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*I. A HAND-BOOK OF ANGLO-SAXON  
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Selections of Illustrative Extracts, with biographical notes. *This work is designed to acquaint the student with such writers of English as are not yet fairly subjects of History, and are, therefore, not included in the work of Mr. Taine.*

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THE CLASS-ROOM TAINÉ

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HISTORY

OF

ENGLISH LITERATURE

BY

H. A. TAINÉ

ABRIDGED FROM THE TRANSLATION OF H. VAN LAUN, AND EDITED  
WITH CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE, NOTES, AND INDEX

BY

JOHN FISKE

*Assistant Librarian and late Lecturer on Philosophy in  
Harvard University*



NEW YORK

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*Old Hart plate*

## EDITOR'S PREFACE.

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IN preparing this abridged edition of TAINÉ'S "History of English Literature," especial attention has been given to the needs of young students who, in the course of their English studies, are likely to derive profit as well as pleasure from the use of a work which admirably combines criticism with narration, and is thus something more and better than a dry manual.

The facts given by M. TAINÉ are not only in the main those which it is most important for the student to learn early and thoroughly, but they are arranged with a sense of proportion which even the most unfriendly criticism must admit to be immeasurably superior to that of the compilers to whom the work of making text-books has been, until lately, with few exceptions, intrusted. The book is, indeed, an admirable one for the student, inasmuch as its brilliant speculations and lively criticisms tend to stimulate intellectual curiosity—that most wholesome of incentives to labor, and to invest the whole subject with a charm of which the secret is not possessed by the mere collator of facts and quoter of passages.

The plan of abridgment which I have followed has been a simple one. I have in nearly all cases retained the very words of the author, only striking out here a

word and there a sentence, here a paragraph or two and there a half-dozen pages, which were not essential to the continuity of the exposition or to its completeness for my purpose. M. TAINE's style is one which lends itself very readily to such treatment. For, while exceedingly powerful and lucid, often rising to extraordinary splendor from sheer intensity of clearness, it is by no means a concise or condensed style. M. TAINE's tendency is to err, not by undue economy, but by unnecessary lavishness in the use of words and in the citation of illustrative facts. I have, therefore, seldom found any difficulty in removing considerable portions of a page without serious detriment to the integrity of the thought. In most instances the omissions have left no trace, and can be detected only by a reference to the larger work.

Quite a considerable part of the curtailment has been effected by the omission of all indecent passages and citations. In a history of literature which aims at faithfully reproducing the manners and morals of past times, there must necessarily be contained a great deal which cannot be profitably read aloud in a school of young ladies. The fastidiousness which would be unpardonable in an original treatise is imperatively required in a text-book for the class-room; and in preparing the abridgment, great care has been taken to obliterate every passage which might have given offence.

The omission of the more elaborate philosophizing which fills several sections and one whole chapter of M. TAINE's work will justify itself, since such speculation, however good in itself, cannot be allowed to encroach upon the room which in a class-book is needed for other things. The chapters on contemporary authors were omitted because it is far less important, in a text-book, to call the student's attention to DICKENS and TENNYSON, whom he will be sure to read for

himself, than to give him the best insight that circumstances permit into CHAUCER or SURREY, SPENSER or BEN JONSON, whom he will very likely never read unless his curiosity is now keenly aroused.

The Chronological Table has been made with the help, chiefly, of the excellent work of Mr. HENRY MORLEY.

J. F.

*Berkeley Street, Cambridge.*

*Oct. 13<sup>th</sup>, 1872.*



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# HISTORY OF ENGLISH LITERATURE.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE SAXONS.

§ 1.—As you coast the North Sea from the Scheldt to Jutland, you will observe that the characteristic feature is the want of slope ; the rivers hardly drag themselves along ; the flooding stream oozes over the banks, and appears beyond them in stagnant pools. In Holland the soil is but a sediment of mud, above which hover thick mists, fed by ceaseless exhalations. They lazily turn their violet flanks, grow black, suddenly descend in heavy showers ; the vapor, like a furnace-smoke, crawls for ever on the horizon. The continued rain, wind, and surge leave room for naught but gloomy and melancholy thoughts. The very joy of the billows has in it an inexplicable restlessness and harshness. From Holland to Jutland, a string of small, deluged islands bears witness to their ravages ; the shifting sands which the tide floats up obstruct with rocks the banks and entrance of the rivers. The first Roman fleet, a thousand vessels, perished there ; to this day ships wait a month or more in sight of port, tossed upon the great white waves, not daring to risk themselves in the shifting, winding channel, notorious for its wrecks. In winter a breastplate of ice covers the two streams ; the sea drives back the frozen masses as they descend ; they pile themselves with a crash upon the sandbanks, and sway to and fro ; now and then you may see a vessel, seized as in a vice, split in two beneath their violence. Picture, in this foggy clime, amid hoarfrost and storm, in these marshes and forests, half-naked savages, a kind of wild beasts, fishers and hunters, even hunters of men ; these are they, Saxons, Angles, Jutes, Frisians, and later on,

