even in the wanderings of distraction gives hints of the profoundest philosophy, and manifests a real kindness of nature—a sweet and most affecting courtesy—of which there was no vestige in the days of his pride. The regality of Richard lies not in "compliment extern"—the philosophy of Hamlet has a princeliness above that of his rank—and the beauties of Imogen are shed into her soul only by the selectest influences of creation.

The objects which have been usually regarded as the most poetical, derive from the soul itself the far larger share of their poetical qualities. All their power to elevate, to delight,

or to awe us, which does not arise from mere form, colour, and proportion, is manifestly drawn from the instincts common to the species. The affections have first consecrated all that they revere. "Cornice, frieze, jutting, or architrave," are fit nestling-places for poetry, chiefly as they are the symbols of feelings of grandeur and duration in the hearts of the beholders. A poet then who seeks at once for beauty and sublimity in their native home of the human soul—who resolves "*non sectari rivulos sed petere fontes*"—can hardly be accused with justice of rejecting the themes most worthy of a bard. His office is, indeed, more arduous than if he selected those subjects about which hallowing associations have long clustered, and which other poets have already rendered sacred. But if he can discover new depths of affection in the soul—or throw new tinges of loveliness on objects hitherto common, he ought not to be despised in proportion to the severity of the work, and the absence of extrinsic aid! Wordsworth's persons are not invested with antique robes, nor clad in the symbols of worldly pomp, but they are "apparelled in celestial light." By his power "the bare earth and mountains bare" are covered with an imaginative radiance more holy than that which old Greek poets shed over Olympus. The world, as consecrated by his poetic wisdom, is an enchanted scene—redolent with sweet humanity, and vocal with "echoes from beyond the grave."

We shall now attempt to express the reasons for our belief in Wordsworth's genius, by first giving a few illustrations of his chief faculties, and then considering them in their application to the uses of philosophical poetry.

We allude first to the descriptive faculty, because though not the least popular, it is the lowest which Wordsworth possesses. He shares it with many others, though few, we think, enjoy it in so eminent a degree. It is difficult, indeed, to select passages from his works which are merely descriptive; but those which approach nearest to portraiture, and are least imbued with fantasy, are master-pieces in their kind. Take, for example, the following picture of masses of vapour receding among the steeps and summits of the mountains, after a storm, beneath an azure sky; the earlier part of which seem almost like another glimpse of Milton's heaven;

and the conclusion of which impresses us solemnly with the most awful visions of Hebrew prophecy :

—“ A step,
 A single step which freed me from the skirts
 Of the blind vapour, opened to my view
 Glory beyond all glory ever seen
 By waking sense or by the dreaming soul—
 The appearance instantaneously disclosed,
 Was of a mighty city—boldly say
 A wilderness of building, sinking far
 And self-withdrawn into a wondrous depth
 Far sinking into splendour—without end !
 Fabric it seemed of diamond and of gold,
 With alabaster domes and silver spires ;
 And blazing terrace upon terrace high
 Uplifted: here serene pavilions bright
 In avenues disposed; there towers begirt
 With battlements that on their restless fronts
 Bore stars, illumination of all gems!
 O 'twas an unimaginable sight;
 Clouds, mists, streams, watery rocks, and emerald turf,
 Clouds of all tincture, rocks and sapphire sky,
 Confused, commingled, mutually inflamed,
 Molten together, and composing thus,
 Each lost in each, that marvellous array
 Of temple, palace, citadel, and huge
 Fantastic pomp of structure without name,
 In fleecy folds voluminous enwrapped.
 Right in the midst, where interspace appeared
 Of open court, an object like a throne
 Beneath a shining canopy of state
 Stood fix'd; and fix'd resemblances were seen
 To implements of ordinary use,
 But vast in size, in substance glorified;
 Such as by Hebrew prophets were beheld
 In vision—forms uncouth of mightiest power,
 For admiration and mysterious awe!”

Excursion, B. II.

Contrast with this the delicate grace of the following picture, which represents the white doe of Rylstone—that most beautiful of mysteries—on her Sabbath visit to the grave of her sainted lady:—

“ Soft—the dusky trees between
 And down the path through the open green

Where is no living thing to be seen;
 And through yon gate-way where is found,
 Beneath the arch with ivy bound,
 Free entrance to the church-yard ground;
 And right across the verdant sod
 Towards the very house of God;
 —Comes gliding in with lovely gleam,
 Comes gliding in serene and slow,
 Soft and silent as a dream,
 A solitary Doe!
 White is she as lily in June;
 And beautiful as the silver moon,
 When out of sight the clouds are driven
 And she is left alone in heaven;
 Or like a ship some gentle day
 In sunshine sailing far away,
 A glittering ship, that hath the plain
 Of ocean for her own domain.

* * * *

What harmonious pensive changes
 Wait upon her as she ranges
 Round and through this pile of state,
 Overthrown and desolate!
 Now a step or two her way
 Is through space of open day,
 Where the enamour'd sunny light
 Brightens her that was so bright;
 Now doth a delicate shadow fall,
 Falls upon her like a breath,
 From some lofty arch or wall,
 As she passes underneath:
 Now some gloomy nook partakes
 Of the glory which she makes,—
 High-ribbed vault of stone, or cell
 With perfect cunning framed, as well
 Of stone and ivy, and the spread
 Of the elder's bushy head;
 Some jealous and forbidding cell,
 That doth the living stars repel,
 And where no flower hath leave to dwell.

* * * *

— Her's are eyes serenely bright,
 And on she moves—with pace how light!
 Nor spares to stoop her head, and taste
 The dewy turf, with flowers bestrown;
 And in this way she fares, till at last
 Beside the ridge of a grassy grave
 In quietness she lays her down;
 Gently as a weary wave

Sinks, when the summer breeze hath died,
 Against an anchor'd vessel's side;
 Even so, without distress, doth she
 Lie down in peace, and lovingly."

White Doe of Rylstone, Canto I.

What, as mere description, can be more masterly than the following picture of the mountain solitude, where a dog was found, after three months' watching by his master's body—though the touches which send the feeling of deep loneliness into the soul, and the bold imagination which represents the huge recess as visited by elemental presences, are produced by higher than descriptive powers?—

"It was a cove, a huge recess,
 That keeps till June December's snow;
 A lofty precipice in front,
 A silent tarn below!
 Far in the bosom of Helvellyn,
 Remote from public road or dwelling,
 Pathway, or cultivated land;
 From trace of human foot or hand.

There sometimes does a leaping fish
 Send through the Tarn a lonely cheer;
 The crags repeat the raven's croak
 In symphony austere;
 Thither the rain-bow comes, the cloud;
 And mists that spread the flying shroud,
 And sun-beams; and the sounding blast,
 That if it could, would hurry past,
 But that enormous barrier binds it fast."

We must abstain from farther examples of the descriptive faculty, and allude to that far higher gift which Wordsworth enjoys in his profound acquaintance with the sanctities of the soul. He does not make us feel the strength of the passions, by their violent contests in a transient storm, but the measureless depth of the affections when they are stillest and most holy. We often meet in his works with little passages in which we seem almost to contemplate the well-springs of pure emotion and gentle pathos, and to see the old clefts in the rock of humanity whence they arise. In these we may not rarely perceive the true elements of tales of the purest

sentiment and most genuine tragedies. No poet has done such justice to the depth and the fulness of maternal love. What, for instance, can be more tear-moving than these exclamations of a mother, who for seven years has heard no tidings of an only child, abandoning the false stay of a pride which ever does unholy violence to the sufferer?—

“ Neglect me ! no, I suffered long
 From that ill thought ; and, being blind,
 Said, ‘ Pride shall help me in my wrong ;
 Kind mother have I been, as kind
 As ever breathed : ’ and that is true ;
 I’ve wet my path with tears like dew,
 Weeping for him when no one knew.
 My son, if thou be humbled, poor,
 Hopeless of honour, or of gain,
 Oh ! do not dread thy mother’s door ;
 Think not of me with grief or pain :
 I now can see with better eyes ;
 And worldly grandeur I despise,
 And fortune with her gifts and lies.”

How grand and fearful are the following conjectures of her agony !

“ Perhaps some dungeon hears thee groan,
 Maim’d, mangled by inhuman men ;
 Or thou upon a desert thrown
 Inheritest the lion’s den ;
 Or hast been summon’d to the deep.
 Thou, thou and all thy mates, to keep,
 An incommunicable sleep.”

And how triumphant does the great instinct appear in its vanquishing even the dread of mortal chilliness—asking and looking for spectres—and concluding that their appearance is not possible, because they come not to its intense cravings:—

“ I look for ghosts ; but none will force
 Their way to me : ’tis falsely said
 That ever there was intercourse
 Between the living and the dead ;
 For surely then I should have sight
 Of him I wait for day and night,
 With love and longings infinite.”

Of the same class is the poem on the death of a noble youth, who fell in attempting to bound over a chasm of the Wharf, and left his mother childless.—What a volume of thought is there in the little stanzas which follows:—

“ If for a lover the lady wept,
 A solace she might borrow
 From death, and from the passion of death,—
 Old Wharf might heal her sorrow.

She weeps not for the wedding-day,
 Which was to be to-morrow :
 Her hope was a farther-looking hope,
 And her's is a mother's sorrow !”

Here we are made to feel not only the vastness of maternal affection, but its difference from that of lovers. The last, being a passion, has a tendency to grasp and cling to objects which may sustain it, and thus fixes even on those things which have swallowed its hopes, and draws them into its likeness. Death itself thus becomes a passion to one whom it has bereaved; or the waters which flowed over the object of once happy love, become a solace to the mourner, who nurses holy visions by their side. But an instinct which has none of that tendency to go beyond itself, when its only object is lost, has no earthly relief, but is left utterly desolate. The hope of a lover looks chiefly to a single point of time as its goal;—that of a mother is spread equally over existence, and when cut down, at once the blossoming expectations of a whole life are withered for ever.

Can any thing be more true or intense than the following description of remorse, rejecting the phantoms of superstitious horror as powerless, and representing lovely and uncomplaining forms of those whose memories the sufferer had dishonoured by his errors, casting their silent looks perpetually upon him:

——“ Feebly must they have felt
 Who, in old time, attired with snakes and whips
 The vengeful Furies. *Beautiful* regards
 Were turned on me—the face of her I loved ;
 The wife and mother pitifully fixing
 Tender reproaches, insupportable !”

We will give but one short passage more to show the depth of Wordsworth's insight into our nature—but it is a passage which we think unequalled in its kind in the compass of poetry. Never surely was such a glimpse of beatific vision opened amidst mortal affliction; such an elevation given to seeming weakness; such consolation ascribed to bereaved love by the very heightening of its own intensities. The poet contends, that those whom we regard as dying broken-hearted for the loss of friends, do not really perish through despair; but have such vivid prospects of heaven, and such a present sense that those who have been taken from them are waiting for them there, that they wear themselves away in longings after the reality, and so hasten to enjoy it:—

—“ Full oft the innocent sufferer sees
 Too clearly; feels too vividly; and longs
 To realize the vision with intense
 And over-constant yearning—there—there lies
 The excess by which the balance is destroy'd.
 Too, too contracted are these walls of flesh,
 This vital warmth too cold, these visual orbs,
 Though inconceivably endow'd, too dim
 For any passion of the soul that leads
 To ecstasy; and, all the crooked paths
 Of time and change disdaining, takes its course
 Along the line of limitless desires.”

But the imaginative faculty is that with which Wordsworth is most eminently gifted. As the term IMAGINATION is often very loosely employed, it will be necessary for us here to state as clearly as possible our idea of its meaning. In our sense, it is *that power by which the spiritualities of our nature and the sensible images derived from the material universe are commingled at the will of the possessor.* It has thus a two-fold operation—the bodying forth of feelings, sentiments, and ideas, in beautiful and majestic forms, and giving to them local habitations; and the informing the colours and the shapes of matter with the properties of the soul. The first of these workings of the faculty supplies the highest excellencies of the orator, and the philosophic bard. When Sophocles represents the eternal laws of morality as “produced in the pure regions of celestial air—having the

Olympian alone for their parent—as not subject to be touched by the decays of man's mortal nature, or to be shaded by oblivion—for the divinity is mighty within them, and waxes not old:”* it is this which half gives to them a majestic personality, and dimly figures out their attributes. By the same process, the imaginative faculty, aiming at results less sublime but more definite and complete, gave individual shape to loves, graces, and affections, and endowed them with the breath of life. By this process, it shades over the sorrows which it describes by the beauties and the graces of nature, and tinges with gentle colouring the very language of affliction. In the second mode of its operation, on the other hand, it moves over the universe like the spirit of God on the face of the waters, and peoples it with glorious shapes, as in the Greek mythology, or sheds on it a consecrating radiance, and imparts to it an intense sympathy, as in the poems of these more reflective days. Although a harmonizing faculty, it can by the law of its essence only act on things which have an inherent likeness. It brings out the secret affinities of its objects; but it cannot combine things which nature has not prepared for union, because it does not add, but transfuses. Hence there can be no wild incongruity, no splendid confusion in its works. Those which are commonly regarded as its productions in the metaphorical speeches of “Irish eloquence,” are their very reverse, and may serve by contrast to explain its realities. The highest and purest of its efforts are when the intensest elements of the human soul are mingled inseparably with the vastest majesties of the universe; as where Lear identifies his age with that of the heavens, and calls on them to avenge his wrongs by their community

* This passage—one of the noblest instances of the moral sublime—is from the Theban Œdipus, where it is uttered by the Chorus on some of the profane scoffs of the fated Iocasta :

Νομοι

Ψυψιποδες γ' εραναν δ' αιθερα
 Τεκναθεντες' ων 'Ολυμπος
 Παλιμρ' μονος, εδε νιν θναλα
 Φυσις ανεραν ετικλεν, εδε
 Μη ποτε λαθα κατακοιμασει.
 Μεγας εν τατοις θεος,
 Ουδε γηρασαι.

of lot; and where Timon "fixes his everlasting mansion upon the beached shore of the salt flood," that "once a day with its embossed froth the turbulent surge may cover him," scorning human tears, but desiring the vast ocean for his eternal mourner!

Of this transfusing and reconciling faculty—whether its office be to "cloath upon," or to spiritualize—Mr. Wordsworth is, in the highest degree, master. Of this, abundant proofs will be found in the latter portion of this article; at present we will only give a few examples. The first of these is one of the grandest instances of noble daring, completely successful, which poetry exhibits. After a magnificent picture of a single yew-tree, and a fine allusion to its readiness to furnish spears for old battles, the poet proceeds:

——— "But worthier still of note
 Are those fraternal four of Borrowdale,
 Join'd in one solemn and capacious grove;
 Huge trunks!—and each particular trunk a growth
 Of intertwined fibres serpentine,
 Upcoiling, and inveterately convolved,—
Not uninformed by fantasy and looks
That threaten the profane;—a pillar'd shade
 Upon whose grassless floor of red-brown hue,
 By sheddings from the *pining* umbrage tinged
 Perennially—beneath whose sable roof
 Of boughs, as if for *festal purpose* deck'd
 By *unrejoicing berries*, ghostly shapes
 May meet at noon-tide—*Fear* and *trembling Hope*,
Silence and *Foresight*—*Death* the *Skeleton*
 And *Time* the *Shadow*—there to celebrate,
 As in a natural temple scatter'd o'er
 With altars undisturb'd of mossy stone,
 United worship; or in mute repose
 To lie, and listen to the mountain flood
 Murmuring from Glamara's inmost caves."

Let the reader, when that first glow of intuitive admiration which this passage cannot fail to inspire is past, look back on the exquisite gradations by which it naturally proceeds from mere description to the sublime personification of the most awful abstractions, and the union of their fearful shapes in strange worship, or in listening to the deepest of nature's voices. The first lines—interspersed indeed with

epithets drawn from the operations of mind, and therefore giving to them an imaginative tinge—are, for the most part, a mere picture of the august brotherhood of trees, though their very sound is in more august accordance with their theme than most of the examples usually produced of “echoes to the sense.” Having completely set before us the image of the scene, the poet begins that enchantment by which it is to be converted into a fitting temple for the noon-tide spectres of Death and Time, by the general intimation that it is “not uninformed by fantasy and looks that threaten the profane”—then by the mere epithet *pillared* gives us the more particular feeling of a fane—then, by reference to the actual circumstances of the grassless floor of red-brown hue, preserves to us the peculiar features of the scene which thus he is hallowing—and at last gives to the roof and its berries a strange air of unrejoicing festivity—until we are prepared for the introduction of the phantasms, and feel that the scene could be fitted to no less tremendous a conclave. The place, without losing one of its individual features, is decked for the reception of these noon-tide shades, and we are prepared to muse on them with unshrinking eyes. How by a less adventurous but not less delightful process, does the poet impart to an evening scene on the Thames, at Richmond, the serenity of his own heart, and tinge it with softest and saddest hues of the fancy and the affections! The verses have all the richness of Collins, to whom they allude, and breathe a more profound and universal sentiment than is found in his sky-tinctured poetry.

“How richly glows the water’s breast .
 Before us tinged with evening hues,
 While, facing thus the crimson west,
 The boat her silent course pursues!
 And see how dark the backward stream!
 A little moment past so smiling!
 And still perchance, with faithless gleam,
 Some other loiterer beguiling.

Such views the youthful bard allure ;
 But, heedless of the following gloom,
 He deems their colours shall endure
 Till peace go with him to the tomb.

And let him nurse his fond deceit,
 And what if he must die in sorrow !
 Who would not cherish dreams so sweet,
 Though grief and pain may come to-morrow ?

Glide gently thus for ever glide,
 O Thames ! that other bards may see
 As lovely visions by thy side
 As now, fair river ! come to me.
 O glide, fair stream ! for ever so,
 Thy quiet soul on all bestowing,
 Till all our minds for ever flow,
 As thy deep waters now are flowing.

Vain thought !—Yet be as now thou art,
 That in thy waters may be seen
 The image of a poet's heart,
 How bright, how solemn, how serene !

The following delicious sonnet, inspired by the same scene, is one of the latest effusions of its author. We do not here quote it on account of its allusion to one of the most delightful of poets—nor of the fine unbroken ligament by which the harmony listened to by the later bard is connected with that which the earlier drank in, by the lineage of the songsters who keep up the old ravishment—but of that imaginative power, by which a sacredness is imparted to the place and to the birds, as though they performed unresting worship in the most glorious of cathedrals.

“Fame tells of groves from England far away—*
 Groves that inspire the nightingale to trill
 And modulate, with subtle reach of skill
 Elsewhere unmatched, her ever-varying lay ;
 Such bold report I venture to gainsay :
 For I have heard the *choir* of Richmond-hill
Chaunting with *indefatigable* bill ;
 While I bethought me of a distant day ;
 When, haply under shade of that same wood,
 And scarcely conscious of the dashing oars
 Plied steadily between those willowy shores
 The sweet-soul'd Poet of the Seasons stood—
 Listening, and listening long, in rapturous mood,
 Ye *heavenly* birds ! to your progenitors.”

The following “Thought of a Briton on the subjugation of

* Wallachia is the country alluded to.

Switzerland," has an elemental grandeur imbued with the intensest sentiment, which places it among the highest efforts of the imaginative faculty.

“ Two voices are there ; one is one of the sea,
 One of the mountains ; each a mighty voice :
 In both from age to age thou didst rejoice,
 They were thy chosen music, Liberty !
 There came a tyrant, and with holy glee
 Thou fought'st against him ; but hast vainly striven,
 Thou from thine Alpine holds at length are driven,
 Where not a torrent murmurs heard by thee.
 Of one deep bliss thine ear hath been bereft ;
 Then cleave, O cleave, to that which still is left ;
 For, high-soul'd maid, what sorrow would it be,
 That mountain-floods should thunder as before,
 And ocean bellow from his rocky shore,
 And neither awful voice be heard by thee ! ”

We have thus feebly attempted to give some glimpse into the essence of Wordsworth's powers—of his skill in delineating the forms of creation—of his insight into the spirit of man—and of his imaginative faculty. How he has applied these gifts to philosophical poetry, and what are the results of his contemplation, by their aid, on the external universe—human life—individual character—the vicissitudes of individual fortune—society at large—and the prospects of the species—we shall next proceed more particularly to examine.

The spirit of contemplation influences and directs all Wordsworth's poetical faculties. He does not create a variety of individual forms to vivify them with the Promethean fire of dramatic genius, and exhibit the living struggle of their passions and their affections in opposition to each other, or to destiny. “ The moving accident is not his trade.” He looks on humanity as from a more exalted sphere, though he feels his kindred with it while he gazes, and yearns over it with deepest sympathy. No poet of ancient or modern times has dared so entirely to repose on the mere strength of his own powers. Others, indeed, have given hints of the divinest truths, even amidst their wildest and most passionate effusions. The tragedies of Sophocles, for example, abound in moralities expressed with a grace and precision which often ally the sentiment to an image and almost define it to the senses. In Shakspeare the wisdom is as much

deeper as the passion is intenser; the minds of the characters, under the strongest excitements of love, hope, or agony, grow bright as well as warm, and in their fervid career shed abroad sparkles of fire, which light up for an instant, the inmost sanctuaries of our nature. But few have ventured to send into the world essentially meditative poems, which none but the thoughtful can truly enjoy. Lucretius is the only writer of antiquity who has left a great work of this description; and he has unhappily lavished the boundless riches of genius on doctrines which are in direct opposition to the spirit of poetry. An apostle of a more genial faith, Wordsworth, stands pre-eminently—almost alone—a divine philosopher among the poets. It has been his singular lot, in this late age of the world, to draw little from those sources of interest which incident and situation supply—and to rest his claim to the gratitude and admiration of the people on his majestic contemplations of man and the universe.

The philosophical poetry of Wordsworth is not more distinct from the dramatic, or the epic, than from the merely didactic and moral. He has thrown into it as much of profound affection, as much of ravishing loveliness, as much of delicate fantasy, as adorn the most romantic tales, or the most passionate tragedies. If he sees all things “far as angel’s ken,” he regards them with human love. His imagination is never obscured amidst his reasonings, but is ever active to embody the beautiful and the pure, and to present to us the most august moralities in “clear dream and solemn vision.” Instead of reaching sublime conclusions by a painful and elaborate process, he discloses them by a single touch, he fixes them on our hearts for ever. So intense are his perceptions of moral beauty, that he feels the spirit of good however deeply hidden, and opens to our view the secret springs of love and of joy, where all has appeared barren to the ungifted observer. He can trace, prolong, and renew within us, those mysterious risings of delight in the soul which “may make a chysome child to smile,” and which, when half-experienced at long intervals in riper age, are to us the assurances of a better life. He follows with the nice touch of unerring sympathy all the most subtle workings of the spirit of good, as it makes its little sanctuaries in hearts unconscious of its presence, and blends its influences unheeded with ordinary thoughts, hopes, and sorrows. The

old prerogatives of humanity, which long usage has made appear common, put on their own air of grandeur while he teaches us to revere them. When we first read his poetry, we look on all the mysteries of our being with a new reverence, and feel like children who, having been brought up in some deserted palace, learn for the first time the regality of their home—understand a venerableness in the faded escutcheons with which they were accustomed to play—and feel the figures on the stained windows, or on the decaying tapestry, which were only grotesque before speaking to their hearts in ancestral voices.

The consecration which Wordsworth has shed over the external world is in a great measure peculiar to his genius. In the Hebrew poetry there was no trace of particular description—but general images, such as of tall cedars, of green pastures, or of still waters, were alone permitted to aid the affections of the devout worshipper. The feeling of the vast and indistinct prevailed; for all in religion was symbolical and mysterious, and pointed to “temples not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” In the exquisite master-pieces of Grecian inspiration, free nature’s grace was almost excluded by the opposite tendency to admire only the definite and the palpable. Hence, the pictures of nymphs, satyrs, and deities, were perpetually substituted for views of the magnificence of earth and heaven. In the romantic poetry of modern times, the open face of nature has again been permitted to smile on us, and its freshness to glide into our souls. Nor has there been wanting “craft of delicate spirits” to shed lovelier tinges of the imagination on all its scenes—to scatter among them classical images like Ionic temples among the fair glades and deep woods of some rich domain—to call dainty groups of fairies to hold their revellings upon the velvet turf—or afford glimpses of angel wings floating at eventide in the golden perspective. But the imagination of Wordsworth has given to the external universe a charm which has never else, extensively at least, been shed over it. He has not personified the glorious objects of creation—nor peopled them with beautiful and majestic shapes—but, without depriving them of their own reality, has imparted to them a life which makes them objects of affection and reverence. He enables us at once to enjoy the contemplation of their colours and forms, and to love them as human friends.

He consecrates earth by the mere influences of sentiment and thought, and renders its scenes as enchanted as though he had filled them with Oriental wonders. Touched by him, the hills, the rocks, the hedge-rows, and the humblest flowers shine in a magic lustre "which never was by sea or land," and which yet is strangely familiar to our hearts. These are not hallowed by him with "angel visits," nor by the presence of fair and immortal shapes, but by the remembrances of early joy, by lingering gleams of a brightness which has passed away, and dawnings of a glory to be revealed in the fulness of time. The lowliest of nature's graces have power to move and to delight him. "The clouds are touched, and in their silent faces does he read unutterable love." He listens to the voice of the cuckoo in early spring, till he "begets again the golden time of his childhood," and till the world, which is "fit home" for that mysterious bird, appears "an airy unsubstantial place." At the root of some old thorn, or beneath the branches of some time-honoured tree, he opens the sources of delicious musing, and suggests the first hints which lead through a range of human thoughts to the glories of our final destiny. When we traverse with him the "bare earth and mountains bare," we feel that "the place whereon we are standing is holy ground;" the melancholy brook can touch our souls as truly as a tragic catastrophe; the splendours of the western sky give intimation of "a joy past joy;" and the meanest flowers, and scanty blades of grass, awaken within us hopes too rapturous for smiles, and "thoughts which do often lie too deep for tears."

To give all the instances of this sublime operation of the imaginative faculty in Wordsworth, would be to quote the far larger portion of his works. A few lines, however, from the poem composed on the Banks of the Wye, will give our readers a deep glimpse into the inmost heart of his poetry, and of his poetical system, on the communion of the soul of man with the spirit of the universe. In this rapturous effusion—in which, with a wise prodigality, he hints and intimates the profoundest of those feelings which vivify all he has created—he gives the following view of the progress of his sympathy with the external world:—

———"Nature then
 (The coarser pleasures of my boyish days
 13*

And their glad animal movements, all gone by)
 To me was all in all.—I cannot paint
 What then I was. The sounding cataract
 Haunted me like a passion: the tall rock,
 The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,
 Their colours and their forms, were then to me—
 An appetite: a feeling and a love,
 That had no need of a remoter charm
 By thought supplied, or any interest
 Unborrow'd from the eye. That time is past,
 And all its aching joys are now no more,
 And all its dizzy raptures. Not for this
 Faint I, nor mourn, nor murmur; other gifts
 Have follow'd, for such loss I would believe
 Abundant recompense. For I have learn'd
 To look on nature, not as in the hour
 Of thoughtless youth, but hearing oftentimes
 The still sad music of humanity,
 Not harsh, nor grating, though of ample power
 To chasten and subdue. And I have felt
 A spirit which disturbs me with the joy
 Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
 Of something far more deeply interfused,
 Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
 And the round ocean, and the living air,
 And the blue sky, and in the mind of mind:
 A motion and a spirit, that impels
 All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
 And rolls through all things."

There are none of the workings of our poet's imaginative faculty more wonderful in themselves, or more productive of high thoughts and intense sympathies, than those which have for their objects the grand abstractions of humanity—Life and Death, Childhood and Old Age. Every period of our being is to him not only filled with its own peculiar endearments and joys, but dignified by its own sanctities. The common forms of life assume a new venerableness when he touches them—for he makes us feel them in their connexion with our immortality—even as the uncouth vessels of the Jewish law appeared sublime to those who felt that they were dedicated to the immediate service of Heaven. He ever leaves us conscious that the existence on whose beginning he expatiates, will endure for ever. He traces out those of its fibres which are eternal in their essence. He discovers in every part of our earthly course manifold intimations that

these our human hearts will never die. Childhood is, to him not only the season of novelty, of innocence, of joyous spir-its, and of mounting hope—but of a dream-like glory which assures to us that this world is not our final home. Age to him, is not a descent into a dark valley, but a “final eminence,” where the wise may sit “in awful sovereignty” as on a high peak among the mountains in placid summer, and commune with Heaven, undisturbed by the lesser noises of the tumultuous world. One season of life is bound to another by “the natural piety” which the unchanging forms of nature preserve, and death comes at last over the deep and tranquil stream as it is about to emerge into a lovelier sunshine, as “a shadow thrown softly and lightly from a passing cloud.”

The Ode in which Wordsworth particularly develops the intimations of immortality to be found in the recollections of early childhood, is, to our feelings, the noblest piece of lyric poetry in the world. It was the first poem of its author which we read, and never shall we forget the sensations which it excited within us. We had heard the cold sneers attached to his name—we had glanced over criticisms, “lighter than vanity,” which represented him as an object for scorn “to point its slow unmoving finger at”—and here—in the works of this derided poet—we found a new vein of imaginative sentiment opened to us—sacred recollections brought back on our hearts with all the freshness of novelty, and all the venerableness of far-off time—the most mysterious of old sensations traced to a celestial origin—and the shadows cast over the opening of life from the realities of eternity renewed before us with a sense of their supernal causes! What a gift did we then inherit! To have the best and most imperishable of intellectual treasures—the mighty world of reminiscences of the days of infancy—set before us in a new and holier light; to find objects of deepest veneration where we had only been accustomed to love; to feel in all the touching mysteries of our past being the symbols and assurances of our immortal destiny! The poet has here spanned our mortal life as with a glorious rainbow, terminating on one side in infancy, and on the other in the realms of blessedness beyond the grave, and shedding even upon the middle of that course tints of unearthly colouring. The following is the view he has given of the fading glory of

childhood—drawn in part from Oriental fiction, but embodying the profoundest of elemental truths :—

“ Our birth is but a sleep, and a forgetting :
 The soul that rises with us, our life's star,
 Hath elsewhere known its setting,
 And cometh from afar ;
 Not in entire forgetfulness,
 And not in utter nakedness,
 But trailing clouds of glory do we come
 From God that is our home ;
 Heaven lies about us in our infancy !
 Shades of the prison-house begin to close
 Upon the growing Boy,
 But he beholds the light, and whence it flows,
 He sees it in his joy ;
 The Youth that daily farther from the east
 Must travel, still is Nature's priest,
 And by the vision splendid
 Is on his way attended ;
 At length the man perceives it die away,
 And fade into the light of common day !”

But the following is the noblest passage of the whole ; and such an outpouring of thought and feeling—such a piece of inspired philosophy—we do not believe exists elsewhere in human language :—

“ O joy ! that in our embers
 Is something that doth live,
 That nature yet remembers
 What was fugitive !
 The thought of our past years in me doth breed
 Perpetual benedictions : not indeed
 For that which is most worthy to be blest ;
 Delight and liberty, the simple creed
 Of Childhood, whether fluttering or at rest,
 With new-born hope for ever in his breast :—
 Not for these I raise
 The song of thanks and praise ;
 But for those obstinate questionings
 Of sense and outward things,
 Fallings from us, vanishings ;
 Blank misgivings of a Creature
 Moving about in worlds not realiz'd,
 High instincts, before which our mortal Nature
 Did tremble like a guilty Thing surpris'd ;
 But for those first affections,
 Those shadowy recollections,
 Which, be they what they may,

Are yet the fountain light of all our day,
 Are yet a master light of all our seeing ;
 Uphold us, cherish us, and make
 Our noisy years seem moments in the being
 Of the eternal Silence : truths that wake,
 To perish never ;
 Which neither listlessness, nor mad endeavour,
 Nor Man nor Boy,
 Nor all that is at enmity with joy,
 Can utterly abolish or destroy !
 Hence, in a season of calm weather,
 Though inland far we be,
 Our Souls have sight of that immortal sea
 Which brought us hither,
 Can in a moment travel thither,
 And see the Children sport upon the shore,
 And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore."

After this rapturous flight the author thus leaves to repose on the quiet lap of humanity, and soothes us with a strain of such mingled solemnity and tenderness, as "might make angels weep :"

"What though the radiance which was once so bright,
 Be now forever taken from my sight,
 Though nothing can bring back the hour
 Of splendour in the grass, of glory in the flower ;
 We will grieve not, rather find
 Strength in what remains behind,
 In the primal sympathy
 Which having been, must ever be,
 In the soothing thoughts that spring
 Out of human suffering,
 In the faith that looks through death,
 In years that bring the philosophic mind.

And oh ye Fountains, Meadows, Hills, and Groves,
 Think not of any severing of our loves !
 Yet in my heart of hearts I feel your might ;
 I only have relinquish'd one delight
 To live beneath your more habitual sway.
 I love the Brooks which down their channels fret,
 Even more than when I tripp'd lightly as they ;
 The innocent brightness of a new-born Day
 Is lovely yet ;
 The Clouds that gather round the setting sun
 Do take a sober colouring from an eye

That hath kept watch o'er man's mortality ;
 Another race hath been, and other palms are won.
 Thanks to the human heart by which we live,
 Thanks to its tenderness, its joys, and fears,
 To me the meanest flower that blows can give
 Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears."

The genius of the poet, which thus dignifies and consecrates the abstractions of our nature, is scarcely less felicitous in its pictures of society at large, and in its philosophical delineations of the characters and fortunes of individual man. Seen through the holy medium of his imagination, all things appear "bright and solemn and serene"—the asperities of our earthly condition are softened away—and the most gentle and evanescent of its hues gleam and tremble over it. He delights to trace out those ties of sympathy by which the meanest of beings are connected with the general heart. He touches the delicate strings by which the great family of man are bound together, and thence draws forth sounds of choicest music. He makes us partake of those joys which are "spread through the earth to be caught in stray gifts by whoever will find" them—discloses the hidden wealth of the soul—finds beauty every where, and "good in every thing." He draws character with the softest pencil, and shades it with the pensive tints of gentlest thought. The pastoral of *The Brothers*—the story of Michael—and the histories in the *Excursion* which the priest gives while standing among the rustic graves of the church-yard, among the mountains, are full of exquisite portraits, touched and softened by a divine imagination which human love inspires. He rejoices also to exhibit that holy process by which the influences of creation are shed abroad in the heart, to excite, to mould, or to soften. We select the following stanzas from many passages of this kind of equal beauty, because in the fantasy of nature's making "a lady of her own," the object of the poet is necessarily developed with more singleness than where reference is incidentally made to the effect of scenery on the mind:—

"Three years she grew in sun and shower,
 Then Nature said, a lovelier flower
 On earth was never sown ;
 This child I to myself will take,
 She shall be mine, and I will make
 A lady of my own !

Myself will to the darling be
 Both law and impulse : and with me
 The girl, in rock and plain,
 In earth and heaven, in glade and bower,
 Shall feel an overseeing power,
 To kindle or restrain.

She shall be sportive as the fawn,
 That wild with glee across the lawn
 Or up the mountain springs ;
 And her's shall be the breathing balm,
 And her's the silence and the calm
 Of mute insensate things.

The floating clouds their state shall lend
 To her ; for her the willow bend ;
 Nor shall she fail to see
 Even in the motions of the storm
 Grace that shall mould the maiden's form
 By silent sympathy.

The stars of midnight shall be dear
 To her ; and she shall lean on air
 In many a secret place
 Where rivulets dance their wayward round,
 And beauty born of murmuring sound
 Shall pass into her face !”

But we must break off to give a passage in a bolder and most passionate strain, which represents the effect of the tropical grandeur and voluptuousness of nature on a wild and fiery spirit—at once awakening and half-redeeming its irregular desires. It is from the poem of “Ruth,”—a piece where the most profound of human affections is disclosed amidst the richest imagery, and incidents of wild romance are told with a Grecian purity of expression. The impulses of a beautiful and daring youth are thus represented as inspired by Indian scenery :

“ The wind, the tempest roaring high,
 The tumult of a tropic sky,
 Might well be dangerous food,
 For him, a youth to whom was given
 So much of earth, so much of heaven,
 And such impetuous blood.

Whatever in those climes he found
 Irregular in sight or sound,
 Did to his mind impart
 A kindred impulse, seem'd allied
 To his own powers, and justified
 The workings of his heart.

Nor less to feed voluptuous thought,
 The beauteous forms of Nature wrought,
 Fair trees and lovely flowers;
 The breezes their own languor lent;
 The stars had feelings which they sent
 Into those gorgeous bowers.

Yet in his worst pursuits, I ween
 That sometimes there did intervene
 Pure hopes of high intent;
 For passions link'd to forms as fair
 And stately, needs must have their share
 Of noble sentiment."

We can do little more than enumerate those pieces of narrative and character, which we esteem the best in their kind of our author's works. The old Cumberland Beggar is one of those which linger most tenderly on our memories. The poet here takes almost the lowliest of his species—an aged mendicant, one of the last of that class who made regular circuits amidst the cottages of the north—and after a vivid picture of his frame bent with years, of his slow motion and decayed senses, he asserts them not divorced from good—traces out the links which bind him to his fellows—and shows the benefit which even he can diffuse in his rounds, while he serves as a record to bind together past deeds and offices of charity—compels to acts of love by “the mild necessity of use” those whose hearts would otherwise harden—gives to the young “the first mild touch of sympathy and thought, in which they find their kindred with a world where want and sorrow are”—and enables even the poor to taste the joy of bestowing. This last blessing is thus set forth and illustrated by a precious example of self-denying goodness and cheerful hope, which is at once more tear-moving and more sublime than the finest things in Cowper:—

——“Man is dear to man; the poorest poor
 Long for some moments in a weary life

When they can know and feel that they have been,
 Themselves, the fathers and the dealers out
 Of some small blessings; have been kind to such
 As needed kindness, for this single cause,
 That we have all of us one human heart.
 —Such pleasure is to one kind being known,
 My neighbour, when with punctual care, each week
 Duly as Friday comes, though prest herself
 With her own wants, she from her chest of meal
 Takes one unsparing handful for the scrip
 Of this old mendicant, and, from her door
 Returning with invigorated heart,
 Sits by her fire, and builds her hope in Heaven.”

Then, in the Excursion, there is the story of the Ruined Cottage, with its admirable gradations, more painful than the pathetic narratives of its author usually are, yet not without redeeming traits of sweetness, and a reconciling spirit which takes away its sting. There, too, is the intense history of the Solitary's sorrows—there the story of the Hanoverian and the Jacobite, who learned to snatch a sympathy from their bitter disputings, grew old in controversy and in friendship, and were buried side by side—there the picture of Oswald, the gifted and generous and graceful hero of the mountain solitude, who was cut off in the blossom of his youth—there the record of that pleasurable sage, whose house death, after forty years of forbearance, visited with thronging summonses, and took off his family one after the other, “with intervals of peace,” till he too, with cheerful thoughts about him, was “overcome by unexpected sleep in one blest moment,” and as he lay on the “warm lap of his mother-earth,” “gathered to his fathers.” There are those fine vestiges, and yet finer traditions and conjectures, of the good knight Sir Alfred Irthing, the “mild-hearted champion” who had retired in Elizabeth's days to a retreat among the hills, and had drawn around him a kindred and a family. Of him nothing remained but a gentle fame in the hearts of the villagers, an uncouth monumental stone grafted on the church-walls, which the sagest antiquarian might muse over in vain, and his name engraven in a wreath or posy around three bells with which he had endowed the spire. “So,” exclaims the poet, in strains as touching and majestic as ever were breathed over the transitory grandeur of earth—

“So fails, so languishes, grows dim and dies,
 All that this world is proud of. From their spheres
 The stars of human glory are cast down ;
 Perish the roses, and the flowers of kings,
 Princes and emperors, and the crowns and palms
 Of all the mighty, withered, and consumed.”

In the Excursion, too, is the exquisite tale of Poor Ellen—a seduced and forsaken girl—from which we will give one affecting incident, scarcely to be matched, for truth and beauty, through the many sentimental poems and tales which have been founded on a similar wo :

“—Beside the cottage in which Ellen dwelt
 Stands a tall ash-tree ; to whose topmost twig
 A Thrush resorts, and annually chaunts,
 At morn and evening from that naked perch,
 While all the undergrove is thick with leaves,
 A time-beguiling ditty, for delight
 Of his fond partner, silent in the nest.
 —‘Ay why,’ said Ellen, sighing to herself,
 ‘Why do not words, and kiss, and solemn pledge ;
 And nature that is kind in Woman’s breast,
 And reason that in Man is wise and good,
 And fear of Him who is a righteous Judge,
 Why do not these prevail for human life,
 To keep two hearts together, that began
 Their spring-time with one love, and that have need
 Of mutual pity and forgiveness, sweet
 To grant, or be received, while that poor bird,
 —O come and hear him ! Thou who hast to me
 Been faithless, hear him, though a lowly creature,
 One of God’s simple children that yet know not
 The universal Parent, how he sings
 As if he wish’d the firmament of Heaven
 Should listen, and give back to him the voice
 Of his triumphant constancy and love ;
 The proclamation that he makes, how far
 His darkness doth transcend our fickle light !’

Such was the tender passage, not by me
 Repeated without loss of simple phrase,
 Which I perused, even as the words had been
 Committed by forsaken Ellen’s hand
 To the blank margin of a Valentine,
 Bedropp’d with tears.”

With these tear-moving expressions of ill-fated love, we may contrast the following rich picture of the affection in its early bloom, from the tale of Vandracour and Julia, which will show how delightedly the poet might have lingered in the luxuries of amatory song, had he not chosen rather to brood over the whole world of sentiment and passion:—

“ Arabian fiction never fill’d the world
With half the wonders that were wrought for him.
Earth breathed in one great presence of the spring ;
Life turn’d the meanest of her implements
Before his eyes to price above all gold ;
The house she dwelt in was a sainted shrine ;
Her chamber window did surpass in glory
The portal of the dawn ; all paradjse
Could, by the simple opening of a door,
Let itself in upon him ; pathways, walks,
Swarm’d with enchantment, till his spirit sank,
Surcharged, within him,—overblest to move
Beneath a sun that walks a weary world
To its dull round of ordinary cares ;
A man too happy for mortality.”

Perhaps the highest instance of Wordsworth’s imaginative faculty, exerted in a tale of human fortunes, is to be found in “The White Doe of Rylstone.” He has here succeeded in two distinct efforts, the results of which are yet in entire harmony. He has shown the gentle spirit of a high-born maiden gathering strength and purity from sorrow, and finally after the destruction of her family, and amidst the ruin of her paternal domains, consecrated by suffering. He has also here, by the introduction of that lovely wonder, the favourite doe of his heroine, at once linked the period of his narrative to that of its events, and softened down the saddest catastrophe and the most exquisite of mortal agonies. A gallant chieftain, one of the goodliest pillars of the olden time, falls, with eight of his sons, in a hopeless contest for the religion to which they were devoted—the ninth, who followed them unarmed, is slain while he strives to bear away, for their sake, the banner which he had abjured—the sole survivor, a helpless woman, is left to wander desolate about the silent halls and tangled glades, once witnesses of her joyous infancy—and yet all this variety of grief is rendered mild and soothing by the influences of the imagination of the poet.

The doe which first with its quiet sympathy excited relieving tears in its forsaken mistress, which followed her a gentle companion through all her mortal wanderings, and which years after made Sabbath visits to her grave, is like the spirit of nature personified to heal, to bless, and to elevate. All who have read the poem aright, will feel prepared for that apotheosis which the poet has reserved for this radiant being, and will recognise the imaginative truth of that bold figure, by which the decaying towers of Bolton are made to smile upon its form, and to attest its unearthly relations:—

“ There doth the gentle creature lie
 With these adversities unmoved;
 Calm spectacle, by earth and sky
 In their benignity approved!
 And aye, methinks, this hoary pile,
 Subdued by outrage and decay,
 Looks down upon her with a smile,
 A gracious smile, that seems to say,
 ‘ Thou art not a Child of Time,
 But daughter of the eternal Prime!’ ”

Although Wordsworth chiefly delights in these humanities of poetry, he has shown that he possesses feelings to appreciate and power to grasp the noblest of classic fictions. No one can read his *Dion*, his *Loadamia*, and the most majestic of his sonnets, without perceiving that he has power to endow the stateliest shapes of old mythology with new life, and to diffuse about them a new glory. Hear him, for example, breaking forth, with holy disdain of the worldly spirit of the time, into this sublime apostrophe:—

“ Great God! I'd rather be
 A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn:
 So might I, standing on some pleasant lee,
 Have glimpses which might make me less forlorn;
 Have sight of Proteus coming from the sea,
 Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn!”

But he has chosen rather to survey the majesties of Greece, with the eye of a philosopher as well as of a poet. He reviews them with emotions equally remote from pedantry and from intolerance—regarding not only the grace and the loveliness of their forms, but their symbolical meaning—

tracing them to their elements in the human soul, and bringing before us the eldest wisdom which was embodied in their shapes, and speedily forgotten by their worshippers. Thus, among "the palpable array of sense," does he discover hints of immortal life—thus does he transport us back more than twenty centuries—and enable us to enter into the most mysterious and far-reaching hopes of a Grecian votary:—

—“A *Spirit* hung,
 Beautiful region! o'er thy Towns and Farms,
 Statues, and Temples, and memorial Tombs;
 And emanations were perceived, and acts
 Of immortality, in Nature's course,
 Exemplified by mysteries, that were felt
 As bonds, on grave Philosopher imposed
 And armed Warrior; and in every grove,
 A gay or pensive tenderness prevail'd
 When piety more awful had relaxed.
 'Take, running River, take these locks of mine,'
 Thus would the votary say,—'this sever'd hair,
 My vow fulfilling, do I here present,
 Thankful for my beloved child's return.
 Thy banks, Cephisus, he again hath trod,
 Thy murmurs heard; and drunk the crystal lymph
 With which thou dost refresh the thirsty lip,
 And moisten all day long these flowery fields.'
 And doubtless, sometimes, when the hair was shed
 Upon the flowing stream, a thought arose
 Of life continuous, Being unimpair'd,
 That hath been, is, and where it was and is
 There shall be,—seen, and heard, and felt, and known,
 And recognised,—existence unexposed
 To the blind walk of mortal accident;
 From diminution free, and weakening age,
 While man grows old, and dwindles, and decays;
 And countless generations of mankind
 Depart: and leave no vestige where they trod.”

We must now bring this long article to a close—and yet how small a portion of our author's beauties have we even hinted! We have passed over the clear majesty of the poem of "Hart leap well"—the lyrical grandeur of the Feast of Brougham Castle—the masculine energy and delicate grace of the Sonnets which with the exception perhaps of one or two of Warton and of Milton far exceed all others in our language—"The Waggoner," that fine and hearty conces-

sion of a water-drinker to the joys of wine and the light-hearted folly which it inspires—and numbers of smaller poems and ballads, which to the superficial observer may seem only like woodland springs, but in which he who ponders intently will discern the breakings forth of an under-current of thought and feeling which is silently flowing beneath him. We trust, however, we have written or rather quoted enough to induce such of our readers as hitherto have despised the poet on the faith of base or ignorant criticism to read him for themselves, especially as by the recent appearance of the *Excursion* in octavo, and the arrangement of the minor poems in four small volumes, the whole of his poetical works are placed within their reach. If he has little popularity with the multitude, he is rewarded by the intense veneration and love of the finest spirits of the age. Not only Coleridge, Lloyd, Southey, Wilson, and Lamb—with whom his name has been usually connected—but almost all the living poets have paid eloquent homage to his genius. He is loved by Montgomery, Cornwall, and Rogers—revered by the author of *Waverley*—ridiculed and pillaged by Lord Byron! Jeffrey, if he begins an article on his greatest work with the pithy sentence "*this will never do,*" glows even while he criticizes, and before he closes, though he came like Balaam to curse, like him "blesses altogether." Innumerable essays, sermons, speeches, poems—even of those who profess to despise him—are tinged by his fancy and adorned by his expressions. And there are no small number of young hearts, which have not only been enriched but renovated by his poetry—which he has expanded, purified, and exalted—and to which he has given the means of high communion with the good and the pure throughout the universe. These, equal at least in number to the original lovers of Shakspeare or of Milton, will transmit his fame to kindred spirits, and whether it shall receive or be denied the honour of fashion, it will ever be cherished by the purest of earthly minds, and connected with the most majestic of nature's scenery.

Too many of our living poets have seemed to take pride in building their fame on the sands. They have chosen for their subjects the diseases of the heart—the sad anomalies of humanity—the turbulent and guilty passions which are but for a season. Their renown, therefore, must necessarily

decline as the species advances. Instead of tracing out the lineaments of the image of God indelibly impressed on the soul, they have painted the deformities which may obscure them for awhile but can never utterly destroy them. Vice, which is the accident of our nature, has been their theme instead of those affections which are its ground-work and essence. "Yet a little space, and that which men call evil is no more!" Yet a little space, and those wild emotions—those horrid deeds—those strange aberrations of the soul—on which some gifted bards have delighted to dwell, will fade away like the phantoms of a feverish dream. Then will poetry, like that of Wordsworth, which even now is the harbinger of a serener day, be felt and loved and held in undying honour. The genius of a poet who has chosen this high and pure career, too, will proceed in every stage of being, seeing that "it is a thing immortal as himself," and that it was ever inspired by affections which cannot die. The poet even in brighter worlds will feel, with inconceivable delight, the connexion between his earthly and celestial being—live along the golden lines of sentiment and thought back to the most delicious moments of his contemplations here—and rejoice in the recognition of those joys of which he had tastes and intimations on earth. Then shall he see the inmost soul of his poetry disclosed—grasp as assured realities the gorgeous visions of his infancy—feel "the burden of the mystery of all this unimaginable world," which were lightened to him here dissolved away—see the prophetic workings of his imagination realized—exult while "pain and anguish and the wormy grave," which here were to him "shapes of a dream," are utterly banished from the view—and listen to the full chorus of that universal harmony whose first notes he here delighted to awaken!

REVIEW OF "NORTH'S LIFE OF LORD GUILFORD."

[Retrospective Review.]

THIS old piece of legal biography, which has been lately republished, is one of the most delightful books in the world. Its charm does not consist in any marvellous incidents of Lord Guilford's life, or any peculiar interest attaching to his character, but in the unequalled naïveté of the writer—in the singular felicity with which he has thrown himself into his subject—and in his vivid delineations of all the great lawyers of his time. He was a younger brother of the Lord Keeper, to whose affection he was largely indebted, and from whom he appears to have been scarcely ever divided. His work, in nice minuteness of detail, and living picture of motive, almost equals the auto-biographies of Benevento Cellini, Rousseau, and Cibber. He seems to be almost as intensely conscious of all his brother's actions, and the movements of his mind, as they were of their own. All his ideas of human greatness and excellence appear taken from the man whom he celebrates. There never was a more liberal or gentle prostration of the spirit. He was evidently the most humane, the most kindly, and the most single-hearted, of flatterers. There is a beauty in his very cringing, beyond the independence of many. It is the most gentleman-like submission, the most graceful resignation of self, of which we have ever read. Hence, there is nothing of the vanity of authorship—no attempt to display his own powers—throughout the work. He never comes forward in the first person, except as a witness. Indeed, he usually speaks of himself as of another, as though he had half lost his personal

consciousness in the contemplation of his idol's virtues. The following passage, towards the conclusion, where he recounts the favours of Lord Guilford to a younger brother, and at last, in the fullness of his heart, discloses, by a little quotation, that he is speaking of himself—this breaking from his usual modest narration into the only personal feeling he seems to have cherished—is beautifully characteristic of the spirit which he brought to his work.

“ But I ought to come nearer home, and take an account of his benevolences to his paternal relations. His youngest brother (the honourable Roger North) was designed, by his father, for the civil law, as they call that professed at Doctors' Commons, upon a specious fancy to have a son of each faculty or employ used in England. But his lordship dissuaded him, and advised rather to have him put to the common law; for the other profession provided but for a few, and those not wonderful well; whereas, the common law was more certain, and, in that way, he himself might bring him forwards, and assist him. And so it was determined. His lordship procured for him a petit chamber, which cost his father £60, and there he was settled with a very scanty allowance; to which his lordship made a timely addition of his own money: more than all this, he took him almost constantly out with him to company and entertainments, and always paid his scot; and, when he was attorney general, let him into partnership in one of the offices under him; and when his lordship was treasurer, and his brother called to the bar, a perquisite chamber, worth £150 fell; and that he gave to his brother for a practising chamber, and took in lieu only that which he had used for his studies. When his lordship was chief justice, he gave him the countenance of practising under him, at *nisi prius*; and all the while his lordship was a house-keeper, his brother and servant were of his family at all meals. When the Temple was burnt, he fitted up a little room and study in his chambers in Serjeant's Inn, for his brother to manage his small affairs of law in, and lodged him in his house till the Temple was built, and he might securely lodge there. And his lordship was pleased with a back door in his own study, by which he could go in and out to his brother, to discourse of incidents; which way of life

delighted his lordship exceedingly. And, what was more extraordinary, he went with his lordship in his coach constantly, to, and from, the courts of *nisi prius*, at Guildhall and Westminster. And, after his lordship had the great seal, his brother's practice (being then made of the king's counsel, and coming within the bar) increased exceedingly, and, in about three years' time he acquired the better part he afterwards was possessed of. At that time, his lordship took his brother into his family, and a coach and servants assigned him out of his equipages; and all at rack and manger, requiring only £200 a year; which was a trifle, as the world went then. And it may truly be said, that this brother was a shadow to him, as if they had grown together. And, to show his lordship's tenderness, I add this instance of fact. Once he seemed more than ordinarily disposed to pensiveness, even to a degree of melancholy. His lordship never left pumping, till he found out the cause of it; and that was a reflection what should become of him, if he should lose this good brother, and be left alone to himself: the thought of which he could scarce bear; for he had no opinion of his own strength, to work his way through the world with tolerable success. Upon this his lordship, to set his brother's mind at ease, sold him an annuity of £200 a year, at an easy rate, upon condition to re-purchase it, at the same rate, when he was worth £5000. And this was all done accordingly.

“ O et præsidium et dulce decus meum.”

We will now conduct our readers through Lord Guilford's life—introducing as many of the nice peculiarities of his historian as our limits will allow—and will then give them one or two of the portraits with which the work is enriched—and add a word on the changes which have taken place in the legal profession, since the time when the originals “held the noisy tenour of their way” through its gradations.

The Hon. Francis North, afterwards Baron Guilford, was the third son of Dudley, Lord North, Baron of Kirtling, who deserved the filial duty of his children, by the veneration which he manifested towards his own father, beyond even

the strictness of those times; for, though he was an old man before his father died, he never sat or was covered in his presence unbidden. He sent his son, at an early age, to school, but was not very fortunate in his selection, for the master was a rigid presbyterian, and his wife a furious independent, who used "to instruct her babes in the gift of praying by the spirit, making them kneel by a bed-side and pray;" but as "this petit spark was too small for that posture, he was set upon the bed to kneel with his face to the pillow." This absurd treatment seems to have given the child an early disgust for those who were esteemed the fanatics, which never left him. He finished his scholastic education under a "cavalier master," with credit. After he left school, he became a fellow-commoner of St. John's College, Cambridge, where he improved greatly in solid learning, and acquired a knowledge of music, which he afterwards used as a frequent solace amidst the toils of his profession.

He next became a member of the Middle Temple, and occupied "a moiety of a petit chamber, which his father bought for him." Here he "used constantly commons in the hall at noons and nights," studied closely, and derived much benefit from the practice of putting cases, which was followed in the old temple cloisters by the students, and for the convenience of which they were rebuilt by Sir Christopher Wren in their present form. He, also, diligently common-placed the substance of his reading, having acquired a very small but legible hand—"for," as his biographer observes, "where contracting is the main business, it is not well to write, as the fashion then was, uncial or semi-uncial letters to look like pigs' ribs." In his studies, he was wont by turns to read the reports and institutes; "as, after a fullness of the reports in a morning, about noon, to take a repast in Stamford, Crompton, or the Lord Coke's Pleas of the Crown, and Jurisdiction of Courts, Manwood of the Forest Law, and Fitzherbert's *Natura Brevium*." He, also, "despatched the greatest part" of the year-books, beginning with the book, termed *Henry the Seventh*, from whence he regarded the common law derived "as from a copious fountain." While thus engaged, he did not altogether refuse recreation, but delighted in a small supper and a temperate glass with his friends in chambers, sometimes fancied "to go

about town and see trade-work, which is a very diverting and instructive entertainment," and visited every thing extraordinary in town, "as engines, shows, lectures, and even so low as to hear Hugh Peters preach!" The only obstacle to his legal success was his excessive bashfulness, which so oppressed him, that when he dined or supped in the hall of the Middle Temple, he would not walk in alone, but "used to stand dogging at the skreen till other company came, behind whom he might enter."

At the bar, he derived great advantage from the favour of Sir Jeofry Palmer, the attorney-general, who gave him many opportunities of showing his dexterity and knowledge of law, by procuring him to perform some of his own public duties, when he was himself disabled by sickness. Through the good offices of this zealous friend, Mr. North was appointed to argue for the king in the House of Lords, on the writ of error in the famous case of the King *v.* Hollis and others, which was brought by order of the House of Commons to reverse a judgment obtained in the time of Charles the First, against five of their members, who had been prosecuted for holding down the speaker in his chair, and other riotous proceedings. In consequence of the ability which he displayed on this occasion, though the commons succeeded, he was, on the recommendation of the Duke of York, appointed one of his majesty's counsel. Thus, having precedence, the favour of the court, great assiduity, and knowledge in law, he soon considerably extended his practice. To this, indeed, his great wariness and prudence, trenching on the boundaries of meanness, did not contribute a little. "He was exceedingly careful to keep fair with the cocks of the circuit," especially Serjeant Earl, who was a miser, and with whom he was contented to travel, when no other would starve with him on his journies. If he discovered a point which his leader had omitted, he would not excite dislike by moving it himself, but suggest it to his senior, and thus conciliate his regard. He was, also, to use the words of his biographer, "a wonderful artist in nicking a judge's tendency to serve his turn, and yet never failed to pay the greatest regard and deference to his opinion." He never contested a point with a judge when he despaired to convince him, but resigned it, even when confident in its goodness, that he might not

weaken his credit for the future. On the other hand, when the judge was wrongly on his side, and he knew it, he did not fail to echo "*aye, my lord,*" to the great annoyance of his rivals. Thus gifted by knowledge and pliancy, he soon "from a humble beginner rejoicing at a cause that came to him, became cock of the circuit; and every one that had a trial rejoiced to have him on his side." One piece of artifice which he used on behalf of a relative is so curious, that we will insert it in the words of our author.

"His lordship had a relation, one Mr. Whitmore, of Balms, near London, an humoursome old gentleman, but very famous for the mere eating and drinking part of house-keeping. He was owner of Waterbeach, near Cambridge, and took a fancy that his estate ought not to pay tithes, and ordered his tenants expressly to pay none, with promise to defend them. The parson had no more to do but to go to law, and by advice brought an action of debt, for treble damages upon the statute against subtraction of tithes. The tenants got the whole demand to be put in one action; and that stood for trial at the assizes. Then he consults his cousin North, and retains him to defend this cause; but shows him no manner of title to a discharge. So he could but tell him he would be routed, and pay treble value of the tithes, and that he must make an end. This signified nothing to one that was abandoned to his own testy humour. The cause came on, and his lordship's utmost endeavour was to fetch him off with the single value and costs; and that point he managed very artificially: for first, he considered that Archer was the judge, and it was always agreeable to him to stave off a long cause. After the cause was opened, his lordship for the defendant, stepped forwards, and told the judge that 'this would be a long and intricate cause, being a title to a discharge of tithes, which would require the reading a long series of records and ancient writings. That his client was no quaker, to deny payments of tithes were due, in which case the treble value was by the law intended as a sort of penalty. But this was to be a trial of a title, which his client was advised he had to a discharge: therefore he moved, that the single value might be settled; and if the cause went for the plaintiff, he should have that and his costs (which costs, it

seems, did not go if the treble value was recovered,) and then they would proceed to their title.' The other side mutinied against this imposition of Mr. North, but the judge was for him, and they must be satisfied. Then did he open a long history of matters upon record, of bulls, monasteries, orders, greater and lesser houses, surrenders, patents, and a great deal more, very proper, if it had been true, while the counsel on the other side stared at him; and, having done, they bid him go to his evidence. He leaned back, as speaking to the attorney, and then, *My lord*, said he, *we are very unhappy in this cause. The attorney tells me, they forgot to examine their copies with the originals at the Tower;* and (so folding up his brief) *My lord*, said he, *they must have the verdict, and we must come better prepared another time.* So, notwithstanding all the mutiny the other side could make, the judge held them to it, and they were choused of the treble value. This was no iniquity, because it was not to defraud the duty, but to shift off the penalty. But the old gentleman told his cousin North, he had given away his cause. His lordship thought he had done him service enough; and could but just, (with the help of the before said reason) satisfy himself that he had not done ill."

There is nothing very worthy of remark in the private life of Mr. North, before the beginning of his speculations for a settlement by marriage. These are exceedingly curious, not for their romance, but the want of it. In the good old times, when our advocate flourished, the language of sentiment was not in fashion. Some doubtless there were, perhaps not fewer than in these poetical days, in whose souls Love held its "high and hearted seat"—whose nice-attuned spirits trembled with every change of the intensest, yet most delicate of affections—whose whole existence was one fervent hope and one unbroken sigh. Since then, the breathings of their deep emotion—the words and phrases which imperfectly indicated that which was passing within them, as light and airy bubbles rise up from the lowest spring to the surface of tranquil waters—have become the current language of every transitory passion, and serve to garnish out every prudent match as a necessary part of the wedding finery. Things were not thus confounded by our heartier

ancestors. Language was some indication of the difference of minds, as dress was of ranks. The choice spirits of the time had their prerogative of words and figures, as the ancient families had of their coats of arms. The greater part of mankind, who never feel love in its depth or its purity, were contented to marry and be given in marriage without the affectation of its language. Men avowedly looked for good portions, and women for suitable jointures—they made the contract for mutual support and domestic comfort in good faith, and did not often break it. They had their reward. They indulged no fairy dreams of happiness too ethereal for earth, which, when dissipated, would render dreary the level path of existence. Of their open, plain-hearted course of entering into the matrimonial state, and of speaking about it, the Lord Keeper and his biographer are edifying examples. His lordship, as his fortune improved, felt the necessity of domestic comfort, and wisely thought his hours of leisure would be spent most happily in a family, "which is never well settled without a mistress." "He fancied," says his eulogist, "he might pretend to as good a fortune in a match as many others had found, who had less reason to expect it; but, without some advantage that way, he was not disposed to engage himself." His first attempt in this laudable pursuit was to obtain the daughter of an old usurer, which we will give in our author's words:

"There came to him a recommendation of a lady, who was an only daughter of an old usurer of Gray's-inn, supposed to be a good fortune in present, for her father was rich; but, after his death, to become worth nobody could tell what. His lordship got a sight of the lady, and did not dislike her; thereupon he made the old man a visit, and a proposal of himself to marry his daughter. There appeared no symptoms of discouragement; but only the old gentleman asked him what estate his father intended to settle upon him for present maintenance, jointure, and provision for children. This was an inauspicious question; for it was plain that the family had not estate enough for a lordship, and none would be to spare for him. Therefore he said to his worship only, *That when he would be pleased to declare what portion he intended to give his daughter, he would write to his father,*

and make him acquainted with his answer. And so they parted, and his lordship was glad of his escape, and resolved to give that affair a final discharge, and never to come near the terrible old fellow any more. His lordship had, at that time, a stout heart, and could not digest the being so slighted; as if, in his present state, a profitable profession, and future hopes, were of no account. If he had had a real estate to settle, he should not have stooped so low as to match with his daughter: and thenceforward despised his alliance."

His next enterprise was directed to the "flourishing widow" of Mr. Edward Palmer, who had been his most intimate friend. Her family favoured his addresses—the lady did not refuse him—but flirted, coquetted, and worried him, until he was heartily tired of being "held in a course of bo-peep play by a crafty widow." Her friends still urged him to persevere, which he did to please them rather than himself, until she relieved him by marrying another of her suitors. His third exploit is thus amusingly related.

"Another proposition came to his lordship, by a city broker, from Sir John Lawrence, who had many daughters, and those reputed beauties; and the fortune was to be £6000. His lordship went and dined with the alderman, and liked the lady, who (as the way is) was dressed out for a muster. And coming to treat, the portion shrank to £5000, and, upon that, his lordship parted, and was not gone far before Mr. Broker (following) came to him and said, Sir John would give £500 more, at the birth of the first child; but that would not do, for his lordship hated such screwing. Not long after this despatch, his lordship was made the king's solicitor general, and then the broker came again, with news that Sir John would give £10,000. No; his lordship said, *after such usage he would not proceed, if he might have £20,000.* So ended that affair; and his lordship's mind was once more settled in tranquillity."

At last, after these repeated disappointments, his mother "laid her eyes" on the Lady Frances Pope, one of three co-heiresses, as a wife for her son—and with his consent made overtures on his behalf. After some little difficulties

respecting his lordship's fortune, this match was happily concluded, and is celebrated by his biographer as "made in heaven." The lady, however, died of a consumption, in the prime of her days. On this occasion, our author rejoices that "his lordship's good stars" forced him to London about a fortnight before her death, because nearness to persons dying of consumptions is perilous—and "when she must expire, and probably in his arms, he might have received great damage in his health." Her husband erected a monument to her memory, on which a tremendous Latin epitaph was engraven, commemorating her father, husband, children, and virtues. Our author here expresses his opinion, that the eulogistic part should be left out, "because it is in the power of every cobbler to do the like;" but that the account of families cannot be too far extended, because they may be useful as evidence of pedigree. This is a curious self-betrayal, by a man of rank and family. The utility of monumental inscriptions, detailing the dignities of ancestry, is, indeed, urged—but it is easy to perceive the antithesis completed in the writer's mind—between all the virtues which a cobbler might share, and the immunities of which the high-born alone are partakers.

Mean while, his lordship proceeded to honour and fortune. He was made Solicitor General, became a candidate for the borough of Lynn Regis; and, on a visit, with his accustomed prudence, "regaled the corporation with a very handsome treat, which cost him about one hundred pounds." He could not, however, be present at the election, but sent our author, and Mr. Matthew Johnson, "to ride for him," with proper directions to economize their pecuniary resources. They did so;—"took but one house, and there allowed scope for all taps'to run;" and as there was no opposition, all passed well, and "the plenipos returned with their purchase, the return of the election, back to London." His lordship, however, lost his seat by the vote of the House—despatched "his plenipos once more to regain it, which they did, though with more difficulty than they first procured it; for Sir Simon Taylor, a wealthy merchant of wine, in that town, stood, and had procured a butt of sherry, which butt of sherry was a potent adversary." Soon after, his lordship was made Attorney General, and some doubts arose as to

his right to sit in parliament ; which, however, he was able to remove.

In due time, Mr. North, wearied with the perpetual labours of extensive practice, not only in the courts of law but of equity, longed for, and obtained, the elevated repose of the cushion of the Court of Common Pleas. Here he sedulously endeavoured to resist the encroachments of the King's Bench, and showed himself sufficiently versed in the arts by which each of the courts attempted to over-reach the other, and which would have done credit to the sagacity of a Solicitor at the Old Bailey. His biographer relates various instances of his skill in detecting falsehood, which do not quite entitle him to be regarded as a second Solomon—of his management of counsel, which we have seen excelled in no distant period—and of his repartees, which are the worst ever gravely told as good things by a devoted admirer. The story of “the dumb day,” is, however, worth transcribing, especially as our author, though he speaks of himself as usual, in the third person, was the party on whose behalf the authority of the Chief Justice was exerted.

“It hath been the usage of the King's Bench, at the side bar below in the hall, and of the Common Pleas, in the chamber within the treasury, to hear attorneys, and young counsel, that came to move them about matters of form and practice. His lordship had a younger brother (Hon. Roger North) who was of the profession of the law. He was newly called to the bar, and had little to do in the King's Bench ; but the attorneys of the Common Pleas often retained him to move for them in the treasury, such matters as were proper there, and what they might have moved themselves. But however agreeable this kind of practice was to a novitiate, it was not worthy the observation it had ; for once or twice a week was the utmost calculate of these motions. But the sergeants thought that method was, or might become, prejudicial to them, who had a monopoly of the bar, and would have no *water go by their mill*, and supposed it was high time to put a stop to such beginnings, for fear it might grow worse. But the doubt was, how they should signify their resentment, so as to be effectually remedial. At length they agreed, for one day, to make no motions at all ; and opportunity would

fall for showing the reason how the court came to have no business. When the court (on this dumb day, as it was called) was sat, the chief justice gave the usual signal to the eldest serjeant to move. He bowed, and had, nothing to move: so the next, and the next, from end to end of the bar. The chief, seeing this, said, *brothers, I think we must rise; here is no business.* Then an attorney steps forward, and called to a serjeant to make his motion; and, after that, turned to the court and said, that he had given the serjeant his fee, and instructions over night, to move for him, and desired he might do it. But profound silence still. The chief looked about, and asked, *What was the matter?* An attorney, that stood by, very modestly said, *that he feared the serjeants took it ill that motions were made in the Treasury.* Then the chief scented the whole matter; and, *brothers,* said he, *I think a very great affront is offered to us, which we ought for the dignity of the court, to resent. But that we may do nothing too suddenly, but take consideration at full leisure, and maturely, let us now rise, and to-morrow morning give order as becomes us. And do you attorneys come all here to-morrow, and care shall be taken for your despatch, and, rather than fail, we will hear you, or your clients, or the barristers at law, or any person that thinks fit to appear in business, that the law may have its course;* and so the court rose. This was like thunder to the serjeants, and they fell to quarrelling, one with another, about being the cause of this great evil they had brought upon themselves: for none of them imagined it would have had such a turn as this was, that shaked what was the palladium of the coif, the sole practice there. In the afternoon, they attended the chief, and the other judges of the court, and, in great humility, owned their fault, and begged pardon, and that no farther notice might be taken of it; and they would be careful not to give the like offence for the future. The chief told them, that the affront was in public, and in the face of the court, and they must make their recognitions there next morning, and in such a manner as the greatness of their offence demanded; and then they should hear what the court would say to them. Accordingly they did; and the chief first, and, then, the rest, in order, gave them a formal chiding with acrimony enough; all which, with de-

jected countenances, they were bound to hear. When this discipline was over, the chief pointed to one to move; which he did, (as they said,) more like one crying than speaking: and so ended the comedy, as it was acted in Westminster-hall, called the dumb day."

His lordship used his travels on the circuit as the means of securing an interest in the country gentlemen; and with so much success, that Dr. Mew, Bishop of Winchester, who was called Patels, from a black plaster which he wore to cover a wound received in the civil war, termed him "*deliciæ occidentis*," the darling of the West; and the western members of parliament "did so firmly ensconce him that his enemies could never get a clever stroke at him." Once, indeed, he was taken in by a busy fanatic, who importuned the judges to sup with him, at his house near Exeter; and, having them fairly in his power, inflicted on them a long extemporaneous prayer, "after the presbyterian way," which gave occasion to much merriment at the expense of their lordships, who were said to have been at a conventicle, and in danger of being presented with all their retinue for that offence by the grand jury. He also narrowly escaped being made the dupe or tool of the infamous Bedloe, who sent for him under pretence of making a confession. Excepting in so far as an excessive timidity influenced him, he appears to have acted in his high office with exemplary justice and wisdom. He was, indeed, a most faint-hearted judge, which his biographer, as in duty bound, discloses to his honour. He dreaded the trying of a witch, because he disbelieved the crime; and yet feared to offend the superstitious vulgar. On this nice subject, our author observes—

"It is seldom that a poor old wretch is brought to trial upon that account, but there is, at the heels of her, a popular rage that does little less than demand her to be put to death: and, if a judge is so clear and open as to declare against *that impious vulgar opinion*, that the devil himself has power to torment and kill innocent children, or that he is pleased to divert himself with the good people's cheese, butter, pigs, and geese, and the like errors of the ignorant and foolish rabble; the countrymen (the triers) cry this judge hath no religion,

for he doth not believe witches; and so, to show they have some, hang the poor wretches. All which tendency to mistake, requires a very prudent and moderate carriage in a judge, whereby to convince, rather by detecting of the fraud, than by denying authoritatively such power to be given to old women."

His lordship did, indeed, whenever he could, lay open the imposture, and procure the acquittal of witches. But when Mr. Justice Raymond and he went the circuit together, and his co-judge condemned two women to death for the crime, he appears to have contented himself, "with concern, that his brother Raymond's passive behaviour should let them die," without himself making any effort to save them. His opinions respecting libels were surprisingly liberal for a judge of the cavalier party, and may serve to put shame to the courtly lawyers of more enlightened days.

"As to the business of lies and libels, which, in those days, were an intolerable vexation to the court, especially finding that the community of gentle and simple strangely ran in with them; it was moved that there should be more messengers of the press, and spies, who should discover secret printing-houses, (which, then, were against law,) and take up the hawkers that sold libels, and all other persons that dispersed them, and inflict severe punishments on all that were found guilty. But his lordship was of a very different opinion, and said that this prosecution would make them but the more inquired after; and it was impossible to hinder the promulgation of libels; for the greediness of every one to get them, and the high price, would make men, of desperate fortunes, venture any thing: and, in such cases, punishments never regulate the abuse; but it must be done, if at all, by methods undermining the encouragement: yet, if any were caught, he thought it was fit to make severe examples of them. But an extraordinary inquisition to be set up, and make so much noise, and the punishment falling, as was most likely, not on the authors and abettors, but some poor wretches that sought to get a penny by selling them, would, as he thought, rather incense than abate the abuse. His notion was, that his majesty should order nothing ex-

traordinary, to make people imagine he was touched to the quick; but to set up counter writers that as every libel came out, should take it to task, and answer it. And, so, all the diurnal lies of the town also would be met with; *for*, said he, *either we are in the wrong, or in the right; if the former, we must do as usurped powers, use force, and crush all our enemies right or wrong. But there is no need of that, for we are in the right; for who will pretend not to own his majesty's authority according to law? And nothing is done, by his majesty and his ministers, but what the law will warrant, and what should we be afraid of? Let them lie and accuse till they are weary, while we declare at the same time, as may be done with demonstration, that all they say is false and unjust; and the better sort of the people, whom truth sways, when laid before them, will be with us.* This counsel was followed; and some clever writers were employed, such as were called the *Observator* and *Heraclitus*, for a constancy, and others, with them, occasionally; and then they soon wrote the libellers out of the pit, and, during that king's life, the trade of libels, which, before, had been in great request, fell to nothing."

Mr. North, notwithstanding the liberality of some of his opinions, was made a privy counsellor, and some time after Lord Keeper of the Great Seal. He opposed Jeffries, the celebrated Lord Chief Justice of the King's Bench, with mildness and caution, and secured and used wisely the esteem of his sovereign. He appears to have foreseen, that the consequence of the violent and arbitrary measures, which he was unable to prevent, would, if continued, work the downfall of the Stuart family. His private life was temperate and regular, untainted with the vices of the times. His brother-in-law, actually fearing his virtue might be visited as a libel on the court, seriously advised him to keep a mistress in his own defence; "for he understood, from very great men, that he was ill looked upon for want of doing so; because he seemed continually to reprehend them;" which notable advice was concluded by an offer, "that, if his lordship pleased, he would help him to one." His lordship's regard to virtue, as well as his usual caution, which told him,

“there was no spy like a female,” made him regard this proffer with a scorn, which utterly puzzled his adviser. He was, however, tremulously alive to ridicule. Aware of this infirmity, Jeffries and the Earl of Sunderland took advantage of a harmless visit he made to see a rhinoceros, to circulate a report, that he had ridden on the animal. This threw him into a state of rage and vexation truly surprising; he turned on his questioners with unexampled fury, was seriously angry with Sir Dudley North for not contradicting it with sufficient gravity, and sent for him that he might add his testimony to his own solemn denial. His biographer, who actually performs the duty of confidante, as described in *The Critic*, to laugh, weep, or go mad with the principal, is also in a towering passion at the charge. He calls it, “an impudent buffoon lie, which Satan himself would not have owned for his legitimate issue;” and is provoked beyond measure, that “the noble Earl, with Jeffries, and others of that crew, made merry, and never blushed at the lie of their own making; but valued themselves upon it, as a very good jest.” He was afflicted by no *other* “great calumny,” notwithstanding the watchfulness of his foes. One of his last public acts was, to stop the bloody proceedings of Jeffries in the West, which he did by his influence with the King. He did not long survive the profligate prince, whom he sometimes was able to guide and to soften. He walked in the Coronation of James the Second, when imperfectly recovered from a fever; and, after a gradual decline of some months, expired at his house at Wroxton, really hurried to the grave by the political broils and vexations attendant on the Great Seal. “That pestiferous lump of metal,” as our author terms it, was given to Jeffries, whom it did not save from an end more disastrous and fearful.

The work before us, as we have already intimated, is rendered more interesting by the admirable characters which it contains of the old lawyers. These are all drawn, not only with great and most felicitous distinctness, but are touched in a mild, gentlemanly, and humane spirit, which it is refreshing to recognise in these days of acrimony and slander. Even those who were most opposed in interest and in prejudice to the author, receive ample justice from his hands. Hale, whose dislike to the court rendered him obnoxious to

the author, or which is the same thing to his brother, is drawn at full length in all his austere majesty. Even Serjeant Maynard, the acknowledged "anti-restoration lawyer," whose praise was in all the conventicles, and who was a hard rival of "his lordship," receives due acknowledgment of his learning, and that he was, to his last breath, true as steel to the principles of the times when he began his career. Sir William Scraggs, the fierce voluptuary and outrageous politician, is softened to us by the single engaging touch, that "in his house every day was a holiday." And Jeffries himself, as exhibited here, seems to have had something of real human warmth within him, which redeems him from utter hatred. The following is a summary of his character.

"His friendship and conversation lay much among the good fellows and humourists; and his delights were, accordingly, *drinking, laughing, singing, kissing*, and all the extravagancies of the bottle. He had a set of banterers, for the most part, near him; as, in old time, great men kept fools to make them merry. And these fellows, abusing one another and their betters, were a regale to him. And no friendship or dearness could be so great, in private, which he would not use ill, and to an extravagant degree, in public. No one, that had any expectations from him, was safe from his public contempt and derision, which some of his minions, at the bar, bitterly felt. Those above, or that could hurt or benefit him, and none else, might depend on fair quarters at his hands. *When he was in temper, and matters indifferent came before him, he became his seat of justice better than any other I ever saw in his place.* He took a pleasure in mortifying fraudulent attorneys, and would deal forth his severities with a sort of majesty. He had extraordinary natural abilities, but little acquired, beyond what practice in affairs had supplied. He talked fluently, and with spirit; and his weakness was that he could not reprehend without scolding; and in such Billingsgate language, as should not come out of the mouth of any man. He called it *giving a lick with the rough side of his tongue*. It was ordinary to hear him say, *Go, you are a filthy, lousy, nitty rascal*; with much more of like elegance. Scarce a day passed that he did not chide some one, or other, of the bar, when he sat in

the Chancery; and it was commonly a lecture of a quarter of an hour long. And they used to say, *This is your's; my turn will be to-morrow.* He seemed to lay nothing of his business to heart, nor care what he did, or left undone; and spent, in the Chancery court, what time he thought fit to spare. Many times, on days of causes at his house, the company have waited five hours in a morning, and, after eleven, he hath come out inflamed, and staring like one distracted. And that visage he put on when he animadverted on such as he took offence at, which made him a terror to real offenders; whom also he terrified with his face and voice, as *if the thunder of the day of judgment broke over their heads:* and nothing ever made men tremble like his vocal inflictions. He loved to insult, and was bold without check; but that only when his place was uppermost. To give an instance. A city attorney was petitioned against for some abuse; and affidavit was made that when he was told of my lord chancellor, *My lord chancellor,* said he, *I made him;* meaning his being a means to bring him early into city business. When this affidavit was read, *Well,* said the lord chancellor, *then I will lay my maker by the heels.* And, with that conceit, one of his best old friends went to jail. One of these intemperances was fatal to him. There was a scrivener of Wapping brought to hearing for relief against a bummery bond; the contingency of losing all being showed, the bill was going to be dismissed. But one of the plaintiff's counsel said that he was a strange fellow, and sometimes went to church, sometimes to conventicles: and none could tell what to make of him; and *it was thought he was a trimmer.* At that the chancellor fired; and, *A trimmer!* said he; *I have heard much of that monster, but never saw one. Come forth, Mr. Trimmer, turn you round, and let us see your shape:* and, at that rate, talked so long that the poor fellow was ready to drop under him; but, at last, the bill was dismissed with costs, and he went his way. In the hall, one of his friends asked him how he came off? *Came off,* said he, *I am escaped from the terrors of that man's face, which I would scarce undergo again to save my life; I shall certainly have the frightful impression of it as long as I live.* Afterwards, when the Prince of Orange came, and all was in confusion, this lord

chancellor, being very obnoxious, disguised himself in order to go beyond sea. He was in a seaman's garb, and drinking a pot in a cellar. This scrivener came into the cellar after some of his clients; and his eye caught that face, which made him start; and the chancellor seeing himself eyed, feigned a cough, and turned to the wall with his pot in his hand. But *Mr. Trimmer* went out, and gave notice that he was there; whereupon the mob flowed in, and he was in extreme hazard of his life; but the lord mayor saved him, and lost himself. For the chancellor being hurried with such crowd and noise before him, and appearing so dismally, not only disguised, but disordered; and there having been an amity between them, as also a veneration on the lord mayor's part, he had not spirits to sustain the shock, but fell down in a swoon; and, in not many hours after, died. But this Lord Jeffries came to the seal without any concern at the weight of duty incumbent upon him; for, at the first, being merry over a bottle with some of his old friends, one of them told him that he would find the business heavy. *No*, said he, *I'll make it light*. But, to conclude with a strange inconsistency, he would drink and be merry, kiss and slaver, with these bon companions over night, as the way of such is, and, the next day fall upon them, ranting and scolding with a virulence unsufferable."

But the richest portion of these volumes is the character of the Lord Chief Justice Saunders, the author of the Reports which Mr. Serjeant Williams has rendered popular by clustering about them the products of his learned industry. He has a better immortality in the Memoir. What a picture is exhibited of the stoutest industry, joined with the most luxurious spirit of enjoyment—of the most intense acquaintance with nice technicalities and the most bounteous humour—of more distressing infirmities and scarcely less wit than those of Falstaff! What a singular being is here—what a laborious, acute, happy, and affectionate spirit in a loathsome frame!—But, we forget;—we are indulging ourselves, when we ought to gratify our readers.

"The Lord Chief Justice Saunders succeeded in the room of Pemberton. His character, and his beginning, were

equally strange. He was at first no better than a poor beggar boy, *if not a parish foundling, without known parents or relations*. He had found a way to live by obsequiousness (in Clement's-Inn, as I remember) and courting the attorney's clerks for scraps. The extraordinary observance and diligence of the boy made the society willing to do him good. He appeared very ambitious to learn to write; and one of the attorney's got a board knocked up at a window on the top of a staircase; and that was his desk, where he sat and wrote after copies of court and other hands the clerks gave him. He made himself so expert a writer that he took in business, and earned some pence by hackney writing. And thus, by degrees, he pushed his faculties, and fell to forms, and, by books that were lent him, became an exquisite entering clerk; and by the same course of improvement of himself, an able counsel, first in special pleading, then, at large. And, after he was called to the bar, had practice, in the King's Bench court, equal with any there. As to his person, he was very corpulent and beastly; a mere lump of morbid flesh. He used to say, *by his troggs*, (such a humorous way of talking he affected) *none could say he wanted issue of his body, for he had nine in his back*. He was a fetid mass that offended his neighbours at the bar in the sharpest degree. Those, whose ill fortune it was to stand near him, were confessors, and, in summer-time, almost martyrs. This hateful decay of his carcass came upon him by continued sottishness; for, to say nothing of brandy, he was seldom without a pot of ale at his nose, or near him. That exercise was all he used; the rest of his life was sitting at his desk, or piping at home; and that *home* was a tailor's house in Butcher-Row, called his lodging, and the man's wife was his nurse, or worse; but by virtue of his money, of *which he made little account, though he got a great deal*, he soon became master of the family; and, being no changeling, he never removed, but was true to his friends, and they to him, to the last hour of his life.

So much for his person and education. As for his parts, none had them more lively than he. Wit and repartee, in an affected rusticity, was natural to him. He was ever ready, and never at a loss; and none came so near as he to be a match for Serjeant Maynard. His great dexterity was in

the art of special pleading, and he would lay snares that often caught his superiors, who were not aware of his traps. And he was so fond of success for his clients that, rather than fail, he would set the court hard with a trick; for which he met sometimes with a reprimand, which he would wittily ward off, so that no one was much offended with him. But Hales could not bear his irregularity of life; and for that, and suspicion of his tricks, used to bear hard upon him in the court. But no ill usage from the bench was too hard for his hold of business, being such as scarce any could do but himself. With all this, he had a goodness of nature and disposition in so great a degree that he may be deservedly styled a *philanthrope*. He was a very *Silenus* to the boys, as, in this place, I may term the students of the law, to make them merry whenever they had a mind to it. He had nothing of rigid or austere in him. If any, near him at the bar, grumbled at his stench, he ever converted the complaint into content and laughing with the abundance of his wit. As to his ordinary dealing, he was as honest as the driven snow was white; and *why not*, having no regard for money, nor desire to be rich? And, for good nature and condescension, there was not his fellow. I have seen him, for hours and half hours together, before the court sat, stand at the bar, with an audience of students over against him, putting of cases, and debating so as suited their capacities, and encouraging their industry. And so in the Temple, he seldom moved without a parcel of youths hanging about him, and he merry and jesting with them.

It will be readily conceived that this man was never cut out to be a presbyter, or any thing that is severe and crabbed. In no time did he lean to faction, but did his business without offence to any. He put off officious talk of government or politics, with jests, and so made his wit a catholicon, or shield, to cover all his weak places and infirmities. When the court fell into a steady course of using the law against all kinds of offenders, this man was taken into the king's business; and had the part of drawing and perusal of almost all indictments and informations that were then to be prosecuted, with the pleadings thereon if any were special; and he had the settling of the large pleadings in the *quo warranto* against London. His lordship had no sort of conversation

with him, but in the way of business, and at the bar; but once after he was in the king's business, he dined with his lordship, and no more. And there he showed another qualification he had acquired, and that was to play jigs upon a harpsichord; having taught himself with the opportunity of an old virginal of his landlady's; but in such a manner, not for defect but figure, as to see him were a jest. The king, observing him to be of a free disposition, loyal, friendly, and without greediness or guile, thought of him to be the chief justice of the King's Bench at that nice time. And the ministry could not but approve of it. So great a weight was then at stake, as could not be trusted to men of doubtful principles, or such as any thing might tempt to desert them. While he sat in the Court of King's Bench, he gave the rule to the general satisfaction of the lawyers. But his course of life was so different from what it had been, his business incessant, and, withal, crabbed; and his diet and exercise changed, that the constitution of his body, or head rather, could not sustain it, and he fell into an apoplexy and palsy, which numbed his parts; and he never recovered the strength of them. He out-lived the judgment in the *quo warranto*; but was not present otherwise than by sending his opinion, by one of the judges, to be for the king, who, at the pronouncing of the judgment, declared it to be the court accordingly, which is frequently done in like cases."

Although we have been able to give but a few of the choice peculiarities of these volumes, our readers will be able to gather, from our extracts, that the profession of the law was a very different thing in the reign of Charles the second, from what it is in the present era. There was something in it more robust and hearty than there is now. Lawyers treated on the dryest subjects, in a "full and heightened style," which now would receive merited ridicule, because it is natural no longer. When Lord Coke "wanders in the wilderness of the laws of the forest,"—or stops to "recreate himself with a view of Dido's deer,"—or looks on his own fourth institute, as "the high and honourable building of the jurisdiction of the courts,"—we feel that he uses the language of metaphor, merely because he thinks in it. Modern improvement has introduced a division of labour among the

faculties. The regions of imagination and of reality are separated by stricter and more definite limits, than in the days of old. Our poems and orations are more wild and extravagant, and our ordinary duties more dry and laborious. Men have learned to refine on their own feelings—to analyze all their sensations—to class all their powers, feelings, and fantasies, as in a museum; and to mark and label them so that they may never be applied, except to appropriate uses. The imagination is only cultivated as a kind of exotic luxury. No one unconsciously writes in a picturesque style, or suffers the colour of his thoughts to suffuse itself over his disquisitions, without caring for the effect on the reader. The rich conceit is either suppressed, or carefully reserved to adorn some cold oration where it may be duly applauded. Our ancestors permitted the wall-flower, when it would, to spread out its sweets from the massive battlement, without thinking there was any thing extraordinary in its growth, or desiring to transplant it to a garden, where it would add little fragrance, to the perfume of other flowers.

The study of the law has sunk of late years. Formerly the path of those by whom it was chosen, though steep and rugged, was clear and open before them. Destitute of adventitious aids, they were compelled to salutary and hopeful toils. They were forced to trace back every doctrine to the principle which was its germ, and to search for their precedents amidst the remotest grandeur of our history. Patient labour was required of them, but their reward was certain. In the most barren and difficult parts of their ascent, they found at least in the masses which they surmounted the stains and colourings of a humanizing antiquity to soften and to dignify their labours. But abridgments, commentaries, and digests without number, have precluded the necessity of these liberal researches, while the vast accumulation of statutes and decisions have rendered them almost hopeless. Instead of a difficult mountain to ascend, there is a briery labyrinth to penetrate. Wearied out with vain attempts, the student accepts such temporary helps as he can procure, and despairs of reducing the ever-increasing multitude of decisions to any fixed and intelligible principles. Thus his labours are not directed to a visible goal—nor

cheered by the venerableness of old time—nor crowned with that certainty of conclusion, which is the best reward of scientific researches. The lot of a superficial student of a dry science, is of all conditions the most harassing and fruitless. The evil must increase until it shall work its own cure—until accumulated reports shall lose their authority—or the legislature shall be compelled, by the vastness of the mischief, to undertake the tremendous task of revising and condensing the whole statute law, and fixing the construction of the unwritten maxims within some tolerable boundaries.

REVIEW OF THE DRAMATIC LITERATURE OF THE AGE OF ELIZABETH.

[Edinburgh Review.]

If Mr. Hazlitt has not generally met with impartial justice from his contemporaries, we must say that he has himself partly to blame. Some of the attacks of which he has been the object, have, no doubt, been purely brutal and malignant; but others have, in a great measure, arisen from feelings of which he has himself set the example. His seeming carelessness of that public opinion which he would influence—his love of startling paradoxes—and his intrusion of political virulence, at seasons when the mind is prepared only for the delicate investigations of taste, have naturally provoked a good deal of asperity, and prevented the due appreciation of his powers. We shall strive, however, to divest ourselves of all prepossessions, and calmly to estimate those talents and feelings which he has here brought to the contemplation of such beauty and grandeur, as none of the low passions of this “ignorant present time” should ever be permitted to overcloud.

Those who regard Mr. Hazlitt as an ordinary writer, have little right to accuse him of suffering antipathies in philosophy or politics to influence his critical decisions. He possesses one excellent quality at least for the office which he has chosen, in the intense admiration and love which he feels for the great authors on whose excellences he chiefly dwells. His relish for their beauties is so keen, that while he describes them, the pleasures which they impart become almost palpable to the sense; and we seem, scarcely in a figure, to feast and banquet on their “nectared sweets.” He introduces,

us almost corporally into the divine presence of the Great of old time—enables us to hear the living oracles of wisdom drop from their lips—and makes us partakers, not only of those joys which they diffused, but of those which they felt in the inmost recesses of their souls. He draws aside the veil of Time with a hand tremulous with mingled delight and reverence; and descants, with kindling enthusiasm, on all the delicacies of that picture of genius which he discloses. His intense admiration of intellectual beauty seems always to sharpen his critical faculties. He perceives it, by a kind of intuitive power, how deeply soever it may be buried in rubbish; and separates it, in a moment, from all that would encumber or deface it. At the same time, he exhibits to us those hidden sources of beauty, not like an anatomist, but like a lover: He does not coolly dissect the form to show the springs whence the blood flows all eloquent, and the divine expression is kindled; but makes us feel it in the sparkling or softened eye, the wreathed smile, and the tender bloom. In a word, he at once analyzes and describes,—so that our enjoyments of loveliness are not chilled, but brightened, by our acquaintance with their inward sources. The knowledge communicated in his lectures, breaks no sweet enchantment, nor chills one feeling of youthful joy. His criticisms, while they extend our insight into the causes of poetical excellence, teach us, at the same time, more keenly to enjoy, and more fondly to revere it.

It must seem, at first sight, strange, that powers like these should have failed to excite universal sympathy. Much, doubtless, of the coldness and misrepresentation cast on them has arisen from causes at which we have already hinted—from the apparent readiness of the author to “give up to party what was meant for mankind”—and from the occasional breaking in of personal animosities on that deep harmony which should attend the reverent contemplation of genius. But we apprehend that there are other causes which have diminished the influence of Mr. Hazlitt's faculties, originating in his mind itself;—and these we shall endeavour briefly to specify.

The chief of these may, we think, be ascribed primarily to the want of proportion, of arrangement, and of harmony in his powers. His mind resembles the “rich stronde” which

Spencer has so nobly described, and to which he has himself likened the age of Elizabeth, where treasures of every description lie, without order, in inexhaustible profusion. Noble masses of exquisite marble are there, which might be fashioned to support a glorious temple; and gems of peerless lustre, which would adorn the holiest shrine. He has no lack of the deepest feelings, the profoundest sentiments of humanity, or the loftiest aspirations after ideal good. But there are no great leading principles of taste to give singleness to his aims, nor any central points in his mind, around which his feelings may revolve, and his imaginations cluster. There is no sufficient distinction between his intellectual and his imaginative faculties. He confounds the truths of imagination with those of fact—the processes of argument with those of feeling—the immunities of intellect with those of virtue. Hence the seeming inconsistency of many of his doctrines. Hence the want of all continuity in his style. Hence his failure in producing one single, harmonious, and lasting impression on the hearts of his hearers. He never waits to consider whether a sentiment or an image is in place—so it be in itself striking. The keen sense of pleasure in intellectual beauty which is the best charm of his writings, is also his chief deluder. He cannot resist a powerful image, an exquisite quotation, or a pregnant remark, however it may dissipate or even subvert the general feeling which his theme should inspire. Thus, on one occasion, in the midst of a violent political invective, he represents the objects of his scorn as “having been beguiled, like Miss Clarissa Harlowe, into a house of ill-fame, and, like her, defending themselves to the last;” as if the reader’s whole current of feeling would not be diverted from all political disputes, by the remembrance thus awakened of one of the sublimest scenes of romance ever embodied by human power. He will never be contented to touch that most strange and curious instrument, the human heart, with a steady aim, but throws his hand rapidly over the chords, mingling strange discord with “most eloquent music.” Instead of conducting us onward to a given object, he opens so many delicious prospects by the way-side, and suffers us to gaze at them so long, that we forget the end of our journey. He is perpetually dazzled among the sunbeams of his fancy, and plays with them in elegant fan-

tasy, when he should point them to the spots where they might fall on truth and beauty, and render them visible by a clearer and lovelier radiance than had yet revealed them.