Danes, who during the fifth and the ninth centuries, with their swords and battle-axes, took and kept the island of Britain.

A rude and foggy land, like their own, except in the depth of its sea and the safety of its coasts, which one day will call up real fleets and mighty vessels ; green England—the word rises to the lips and expresses all. Here also moisture pervades everything ; even in summer the mist rises ; even on clear days you perceive it fresh from the great sea-girdle, or rising from vast but ever slushy moorlands, undulating with hill and dale, intersected with hedges to the limit of the horizon. Joyless scene, poverty-stricken soil ! What a labor it has been to humanize it ! What impression it must have made on the men of the South, the Romans of Cæsar ! I thought, when I saw it, of the ancient Saxons, wanderers from West and North, who came to settle in this land of marsh and fogs, on the border of these primeval forests, on the banks of these great muddy streams, which roll down their slime to meet the waves. They must have lived as hunters and swineherds ; grow, as before, brawny, fierce, gloomy. Take civilization from this soil, and there will remain to the inhabitants only war, the chase, gluttony, drunkenness. Smiling love, sweet poetic dreams, art, refined and nimble thought, are for the happy shores of the Mediterranean. Here the barbarian, ill housed in his mud-hovel, who hears the rain rustling whole days in the oak leaves—what dreams can he have, gazing upon his mud-pools and his sombre sky ?

Huge white bodies, cool-blooded, with fierce blue eyes, reddish flaxen hair ; ravenous stomachs, filled with meat and cheese, heated by strong drinks ; of a cold temperament, home-stayers, prone to brutal drunkenness : these are to this day the features which descent and climate preserve in the race, and these are what the Roman historians discovered in their former country. Pirates at first : of all kinds of hunting the man-hunt is most profitable and most noble ; they left the care of the land and flocks to the women and slaves ; they dashed to sea in their two-sailed barks, landed anywhere, killed everything ; and having sacrificed in honor of their gods the tithe of their prisoners, and leaving behind them the red light of their burnings, went farther on to begin again. “ Lord,” says a certain litany, “ deliver us from the fury of the Jutes.” About the eighth century, the final decay of the great Roman corpse which Charle

magne had tried to revive, and which was settling down into corruption, called them like vultures to the prey. Those who had remained in Denmark, with their brothers of Norway, fanatical pagans, incensed against the Christians, made a descent on all the surrounding coasts. Their sea-kings, "who had never slept under the smoky rafters of a roof, who had never drained the ale-horn by an inhabited hearth," laughed at wind and storms, and sang: "The blast of the tempest aids our oars; the bellowing of heaven, the howling of the thunder, hurt us not; the hurricane is our servant, and drives us whither we wish to go." Torture and carnage, greed of danger, fury of destruction, such traits meet us at every step in the old Sagas. The daughter of the Danish Jarl, seeing Egil taking his seat near her, repels him with scorn, reproaching him with "seldom having provided the wolves with hot meat, with never having seen for the whole autumn a raven croaking over the carnage." But Egil seized her and pacified her by singing: "I have marched with my bloody sword, and the raven has followed me. Furiously we fought, the fire passed over the dwellings of men; we slept in the blood of those who kept the gates." From such table-talk, and such maid's fancies, one may judge of the rest.\*

§ 2.—Behold them now in England, more settled and wealthier: do you look to find them much changed? Changed it may be, but for the worse, like the Franks, like all barbarians who pass from action to enjoyment. The ancient histories tell us that they had a great and a coarse appetite. Even at the time of the Conquest the custom of drinking to excess was a common vice with men of the highest rank, and they passed in this way whole days and nights without intermission. When the guests were satisfied, the harp passed from hand to hand, and the rude harmony of their deep voices swelled under the vaulted roof. The monasteries themselves in Edgar's time kept up games, songs, and dances till midnight. To shout, to drink, to caper

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\* Franks, Frisians, Saxons, Danes, Norwegians, Icelanders, are one and the same people. Their language, laws, religion, poetry, differ but little. The more northern continue longest in their primitive manners. Germany in the fourth and fifth centuries, Denmark and Norway in the seventh and eighth, Iceland in the tenth and eleventh centuries, present the same condition; and the documents of each country will fill up the gaps that exist in the history of the others.

about, to feel their veins heated and swollen with wine, to hear and see around them the riot of the orgy, this was the first need of the Barbarians. The heavy human brute gluts himself with sensations and with noise.

For this appetite there was a stronger grazing-ground,—I mean, blows and battle. Every man was obliged to appear armed, and to be ready, with his burgh or his township, to repel marauders, who went about in bands; one such consisted of thirty-five and more. The animal was yet too powerful, too impetuous, too untamed. Anger and covetousness in the first place brought him upon his prey. Their history, such as that of the Heptarchy, is like a history of “kites and crows.” They slew the Britons or reduced them to slavery, fought the remnant of the Welsh, Irish, and Picts, massacred one another, were hewn down and cut to pieces by the Danes. In a hundred years, out of fourteen kings of Northumbria, seven were slain and six deposed.

At Bristol, at the time of the Conquest, as we are told by an historian of the time, it was the custom to buy men and women in all parts of England, and to carry them to Ireland for sale. “You might have seen with sorrow long files of young people of both sexes and of the greatest beauty, bound with ropes, and daily exposed for sale. . . . They sold in this manner as slaves their nearest relatives, and even their own children.” When we regard their deeds of violence, their ferocity, their cannibal jests, we see that they were not far removed from the sea-kings, or from the followers of Odin, who ate raw flesh, hung men as victims on the sacred trees of Upsal, and killed one another to make sure of dying, as they had lived, in blood.

§ 3.—Under this native barbarism there were noble dispositions, unknown to the Roman world, which were destined to produce a better people out of the ruins of these. In the first place, “a certain earnestness, which leads them out of idle sentiments to noble ones.”\* From their origin in Germany this is what we find them, severe in manner, with grave inclinations and a manly dignity. They live solitary, each one near the spring or the wood which has taken his fancy.† Even in villages the cot-

\* Grimm, *Mythology*, 53, Preface.

† Tacitus, xx., xxiii., xi., xii., xiii., *et passim*. We may still see the traces of this taste in English dwellings.

tages were detached ; they must have independence and free air. Violent intoxication and perilous wagers were their weakest points ; they sought in preference not mild pleasures, but strong excitement. In everything, in rude and masculine instincts, they were men. Each in his own home, on his own land, and in his own hut, was master of himself, firm and self-contained, in no wise restrained or shackled. If the commonweal received anything from him, it was because he gave it. In all great conferences he gave his vote in arms, passed judgment in the assembly, made alliances and wars on his own account, moved from place to place, showed activity and daring.\* The modern Englishman existed entire in this Saxon. If he bends, it is because he is quite willing to bend ; he is no less capable of self-denial than of independence ; sacrifice is not uncommon, a man cares not for his life and his blood. In Homer the warrior often gives way, and is not blamed if he flees. In the Sagas, in the Edda, he must be over-brave ; in Germany the coward is drowned in the mud, under a hurdle. Through all outbreaks of primitive brutality gleams obscurely the grand idea of duty, which is, the self-constraint exercised in view of some noble end. Having chosen his chief, he forgets himself in him, assigns to him his own glory, serves him to the death. It was on this voluntary subordination that feudal society was based. Man, in this race, can accept a superior, can be capable of devotion and respect. This kind of naked brute, who lies all day by his fireside, sluggish and dirty, always eating and drinking, whose rusty faculties cannot follow the clear and fine outlines of poetic forms, catches a glimpse of the sublime in his troubled dreams. He does not see it, but simply feels it ; his religion is already within, as it will be in the sixteenth century, when he will cast off the sensuous worship of Rome, and confirm the faith of the heart. His gods are not enclosed in walls ; he has no idols. What he designates by divine names is something invisible and grand, which floats through nature, and is conceived beyond nature,† a mysterious

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\* Tacitus, xiii.

† "Deorum nominibus appellant secretum illud, quod sola reverentia vident." Later on, at Upsal for instance, they had images (Adam of Bremen, *Historia Ecclesiastica*). Wuotan (Odin) signifies etymologically the All-Powerful, him who penetrates and circulates through everything (Grimm, *Mythol.*)

infinity which the sense cannot touch, but which "reverence alone can appreciate;" and when, later on, the legends define and alter this vague divination of natural powers, an idea remains at the bottom of this chaos of giant-dreams that the world is a warfare, and heroism the greatest excellence.