The work before us is not the best verification of these remarks; for it has more of continuity and less of paradox than any of his previous writings. With the exception of some strong political allusions in the account of the Sejanus of Ben Jonson, it is entirely free from those expressions of party feeling which respect for an audience, consisting of men of all parties, and men of no party, ought always to restrain. There is also none of that personal bitterness towards Messrs. Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey, which disfigured his former lectures. His hostility towards these poets, the associates of his early days, has always indeed been mingled with some redeeming feelings which have heightened the regret occasioned by its public disclosure.—While he has pursued them with all possible severity of invective, and acuteness of sarcasm, he has protected their intellectual character with a chivalrous zeal. He has spoken as if “his only hate had sprung from his only love;” and his thoughts of its objects, deep rooted in old affection, could not lose all traces of their “primal sympathy.” His bitterest language has had its dash of the early sweets, which no changes of opinion could entirely destroy. Still his audiences and his readers had ample ground of complaint for the intrusion of personal feelings, in inquiries which should be sacred from all discordant emotions. We rejoice to observe, that this blemish is now effaced; and that full and free course is at last given to that deep humanity which has ever held its current in his productions, sometimes in open day, and sometimes beneath the soil which it fertilized, though occasionally dashed and thrown back in its course by the obstacles of prejudice and of passion.

The first of these lectures consists of a general view of the subject, expressed in terms of the deepest veneration and of the most passionate eulogy. After eloquently censuring the gross prejudice, that genius and beauty are things of modern discovery, or that in old time a few amazing spirits shone forth amidst general darkness, as the harbingers of brighter days, the author proceeds to combat the notion that

Shakspeare was a sort of monster of poetical genius, and all his contemporaries of an order far below him.

“He, indeed, overlooks and commands the admiration of posterity; but he does it from the *table land* of the age in which he lived. He towered above his fellows ‘in shade and gesture proudly eminent;’ but he was but one of a race of giants,—the tallest, the strongest, the most graceful and beautiful of them;—but it was a common and noble brood. He was not something sacred and aloof from the vulgar herd of men, but shook hands with Nature and the circumstances of the time; and is distinguished from his immediate contemporaries, not in kind, but in degree, and greater variety of excellence. He did not form a class or species by himself, but belonged to a class or species. His age was necessary to him; nor could he have been wrenched from his place in the edifice, of which he was so conspicuous a part, without equal injury to himself and it. Mr. Wordsworth says of Milton, that ‘his soul was like a star, and dwelt apart.’ This cannot be said with any propriety of Shakspeare, who certainly moved in a constellation of bright luminaries, and ‘drew after him the third part of the heavens.’” pp. 12, 13.

The author then proceeds to investigate the general causes of that sudden and rich development of poetical feeling which forms his theme. He attributes it chiefly to the mighty impulse given to thought by the Reformation—to the disclosure of all the marvellous stores of sacred antiquity, by the translation of the Scriptures—and to the infinite sweetness, breathing from the divine character of the Messiah, with which he seems to imagine that the people were not familiar in darker ages. We are far from insensible to the exquisite beauty with which this last subject is treated; and fully agree with our author, that “there is something in the character of Christ, of more sweetness and majesty, and more likely to work a change in the mind of man, than any to be found in history, whether actual or feigned.” But we cannot think that the gentle influences which that character shed upon the general heart, were weak or partial even before the translation of the Scriptures. The young had received it,

not from books, but from the living voice of their parents, made softer in its tones by reverence and love. It had tempered early enthusiasm, and prompted visions of celestial beauty, in the souls even of the most low, before men had been taught to reason on their faith. The instances of the Saviour's compassion—his wondrous and beneficent miracles—his agonies and death, did not lie forgotten during centuries, because the people could not read of them. They were written "on the fleshy tables of the heart," and softened the tenour of humble existence, while superstition, ignorance and priestcraft held sway in high places.

These old feelings of love, however, tended greatly to sweeten and moderate the first excursions of the intellect, when released from its long thralldom. The new opening of the stores of Classic lore, of Ancient History, of Italian Poetry, and of Spanish Romance, contributed much, doubtless, to the incitement and the perfection of our national genius. The discovery of the New World, too, opened fresh fields for the imagination to revel in. "Green islands, and golden sands," says our author, "seemed to arise as by enchantment out of the bosom of the watery waste, and invite the cupidity, or wing the imagination of the dreaming speculator. Fairy land was realized in new and unknown worlds."—"Fortunate fields, and groves, and flowery vales—thrice happy isles," were found floating "like those Hesperian gardens famed of old,"—"beyond Atlantic seas, as dropped from the zenith." Ancient superstitions also still lingered among the people. The romance of human life had not then departed. It "was more full of traps and pitfalls; of moving accidents by flood and field: more way-laid by sudden and startling evils, it stood on the brink of hope and fear, or stumbled upon fate unawares,—while imagination, close behind it, caught at and clung to the shape of danger, or snatched a wild and fearful joy from its escape." The martial and heroic spirit was not dead. It was comparatively an age of peace, "Like Strength reposing on his own right arm;" but the sound of civil combat might still be heard in the distance,—the spear glittered to the eye of memory, or the clashing of armour struck on the imagination of the ardent and the young. The people of that day were borderers on the savage

state, on the times of war and bigotry,—though themselves in the lap of arts, of luxury, and knowledge. They stood on the shore, and saw the billows rolling after the storm. They heard the tumult, and were still. Another source of imaginative feelings, which Mr. Hazlitt quotes from Mr. Lamb, is found in the distinctions of dress, and all the external symbols of trade, profession, and degree, by which “the surface of society was embossed with hieroglyphics, and poetry existed in act and complement extern.” Lastly, our author alludes to the first enjoyment and uncontrolled range of our old poets through Nature, whose fairest flowers were then uncropped,—and to the movements of the soul then laid open to their view, without disguise or control. All those causes Mr. Hazlitt regards as directed, and their immediate effects as united by the genius of our country, native, unaffected, sturdy, and unyielding. His lecture concludes with a character, equally beautiful and just, of the Genius of our Poetry, with reference to the classical models, as having more of Pan than of Apollo :—“but Pan is a God, Apollo is no more!”

The five succeeding Lectures contain the opinions of the author on most of the celebrated works produced from the time of the Reformation, until the death of Charles the First. The second comprises the characters of Lyly, Marlow, Heywood, Middleton, and Rowley. The account of Lyly's *Endymion* is worthy of that sweet but singular work. The address of Eumenides to Endymion, on his awaking from his long sleep, “Behold the twig to which thou laidest down thy head is become a tree,” is indeed, as described by our author, “an exquisitely chosen image, and dumb proof of the manner in which he has passed his life from youth to old age,—in a dream, a dream of love!” His description of Marlow's qualities, when he says “there is a lust of power in his writings, a hunger and thirst after unrighteousness, a glow of the imagination unhallowed by any thing but its own energies,” is very striking. The characters of Middleton and Rowley in this Lecture, and those of Marston, Chapman, Decker, and Webster in the third, are sketched with great spirit; and the peculiar beauties of each are dwelt on in a style and with a sentiment congenial with the predominant feeling of the poet. At the close of the Lecture, the observation, that the old Dramatic writers have nothing theatrical

about them, introduces the following eulogy on that fresh delight which books are ever ready to yield us.

“Here, on Salisbury Plain, where I write this, even here, with a few old authors, I can manage to get through the summer or the winter months, without ever knowing what it is to feel *ennui*. They sit with me at breakfast, they walk out with me before dinner. After a long walk through unfrequented tracts,—after starting the hare from the fern, or hearing the wing of the raven rustling above my head, or being greeted with the woodman’s ‘stern goodnight’ as he strikes into his narrow homeward path,—I can take ‘mine ease at mine inn’ beside the blazing hearth, and shake hands with Signor Orlando Frescobaldo, as the oldest acquaintance I have. Ben Jonson, learned Chapman, Master Webster, and Master Heywood are there; and, seated round, discourse the silent hours away. Shakspeare is there himself, rich in Cibber’s Manager’s coat. Spenser is hardly returned from a ramble through the woods, or is concealed behind a group of nymphs, fawns, and satyrs. Milton lies on the table as on an altar, never taken up or laid down without reverence. Lyly’s *Endymion* sleeps with the moon that shines in at the window; and a breath or wind stirring at a distance, seems a sigh from the tree under which he grew old. Faustus disputes in one corner of the room with fiendish faces, and reasons of divine astrology. *Bellafront* soothes *Mattheo*, *Vittoria* triumphs over her Judges, and old Chapman repeats one of the hymns of Homer, in his own fine translation.” pp. 136–7.

The spirit of this passage is very deep and cordial; and the expression, for the most part, exquisite. But we wonder that Mr. Hazlitt should commit so great an incongruity, as to represent the other poets around him in person, while Milton, introduced among the rest, is used only as the title of a book. Why are other authors to be “seated round,” to cheer the critic’s retirement as if living,—while Milton, like a petition in the House of Commons, is only ordered “to lie upon the table?”

In the Fourth Lecture, ample justice is done to Beaumont and Fletcher, Massinger and Ben Jonson; but we think the

same measure is not meted to Ford. We cannot regard the author of "Tis Pity she's a Whore," and "the Broken Heart," as "finical and fastidious." We are directly at issue, indeed, with our author on his opinions respecting the catastrophe of the latter tragedy. Calantha, Princess of Sparta, is celebrating the nuptials of a noble pair, with solemn dancing, when a messenger enters, and informs her that the King, her father is dead:—she dances on. Another report is brought to her, that the sister of her betrothed husband is starved;—she calls for the other change. A third informs her that Ithocles, her lover, is cruelly murdered;—she complains that the music sounds dull, and orders sprightlier measures. The dance ended, she announces herself Queen, pronounces sentence on the murderer of Ithocles, and directs the ceremonials of her coronation to be immediately prepared. Her commands are obeyed. She enters the Temple in white, crowned, while the dead body of her husband is borne on a hearse, and placed beside the altar; at which she kneels in silent prayer. After her devotions, she addresses Nearchus, Prince of Argos, as though she would choose him for her husband, and lays down all orders for the regulation of her kingdom, under the guise of proposals of marriage. This done, she turns to the body of Ithocles, "the shadow of her contracted lord," puts her mother's wedding ring on his finger, "to new-marry him whose wife she is," and from whom death shall not part her. She then kisses his cold lips, and dies smiling. This Mr. Hazlitt calls "tragedy in masquerade," "the true false gallop of sentiment;" and declares, that "any thing more artificial and mechanical he cannot conceive." He regards the whole scene as a forced transposition of one in Marston's Malcontent, where Aurelia dances on in defiance to the world, when she hears of the death of a detested husband. He observes, "that a woman should call for music, and dance on in spite of the death of a husband whom she hates, without regard to common decency, is but too possible: that she should dance on with the same heroic perseverance, in spite of the death of her father, and of every one else whom she loves, from regard to common courtesy or appearance, is not surely natural. The passions may silence the voice of humanity; but it is, I think, equally against probability and

decorum, to make both the passions and the voice of humanity give way (as in the example of Calantha) to a mere form of outward behaviour. Such a suppression of the strongest and most uncontrollable feelings, can only be justified from necessity, for some great purpose,—which is not the case in Ford's play; or it must be done for the effect and eclat of the thing, which is not fortitude but affectation." The fallacy of this criticism appears to us to lie in the assumption, that the violent suppression of her feelings by the heroine was a mere piece of court etiquette—a compliment to the ceremonies of a festival. Surely the object was noble, and the effort sublime. While the deadly force of sorrow oppressed her heart, she felt that she had solemn duties to discharge, and that, if she did not arm herself against affliction till they were finished, she could never perform them. She could seek temporary strength only by refusing to pause—by hurrying on the final scene; and dared not to give the least vent to the tide of grief, which would at once have relieved her overcharged heart, and left her, exhausted, to die. Nothing less than the appearance of gaiety could hide or suppress the deep anguish of her soul. We agree with Mr. Lamb, whose opinion is referred to by our author, that there is scarcely in any other play "a catastrophe so grand, so solemn, and so surprising as this!"

The Fifth Lecture, on Single Plays and Poems, brings into view many curious specimens of old humour, hitherto little known, and which sparkle brightly in their new setting. The Sixth, on Miscellaneous Poems and Works, is chiefly remarkable for the admirable criticism on the *Arcadia* of Sir Philip Sidney, with which it closes. Here the critic separates with great skill the wheat from the chaff, showing at once the power of his author, and its perversion, and how images of touching beauty and everlasting truth are marred by "the spirit of Gothic quaintness, criticism, and conceit." The passage, which is far too long for quotation, makes us desire more earnestly than ever that an author, capable of so lucid and convincing a development of his critical doctrines, would less frequently content himself with giving the mere results of his thought, and even conveying these in the most abrupt and startling language. A remark uttered in the parenthesis of a sarcasm, or an image thrown in to heighten a piece of

irony, might often furnish extended matter for the delight of those whom it now only disgusts or bewilders.

The Seventh Lecture, on the works of Lord Bacon, compared as to style with those of Sir Thomas Browne and of Jeremy Taylor, is very unequal. The character of Lord Bacon is eloquent, and the praise sufficiently lavish; but it does not show any proper knowledge of his works. That of Jeremy Taylor is somewhat more appropriate, but too full of gaudy images and mere pomp of words. The style of that delicious writer is ingeniously described as "prismatic;" though there is too much of shadowy chillness in the phrase, adequately to represent the warm and tender bloom which he casts on all that he touches. And when we are afterwards told that it "unfolds the colours of the rainbow; floats like a bubble through the air; or is like innumerable dew drops, that glitter on the face of morning, and twinkle as they glitter;"—we can only understand that the critic means to represent it as variegated, light and sparkling: But it appears to us that the style of Jeremy Taylor is like nothing unsubstantial or airy. The blossoms put forth in his works spring from a deep and eternal stock, and have no similitude to any thing wavering or unstable. His account of Sir Thomas Browne, however, seems to us very characteristic, both of himself and of that most extraordinary of English writers. We can make room only for a part of it.

"As Bacon seemed to bend all his thoughts to the practice of life, and to bring home the light of science 'to the bosoms and business of men,' Sir Thomas Browne seemed to be of opinion, that the only business of life was to think; and that the proper object of speculation was, by darkening knowledge, to breed more speculation, and 'find no end in wandering mazes lost.' He chose the incomprehensible and the impracticable, as almost the only subjects fit for a lofty and lasting contemplation, or for the exercise of a solid faith. He cried out for an '*oh altitudo*' beyond the heights of revelation; and posed himself with apocryphal mysteries as the pastime of his leisure hours. He pushes a question to the utmost verge of conjecture, that he may repose on the certainty of doubt; and he removes an object to the greatest distance from him, that he may take a high and abstracted

interest in it, consider it in relation to the sum of things, not to himself, and bewilder his understanding in the universality of its nature, and the inscrutableness of its origin. His is the sublime of indifference; a passion for the abstruse and imaginary. He turns the world round for his amusement, as if it were a globe of pasteboard. He looks down on sublunary affairs as if he had taken his station in one of the planets. The antipodes are next door neighbours to him; and doomsday is not far off. With a thought he imbraces both the poles; the march of his pen is over the great divisions of geography and chronology. Nothing touches him nearer than humanity. He feels that he is mortal only in the decay of nature, and the dust of long-forgotten tombs. The finite is lost in the infinite. The orbits of the heavenly bodies, or the history of empires, are to him but a point in time, or a speck in the universe. The great Platonic year revolves in one of his periods. Nature is too little for the grasp of his style. He scoops an antithesis out of fabulous antiquity, and rakes up an epithet from the sweepings of chaos. It is as if his books had dropped from the clouds, or as if Friar Bacon's head could speak. He stands on the edge of the world of sense and reason, and gets a vertigo by looking down at impossibilities and chimeras. Or he busies himself with the mysteries of the Cabbala, or the enclosed secrets of the heavenly quincunxes, as children are amused with tales of the nursery. The passion of curiosity (the only passion of childhood) had in him survived to old age, and had superannuated his other faculties. He moralizes and grows pathetic on a mere idle fancy of his own, as if thought and being were the same, or as if 'all this world were one glorious lie.' He had the most intense consciousness of contradictions and nonentities; and he decks them out in the pride and pedantry of words, as if they were the attire of his proper person. The categories hang about his neck like the gold chain of knighthood; and he 'walks gowned' in the intricate folds and swelling drapery of dark sayings and impenetrable riddles." pp. 292-295.

The Eighth and Last Lecture begins with a few words on the merits of Sheil, Tobin, Lamb, and Cornwall, who, in our own time, have written in the spirit of the elder dramatists.

The observations in this Lecture, on the spirit of the romantic and classic literature, are followed by a striking development of the materials, and an examination of the success of the German Drama. Mr. Hazlitt attributes the triumph of its monstrous paradoxes to those abuses and hypocrisies of society, those incoherences between its professions and its motives, which excite enthusiastic minds to seek for the opposite, at once, of its defects and blessings. His account of his own sensations on the first perusal of the *Robbers*, is one of the most striking passages in the work.

“I have half trifled with this subject; and I believe I have done so because I despaired of finding language for some old-rooted feelings I have about it, which a theory could neither give, nor can it take away. The *Robbers* was the first play I ever read; and the effect it produced upon me was the greatest. It stunned me like a blow; and I have not recovered enough from it to tell how it was. There are impressions which neither time nor circumstances can efface. Were I to live much longer than I have any chance of doing, the books I have read when I was young, I can never forget. Five-and-twenty years have elapsed since I first read the translation of the *Robbers*, but they have not blotted the impression from my mind; it is here still—an old dweller in the chambers of the brain. The scene, in particular, in which Moor looks through his tears at the evening sun from the mountain's brow, and says in his despair, ‘It was my wish like him to live, like him to die: it was an idle thought, a boy's conceit,’ took first hold of my imagination,—and that sun has to me never set!”

While we sympathize in all Mr. Hazlitt's sentiments of reverence for the mighty works of the older times, we must guard against that exclusive admiration of antiquity, rendered fashionable by some great critics, which would induce the belief that the age of genius is past, and the world grown too old to be romantic. We can observe in these Lectures, and in other works of their author, a jealousy of the advances of civilization as lessening the dominion of fancy. But this is, we think, a dangerous error; tending to chill the earliest aspirations after excellence, and to roll its rising energies back on the kindling soul. There remains yet abun-

dant space for genius to possess ; and science is rather the pioneer than the impeder of its progress. The level roads, indeed, which it cuts through unexplored regions, are, in themselves, less fitted for its wanderings, than the tangled ways through which it delights to stray ; but they afford it new glimpses into the wild scenes and noble vistas which open near them, and enable it to deviate into fresh scenes of beauty, and hitherto unexplored fastnesses. The face of nature changes not with the variations of fashion. One state of society may be somewhat more favourable to the development of genius than another ; but wherever its divine seed is cast, there will it strike its roots far beneath the surface of artificial life, and rear its branches into the heavens, far above the busy haunts of common mortals.

VARIOUS PROSPECTS OF MANKIND, NATURE, AND PROVIDENCE.

[Retrospective Review.]

MR. WALLACE, the author of the work before us, was of the number of those speculators who have delighted to form schemes of ideal felicity for their species. Men of this class, often despised as dreaming theorists, have been found among the best and wisest of all ages. Those, indeed, who have seen the farthest into their nature, have found the surest grounds of hope even for its earthly progress. Their enthusiasm has been, at the least, innoxious. The belief, that humanity is on the decline—that the energy of man is decaying—that the heart is becoming harder—and that imagination and intellect are dwindling away—lays an icy finger on the soul, confirms the most debasing selfishness, and tends to retard the good which it denies. We propose, therefore, in this article very cursorily to inquire how far the hopes of those who believe that man is, on the whole, advancing, are sanctioned by experience and by reason.

But we must not forget, that, in the very work before us, an obstacle to the happiness of the species is brought forward, which has subsequently been explained as of a dreadful nature, and has been represented as casting an impenetrable gloom over the brightest anticipations of human progress. We shall first set it forth in the words of Wallace—then trace its expansion and various application by Malthus—and inquire how far it compels us to despair for man.

“Under a perfect government, the inconveniencies of having a family would be so entirely removed, children

would be so well taken care of, and every thing become so favourable to populousness, that though some sickly seasons or dreadful plagues in particular climates might cut off multitudes, yet, in general, mankind would increase so prodigiously, that the earth would at last be overstocked, and become unable to support its numerous inhabitants.

“How long the earth, with the best culture of which it is capable from human genius and industry, might be able to nourish its perpetually increasing inhabitants, is as impossible as it is unnecessary to be determined. It is not probable that it could have supported them during so long a period as since the creation of Adam. But whatever may be supposed of the length of this period, of necessity it must be granted, that the earth could not nourish them for ever, unless either its fertility could be continually augmented, or, by some secret in nature, like what certain enthusiasts have expected from the philosopher's stone, some wise adept in the occult sciences should invent a method of supporting mankind quite different from any thing known at present. Nay, though some extraordinary method of supporting them might possibly be found out, yet, if there was no bound to the increase of mankind, which would be the case under a perfect government, there would not even be sufficient room for containing their bodies upon the surface of the earth, or upon any limited surface whatsoever. It would be necessary, therefore, in order to find room for such multitudes of men, that the earth should be continually enlarging in bulk, as an animal or vegetable body.

“Now, since philosophers may as soon attempt to make mankind immortal, as to support the animal frame without food, it is equally certain, that limits are set to the fertility of the earth; and that its bulk, so far as is hitherto known, hath continued always the same, and probably could not be much altered without making considerable changes in the solar system. It would be impossible, therefore, to support the great numbers of men who would be raised up under a perfect government; the earth would be overstocked at last, and the greatest admirers of such fanciful schemes must foresee the fatal period when they would come to an end, as they are altogether inconsistent with the limits of that earth in which they must exist.

“What a miserable catastrophe of the most generous of all human systems of government! How dreadfully would the magistrates of such commonwealths find themselves disconcerted at that fatal period, when there was no longer any room for new colonies, and when the earth could produce no farther supplies! During all the preceding ages, while there was room for increase, mankind must have been happy; the earth must have been a paradise in the literal sense, as the greatest part of it must have been turned into delightful and fruitful gardens. But when the dreadful time should at last come, when our globe, by the most diligent culture, could not produce what was sufficient to nourish its numerous inhabitants, what happy expedient could then be found out to remedy so great an evil?

“In such a cruel necessity, must there be a law to restrain marriage? Must multitudes of women be shut up in cloisters, like the ancient vestals or modern nuns? To keep a ballance between the two sexes, must a proportionable number of men be debarred from marriage? Shall the Utopians, following the wicked policy of superstition, forbid their priests to marry; or shall they rather sacrifice men of some other profession for the good of the state? Or, shall they appoint the sons of certain families to be maimed at their birth, and give a sanction to the unnatural institution of eunuchs? If none of these expedients can be thought proper, shall they appoint a certain number of infants to be exposed to death as soon as they are born, determining the proportion according to the exigencies of the state; and pointing out the particular victims by lot, or according to some established rule? Or, must they shorten the period of human life by a law, and condemn all to die after they had completed a certain age, which might be shorter or longer, as provisions were either more scanty or plentiful? Or what other method should they devise (for an expedient would be absolutely necessary) to restrain the number of citizens within reasonable bounds?

“Alas! how unnatural and inhuman must every such expedient be accounted! The natural passions and appetites of mankind are planted in our frame, to answer the best ends for the happiness both of the individuals and of the species. Shall we be obliged to contradict such a wise order? Shall

we be laid under the necessity of acting barbarously and inhumanly? Sad and fatal necessity! And which, after all, could never answer the end, but would give rise to violence and war. For mankind would never agree about such regulations. Force and arms must, at last, decide their quarrels, and the deaths of such as fall in battle leave sufficient provisions for the survivors, and make room for others to be born.

“Thus the tranquillity and numerous blessings of the Utopian governments would come to an end; war, or cruel and unnatural customs, be introduced, and a stop put to the increase of mankind, to the advancement of knowledge, and to the culture of the earth, in spite of the most excellent laws and wisest precautions. The more excellent the laws had been, and the more strictly they had been observed, mankind must have sooner become miserable. The remembrance of former times, the greatness of their wisdom and virtue, would conspire to heighten their distress; and the world, instead of remaining the mansion of wisdom and happiness, become the scene of vice and confusion. Force and fraud must prevail, and mankind be reduced to the same calamitous condition as at present.

“Such a melancholy situation, in consequence merely of the want of provisions, is in truth more unnatural than all their present calamities. Supposing men to have abused their liberty, by which abuse, vice has once been introduced into the world; and that wrong notions, a bad taste, and vicious habits, have been strengthened by the defects of education and government, our present distresses may be easily explained. They may even be called natural, being the natural consequences of our depravity. They may be supposed to be the means by which Providence punishes vice; and, by setting bounds to the increase of mankind, prevents the earth's being overstocked, and men being laid under the cruel necessity of killing one another. But to suppose, that in the course of a favourable Providence a perfect government had been established, under which the disorders of human passions had been powerfully corrected and restrained; poverty, idleness, and war, banished; the earth made a paradise; universal friendship and concord established, and human society rendered flourishing in all re-

spects; and that such a lovely constitution should be overturned, not by the vices of men, or their abuse of liberty, but by the order of nature itself, seems wholly unnatural, and altogether disagreeable to the methods of Providence."

To this passage, the gloomy theories of Mr. Malthus owe their origin. He took the evil, which Wallace regarded as awaiting the species in its highest state of earthly perfection, as instant and pressing in almost every state of society, and as causing mankind perpetually to oscillate. He represented nature herself as imposing an adamant barrier to improvement. He depicted the tendency of the species to increase in numbers, as arising from passion, mad and ungovernable as well as universal, and as resisted, in its fatal consequences, only by war, famine, or disease. He maintained, that man was placed by nature between two tremendous evils, and could never recede from the strait within which his movements were contracted.

The system thus promulgated in the first edition of the work on *Population*, could not be well applied to any practical uses. It tended to destroy the fair visions of human improvement, and to place a gigantic demon in their room. But it could not form a part of any rational scheme of legislation, because it represented the evils which it depicted as hopeless. Its only moral was despair. But its author—a man whose personal benevolence withstood his doctrines—became anxious to discover some moral purposes to which he might apply his scheme. Accordingly, in his second edition, which was so altered and re-written as to be almost a new work, he introduced a new preventive check on the tendency of population to increase, which he designated "moral restraint;" and proposed to inculcate, by the negative course of leaving all those who did not practise it to the consequences of their error. This new feature appears to us subversive of the whole system, in so far, at least, as it is designed to exhibit insuperable obstacles to the progressive happiness of man. Instead of the evil being regarded as inevitable, a means was expressly enforced by which it might be completely avoided. Celibacy was shown to be a state of attainable and exalted virtue. In calculating on the tendency of the species to increase, we were no longer re-

quired to speculate on a mere instinct, but on a thousand moral and intellectual causes—on the movements of reason, sensibility, imagination, and hope. The rainbow could be as easily grasped, or a sun-beam measured by a line, as the operations of the blended passion and sentiment of love estimated by geometrical series! We will, however, examine a little more closely the popular objection to theories of human improvement, which the principle of population is supposed to offer.

The real question, in this case, is not whether, when the world is fully cultivated, the tendency of the species to increase will be greater than the means of subsistence; but whether this tendency really presses on us at every step of our progress. For, if there is no insuperable barrier to the complete cultivation of the earth, the cessation of all the countless evils of war, and the union of all the brethren of mankind in one great family, we may safely trust to Heaven for the rest. When this universal harmony shall begin, men will surely have attained the virtue and the wisdom to exercise a self-denial, which Mr. Malthus himself represents as fully within their power. In the era of knowledge and of peace, that degree of self-sacrifice can scarcely be impossible, which, even now, our philosopher would inculcate at the peril of starvation. At least, there can be no danger in promoting the happiness of the species, until it shall arise to this fulness; for we are told, that every effort towards it produces a similar peril with that which will embitter its final reign. And if it should exist at last, we may safely believe, that He who pronounced the blessing, "increase and multiply," will not abandon the work of his hands; but that this world then will have answered all the purposes of its creation, and that immortal state will begin, "in which we shall neither marry nor be given in marriage, but be as the angels of God."

Let us inquire, then, whether the evidence of history, or the present aspect of the world, warrant the belief, that the tendency of the species to increase beyond the means of subsistence is a necessary obstacle to the improvement of its condition. If the wretchedness of man really flowed from this source, it is strange that the discovery should not have been made during six thousand years of his misery. He is

not usually thus obtuse, respecting the cause of his sorrows. It will be admitted, that his distresses have most frequently arisen from luxury and from war, as their immediate causes. The first will scarcely be attributed to the want of food; nor can the second be traced to so fantastical an origin. Shakespeare, indeed, represents Coriolanus, in his insolent contempt for humanity, as rejoicing in the approach of war, as the means of "venting the musty superfluity" of the people; but kings have not often engaged in the fearful game on so refined and philosophic principles. On the contrary, the strength of a state was always regarded, in old time, as consisting in the number of its citizens. And, indeed, it is impossible that any of the gigantic evils of mankind should have arisen from the pressure of population against the means of subsistence; because it is impossible to point out any one state in which the means of subsistence have been fully developed and exhausted. If the want of subsistence, then, has ever afflicted a people, it has not arisen, except in case of temporary famine, from a deficiency in the means of subsistence, but in the mode and spirit of using them. The fault has been not in nature, but in man. Population may, in a few instances, have increased beyond the energy of the people to provide for it, but not beyond the resources which God has placed within their power.

The assertion, that there is, in the constant tendency of population to press hardly against the means of subsistence, an insuperable check to any great improvement of the species, is in direct contradiction to history. The species has increased in numbers, and has risen in intelligence, under far more unfavourable circumstances than the present, in spite of this fancied obstacle. There is no stage of civilization, in which the objection to any farther advance might not have been urged with as much plausibility as at the present. While any region, capable of fruitfulness, remains uninhabited and barren, the argument applies with no more force against its cultivation, than it would have applied against the desire of him who founded the first city to extend its boundaries. While the world was before him, he might as reasonably have been warned to decline any plan for bringing wastes into tillage, on the ground that the tendency of man to multiply would thus be incited beyond the means of sup-

plying food, as we, in our time, while the greater part of the earth yet remains to be possessed. And, indeed, the objection has far less force now than at any preceding period;—because not only is space left, but the aids of human power are far greater than in old time. Machinery now enables one man to do as much towards the supply of human wants, as could formerly have been done by hundreds. And shall we select this as the period of society in which the species must stand still, because the means of subsistence can be carried but a little farther?

It seems impossible to cast a cursory glance over the earth, and retain the belief, that there is some insuperable obstacle in the constitution of nature, to the development of its vast and untried resources. Surely, immense regions of unbounded fertility—long successions of spicy groves—trackless pastures watered by ocean—rivers formed to let in wealth to the midst of a great continent—and islands which lie calmly on the breast of crystal seas were not created for eternal solitude and silence. Until these are peopled, and the earth is indeed “replenished and subdued,” the command and the blessing, “increase and multiply,” must continue unrecalled by its great Author. Shall not Egypt revive its old fruitfulness, and Palestine again flow with milk and honey?

The hypothesis, that population left to itself will increase in a geometrical progression, while the means of subsistence can only be enlarged in an arithmetical progression, is a mere fantasy. Vegetables, cattle, and fish, have far greater powers of productiveness than the human species; and the only obstacle to those powers being developed in an equal degree, is the want of room for them to increase, or the want of energy or wisdom in man to apply the bounty of nature to its fittest uses. The first want cannot exist while the larger part of the earth is barren, and the riches of the ocean remain unexhausted. The second, with all the disadvantages of ignorance, war, tyranny, and vice, has not prevented the boundaries of civilization from widely extending. What is there then in this particular stage of society, which should induce the belief, that the sinews of humanity are shrivelled up, and its energy falling to decay? The same quantity of food or of clothing—the same comforts and the same luxu-

ries—which once required the labour of a hundred hands, are now produced almost without personal exertion. And is the spirit in man so broken down and debased, that, with all the aids of machinery, he cannot effect as much as the labour of his own right arm would achieve in the elder time? If, indeed, he is thus degenerate, the fault, at least, is not in nature, but in external and transitory causes. But we are prepared clearly, though briefly, to show, that man has been and is, on the whole, advancing in true virtue, and in moral and intellectual energy.

It cannot be denied, that there are many apparent oscillations in the course of the species. If we look at only a small portion of history, it may seem retrograde, as a view of one of the windings of a noble river may lead us to imagine that it is flowing from the ocean. The intricacies of human affairs, the perpetual opposition of interests, prejudices, and passions, do not permit mankind to proceed in a right line; but, if we overlook any large series of ages, we shall clearly perceive, that the course of man is towards perfection. In contemplating the past, our attention is naturally attracted to the illustrious nations, whose story is consecrated by our early studies. But even if we take these, and forget the savage barbarism of the rest of the world, we shall find little to excite our envy. Far be it from us to deny, that there were among these, some men of pure and disinterested virtue, whose names are like great sea-marks in the dreariness of the perspective, and whom future generations can only desire to imitate. Our nature has always had some to vindicate its high capabilities of good. But even among the privileged classes of Greece and Rome—the selected minority, to whom all the rights of nature were confined more strictly than in the strictest modern despotism—how rare are the instances of real and genuine goodness! The long succession of bloody tragedies—that frightful alternation of cruelties and of meannesses—the Peloponnesian war, was perpetrated in the midst of the people, who had just carried the arts to their highest perfection. Gratitude, honesty, and good faith, had no place in the breast of Athenian citizens. The morals of the Spartans were even more despicable than those of their rivals. Their mixture of barbarity and of craft towards their foes, and the states which were tributary to their

power—their unnatural sacrifice of the most sacred of the affections of nature to mere national glory—and their dreadful conduct towards the wretched Helots, who were their property,—have scarcely a parallel in human history. The long conspiracy of Rome against the liberties of mankind, carried on from the time of its foundation until it began to decline, served to string every sinew into a horrid rigidity, and to steel the heart to the feelings of compassion. This is the description of its progress by one of its own historians :

“ Raptores orbis, postquam cuncta vastantibus defuere terræ, et mare scrutantur; si locuples hostis est, avari; si pauper, ambitiosi: quos non oriens non occidens satiaverit; soli omnium opes atque inopiam pari affectu concupiscunt. Auferre, trucidare, rapere, falsis nominibus imperium, atque ubi solitudinem pacem appellent.” (*Tacitus Vit. Agricolæ*, 30.)

The proscriptions of Marius and Sylla alone proved what this savage spirit could perpetrate at home, when it had exhausted all opportunities of satiating, among foreign states, its thirst for slaughter.

If we pass over the improvements in morals—the amelioration of war—the progress of political science—and the redemption of the female sex from degradation and from bondage—we shall find, in one great change alone, ample reason to rejoice in the advances of the species. The simple term, *humanity*, expresses the chief difference between our times and the brightest of classical ages. In those there was no feeling for man, as man—no recognition of a common brother-hood—no sense of those qualities which all men have in common, and of those claims which those who are “made of one blood” have on each other for justice and for mercy. Manhood was nothing, citizenship was all in all. Nearly all the virtues were aristocratical and exclusive. The number of slaves—their dreadful condition—and the sanction which the law gave to all the cruelties practised on them—showed that the masters of the world had no sense of the dignity of their nature, whatever they might feel for the renown of their country, or the privileges of their order. The Spartan youths massacred their Helots, to nurture their

valour. Indeed, the barbarities inflicted on that miserable race, by those whom we are sometimes taught to admire, would exceed belief, if they were not attested by the clearest proofs. At Rome, slaves, when too old for work, were often sent to an island in the Tiber, and left there to perish. On the slightest offence, they were frequently thrown into fish-ponds, exposed to wild beasts, or sentenced to die upon the cross. And in the same spirit of contempt for humanity, and veneration for the privileged orders, parents had power to imprison their children or put them to death, and wives were left, without protection, to the brutal ferocity of their husbands.

With how different feelings are the rights of humanity regarded in these happier seasons! Slavery is abolished throughout the Christian kingdoms of Europe, and, with few exceptions, equal justice is administered to all. There is no grief which does not meet with pity, and few miseries which do not excite the attempt to relieve them. Men are found of sensibilities keen even to agony, who, tremblingly alive in every fibre to wretchedness, have yet the moral heroism to steel their nerves to the investigation of the most hideous details of suffering, with no desire of applause or wish for reward, except that which success itself will give them. Within a few short years, what great moral changes have been effected! The traffic in human beings, which was practised without compunction or disgrace, and defended in parliament as a fair branch of commerce, is now made a felony, and those who are detected in pursuing it would almost be torn in pieces by popular fury. The most cruel enactments against freedom of thought and of discussion have been silently repealed, while scarcely a voice has been raised to defend or to mourn them. And, above all, a moral elevation has been given to the great mass of the rising generation, by the provision for their instruction, of which no time, or change, or accident can deprive them.

There is a deep-rooted opinion, which has been eloquently propounded by some of the first critics of our age, that works of imagination must necessarily decline as civilization advances. It will readily be conceded, that no individual minds can be expected to arise, in the most refined periods, which will surpass those which have been developed in rude and

barbarous ages. But there does not appear any solid reason for believing, that the mighty works of old time occupy the whole region of poetry—or necessarily chill the fancy of these later times by their vast and unbroken shadows. Genius does not depend on times or on seasons, it waits not on external circumstances, it can neither be subdued by the violence of the most savage means, nor polished away or dissipated among the refinements of the most glittering scenes of artificial life. It is “itself alone.” To the heart of a young poet, the world is ever beginning anew. He is in the generation by which he is surrounded, but he is not of it; he can live in the light of the holiest times, or range amidst gorgeous marvels of eldest superstition, or sit “lone upon the shores of old romance,” or pierce the veil of mortality, and “breathe in worlds to which the heaven of heavens is but a veil.” The very deficiency of the romantic, in the actual paths of existence, will cause him to dwell in thought more apart from them, and to seek the wildest recesses in those regions which imagination opens to his inward gaze. To the eye of young joy, the earth is as fresh as at the first—the dew-drop is lit up as it was in Eden—and “the splendour in the grass, the glory in the flower,” yet glitters as in the spring-time of the world.

The subjects in which genius rejoices, are not the vain and the transitory, but the true and the eternal, which are the same through all changes of society and shifting varieties of fashion. The heavens yet “tell the glory of God;” the hills, the vales, and the ocean, do not alter, nor does the heart of man wax old. The wonders of these are as exhaustless as they are lasting. While these remain, the circumstances of busy life—the exact mechanism of the social state—will affect the true poet but little. The seeds of genius, which contain within themselves the germs of expanded beauties and divinest sublimities, cannot perish. Wheresoever they are scattered, they must take root, striking far below the surface, overcropped and exhausted by the multitude of transitory productions, into a deep richness of soil, and, rising up above the weeds and tangled underwood which would crush them, lift their innumerable boughs into the free and rejoicing heavens.

The advancement of natural science and of moral truth

do not tend really to lessen the resources of the bard. The more we know, the more we feel there is yet to be known. The mysteries of nature and of humanity are not lessened, but increased, by the discoveries of philosophic skill. The lustre which breaks on the vast clouds, which encircle us in our earthly condition, does not merely set in clear vision that which before was hidden in sacred gloom; but, at the same time, half exhibits masses of magnificent shadow, unknown before, and casts an uncertain light on vast regions, in which the imagination may devoutly expatiate. A plastic superstition may fill a limited circle with beautiful images, but it chills and confines the fancy, almost as strictly as it limits the reasoning faculties. The mythology of Greece, for example, while it peopled earth with a thousand glorious shapes, shut out the free grace of nature from poetic vision, and excluded from the ken the high beatings of the soul. All the loveliness of creation, and all the qualities, feelings, and passions, were invested with personal attributes. The evening's sigh was the breath of Zephyr—the streams were celebrated, not in their rural clearness, but as visionary nymphs—and ocean, that old agitator of sublimest thoughts, gave place, in the imagination, to a trident-bearing god. The tragic muse almost "forgot herself to stone," in her lone contemplations of destiny. No wild excursiveness of fancy marked their lighter poems—no majestic struggle of high passions and high actions filled the scene—no genial wisdom threw a penetrating, yet lovely, light on the silent recesses of the bosom. The diffusion of a purer faith restored to poetry its glowing affections, its far-searching intelligence, and its excursive power. And not only this, but it left it free to use those exquisite figures, and to avail itself of all the chaste and delicate imagery, which the exploded superstition first called into being. In the stately regions of imagination, the wonders of Greek fable yet have place, though they no longer hide from our view the secrets of our nature, or the long vistas which extend to the dim verge of the moral horizon. Well, indeed, does a great living poet assert their poetic existence, under the form of defending the science of the stars:

"For Fable is Love's world, his home, his birth place;
Delightedly dwells he 'mong fays and talismans,

And spirits; and delightedly believes
 Divinities, being himself divine.
 The intelligible forms of ancient poets,
 The fair humanities of old religion,
 The power, the beauty, and the majesty,
 That had their haunts in dale or piny mountain,
 Or forest, by slow stream or pebbly spring,
 Or chasms and watery depths! all these have vanish'd,
 They live no longer in the faith of reason!
 But still the heart doth need a language, still
 Doth the old instinct bring back the old names;
 And to yon starry world they now are gone,
 Spirits or gods, that us'd to share this earth
 With man as with their friend; and to the lover
 Yonder they move, from yonder visible sky
 Shoot influence down; and, even at this day,
 'Tis Jupiter who brings whate'er is great,
 And Venus that brings every thing that's fair!"*

The poet is the inheritor of the imaginative treasures of all creeds which reason has now exploded. The dim gigantic shadows of the north—the gentle superstitions of the Greeks—the wild and wondrous prodigies of the Arabian enchantment—the dark rites of magic, more heart-stirring than all—have their places in the vast region of his soul. When we climb above the floating mists which have so long overspread humanity, to breathe a purer air, and gaze on the unclouded heavens, we do not lose our feeling of veneration for majestic errors, nor our sense of their glories. Instead of wandering in the region of cloud, we overlook it all, and behold its gorgeous varieties of arch, minaret, dome, or spire, without partaking in its delusions.

But we have no need of resort to argument, in order to show that genius is not gradually declining. A glance at its productions, in the present age, will suffice to prove the gloomy mistake of desponding criticism. We will sketch very lightly over the principal living authors, to illustrate this position—satisfied that the mere mention of their names will awaken, within our readers, recollections of delight, far more than sufficient triumphantly to contravene the theory of those who believe in the degeneracy of genius.

* Colridge's translation of Schiller's *Wallenstein*.

And first—in the great walk of poesy—is Wordsworth, who, if he stood alone, would vindicate the immortality of his art. He has, in his works, built up a rock of defence for his species, which will resist the mightiest tides of demoralizing luxury. Setting aside the varied and majestic harmony of his verse—the freshness and the grandeur of his descriptions—the exquisite softness of his delineations of character—and the high and rapturous spirit of his choral songs—we may produce his “divine philosophy” as unequalled by any preceding bard. And surely it is no small proof of the infinity of the resources of genius, that, in this late age of the world, the first of all philosophic poets should have arisen, to open a new vein of sentiment and thought, deeper and richer than yet had been laid bare to mortal eyes. His rural pictures are as fresh and as lively as those of Cowper, yet how much lovelier is the poetic light which is shed over them! His exhibition of gentle peculiarities of character, and dear immunities of heart, is as true and as genial as that of Goldsmith, yet how much is its interest heightened by its intimate connexion, as by golden chords, with the noblest and most universal truths! His little pieces of tranquil beauty are as holy and as sweet as those of Collins, and yet, while we feel the calm of the elder poet gliding into our souls, we catch farther glimpses through the luxuriant boughs into “the highest heaven of invention.” His soul mantles as high with love and joy, as that of Burns, but yet “how bright, how solemn, how serene,” is the brimming and lucid stream! His poetry not only discovers, within the heart, new faculties, but awakens within, its untried powers, to comprehend and to enjoy its beauty and its wisdom.

Not less marvellously gifted, though in a far different manner, is Coleridge, who, by a strange error, has been usually regarded as belonging to the same school, partaking of the same peculiarities, and upholding the same doctrines. Instead, like Wordsworth, of seeking the sources of sublimity and of beauty in the simplest elements of humanity, he ranges through all history and science, investigating all that has really existed, and all that has had foundation only in the strangest and wildest minds, combining, condensing, developing, and multiplying the rich products of his research with marvellous facility and skill; now pondering fondly over

some piece of exquisite loveliness, brought from a wild and unknown recess; now tracing out the hidden germ of the eldest and most barbaric theories; and now calling fantastic spirits from the vasty deep, where they have slept since the dawn of reason. The term, "myriad-minded," which he has happily applied to Shakspeare, is truly descriptive of himself. He is not one, but Legion—"rich with the spoils of time," richer in his own glorious imagination and sportive fantasy. There is nothing more wonderful than the facile majesty of his images, or rather of his worlds of imagery, which, even in his poetry or his prose, start up before us self-raised and all perfect, like the palace of Aladdin. He ascends to the sublimest truths, by a winding tract of sparkling glory, which can only be described in his own language—

"the spirits' ladder,
That from this gross and visible world of dust
Even to the starry world, with thousand rounds
Builds itself up; on which the unseen powers
Move up and down on heavenly ministries—
The circles in the circles, that approach
The central sun with ever-narrowing orbit."

In various beauty of versification, he has never been exceeded. Shakspeare, doubtless, has surpassed him in linked sweetness and exquisite continuity, and Milton in pure majesty and classic grace—but this is in one species of verse only—and, taking all his trials of various metres, the swelling harmony of his blank verse, the sweet breathing of his gentler odes, and the sybil-like flutter alternate with the murmuring charm of his wizzard spells, we doubt if even these great masters have so fully developed the music of the English tongue. He has yet completed no adequate memorials of his genius; yet it is most unjust to assert, that he has done nothing or little. To refute this assertion, there are, his noble translation of *Wallenstein*—his love-poems of intensest beauty—his *Ancient Mariner*, with its touches of profoundest tenderness amidst the wildest and most bewildering terrors—his holy and most sweet tale of *Christabel*, with its rich enchantments and its richer humanities—the depths, the sublimities, and the pensive sweetness of his tragedy—the heart-dilating sentiments scattered through his

“*Friend*”—and the stately imagery which breaks upon us at every turn of the golden paths of his metaphysical labyrinths. And, if he has a power within mightier than that which even these glorious creations indicate, shall he be censured because he has deviated from the ordinary course of the age, in its development; and, instead of committing his imaginative wisdom to the press, has delivered it from his living lips? He has gone about in the true spirit of an old Greek bard, with a noble carelessness of self, giving fit utterance to the divine spirit within him. Who that has heard can ever forget him—his mild benignity—the unbounded variety of his knowledge—the fast succeeding products of his imagination—the child-like simplicity with which he rises, from the driest and commonest theme, into the widest magnificence of thought, pouring on the soul a stream of beauty and of wisdom, to mellow and enrich it for ever! The seeds of poetry, which he has thus scattered, will not perish. The records of his fame are not in books only, but on the fleshly tablets of young hearts, who will not suffer it to die even in the general ear; however base and unfeeling criticism may deride their gratitude!

Charles Lamb is as original as either of these, within the smaller circle which he has chosen. We know not of any writer, living or dead, to whom we can fitly liken him. The exceeding delicacy of his fancy, the keenness of his perceptions of truth and beauty, the sweetness and the wisdom of his humour, and the fine interchange and sportive combination of all these, so frequent in his works, are entirely and peculiarly his own. As it has been said of Swift, that his better genius was his spleen, it may be asserted of Lamb, that his kindliness is his inspiration. With how nice an eye does he detect the least hitherto unnoticed indication of goodness, and with how true and gentle a touch does he bring it out to do good to our natures! How new and strange do some of his more fantastical ebullitions seem, yet how invariably do they come home to the very core, and smile at the heart! He makes the majesties of imagination seem familiar, and gives to familiar things a pathetic beauty or a venerable air. Instead of finding that every thing in his writings is made the most of, we always feel that the tide of sentiment and of thought is pent in, and that the airy and variegated bubbles

spring up from a far depth in the placid waters. The loveliness of his thought looks, in the quaintness of his style, like a modest beauty, laced-in and attired in a dress of the superb fashion of the elder time. His versification is not greatly inferior to that of Coleridge, and it is, in all its best qualities, unlike that of any other poet. His heroic couplets are alternately sweet, terse, and majestic; and his octo-syllabic measures have a freeness and completeness, which mark them the pure Ionic of verse.

Barry Cornwall, with the exception of Coleridge, is the most genuine poet of love, who has, for a long period, appeared among us. There is an intense and passionate beauty, a depth of affection, in his little dramatic poems, which appear even in the affectionate triflings of his gentle characters. He illustrates that holiest of human emotions, which, while it will twine itself with the frailest twig, or dally with the most evanescent shadow of creation, wasting its excess of kindness on all around it, is yet able to "look on tempests and be never shaken." Love is gently omnipotent in his poems; accident and death itself are but passing clouds, which scarcely vex and which cannot harm it. The lover seems to breathe out his life in the arms of his mistress, as calmly as the infant sinks into its softest slumber. The fair blossoms of his genius, though light and trembling at the breeze, spring from a wide, and deep, and robust stock, which will sustain far taller branches without being exhausted. In the vision, where he sees "the famous Babylon," in his exquisite sonnets, and yet more in his *Marcian Colonna*, has he shown a feeling and a power for the elder venerableness of the poetic art, which, we are well assured, he is destined successfully to develope.

Some of our readers will, perhaps, wonder, that we have thus long delayed the mention of the most popular of the living poets. But, though we have no desire to pass them by, we must confess, that we do not rest chiefly on them our good hope for English genius. Lord Byron's fame has arisen, we suspect, almost as much from an instinctive awe of his nobility, and from a curiosity to know the secrets of his diseased soul, which he so often partially gratifies, as from the strength and turbid majesty of his productions. His mind is, however, doubtless cast in no ordinary mould. His

chief poetic attributes appear, to us, to be an exceedingly quick sensibility to external beauty and grandeur, a capability and a love of violent emotion, and a singular mastery of language. He has no power over himself, which is the highest of all qualifications for a poet as it is for a man. He has no calm meditative greatness, no harmonizing spirit, no pure sense of love and of joy. He is as far beneath the calmly imaginative poets, as the region of tempests and storms is below the quiet and unclouded heavens. He excites intense feeling, by leading his readers to the brink of unimaginable horror, by dark hints of nameless sins, or by the strange union of virtues and of vices, which God and nature have for ever divided. Yet are there touches of grace and beauty scattered throughout his works, occasional bursts of redeeming enthusiasm, which make us deeply regret the too-often "admired disorder" of his soul. The stream of his genius falls, from a vast height, amidst bleakest rocks, into depths, which mortal eye cannot fathom, and into which it is dangerous to gaze; but it sends up a radiant mist in its fall, which the sun tints with heavenly colouring, and it leaves its echoes on the golden and quiet clouds! The too frequent perversion of his genius does not prevent it from showing, in its degree, the immortality of the most sublime of the human faculties.

Sir Walter Scott, if his poetry is not all which his countrymen proclaim it, is a bard, in whose success every good man must rejoice. His feeling of nature is true, if it is not profound; his humanity is pure, if it is not deep; his knowledge of facts is choice and various, if his insight into their philosophy is not very clear or extensive. Dr. Percy's *Reliques* prepared his way, and the unpublished *Christabel* aided his inspirations; but he is entitled to the credit of having first brought romantic poetry into fashion. Instead of the wretched sentimentalities of the Della Cruscan school, he supplied the public with pictures of nature, and with fair visions of chivalry. If he is, and we hope as well as believe that he is, the author of the marvellous succession of Scotch romances, he deserves far deeper sentiments of gratitude than those which his poems awaken. Then does he merit the praise of having sent the mountain breezes into the heart of this great nation; of having supplied us all with a glorious crowd

of acquaintance, and even of friends, whose society will never disturb or weary us; and of having made us glow a thousand times with honest pride, in that nature of which we are part-takers!

Mr. Southey is an original poet, and a delightful prose-writer, though he does not even belong to the class which it has been the fashion to represent him as redeeming. He has neither the intensity of Wordsworth, nor the glorious expansion of Coleridge; but he has their holiness of imagination, and child-like purity of thought. His fancies are often as sweet and as heavenly, as those which "may make a crysome child to smile." There is, too, sometimes an infantine love of glitter and pomp, and of airy castle-building, displayed in his more fantastical writings. The great defect of his purest and loftiest poems is, that they are not imbued with humanity; they do not seem to have their only home on "this dear spot, this human earth of ours," but their scenes might be transferred, perhaps with advantage, to the moon or one of the planets. In the loneliest bower which poesy can rear, deep in a trackless wild, or in some island, placed "far amid the melancholy main," the air of this world must yet be allowed to breathe, if the poet would interest "us poor humans." It may heighten even the daintiest solitude of blessed lovers,

"All the while to feel and know,
That they are in a world of wo,
On such an earth as this."

Mr. Southey's poems are beautiful and pure, yet too far from our common emotions. His *Joan of Arc*, his *Thalaba*, and his *Roderick*, are full of the stateliest pictures. But his *Kehama* is his greatest work—the most marvellous succession of fantasies, "sky tintured," ever called into being, without the aid of real and hearty faith! Mr. Southey's prose style is singularly lucid and simple. His life of Nelson is a truly British work, giving the real heartiness of naval strength of our country, without ostentation or cant; his memoir of Kirke White is very unaffected and pathetic; and his *Essays on the State of the Poor*, really touching in their benevolence, and their well regulated sympathies. Of the violences of his more decidedly political effusions, we shall not

here venture to give an opinion ; except to express our firm belief, that they have never been influenced by motives unworthy of a man of genius.

Mr. Campbell has not done much which is excellent in poetry, but that which he has written well is admirable in its kind. His battle-odes are simple, affecting, and sublime.— Few passages can exceed the dying speech of Gertrude, in sweet pathos, or the war-song of old Outalissi, in stern and ferocious grandeur. It is astonishing, that he, who could produce these and other pieces of most genuine poetry, should, on some occasions, egregiously mistake gaudy words for imagination ; and heap up fragments of bad metaphors, as though he could scale the “ highest heaven of invention,” by the accumulation of mere earthly materials.

It is the singular lot of Moore, to seem in his smaller pieces, as though he were fitted for the highest walk of poetry ; and, in his more ambitious efforts, to appear as though he could fabricate nothing but glittering tinsel. The truth is, however, that those of his attempts, which the world thinks the boldest, and in which we regard him as unsuccessful, are not above but beneath his powers. A thousand tales of veiled prophets, who wed ladies in the abodes of the dead, and frighten their associates to death by their maimed and mangled countenances, may be produced with far less expense of true imagination, fancy, or feeling, than one sweet song, which shall seem the very echo “ of summer days and delightful years.” Moore is not fit for the composition of tales of demon frenzy and feverish strength, only because his genius is of too pure and noble an essence. He is the most sparkling and graceful of triflers. It signifies little, whether the Fives Court or the Palacé furnish him with materials. However repulsive the subject, he can “ turn all to favour, and to prettiness.” Clay and gold, subjected to his easy inimitable hand, are wrought into shapes, so pleasingly fantastic, that the difference of the subject is lost in the fineness of the workmanship. His lighter pieces are distinguished at once by deep feeling, and a gay festive air, which he never entirely loses. He leads wit, sentiment, patriotism, and fancy, in a gay fantastic round, gambols sportively with fate, and holds a dazzling fence with care and with sorrow. He has seized all the “ snatches of old tunes,” which yet lingered

about the wildest regions of his wild and fanciful country; and has fitted to them words of accordance, the most exquisite. There is a luxury in his grief, and a sweet melancholy in his joy, which are old and well remembered in our experience, though scarcely ever before thus nicely revived in poetry.

The works of Crabbe are full of good sense, condensed thought, and lively picture; yet the greater part of them is almost the converse of poetry. The mirror which he holds up to nature, is not that of imagination, which softens down the asperities of actual existences, brings out the stately and the beautiful, while it leaves the trivial and the low in shadow, and sets all things which it reflects in harmony before us: on the contrary, it exhibits the details of the coarsest and most unpleasing realities, with microscopic accuracy and minuteness. Some of his subjects are, in themselves, worthless—others are absolutely revolting—yet it is impossible to avoid admiring the strange nicety of touch with which he has felt their discordances, and the ingenuity with which he has painted them. His likenesses absolutely startle us.—There are cases in which this intense consciousness of little circumstances is prompted by deep passion; and, whenever Mr. Crabbe seizes one of these, his extreme minuteness rivets and enchants us. The effect of this vivid picturing in one of his tales, where a husband relates to his wife the story of her own intrigue before marriage, as a tale of another, is thrilling and grand. In some of his poems, as his *Sir Eustace Grey* and the *Gipsy-woman's Confession*, he has shown that he can wield the mightiest passions with ease, when he chooses to rise from the contemplation of the individual to that of the universal; from the delineation of men and things, to that of man and the universe.

We dissent from many of Leigh Hunt's principles of morality and of taste; but we cannot suffer any difference of opinion to prevent the avowal of our deep sense of his poetical genius. He is a poet of various and sparkling fancy, of real affectionate heartiness, and of pathos as deep and pure as that of any living writer. He unites an English homeliness, with the richest Italian luxury. The story of *Rimini* is one of the most touching, which we have ever received into our "heart of hearts." The crispness of the descriptive

passages, the fine spirit of gallantry in the chivalrous delineations, the exquisite gradations of the fatal affection and the mild heart-breaking remorse of the heroine ; form, altogether, a body of sweetly-bitter recollections, for which none but the most heartless of critics would be unthankful. The fidelity and spirit of his little translations are surprising. Nor must we forget his prose works ;—the wonderful power, with which he has for many years sent forth weekly essays, of great originality, both of substance and expression ; and which seem now as fresh and unexhausted as ever. We have nothing here to do with his religion or his politics ;—but, it is impossible to help admiring the healthful impulses, which he has so long been breathing “into the torpid breast of daily life ;” or the plain and manly energy, with which he has shaken the selfishness of the age, and sent the claims of the wretched in full and resistless force to the bosoms of the proud, or the thoughtless. In some of his productions—especially in several numbers of the *Indicator*—he has revived some of those lost parts of our old experience, which we had else wholly forgotten ; and has given a fresh sacredness to our daily walks and ordinary habits. We do not see any occasion in this for terms of reproach or ridicule. The scenery around London is not the finest in the world ; but it is all which an immense multitude can see of nature, and surely it is no less worthy an aim to hallow a spot which thousands may visit, than to expatiate on the charms of some dainty solitude, which can be enjoyed only by an occasional traveller.

There are other living poets, some of them of great excellence, on whose merits we should be happy to dwell, but that time and space would fail us. We might expatiate on the heaven-breathing pensiveness of Montgomery—on the elegant reminiscences of Rogers—on the gentle eccentricity of Wilson—on the luxurious melancholy of Bowles—or on the soft beauties of Ettrick Shepherd. The works of Lloyd are rich in materials of reflection—most intense, yet most gentle—most melancholy, yet most full of kindness—most original in philosophic thought, yet most calm and benignant towards the errors of the world. Reynolds has given delightful indications of a free, and happy, and bounteous spirit, fit to sing of merry out-laws and green-wood revelries, which we trust he will suffer to refresh us with its blithe carollings.

Keats, whose *Endymion* was so cruelly treated by the critics, has just put forth a volume of poems which must effectually silence his deriders. The rich romance of his *Lamia*—the holy beauty of his *St. Agnes' Eve*—the pure and simple diction and intense feeling of his *Isabella*—and the rough sublimity of his *Hyperion*—cannot be laughed down, though all the periodical critics in England and Scotland were to assail them with their sneers. Shelley, too, notwithstanding the odious subject of his last tragedy, evinced in that strange work a real human power, of which there is little trace among the old allegories and metaphysical splendours of his earlier productions. No one can fail to perceive, that there are mighty elements in his genius, although there is a melancholy want of a presiding power—a central harmony—in his soul. Indeed, rich as the present age is in poetry, it is even richer in promise. There are many minds—among which we may, particularly, mention that of Maturin—which are yet disturbed even by the number of their own incomplete perceptions. These, however, will doubtless fulfill their glorious destiny, as their imaginations settle into that calm lucidness, which in the instance of Keats has so rapidly succeeded to turbid and impetuous confusion.

The dramatic literature of the present age does not hold a rank proportioned to its poetical genius. But our tragedy, at least, is superior to any which has been produced since the rich period of Elizabeth and of James. Though the dramatic works of Shiel, Maturin, Coleridge, and Milman, are not so grand, and harmonious, and impressive, as the talent of their authors would lead us to desire, they are far superior to the tragedies of Hill, Southern, Murphy, Johnson, Philipps, Thomson, Young, Addison, or Rowe. Otway's *Venice Preserved* alone—and that only in the stucture of its plot—is superior to the *Remorse*, to *Bertram*, *Fazio*, or *Evadne*. And then—more pure, more dramatic, more gentle, than all these, is the tragedy of *Virginus*—a piece of simple yet beautiful humanity—in which the most exquisite succession of classic groups is animated with young life and connected by the finest links of interest—and the sweetest of Roman stories lives before us at once, new and familiar to our bosoms.

We shall not be suspected of any undue partiality to-

wards modern criticism. But its talent shows, perhaps, more decidedly than any thing else, the great start which the human mind has taken of late years. Throughout all the periodical works extant, from the *Edinburgh Review* down to the lowest of the Magazines, striking indications may be perceived of "that something far more deeply inter-fused," which is now working in the literature of England. We not rarely see criticisms on theatrical performances of the preceding evening in the daily newspapers, which would put to shame the elaborate observations of Dr. Johnson on Shakspeare. Mr. Hazlitt—incomparably the most original of the regular critics—has almost raised criticism into an independent art, and, while analyzing the merits of others, has disclosed stores of sentiment, thought, and fancy, which are his own peculiar property. His relish for the excellencies of those whom he eulogizes, is so keen, that, in his delineations, the pleasures of intellect become almost as vivid and substantial as those of sense. He introduces us into the very presence of the great of old time, and enables us almost to imagine that we hear them utter the living words of beauty and wisdom. He makes us companions of their happiest hours, and share not only in the pleasures which they diffused, but in those which they tasted. He discloses to us the hidden soul of beauty, not like an anatomist but like a lover. His criticisms, instead of breaking the sweetest enchantments of life, prolongs them, and teaches us to love poetic excellence more intensely, as well as more wisely.

The present age is, also, honourably distinguished by the variety and the excellence of productions from the pen of women. In poetry—there is the deep passion, richly tinged with fancy, of Baillie—the delicate romance of Mitford—the gentle beauty and feminine chivalry of Beetham—and the classic elegance of Hemans. There is a greater abundance of female talent among the novelists. The exquisite sarcasm of humour of Madame D'Arblay—the soft and romantic charm of the novels of the Porters—the brilliant ease and admirable good sense of Edgeworth—the intense humanity of Inchbald—the profound insight into the fearful depths of the soul with which the author of *Glenarvon* is gifted—the heart-rending pathos of Opie—and the gentle

wisdom, the holy sympathy with the holiest childhood, and the sweet imaginings, of the author of *Mrs. Leicester's School*—soften and brighten the literary aspect of the age. These indications of female talent are not only delightful in themselves, but inestimable as proofs of the rich intellectual treasures which are diffused throughout the sex, to whom the next generation will owe their first and their most sacred impressions.

But, after all, the best intellectual sign of the present times is the general education of the poor. This ensures duration to the principles of good, by whatever political changes the frame of society may be shaken. The sense of human rights and of human duties is not now confined to a few, and, therefore, liable to be lost, but is stamped in living characters on millions of hearts. And the foundations of human improvement thus secured, it has a tendency to advance in a true geometrical progression. Mean while, the effects of the spirit of improvement which have long been silently preparing in different portions of the globe, are becoming brilliantly manifest. The vast continent of South America, whether it continue nominally dependent on European states, or retain its own newly-asserted freedom, will teem with new intellect, enterprize, and energy. Old Spain, long sunk into the most abject degradation, has suddenly awakened, as if refreshed from slumber, and her old genius must revive with her old dignities. A bloodless revolution has just given liberty to Naples, and thus has opened the way for the restoration of Italy. That beautiful region again will soon inspire her bards with richer strains than of yore, and diffuse throughout the world a purer luxury. Amidst these quickenings of humanity, individual poets, indeed, must lose that personal importance which in darker periods would be their portion. All selfism—all predominant desire for the building up of individual fame—must give way to the earnest and single wish to share in, and promote, the general progress of the species. He is unworthy of the name of a great poet, who is not contented that the loveliest of his imaginations should be lost in the general light, or viewed only as the soft and delicate streaks which shall usher in that glorious dawn, which is, we believe, about to rise on the world, and to set no more!

ON PULPIT ORATORY.

WITH REMARKS ON THE REVEREND ROBERT HALL.

[London Magazine.]

THE decline of eloquence in the Senate and at the Bar is no matter of surprise. In the freshness of its youth, it was the only medium by which the knowledge and energy of a single heart could be communicated to thousands. It supplied the place, not only of the press, but of that general communication between the different classes of the state, which the intercourses of modern society supply. Then the passions of men, unchilled by the frigid customs of later days, left them open to be inflamed or enraptured by the bursts of an enthusiasm, which would now be met only with scorn. In our courts of law occasions rarely arise for animated addresses to the heart; and even when these occur, the barrister is fettered by technical rules, and yet more by the technical habits and feelings, of those by whom he is encircled. A comparatively small degree of fancy, and a glow of social feeling, directed by a tact which will enable a man to proceed with a constant appearance of directing his course within legal confines, are now the best qualifications of a forensic orator. They were exhibited by Lord Erskine in the highest perfection, and attended with the most splendid success. Had he been greater than he was, he had been nothing. He ever seemed to cherish an affection for the technicalities of his art, which won the confidence of his duller associates. He appeared to lean on these as his stays and resting-places, even when he ventured to look into the depth of human nature, or to catch a momentary glimpse of

the regions of fantasy. When these were taken from him, his powers fascinated no longer. He was exactly adapted to the sphere of a court of law—above his fellows, but not beyond their gage—and giving to the forms which he could not forsake, an air of venerableness and grandeur. Any thing more full of beauty and wisdom than his speeches, would be heard only with cold and bitter scorn in an English court of justice. In the houses of parliament, mightier questions are debated; but no speaker hopes to influence the decision. Indeed the members of opposition scarcely pretend to struggle against the “dead eloquence of votes,” but speak with a view to an influence on the public mind, which is a remote and chilling aim. Were it otherwise, the academic education of the members—the prevalent disposition to ridicule, rather, than to admire—and the sensitiveness which resents a burst of enthusiasm as an offence against the decorum of polished society—would effectually repress any attempt to display an eloquence in which intense passion should impel the imagination, and noble sentiment should be steeped in fancy. The orations delivered on charitable occasions,—consisting, with few exceptions, of poor conceits, miserable compliments, and hackneyed metaphors,—are scarcely worthy of a transient allusion.

But the causes which have opposed the excellence of pulpit oratory in modern times, are not so obvious. Its subjects have never varied, from the day when the Holy Spirit visibly descended on the first advocates of the Gospel, in tongues of fire. They are in no danger of being exhausted by frequency, or changed with the vicissitudes of mortal fortune. They have immediate relation to that eternity, the idea of which is the living soul of all poetry and art. It is the province of the preachers of Christianity to develop the connexion between this world and the next—to watch over the beginnings of a course which will endure for ever—and to trace the broad shadows cast from imperishable realities on the shifting scenery of earth. This sublunary sphere does not seem to them as trifling or mean, in proportion as they extend their views onward; but assumes a new grandeur and sanctity, as the vestibule of a statelier and an eternal region. The mysteries of our being—life and death—both in their strange essences, and in their sublimer relations, are topics of

their ministry. There is nothing affecting in the human condition, nothing majestic in the affections, nothing touching in the instability of human dignities,—the fragility of loveliness,—or the heroism of self-sacrifice—which is not a theme suited to their high purposes. It is theirs to dwell on the eldest history of the world—on the beautiful simplicities of the patriarchal age—on the stern and awful religion, and marvellous story of the Hebrews—on the glorious visions of the prophets, and their fulfillment—on the character, miracles, and death of the Saviour—on all the wonders, and all the beauty of the Scriptures. It is theirs to trace the spirit of the boundless and the eternal, faintly breathing in every part of the mystic circle of superstition, unquenched even amidst the most barbarous rites of savage tribes, and all the cold and beautiful shapes of Grecian mould. The inward soul of every religious system—the philosophical spirit of all history—the deep secrets of the human heart, when grandest or most wayward—are theirs to search and to develope. Even those speculations which do not immediately affect man's conduct and his hopes are theirs, with all their high casuistry; for in these, at least, they discern the beatings of the soul against the bars of its earthly tabernacle, which prove the immortality of its essence, and its destiny to move in freedom through the vast etherial circle to which it thus vainly aspires. In all the intensities of feeling, and all the regalities of imagination, they may find fitting materials for their passionate expostulations with their fellow men to turn their hearts to those objects which will endure for ever.

It appears, therefore, at first observation, strange, that in this country, where an irreligious spirit has never become general, the oratory of the pulpit has made so little progress. The ministers of the Established Church have not, on the whole, fulfilled the promise given in the days of its early zeal. The noble enthusiasm of Hooker—the pregnant wit of South—the genial and tolerant warmth of Tilotson—the vast power of reasoning and observation of Barrow—have rarely been copied, even feebly, by their successors. Jeremy Taylor stands altogether alone among churchmen. Who has ever manifested any portion of that exquisite intermixture of a yearning love with a heavenly fancy, which enabled him to embody and render palpable the holy charities of his reli-

gion in the loveliest and most delicate images? Who has ever so encrusted his subjects with candied words; or has seemed, like him, to take away the sting of death with "rich conceit;" or has, like him, half persuaded his hearers to believe that they heard the voice of pitying angels? Few, indeed, of the ministers of the church have been endued with the divine imagination which might combine, enlarge, and vivify the objects of sense, so as, by stately pictures, to present us with symbols of that uncreated beauty and grandeur in which hereafter we shall expatiate. The most celebrated of them have been little more than students of vast learning and research, unless, with Warburton and Horseley, they have aspired at once boldly to speculate, and imperiously to dogmatize.

It cannot be doubted, that the species of patronage, by which the honours and emoluments of the Establishment are distributed, has tended to prevent the development of genius within its pale. But, perhaps, we may find a more adequate cause for the low state of its preaching in the very beauty and impressiveness of its rites and appointed services. The tendency of religious ceremonies, of the recurrence of old festivals, and of a solemn and dignified form of worship, is, doubtless, to keep alive tender associations in the heart, and to preserve the flame of devotion steady and pure, but not to incite men to look abroad into their nature, or to prompt any lofty excursions of religious fancy. There have, doubtless, been eloquent preachers in the church of Rome,—because in her communion the ceremonies themselves are august and fearful, and because her proselyting zeal inspired her sons with peculiar energy. But episcopacy in England is by far the most tolerant of systems ever associated with worldly power. Its ministers, until the claim of some of them, to the exclusive title of evangelical, created dissensions, breathed almost uniformly a spirit of mildness and peace. Within its sacred boundaries, all was order, repose, and charity. Its rites and observances were the helps and leaning-places of the soul, on which it delighted to rest amidst the vicissitudes of the world, and in its approach to its final change. The fulness, the majesty, and the dignified benignities of the Liturgy sunk deep into the heart, and prevented the devout worshipper from feeling the want of strength or

variety in the discourses of the preacher. The church-yard, with its gentle risings, and pensive memorials of affection, was a silent teacher, both of vigilance and love. And the village spire, whose "silent finger points to heaven," has supplied the place of loftiest imaginings of celestial glory.

Obstacles of a far different kind long prevented the advancement of pulpit eloquence among the Protestant Dissenters. The ministers first ejected for non-conformity were men of rigid honesty and virtue,—but their intellectual sphere was little extended beyond that of their fellows. There cannot be a greater mistake than to suppose that they sacrificed their worldly interest from any regard to the principles of free inquiry, which have since almost become axioms. They believed that their compliance with the requisitions of the monarch, would be offensive to God, and that in refusing to yield it they were doing his will; but they were prepared in their turn to assume the right of interpreting the Bible for others, and of condemning them for a more extended application of their example. Harassed, ridiculed, and afflicted, they naturally contracted an air of rigidity, and refused in their turn, with horror, an extensive sympathy with the world. The controversies in which the learned men among the Dissenters were long occupied, having respect, not to grand and universal principles, but to petty questions of ceremony and minor points of faith, tended yet farther to confine and depress their genius. Their families were not the less scenes of love, because they preserved parental authority in its state; but the austerity of their manner tended to repress the imaginative faculties of the young. If they indulged themselves in any relaxation of manner, it was not with flowing eloquence, but with the quaint conceit and grave jest that they garnished their conversation or their discourses. Their religion wore a dark and uncouth garb; but to this we are indebted, in no small degree, for its preservation through times of demoralizing luxury.

A great change has taken place, of late years, in the literature and eloquence of Protestant Dissenters. As they ceased to be objects of persecution or of scorn, they insensibly lost the austerity and exclusiveness of their character. They descended from their dusty retirements to share in the pursuits and innocent enjoyments of "this bright and breath-

ing world." Their honest bigotries gave way at the warm touch of social intercourse with those from whom they dissented. Meanwhile, the exertions of Whitfield,—his glowing, passionate, and awful eloquence;—his daring and quenchless enthusiasm,—and the deep and extensive impression which he made throughout the kingdom, necessarily aroused those, who received his essential doctrines, into new zeal. The impulse thus given was happily refined by a taste for classical learning, and for the arts and embellishments of life, which was then gradually insinuating itself into their churches. Some of the new converts who forsook the establishment, not from repugnance to its constitution, but to its preachers, maintained, in the first eagerness of their faith, the barbarous notion that human knowledge was useless, and even dangerous, to the Christian minister. The absurdity of this position, however strikingly exemplified in the advantages gained by the enemies of those who acted on it, served only to increase the desire of the more enlightened and liberal among the non-conformists to emulate the church in the intellectual qualification of their preachers. They speedily enlarged the means of education among them for the sacred office, and encouraged those habits of study, which promote a refinement and delicacy of feeling in the minds which they enlighten. Mean while, their active participation in the noblest schemes of benevolence tended yet farther to expand their moral horizon. Youths were found among them prepared to sacrifice all the enjoyments of civilized life, and at the peril of their lives to traverse the remotest and the wildest regions, that they might diffuse that religion which is every where the parent of arts, charities, and peace. It is not the least benefit of their Missionary exertions, that they have given a romantic tinge to the feelings of men "in populous city pent," and engrossed with the petty and distracting cares of commerce. These form the true Evangelical chivalry, supplying to their promoters no small measure of that mental refinement and elevation, which the far less noble endeavours to recover the holy Sepulchre shed on Europe in the middle ages. It is not easy to estimate the advantages which spring from the extension of the imagination into the grandest regions of the earth, and from the excitement of sympathies for the condition of the most distant

and degraded of the species. The merchant, whose thoughts would else rarely travel beyond his desk and his fire-side, is thus busied with high musings on the progress of the Gospel in the deserts of Africa—skims with the lonely bark over tropical seas—and sends his wishes and his prayers over deserts which human footstep has rarely trodden. Missionary zeal thus diffused among the people, has necessarily operated yet more strongly on the minds of the ministers, who have leisure to indulge in these delicious dreamings which such a cause may sanction. These excellent men are now, for the most part, not only the instructors, but the ornaments of the circles in which they move. The time which they are able to give to literature is well employed for the benefit of their flocks. In the country, more especially, their gentle manners, their extended information, and their pure and blameless lives, do incalculable good to the hearts of their ruder hearers, independent of their public services. Not only in the more solemn of their duties,—in admonishing the guilty, comforting the afflicted, and cheering the dying—do they bless those around them; but by their demeanour, usually dignified, yet cheerful, and their conversation decorous, yet lively; they raise incalculably the tone of social intercourse, and heighten the innocent enjoyment of their friends. Some of them are, at the present day, exhibiting no ordinary gifts and energies;—and to the most distinguished of these, we propose to direct the attention of our readers.

MR. HALL, though perhaps the most distinguished ornament of the Calvinistic* Dissenters, does not afford the best opportunity for criticism. His excellence does not consist in the predominance of one of his powers, but in the exquisite proportion and harmony of all. The richness, variety, and extent of his knowledge, are not so remarkable as his absolute mastery over it. He moves about in the loftiest sphere of contemplation, as though he were “native and endued to its element.” He uses the finest classical allusions, the noblest images, and the most exquisite words, as though they

* We use this epithet merely as that which will most distinctively characterize the extensive class to which it is applied—well aware that there are shades of difference among them—and that many of them would decline to call themselves after any name but that of Christ.

were those which came first to his mind, and which formed his natural dialect. There is not the least appearance of straining after greatness in his most magnificent excursions, but he rises to the loftiest heights with a child-like ease. His style is one of the clearest and simplest—the least encumbered with its own beauty—of any which ever has been written. It is bright and lucid as a mirror, and its most highly-wrought and sparkling embellishments are like ornaments of crystal, which, even in their brilliant inequalities of surface, give back to the eye little pieces of true imagery set before them.

The works of this great preacher are, in the highest sense of the term, imaginative, as distinguished not only from the didactic, but from the fanciful. He possesses “the vision and the faculty divine,” in as high a degree as any of our writers in prose. His noblest passages do but make truth visible in the form of beauty, and “clothe upon” abstract ideas, till they become palpable in exquisite shapes. The dullest writer would not convey the same meaning in so few words, as he has done in the most sublime of his illustrations. Imagination, when like his of the purest water, is so far from being improperly employed on divine subjects, that it only finds its real objects in the true and the eternal. This power it is which disdains the scattered elements of beauty, as they appear distinctly in an imperfect world, and strives by accumulation, and by rejecting the alloy cast on all things, to embody to the mind that ideal beauty which shall be realized hereafter. This, by shedding a consecrating light on all it touches, and “bringing them into one,” anticipates the future harmony of creation. This already sees the “soul of goodness in things evil,” which shall one day change the evil into its likeness. This already begins the triumph over the separating powers of death and time, and renders their victory doubtful, by making us feel the immortality of the affections. Such is the faculty which is employed by Mr. Hall to its noblest uses. There is no rhetorical flourish—no mere pomp of words—in his most eloquent discourses. With vast excursive power, indeed, he can range through all the glories of the Pagan world, and seizing those traits of beauty, which they derived from primeval revelation, restore them to the system of truth. But he is ever best when he is intensest—when he unveils the mighty foundations of the rock of ages—or makes the

hearts of his hearers vibrate with a strange joy which they will recognise in more exalted stages of their being.

Mr. Hall has, unfortunately, committed but few of his discourses to the press. His Sermon on the tendencies of Modern Infidelity, is one of the noblest specimens of his genius. Nothing can be more fearfully sublime, than the picture which he gives of the desolate state, to which Atheism would reduce the world; or more beautiful and triumphant, than his vindication of the social affections. His Sermon on the Death of Princess Charlotte, contains a philosophical and eloquent development of the causes which make the sorrows of those who are encircled by the brightest appearances of happiness, peculiarly affecting; and gives an exquisite picture of the gentle victim adorned with sacrificial glories. His discourses on War—on the Discouragements and Supports of the Christian Ministry—and on the Work of the Holy Spirit—are of great and various excellence. But, as our limits will allow only a single extract, we prefer giving the close of a Sermon preached in the prospect of the invasion of England by Napoleon, in which he blends the finest remembrance of the antique world—the dearest associations of British patriotism—and the pure spirit of the Gospel—in a strain as noble as could have been poured out by Tyrtæus.

“To form an adequate idea of the duties of this crisis, it will be necessary to raise your minds to a level with your station, to extend your views to a distant futurity and to consequences the most certain, though most remote. By a series of criminal enterprizes, by the successes of guilty ambition, the liberties of Europe have been gradually extinguished: the subjugation of Holland, Switzerland, and the free towns of Germany, has completed that catastrophe: and we are the only people in the eastern hemisphere who are in possession of equal laws, and a free constitution. Freedom, driven from every spot on the continent, has sought an asylum in a country which she always chose for her favourite abode: but she is pursued even here, and threatened with destruction. The inundation of lawless power, after covering the whole earth, threatens to follow us here; and we are most exactly, most critically placed in the only aperture where it can be successfully repelled, in the Thermopylæ of

the universe. As far as the interests of freedom are concerned, the most important by far of sublunary interests, you, my countrymen, stand in the capacity of the federal representatives of the human race; for with you it is to determine (under God) in what condition the latest posterity shall be born; their fortunes are entrusted to your care, and on your conduct at this moment depends the colour and complexion of their destiny. If liberty, after being extinguished on the continent, is suffered to expire here, whence is it ever to emerge in the midst of that thick night that will invest it? It remains with you then to decide whether that freedom, at whose voice the kingdoms of Europe awoke from the sleep of ages, to run a career of virtuous emulation in every thing great and good; the freedom which dispelled the mists of superstition, and invited the nations to behold their God; whose magic touch kindled the rays of genius, the enthusiasm of poetry, and the flame of eloquence; the freedom which poured into our lap opulence and arts, and embellished life with innumerable institutions and improvements, till it became a theatre of wonders; it is for you to decide whether this freedom shall yet survive, or be covered with a funeral pall, and wrapped in eternal gloom. It is not necessary to await your determination. In the solicitude you feel to approve yourselves worthy of such a trust, every thought of what is afflicting in warfare, every apprehension of danger must vanish, and you are impatient to mingle in the battle of the civilized world. Go then, ye defenders of your country, accompanied with every auspicious omen; advance with alacrity into the field, where God himself musters the hosts to war. Religion is too much interested in your success, not to lend you her aid; she will shed over this enterprize her selectest influence. While you are engaged in the field many will repair to the closet, many to the sanctuary; the faithful of every name will employ that prayer which has power with God; the feeble hands which are unequal to any other weapon, will grasp the sword of the Spirit; and from myriads of humble, contrite hearts, the voice of intercession, supplication, and weeping, will mingle in its ascent to heaven with the shout of battle and the shock of arms.

“ While you have every thing to fear from the success of the enemy, you have every means of preventing that success, so that it is next to impossible for victory not to crown your exertions. The extent of your resources, under God, is equal to the justice of our cause. But should Providence determine otherwise, should you fall in this struggle, should the nation fall, you will have the satisfaction (the purest allotted to man) of having performed your part; your names will be enrolled with the most illustrious dead, while posterity to the end of time, as often as they revolve the events of this period, (and they will incessantly revolve them) will turn to you a reverential eye, while they mourn over the freedom which is entombed in your sepulchre. I cannot but imagine the virtuous heroes, legislators, and patriots, of every age and country, are bending from their elevated seats to witness this contest, as if they were incapable, till it be brought to a favourable issue, of enjoying their eternal repose. Enjoy that repose, illustrious immortals! Your mantle fell when you ascended; and thousands, inflamed with your spirit, and impatient to tread in your steps, are ready to *swear by Him that sitteth upon the throne, and liveth for ever and ever*, they will protect freedom in her last asylum, and never desert that cause which you sustained by your labours, and cemented with your blood. And thou, sole Ruler among the children of men, to whom the shields of the earth belong, *gird on thy sword, thou Most Mighty*: go forth with our hosts in the day of battle! Impart, in addition to their hereditary valour, that confidence of success which springs from thy presence! Pour into their hearts the spirit of departed heroes! Inspire them with thine own; and, while led by thine hand, and fighting under thy banners, open thou their eyes to behold in every valley and in every plain, what the prophet beheld by the same illumination—chariots of fire, and horses of fire! *Then shall the strong man be as tow, and the maker of it as a spark; and they shall burn together, and none shall quench them.*”

There is nothing very remarkable in Mr. Hall's manner of delivering his sermons. His simplicity, yet solemnity of deportment, engage the attention, but do not promise any of

his most rapturous effusions. His voice is feeble, but distinct, and as he proceeds, trembles beneath his images, and conveys the idea, that the spring of sublimity and beauty in his mind, is exhaustless, and would pour forth a more copious stream, if it had a wider channel than can be supplied by the bodily organs. The plainest, and least inspired of his discourses, are not without delicate gleams of imagery and felicitous turns of expression. He expatiates on the prophecies with a kindred spirit, and affords awful glimpses into the valley of vision. He often seems to conduct his hearers to the top of the "Delectable Mountains," whence they can see from afar the glorious gates of the eternal city. He seems at home among the marvellous Revelations of St. John; and while he expatiates on them, leads his hearers breathless through ever-varying scenes of mystery, far more glorious and surprising than the wildest of oriental fables. He stops when they most desire that he should proceed—when he has just disclosed the dawnings of the inmost glory to their enraptured minds—and leaves them full of imaginations of "things not made with hands,"—of joys too ravishing for smiles—and of impulses which wing their hearts, "along the line of limitless desires."

RECOLLECTIONS OF LISBON.

[New Monthly Magazine.]

ON the first of May, 1818, I sailed in one of the government packets, from the beautiful harbour of Falmouth, for Lisbon. The voyage, though it only lasted eight days, was sufficiently long to excite an earnest desire for our arrival at the port of our destiny. The water which so majestically stretches before us, when seen from a promontory or headland, loses much of its interest and its grandeur when it actually circles round us and shuts us in from the world. The part which we are able to discern from the deck of a vessel, appears of very small diameter, and its aspect in fine weather is so uniform as to weary the eye, which seems to sicken with following the dance of the sun-beams, which alone diversify its surface. There is something painfully restless and shadowy in all around us, which forces on our hearts that feeling of the instability and transitoriness of our nature, which we lose among the moveless grandeurs of the universe. On the sea, all without, instead of affording a resting-place for the soul, is emblematic of the fluctuation of our mortal being. Those who have long been accustomed to it seem accommodated to their lot in feeling and in character; snatch a hasty joy with eagerness wherever it can be found, careless of the future, and borne lightly on the wave of life without forethought or struggle. To a landsman there is something inexpressibly sad in the want of material objects which endure. The eye turns disappointed from the glorious panoply of clouds which attend the setting sun, where it has fancied thrones, and golden cities, and temples with their holy shrines far sunken within outer courts of splendour,

while it feels that they are but for a moment, gay mockeries of the state of man on earth. Often, during my little voyage, did I, while looking over the side of the vessel on the dark water, think of the beautiful delineation by the most profound of living poets, of the tender imaginations of a mariner who had been reared among the mountains, and in his heart was "half a shepherd on the stormy seas," who was wont to hear in the piping shrouds "the tones of waterfalls and inland sounds of caves and trees," and

" When the regular wind
Between the tropics fill'd the steady sail,
And blew with the same breath through days and weeks,
Lengthening invisibly its weary line
Along the cloudless main, who in those hours
Of tiresome indolence, would often hang
Over the vessel's side, and gaze and gaze;
And while the broad green wave and sparkling foam
Flash'd round him images and hues that wrought
In union with the employment of his heart,
He, thus by feverish passion overcome,
Even with the organs of his bodily eye,
Below him, in the bosom of the deep,
Saw mountains—saw the forms of sheep that grazed
On verdant hills—with dwellings among trees,
And shepherds clad in the same country gray
Which he himself had worn."*

I remember, however, with gratitude two evenings, just after the renewal of the moon, which were rendered singularly lovely by a soft, tender, and penetrating light which seemed scarcely of this world. The moon on its first appearance, before the western lustre had entirely faded away, cast no reflection, however pale, on the waves; but seemed like some princely maiden exposed for the first time to vulgar gaze, gently to shrink back as though she feared some contamination to her pure and celestial beauty from shining forth on so busy and turbulent a sphere. As night advanced, it was a solemn pleasure to stand on the deck of the vessel, borne swiftly along the noiseless sea, and gaze on the far-retiring stars in the azure distance. The mind seems, in such a scene, almost to "o'er inform its tenement of clay,"

* See Wordsworth's most affecting pastoral of "The Brothers."

and to leap beyond it. It dwells not on the changes of the world; for in its high abstraction, all material things seem but passing shadows. Life, with its realities appears like a vanishing dream, and the past a tale scarcely credited. The pulses of mortal existence are almost suspended—"thought is not—in enjoyment it expires." Nothing seems to be in the universe but one's-self and God. No feeling of loneliness has entrance, for the great spirit of Eternal Good seems shedding mildest and selectest influences on all things.

On the eighth morning after our departure from Falmouth, on coming as usual on the deck, I found that we were sailing almost close under "the Rock of Lisbon," which breasts the vale of Cintra. It is a stupendous mountain of rock, extending very far into the sea, and rising to a dizzy height above it. The sides are broken into huge precipices and caverns of various and grotesque forms, are covered with dark moss, or exhibit naked stones blackened with a thousand storms. The top consists of an unequal ridge of apparently shivered rock, sometimes descending in jagged lines, and at others rising into sharp, angular, and pointed pyramids, which seem to strike into the clouds. What a feeling does such a monument excite, shapeless, rugged, and setting all form at defiance—when the heart feels that it has outlived a thousand generations of perishable man, and belongs to an antiquity compared with which the wonders of Egypt are modern! It seems like the unhewn citadel of a giant race; the mighty wreck of an older and more substantial world.

Leaving the steeps and everlasting recesses of this huge mass, we passed the coasts of Portugal. The fields lying near the shore appeared for the most part barren, though broken into gentle undulations, and adorned with large spreading mansions and neat villages. A pleasant breeze brought us soon to the mouth of the Tagus, where a scene of enchantment, "too bright and fair almost for remembrance," burst upon my view. We sailed between the two fortresses which guard the entrance of the river, here several miles in width, close to the walls of that on the left, denominated "Fort St. Julian." The river, seen up to the beautiful castle of Belem, lay before us, not serpentine nor perceptibly contracting, but between almost parallel shores, like a noble

avenue of crystal. It was studded with vessels of every region, as the sky is sprinkled with stars, which rested on a bosom of waters so calm as scarcely to be curled by the air which wafted us softly onwards. On both sides, the shore rose into a series of hills on the right side, wild; abrupt, mazy, and tangled, and on the left, covered with the freshest verdure and interspersed with luxuriant trees. Noble seats appeared crowning the hills and sloping on their sides; and in the spaces between the elevated spots, glimpses were caught of sweet valleys winding among scattered woods, or of princely domes and spires in the richness of the distance. All wore, not the pale livery of an opening spring, but the full bloom of maturest summer. The transition to such a seen, sparkling in the richest tints of sunshine and overhung by a cloudless sky of the deepest blue, from the scanty and just-budding foliage of Cornwall, as I left it, was like the change of a *Midsummer Night's Dream*; a sudden admission into fairy worlds. As we glided up the enchanted channel, the elevations on the left became overspread with magnificent buildings, like mingled temples and palaces, rising one above another into segments of vast amphitheatres, and interspersed with groves of the fullest yet most delicate green. Close to the water lay a barbaric edifice, of rich though fantastic architecture, a relic of Moorish grandeur, now converted into the last earthly abode of the monarchs of Portugal. Hence the buildings continued to thicken over the hills and to assume a more confused, though scarcely less romantic aspect, till we anchored in front of the most populous part of Lisbon. The city was stretched beyond the reach of the eye, on every side, upon the ascents and summits of very lofty and steep elevations. The white houses, thickly intersected with windows, mostly framed with green and white lattice-work, seemed to have their foundations on the tops of others: terraces appeared lifted far above the lofty buildings, and other edifices rose above them; gardens looked as suspended by magic in the clouds, and the whole scene wore an aspect of the most gorgeous confusion—"all bright and glittering in the smokeless air." We landed, and the enchantment vanished, at least for a season. Very narrow streets, winding in ceaseless turnings over steep ascents and declivities, paved only with sharp flints, and filthy beyond compare

now seemed to form the interior of the promised elysium. Nature and the founders of the city appeared to have done their best to render the spot a paradise, and modern generations their worst to reduce it to a sink of misery.

Lisbón, like ancient Rome, is built on at least seven hills. It is fitted by situation to be one of the most beautiful cities in the world. Seated, or rather enthroned on such a spot, commanding a magnificent harbour, and overlooking one of the noblest rivers of Europe, it might be more distinguished for external beauty than Athens in the days of her freedom. Now it seems rather to be the theatre in which the two great powers of deformity and loveliness are perpetually struggling for the mastery. The highest admiration and the most sickening disgust alternately prevail in the mind of the beholder. Never was there so strange an intermixture of the mighty and the mean—of the pride of wealth and the abjectness of poverty—of the memorials of greatness and the symbols of low misery—of the filthy and the romantic. I will dwell, however, on the fair side of the picture; as I envy not those who delight in exhibiting the frightful or the gloomy, in the moral or the natural world. Often after traversing dark and wretched streets, at a sudden turn, a prospect of inimitable beauty bursts on the eye of the spectator. He finds himself, perhaps, on the brink of a mighty hollow scooped out by nature amidst hills, all covered to the tops with edifices, save where groves of the freshest verdure are interspersed; or on one side, a mountain rises into a cone far above the city, tufted with woods and crowned with some castellated pile, the work of other days. The views fronting the Tagus are still more extensive and grand. On one of these I stumbled a few evenings after my arrival, which almost suspended the breath with wonder. I had laboured through a steep and narrow street almost choked with dirt, when a small avenue on one side, apparently more open, tempted me to step aside to breathe the fresher air. I found myself on a little plot of ground, hanging apparently in the air, in the front of one of the churches. I stood against a column of the portico absorbed in delight and wonder. Before me lay a large portion of the city—houses descended beneath houses, sinking almost precipitously to a fearful depth beneath me, whose frame-works, covered over with vines of delicate green, broke

the ascent like prodigious steps, by which a giant might scale the eminence—the same “wilderness of building” filled up the vast hollow, and rose by a more easy slope to the top of the opposite hills, which were crowned with turrets, domes, mansions, and regal pavilions of a dazzling whiteness—beyond the Tagus, on the southern shore, the coast rose into wild and barren hills, wearing an aspect of the roughest sublimity and grandeur—and, in the midst, occupying the bosom of the great vale, close between the glorious city and the unknown wilds, lay the calm and majestic river, from two to three miles in width, seen with the utmost distinctness to its mouth, on each side of which the two castles which guard it were visible, and spread over with a thousand ships—onward yet farther, far as the eye could reach, the living ocean was glistening, and ships, like specks of the purest white, were seen crossing it to and fro, giving to the scene an imaginary extension by carrying the mind with them to far-distant shores. It was the time of sunset, and clouds of the richest saffron rested on the bosom of the air, and were reflected in softer tints in the waters. Not a whisper reached the ear. “The holy time was quiet as a nun breathless with adoration.” The scene looked like some vision of blissful enchantment, and I scarcely dared to stir or breathe lest it should vanish away.

The eastern quarter of Lisbon, which is chiefly built since the great earthquake, stands almost on level ground; and, though surrounded by steep hills, with trees among their precipices, and aerial terraces on their summits, is not in itself very singular or romantic. A square of noble extent, open on the South to the Tagus, which here spreads out into a breadth of many miles, so as to wear almost the appearance of an inland lake, forms the southern part of this modern city. At the south-eastern angle, close to the river, stands the Exchange, which is a square white building, of no particular beauty or size. The sides of the square are occupied with dull looking white buildings, which are chiefly offices of state, excepting, indeed, that the plan is incompletely executed, as the unfinished state of the western range of edifices sadly evinces. In the centre is an equestrian statue of King Joseph, on a scale so colossal, that the image of Charles on horseback at Charing Cross would appear a miniature by

its side. From the northern side of this quadrangle run three streets, narrow but built in perfect uniformity, and of more than a quarter of a mile in length, which connect it with another square called the Rocio, of nearly similar magnitude and proportions. The houses in these streets are white, of five stories in height, with shops, more resembling cells, than the brilliant repositories of Cheapside, in the lower departments, and latticed windows in the upper stories.—They have on both sides elevated pathways for foot passengers, neatly paved with blocks of stone, and leaving space for two carriages to pass in the centre. The Rocio is surrounded on three sides with houses resembling those in the streets, and on the north by a range of building belonging to the Inquisition, the subterranean prisons of which extend far beneath the square. A little onward to the north of this area, amidst filthy suburbs, stands the public garden of the city. It is an oblong piece of ground, of considerable extent, surrounded by high walls, but always open at proper hours to the public. It is planted with high trees of the most delicate green, which, however, do not form a mass of impervious shade, but afford many spots of the thickest shelter, and give room for the play of the warm sun-beams, and for the contemplation of the stainless sky. The garden is laid out with more regularity than taste: one broad walk runs completely through it from north to south, on each side of which, beneath the loftier shade, are tall hedge-rows, solid masses of green, cut into the exactest parallelograms. The equal spaces on each side of the middle walk are intersected by similar hedge-rows—sometimes curving into an open circle, surrounded with circular trenches; at others, enclosing an angular space, railed in and cultivated with flowers, and occasionally expanding into shapes yet more fantastic.—There is no intricacy, no beautiful wildness in the scene—“half the platform just reflects the other” in the minutest features—but the green is so fresh and so abundant, and the air so delicately fragrant, that this garden forms a retreat in the warmth of summer which seems almost elysian.

There are two small places of public amusement in Lisbon, where dramatic pieces are performed, chiefly taken from the Spanish. The “legitimate drama,” however, is of little attraction, compared with the wonderful contortions and rope-

dancings which these houses exhibit, and which are truly surprising. The Opera House, called the Theatre San Carlos, is, except on a few particular occasions, almost deserted. The audiences are usually so thin, that it is not usual to light up the body of the house, except on particular days, when the rare illumination is duly announced in the bills. I visited it fortunately on the birth-day of the king, which is one of the most splendid of its festivals. Its interior is not much smaller than that of Covent Garden Theatre, though it appears at the first glance much less, from the extreme beauty of the proportions. The form is that of an ellipse, exquisitely turned, intersected at the farther extremity by the stage. The sides are occupied by five tiers of boxes, at least in appearance, for the upper circles, which are appropriated to the populace by way of gallery, are externally uniform with the rest of the theatre. The prevailing colour is white; the ornaments between the boxes, consisting of harps and tasteful devices, are of brown and gold, and elegantly divided into compartments by rims of burnished gold. The middle of the house is occupied by the grand entrance into the pit, the royal box, and the gallery above it, which is in continuation of the higher circle. The royal box is from twelve to fifteen feet in length, and occupies in height the space of three rows of the common boxes. Above are the crown and regal arms in burnished gold, and the sides are supported by statues of the same radiant appearance. Curtains of green silk of a fine texture usually conceal its internal splendours; but on this occasion they were drawn aside at the same moment that the stage was discovered, and displayed the interior illuminated with great brilliancy. This seat of royalty is divided into two stories—a slight gallery being thrown over the back part of it. Its ground is a deep crimson; the top descends towards the back in a beautiful concave, representing a rich veil of ermine. In the front of the lower compartment, behind the seats, is the crown of Portugal figured on deep green velvet; and the sides are adorned with elegant mirrors. The centre of the roof of the theatre is an ellipse, painted to represent the sky with the moon and stars visible; the sides sloping to the upper boxes are of white adorned with gold and crimson. The stage is supported on each side by two pillars of the composite order of white and

gold, half in relief, with a brazen statue between each of them. It forms an excellent frame work for a dramatic picture.—The most singular feature of the house is a clock over the centre of the stage, which regularly strikes the hours, without mercy. What a noble invention this for the use of those who contend for the *unity of time*! How nicely would it enable the French critics to estimate the value of a tragedy at a single glance! How accurately might the time be measured out in which eternal attachments should be formed, conspiracies planned, and states overthrown; how might the passions of the soul be regulated to a minute, and the rise and swell of the great emotions of the heart determined to a hair; with what accuracy might the moments which the heroes have yet to live be counted out like those of culprits at the Old Bailey! What huge criticisms of Corneille and Voltaire would that little instrument supply! What volumes, founded on its movements, would it render superfluous! Even Grecian regularity must yield before it, and criticism triumph, by this invariable standard, at once over Sophocles and Shakspeare.

The scenery was wretched—the singers tolerable—and the band excellent. The ballet took place between the acts of the opera, and was spun out to great length. The dancing consisted partly of wonderful twirlings of the French school, and partly of the more wonderful contortions of the Portuguese; both kinds exceedingly clever, but exhibiting very little of true beauty, grace, or elegance. At the close of the first act, a perfect shower of roses, pinks, and carnations, together with printed sonnets, was poured down from the top of the theatre in honour of his majesty, whose absence, however, even Portuguese loyalty cannot pardon.

The churches are the most remarkable of the public buildings of Lisbon; though plain on the outside, they are exceedingly splendid in the interior. The tutelary saints are richer than many Continental princes, though their treasures are only displayed to excite the reverence or the cupidity of the people on high and festal occasions. The most beautiful, though not the largest of the churches which I have examined, is that of the Estrella, which is lined with finely-varied and highly-polished marble, vaulted over with a splendid and sculptured roof, and adorned, in its gilded recesses, with

beautiful pictures. Were it not, indeed, for the impression made on me by one of the latter, I should scarcely have mentioned this edifice, unable as I am technically to describe it. The piece to which I allude is not, that I can discover, held in particular estimation, or the production of any celebrated artist; but it excited in me feelings of admiration and delight, which can never die away. It represents Saint John in the Isle of Patmos, gazing on the vision in which the angels are pouring forth the vials, and with the pen in his hand, ready to commit to sacred and imperishable record the awful and mysterious scenes opened before him. Never did I behold or imagine such a figure. He is sitting, half entranced with wonder at the revelation disclosed to him, half mournfully conscious of the evils which he is darkly to predict to a fated and unheeding world. The face, in its mere form and colouring, is most beautiful: its features are perfectly lovely, though inclining rather to cherubic roundness than Grecian austerity, and its roseate bloom of youth is gently touched and softened by the feelings attendant on the sad and holy vocation of the beloved disciple. The head is bent forward, in eagerness, anxiety, and reverence; the eyebrows arched in wonder, yet bearing in every line some undefinable expression of pity; the eyes are uplifted, and beaming with holy inspiration, yet mild, soft, angelical; around the exquisitely-formed mouth, sweet tendernesses for the inevitable sorrows of mankind are playing; and the bright chesnut hair, falling in masses over the shoulders, gives to all this expression of high yet soft emotion, a finishing grace and completeness. This figure displays such unspeakable sweetness tempering such prophetic fire; such religious and saintly purity, mingled with so genial a compassion; it is at once so individual and so ideal; so bordering on the celestial, and yet so perfectly within the range of human sympathies; that it is difficult to say, whether the delicious emotions which it inspires partake most of wonder or of love. The image seemed, like sweet music, to sink into the soul, there to remain for ever. To see such a piece is really to be made better and happier. The recollection is a precious treasure for the feelings and the imagination, of which nothing, while they endure, can deprive them.

The church at Belem, a fortified place on the Tagus, three

or four miles from Lisbon, where the kings and royal family of Portugal have, for many generations, been interred, must not be forgotten. It is one of the most ancient buildings in the kingdom, having originally been erected by the Romans, and splendidly adorned by the Moorish sovereigns. Formed of white stone, it is now stained to a reddish brown by the mere influence of years, and frowns over the water "cased in the unfeeling armour of old time." Its shape is oblong, its sides of gigantic proportions, and its massive appearance most grand and awe-inspiring. The principal entrance is by a deep archway, reaching to a great height and circular within, ornamented above and around with the most crowded, venerable, and yet fantastic devices—martyrs and heroes of chivalry—swords and crosiers—monarchs and saints—crosses and sceptres—"the roses and flowers of kings" and the sad emblems of mortality—all wearing the stamp of deep antiquity, all appearing carved out of one eternal rock, and promising by their air of solid grandeur to survive as many stupendous changes as those which have already left them unshaken. The interior of this venerable edifice is not less awe-breathing or substantial. Eight huge pillars of barbaric architecture, and covered all over with strange figures and grotesque ornaments in relievo, support the roof, which is white, ponderous, and of a noble simplicity, being only divided into vast square compartments by the beams which cross it. Such a pile, devoted to form the last resting-place of a line of kings who have, each in his brief span of time, held the fate of millions at his pleasure, cannot fail to excite solemn and pensive thought. And yet what are the feelings thus excited, to those meditations to which the great repository of the illustrious deceased in England invites us! Here we think of nothing but the perishableness of man in his best estate—the emptiness of human honours—the low and frail nature of all the distinctions of earth. A race of monarchs occupy but a narrow vault: they were kings, and now are dust; and this idea forced home upon us, makes us feel that the most potent and enduring of worldly things—thrones, dynasties, and the peaceable succession of high families—are but as feeble shadows. We learn only to feel our weakness. But in the sacred place where all that could perish of our orators, philosophers, and poets, is re-

posing, we feel our mortality only to lend us a stronger and more ethereal sense of our eternal being. Life and death seem met together, as in a holy fane, in peaceful concord. While we feel that the mightiest must yield to the stern law of necessity, we know that the very monuments which record the decay of their outward frame, are so many proofs and symbols that they shall never really expire. We feel that those whose remembrance is thus extended beyond the desolating power of the grave, over whose *fame* death and mortal accidents have no power, are not themselves destroyed. And when we recollect the more indestructible monuments of their genius, those works, which live not only in the libraries of the studious, but in the hearts and imaginations of men; we are conscious at once, that the spirit which conceived, and the souls which appreciate and love them, are not of the earth, earthy. Our thoughts are not wholly of humiliation and sorrow! but stretch forward, with a pensive majesty, into the permanent and the immortal.

Having inspected the city, I was naturally anxious to visit the celebrated *Aqueduct*, which is carried across a deep valley two or three miles from Lisbon. Having passed the suburbs, and reached the open country, I saw, at a sudden turn in the pathway, the mighty object of my wanderings. I found myself on the summit of a gently-sloping declivity, at a little distance from the foot of which a hill rose to an equal height, with a bold and luxuriant sweep. It is across the expanse thus formed, that the stupendous bridge runs, in two straight lines from each eminence, which form an obtuse angle in the centre. The whole is supported by thirty-six arches, which, as the ground from each extremity sinks, increase in height, or rather depth, till in the middle of the pile, the distance to which they ascend from the vale is fearful. This huge structure is composed of dark gray stone, the deep colour of which gives to its massiveness an air of the sternest grandeur. The water is conveyed across the level thus formed, through a chain of building which occupies its centre, and appears almost like a line of solid and unbroken rock. Above this erection, turrets of still greater height, and of the same materials, are reared at regular intervals, and crown the whole. The road is thus divided into two passes, which are secured by high ridges of stone, in the long, uninterrupted

straight lines, which have an air of so awful a grandeur in the noblest remains of Roman art. The view from the southern road, though romantic, is, for the most part, confined within narrow boundaries, as rugged hills arise on this side almost from the foot of the Aqueduct, to a height far above its towers, cultivated only towards the lower parts, and covered on the loftier spots with a thin grass and shapeless blocks or masses of granite. This mountainous ridge breaks, however, in the centre, and abruptly displays a piece of the Tagus, like an inland lake, with its tenderly-rippled blue, and the wild and lofty banks which rise precipitously beyond it. As the sun was declining when I traversed this path, the portion of craggy shore thus disclosed, and the shrubs which flourish among its steeps, were overcast with the richest tints from the West, and the vessels gently gliding through the opening made by the shaggy declivities of the nearer hills, completed the feeling of genial composure diffused over the scene. From the Northern side, the prospect appears arrayed in far gayer charms. The valley here, from the narrow point at which it is seen, spreads out into a fan-like form, till the eminences on each side seem gradually to melt away, and the open country lies in full expanse to the view. It is a scene of fresh, reposing, and perfect beauty. Not an angular intersection breaks the roundness, or interrupts the grace, which characterize the whole. The hills in the foreground sink from each side of the Aqueduct, gradually to the depth of the vale, covered with the freshest verdure, fluctuating in a wave-like motion; and the more distant landscape appears composed of a thousand gentle undulations, thrown up by Nature in her sweetest mood, as though the earth were swelling with an exuberant bounty, even to the rim of the circling sky, with the form of which all is harmonious. The green in which the prospect is clothed, is of a softer and more vivid hue than in England; the pastures seem absolutely to sparkle on the eye; and, amidst this "splendour in the grass, this glory in the flower," the lively groves of orange and the villas of purest white scattered thickly around, give to the picture a fairy brightness. And yet, setting individual associations aside, I prefer the scenery of my own country to this enchanted vale. This is a landscape to visit as a spectacle, not to live in. There is no

solemnity about it,—no austere beauty,—no retiring loveliness; there are no grand masses of shade,—no venerable oaks, which seem coeval with the hills over which they cast their shadows,—no vast colonnades, in which the fine spirit of the elder time seems yet to keep its state. Nature wears not the pale livery which inspires meditation or solemn joy; her face seems wreathed in a perpetual smile. The landscape breathes, indeed, of intoxicating delight; it invites to present joy; but it leads to no tender reminiscences of the past, nor gives solemn indications of the future. It is otherwise in the very *deficiencies*, as they are usually regarded, of our happier land. There “the pale primrose that dies unmarried” among the scanty hedge-rows, as an emblem of innocence peeping forth amidst a cheerless world, suggests more pensive yet delicious musing, than the gaudiest productions of this brighter clime. The wild roses, thinly interspersed among our thickets, with their delicate colouring and faint perfume, afford images of rustic modesty, far sweeter and more genial than the rich garlands which cluster here. Those “echoes from beyond the grave,” which come to us amid the stillness of forests which have outlived generations of men, are here unheard. In these valleys we are dazzled, surprised, enchanted;—in ours we are moved with solemn yet pleasing thoughts, which “do often lie too deep for tears.”

Having traversed both sides of the aqueduct, I resolved to ascend one of the hills beyond it, for the purpose of obtaining a still more extensive view. After a most weary ascent, of which my eye had taken a very inadequate estimate, I reached the summit, and was amply rewarded for my toils. To the north lay the prospect which I have endeavoured to describe, softened in the distance; beneath was the huge pile, with its massive arches and lone turrets bridging the vale. To the south was the Tagus, and, a little onward, its entrance where it gently blended with the sea. Completely round the north-eastern side of the horizon, the same mighty and beautiful river appeared flowing on far beyond Lisbon, in a noble curve, which seemed to dissolve in the lighter blue of the heavens. And, full to the west, beyond the coasts of Portugal, now irradiated with the most brilliant colouring, was the free and circling ocean, on which, amidst

visionary shapes or orange and saffron glory, the sun was, for his last moment, resting. Soon the sky became literally "fretted with golden fire," and the hills seemed covered with a tender haze of light, which rendered them yet lovelier. The moon began to blend her mild radiance with the sweet twilight, as I took the last glance at the vale, and hastened to Lisbon.

On Thursday, the 21st of May, a grand festival was holden in honour of Saint George, who is held in peculiar reverence in Lisbon. On this most sacred occasion, all the buildings around the vast area of the Rocio were hung with crimson tapestry; a road was formed of fine gravel, guarded by lines of soldiers; and the troops, to a great number, in splendid uniforms, occupied the most conspicuous passages. When all was prepared, the train issued from a church in one of the angles of the square, and slowly paraded round the path prepared for it. It consisted of all the ecclesiastical orders, attired in their richest vestments, and bearing, alternately, crosses of gold and silver; canopies of white, purple, orange, and crimson silk, bordered with deep fringes; and gorgeous banners, decorated with curious devices. The canopy which floated over the consecrated wafer, formerly borne by the king and the princes, was, on this occasion, carried by the chief persons of the regency. But the most remarkable object was the *Saint himself*, who, "not to speak it profanely," is no other than a wooden figure, and, I am afraid, must yield in proportion and in grace to that unconsecrated work, the *Apollo Belvidere*. He was seated on a noble horse, and arrayed in a profusion of gems, which, according to the accounts of the Portuguese, human powers could hardly calculate. His boots were of solid silver; his whole person begirt with jewels, and his hat glittered in the sun like one prodigious diamond. He descended in state from the castle to the church, whence the procession issued, and remained there during the solemnities. He was saluted, on leaving his mansion, with a discharge of artillery, and received the same compliment on his return to that favoured residence. The people, who were of course assembled in great crowds, did not appear to me to look on the magnificent display before them with

any feeling of religious awe, or to regard it in any other light than, at the most, a national spectacle.

Of the national character of the Portuguese in general, I can say very little, as my personal intercourse with them was extremely limited. Were I to believe all that some English residents in Lisbon have told me, I should draw a gloomy picture of human degradation, unrelieved by a single redeeming grace. I should say that the common people are not only ignorant and filthy, but universally dishonest; that they blend the vices of savage and social life, and are ready to become either pilferers or assassins; that they are cruel to their children, lax in friendship, and implacable in revenge; that the higher orders are at once the dupes and tyrants of their servants, familiar with them one moment, and brutally despotic the next; that they are in constant jealousy of their wives, and not without reason; and that even their vices are without dignity or decorum. *All this can never be true*, or Lisbon would not be subsisting in order and peace. To me, the inhabitants appear in a more amiable light. Filthy and ignorant the common people doubtless are; but they are *sober*; and those dreadful excesses and sorrows which arise from the use, in England, of ardent spirits, are consequently unknown. They are idle; but the warmth of the climate may, in some degree, excuse them. No rank is destitute of some appearance of native courteousness. The rich are not, indeed, Howards or Clarksons; they have no idea of exerting themselves to any great degree, to draw down blessings on the heads of others or their own; they do not go in search of wretchedness in order to remove it; but when misery is brought before them, as it is constantly here in a thousand ghastly forms, they are far from withholding such aid as money can render. The gardens of their country villas, which are exceedingly elegant, are always open in the evenings to any of the populace who choose to walk there, so that the citizen, on the numerous holidays, which the Romish church affords, is not compelled to inhale the dust in some wretched tea-garden, which is a libel at once on nature and art, but may rove with his children through groves of orange and thickets of roses. When the company thus indulged meet any of the family which reside in the mansion, they acknowledge the favour which they

are enjoying by obeisances not ungracefully made, which are always returned with equal courtesy. I am assured that this privilege is never abused; even the children walk amidst the flowers and the fruits, without the slightest idea of touching them. This circumstance alone would induce me to doubt the justice with which some have attempted to fix the brand of dishonesty on the inferior classes of Portugal. The people want not the natural tendernesses and gentle movements of the heart; all their deficiencies arise from the absence of high principle, the languishing of intellect, and the decay of the loftier powers and energies which dignify man. They have no enthusiasm, no devoted admiration, or love, for objects unconnected with the necessities of their mortal being, or the low gratifications of sense. They have few mighty names to lend them an inspiration, which might supply the place of contemporary genius; and with those, of which they ought to be fond in proportion to their rarity, they appear scarcely acquainted. Of the rich stores of poetry and romance, which they might enjoy from the neighbouring country and almost similar language of Spain, they are, for the most part, unconscious. Not only has the spirit of chivalry departed from these mountains, where it once was glowing; but its marvellous and golden tales are neglected or forgotten.

The degradation of the public mind in Lisbon is increased by the notorious venality of the ministers of justice. There is no crime for which indemnity may not be purchased by a bribe. Even offences against the government of the king may be winked at, if the culprit is able to make an ample pecuniary sacrifice. It is a well known fact that some of the chief conspirators in the plot to assassinate Marshal Beresford, and change the whole order of things in Portugal, were able to make their peace with the judges, and, on the ground of some technical informality, were dismissed without trial. When any one is accused of an offence, he is generally sent at once to prison, where he remains until he can purchase his freedom. There does not seem, however, any disposition to persecution for opinions, or to exercise wanton cruelty. The Inquisition is no longer an engine in the hands of the priests, but is merely a tribunal for the examination and the punishment of political offences. Death is rarely in-

flicted; for it brings no gain to the magistrate. Criminals guilty of the highest offences are kept in prison until they are forgotten, without any one knowing or caring about their fate. In the absence of the sovereign almost all the civil authorities have become totally corrupted, for there is no patriot to watch, and no public voice to awe them. The people appear sunk in apathy to all excepting gain; and the greater number of them crawl on with little hope, except to supply the cravings of hunger. The city, notwithstanding its populousness, exhibits all the marks of decay—buildings in ruins amidst its stateliest streets, and houses begun on a magnificent scale, and left unfinished for years. The foreign merchants, especially the British, who use it as a central port, give it an artificial life, without which its condition would be most wretched. In bidding farewell to this bright abode of degraded humanity, I felt it impossible to believe that it was destined gradually to become desolate and voiceless. Glorious indeed would be the change, if knowledge should expand the souls now so low and contracted, into a sympathy with the natural wonders around them—if the arts should once more adorn the romantic city—and the orange groves and lovely spots among the delicate cork trees should be vocal with the innocent gaiety of happy peasants, or shed their influences on the hearts of youthful bards. If, indeed, the people were awakened into energy, and their spirit was regulated by wise and beneficent governors, the capital of Portugal would assuredly become the fairest of cities.

MR. CHARLES LLOYD'S POEMS.*

[London Magazine.]

THERE is no more remarkable instance of the "cant of criticism," than the representation currently received as distinctive, whereby several authors, chiefly residing in the neighbourhood of the lakes, were characterized as belonging to one school of poetry. In truth, propinquity of residence, and the bonds of private friendship, are the only circumstances which have ever given the slightest colour to the hypothesis which marked them out as disciples of the same creed. It is scarcely possible to conceive individuals more dissimilar in the objects of their choice, or in the essential properties of their genius. Who, for example, can have less in common than Wordsworth and Coleridge, if we except those faculties which are necessarily the portion of the highest order of imaginative minds? The former of these has sought for his subjects among the most ordinary occurrences of life, which he has dignified and exalted, from which he has extracted the holiest essences of good, or over which he has cast a consecrating and harmonizing light "which never was by sea or land." The latter, on the other hand, has spread abroad his mighty mind, searching for his materials through all history and all science, penetrating into the hidden soul of the wildest superstitions, and selecting the richest spoils of time from the remotest ages. Wordsworth is all intensity—he sees nothing, but through the hallowing medium of his own soul, and represents all things calm, silent, and harmo-

* Desultory Thoughts in London, Titus and Gisippus, with other Poems. By Charles Lloyd, author of *Nugæ Canoræ*, and translator of Alfieri's Tragedies, 12mo. 1821.

nious as his own perceptions. Coleridge throws himself into all the various objects which he contemplates, and attracts to his own imagery their colours and forms. The first, seizes only the mighty and the true with a giant grasp;—the last has a passionate and almost effeminate love of beauty and tenderness which he never loses. One looks only on the affections in their inmost home, while the other perceives them in the lightest and remotest tints, which they cast on objects the strangest and most barbarous. All the distinction, in short, between the intense and the expansive—the severe and the lovely—the philosophic and the magical—really separates these great poets, whom it has been the fashion to censure as united in one heresy. If we cast the slightest glance at Southey's productions, we shall find him unlike either of these, his associates—offering a child-like feebleness in contrast to Wordsworth's nerve—and ranging through mythologies and strange fantasies, not only with less dominion than Coleridge, but merely portraying the shapes to which they gave existence, instead of discovering the spirit of truth and beauty within them. Nor does the author before us, often combine with these by the ignorance or the artifice of criticism, differ less widely from them.—Without Wordsworth's intuitive perception of the profoundest truth's, or Coleridge's feeling of beauty, he has a subtle activity of mind which supplies the place of the first, and a wonderful power of minute observation, which, when directed to lovely objects, in a great degree produces the effect of the latter. All these three rise on some occasions to the highest heaven of thought and feeling, though by various processes—Wordsworth reaching it at once by the divine wingedness of his genius—Coleridge ascending to it by a spiral tract of glory winding on through many a circuit of celestial light—and Lloyd stepping thither by a firm ladder, like that of Jacob, by even steps, which the feet of angels have trodden!

The peculiar qualities of Mr. Lloyd's genius have never been so clearly developed as in the chief poem of the work before us. In his "Nugæ Canoræ," all his thoughts and feelings were overcast by a gentle melancholy, which rendered their prominences less distinct, as it shed over them one sad and sober hue. Even, however, in his most pensive moods,

the vigorous and restless activity of his intellect might be discerned, curiously inquiring for the secret springs of its own distress, and regarding its sorrows as high problems worthy of the most painful scrutiny. While he exhibited to us the full and pensive stream of emotion, with all the images of soft clouds and delicate foliage reflected on its bosom, he failed not to conduct us to its deep-seated fountains, or to lay open to our view the jagged caverns within its banks. Yet here the vast intellectual power was less conspicuous than in his last poems, because the personal emotion was more intense, single, and pervading. He is now, we rejoice to observe, more "i' the sun," and consequently, the nice workings of his reason are set more distinctly before us. The "Desultory Thoughts in London" embrace a great variety of topics, associated in the mind of the author with the metropolis, but many of them belonging to those classes of abstraction which might as fitly be contemplated in a desert. Among these are "Fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute,"—the theories of manners and morals—the doctrines of expediency and self-interest—with many speculations relating to the imaginative parts of literature, and the influences of religion upon them—all of which are grasped by the hand of a master. The whole range of controversial writing scarcely affords an example of propositions stated so lucidly, qualified so craftily, and urged with such exemplary fairness and candour, as in this work. It must, indeed, be admitted, that the admirable qualities of the argument render it somewhat unfit for marriage "with immortal verse." Philosophical poetry, when most attractive, seizes on some grand elemental truths, which it links to the noblest material images, and seeks rather to send one vast sentiment to the heart through the medium of the imagination, than to lead the mind by a regular process of logic, to the result which it contemplates. Mere didactic poetry, as Pope's *Essay on Man*, succeeds not by the nice balance of reasons, but by decking out some obvious common place in a gorgeous rhetoric, or by expressing a familiar sentiment in such forcible language as will give it a singular charm to all who have felt its justice in a plainer garb. In general, the poet, no less than the woman, who deliberates, is lost. But Mr. Lloyd's effusions are in a great measure exceptions to this rule;—for though they

are sometimes "harsh and crabbed," and sometimes too minute, they are marked by so hearty an earnestness, and adorned by such variety of illustration, and imbued with such deep sentiment, that they often enchant while they convince us. Although his processes are careful, his results belong to the stateliest range of truths. His most laborious reasonings lead us to elevated views of humanity—to the sense of a might above reason itself—to those objects which have inspired the most glorious enthusiasm, and of which the profoundest bards have delighted to afford us glimpses. It is quite inspiring to follow him as he detects the inconsistencies of worldly wisdom, as he breaks the shallow reasonings of the advocates of expediency into pieces, or as he vindicates their prerogatives to faith and hope. He leads us up a steep and stony ascent, step by step; but cheers us by many a ravishing prospect by the way, and conducts at last to an eminence, not only above the mists of error, but where the rainbow comes, and whence the gate of heaven may be seen as from the Delectable Mountains which Bunyan's Pilgrim visited.

We scarcely know how to select a specimen which shall do justice to an author, whose speculations are too vast to be completed within a short space, and are connected with others by delicate links of thought. We will give, however, his vindication of the enthusiastic and self-denying spirit, which, however associated with absurdity, is the soul of all religion and virtue.

Reasoners, that argue of ye know not what,
Do not, as mystical, my strain deride :
By facts' criterion be its doctrine tried.

The blind as well might doubt of sense and sight ;
Peruse their lives, who thus have vow'd pursuit
Of heavenly communion : in despite
Of all your arguments ye can't dispute
Their singleness of heart: except ye fight
'Gainst facts, ye, self-convicted, must be mute.
Will ye deny, that they've a secret found
To baffle fate, and heal each mortal wound ?

Will ye deny, to them alone 'tis given,
Who its existence, as a faith, embraced ?
'Tis mainly requisite, to partake of heaven,
That the heart's treasures there should first be placed.

According to thy faith shall it be given
 To thee, with spiritual glories, to be graced.
 As well all facts whence man experience hath,
 As doubt immunities bound up in faith.

'Tis easy thing to say, that men are knaves ;
 'Tis easy thing to say, that men are fools ;
 'Tis easy thing to say, an author raves ;
 Easy, to him who always ridicules
 The incomprehensible, to allege—and saves
 Trouble of farther thought—that oft there rules
 Fanatic feeling in a mad-man's brain :
 That half-pretence oft ekes out half-insane.

We know all this ; but we know also well,
 These men we speak of tried by every test
 Admissible, all other men excel
 In virtue, and in happiness. Since bless'd
 Are they, stern Fate, spite of thy direst spell !
 Infection, loathsome maladies, each pest
 And plague,—for these have they,—should they assail,
 A panacea which will never fail.

God is their rock, their fortress of defence,
 In time of trouble, a defence most holy ;
 For them the wrath of man is impotence ;
 His pride, a bubble ; and his wisdom, folly.
 That "peace" have they—unspeakable intense,—
 "Which passeth understanding !" Melancholy
 Life's gauds to them : the unseen they explore :
 Rooted in heaven, to live is—to adore !

Ye, that might cavil at these humble lays,
 Peruse the page of child-like Fenelon ;
 Hear what the wrapped, transfigur'd Guion says
 With ills of body such as few have known ;—
 Tedious imprisonment ; in youthful days
 To luxuries used, they all aside are thrown ;
 To poverty devoted, she defies
 Its sorest ills, blessing the sacrifice.

Was e'er an instance known, that man could taste
 True peace of mind, and spurn religion's laws ?
 In other things were this *alliance* traced ;
 Constant *coincidence* ; effect, and cause,
 We scruple not to call them ; or, at least,
 Condition indispensable, whence draws

The one, the other. This *coincidence*
But grant me *here*;—and grant the consequence.

Facts, facts, are stubborn things! We trust the sense
Of sight, because th' experience of each day
Warrants our trust in it. Now, tell me whence
It is, no mortal yet could dare to say,
Man trusted in his God for his defence,
And was confounded? cover'd with dismay?
Loses he friends? Religion dries his tears!
Loses he life? Religion calms his fears!

Loses he health? Religion balm's his mind,
And pains of flesh seem ministers of grace,
And wait upon a rapture more refin'd,
Then e'en in lustiest health e'er found a place.
Loses he wealth? the pleasure *it* can find
He had before renounced; thus he can trace
No difference, but that now the *heart* bestows
What through a *hand* less *affluent* *scantier* flows.

He too as much enjoys the spectacle
Of good, when done by others as by him:
Loses he fame? the honour he loves well
Is not of earth, but that which seraphim
Might prize! Loses he liberty? his cell,
And all its vaults, echo his rapturous hymn!
He feels as free as freest bird in air!
His heaven-shrin'd spirit finds heaven every where!

'Tis not romance which we are uttering! No;
Thousands of volumes each word's truth attest!
Thousands of souls redeem'd from all below
Can bring a proof, that, e'en while earthly guest,
'Tis possible for man that *peace* to know,
Which maketh him impassive to the test
Of mortal sufferance! Many and many a martyr
Has found this bound up in religion's charter.

Pleasure, or philosophical or sensual,
Is not, ought not to be, man's primary rule;
We often feel bound by a law potential
To do those things which e'en our reasons fool.
God, and he only, sees the consequential;
The mind, well nurtur'd in religion's school
Feels that *He* only—to whom all's obedient—
Has right to guide itself by the expedient.

Duty is man's first law, not satisfaction!
 That satisfaction comes from *this* perform'd,
 We grant! But should this be the prime attraction
 That led us to performance, soon inform'd
 By finding that we've miss'd the meed of action,
 We shall confess our error. Oft we're warm'd,
 By a strong spirit we cannot restrain,
 To deeds, which make all calculation vain.

Had Regulus reason'd, whether on the scale
 Of *use*, in Rome, his faculties would *most*,
 Or Carthage—patriotism's cause avail,
 He never had resum'd his fatal post.
 Brutus, Virginius had they tried *by tale*
 Their country's cause, had never been her boast.
 Yet had it not these self-doom'd heroes seen,
 Rome "the eternal city," ne'er had been!

Shall Christ submit upon the cross to bleed,
 And man for all he does a reason ask?
 Have martyrs died, and confessors, indeed,
 That he must seek a *why* for every task?
 If it be so, to prate we've little need
 Of this *enlighten'd age!* Take off the mask!
 If it be so, and ye'll find this our *proud age*,—
 Its grand climacterick past is in its *dotage*.

Thy name, Thermopylæ, had ne'er been heard,
 Were not the Greeks wiser than our wise men.
 I grant, that heaven alone to man transferr'd,
 When he would raise up states for history's pen,
 This more than mortal instinct! Yet absurd
 It is (because, perhaps, our narrower ken
 Their heights cannot descry; yea, and a curse
 'Twill bring) to make a *theory* of the worse.

A theory for a declining race!
 No, let us keep at least our lips from lies;
 If we have forfeited *Truth's soaring grace*,
 Let us not *falsify* her *prodigies*.
 We well may wear a blush upon our face,
 From her past triumphs so t' apostatize
 In deeds; but let us not with this invent
 And infidelity of argument.

Go to Palmyra's ruins; visit Greece,
 Behold! The wrecks of her magnificence
 Seem left, in spite of man, thus to increase
 The sting of satire on his impotence.

As to betray how soon man's glories cease ;
 Tombs, time defying, of the most pretence
 But only make us feel with more surprise,
 How mean the things they would immortalize!

The following is only a portion of a series of reminiscences equally luxurious and intense, and which are attended throughout by that vein of reflection which our author never loses :

Oh, were the eye of youth a moment ours!
 When every flower that gemm'd the various earth
 Brought down from Heaven enjoyment's genial showers!
 And every bird, of everlasting mirth
 Prophecied to us in romantic bowers!
 Love was the garniture, whose blameless birth
 Caus'd that each filmy web where dew-drops trembled,
 The gossamery haunt of elves resembled!

We can remember earliest days of spring,
 When violets blue and white, and primrose pale,
 Like callow nestlings 'neath their mother's wing,
 Each peep'd from under the broad leaf's green veil.
 When streams look'd blue; and thin clouds clustering
 O'er the wide empyrean did prevail,
 Rising like incense from the breathing world,
 Whose gracious aspect was with dew impearl'd.

When a soft moisture, steaming every where,
 To the earth's countenance mellow hues imparted;
 When sylvan choristers self-pois'd in air,
 Or perched on bows, in shrilly quiverings darted
 Their little raptures forth; when the warm glare
 (While glancing lights backwards and forwards started,
 As if with meteors silver-sheath'd 'twere flooded)
 Sultry, and silent, on the hill's turf brooded.

Oh, in these moments we such joy have felt,
 As if the earth were nothing but a shrine;
 Where all, or awe inspir'd, or made one melt
 Gratefully towards its architect divine!
 Father! in future (as I once have dwelt
 Within that very sanctuary of thine
 When shapes, and sounds, seem'd as but modes of Thee!)
 That with experience gain'd were heaven to me!

Oft in the fulness of the joy ye give,
 Oh, days of youth! in summer's noon-tide hours,
 Did I a depth of quietness receive
 From insects' drowsy hum, that all my powers
 Would baffle to portray! Let them that live
 In vacant solitude, speak from their bowers
 What nameless pleasures letter'd ease may cheer,
 Thee, Nature! bless'd to mark with eye and ear!—

Who can have watch'd the wild rose' blushing dye,
 And seen what treasures its rich cups contain;
 Who, of soft shades the fine variety,
 From white to deepest flush of vermeil stain?
 Who, when impearl'd with dew-drop's radiancy
 Its petals breath'd perfume, while he did strain
 His *very being*, lest the sense should fail
 T' imbibe each sweet its beauties did exhale?

Who amid lanes, on eve of summer days,
 Which sheep brouse, could the thicket's wealth behold?
 The fragrant honey-suckle's bowery maze?
 The furze bush, with its vegetable gold?
 In every satin sheath that helps to raise
 The fox-glove's cone, the figures manifold
 With such a dainty exquisiteness wrought?—
 Nor grant that thoughtful love they all have taught?

The daisy, cowslip, each have to them given—
 The wood anemone, the strawberry wild,
 Grass of Parnassus, meek as star of even:—
 Bright, as the brightening eye of smiling child,
 And bathed in blue transparency of heaven,
 Veronica; the primrose pale, and mild;—
 Of charms (of which to speak no tongue is able)
 Intercommunion incommunicable!

I had a cottage in a Paradise!
 'Twere hard to enumerate the charms combin'd
 Within the little space, greeting the eyes,
 Its unpretending precincts that confin'd.
 Onward, in front, a mountain stream did rise
 Up, whose long course the fascinated mind
 (So apt the scene to awaken wildest themes)
 Might localize the most romantic dreams.

When winter torrents, by the rain and snow,
 Surlily dashing down the hills, were fed,
 Its mighty mass of waters seem'd to flow
 With deafening course precipitous: its bed

Rocky, such steep declivities did show
 That towards us with a rapid course it sped,
 Broken by frequent falls; thus did it roam
 In whirlpools eddying, and convulsed with foam.

Flank'd were its banks with perpendicular rocks,
 Whose scars enormous, sometimes gray and bare,
 And sometimes clad with ash and gnarled oaks,
 The birch, the hazel, pine, and holly, were.
 Their tawny leaves, the sport of winters' shocks,
 Oft o'er its channel circled in the air;
 While, on their tops, and midway up them, seen,
 Lower'd cone-like firs and yews in gloomiest green.

So many voices from this river came
 In summer, winter, autumn, or the spring;
 So many sounds accordant to each frame
 Of Nature's aspect, (whether the storm's wing
 Brooded on it, or pantingly, and tame,
 The low breeze crisp'd its waters) that, to sing
 Half of their tones, impossible! or tell
 The listener's feelings from their viewless spell.

When fires gleam'd bright, and when the curtain'd room,
 Well stock'd with books and music's implements,
 When children's faces, dress'd in all the bloom
 Of innocent enjoyments, deep content's
 Deepest delight inspir'd; when nature's gloom
 To the domesticated heart presents
 (By consummate tranquillity possess'd)
 Contrast, that might have stirr'd the dullest breast;

Yes,—in such hour as that—thy voice I've known.
 Oh, hallow'd stream!—fitly so nam'd—(since tones
 Of deepest melancholy swell'd upon
 The breeze that bore it)—fearful as the groans
 Of fierce night spirits! Yes, when tapers shone
 Athwart the room (when, from their skiey thrones
 Of ice-piled height abrupt, rush'd rudely forth,
 Riding the blast, the tempests of the North;)

Thy voice I've known to wake a dream of wonder!
 For though 'twas loud, and wild with turbulence,
 And absolute as is the deep-voiced thunder,
 Such fine gradations mark'd its difference
 Of audibility, one scarce could sunder
 Its gradual swellings from the influence
 Of harp Æolian, when, upon the breeze,
 Floats in a stream its plaintive harmonies.

One might have thought, that spirits of the air
 Warbled amid it in an undersong ;
 And oft one might have thought, that shrieks were there
 Of spirits, driven for chastisement along
 The invisible regions that above earth are.
 All species seem'd of intonation (strong
 To bind the soul, Imagination rouse,)
 Conjur'd from preternatural prison-house.

But when the heavens are blue, and summer skies
 Are pictur'd in thy wave's cerulean glances ;
 Then thy crisp stream its course so gaily plies,
 Trips on so merrily in endless dances,
 Such low sweet tone, fit for the time, does rise
 From thy swift course, methinks, that it enhances
 The hue of flowers which decorate thy banks,
 While each one's freshness seems to pay thee thanks.

Solemn the mountains that the horizon close,
 From whose drear verge thou seem'st to issue forth :
 Sorcery might fitly dwell, one could suppose,
 (Or any wondrous spell of heaven or earth,
 Which e'en to name man's utterance not knows,)
 Amid the forms that mark thy place of birth.
 Thither direct your eye, and you will find
 All that excites the imaginative mind !

The tale of Titus and Gisippus which follows, while it is very interesting as a story, exhibits the same great intellectual power and ceaseless activity of thought, which characterize the Thoughts in London. Mr. Lloyd has taken the common incident of one lover resigning his mistress to another, and the names of his chief characters from Boccaccio, but in all other respects, the poem is original. Its chief peculiarity is the manner in which it reasons upon all the emotions which it portrays, especially on the progress of love in the soul, with infinite nicety of discrimination, not unlike that which Shakspeare has manifested in his amatory poems. He accounts for the finest shade of feeling, and analyzes its essence, with the same care, as though he were demonstrating a proposition of Euclid. He is as minute in his delineation of all the variations of the heart, as Richardson was in his narratives of matters of fact ;—and, like him, thus throws such an air of truth over his statements, that we can scarcely avoid receiving them as authentic history. At the

same time, he conducts this process with so delicate a hand, and touches his subjects with so deep a reverence for humanity, that he teaches us to love our nature the more from his masterly dissection. By way of example of these remarks, we will give part of the scene between a lover who long has secretly been agitated by a passion for the betrothed mistress of his friend, and the object of his silent affection whom he has just rescued from a watery grave—though it is not perhaps the most beautiful passage of the poem :

He is on land ; on safe land is he come :
 Sophronia's head he pillows on a stone :
 A death-like paleness hath usurp'd her bloom ;
 Her head falls lapsing on his shoulder. None
 Were there to give him aid ! he fears her doom
 Is seal'd for evermore ! At last a groan
 Burst from her livid lips, and then the word
 "Titus" he heard, or fancied that he heard !—

Where was he then ? From death to life restor'd !
 From hell to heaven ! To rapture from despair !
 His hand he now lays on that breast ador'd ;
 And now her pulse he feels ; and now—(beware,
 Beware, rash youth !) his lips draw in a hoard
 Of perfume from her lips, which though they were
 Still clos'd, yet oft the inarticulate sigh,
 Issuing from thence, he drank with ecstasy.

Still were they cold ; her hands were also cold ;
 Those hands he chaf'd, and, perhaps to restore
 To her chill paly lips their warmth, so bold
 He grew, he kiss'd those pale lips o'er and o'er.
 Nay, to revive in their most perfect mould
 Their wonted rubeous hue, he dared do more ;—
 He glued his mouth to them, and breath'd his breath
 To die with her, or rescue her from death.—

Thou art undone, mad youth ! The fire of love
 Burn'd so intensely in his throbbing veins,
 That, had she been a statue, he might prove
 A new Pygmalion, and the icy chains
 Of death defy. Well then might he remove
 The torpor which her o'er-wrought frame sustains.—
 If *sweet*, revival from such menaced death ;
 More *sweet*, revival by a lover's breath !

She feels the delicate influence through her thrill,
 And with seal'd eye lay in a giddy trance,
 Scarce dare she open them, when had her will
 On this been bent, she felt the power to glance
 Their lights on him. No, with a lingering skill—
 Oh, blame her not!—she did awhile enhance
 The bliss of that revival, by a feign'd
 Or half-feign'd show of conflict still sustain'd.

At last, she look'd!—*They* looked!—Eye met with eye!
 The whole was told! The lover, and the lov'd,
 The ador'd, and the adorer, ecstasy
 Never till then experienced—swiftly proved!—
 Thanks for his aid were a *mean courtesy*!
 They were forgotten! Transport unreprieved,
 This was his guerdon; this his rich reward!
 An hour's oblivion with Sophronia shared!

Then all the world was lost to them, in one
 Fulness of unimaginable bliss!—
 Infinity was with them! and the zone
 Unbound whence Venus sheds upon a kiss
 Nectareous essences, and raptures known
 Ne'er save to moments *unprepar'd* as this!
 And in that earnest impulse did they find
 Peace and intensity, alike combin'd!

To frame such joy, these things are requisite;
 A lofty nature; the exalting stress
 Of stimulating trials; which requite,
 And antecedent sorrows, doubly bless.
 Consummate sympathies, which souls unite;
 And a conjuncture, whence no longer press
 Impulses—long as these delights we prove—
 From one thing foreign to the world of love.

This could not last! Not merely would a word;—
 A gesture would, a look, dissolve the charm!—
 Could *home* be mention'd nor the thought restor'd,
 To her remembrance of Gisippus' warm
 And manly love? Bless'd be ye with your hoard
 Of transient bliss, and be ye safe from harm,
 Ye fond, fond pair! But think not joys so high
 Can be inwoven with reality!

At last a swift revulsion through her frame
 And o'er her countenance stole: a sudden pause!

Her eyes, which had imbib'd a piercing flame,
 Fell at once rayless; and her bosom draws
 One in-pent sigh; one look imploring came
 O'er her fine face! Titus knew well the cause
 Of this so sudden change: he dared not speak;
 He dared not move; dared not its reason seek!

Some minutes they were silent. Night advanced;
 Titus towards himself, Sophronia press'd,
 But dumb he stood; upward she faintly glanced
 A look upbraiding, and upon his breast—
 Gently reclining—lay like one entranced!
 No longer was happiness her guest.
 She starts! She cries "Gisippus!" all is told!
 Cold fell the word, on bosoms still more cold!

They rose and crept along in silentness—
 Sophronia reach'd her home, but nothing said,
 E'en to her mother, of her past distress.
 Her threshold past not Titus—Thence he fled,
 Soon as in safety he the maid did guess,
 Like to a madman madden'd more with dread!
 Nor ever of this night, or of its spell
 Of mighty love, did he breathe a syllable!

We now take leave of Mr. Lloyd with peculiar gratitude for the rich materials for thought with which a perusal of his poems has endowed us. We shall look for his next appearance before the public with anxiety;—assured that his powers are not even yet fully developed to the world, and that he is destined to occupy a high station among the finest spirits of his age.

MR. OLDAKER ON MODERN IMPROVEMENTS.

[New Monthly Magazine.]

MR. EDITOR. I trust that, even in this age of improvement you will suffer one of the oldest of the old school to occupy a small space in your pages. A few words respecting myself will, however, be necessary to apologize for my opinions. Once I was among the gayest and sprightliest of youthful aspirants for fame and fortune. Being a second son, I was bred to the bar, and pursued my studies with great vigour and eager hope, in the Middle Temple. I loved, too, one of the fairest of her sex, and was beloved in return. My toils were sweetened by the delightful hope that they would procure me an income sufficient for the creditable support of the mistress of my soul. Alas! at the very moment when the unlooked-for devise of a large estate from a distant relative gave me affluence, she for whom alone I desired wealth, sunk under the attack of a fever into the grave. Religion enabled me to bear her loss with firmness, but I determined, for her sake, ever to remain a bachelor. Although composed and tranquil, I felt myself unable to endure the forms, or to taste the pleasures of London. I retired to my estate in the country, where I have lived for almost forty years in the society of a maiden sister, happy if an old friend came for a few days to visit me, but chiefly delighting to cherish in silence the remembrance of my only love, and to anticipate the time when I shall be laid beside her. At last, a wish to settle an orphan nephew in my own profession, has compelled me to visit the scenes of my early days, and to mingle, for a short time, with the world. My resolution

once taken, I felt a melancholy pleasure in the expectation of seeing the places with which I was once familiar, and which were ever linked in my mind with sweet and blighted hope. Every change has been to me as a shock. I have looked at large on society too, and there I see little in brilliant innovation to admire. Returned at last to my own fire-side, I sit down to throw together a few thoughts on the new and boasted Improvements, over which I mourn. If I should seem too querulous, let it be remembered, that my own happy days are long past, and that recollection is the sole earthly joy which is left me.

My old haunts have indeed suffered comparatively small mutation. The princely hall of the Middle Temple has the same venerable aspect as when, in my boyish days, I felt my heart beating with a strange feeling of mingled pride and reverence on becoming one of its members. The fountain yet plays among the old trees, which used to gladden my eye in spring for a few days with their tender green, to become so prematurely desolate. But the front of the Inner Temple hall, upon the terrace, is sadly altered for the worse. When I first knew it, the noble solidity of its appearance, especially of the figure over the gateway, cut massively in the stone, carried the mind back into the deep antiquity of the scene. Now the whole building is white-washed and plastered over, the majestic entrance supplied by an arch of pseudo-gothic, and a new library added at vast cost in the worst taste of the modern antique. The view from the garden is spoiled by that splendid nuisance, the Waterloo Bridge. Formerly we used to enjoy the enormous bend of the river, far fairer than the most marvellous work of art; and while our eyes dwelt on the placid mirror of water, our imagination went over it, through calm and majestic windings, into sweet rural scenes, and far inland bowers. Now the river appears only an oblong lake, and the feeling of the country once let into the town by that glorious avenue of crystal, is shut out by a noble piece of mere human workmanship! But nature never changes, and some of her humble works are ever found to renew old feelings within us, notwithstanding the sportive changes of mortal fancy. The short grass of the Temple garden is the same as when forty years ago I was accustomed to refresh my weary eyes with its greenness. There

I have strolled again; and while I bent my head downwards, and fixed my eyes on the thin blades and the soft daisies, I felt as I had felt when last I walked there—all between was as nothing, or a feverish dream—and I once more dreamed of the Seals, and of the living Sophia!—I felt—but I dare not trust myself on this subject farther.

The profession of the law is strangely altered since the days of my youth. It was then surely more liberal, as well as more rational, than I now find it. The business and pleasure of a lawyer were not entirely separated, as at present, when the first is mere toil, and the second lighter than vanity. The old stout-hearted pleaders threw a jovial life into their tremendous drudgeries, which almost rendered them delightful. Wine did but open to them the most curious intricacies of their art: they rose from it, like giants refreshed, to grapple with the sternest difficulties, and rejoiced in the encounter. Their powers caught a glow in the severity of the struggle, almost like that arising from strong exertion of the bodily frame. Nor did they disdain to enjoy the quaint jest, the far-fetched allusion, or the antique fancy, which sometimes craftily peeped out on them amidst their laborious researches. Poor T—— W—— was one of the last of the race. He was the heartiest and most romantic of special pleaders. Thrice happy was the attorney who could engage him to a steak or broiled fowl in the old coffee-room in Fleet-street, where I have often met him. How would he then dilate, in the warmth of his heart, on all his professional triumphs—now chuckling over the fall of a brother into a trap set artfully for him in the fair guise of liberal pleading—now whispering a joy past joy in a stumble of the Lord Chief Justice himself, among the filmy cords drawn about his path! When the first bottle was despatched, arrived the time for his wary host to produce his papers in succession, to be drawn or settled by the joyous pleader. The well-lauded inspiration of a poet is not more genuine than that with which he then was gifted. All his nice discernment—all his vast memory—all his skill in drawing analogies and discerning principles in the “great obscurity” of the Year Books—were set in rapid and unerring action. On he went—covering page after page, his pen “in giddy mazes running,” and his mind growing subtler and more acute with

every glass. How dextrously did he then glide through all the strange windings of the case, with a sagacity which never failed, while he garnished his discourse with many a legal pun and learned conceit, which was as the light bubble on the deep stream of his knowledge! He is gone!—and I find none to resemble him in this generation—none who thus can put a spirit into their work, which may make cobweb-sophistries look golden, and change a laborious life into one long holiday!

In the greater world, I have observed with sorrow, a prevailing disregard of the past, and a desire to extol the present, or to expatiate in visionary prospects of the future. I fear this may be traced not so much to philanthropy as to self-love, which inspires men with the wish personally to distinguish themselves as the teachers and benefactors of their species, instead of resting contented to share in the vast stock of recollections and sympathies which is common to all. They would fain persuade us that mankind, created, “a little lower than the angels,” is now for the first time “crowned with glory and honour;” and they exultingly point to institutions of yesterday for the means to regenerate the earth. Some, for example, pronounce the great mass of the people, through all ages, as scarcely elevated above the brutes which perish, because the arts of reading, writing, and arithmetic, were not commonly diffused among them; and on the diffusion of these they ground their predictions of a golden age. And were there then no virtuous hardihood, no guileless innocence, no affections stronger than the grave, in that mighty lapse of years which we contemptuously stigmatize as dark? Are disinterested patriotism, conjugal love, open-handed hospitality, meek self-sacrifice, and chivalrous contempt of danger and of death, modern inventions? Has man’s great birth-right been in abeyance even until now? Oh, no! The Chaldæan shepherd did not cast his quiet gaze through weeks and years in vain to the silent skies. He knew not, indeed, the discoveries of science, which have substituted an immense variety of figures on space and distance, for the sweet influences of the stars; yet did the heavens tell to him the glory of God, and angel faces smile on him from the golden clouds. Book-learning is, perhaps, the least part of the education of the species. Nature is the mightiest and

the kindest of teachers. The rocks and unchanging hills give to the heart the sense of a duration beyond that of the perishable body. The flowing stream images to the soul an everlasting continuity of tranquil existence. "The brave o'er-hanging firmament," even to the most rugged swain, imparts some consciousness of the universal brotherhood of those over whom it hangs. The affections ask no leave of the understanding to "glow and spread and kindle," to shoot through all the frame a tremulous joy, or animate to holiest constancy. We taste the dearest blessedness of earth in our childhood, before we have learned to express it in mortal language. Life has its universal lessons far beyond human lore. Kindness is as cheering, sorrow as purifying, and the aspect of death as softening to the ignorant in this world's wisdom, as to the scholar. The purest delights grow beneath our feet, and all who will stoop may gather them. While sages lose the idea of the Universal Parent in their subtleties, the lowly "FEEL after Him and find Him." Sentiment precedes reason in point of time, and is a surer guide to the noblest realities. Thus man hopes, loves, reveres, and enjoys, without the aid of writing or of the press to inspire or direct him. Many of his feelings are even heartier and more genuine before he has learned to describe them. He does not perpetually mistake words for things, nor cultivate his faculties and affections for a discerning public. His aspirations "are raised, not marked." If he is gifted with divine imagination, he may "walk in glory and in joy beside his plough upon the mountain side," without the chilling idea that he must make the most of his sensations to secure the applause of gay saloons or crowded theatres. The deepest impressions are worn out by the multiplication of their copies. Talking has almost usurped the place of acting and of feeling; and the world of authors seem as though their hearts were but paper scrolls, and ink, instead of blood, were flowing in their veins. "The great events with which old story rings, seem vain and hollow." If all these evils will not be extended by what is falsely termed the Education of the Poor, let us at least be on our guard lest we transform our peasantry from men into critics, teach them scorn instead of humble hope, and leave them nothing to love, to revere, or to enjoy!

The Bible Society, founded and supported, no doubt, from the noblest motives, also puts forth pretensions which are sickening. Its advocates frequently represent it as destined to change all earth into a paradise. That a complete triumph of the *principles* of the Bible would bring in the happy state which they look for can never be disputed; but the history of our religion affords no ground for anticipating such a result from the unaided perusal of its pages. Deep and extensive impressions of the truths of the Gospel have never been made by mere reading, but always by the exertions of living enthusiasm in the holy cause. Providence may, indeed, in its inscrutable wisdom, impart new energy to particular instruments; but there appears no sufficient indication of such a change as shall make the *printed Bible alone* the means of regenerating the species. "An age of Bibles" may not be an age of Christian charity and hope. The word of God may not be revered the more by becoming a common book in every cottage, and a drug in the shop of every pawnbroker. It was surely neither known nor revered the less when it was a rare treasure, when it was proscribed by those who sat in high places, and its torn leaves and fragments were cherished even unto death. In those days, when a single copy chained to the desk of the church was alone in extensive parishes, did it diffuse less sweetness through rustic hearts than now, when the poor are almost compelled to possess it? How then did the villagers flock from distant farms, cheered in their long walks by thoughts not of this world, to converse for a short hour with patriarchs, saints, and apostles! How did they devour the venerable and well worn page with tearful eyes, or listen delighted to the voice of one gifted above his fellows, who read aloud the oracles of celestial wisdom! What ideas of the Bible must they have enjoyed, who came many a joyful pilgrimage to hear or to read it! Yet even more precious was the enjoyment of those who, in times of persecution, snatched glances in secret at its pages, and thus entered, as by stealth, into the paradisiacal region, to gather immortal fruits and listen to angel voices. The word of God was dearer to them than house, land, or the "ruddy drops which warmed their hearts." Instead of the lamentable weariness and disgust with which the young now too often turn from the perusal of the Scriptures,

they heard with mute attention and serious joy the histories of the Old Testament and the parables of the New. They heard with revering sympathy of Abraham receiving seraphs unawares—of Isaac walking out at even-tide to meditate, and meeting the holy partner of his days—of Jacob's dream, and of that immortal Syrian Shepherdess, for whose love he served a hard master fourteen years, which seemed to him but a few days—of Joseph the beloved, the exile, the tempted, and the forgiver—of all the wonders of the Jewish story—and of the character and sufferings of the Messiah. These things were to them at once august realities, and surrounded with a dream-like glory from afar. "Heaven lay about them in their infancy." They preserved the purity—the spirit of meek submission—the patient confiding love of their childhood in their maturest years. They, in their turn, instilled the sweetness of Christian charity, drop by drop, into the hearts of their offspring, and left their example as a deathless legacy. Surely this was better than the dignified patronage now courted for the Scriptures, or the pompous eulogies pronounced on them by rival orators! The reports of anniversaries of the Bible Society are often to me, inexpressibly nauseous. The word of God is praised in the style of eulogy employed on a common book by a friendly reviewer. It is evidently used as a theme to declaim on. But the praise of the Bible is almost overshadowed by the flatteries lavished on the nobleman or county member who has condescended to preside, and which it is the highest ambition of the speakers ingeniously to introduce and to vary. Happy is he who can give a new turn to the compliment, or invent a new alliteration or antithesis for the occasion! The copious nonsense of the successful orators is even more painful than the failures of the novices. After a string of false metaphors and poor conceits, applauded to the echo, the meeting are perhaps called on to sympathize with some unhappy debutant, whose sense of the virtues of the chairman proves too vast for his powers of expression; and with Miss Peachum in the *Beggars' Opera*, to lament "that so noble a youth should come to an untimely end." Alas! these exhibitions have little connexion with a deep love of the Bible, or with real pity for the sufferings of man. Were religious tyranny to render the Scriptures scarce, and to forbid their circulation, they would

speedily be better prized and honoured than when scattered with gorgeous profusion, and lauded by nobles and princes.

The Society for the Suppression of Mendicity is another boasted institution of these cold-hearted days. It would annihilate the race of beggars, and remove from the delicate eye the very form and aspect of misery. Strange infatuation! as if an old class of the great family of man might be cut off without harm! "All are but parts of one stupendous whole," bound together by ties of antique sympathy, of which the lowest and most despised are not without their uses. In striking from society a race whom we have, from childhood, been accustomed to observe, a vast body of old associations and gentle thoughts must necessarily be lost for ever. The poor mendicants whom we would banish from the earth, are the best sincurists to whose sustenance we contribute. In the great science—the science of humanity—they not rarely are our first teachers: they affectingly remind us of our own state of mutual dependance; bring sorrow palpably before the eyes of the prosperous and the vain; and prevent the hearts of many from utterly "losing their nature." They give, at least, a salutary disturbance to gross selfishness, and hinder it from entirely forming an ossified crust about the soul. We see them too with gentle interest, because we have always seen them, and were accustomed to relieve them in the spring-time of our days. And if some of them are what the world calls impostors, and literally "do beguile us of our tears" and our alms, those tears are not shed, nor those alms given, in vain. If they have even their occasional revellings and hidden luxuries, we should rather rejoice to believe that happiness has every where its nooks and corners which we do not see; that there is more gladness in the earth than meets the politician's gaze; and that fortune has her favours, "secret, sweet, and precious," even for those on whom she seems most bitterly to frown. Well may that divinest of philosophers, Shakspeare, make Lear reply to his daughters, who had been speaking in the true spirit of modern improvements:

"O reason not the need: our basest beggars
Are in the poorest thing superfluous:
Allow not nature more than nature needs,
Man's life is cheap as beasts!"

There are many other painful instances in these times of that "restless wisdom" which "has a broom for ever in its hand to rid the world of nuisances." There are, for example, the plans of Mr. Owen, with his infallible recipes for the formation of character. Virtue is not to be forced in artificial hot-beds, as he proposes. Rather let it spring up where it will from the seed scattered throughout the earth, and rise hardly in sun and shower, while the "free mountain winds have leave to blow against it." But I feel that I have already broken too violently on my habits of dreamy thought, by the asperity into which I now and then have fallen. Let me then break off at once, with the single expression of a hope, that this "bright and breathing world" may not be changed into a Penitentiary by the efforts of modern reformers.

I am, Sir,

Your hearty well-wisher,

FRANCIS OLDAKER.

A CHAPTER ON "TIME."

BEING AN ATTEMPT TO THROW NEW LIGHT ON AN OLD SUBJECT.

[New Monthly Magazine.]

"WE know what we are," said poor Ophelia, "but we know not what we may be." Perhaps she would have spoken with a nicer accuracy had she said, "we know what we *have been*." Of our present state we can strictly speaking, *know* nothing. The act of meditation on ourselves, however quick and subtle, must refer to the past, in which alone we can truly be said to live. Even in the moments of intensest enjoyment, our pleasures are multiplied by the quick-revolving images of thought; we feel the past and future in each fragment of the instant, even as the flavour of every drop of some delicious liquid is heightened and prolonged on the lips. It is the past only which we really enjoy as soon as we become sensible of duration. Each by-gone instant of delight becomes rapidly present to us, and "bears a glass which shows us many more." This is the great privilege of a meditative being—never properly to have any sense of the present, but to feel the great realities as they pass away, casting their delicate shadows on the future.

Time, then, is only a notion—unfelt in its passage—a mere measure given by the mind to its own past emotions. Is there, then, any abstract common measure by which the infinite variety of intellectual acts can be meted—any real passage of years which is the same to all—any periodical revolution, in which all who have lived, have lived out equal hours? Is chronology any other than a fable, a "tale

that is told?" Certain outward visible actions have passed, and certain seasons have rolled over them; but has the common idea of time, as applicable to these, any truth higher or surer than those infinite varieties of duration which have been felt by each single heart? Who shall truly count the measure of his own days—much more scan the real life of the millions around him?

The ordinary language of moralists respecting time shows that we really know nothing respecting it. They say that life is fleeting and short; why, humanly speaking, may they not as well affirm that it is extended and lasting? The words "short" and "long" have only meaning when used comparatively; and to what can we compare or liken this our human existence? The images of fragility—thin vapours, delicate flowers, and shadows cast from the most fleeting things—which we employ as emblems of its transitoriness, really serve to exhibit its durability as great in comparison with their own. If life is short, compared with the age of some fine animals, how much longer is it than that of many, some of whom pass through all the varieties of youth, maturity, and age, during a few hours, according to man's reckoning, and, if they are endowed with memory, look back on their early minutes through the long vista of a summer's day! An antediluvian shepherd might complain with as much apparent reason of the brevity of his nine hundred years, as we of our three score and ten. He would find as little to confute or to establish his theory. There is nothing visible by which we can fairly reckon the measure of our lives. It is not just to compare them with the duration of rocks and hills, which have withstood "a thousand storms, a thousand thunders;" because where there is no consciousness, there is really no time. The power of imagination supplies to us the place of ages. We have thoughts which "date beyond the pyramids." Antiquity spreads around us her mighty wings. We live centuries in contemplation, and have all the sentiment of six thousand years in our memories:—

"The wars we too remember of King Nine,
And old Assaracus and Ibycus divinc."

Whence then the prevalent feeling of the brevity of our life? Not, assuredly, from its comparison with any thing which is presented to our senses. It is only because the mind is formed for eternity that it feels the shortness of its earthly sojourn. Seventy years, or seventy thousand, or seven, shared as the common lot of a species, would seem alike sufficient to those who had no sense within them of a being which should have no end. When this sense has been weakened, as it was amidst all the exquisite forms of Grecian mythology, the brevity of life has been forgotten. There is scarcely an allusion to this general sentiment, so deep a spring of the pathetic, throughout all the Greek tragedies. It will be found also to prevail in individuals in proportion as they meditate on themselves, or as they nurse in solitude and silence the instinct of the Eternal.

The doctrine that Time exists only in remembrance, may serve to explain some apparent inconsistencies in the language which we use respecting our sense of its passage. We hear persons complaining of the slow passage of time, when they have spent a single night of unbroken wearisomeness, and wondering how speedily hours, filled with pleasure or engrossing occupations, have flown; and yet we all know how long any period seems which has been crowded with events or feelings leaving a strong impression behind them. In thinking on seasons of ennui we have nothing but a sense of length—we merely remember that we felt the tedium of existence; but there is really no space in the imagination filled up by the period. Mere time, unpeopled with diversified emotions or circumstances, is but one idea, and that idea is nothing more than the remembrance of a listless sensation. A night of dull pain and months of lingering weakness are, in the retrospect, nearly the same thing. When our hands or our hearts are busy, we know nothing of time—it does not exist for us; but as soon as we pause to meditate on that which is gone, we seem to have lived long, because we look back through a long series of events, or feel them at once peering one above the other like ranges of distant hills. Actions or feelings, not hours, mark all the backward course of our being. Our sense of the nearness to us of any circumstance in our life is determined on the same principles—not by the revolution of the seasons, but by the relation which

the event bears in importance to all that has happened to us since. To him who has thought, or done, or suffered much, the level days of his childhood seem at an immeasurable distance, far off as the age of chivalry, or as the line of Sesostris. There are some recollections of such overpowering vastness, that their objects seem ever near; their size reduces all intermediate events to nothing; and they peer upon us like "a forked mountain, or blue promontory," which, being far off, is yet nigh. How different from these appears some inconsiderable occurrence of more recent date, which a flash of thought redeems for a moment from long oblivion;—which is seen amidst the dim confusion of half-forgotten things, like a little rock lighted up by a chance gleam of sunshine afar in the mighty waters!

What immense difference is there, then, in the real duration of men's lives! He lives longest of all who looks back oftenest, whose life is most populous of thought or action, and on every retrospect makes the vastest picture. The man who does not meditate has no real consciousness of being. Such a one goes to death as to a drunken sleep; he parts with existence wantonly, because he knows nothing of its value. Mere men of pleasure are, therefore, the most careless of duellists, the gayest of soldiers. To know the true value of being, yet to lay it down for a great cause, is a pitch of heroism which has rarely been attained by man. That mastery of the fear of death which is so common among men of spirit, is nothing but a conquest over the apprehension of dying. It is a mere victory of nerve and muscle. Those whose days have no principle of continuity—who never feel time but in the shape of ennui—may quit the world for sport or for honour. But he who truly lives, who feels the past and future in the instant, whose days are to him a possession of majestic remembrances and golden hopes, ought not to fancy himself bound by such an example. He may be inspired to lay down his life, when truth or virtue shall demand so great a sacrifice; but he will be influenced by mere weakness of resolution, not by courage, if he suffer himself to be shamed, or laughed, or worried out of it!

Besides those who have no proper consciousness of being, there are others even perhaps more pitiable, who are constantly irritated by the knowledge that their life is cut up into

melancholy fragments. This is the case of all the pretending and the vain; those who are ever attempting to seem what they are not, or to do what they cannot; who live in the lying breath of contemporary report, and bask out a sort of occasional holiday in the glimmers of public favour. They are always in a feverish struggle, yet they make no progress. There is no dramatic coherence, no unity of action, in the tragi-comedy of their lives. They have hits and brilliant passages perhaps, which may come on review before them in straggling succession; but nothing dignified or massive, tending to one end of good or evil. Such are self-fancied poets and panting essayists, who live on from volume to volume, or from magazine to magazine, who tremble with nervous delight at a favourable mention, are cast down by a sly alliteration or satirical play on their names, and die of an elaborate eulogy "in aromatic pain." They begin life once a quarter, or once a month, according to the will of their publishers. They dedicate nothing to posterity; but toil on for applause till praise sickens, and their "life's idle business" grows too heavy to be borne. They feel their best days passing away without even the effort to build up an enduring fame; and they write an elegy on their own weaknesses! They give their thoughts immaturely to the world, and thus spoil them for themselves for ever. Their own earliest, and deepest, and most sacred feelings become at last dull common-places, which they have talked of and written about till they are glad to escape from the theme. Their days are not "linked each to each by natural piety," but at best bound together in forgotten volumes. Better, far better than this, is the lot of those whose characters and pretensions have little "mark of likelihood;"—whose days are filled up by the exercises of honest industry, and who, on looking back, recognise their lives only by the turns of their fortune, or the events which have called forth their affections. Their first parting from home is indelibly impressed on their minds—their school-days seem to them like one sweet April day of shower and sunshine—their apprenticeship is a long week of toil;—but then their first love is fresh to them as yesterday, and their marriage, the births of their children, and of their grandchildren, are events which mark their course even to old age. They reach their infancy again in thought by an easy pro-

cess, through a range of remembrances few and simple, but pure, and sometimes holy. Yet happier is the lot of those who have one great aim; who devote their undivided energy to a single pursuit; who have one idea of practical or visionary good, to which they are wedded. There is a harmony, a proportion, in their lives. The Alchemist of old, labouring with undiminished hope, cheering his solitude with dreams of boundless wealth, and yet working on, could not be said to live in vain. His life was continuous—one unbroken struggle—one ardent sigh. There is the same unity of interest in the life of a great verbal scholar, or of a true miser; the same singleness of purpose, which gives solidity to floating minutes, hours, and years.

The great Lawyer deserves an eminent rank among true liver. We do not mean a political adventurer, who breathes feverishly amidst the contests, the intrigues, and petty triumphs of party; nor a dabbler in criticism, poetry, or the drama; nor even a popular nisi-prius advocate, who passes through a succession of hasty toils and violent excitements to fortune and to oblivion. But we have respect to the real dull plodder—to him who has bidden an early "Farewell to his Muse," if he ever had one; who anticipates years of solitary study, and shrinks not back; who proceeds, step by step, through the mighty maze with a cheerful heart, and counts on his distant success with mathematical precision. His industry and self-denial are powers as true as fancy or eloquence, and he soon learns to take as hearty a pleasure in their exercise. His retrospect is vast and single—of doubts solved, stoutest books mastered, nicest webs disentangled, and all from one intelligible motive which grows old with him, and, though it "strengthened with his strength," will not diminish with his decline. It is better in the end to have had the pathway of life circumscribed and railed in by forms and narrow observances, than to have strayed at will about the vast field open to human enterprize, in the freest and most graceful wanderings; because in the latter case we cannot trace our road again, or call it over; while in the first, we see it distinctly to the end, and can linger in thought over all the spots where our feet have trodden. The "old names" bring back the "old instincts" to our hearts. Instead of faint sympathies with a multitude of things, a kind of small

partnership with thousands in certain general dogmas and speculations, we have all our own past individual being as a solid and abiding possession.

A metaphysician who thinks earnestly and intensely for himself, may truly be said to live long. He has this great advantage over the most felicitous inventor of machinery, or the most acute of scientific inquirers, that all his discoveries have a personal interest; he has his existence for his living study; his own heart is the mighty problem on which he meditates, and the "exceeding great reward" of his victories. In a moment of happy thought he may attain conquests, "compared to which the laurels which a Cæsar reaps are weeds." Years of anxious thought are rewarded by the attainment of one triumphant certainty, which immediately gives a key to the solution of a thousand pregnant doubts and mysteries, and enables him almost to "curdle a long life into an hour." When he has, after long pursued and baffled endeavours, rolled aside some huge difficulty which lay in his path, he will find beneath it a passage to the bright subtleties of his nature, through which he may range at will, and gather immortal fruits, like Aladdin in the subterranean gardens. He counts his life thus not only by the steps which he has taken, but by the vast prospects which, at every turn of his journey, have recompensed his toils, over which he has diffused his spirit as he went on his way rejoicing. We will conclude this article with the estimate made of life from his own experience by one of the most profound and original of thinkers.

"It is little, it is short, it is not worth having—if we take the last hour, and leave out all that has gone before, which has been one way of looking at the subject. Such calculators seem to say that life is nothing when it is over; and that may, in their sense, be true. If the old rule—*Respice finem*—were to be made absolute, and no one could be pronounced fortunate till the day of his death, there are few among us whose existence would, upon such conditions, be much to be envied. But this is not a fair view of the case. A man's life is his whole life, not the last glimmering snuff of the candle; and this I say is considerable, and not a *little matter*, whether we regard its pleasures or its pains. To draw a peevish conclusion to the contrary, from our own superannuated de-

sires or forgetful indifference, is about as reasonable as to say, a man never was young because he has grown old, or never lived because he is now dead. The length or agreeableness of a journey does not depend on the few last steps of it, nor is the size of a building to be judged of from the last stone that is added to it. It is neither the first nor the last hour of our existence, but the space that parts these two—not our exit, nor our entrance upon the stage, but what we do feel, and think while there—that we are to attend to in pronouncing sentence upon it. Indeed, it would be easy to show that it is the very extent of human life, the infinite number of things contained in it, its contradictory and fluctuating interests, the transition from one situation to another, the hours, months, years, spent in one fond pursuit after another; that it is, in a word, the length of our common journey, and the quantity of events crowded into it, that, baffling the grasp of our actual perception, make it slide from our memory, and dwindle into nothing in its own perspective. It is too mighty for us, and we say it is nothing! It is a speck in our fancy, and yet what canvass would be big enough to hold its striking groups, its endless objects? It is light as vanity; and yet if all its weary moments, if all its head and heart-aches were compressed into one, what fortitude would not be overwhelmed with the blow! What a huge heap, a 'huge, dumb heap,' of wishes, thoughts, feelings, anxious cares, soothing hopes, loves, joys, friendships, it is composed of! How many ideas and trains of sentiment, long, deep, and intense, often pass through the mind in one days thinking or reading for instance! How many such days are there in a year, how many years in a long life, still occupied with something interesting—still recalling some old impression—still recurring to some difficult question, and making progress in it, every step accompanied with a sense of power, and every moment conscious of 'the high endeavour or the glad success;' for the mind seizes only on that which keeps it employed, and is wound up to a certain pitch of pleasurable excitement by the necessity of its own nature."—*Hazlitt's Table Talk, Essay 6.*

ON THE PROFESSION OF THE BAR.

[London Magazine.]

THERE is no pursuit in life which appears more captivating at a distance than the profession of the bar, as it is followed and rewarded in English courts of justice. It is the great avenue to political influence and reputation; its honours are among the most splendid which can be attained in a free state; and its emoluments and privileges are exhibited as prizes, to be contested freely by all its members. Its annals celebrate many individuals who have risen from the lowest ranks of the people, by fortunate coincidence, or by patient labour, to wealth and station, and have become the founders of honourable families. If the young aspirant perceives, even in his hasty and sanguine glance, that something depends on fortuitous circumstances, the conviction only renders the pursuit more inviting, by adding the fascinations of a game of chance to those of a trial of skill. If he is forced to confess that a sacrifice of principle is occasionally required of the candidate for its most lucrative situations, he glories in the pride of untempted virtue, and pictures himself generously resisting the bribe which would give him riches and authority, in exchange for conscious rectitude and the approbation of the good and wise. While he sees nothing in the distance, but glorious success or more glorious self-denial, he feels braced for the severest exertion; nerved for the fiercest struggle; and regards every throb of an impatient ambition, as a presage of victory.

Not only do the high offices of the profession wear an inviting aspect, but its level course has much to charm the inexperienced observer. It affords perpetual excitement; keeps

the faculties in unceasing play; and constantly applies research, ingenuity, and eloquence, to the actual business of life. A Court of Nisi Prius is a sort of epitome of human concerns, in which advocates are the representatives of the hopes and fears, the prejudices, the affections, and the hatreds of others, which stir their blood, yet do not endanger their fortune or their peace. The most important interests are committed to their discretion, and the most susceptible feelings to their forbearance. They enjoy a fearful latitude of sarcasm and invective, with an audience ready to admire their sallies, and reporters eager to circulate them through the land. Their professional dress, which might else be ludicrous, becomes formidable as the symbol of power; for, with it, they assume the privilege of denouncing their adversaries, confounding witnesses, and withstanding the judge. If the matter on which they expatiate is not often of a dignified nature or productive of large consequences, it is always of real importance; not a mere theme for display, or a parliamentary shadow. The men whom they address are usually open to receive impressions, either from declamation or reasoning, unlike other audiences who are guarded by system, by party, or by interest, against the access of conviction. They are not confined to rigid logic, or to scholastic sophistry, but may appeal to every prejudice, habit, and feeling, which can aid their cause or adorn their harangue; and possess a large store of popular topics always ready for use. They do not contend for distant objects, nor vainly seek to awaken an interest for futurity, but struggle for palpable results which immediately follow their exertions. They play an animating game for verdicts with the resources of others, in which success is full of pleasure, and defeat is rarely attended with personal disgrace or injury. This is their ordinary vocation; but they have, or seem to have, a chance of putting forth all the energies of their mind on some high issue; and of vindicating their moral courage, perchance by rescuing an innocent man from dishonour and the grave, or by standing, in a tumultuous season, between the frenzy of the people and the encroachments of their enemies, and protecting the constitutional rights of their fellows with the sacred weapons of the laws. What dream is more inspiring to a youth of sanguine temperament than that of conducting the defence of a

man prosecuted by the whole force of the state? He runs over in thought the hurried and feverish labour of preparation; the agitations of the heart quelled by the very magnitude of the endeavour and the peril; and imagines himself settled and bent up to his own part in the day of trial—the low tremulous beginning, the gradually strengthening assurance; the dawning recognition of sympathy excited in the men on whose lips the issue hangs; till the whole world of thought and feeling seems to open full of irresistible argument and happy illustrations; till his reasonings become steeped in passion; and he feels his cause and his triumph secure. To every enthusiastic boy, flattered by the prophecies of friends, such an event appears possible; and, in the contemplation, wealth, honour, and long life, seem things of little value.

But the state of anticipation cannot last for ever. The day arrives, when the candidate for forensic opportunities and honours must assume the gown amidst the congratulations of his friends, and attempt to realize their wishes. The hour is, no doubt, happy, in spite of some intruding thoughts; its festivities are not less joyous, because they wear a colouring of solemnity; it is one more season of hope snatched from fate, inviting the mind to bright remembrance, and rich in the honest assurances of affections and sympathy. It passes, however, as rapidly as its predecessors, and the morrow sees the youth at Westminster, pressing a wig upon aching temples, and taking a fearful survey of the awful bench where the judges sit, and the more awful benches crowded with competitors who have set out with as good hopes, who have been encouraged by as enthusiastic friends, and who have as valid claims to success as he. Now then, having allowed him to enjoy the foretastes of prosperity, let us investigate what are the probabilities that he will realize them. Are they, in any degree, proportioned to his intellectual powers and accomplishments? Is the possession of some share of the highest faculties of the mind, which has given him confidence, really in his favour? These questions we will try to solve. We may, perhaps, explain to the misjudging friends of some promising aspirant, who has not attained the eminence they expected, why their prophecies have been unfulfilled. They think that, with such powers as they know

him to possess, there must be some fault which they did not perceive; some want of industry, or perseverance; but there was probably none; and they may rather seek for the cause of failure in the delicacy of feeling which won their sympathy, or in the genius which they were accustomed to admire.

Men who take a cursory view of the profession are liable to forget how peculiarly it is situated in relation to those who distribute its business. These are not the people at large; not even the factitious assemblage called the public; not scholars, nor readers, nor thinkers, nor admiring audiences, nor sages of the law, but simply *attorneys*. In this class of men are, of course, comprised infinite varieties of knowledge and of worth; many men of sound learning and honourable character; many who are tolerably honest and decorously dull; some who are acute and knavish; and more who are knavish without being acute. Respectable as is the station of attorneys, they are, as a body, greatly inferior to the bar in education and endowments; and yet on their opinion, without appeal, the fate of the members of the profession depends. It can scarcely be matter of surprise that they do not always perceive, as by intuition, the accurate thinking, the delicate satire, the playful fancy, or the lucid eloquence, which have charmed a domestic circle, and obtained the applause of a college, even if these were exactly the qualities adapted to their purposes. They will never, indeed, continue to retain men who are obviously unequal to their duty; but they have a large portion of business to scatter, which numbers, greatly differing in real power, can do equally well; and some junior business, which hardly requires any talent at all. In some cases, therefore, they are virtually not only judges but patrons, who, by employing young men early, give them not merely fees, but courage, practice, and the means of becoming known to others. From this extraordinary position arises the necessity of the strictest etiquette in form, and the nicest honour in conduct, which strangers are apt to ridicule, but which alone can prevent the bar from being prostrated at the feet of an inferior class. But for that barrier of rule and personal behaviour, solicitors would be enabled to assume the language and manner of dictators; and no bar-

rister could retain at once prosperity and self-respect, except the few, whose reputations for peculiar skill are so well established, as to render it indispensable to obtain their services. It is no small proof of the spirit and intelligence of the profession, as a body, that these qualities are able to preserve them in a station of apparent superiority to those on whom they virtually depend. They frequent the places of business; they follow the judges from town to town, and appear ready to undertake any side of any cause; they sit to be looked at, and chosen, day after day, and year after year; and yet by force of professional honour and gentlemanly accomplishments, and by these alone, they continue to be respected by the men who are to decide their destiny. But no rule of etiquette, however strict, and no feelings of delicacy, however nice and generous, can prevent a man, who has connexions among attorneys, from possessing a great advantage over his equals who have none. It is natural that his friends should think highly of him, and desire to assist him, and it would be absurd to expect that he should disappoint them by refusing their briefs, when conscious of ability to do them justice. Hence a youth, born and educated in the middle ranks of life, who is able to struggle to the bar, has often a far better chance of speedy success than a gentleman of rank and family. This consideration may lessen the wonder, so often expressed, at the number of men who have risen to eminence in the law from comparatively humble stations. Without industry and talent, they could have done little; but, perhaps, with both these they might have done less, if their early fame had not been nurtured by those to whom their success was a favourite object, and whose zeal afforded them at once opportunity and stimulus which to more elevated adventurers are wanting.

Let us now examine a little the *kind of talent* by which success at the bar will most probably be obtained; as, from want of attention to this point much disappointment frequently springs. We will first refer to the lower order of business—that by which a young man usually becomes known—and then take a glance at the Court of Nisi Prius, as it affords scope to the powers of leaders. We pass over at present that class of men who begin to practice as spe-

cial pleaders, and after acquiring reputation, are called late in life with a number of clients who have learned to value them as they deserve. These have chosen a safe and honourable course; but the general reader would find little to excite his interest in a view of their silent and laborious progress. We speak rather of the business of Criminal Courts and of Sessions, in which young men generally make first trial of their powers, and of the more trivial and showy order of causes which it may sometimes be their good or ill fortune to lead.

In this description of business, it must be obvious to every one that there is no scope for the higher powers and more elegant accomplishments of the mind. But it is not so obvious, though not less true, that these are often incumbrances in the way of the advocate. This will appear, if we glance at the kind of work he has to perform, the jury whom he is to influence, or the audience by whom he is surrounded. Even if the successful performance of his duty, without regard to appearances, be his only aim, he will often find it necessary to do something more painful than merely to lay aside his most refined tastes. To succeed with the jury, he must rectify his understanding to the level of theirs: to succeed with the audience, he must necessarily go still lower; because, although there are great common themes on which an advocate may raise almost any assembly to his own level, and there are occasions in which he may touch on universal sympathies, these rarely, if ever, arise in the beginning of his professional life. On those whom he has to impress, the fine allusion, the happy conceit, the graceful sophistry, which will naturally occur to his mind, would be worse than lost. But though he may abstain from these, how is he to find, on the inspiration of the instant, the matter which ought to supply their place? Can he, accustomed to enjoy the most felicitous turns of expression, the airiest wit, the keenest satire, think in a moment of a joke sufficiently broad and stale to set the jury box and the galleries in a roar? Has he an instinctive sense of what they will admire? If not, he is wrong to wonder that he makes less impression than others, who may be better able to sacrifice the refinements which he prizes, and ought not to grudge them the success which fairly and naturally follows their exertions.

The chief duties of a junior are to examine witnesses; to raise legal objections; and, in smaller cases, to address juries. We will show in each of these instances how much a man of accurate perceptions and fastidious tastes must overcome before he can hope for prosperity.

The examination of witnesses, *in chief*, generally requires little more than a clear voice, a tolerable degree of self-possession, a superficial knowledge of the law of evidence, and an acquaintance with the matter to which the witnesses are expected to speak. There are critical cases, it is true, in which it is one of the most important duties which an advocate can perform, and requires all the dexterity and address of which he is master. But the more popular work, and that which most dazzles by-standers, is *cross-examination*, to which some men attribute the talismanic property of bringing falsehood out of truth. In most cases, before an intelligent jury, it is mere show. When it is not founded on materials of contradiction, or directed to obtain some information which the witness will probably give, it proceeds on the assumption that the party interrogated has sworn an untruth, which he may be induced to vary. But, in the great majority of cases, the contrary is the fact, and therefore the usual consequence of speculative cross-examining is the production of a more minute and distinct story than was originally told. Still a jury may be puzzled; an effect may be produced; and as, in cases of felony, an advocate is not permitted to make a speech, he must either cross-examine or do nothing.* Here then, taste, feeling, and judgment, are sometimes no trifling hindrances. A man who has a vivid perception of the true relation of things cannot, without difficulty, force himself to occupy the attention of the court for an hour with questions which he feels have no bearing on the matter substantially in issue. Even when he might confound the transaction, the clearness of his own head will scarcely permit him to do the business well. He finds it hard to apply his mind to the elaborate scrutiny of a labourer's dinner or dress, the soundness of his sleep, or the slowness of his cottage time-piece; and he hesitates to place himself exactly on a level with the witness who comes to detail them. His discretion may

* This has been happily altered since the publication of this copy.

sometimes restrain him from imitating the popular cross-examiners of the day, but his incapacity will prevent him still oftener, until, like them, he has become thoroughly habituated to the intellectual atmosphere of the court in which he practises.

In starting and arguing points of law, a deep knowledge of law, and a faculty of clear and cogent reasoning, might seem qualities of the highest value. At *Nisi Prius*, before a Judge, they are so, or rather would be if the modern course of transacting business left a junior any opportunity to use them. But they are very far from producing unmingled advantage before inferior tribunals. As the bench is not often filled with magistrates profoundly learned, futile objections are almost as likely to succeed as good ones, and sometimes more so, because those to whom they are addressed have a vague notion of law as something full of mere arbitrary quiddities, and therefore likely to be found in direct opposition to common sense. Now, a man who is himself ignorant of a science is obviously better fitted to hit the fancies of the respectable gentlemen who entertain such a notion, than one who thoroughly understands its rules. The first will raise objections where the last would be silent; or will defend them with the warmth of honest conviction, where the lawyer would introduce them with hesitation and abandon them without a struggle. When a man has nothing really to say he is assisted greatly by confusion of language, and a total want of arrangement and grammar. Mere stupidity, accompanied by a certain degree of fluency, is no inconsiderable power. It enables its possessor to protract the contest long after he is beaten, because he neither understands his own case, nor the arguments by which he has been answered. It is a weapon of defence, behind which he obtains protection, not only from his adversaries, but from the judge. If the learned person who presides, wearied out with endless irrelevancies, should attempt to stop him, he will insist on his privilege to be dull, and obtain the admiration of the audience by his firmness in supporting the rights of the bar. In these points, a sensitive and acute advocate has no chance of rivalling him in the estimation of the bystanders. A young man may, indeed, display correctness of thought, depth of research, and elegant perspicuity in an

argument on a special case, in the Court of King's Bench ; but few will hear and fewer listen to him ; and he will see the proceedings of the day shortly characterized in the newspapers of the morrow "as totally destitute of public interest," while the opposite column will be filled with an elaborate report of a case of assault at Clerkenwell, or a picturesque account of a squabble between a pawnbroker and an alderman !

To address a jury, even in cases of minor importance, seems at first to require talents and requirements of a superior kind. It really requires a certain degree of nerve, a readiness of utterance, and a sufficient acquaintance with the ordinary line of illustration used and approved on similar occasions. A power of stating facts, indeed, distinctly and concisely is often important to the real issue of the cause ; but it is not one which the audience are likely to appreciate. The man who would please them best should omit all the facts of his case, and luxuriate in the common places which he can connect with it, unless he is able to embellish his statement, and invest the circumstances he relates with adventitious importance and dignity. An advocate of accurate perceptions, accustomed to rate things according to their true value, will find great difficulty in doing either. Most of the subject matter of flourish, which is quite as real to the superficial orator as any thing in the world, is thrown far back from his habitual thoughts, and hardly retains a place among the lumber of his memory. Grant him time for preparation, and a disposition to do violence to his own tastes, in order to acquire popularity, and he may approach a genuine artist in the factitious ; but, after all, he will run great risk of being detected as a pretender. A single touch of real feeling, a single piece of concise logical reasoning, will ruin the effect of the whole, and disturb the well-attuned minds of an enlightened jury. Even the *topics* which must be dilated on are often such as would not weigh a feather with an intelligent man, *out of court*, and still oftener give occasion to watery amplifications of ideas, which may be fairly and fully expressed in a few words. It is obvious, therefore, that the more an advocate's mind is furnished with topics rather than with opinions or thoughts, the more easy will he find the task of addressing a jury. A sense of truth is ever in his

way. It breaks the fine, flimsy, gossamer tissue of his eloquence, which, but for this sturdy obstacle, might hang suspended on slender props to glitter in the view of fascinated juries. If he has been accustomed to recognise a proportion between words and things, he will, with difficulty, screw himself up to describe a petty affray in the style of Gibbon, though to his client the battle of Holywell-jane may seem more important than the fall of the Roman Empire. If he would enrapture the audience when entrusted to open a criminal case of importance, he should begin with the first murder; pass a well-rounded eulogy on the social system; quote Blackstone, and the Precepts of Noah; and dilate on crime, conscience, and the trial by jury; before he begins to state the particular facts which he expects to prove. He disdains to do this—or the favourite topics never occur to his mind even to be rejected; and, instead of winning the admiration of a county, he only obtains a conviction! In addition to an inward repugnance to solemn fooling, men of sterling sense have also to overcome the dread of the criticism of others whose opinion they value, before they can descend to the blandishments of popular eloquence. It is seldom, therefore, that a young barrister can employ the most efficacious mode of delighting his audience, unless he is nearly on a par with them, and thinks, in honest stupidity, that he is pouring forth pathos and wisdom. There is, indeed, an excessive proneness to adopt the tone of the moment, an easiness of temperament, which sometimes may enable him to make a display in a trifling matter without conscious degradation; but he is ashamed of his own success when he grows cool, and was reduced by excessive sympathy to the level of his hearers only for the hour. Let no one, therefore, hastily conclude that the failure of a youth, to whom early opportunities are given, is a proof of essential inferiority to successful rivals. It may be, indeed, that he is below his business; for want of words does not necessarily imply plenitude of ideas, nor is abstinence from lofty prosings and stale jests conclusive evidence of wit and knowledge; but he is more probably superior to his vocation—too clear in his own perceptions to perplex others; too much accustomed to think to make a show without thought; and too deeply impressed with admiration of the venerable and the affecting readily to

apply their attributes to the miserable facts he is retained to embellish.

Let us now take a glance at that higher sphere in which a barrister moves when he has overcome the difficulties of his profession, and has obtained a share of leading business in the superior courts. Here it must at once be conceded that considerable powers are necessary, and that the deficiencies which aided the aspiring junior will no longer prevail. The learning and authority of the judge, and the acuteness of established rivals, not only prevent the success of those experiments, which ignorance only can hazard, but generally stifle them in the birth. The number and variety of causes, and the business-like manner in which they are conducted, restrain the use of fine spun rhetoric to a few special occasions. A man who would keep any large portion of general practice must have industry and retentive memory; clearness of mind enough to state facts with distinctness, and to arrange them in lucid order; a knowledge of law sufficient for the discovery of any point in his own favour, and for the supply of a ready evasion of any suggested by his opponent; quickness and comprehension of intellect to see the whole case on both sides at one view; and complete self-possession and coolness, without which all other capacities will be useless. These are essentials for *Nisi Prius* practice; but does it give scope to no higher faculties? Is there nothing in human intellect which may be allowed to adorn, to lighten, and to inspire the dull mass of facts and reasonings? Was *Erskine* no more than a distinct narrator, a tolerable lawyer, and a powerful reasoner on opposing facts? Can no higher praise be given to *Scarlett*, who sways the Court of King's Bench like a monarch, and to *Brougham** whose eloquence sheds terror into the enemies of freedom throughout the world? We will answer these questions as well as we are able.

For the highest powers of the mind which can be developed in eloquence even a superior court rarely affords room. Some have ascribed their absence to a chilling spirit of criticism in the legal auditors; but it is really attributable to the want of fitness in the subjects, and in the occasions.

* Now Lord Brougham.

The noble faculty of imagination may, indeed, sometimes be excited to produce sublime creations, in the fervour of a speech, as justly as in the rage or sorrow of a tragedy; but in both the passion must enkindle the imagination, not the imagination create the passion. The distinction of eloquence from other modes of prose composition is that it is primarily inspired by passion, and that it is either solely addressed to the feelings, or sways the understanding through the medium of the affections. It is only true when it is proportioned to the subject out of which it arises, because otherwise the passion is but fantastical and belongs to the mock heroic. In its course, it may edge the most subtle reasonings, point the keenest satire, and excite the imagination to embody truth in living images of grandeur and beauty; but its spring and instinct must be passion. Nor is this all; it must not only be proportioned to the feeling in its author's mind, but to the feeling and intellect of those to whom it is addressed. A man of ardent temperament may work himself into a state of excitation by contemplating things which are remote and visionary; he may learn to take an enthusiastic interest in the objects of his own solitary musings; but if he brings into court the passionate dreams of his study, he will invite scorn and make failure certain. Not only is there rarely a subject which can worthily enkindle such passion as may excite imagination, but still more rarely an audience who can justify it by receiving it into their hearts. On some few occasions, as of great political trials, a burning indignation can be felt and reflected; the thoughts which the jury themselves swell with may be imaged in shapes of fire; and the orator may, while clothing mighty principles in noble yet familiar shapes, by a felicitous compromise, bring grandeur and beauty half way to the audience, and raise the audience to a station where they can feel their influence. But he must take care that he does not deceive himself by his own emotions; and mistake the inspiration of the study for that of the court. He is safe only while he is impelled by the feeling of those whom he addresses, and while he keeps fully within their view. In ordinary causes, imagination would not only be out of place, but it cannot enter; because its own essence is truth, and because it never has part in genuine eloquence unless inspired by adequate emotion. The flowers of oratory

which are withheld by fear of contempt, or regarded as mere ornaments if produced, are not those which grow out of the subject, and are streaked and coloured by the feeling of the time; but gaudy exotics, leisurely gathered and stuck in out of season, and destitute of root. These fantastical decorations do not prove the existence of fervour or of imagination, but the want of both; and it is well if they are kept back by the good sense of the speaker, or his reasonable fears. But while a man, endowed with high faculties, cautiously abstains from displaying them on inadequate occasions, he will find them too often an impediment and a burden. He is in danger of timidity from a consciousness of power yet unascertained even by himself, and from an apprehension lest he should profane his long-cherished thoughts by a needless exposure. He is liable to be posed by the recurrence of some delicate association which he feels will not be understood, and modestly hesitates on the verge of the profound. He is, therefore, less fitted for ordinary business than another who can survey his own mental resources at a glance, as a well-ordered armoury, and select, without hesitation, the weapon best adapted for the struggle.

Pathos, much oftener than imagination, falls within the province of the advocate. But the art of exciting pity holds no elevated rank in the scale of intellectual power. As employed at the bar in actions for adultery, seduction, and breach of promise of marriage, ostensibly as a means of effecting a transfer of money from the purse of the culprit to that of the sufferer, it sinks yet lower than its natural place, and robs the sorrows on which it expatiates of all their dignity. The first of these actions is a disgrace to the English character; for the plaintiff, who asks for money, has sustained no pecuniary loss; and what money does *he* deserve who seeks it as a compensation for domestic comfort, at the price of exposing to the greedy public all the shameful particulars of his wife's crime and of his own disgrace? In the other cases, where the party has been injured, not only in feeling, but in property or property's value, it is right that redress should be given; and that redress, even when sought in the form of damages, may be demanded in a tone of eloquent reprobation of villany; but the moment the advocate recounts the miseries of his client, in order to show how

much money ought to be awarded, his task is degrading and irksome. He speaks of modesty destroyed, of love turned to bitterness, of youth blasted in its prime, and of age brought down by sorrow to the grave; and he asks for *money*! He hawks the wrongs of the inmost spirit, "as beggars do their sores," and unveils the sacred agonies of the heart, that the jury may estimate the value of their palpitations! It is in vain that he urges the specious plea, that no money can compensate the sufferer, to sustain the inference that the jury must give the whole sum laid in the declaration; for the inference does not follow. Money will not compensate, not because it is insufficient in degree but in kind; and, therefore, the consequence is—not that great damages should be given, but that none should be claimed. When once money is connected with the idea of mental grief, by the advocate who represents the sufferer, all respect for both is gone. Subjects, therefore, of this kind are never susceptible in a court of law of the truest pathetic; and the topics to which they give occasion are somewhat musty.

If, however, the highest powers of the mind are rarely brought into action in a Court of Nisi Prius, its more ordinary faculties are required in full perfection, and readiness for use. To an uninitiated spectator, the course of a leader in considerable business seems little less than a miracle. He opens his brief with apparent unconcern; states complicated facts and dates with marvellous accuracy; conducts his cause with zeal and caution through all its dangers; replies on the instant, dexterously placing the adverse features of each side in the most favourable position for his client; and, having won or lost the verdict for which he has struggled, as if his fortune depended on the issue, dismisses it from his mind like one of the spectators. The next cause is called on; the jury are sworn; he unfolds another brief and another tale, and is instantly inspired with a new zeal, and possessed by a new set of feelings; and so he goes on till the court rises, finding time in the intervals of actual exertion to read the newspaper, and talk over all the scandal of the day! This is curious work; it obviously requires all the powers to which we have referred as essential; and the complete absorption of the mind in each successive case. Besides these, there are two qualities essential to splendid

success—a pliable temperament, and that compound quality, or result of several qualities, called *tact*, in the management of a cause.

To the first of these we have already alluded, in its excessive degree, as supplying a young barrister with the capability of making a display on trivial occasions; but, when chastened by time, it is a most important means of success in the higher departments of the profession. An advocate should not only throw his mind into the cause, but his heart also. It is not enough that the ingenuity is engaged to elicit strength, or conceal weakness, unless the sympathies are fairly enlisted on the same side. To men of lofty habits of thinking, or of cold constitution, this is impossible, unless the case is of intrinsic magnitude, or the client has been wise enough to supply an artificial stimulus in the endorsement on the brief. Such men, therefore, are only excellent in peculiar cases, where their sluggish natures are quickened, and their pride gratified or disarmed by a high issue, or a splendid fee. Persons, on the other hand, who are prevented from saying “no,” not by cowardice, but by sympathy; whose hearts open to all who happen to be their companions; whose prejudices vanish with a cordial grasp of the hand, or melt before a word of judicious flattery; who have a spare fund of warmth and kindness to bestow on whoever seeks it; and who, energetic in action, are wavering in opinion, and infirm of purpose—will be delighted advocates, if they happen also to possess industry and nerve. The statement in their brief is enough to convert them into partisans, ready to triumph in the cause if it is good, and to cling to it if it is hopeless as to a friend in misfortune. By this instinct of sociality, they are enabled not only to throw life into its details, and energy into its struggles, but to create for themselves a personal interest with the jury, which they turn to the advantage of their clients. It has often been alleged that the practice of the law prepares men to abandon their principles in the hour of temptation; but it will often appear, on an attentive survey of their character, that the extent of their practice was the effect rather than the cause of their inconstancy. They are not unstable because they were successful barristers, but became successful barristers by virtue of the very qualities which render them unstable.

They do not yield on a base calculation of honour or gain, but because they cannot resist a decisive compliment paid to their talents by the advisers of the crown. They are undone by the very trick of sympathy which has often moulded them to the purposes of their clients and swayed juries to their pleasure.

But the great power of a *Nisi Prius* advocate consists of *tact* in the management of a cause. Of this a by-stander sees but little; if the art be consummate, nothing; and he is, with difficulty, made to comprehend its full value. He hears the cause tried fairly out; observes perhaps witnesses on both sides examined; and thinking the whole merits have been necessarily disclosed, he sees no room for peculiar skill, except in the choice of topics to address to the jury. But a trial is not a hearing of all the matters capable of discovery which are relevant to the issue, or which would assist an impartial mind in forming a just decision. It is an artificial mode of determination, bounded by narrow limits, governed by artificial rules, and allowing each party to present to the court, as much or as little of his own case as he pleases. A leader, then, has often, on the instant, to select out of a variety of matters, precisely those which will make the best show, and be least exposed to observation and answer; to estimate the probable case which lies hid in his adversary's brief, and prepare his own to elude its force; to decide between the advantage of producing a witness and the danger of exposing him; or, if he represents the defendant, to apply evidence to a case new in many of its aspects, or take the grave responsibility of offering none. Besides the opportunity which the forms and mode of trial give to the exercise of skill, the laws of evidence afford still greater play for ingenuity, and ground for caution. Some of these are founded on principle; some on mere precedent; some on caprice; some on a desire to swell the revenue; and all serve to perplex the game of *Nisi Prius*, and give advantages to its masters. The power which they exhibit among its intricacies is really admirable, and may almost be considered as a lower order of genius. Its efforts must be immediate; for the exigency presses, and the lawyer, like the woman, "who deliberates is lost." He cannot stop to recollect a precedent, or to estimate all the consequences of a single step;

yet he decides boldly and justly. His *tact* is, in truth, the result of a great number of impressions, of which he is now unconscious, which gives him a kind of intuitive power to arrive at once at the right conclusion. Its effects do not make a show in the newspapers; but they are very eloquent in the sheriff's office; and in the rolls of the court.

Besides exerting these qualities, a leader may render his statements not only perspicuous but elegant; relieves the dullness of a cause by wit not too subtle; and sometimes enliven the court by a momentary play of fancy. To describe Mr. Erskine, when at the bar, is to ascertain the highest intellectual eminence to which a barrister, under the most favourable circumstances, may safely aspire. He had no imaginative power, no originality of thought, no great comprehension of intellect, to encumber his progress. Inimitable as pleadings, his corrected speeches supply nothing which, taken apart from its context and the occasion, is worthy of a place in the memory. Their most brilliant passages are but common places exquisitely wrought, and curiously adapted to his design. Had his mind been pregnant with greater things, teeming with beautiful images, or, indued with deep wisdom, he would have been less fitted to shed lustre on the ordinary feelings and transactions of life. If he had been able to answer Pitt without fainting, or to support Fox without sinking into insignificance, he would not have been the delight of special juries, and the glory of the Court of King's Bench. For that sphere, his powers, his acquisitions, and his temperament, were exactly framed. He brought into it, indeed, accomplishments never displayed there before in equal perfection—glancing wit, rich humour, infinite grace of action, singular felicity of language, and a memory elegantly stored, yet not crowded with subjects of classical and fanciful illustration. Above his audience, he was not beyond their sight, and he possessed rare facilities of raising them to his own level. In this purpose, he was aided by his connexion with a noble family, by a musical voice, and by an eloquent eye, which enticed men to forgive, and even to admire his natural polish and refined allusions. But his moral qualities tended even more to win them. Who could resist a disposition overflowing with kindness, animal spirits as elastic as those of a school-boy, and a love of gaiety and

pleasure which shone out amidst the most anxious labours? His very weaknesses became instruments of fascination. His egotism, his vanity, his personal frailties, were all genial, and gave him an irresistible claim to sympathy. His warmest colours were drawn not from the fancy but the affections. If he touched on the romantic, it was on the little chapter of romance which belongs to the most hurried and feverish life. The unlettered clown, and the assiduous tradesman, understood him when he revived some bright recollection of childhood, or brought back on the heart the enjoyments of old friendship, or touched the chord of domestic love and sorrow. He wielded with skill and power the weapons which precedent supplied, but he rarely sought for others. When he defended the rights of the subject, it was not by abstract disquisition, but by freshening up anew the venerable customs and immunities which he found sanctioned by courts and parliaments, and infusing into them new energy. He entrenched himself within the forms of pleading, even when he ventured to glance into literature and history. These forms he rendered dignified as a fence against oppression, and cast on them sometimes the playful hues of his fancy. His powers were not only adapted to his sphere, but directed by admirable discretion and taste. In small causes he was never betrayed into exaggeration, but contrived to give an interest to their details, and to conduct them at once with dexterity and grace. His jests told for arguments; his digressions only threw the jury off their guard that he might strike a decisive blow; his audacity was always wise. His firmness was no less under right direction than his weaknesses. He withstood the bench, and rendered the bar immortal service; not so much by the courage of the resistance, as by the happy selection of its time, and the exact propriety of its manner. He was, in short, the most consummate advocate of whom we have any trace; he left his profession higher than he found it; and yet, beyond its pale, he was only an incomparable companion, a lively pamphleteer, and a weak and superficial debater!

Mr. Scarlett, the present leader of the Court of King's Bench, has less brilliancy than his predecessor, but is not perhaps essentially inferior to him in the management of causes. He studiously disclaims imagination; he rarely addresses the

passions ; but he now and then gives indications which prove that he has disciplined a mind of considerable elegance and strength to *Nisi Prius* uses. In the fine *tact* of which we have already spoken, the intuitive power of common sense sharpened within a peculiar circle ; he has no superior, and perhaps no equal. He never betrays anxiety in the crisis of a cause, but instantly decides among complicated difficulties, and is almost always right. He can bridge over a nonsuit with insignificant facts, and tread upon the gulf steadily but warily to its end. What Johnson said of Burke's manner of treating a subject is true of his management of a cause, "he winds himself into it like a great serpent." He does not take a single view of it, nor desert it when it begins to fail, but throws himself into all its windings, and struggles in it while it has life. There is a lucid arrangement, and sometimes a light vein of pleasantry and feeling in his opening speeches ; but his greatest *visible* triumph is in his replies. These do not consist of a mere series of ingenious remarks on conflicting evidence ; still less of a tiresome examination of the testimony of each witness singly ; but are as finely arranged on the instant, and thrown into as noble and decisive masses, as if they had been prepared in the study. By a vigorous grasp of thought, he forms a plan and an outline, which he first distinctly marks, and then proceeds to fill up with masterly touches. When a case has been spread over half a day, and apparently shattered by the speech and witnesses of his adversary, he will gather it up, condense, concentrate, and render it conclusive. He imparts a weight and solidity to all that he touches. Vague suspicions become certainties, as he exhibits them ; and circumstances light, valueless, and unconnected till then, are united together, and come down in wedges which drive conviction into the mind. Of this extraordinary power, his reply on the first trial of "The King *v.* Collins," where he gained the verdict against evidence and justice, was a wonderful specimen. If such a speech is not an effort of genius, it is so much more complete than many works which have a portion of that higher faculty, that we almost hesitate to place it below them. Mr. Scarlett, in the debate on the motion relative to the Chancellor's attack on Mr. Abercrombie, showed that he has felt it necessary to bend his mind considerably to the routine of his practice.

He was then surprised into his own original nature ; and forgetting the measured compass of his long adopted voice and manner, spoke out in a broad northern dialect, and told daring truths which astonished the house. It is not thus, however, that he wins verdicts and compels the court to grant "rules to show cause!"

Mr. Brougham may, at first, appear to form an exception to the doctrines we have endeavoured to establish ; but, on attentive consideration, will be found their most striking example. True it is, that this extraordinary man, who, without high birth, splendid fortune, or aristocratic connexion, has, by mere intellectual power, become the parliamentary leader of the whigs of England, is at last beginning to succeed in the profession he has condescended to follow. But, stupendous as his abilities, and various as his acquisitions are, he does not possess that one presiding faculty—imagination, which, as it concentrates all others, chiefly renders them unavailing for inferior uses. Mr. Brougham's powers are not thus united and rendered unwieldy and prodigious, but remain apart, and neither assist nor impede each other. The same speech, indeed, may give scope to several talents ; to lucid narration, to brilliant wit, to irresistible reasoning, and even to heart-touching pathos ; but these will be found in parcels, not blended and interfused in one superhuman burst of passionate eloquence. The single power in which he excels all others is sarcasm, and his deepest inspiration—Scorn. Hence he can awaken terror and shame far better than he can melt, agitate, and raise. Animated by this blasting spirit, he can "bare the mean hearts" which "lurk beneath" a hundred "stars," and smite a majority of lordly persecutors into the dust ! His power is all directed to the practical and earthy. It is rather that of a giant than a magician ; of Briareus than of Prospero. He can do a hundred things well, and almost at once ; but he cannot do the one highest thing ; he cannot by a single touch, reveal the hidden treasures of the soul, and astonish the world with truth and beauty unknown till disclosed at his bidding. Over his vast domain he ranges with amazing activity, and is a different man in each province which he occupies. He is not one, but Legion. At three in the morning he will make a reply in parliament, which shall blanch the cheeks and ap-

pal the hearts of his enemies; and at half past nine he will be found in his place in court, working out a case in which a bill of five pounds is disputed with all the plodding care of the most laborious junior. This multiplicity of avocation, and division of talent, suit the temper of his constitution and mind. Not only does he accomplish a greater variety of purposes than any other man—not only does he give anxious attention to every petty cause, while he is fighting a great political battle and weighing the relative interests of nations—not only does he write an article for the Edinburgh Review while contesting a county, and prepare complicated arguments on Scotch appeals by way of rest from his generous endeavours to educate a people—but he does all this as if it were perfectly natural to him, in a manner so unpretending and quiet, that a stranger would think him a merry gentleman who had nothing to do but enjoy himself and fascinate others. The fire which burns in the tough fibres of his intellect does not quicken his pulse, or kindle his blood to more than a genial warmth. He, therefore, is one man in the senate, another in the study, another in a committee room, and another in a petty cause; and consequently is never above the work which he has to perform. His powers are all as distinct and as ready for use as those of the most accomplished of Old Bailey practitioners. His most remarkable faculty, taken singly, the power of sarcasm, can be understood, even by a Lancaster jury. And yet, though worthy to rank with statesmen before whom Erskine sunk into insignificance, and though following his profession with zeal and perseverance almost unequalled, he has hardly been able to conquer the impediment of that splendid reputation, which to any other man must have been fatal!

These great examples are sufficient for our purpose, and it would be invidious to add more. Without particularizing any, we may safely affirm that if the majority of successful advocates are not men of genius, they are men of very active and penetrating intellect, disciplined by the peculiar necessity of their profession to the strictest honour, and taught by their intimate and near acquaintance with all the casualties of human life, and the varieties of human nature, indulgence to frailty and generosity to misfortune. It is impossible to estimate too highly the value of such a body of men, as-

piring, charitable, and acute ; who, sprung from the people, naturally sympathize with their interests ; who, being permitted to grasp at the honours of the state, are supplied with high motives to preserve its constitution ; and who, if not very eager for improving the laws, at least keep unceasing watch over every attempt to infringe on the rights they sustain, or to pervert them to purposes of oppression. If they are too prone to change their party as they rise, they seldom do so from base or sordid motives, and often infuse a better spirit into those whose favours they consent to receive.

Let no one of those who, with a consciousness of fine talents, has failed in his profession, abate his self-esteem, or repine at his fortune. A life of success, though a life of excitement, is also a life of constant toil, in which the pleasures of contemplation and of society are sparingly felt, and which sometimes tends to a melancholy close. Besides, the best part of our days is past before the struggle begins. Success itself has nothing half so sweet as the anticipations of boyish ambition and the partial love by which they were fostered. A barrister can scarcely hope to begin a career of anxious prosperity till after thirty ; and surely he who has attained that age, after a youth of robust study and manly pleasure, with firm friends, and an unspotted character, has no right to complain of the world !

THE WINE CELLAR.

[New Monthly Magazine.]

Facilis descensus Averni,
Sed revocare gradum, superasque evadere ad auras,
Hic labor, hoc opus est. VIRG.

In the deep discovery of the subterranean world, a shallow part would satisfy some inquirers, who if two or three yards were opened beneath the surface, would not care to rake the bowels of Potosi and regions towards the centre.

SIR THOMAS BROWNE.

MEN have always attached a peculiar interest to that region of the earth which extends for a few yards beneath its surface. Below this depth the imagination, delighting to busy itself among the secrets of Time and Mortality, hath rarely cared to penetrate. A few feet of ground may suffice for the repose of the first dwellers of the earth until its frame shall grow old and perish. The little coin, silent picture of forgotten battles, lies among the roots of shrubs and vegetables for centuries, till it is turned into light by some careful husbandman, who ploughs an inch deeper than his fathers. The dead bones which, loosened from their urns, gave occasion to Sir Thomas Browne's noblest essay, "had outlasted the living ones of Methusalem, and in a yard under ground, and thin walls of clay, outworn all the strong and spacious buildings above them, and quietly rested under the drums and tramplings of three conquests." Superstition chooses the subterranean space which borders on the abodes of the living, and ranges her vaults and mysterious caverns near to the scenes of revelry, passion, and joy; and within this narrow rind rest the mighty products of glorious vintages, the stores of that divine juice which, partaking of the rarest

qualities of physical and intellectual nature, blends them in happier union within us. Here, in this hallowed ground, the germs of inspiration and the memorials of decay lie side by side, and Bacchus holds divided empire with the King of Terrors.

As I sat indulging this serious vein of reflection some years ago, when my relish of philosophy and port was young, a friend called to remind me that we had agreed to dine together with rather more luxury than usual. I had made the appointment with boyish eagerness, and now started gladly from my solitary reveries to keep it. The friend with whom I had planned our holiday, was one of those few persons whom you may challenge to a convivial evening with a mathematical certainty of enjoying it;—which is the rarest quality of friendship. Many who are equal to great exigencies, and would go through fire and water to serve you, want the delicate art to allay the petty irritations, and heighten the ordinary enjoyments of life, and are quite unable to make themselves agreeable at a *tête-à-tête* dinner. Not so my companion; who zealous, prompt, and consoling in all seasons of trial, had good sense for every little difficulty, and a happy humour for every social moment; at all times a better and wiser self. Blest with good but never boisterous spirits; endowed with the rare faculty not only of divining one's wishes but instantly making them his own; skilful in sweetening good counsel with honest flattery; able to bear with enthusiasm in which he might not participate, and to avoid smiling at the follies he could not help discerning; ever ready to indulge the secret wish of his guest "for another bottle," with heart enough to drink it with him, and head enough to take care of him when it was gone, he was (and yet is) the pleasantest of advisers, the most genial of listeners, and the quietest of lively companions. On this memorable day he had, with his accustomed forethought, given particular orders for our entertainment, and I hastened to enjoy it with him, little thinking how deep and solemn was the pleasure which awaited us.

We arrived at the — Coffee House about six on a bright afternoon in the middle of September, and found every thing ready and excellent; and the turtle magnificent and finely relieved by lime punch effectually iced; grilled salmon

crisply prepared for its appropriate lemon and mustard; a leg of Welch mutton just tasted as a "sweet remembrancer" of its heathy and hungry hills; woodcocks with thighs of exquisite delicacy and essence "deeply interfused" in thick soft toast; and mushrooms, which Nero justly called "the flesh of the gods," simply broiled and faintly sprinkled with Cayenne.* Our conversation was, of course, confined to mutual invitations and expressive criticisms on the dishes; the only table-talk which men of sense can tolerate. But the most substantial gratifications, in this world at least, must have an end; and the last mushroom was at length eaten. Unfortunately for the repose of the evening, we were haunted by the recollection of some highly flavoured port, and, in spite of strong evidence of identity from conspiring waiters, sought for the like in vain. Bottle after bottle was produced and dismissed as "not the thing," till our generous host, somewhat between liberal hospitality and just impatience, smilingly begged us to accompany him into the cellar, inspect the whole of "his little stock," and choose for ourselves! We took him at his word; another friend of riper years and graver authority joined us; and we prepared to follow our guide who stood ready to conduct us to the banks of Lethe. All the preparations, like those which preceded similar descents of the heroes of old, bespoke the awfulness and peril of the journey. Our host preceded us with his massive keys

* This trait sufficiently accounts for the flowers which were seen scattered on the sepulchre of Nero, when the popular indignation raged highest against his memory—the grateful Roman had eaten his mushroom under imperial auspices. Had Lord Byron been acquainted with the flavour of choice mushrooms, he would have turned to give it honour due after the following stanza, one of the noblest in that work, which, with all its faults of waywardness and haste, is a miracle of language, pathos, playfulness, sublimity and sense.

When Nero perish'd by the justest doom
Which ever the destroyer yet destroy'd,
Amidst the roar of liberated Rome,
The nations free and the world overjoy'd,
Some hand unseen strew'd flowers upon his tomb—
Perhaps the weakness of a heart not void
Of feeling for some kindness done when power
Had left the wretch one uncorrupted hour!

to perform an office collateral to that of St. Peter; behind, a dingy imp of the nether regions stood with glasses in his hands and a prophetic grin on his face; and each of us was armed with a flaming torch to penetrate the gloom which now stretched through the narrow entrance before us.

We descended the broken and winding staircase with cautious steps, and, to confess the truth, not without some apprehension for our upward journey, yet hoping to be numbered among that select class of Pluto's visitors, "*quos ardens evexit ad æthera virtus.*" On a sudden, turning a segment of a mighty cask, we stood in the centre of the vast receptacle of spirituous riches. The roof of solid and stoutly compacted brickwork, low, but boldly arched, looked substantial enough to defy all attacks of the natural enemy, water, and resist a second deluge. From each side ran long galleries, partially shown by the red glare of the torches, extending one way far beneath the busy trampling of the greatest shopkeepers and stock-jobbers in the world; and, on the other, below the clamour of the Old Bailey Court and the cells of its victims. What a range! Here rest, cooling in the deep-delved cells, the concentrated essences of sunny years! In this archway huge casks of mighty wine are scattered in bounteous confusion, like the heaped jewels and gold on the "rich strand" of Spenser, the least of which would lay Sir Walter's Fleming low! Throughout that long succession of vaults, thousands of bottles, "in avenues disposed," lie silently waiting their time to kindle the imagination, to sharpen the wit, to open the soul, and to unchain the trembling tongue. There may you feel the true grandeur of quiescent power, and walk amidst the palpable elements of madness or of wisdom. What stores of sentiment in that butt of raciest Sherry! What a fund of pensive thought! What suggestions for delicious remembrance! What "aids to reflection!" (genuine as those of Coleridge) in that Hock of a century old. What sparkling fancies, whirling and foaming, from a stout body of thought in that full and ripe Champagne! What mild and serene philosophy in that Burgundy, ready to shed "its sunset glow" on society and nature! This pale Brandy, softened by age, is the true "spirit" which "disturbs us with the joy of elevated thoughts." That Hermitage, stealing gently into the chambers of the brain, shall make us

“babble of green fields;” and that delicate Claret, innocently bubbling and dancing in the slender glass, shall bring its own vine-coloured hills more vividly before us even than Mr. Stanfield’s pencil! There from a time-changed bottle, tenderly drawn from a crypt, protected by huge primeval cobwebs, you may taste antiquity, and feel the olden time on your palate! As we sip this marvellous Port,* to the very colour of which age has been gentle, methinks we have broken into one of those rich vaults in which Sir Thomas Browne, the chief butler of the tomb, finds treasures rarer than jewels. “Some,” saith he, “discover sepulchral vessels containing liquors which time hath incrassated into jellies. For besides lacrymatories, notable lamps, with oils and aromatic liquors, attended noble ossuaries; and some yet retaining a vinosity and spirit in them, which, if any have tasted, they have far exceeded the palates of antiquity;—liquors, not to be computed by years of annual magistrates, but by great conjunctions and the fatal periods of kingdoms. The draughts of consulary date were but crude unto these, and opimian wine but in the must unto them.”

We passed on from flavour to flavour with our proud and liberal guide, whose comments added zest even to the text which he had to dilate on. A scent, a note of music, a voice long unheard, the stirring of the summer breeze, may startle us with the sudden revival of long-forgotten feelings and thoughts, but none of these little whisperers to the heart is so potently endowed with this simple spell as the various flavours of Port to one who has tried, and, in various moods of his own mind, relished them all. This full, rough, yet fruity wine, brings back that first season of London life when topics seemed exhaustless as words, and coloured with rainbow hues; when Irish students, fresh from Trinity College, Dublin, were not too loud or familiar to be borne; when the florid fluency of others was only tiresome as it interrupted one’s own; when the vast Temple Hall was not too large or too cold for sociality; and ambition, dilating in the venerable

* Old Port wine is more ancient to the imagination than any other, though in fact it may have been known fewer years; as a broken Gothic arch has more of the spirit of antiquity about it than a Grecian temple. Port reminds us of the obscure middle ages; but Hock, like the classical mythology, is always young.

space, shaped dreams of enterprize, labour, and glory, till it required more wine to assuage its fervours. This taste of a liquor, firm yet in body, though tawny with years, bears with it to the heart that hour when, having returned to my birth-place, after a long and eventful absence, and having been cordially welcomed by my hearty friends, I slipped away from the table, and hurried, in the light of a brilliant sunset, to the gently declining fields and richly wooded hedgroves which were the favourite haunt of my serious boyhood. The swelling hills seemed touched with ethereal softness; the level plain was invested "with purpleal gleams;" every wild rose and stirring branch was eloquent with vivid recollections: a thousand hours of happy thoughtfulness came back upon the heart; and the glorious clouds which fringed the western horizon looked prophetic of golden years "predestined to descend and bless mankind." This soft, highly-flavoured Port, in every drop of which you seem to taste an aromatic flower, revives that delicious evening, when, after days of search for the tale of Rosamond Grey, of which I had indistinctly heard, I returned from an obscure circulating library with my prize, and brought out a long-cherished bottle, given me two years before as a curiosity, by way of accompaniment to that quintessence of imaginative romance. How did I enjoy, with a strange delight, its scriptural pathos, like a newly discovered chapter of the Book of Ruth; hang enamoured over its young beauty, lovelier for the antique frame of language in which it was set; and long to be acquainted with the author, though I scarcely dared aspire so high, and little anticipated those hundreds of happy evenings since passed in his society, which now crowd on me in rich confusion!—Thus is it that these subtlest of remembrancers not only revive some joyful season, but this also "contains a glass which shows us many more," unlocking the choicest stores of memory, that cellar of the brain, in which lie the treasures which make life precious.

But see! our party have seated themselves beneath that central arch to enjoy a calmer pleasure after the fatigues of their travel. They look romantic as banditti in a cave, and good-humoured as a committee of aldermen. A cask which has done good service in its day—the shell of the evaporated

spirit—serves for a table round which they sit on rude but ample benches. The torches planted in the ground cast a broad light over the scene, making the ruddy wine glisten, and seeming by their irregular flickering, as if they too felt the influence of the spot. My friend, usually so gentle in his convivialities, has actually broken forth into a song, such as these vaults never heard; our respected senior sits trying to preserve his solemn look, but unconsciously smiling; and Mr. B———, the founder of the banquet, is sedulously doing the honours with only intenser civility, and calling out for fresh store of ham, sandwiches and broiled mushrooms, to enable us to do justice to the liquid delicacies before us. The usual order of wines is disregarded; no affected climax, no squeamish assortments of tastes for us here; we despise all rules, and yield a sentimental indulgence to the aberrations of the bottle. “Riches fineless” are piled around us; we are below the laws and their ministers; and just, lo! in the farthest glimmer of the torches lies outstretched our black Mercury, made happy by our leavings, and seeming to rejoice that in the cellar, as in the grave, all men are equal.

How the soul expands from this narrow cell and bids defiance to the massive walls! What Elysian scenes begin to dawn amidst the darkness! Now do I understand the glorious tale of Aladdin and the subterranean gardens. It is plain that the visionary boy had discovered just such a cellar as this, and there eagerly learned to gather amaranthine fruits, and range in celestial groves, till the Genius of the Ring, who has sobered many a youth, took him in charge, and restored him to common air. Here is the true temple, the inner shrine of Bacchus. Feebly have they understood the attributes of the benignant god, who have represented him as delighting in a garish bower with clustering grapes; here he rejoices to sit, in his true citadel, amidst his mightier treasures. Methinks we could now, in prophetic mood, trace the gay histories of these his embodied inspirations, among those who shall feel them hereafter; live at once along a thousand lines of sympathy and thought which they shall kindle; reverse the melancholy musing of Hamlet, and trace that which the bung-hole-stopper confines to “the noble dust of an Alexander,” which it shall quicken; and peeping into

the studies of our brother contributors, see how that vintage which flushed the hills of France with purple, shall mantle afresh in the choice articles of this Magazine.

But it is time to stop, or my readers will suspect me of a more recent visit to the cellar. They will be mistaken. One such descent is enough for a life; and I stand too much in awe of the Powers of the Grave to venture again so near to their precincts.

ON THE DESTRUCTION OF THE BRUNSWICK THEATRE BY FIRE.

[New Monthly Magazine.]

WE notice this lamentable accident in our dramatic record, not for the sake of inquiry into its causes, or of multiplying the dismal associations which it awakens, but for the striking manner in which it has brought out the proper virtues of players. Actors of all ranks; managers of all interests; the retired and the active; the successful and the obscure; the refined and the vulgar; from Mrs. Siddons down to the scene-shifters of Sadler's Wells, have pressed forward to afford their sympathy and relief to the living sufferers. The proprietors of the patent theatres, who were just complaining of the infringements on their purchased rights, which have rendered them almost valueless, at once forgot the meditated injury to themselves, and saw nothing but the misery of their comrades. It is only on occasions such as these that the charities which are nurtured amidst the excitements and vicissitudes of a theatrical life are exhibited, so as to put the indiscriminate condemnations of the crabbed moralist and the fanatic to shame. There is more equality in the distribution of goodness and evil than either of these classes imagine; for the "respectable" part of the community are powerful and permanent; and obtain, perhaps, something more than justice for the negative virtues. Far be it from us to undervalue these, or to sympathize with any who would represent the ordinary guards and fences of morality as things of little value; but justice is due to all; and justice, we cannot help thinking, is scarcely done to those whose irregularities and whose virtues grow together on that verge of ruin and despair on

which they stand in the times of their giddiest elevation. A cold observance of the decencies of life excites no man's envy and wounds no man's self-love; and, therefore, it is allowed without grudging; while the dazzling errors and redeeming nobleness of the light-hearted and the generous are more easily abused than copied. To detect "the soul of goodness in things evil," is not to confound evil with good, or to weaken the laws of honour and conscience, but to give to them a finer precision and a more penetrating vigour. It is not by distinguishing, but by confounding, that pernicious sentimentalists pervert the understanding and corrupt the affections. They lend to vice the names and attributes of virtue; tack together qualities which could never be united in nature; and thus, in order to produce a new and startling effect, deprave the moral sensibility, and relax the tone of manly feeling. But it is another thing to hold the balance fairly between the excellencies and the frailties of imperfect man; to trace the hints and indications of high emotion amidst the weaknesses of our nature; to consider temptations as well as transgressions, and to estimate not only what is done but what is resisted. We can, indeed, do this but partially, yet we should, as far as possible, dispose ourselves to be just in our moral censures; and we shall find in those whom we call "good for nothing people," more good than we think for. Actors are, no doubt, more liable to deviate from the ordinary proprieties of conduct, than merchants or agriculturalists; it is their business to give pleasure to others, and, therefore, they must incline to the pleasurable; they live in the present, and it is no wonder that, as their tenure is more precarious than that of others, they take less thought for the future. But if they have less of the virtue of discretion, they have also less of that alloy of gross selfishness to which it is allied; they have much of the compassion which they help to diffuse; and ludicrous as their vanities sometimes are they give way at once on the touch of sympathy for unmerited or merited sorrow. Mr. Kean is an extreme instance, perhaps, both of imprudence and generosity; and accordingly no man living has been treated with greater injustice by a moral and discerning public. Raised in a moment from obscurity and want to be the idol of the town; courted, caressed, and applauded by the multitude, praised by men of genius, with

rank, beauty, and wit, proud to be enlisted in his train, he grew giddy and fell, and was hooted from the stage with brutal indignities. All knew his faults; but how few were capable of understanding his virtues—his princely spirit, his warm and cordial friendship, his proneness to forget his own interests in those of others, his magnanimity and his kindness! The “respectable” part of the community do not engross all its goodness, although they turn it to the best account for their own benefit. Under the shield of this character, they sometimes do things which the vagabonds they sneer at, would not, and could not achieve; and such is the submission of mankind to custom, that they retain their name even when they are detected. An attorney, in large practice, convicted of a fraud, retains the addition “respectable” till he receives judgment; the announcement of the failure of a country bank, by which hundreds are ruined, styles the swindlers “the respectable firm;” and a most respectable member of the religious world speculates in hops, or in stock, without reproach, and, when he has failed for thousands, fraudulently gambled away, continues to hold shilling whist in pious abomination. We have been led to this train of reflection by seeing in a newspaper the speech of a most respectable Home Missionary, named Smith, at the Mansion-house, in which he exults in the horrible catastrophe as “the triumph of piety in London!” And this person, no doubt, regards the accidental mention of the name of the Supreme Being on the stage as blasphemy. It is difficult to express one’s indignation at such a spirit and such language without wounding the feelings of those whose opinions of the guilt of theatrical enjoyments has not rendered them insensible to the feelings of others.

It must be admitted that there is something in the sudden death of actors which shocks us peculiarly at the moment, because the contrast between life and death seems more violent in their case than in that of others. We connect them, by the law of association, with our own gayest moments, and fancy that they who live to please must lead a life of pleasure. Alas! the truth is often far otherwise. The comedian droops behind the scenes, quite chapfalled; the tragic hero retires from his stately griefs to brood over homely and familiar sorrows, which no poetry softens; the triumphant

actress, arrayed in purple and in pall, may know the pangs of despised love, or anticipate the coming on of the time when she shall be prematurely old, and as certainly neglected. The stage is a grave business to those who study it even successfully, though its rewards are intoxicating enough to turn the most sober brain. The professors in misfortune—especially such a misfortune as this—have the most urgent claims on our sympathy. Should we allow those to be miserable who have so often made us and thousands happy? Should we shut our hearts against those who have touched them so truly; who have helped to lighten the weight of existence; and have made us feel our kindred with a world of sorrow and of tears? Their art has the most sacred right to the protection of humanity, for it touches it most nearly. It makes no appeal to posterity; it does not aim at the immortal, in contempt of our perishable aims and regards; but it is contented to live in our enjoyments, and to die with them. Its triumphs are not diffused by the press, nor recorded in marble, but registered on the red-leaved tablets of the heart, satisfied to date its fame with the personal existence of its witnesses. It forms a part of ourselves; beats in the quickest pulses of our youth, and supplies the choicest topics of our garrulous age. It partakes of our fragility, nay even dies before us, and leaves its monument in our memories. Surely, then, it becomes us “to see the players well bestowed,” when their gaieties are suddenly and prematurely eclipsed, and their short flutterings of vanity stayed before their time; or to provide for those who depended on their exertions. Of all people, they do most for relations; they hence most depend on them; and, therefore, their case both deserves and requires our most active sympathy. The call has been, in this instance, powerfully made, and will, we hope, be answered practically by all who revere the genius, and love the profession, and partake the humanity of Shakspeare.

FIRST APPEARANCE OF MISS FANNY KEMBLE.

[New Monthly Magazine.]

WHEN we predicted, last month, that if Covent Garden theatre should be opened at all, it would derive attraction even from the extreme depression into which it had sunk, we had no idea of the manner in which this hope would be realized. We little dreamed that the circumstances which had threatened to render this house desolate, would inspire female genius to spring from the family whose honours were interwoven with its destiny, like an infant Minerva, almost perfect at birth, to revive its fortunes and renew its glories. In the announcement that, on the opening night, Miss Fanny Kemble, known to be a young lady of high literary endowments, though educated without the slightest view to the stage as a profession, would present herself as Juliet—that her mother, who, in her retirement, had been followed by the grateful recollections of all lovers of the drama, would reappear, in the part of Lady Capulet, to introduce and support her; and that her father would embody, for the first time, that delightful creation of Shakspeare's happiest mood, Mercutio—there was abundant interest to ensure a full, respectable, and excited audience; but no general expectation had gone forth of the splendid event which was to follow. Even in our youngest days, we never shared in so anxious a throb of expectation as that which awaited the several appearances of these personages on the stage. The interest was almost too complicated and intense to be borne with pleasure; and when Kemble bounded on the scene, gaily pointed at Ro-

meo, as if he had cast all his cares and twenty of his years behind him, there was a grateful relief from the first suspense, that expressed itself in the heartiest enthusiasm we ever witnessed. Similar testimonies of feeling greeted the entrance of Mrs. Kemble; but our hearts did not breathe freely till the fair debutant herself had entered, pale, trembling, but resolved, and had found encouragement and shelter in her mother's arms. But another and a happier source of interest was soon opened; for the first act did not close till all fears for Miss Kemble's success had been dispelled; the looks of every spectator conveyed that he was electrified by the influence of new-tried genius, and was collecting emotions, in silence, as he watched its development, to swell its triumph with fresh acclamations. For our own part, the illusion that she was Shakspeare's own Juliet, came so speedily upon us as to suspend the power of specific criticism—so delicious was the fascination, that we disliked even the remarks of bystanders that disturbed that illusive spell; and though, half an hour before, we had blessed the applauding bursts of the audience, like omens of propitious thunder, we were now half impatient of their frequency and duration, because they intruded on a still higher pleasure, and because we needed no assurance that of Miss Kemble's success was sealed.

Feeling that the occasion formed an era in our recollections of the theatre, we compared her, in our imagination, with all the great actresses we had; and it is singular, though we can allege nothing like personal likeness, that Mrs. Jordan was the one whom she brought back, in the first instance, to our memory. We might have set down this idea as purely fanciful, if we had not learned that it has crossed the minds of other observers. As form and features seem to have nothing to do with this reminiscence, we attribute it to the exquisite naturalness of Miss Kemble's manner, and we cannot help connecting it with an anticipation that she will one day be as pre-eminently the comic as the tragic muse of our stage.

Her traits of family resemblance struck us most powerfully in the deeper and more earnest parts of her tragic performance. On one occasion, when her face only was revealed by her drapery, its intense expression brought Mrs. Siddons most vividly back to us. Miss Kemble's personal

qualifications for her profession are indeed, such as we might expect from one so parented and related. Her head is nobly formed and admirably placed on her shoulders—her brow is expansive and shaded by very dark hair—her eyes are full of a gifted soul, and her features are significant of intellect to a very extraordinary degree. Though scarcely reaching the middle height, she is finely proportioned, and she moves with such dignity and decision that it is only on recollection we discover she is not tall. In boldness and dignity of action she unquestionably approaches more nearly to Mrs. Siddons than any actress of our time excepting Pasta. Her voice, whilst it is perfectly feminine in its tones, is of great compass, and though, perhaps, not yet entirely within her command, gives proof of being able to express the sweetest emotions without monotony, and the sternest passions without harshness. She seems to know the stage by intuition, “as native there and to the manner born,” and she understands even now, by what magic we cannot divine, the precise effect she will produce on the most distant spectators. She treads the stage as if she had been matured by the study and practice of years. We dreamed for a while of being able to analyze her acting, and to fix in our memory the finest moments of its power and grace; but her attitudes glide into each other so harmoniously that we at last gave up enumerating how often she seemed a study to the painter’s eye and a vision to the poet’s heart.

At the first sight, Miss Kemble’s countenance conveys an impression of extraordinary intellect, and the manifestation of that faculty is a pervading charm of her acting. It gives her courage, it gives her promptitude—the power of seeing what is to be done, and of doing it without faltering or hesitation. She always aims at the highest effect, and almost always succeeds in realizing her finest conceptions.

The Juliet of Shakspeare is young and beautiful; but no mistake can be greater than the idea that her character can be impersonated with probability by a merely beautiful young woman. Juliet is a being of rich imagination; her eloquence breathes an ethereal spirit; and her heroic devotedness is as different from common-place romance, as superficial gilding is unlike the solid ore. By many an observer, the beautiful surface of her character is alone ap-

preciated, and not that force and grandeur in it which is capable of sustaining itself in harmony, not only with the luxuriant commencement of the piece, but with the funereal terrors of its tragic close. Hence the expectation has been so often excited, that a lovely girl, who can look the character very innocently, and speak the garden-scene very prettily, is quite sufficient to be a representative of the heroine throughout; and hence the same expectation has been so often disappointed. The debutante may be often carried, without apparent failure, through a scene or two, by her beauty and pretty manner of love-making; but when the tragedy commences in earnest, her intellectual expression sinks under its terrors, and she appears no more than a poor young lady, driven mad with the vexation of love.

Far remote from this description is the Juliet of Miss Kemble. It never was our fortune to see Mrs. Siddons in the part, but Miss Kemble gives it a depth of tragic tone which none of her predecessors whom we have seen ever gave to it. Miss O'Neil, loth as we are to forget her fascinations, used to lighten the earlier scenes of the piece with some girlish graces that were accused of being infantine. Be that as it may, there were certainly a hundred little prettinesses enacted by hundreds of novices in the character, which attracted habitual applauses, but which Miss Kemble at once repudiated with the wise audacity of genius; at the same time, though she blends not a particle of affected girlishness with the part of Juliet, her youth and her truth still leave in it a Shakspearian *naïveté*. As the tragedy deepens, her powers are developed in unison with the strengthened decision of purpose which the poet gives to the character. What a noble effect she produced in that scene where the Nurse, who had hitherto been the partner of all her counsels, recommends her to marry Paris, and to her astonished exclamation, "Speak'st thou from thy heart?" answers, "And from my soul, too, or else beshrew them both." At that momentous passage Miss Kemble erected her head, and extended her arm, with an expressive air which we never saw surpassed in acting, and with a power like magic, pronounced "Amen!" In that attitude, and look, and word, she made us feel that Juliet, so late a nurseling, was now left alone in the world—that the child was gone, and that the heroic wo-

man had begun her part. By her change of tone and manner she showed that her heart was wound up to fulfill its destiny, and she bids the Nurse "Go in," in a tone of dignified command. That there was such a change in Juliet we have always felt, but to mark its precise moment was reserved for this accomplished actress in a single tone.

It is hardly needless to say, that Mr. Kemble's Mercutio was delightful, independent even of the gallant spirit with which he carried off the weight of his anxieties on the first evening. It was charmingly looked, acted, and spoken—with only one little touch of baser matter in the mimicry of the Nurse—and closed by a death true to nature, and exhibiting, in milder light, all the brilliant traits of the character. Warde showed his good feeling in accepting the part of Friar Laurence, and his good taste in speaking the poetry of which it is made up: Mrs. Davenport played the Nurse as excellently as she has played it for the last twenty years, and not better than she will play it for twenty years to come; and Mrs. Kemble went through the little she had to do in Lady Capulet with true motherly grace.

THE MELO-DRAMAS AGAINST GAMBLING.

(New Monthly Magazine.)

THERE is at Paris, where all extremes meet, a kind of sub-theatrical public, which makes amends for the severity of the orthodox dramatic code, by running wild after the most extravagant violations of all rules, and the strangest outrages on feeling and taste. Thus the members of this living paradox keep the balance even, and avenge the beautiful and the romantic. If they turn away with disgust from the *Weird Sisters*, and defy the magic in the web of *Othello's* handkerchief, they dote on *Mr. Cooke* in the *Monster*, and consecrate ribands to his fame. If they refuse to pardon the grave-diggers in *Hamlet*, they seek for materials of absorbing interest in the charnal-house which no divine philosophy illumines. If they refuse to tragedy any larger bounds of time than their own classical poets could occupy with frigid declamations, they will select three days from distant parts of a wretched and criminal life, in order to exhibit in full and odious perfection, the horrors which two fifteen years of atrocity can accumulate and mature. Of all the examples of the daring side of their eternal antithesis, the melo-drama against gambling, produced within the last few months, is the most extraordinary and the most successful. Each act is crowded with incidents, in which the only relief from the basest fraud and the most sickening selfishness is to be found in deeds which would chill the blood if it had leisure to freeze. We do not only "sup full of horrors," but breakfast and dine on them also. A youth, who on the eve of his wedding-day sells the jewels of his bride to gamble with the price, and who deceives her by the most paltry equivocations; a friend, who

supplies this youth with substituted diamonds which he has himself stolen ; a broken-hearted father who dies cursing his son ; and a seduction of the wife, filthily attempted while the husband is evading the officers of justice, are among the attractions which should enchain the attention, and gently arouse curiosity in the first act of this fascinating drama. The second act, exhibiting the same pair of fiends, after a lapse of fifteen years, is replete with appropriate fraud, heartlessness, and misery. But the last act crowns all, and completes the "moral lesson." Here, after another fifteen years passed in the preparatory school of guilt, the hero verging on old age is represented as in the most squalid penury—an outcast from society, starving with a wife bent down by suffering, and a family of most miserable children crying for bread. His first exploit is to plunder a traveller, murder him, and hide his body in the sand ; but this is little ; the horror is only beginning. While his last murder is literally "sticking on his hands," his old tempter and companion, who had attempted to seduce his wife and had utterly blasted his fortunes, enters his hut, ragged and destitute, and by a few sentences rekindles the old love of play, and engages him in schemes of fraudulent gaming. After this little scene of more subdued interest, the parties leave the hut to inter the corpse of the assassinated traveller, and give opportunity for the entrance of the eldest son of the hero, and his recognition by his mother. In her brief absence, contrived for this special occasion, the friends resolve on murdering the youth, of whose name they are ignorant ; the father watches while his familiar stabs the stranger on his couch ; and just as the full horror is discovered, a thunderbolt sets fire to the dwelling of iniquity, and the father hurls his tempter into the flames and follows him ! Such is the piece which has delighted the dainty critics of Paris, who revolt from Julius Cæsar as bloody, and characterize Hamlet as "the work of a drunken savage."

But the most offensive circumstance attendant on the production of this bloody trash is the pretence that it is calculated to advance the cause of morality by deterring from the passion of gambling. What a libel is this on poor human nature ! Of what stuff must that nature be made, if it could

receive benefit from such shocking pictures as representations affecting it nearly! No longer must we regard it as a thing of passion and weakness,—erring, frail, and misguided, yet full of noble impulses and gentle compassions and traits, indicating a heavenly origin and an immortal home; but moulded of low selfishness, and animated by demoniac fury. If earth has ever produced such beings as are here exposed on the scene, they are not specimens of any class of humanity, but its monsters. And on what minds is the exhibition to operate? On such as contain within themselves a conscious disposition to its atrocities, if any such there be, or on the rest of mankind, who sicken at the sight? The first are far beyond the reach of the actor's preaching; the last feel the lesson is not for them—if they indulge in gambling, they have no fear of murdering their sons, and “their withers are unwrung.” In the mean time the “moral lesson,” impotent for good, has a mischievous power to wear out the sources of sympathy, and to produce a dangerous familiarity with the forms of guilt, which, according to the solemn warnings of Sir Thomas Browne, “have oft-times a sin even in their histories.” “We desire,” continues this quaint but noble writer, “no records of such enormities; sins should be accounted new, that so they may be esteemed monstrous; they omit of monstrosity as they fall from their rarity; for men count it venial to err with their forefathers, and foolishly conceive they divide a sin in its society. The pens of men may sufficiently expatiate without these singularities of villainy; for, as they increase the hatred of vice in some, so do they enlarge the theory of wickedness in all. And this is one thing that may make latter ages worse than the former; for the vicious example of ages past poisons the curiosity of these present, affording a hint of sin unto seduceable spirits, and soliciting those unto the imitation of them, whose heads were never so perversely principled as to invent them. In things of this nature, silence commendeth history; it is the veniable part of things lost; wherein there must never rise a Pancovillus, nor remain any register but that of Hell.” The murderous phantasm of Paris will never deter men from becoming gamblers, who have the fatal passion within them, but it may assist in making gamblers demons.

In London, this piece has, we are happy to find, succeeded only in the minor houses, where the audience are accustomed to look for coarse and violent stimulants. It was first produced at the Coburgh; and, assisted by splendid scenery and powerful melo-dramatic acting, was attractive for some time; but has given way to real operas, got up with great liberality, and the graceful performances of a young gentleman named Smith, who acts with more taste and feeling than the clever aspirants of his age usually exhibit. It was afterwards announced at both the winter theatres; but, fortunately for Covent-Garden, Drury-Lane obtained the precedence, and the good sense of Mr. Kemble profited by the example set before him. Here the enormities were somewhat foreshortened, being compressed into two acts, but unredeemed by a single trait of kind or noble emotion. Cooper, as the more potent devil, and Wallack, as his disgusting tool, played with considerable energy; but no talent could alleviate the mingled sense of sickness and suffocation with which their slimy infamies oppressed the spectators. Although much curiosity had been excited, the piece did not draw, and was speedily laid aside; while at Covent-Garden, where its announcement was dignified by the names of Kemble, Ward, and Miss Kelly, it was most wisely suppressed in the shell. At the Adelphi, we have been told that it was rendered somewhat less revolting; but we could not muster courage to face it here, or even to endure it in the improved version of the Surrey, where, according to the play-bills, the Manager has, "after due correction, reformed his hero, and restored him to happiness and virtue." What a fine touch of maudlin morality! To hear Elliston deliver it from the stage, with all the earnestness of his mock-heroic style, we would undergo the purgatory with which he threatens us. He is the reforming Quaker of dramatic legislation, and his stage, during the run of the piece, was a court of ease to Brixton, as Drury-Lane was to Newgate. Nothing can equal the benevolent discrimination of his theory, except that of a popular preacher, whom we once heard deprecating the orthodox doctrine of the eternity of future punishment and cheering his audience with the invigorating hope, that, after being tormented for three hundred and sixty-five

thousand years, the wicked would be made good and happy. We are thankful, nevertheless, that Mr. Elliston's tread-mill for gamblers has rested with the axes and ropes of his more sanguinary rivals; and that the young gentlemen addicted to play have finished their lesson. How it may operate in Paris and the neighbourhood of St. James's, will be ascertained in the ensuing winter.

ON THE INTELLECTUAL CHARACTER OF
THE LATE WILLIAM HAZLITT.

[From "The Examiner" and "The Review of William Hazlitt."]

As an author, Mr. Hazlitt may be contemplated principally in three aspects,—as a moral and political reasoner; as an observer of character and manners; and as a critic in literature and painting. It is in the first character only that he should be followed with caution. His metaphysical and political essays contain rich treasures, sought with years of patient toil, and poured forth with careless prodigality,—materials for thinking, a small part of which wisely employed will enrich him who makes them his own,—but the choice is not wholly unattended with perplexity and danger. He had, indeed, as passionate a desire for truth as others have for wealth, or power, or fame. The purpose of his research was always steady and pure; and no temptation from without could induce him to pervert or to conceal the faith that was in him. But, besides that love of truth, that sincerity in pursuing it, and that boldness in telling it, he had earnest aspirations after the beautiful, a strong sense of pleasure, an intense consciousness of his own individual being, which broke the current of abstract speculation into dazzling eddies, and sometimes turned it astray. The vivid sense of beauty may, indeed, have fit home in the breast of the searcher after truth,—but then he must also be endowed with the highest of all human faculties, the great mediatory and interfusing power of Imagination, which presides supreme in the mind, brings all its powers and impulses into harmonious action, and becomes itself the single organ of all. At its touch, truth be-

comes visible in the shapes of beauty; the fairest of material things appear the living symbols of airy thought; and the mind apprehends the finest affinities of the worlds of sense and of spirit "in clear dream and solemn vision." By its aid the faculties are not only balanced, but multiplied into each other; are pervaded by one feeling, and directed to one issue. But, without it, the inquirer after truth will sometimes be confounded by too intense a yearning after the grand and the lovely,—not, indeed, by an elegant taste, the indulgence of which is a graceful and harmless recreation amidst severer studies, but by that passionate regard which quickens the pulse, and tingles in the veins, and "hangs upon the beatings of the heart. Such was the power of beauty in Hazlitt's mind; and the interfusing faculty was wanting. The spirit, indeed, was willing, but the flesh was strong; and when these contend it is not difficult to foretel which will obtain the mastery; for "the power of beauty shall sooner transform honesty from what it is into a bawd, than the power of honesty shall transform beauty into its likeness." How this some-time paradox became exemplified in the writings of one whose purpose was always single, may be traced in the history of his mind, at which it may be well to glance before adverting to the examples.

William Hazlitt was the son of a dissenting minister, who presided over a small Unitarian congregation at Wem, in Shropshire. His father was one of those blameless enthusiasts who, taking only one view of the question between right and power, embrace it with singleness of heart, and hold it fast with inflexible purpose. He cherished in his son that attachment to truth for its own sake, and those habits of fearless investigation which are the natural defences of a creed maintaining its ground against the indolent force of a wealthy establishment, and the fervid attacks of combining sectaries without the fascinations of mystery or terror. In the solitude of the country, his pupil learned, at an early age, to think. But that solitude was something more to him than a noiseless study, in which he might fight over the battle between Filmer and Locke; or exult on the shattered dogmas of Calvin; or rivet the links of the immortal chain of necessity, and strike with the force of ponderous understanding on all mental fetters. A temperament of unusual ardour glowed

amidst those lonely fields, and imparted to the silent objects of nature a weight of interest akin to that with which Rousseau has oppressed the picture of his early years. He had not then, nor did he find till long afterwards, power to embody his meditations and feelings in words; the consciousness of thoughts which he could not hope adequately to express increased his natural reserve; and he turned for relief to the art of painting, in which he might silently realize his dreams of beauty, and repay the bounties of nature. A few old prints from the old masters awakened the spirit of emulation within him; the sense of beauty became identified in his mind with that of glory and duration; while the peaceful labour calmed the tumult in his veins, and gave steadiness to his pure and distant aim. He pursued the art with an earnestness and patience which he vividly describes in his essay "On the Pleasure of Painting;" and to which he frequently reverts in some of his most exquisite passages; and, although in this, his chosen pursuit, he failed, the passionate desire for success, and the long struggle to attain it, left deep traces in his mind, heightening his strong perception of external things, and mingling, with all the thoughts, shapes and hues which he had vainly striven to render immortal. A painter may acquire a fine insight into the nice distinctions of character,—he may copy manners in words as he does in colours,—but it may be apprehended that his course as a severe reasoner will be somewhat "troubled with thick coming fancies." And if the successful pursuit of art may thus disturb the process of abstract contemplation, how much more may an unsatisfied passion ruffle it, bid the dark threads of thought glitter with radiant fancies unrealized, and clothe its diagrams with the fragments of picture which the hand refused to execute! What wonder, if, in the mind of an ardent youth, thus struggling in vain to give palpable existence to the shapes of loveliness which haunted him, "the homely beauty of the good old cause" should assume the fascinations not properly its own! At this time, also, while at once laborious and listless, he became the associate of a band of young poets of power and promise such as England had not produced for two centuries, whose genius had been awakened by the rising sun of liberty, and breathed forth most eloquent music. Their political creed resembled his own; yet, for

the better and more influential part, they were poets, not metaphysicians; and his intercourse with them tended yet farther to spread the noble infection of beauty through all his thoughts. That they should have partially understood him at that time was much, both for them and for him; for the faculty of expression remained imperfect and doubtful until quickened at that chosen home of genius and kindness, the fire-side of the author of "John Woodvil." There his bashful struggles to express the fine conceptions with which his bosom laboured were met by entire sympathy; there he began to stammer out his just and original notions of Chaucer and Spenser, and old English writers, less talked of, though not less known, by their countrymen; there he was understood and cheered by one who thought after their antique mode, and wrote in their spirit, and by a lady, "sister every way" to his friend, whose fine discernment of his first efforts in conversation, he dwelt upon with gratitude even when most out of humour with the world. He wrote then slowly, and with great difficulty, being, as he himself states in his "Letter to Gifford," "eight years in writing as many pages;" in that austere labour the sense of the beautiful was rebuked, and his first work, the "Essay on the Principles of Human Action," is composed in a style as dry and hard as a mathematical demonstration. But when his pen was loosed from its long bondage, the accumulated stores of thought and observation pressed upon him; images of beauty hovered round him; deep-rooted attachments to books and works of art, which had been friends to him through silent years, glowed for expression, and a long arrear of personal resentments struggled to share in the masterdom of conscious power. The room of Imagination, which would have enabled him to command all his resources, and place his rare experiences to their true account, was supplied by a *will*—sufficiently sturdy by nature, and made irritable and capricious by the most inexcusable misrepresentation and abuse with which the virulence of party-spirit ever disgraced literary criticism. His works were shamelessly garbled; his person and habits slandered; and volumes, any one page of which contained thought sufficient to supply a whole "Quarterly Review," were dismissed with affected contempt, as the drivelling of an impudent pretender, whose judgment was to be estimated by an enthusiastic expression

torn from its context, and of whose English style a decisive specimen was found in an error of the press. Thus was a temperament, always fervid, stung into irregular action; the strong regard to things was matched by as vivid a dislike of persons; and the sense of injury joined with the sense of beauty to disturb the solemn musings of the philosopher and the great hatreds of the patriots.

One of the most remarkable effects of the strong sense of the *personal* on Hazlitt's abstract speculations, is a habit of confounding his own feelings and experiences in relation to a subject with proofs of some theory which had grown out of them, or had become associated with them. Thus, in his "Essay on the Past and the Future," he asserts the startling proposition, that the past is, at any given moment, of as much consequence to the individual as the future; that he has no more actual interest in what is to come than in what has gone by, except so far as he may think himself able to avert the future by action; that whether he was put to torture a year ago, or anticipates the rack a year hence, is of no importance, if his destiny is so fixed that no effort can alter it; and this paradox its author chiefly seeks to establish by beautiful instances of what the past, as matter of contemplation, is to thoughtful minds, and in fine glances at his individual history. The principal sophism consists in varying the aspect in which the past and future are viewed;—in one paragraph, regarding them as apart from personal identity and consciousness, as if a being, who was "not a child of time," looked down upon them; and, in another, speaking in his own person as one who feels the past as well as future in the instant. When he quarrels with a supposed disputant who would rather not have been Claude, because then all would have been over with him, and asserts that it cannot signify when we live, because the value of existence is not altered in the course of centuries, he takes a stand apart from present consciousness and the immediate question—for the desire to have been Claude could only be gratified in the consciousness of having been Claude—which belongs to the present moment, and implies present existence in the party making the choice, though for such a moment he might be willing to die. He strays still wider from the subject when he observes a treatise on the

Millennium is dull; but asks who was ever weary of reading the fables of the Golden Age? for both fables essentially belong neither to past nor future, and depend for their interest, not on the time to which they are referred, but the vividness with which they are drawn. But supposing the Golden Age and the Millennium to be happy conditions of being—which to our poor, frail, shivering virtue they are *not*—and the proposal to be made, whether we would remember the first, or enter upon the last, surely we should “hail the coming on of time,” and prefer having our store of happiness yet to expend, to the knowledge that we had just spent it! When Mr. Hazlitt instances the agitation of criminals before their trial, and their composure after their conviction, as proofs that if a future event is certain, “it gives little more disturbance or emotion than if it had already taken place, or were something to happen in another state of being, or to another person,” he gives an example which is perfectly fair, but which every one sees is decisive against his theory. If peace followed when hope was no longer busy; if the quiet of indifference was the same thing as the stillness of despair; if the palsy of fear did not partially anticipate the stroke of death and whiten the devoted head with premature age; there might be some ground for this sacrifice of the future at the shrine of the past; but the poor wretch who grasps the hand of the chaplain or the under-sheriff's clerk, or a turnkey, or an alderman, in convulsive agony, as his last hold on life, and declares that he is happy, would tell a different tale! It seems strange that so profound a thinker, and so fair a reasoner, as Mr. Hazlitt, should adduce such a proof of such an hypothesis—but the mystery is solved when we regard the mass of personal feeling he has brought to bear on the subject, and which has made his own view of it unsteady. All this picturesque and affecting retrospection amounts to nothing, or rather tells against the argument; because the store of contemplation which *is*, *will* ever be while consciousness remains; nay, must increase even while we reckon it, as the present glides into the past, and turns another arch over the cave of memory. This very possession which he would set against the future is the only treasure which with certainty belongs to it, and of which no change of fortune can deprive him; and, there-

fore, it is clear that the essayist mistakes a sentiment for a demonstration, when he expatiates upon it as proof of such a doctrine. There is nothing affected in the assertion—no desire to startle—no playing with the subject or the reader; for of such intellectual trickeries he was incapable; but an honest mistake into which the strong power of personal recollection, and the desire to secure it within the lasting fret-work of a theory, drew him. So, when wearied with the injustice done to his writings by the profligate misrepresentations of the government critics, and the slothful acquiescence of the public, and contrasting with it the success of the sturdy players at his favourite game of *fives*, which no one could question, he wrote elaborate essays* to prove the superiority of physical qualifications to those of intellect—full of happy illustrations and striking instances, and containing one inimitable bit of truth and pathos “On the Death of Cavanagh,”—but all *beside the mark*—proving nothing but that which required no proof—that corporeal strength and beauty are more speedily and more surely appreciated than the products of genius; and leaving the essential differences of the two, of the transitory and the lasting—of that which is confined to a few barren spectators, and that which is diffused through the hearts and affections of thousands, and fructifies and expands in generations yet unborn, and connects its author with far distant times, not by cold renown, but by the links of living sympathy—to be exemplified in the very essay which would decry it, and to be nobly vindicated by its author at other times, when he shows, and makes us feel, that “words are the only things which last for ever.”† So his attacks on the doctrine of utility, which were provoked by the cold extravagancies of some of its supporters, consist of noble and passionate eulogies on the graces, pleasures, and ornaments, of life, which leave the theory itself, with which all these are consistent, precisely where it was. So his “Essays on Mr. Owen’s View of Society” are full of exquisite banter, well-directed against the individual: of unanswerable expositions, of the falsehood of

* “On the Indian Jugglers,” and “On the Disadvantages of Intellectual Superiority.”

† “On Thought and Action.”

his pretensions to novelty and of the quackery by which he attempted to render them notorious; of happy satire against the aristocratic and religious patronage which he sought and obtained for schemes which were tolerated by the great because they were believed by them to be impracticable; but the truth of the principal idea itself remains almost untouched. In these instances the *personal* has prevailed over the *abstract* in the mind of the thinker; his else clear intellectual vision has been obscured by the intervention of his own recollections, loves, resentments, or fancies; and the real outlines of the subject have been overgrown by the exuberant fertility of the region which bordered upon them.

The same causes diminished the immediate effect of Mr. Hazlitt's political writings. It was the fashion to denounce him as a sour Jacobin; but no description could be more unjust. Under the influence of some bitter feeling, he occasionally poured out a furious invective against those whom he regarded as the enemies of liberty, or the apostates from its cause; but, in general, his force was diverted (unconsciously to himself) by figures and fantasies, by fine and quaint allusions, by quotations from his favourite authors, introduced with singular felicity as respects the direct link of association, but tending by their very beauty to unnerve the mind of the reader, and substitute the sense of luxury for that of hatred or anger. In some of his essays, when the reasoning is most cogent, every other sentence contains some exquisite passage from Shakspeare, or Fletcher, or Wordsworth, trailing after it a line of golden associations—or some reference to a novel, over which we have a thousand times forgotten the wrongs of mankind; till in the recurring shock of pleasurable surprise, the main argument escapes us. When, for example, he compares the position of certain political waverers to that of Clarissa Harlowe when Lovelace would repeat his outrage, and describes them as having been, like her, trepanned into a house of ill-fame near Pall Mall, and defending their soiled virtue with their pen-knives,—who, at the suggestion of the stupendous scene which the allusion directly revives, can think or care about the renegade of yesterday? Here, again, is felt the want of that imagination which brings all things into one, tinges all our thoughts and sympathies with one joyous or solemn hue, and rejects

every ornament which does not heighten or prolong the feeling which is proper to the design. Even when Mr. Hazlitt retaliates on Mr. Southey for attacking his old co-patriots, the poetical associations which bitter remembrance suggests almost neutralize the attack, else overpowering; he brings every "flower which sad embroidery wears to strew the laureate hearse" where patriotism is interred; and diverts our indignation and his own by affecting references to an early friendship. So little does he regard the unity of his compositions, that in his "Letter to Gifford," after a series of the most just and bitter retorts on his maligner,—“the fine link which connected literature with the police”—he takes a fancy to teach that "Ultra-crepidarian Critic" his own theory of the natural disinterestedness of the human mind, and develops it—not now in the mathematical style in which it was first enunciated, but "o'er-informed" with the glow of sentiment, and terminating in an eloquent rhapsody. This latter part of the letter is one of the noblest of his effusions, but it entirely destroys the first in the mind of the reader; for who, when thus contemplating the living wheels on which human benevolence is borne onward in its triumphant career, and the spirit with which they are instinct, can think of the poor wasp settled upon them, and who was just before transfixed with minikin arrows?

But the most signal result which "the shows of things" had over Mr. Hazlitt's mind, was his setting up the Emperor Napoleon as his idol. He strove to justify this predilection to himself by referring it to the revolutionary origin of his hero, and the contempt with which he trampled upon the claims of legitimacy, and humbled the pride of kings. But if his "only love" thus sprung "from his only hate," it was not wholly cherished by antipathies. If there had been nothing in his mind which tended to aggrandizement and glory, and which would fain reconcile the principles of liberty with the lavish accumulation of power, he might have desired the triumph of young tyranny over legitimate thrones; but he would scarcely have watched its progress "like a lover and a child." His feeling for Bonaparte was not a sentiment of respect for fallen greatness; not a desire to trace "the soul of goodness in things evil;" not a loathing of the treatment the Emperor received from "his cousin kings" in the day of

adversity; but entire affection mingling with the current of the blood, and pervading the moral and intellectual being.* Nothing less than this strong attachment, at once personal and refined, would have enabled him to encounter the toil of collecting and arranging facts and dates for four volumes of narrative;—a drudgery too abhorrent to his habits of mind as a thinker, to be sustained by any stimulus which the prospect of wealth or reputation could supply. It is not so much in the ingenious excuses which he discovers for the worst acts of his hero, even for the midnight execution of the Duke d'Enghein, and the invasion of Spain, that the stamp of personal devotion is obvious, as in the graphic force with which he has delineated the short-lived splendours of the Imperial Court, and “the trivial fond records” he has gathered of every vestige of human feeling by which he could reconcile the Emperor to his mind. The first two volumes of the “Life of Napoleon,” although redeemed by scattered thoughts of true originality and depth, are often confused and spiritless; the characters of the principal revolutionists are drawn too much in the style of caricatures; but when the hero throws all his rivals into the distance, erects himself the individual enemy of England, consecrates his power by religious ceremonies, and defines it by the circle of a crown, the author's strength becomes concentrated, his narrative assumes an epic dignity and fervour, and glows with “the long-resounding march and energy divine.” How happy and proud is he to picture the meeting of Napoleon with the

* Proofs of the singular fascination which the idea of Bonaparte created on Mr. Hazlitt's mind abound in his writings. One example of which suffices to show how it mingled with his most passionate thoughts—his earliest aspirations, and his latest sympathies. Having referred to some association which revived the memory of his happiest days, he breathes out into this rhapsody:—“As I look on the long-neglected copy of the *Death of Clorinda*, golden dreams play upon the canvass as they used when I painted it. The flowers of Hope and Joy springing up in my mind, recall the time when they first bloomed there. The years that are fled knock at the door and enter. I am in the Louvre once more. *The Sun of Austerlitz has not set. It shines here, in my heart; and he the Son of Glory is not dead, nor ever shall be to me.* I am as when my life began.”—See the Essay on “Great and Little Things:” *Table Talk*, vol. ii., p. 171.

Pope and the grandeurs of the coronation! How he grows wanton in celebrating the fêtes of the Tuileries, as "presenting all the elegance of enchanted pageants," and laments them as "gone like a fairy revel!" How he "lives along the line" of Austerlitz, and rejoices in its thunder, and hails its setting sun, and exults in the minutest details of the subsequent meeting of the conquered sovereigns with the conqueror! How he expatiates on the fatal marriage with "the deadly Austrian," (as Mr. Cobbett justly called that most heartless of her sex) as though it were a chapter in romance, and added the grace of beauty to the imperial picture! How he kindles with martial ardour as he describes the preparations for the expedition against Russia; musters the myriads of barbarians with a show of dramatic justice; and fondly lingers among the brief triumphs of Moskwa on the verge of the terrible catastrophe! The narrative of that disastrous expedition is, indeed, written with a master's hand; we see the "Grand Army" marching to its destruction through the immense perspective; the wild hordes flying before the terror of its "coming;" the barbaric magnificence of Moscow towering in the far distance; and when we gaze upon the sacrificial conflagration of the Kremlin, we feel that it is the funeral pile of the conqueror's glories. It is well for the readers of this splendid work, that there is more in it of the painter than of the metaphysician; that its style glows with the fervour of battle, or stiffens with the spoils of victory; yet we wonder that this monument to imperial grandeur should be raised from the dead level of Jacobinism by an honest and profound thinker. The solution is, that although he was this, he was also more—that, in *opinion*, he was devoted to the cause of the people; but that, in *feeling*, he required some individual object of worship; that he selected Napoleon as one in whose origin and career he might impersonate his principles and gratify his affections; and that he adhered to his own idea with heroic obstinacy when the "child and champion of the republic" openly sought to repress all feeling and thought, but such as he could cast in his own iron moulds, and scoffed at popular enthusiasm even while it bore him to the accomplishment of his loftiest desires.

If the experiences and the sympathies which acted so powerfully on the mind of Hazlitt, detract somewhat from

his authority as a reasoner, they give an unprecedented interest and value to his essays on character and books. The excellence of these works differ not so much in degree as in kind from that of all others of their class. There is a weight and substance about them, which makes us feel that amidst all their nice and dexterous analysis, they are, in no small measure, creations. The quantity of thought which is accumulated upon his favourite subjects; the variety and richness of the illustrations; and the strong sense of beauty and pleasure which pervades and animates the composition, give them a place, if not above, yet apart from the writings of all other essayists. They have not, indeed, the dramatic charm of the old "Spectator" and "Tatler," nor the airy touch with which Addison and Steele skimmed along the surface of many-coloured life; but they disclose the subtle essences of character, and trace the secret springs of the affections with a more learned and penetrating spirit of human dealing than either. The intense interest which he takes in his theme, and which prompts him to adorn it lavishly with the spoils of many an intellectual struggle, commends it to the feelings as well as the understanding, and makes the thread of his argument seem to us like a fibre of our own moral being. Thus his essay on "Pedantry," seems, within its few pages, to condense not only all that can be *said*, but all that can be *felt*, on the happiness which we derive from the force of habit, on the softening influences of blameless vanity, and on the moral and picturesque effect of those peculiarities of manner, arising from professional associations, which diversify and emboss the plain ground-work of modern life. Thus, his character of *Rousseau* is not merely a just estimate of the extraordinary person to whom it relates, but is so imbued with the predominant feeling of his works that they seem to glide in review before us, and we rise from the essayist as if we had perused the "Confessions" anew with him, and had partaken in the strong sympathy which they excited within him during the happiest summers of his youth. Thus, his paper on "Actors and Acting," breathes the very soul of abandonment to impulse and heedless enjoyment, affording glimpses of those brief triumphs which make a stroller's career "less forlorn," and presenting mirrors to the stage in which its grand and affecting images, themselves reflected from nature, are yet farther prolonged and multiplied. His

individual portraits of friends and enemies are hit off with all the strength of hatred or affection, neither mitigated by courtesy nor mistrust:—partial, as they embrace, at most, only one aspect of the character, but startling in their vividness, and productive of infinite amusement to those who are acquainted with the originals. It must be conceded that these personal references were sometimes made with unjustifiable freedom; but they were more rarely prompted by malice prepense, than by his strong consciousness of the eccentricities of mankind, which pressed upon him for expression, and irritated his pen into satiric picture. And when this keen observance was exerted on scenes in which he delighted—as the Wednesday evening parties of Mr. Lamb's—how fine, how genial, how happy his delineations! How he gathers up the precious moments, when poets and artists known to fame, and men of fancy and wit yet unexhausted by publication, met in careless pleasure; and distils their finest essence. And if sometimes the temptation of making a spiteful hit at one of his friends was too urgent for resistance, what amends he made by some oblique compliment, at once as hearty and as refined as those by which Pope has made those whom he loved immortal. But these essays, in which the spirit of personality sometimes runs riot, are inferior, in our apprehension, to those in which it warms and peoples more abstracted views of humanity—not purely metaphysical reasonings, which it tended to disturb,* nor political disquisitions

* Of the writers since Hume, who have written on metaphysics with the severity proper to the subject, are Mr. Fearn, the author of the *Essay on "Consciousness,"* and Lady Mary Shepherd, whose works on *"Cause and Effect"* are amongst the most remarkable productions of the age. Beattie, Dugald Stewart, Dr. Brown, and his imitators, turned what should have been abstract reasoning "to favour and to prettiness." Mr. Hazlitt obscured it by thickly clustered associations; and Coleridge presented it in the masquerade of a gorgeous fancy. Lady Mary Shepherd, on the other hand, is a thinker of as much honesty as courage; her speculations are colourless, and leave nothing on the mind but the fine-drawn lines of thought. Coleridge addressing the Duchess of Devonshire, on a spirited verse she had written on the heroism of Tell, asks—

"O lady, nursed in pomp and pleasure,
Where got ye that heroic measure?"

The poet might have found in the reasonings of Lady Mary Shepherd a worthier object of admiration than in the little stanza which seemed so extraordinary an effort for a lady of fashion.

which it checked and turned from their aim ; but estimates of the high condition and solemn incidents of our nature. Of this class, his papers on the "Love of Life," on the "Fear of Death," on the "Reasons why Distant Objects Please," on "Antiquity," on the "Love of the Country," and on "Living to Oneself," are choice specimens, written with equal earnestness and ingenuity, and full of noble pieces of retrospection on his own past being. Beyond their immediate objects of contemplation, there is always opened a moral perspective ; and the tender hues of memory gleam and tremble over them.

"Books," says Mr. Wordsworth, "are a substantial world," and surely those on which Hazlitt has expatiated with true regard, have assumed, to our apprehensions, a stouter reality since we surveyed them through the medium of his mind. In general, the effect of criticism, even when fairly and tenderly applied, is the reverse of this ; for the very process of subjecting the creations of the poet and the novelist to examination as works of art, and of estimating the force of passion or of habit, as exemplified in them, so necessarily implies that they are but the shadows of thought, as insensibly to dissipate the illusion which our dreamy youth had perchance cast around them. But in all that Hazlitt has written on old English authors, he is seldom merely critical. His masterly exposition of that huge book of fantastical fallacies, the vaunted "Arcadia" of Sir Philip Sidney,* stands almost alone in his works as a specimen of the mere power of unerring dissection and impartial judgment. In the laboratory of his intellect, analysis was turned to the sweet uses of alchemy. While he discourses of characters he has known the longest, he sheds over them the light of his own boyhood, and makes us partakers of that realizing power by which they become creatures of flesh and blood, with whom we may eat, drink, and be merry. He bids us enjoy all that he has enjoyed in their society ; invites us to gaze, as he did first, on that setting sun which Schiller's heroic Robber watched in his sadness, and makes us feel that to us "that sun will never set ;" or introduces us to honest old Decker on the borders of Salisbury Plain, when he struck a bargain

* Lectures on the Age of Elizabeth.—Lecture VI.

for life with the best creation of the poet's genius. "After a long walk" with him "through unfrequented tracks—after starting the hare from the fern, or hearing the wing of the raven rustle above our heads, being greeted by the woodman's stern 'good night,' as he strikes into his narrow homeward path," we too "take our ease at our inn beside the blazing hearth, and shake hands with Signor Orlando Friscolbaldo as the oldest acquaintance we have."* He has increased our personal knowledge of Don Quixote, of John Bunce, of Parson Adams, of Pamela, of Clarissa Harlowe, of Lovelace, of Sir Roger de Coverly, and a hundred other undying teachers of humanity, and placed us on nearer and dearer terms with them. His cordial warmth brings out their pleasantest and most characteristic traits as heat makes visible the writing which a lover's caution has traced in colourless liquid; and he thus attests their reality with an evidence like that of the senses. He restored the "Beggar's Opera," which had been long treated as a burlesque appendage to the "Newgate Calendar," to its proper station; showing how the depth of the design, and the brilliancy of the workmanship, had been overlooked in the palpable coarseness of the materials; and tracing instances of pathos and germs of morality amidst scenes which the world had agreed to censure and to enjoy as vulgar and immoral.† He revels in the delights of old English comedy; exhibits the soul of art in its town-born graces, and the spirit of gaiety in its mirth; detects for us a more delicate flavour in the wit of Congreve, and lights up the age of Charles the Second, "when kings and nobles led purely ornamental lives," with the airy and harmless splendour in which it streamed upon him amidst rustic manners and Presbyterian virtues. But his accounts

* Lectures on the Age of Elizabeth.—Lecture III.

† This exquisite morsel of criticism (if that name be proper) first appeared in the "Morning Chronicle," as an introduction to the account of the first appearance of Miss Stephens in "Polly Peachum" (her second character)—an occasion worthy to be so celebrated—but not exciting any hope of such an article. What a surprise it was to read it for the first time, amidst the tempered patriotism and measured praise of Mr. Perry's columns! It was afterwards printed in the "Round Table," and (being justly a favourite of its author) found fit place in his "Lectures on the English Poets."—See Lecture VI.

of many of the dramatists of Shakspeare's age are less happy ; for he had no early acquaintance with these that he should receive them into his own heart, and commend them to ours ; he read them, that he might lecture upon them,—and he lectures upon them for effect, not for love. With the exception of a single character, that of Sir Orlando Friscobaldo, whom he recognised at first sight as one with whose qualities he had been long familiar, they did not touch him nearly ; and, therefore, his comments upon them are comparatively meager and turgid, and he gladly escapes from them into “ wise saws and modern instances.” The light of his own experience does not thicken about their scenes. His notices of Marlow, Heywood, Middleton, Marston, Decker, Chapman, Webster, and Ford, do not let us half so far into the secret of these extraordinary writers as the notes which Mr. Lamb has scattered (stray gifts of beauty and wisdom) through the little volume of his “ Specimens ;” imbued with the very feeling which swelled and crimsoned in their intensest passages, and coming on the listening mind like strains of antique melody, breathed from the midst of that wild and solemn region in which their natural magic wrought its wonders. His regard for Beaumont and Fletcher is more hearty, and his appreciation of scattered excellencies in them as fine as can be wished ; but he does not seem to apprehend the pervading spirit of their dramas,—the mere spirit of careless grace and fleeting beauty, which made the walk of tragedy a fairy land ; turned passions and motives to its own sweet will ; annihilated space and time ; and sheds its rainbow hues with bountiful indifference on the just and the unjust ; represented virtue as a happy accident, vice as a wayward fancy ; and changed one for the other in the same person by sovereign caprice, as by a touch of Harlequin's wand, leaving “ nothing serious in mortality,” but reducing the struggle of life to an heroic game, to be played splendidly out, and left without a sigh. Nor does he pierce through the hard and knotty rind of Ben Jonson's manner, which alone, in our time, has been entirely penetrated by the author of the “ Merchant of London,” who, when a mere lad, grappled with this tough subject and mastered it ;* and whose long and earnest aspiration after a kin-

* “ Retrospective Review,” vol. i, pp. 181—206.

dred force and beauty with this and other idols of his serious boyhood, is not, even now, wholly unfulfilled!

Of Shakspeare's genius Mr. Hazlitt has written largely and well; but there is more felicity in his incidental references to this great subject, than in those elaborate essays upon it, which fill the volume entitled "Characters of Shakspeare's Plays." In reading them we are fatigued by perpetual eulogy,—not because we deem it excessive, but because we observe in it a constant straining to express an admiration too vast for any style. There is so much suggested by the poet to each individual mind, which blends with, and colours its own most profound meditations and dearest feelings, without assuming a distinct form, that we resent the laborious efforts of another to body forth his own ideas of our common inheritance, unless they vindicate themselves by entire success, as intruding on the holy ground of our own thoughts. Mr. Lamb's brief glance at "Lear" is the only instance of a commentary on one of Shakspeare's four great tragedies which ever appeared to us entirely worthy of the original; and this, indeed, seems to prolong, and even to heighten, the feeling of the tremendous scenes to which it applies, and to make compensation for displacing our own dim and faint conceptions, long cherished as they were, by the huge image clearly reflected in another's mind. There is nothing approaching to this excellence in Mr. Hazlitt's account of "Lear," of "Hamlet," of "Othello," or of "Macbeth." He piles epithet on epithet in a vain attempt to reach "the height of his great argument;" or trifles with the subject, in despair of giving adequate expression to his own feelings respecting it. Nor is his essay on "Romeo and Juliet" more successful; for here, unable to find language which may breathe the sense of love and joy which the play awakens, he attacks Wordsworth's "Ode on the Intimations of Immortality in Early Childhood," because it refers the glory of our intellectual being to a season antecedent to the dawn of passion; as if there was any common standard for the most delicious of all plays of which love is the essence, and the noblest train of philosophic thought which ever "voluntary moved harmonious numbers;" as if each had not a truth of its own; or as if there was not room enough in the great world of poetry for both! When thus

reduced, by conscious inability to grasp the subject, into vague declamation, he was lost; but wherever he found "jutting freeze or cornice" to lodge the store of his own reflections, as in estimating the aristocratic pride of "Coriolanus," he was excellent; still better where he could mingle the remembrances of sportive childhood with the poet's fantasies, as in describing the "Midsummer Night's Dream;" and best of all when he could vindicate his own hatred of the sickly cant of mortality, and his sense of hearty and wise enjoyment, by precept and example such as "The Twelfth Night" gave him. In these instances, his own peculiar faculty, as a commentator on the writings of others,—that of enriching his criticism by congenial associations, and, at the same time, infusing into it the spirit of his author, thus "stealing and giving odour"—had free scope, while the greatest tragedies remained beyond the reach of all earthly influence, too far withdrawn "in the highest heaven of invention," to be affected by any atmosphere of sentiment he might inhale himself, or shed around others.

The strong sense of pleasure, both intellectual and physical, naturally produced in Hazlitt a rooted attachment to the theatre, where the delights of the mind and the senses are blended; where the grandeur of the poet's conceptions is, in some degree, made palpable, and luxury is raised and refined by wit, sentiment, and fancy. His dramatic criticisms are more pregnant with fine thoughts on that bright epitome of human life than any others which ever were written; yet they are often more successful in making us forget their immediate subjects than in doing them justice. He began to write with a rich fund of theatrical recollections; and, except when Kean, or Miss Stephens, or Liston supplied new and decided impulses, he did little more than draw upon this old treasury. The theatre to him was redolent of the past: images of Siddons, of Kemble, of Bannister, of Jordan, thickened the air; imperfect recognitions of a hundred evenings, when mirth or sympathy had loosened the pressure at the heart, and set the springs of life in happier motion, thronged around him, and "more than echoes talked along the walls." He loved the theatre for these associations, and for the immediate pleasure which it gave to thousands about him, and the humanizing influences it shed among

them, and attended it with constancy to the very last;* and to those personal feelings and universal sympathies he gave fit expression; but his habits of mind were unsuited to the ordinary duties of the critic. The players put him out. He could not, like Mr. Leigh Hunt, who gave theatrical criticism a place in modern literature, apply his graphic powers to a detail of a performance, and make it interesting by the delicacy of the touch; encrystal the cobweb intricacies of a plot with the sparkling dew of his own fancy—bid the light plume wave in the fluttering grace of his style—or “catch ere she fell the Cynthia of the minute,” and fix the airy charm in lasting words. In criticism, thus just and picturesque, Mr. Hunt has never been approached; and the wonder is, that, instead of falling off with the art of acting, he even grew richer; for the articles of the “Tatler,” equalling those of the “Examiner” in niceness of discrimination, are superior to them in depth and colouring. But Hazlitt required a more powerful impulse; he never wrote willingly, except on what was great in itself, or, forming a portion of his own past being, was great to him; and when both these felicities combined in the subject, he was best of all—as upon Kemble and Mrs. Siddons. Mr. Kean satisfied the first requisite only, but in the highest possible degree. His extraordinary vigour struck Hazlitt, who attended the theatre for the “Morning Chronicle,” on the night of his *débüt*, in the very first scene, and who, from that night, became the most devoted and efficient of his supporters. Yet if, on principle, Hazlitt preferred Kean to Kemble, and sometimes drew parallels between them disparaging to the idol of his earlier affections, there is nothing half so fine in his eloquent eulogies on the first, as in his occasional recurrences to the last, when the stately form which had realized full many a boyish dream of Roman greatness “came back upon his heart again,” and seemed to reproach him for his late preference of the passionate to the ideal. He criticised new plays with a reluctant and indecisive hand, except when strong friendship supplied the place of old recollection, as in the instances

* See his article entitled “The Free Admission,” in the “New Monthly Magazine,” vol. xxix. p. 93; one of his last, and one of his most characteristic effusions.

of Barry Cornwall and Sheridan Knowles—the first of whom, not exhausting all the sweetness of his nature in scenes of fanciful tenderness and gentle sorrow, cheered him by unwearied kindness in hours of the greatest need—and the last, as kind and as true, had, even from a boy, been the object of his warmest esteem. He rejoiced to observe his true-hearted pupil manifesting a dramatic instinct akin to that of the old masters of passion—like them forgetting himself in his subject, and contented to see *fair play* between his persons—working all his interest out of the purest affections, which might beat indeed beneath the armour of old Rome, and beside its domestic hearths, but belong to all time—and finding an actor who, with taste and skill to preserve his un-studied grace, had heart enough to send his honest homely touches to the hearts of thousands. Would that Hazlitt had lived to witness the success of the “Hunchback”—not that it is better than the plays which he did see, but that he would have exulted to find the town surprised for once into justice, recognising the pathos and beauty which had been among them unappreciated so long, and paying part of that debt to the living author, which he feared they would leave for posterity to acknowledge in vain!

Mr. Hazlitt's criticisms on pictures are, as we have been informed by persons competent to judge, and believe, masterly. Of their justice we are unable to form an opinion for ourselves; but we know that they are instinct with earnest devotion to art, and rich with illustrations of its beauties. Accounts of paintings are too often either made up of technical terms, which convey no meaning to the uninitiated, or of florid description of the scenes represented, with scarce an allusion to the skill by which the painter has succeeded in emulating nature; but Hazlitt's early aspirations, and fond endeavours after excellence in the art, preserved him effectually from these errors. He regarded the subject with a perfect love. No gusty passion here ruffled the course of his thoughts: all his irritability was soothed, and all his disappointments forgotten, before the silent miracles of human genius; and his own vain attempts, fondly remembered, instead of exciting envy of the success of others, heightened his sense of their merit, and his pleasure and pride in accumulating honours on their names. Mr. Hunt says of these

essays, that they "throw a light on art as from a painted window,"—a sentence which, in its few words, characterizes them all, and leaves nothing to be wished or added.

In person, Mr. Hazlitt was of the middle size, with a handsome and eager countenance, worn by sickness and thought; and dark hair, which had curled stiffly over the temples, and was only of late years sprinkled with gray. His gait was slouching and awkward, and his dress neglected; but when he began to talk he could not be mistaken for a common man. In the company of persons with whom he was not familiar his bashfulness was painful; but when he became entirely at ease, and entered on a favourite topic, no one's conversation was ever more delightful. He did not talk for effect, to dazzle, or surprise, or annoy, but with the most simple and honest desire to make his view of the subject entirely apprehended by his hearer. There was sometimes an obvious struggle to do this to his own satisfaction: he seemed labouring to drag his thought to light from its deep lurking place; and, with modest distrust of that power of expression which he had found so late in life, he often betrayed a fear that he had failed to make himself understood, and recurred to the subject again and again, that he might be assured he had succeeded. In argument, he was candid and liberal: there was nothing about him pragmatistical or exclusive; he never drove a principle to its utmost possible consequences, but like Locksley, "allowed for the wind." For some years previous to his death, he observed an entire abstinence from fermented liquors, which he had once quaffed with the proper relish he had for all the good things of this life, but which he courageously resigned when he found the indulgence perilous to his health and faculties. The cheerfulness with which he made this sacrifice always appeared to us one of the most amiable traits in his character. He had no censure for others, who with the same motives were less wise or less resolute; nor did he think he had earned, by his own constancy, any right to intrude advice which he knew, if wanted, must be unavailing. Nor did he profess to be a convert to the general system of abstinence which was advocated by one of his kindest and stanchest friends: he avowed that he yielded to necessity; and instead of avoiding the sight of that which he could no longer taste, he was seldom so happy

as when he sat with friends at their wine, participating the sociality of the time, and renewing his own past enjoyment in that of his companions, without regret and without envy. Like Dr. Johnson, he made himself poor amends for the loss of wine by drinking tea, not so largely, indeed, as the hero of Boswell, but at least of equal potency—for he might have challenged Mrs. Thrale and all her sex to make stronger tea than his own. In society, as in politics, he was no flincher. He loved “to hear the chimes at midnight,” without considering them as a summons to rise. At these seasons, when in his happiest mood, he used to dwell on the conversational powers of his friends, and live over again the delightful hours he had passed with them; repeat the pregnant puns that one had made; tell over again a story with which another had convulsed the room; or expand in the eloquence of a third; always best pleased when he could detect some talent which was unregarded by the world, and giving alike, to the celebrated and the unknown, due honour.

Mr. Hazlitt delivered three courses of Lectures at the Surrey Institution, to the matter of which we have repeatedly alluded—on *The English Poets*; on *The English Comic Writers*, and on *The Age of Elizabeth*—before audiences with whom he had but “an imperfect sympathy.” They consisted chiefly of Dissenters, who agreed with him in his hatred of Lord Castlereagh, but who “loved no plays;” of Quakers, who approved him as the opponent of Slavery and Capital Punishment, but who “heard no music;” of citizens, devoted to the main chance, who had a hankering after “the improvement of the mind,” but to whom his favourite doctrine of its natural disinterestedness was a riddle; of a few enemies, who came to sneer; and a few friends, who were eager to learn and to admire. The comparative insensibility of the bulk of his audience to his finest passages, sometimes provoked him to awaken their attention by points which broke the train of his discourse, after which he could make himself amends by some abrupt paradox which might set their prejudices on edge, and make them fancy they were shocked. He startled many of them at the onset, by observing, that, since Jacob’s Dream, “the heavens have gone farther off and become astronomical,”—a fine extravagance, which the ladies and gentlemen, who had grown astronomical

themselves under the preceding lecturer, felt called on to resent as an attack on their severer studies. When he read a well-known extract from Cowper, comparing a poor cottager with Voltaire, and had pronounced the line "a truth the brilliant Frenchman never knew," they broke into a joyous shout of self-gratulation, that they were so much wiser than a wicked Frenchman! When he passed by Mrs. Hannah More with observing, that "she had written a great deal which he had never read," a voice gave expression to the general commiseration and surprise, by calling out "More pity for you!" They were confounded at his reading with more emphasis perhaps than discretion, Gay's epigrammatic lines on Sir Richard Blackstone, in which scriptural persons are freely hitched into rhyme; but he went doggedly on to the end, and, by his perseverance, baffled those who, if he had acknowledged himself wrong by stopping, would have hissed him without mercy. He once had an edifying advantage over them. He was enumerating the humanities which endeared Dr. Johnson to his mind, and at the close of an agreeable catalogue, mentioned, as last and noblest, "his carrying the poor victim of disease and dissipation on his back through Fleet-street,"—at which a titter arose from some, who were struck by the picture as ludicrous, and a murmur from others, who deemed the allusion unfit for ears polite. He paused for an instant, and then added in his sturdiest and most impressive manner, "an act which realizes the parable of the Good Samaritan," at which his moral and delicate hearers shrunk rebuked into deep silence. He was not eloquent in the true sense of the term; for his thoughts were too weighty to be moved along by the shallow stream of feeling which an evening's excitement can rouse. He wrote all his lectures, and read them as they were written: but his deep voice and earnest manner suited his matter well. He seemed to dig into his subject—and not in vain. In delivering his longer quotations, he had scarcely continuity enough for the versification of Shakspeare and Milton, "with linked sweetness long drawn out;" but he gave Pope's brilliant satire and divine compliments, which are usually complete within the couplet, with an elegance and point which the poet himself would have felt as their highest praise.

Mr. Hazlitt had little inclination to write about contem-

porary authors,—and still less to read them. He was with difficulty persuaded to look into the Scotch Novels; but when he did so, he found them old in substance though new in form, read them with as much avidity as the rest of the world, and expressed better than any one else what all the world felt about them. His hearty love of them, however, did not decrease, but aggravate, his dislike of the political opinions and practices of their author; and yet, the strength of his hatred towards that which was accidental and transitory, only set off the unabated power of his regard for the free and the lasting. Coleridge and Wordsworth were not moderns to him; for he knew them in his youth, which was his own antiquity, and the feelings which were the germ of their poetry had sunk deep into his heart. His personal acquaintance with them was broken before he became known to the world as an author, and he sometimes alluded to them with bitterness: but he, and he alone, has done justice to the immortal works of the one, and the genius of the other. The very prominence which he gave to them as objects of attack, at a time when it was the fashion to pour contempt on their names—when the public echoed those articles of the “Edinburgh Review” upon them, which they now regard with wonder as the curiosities of criticism, proved what they still were to him; and, in the midst of those attacks, there are involuntary confessions of their influence over his mind, are touches of admiration, heightened by fond regret, which speak more than his elaborate eulogies upon them in his “Spirit of the Age.” With the exception of the works of these, and of two or three friends to whom we have alluded, he held modern literature in slight esteem; and he regarded the discoveries of science, and the visions of optimism, with an undazzled eye. His “large discourse of reason” looked not before, but after. He felt it his great duty, as a lover of genius and art, to defend the fame of the mighty dead. When the old painters were assailed in “The Catalogue Raisonné of the British Institution,” he was “touched with noble anger.” All his own vain longings after the immortality of the works which were libelled,—the very tranquillity and beauty they had shed into his soul,—all his comprehension of the sympathy and delight of thousands, which, accumulating through long time, had attested their worth—were

fused together to dazzle and to blast the poor caviller who would disturb the judgment of ages. So, when a popular poet assailed the fame of Rousseau—seeking to reverse the decision of posterity on what that great writer had done, by fancying the opinion of people of condition in his neighbourhood on what he seemed to their apprehensions while living with Madame de Warrrens, he vindicated the prerogatives of genius with the true logic of passion. Few things irritated him more than the claims set up for the present generation to be wiser and better than those which have gone before it. He had no power of imagination to embrace the golden clouds which hang over the Future, but he rested and expatiated in the Past. To his apprehension human good did not appear a slender shoot of yesterday, like the bean-stalk in the fairy tale, aspiring to the skies, and ending in an enchanted castle, but a huge growth of intertwined fibres, grasping the earth by numberless roots, and bearing vestiges of “a thousand storms, a thousand thunders.”

It would be beside our purpose to discuss the relative merits of Mr. Hazlitt's publications, to most of which we have alluded in passing; or to detail the scanty vicissitudes of a literary life. Still less do we feel bound to expose or to defend the personal frailties which fell to his portion. We have endeavoured to trace his intellectual character in the records he has left of himself in his works, as an excitement and a guide to their perusal by those who have yet to know them. The concern of mankind is with this alone. In the case of a profound thinker more than of any other, “that which men call evil”—the accident of his condition—is interred with him, while the good he has achieved lives unmingled and entire. The events of Mr. Hazlitt's true life are not his engagement by the “Morning Chronicle,” or his transfer of his services to the “Times,” or his introduction to the “Edinburgh Review,” or his contracts or quarrels with booksellers; but the progress and the development of his understanding as nurtured or swayed by his affections. “His warfare was within;” and its spoils are ours! His “thoughts which wandered through eternity” live with us, though the hand which traced them for our benefit is cold. His death, though at the age of only fifty-two, can hardly be deemed untimely.

He lived to complete the laborious work in which he sought to embalm his idea of his chosen hero; to see the un hoped-for downfall of the legitimate throne which had been raised on the ruins of the empire; and to open, without exhausting, those stores which he had gathered in his youth. If the impress of his power is not left on the sympathies of a people, it has (all he wished) sunk into minds neither unreflecting nor ungrateful.

THE END.

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