There is no fear of grief, no care for life; they count it as dross when the idea has seized upon them. The trembling of the nerves, the repugnance of animal instinct which starts back before wounds and death, are all lost in an irresistible determination. There were men amongst them, Berserkirs,\* who in battle, seized with a sort of madness, showed a sudden and superhuman strength, and ceased to feel their wounds. This is the conception of a hero as engendered by this race in its infancy. Energy, tenacious and mournful energy, an ecstasy of energy—such was their chosen condition. Carlyle said well, that in the sombre obstinacy of an English laborer still survives the tacit rage of the Scandinavian warrior. Strife for strife's sake—such is their pleasure. With what sadness, madness, waste, such a disposition breaks its bonds, we shall see in Shakspeare and Byron; with what completeness, in what duties it can entrench and employ itself under moral ideas, we shall see in the case of the Puritans.

§ 4.—They have established themselves in England; and however disordered the society which binds them together, it is founded, as in Germany, on generous sentiment. War is at every door, I am aware, but warlike virtues are behind every door; courage chiefly, then fidelity. Under the brute there is a free man, and a man with a heart. There is no man among them who, at his own risk, will not make alliance, go forth to fight, undertake adventures. There is no group of men among them, who, in their Witenagemot,† is not for ever concluding alliances one with another. Every clan, in its own district, forms a league of which all the members, "brothers of the sword," defend

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\* This word signifies men who fought without a breastplate, perhaps in shirts only; *Scottice*, "Baresarks."—TR.

† [*Witena gemot*, "the assembly of the wise," the supreme council of the nation, summoned by the King, and consisting of Earls, Thanes, and the higher clergy, both regular and secular. Here laws were passed or repealed, and the King's grants were ratified. See Bosworth's Anglo-Saxon Dictionary, s. v.—J. F.]

each other, and demand each other's blood at the price of their own. Every chief in his hall reckons that he has friends, not mercenaries, in the faithful ones who drink his beer, and who, having received as marks of his confidence, bracelets, swords, and suits of armor, will cast themselves between him and danger on the day of battle. Independence and bravery smoulder among this young nation with violence and excess; but these are of themselves noble things; and no less noble are the sentiments which serve them for discipline,—to wit, an affectionate devotion, and respect for plighted faith. These appear in their laws, and break forth in their poetry. Among them greatness of heart gives matter for imagination. Their characters are not selfish and shifty, like those of Homer. They are brave hearts, simple and strong, faithful to their relatives, to their master in arms, firm and steadfast to enemies and friends, abounding in courage, and ready for sacrifice. "Old as I am," says one, "I will not budge hence. I mean to die by my lord's side, near this man I have loved so much. He kept his word, the word he had given to his chief, to the distributor of gifts, promising him that they should return to the town, safe and sound to their homes, or that they would fall both together, in the thick of the carnage, covered with wounds. He lay by his master's side, like a faithful servant." Though awkward in speech, their old poets find touching words when they have to paint these manly friendships. We cannot without emotion hear them relate how the old "king embraced the best of his thanes,\* and put his arms about his neck, how the tears flowed down the cheeks of the gray-haired chief. . . . The valiant man was so dear to him. He could not stop the flood which mounted from his breast. In his heart, deep in the cords of his soul, he sighed in secret after the beloved man." Few as are the songs which remain to us, they return to this subject again and again. Amid their perilous mode of life, and the perpetual appeal to arms, there exists no sentiment more warm than friendship, nor any virtue stronger than loyalty.

Thus supported by powerful affection and firm fidelity,

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\* [*Thane*, a nobleman empowered by the king to hold a court; ranking lower than an earl or ealdorman, and corresponding nearly to a baron or lord of a manor.—J. F.]

society is kept wholesome. As in Germany, amid the sadness of a melancholic temperament and the savagery of a barbarous life, the most tragic human faculties, the deep power of love and the grand power of will, are the only ones that sway and act.

This is why the hero, as in Germany, is truly heroic. Let us speak of him at length; we retain one of their poems, that of Beowulf, almost entire. Here are the stories, which the thanes, seated on their stools, by the light of their torches, listened to as they drank the ale of their king: we can glean thence their manners and sentiments, as in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* those of the Greeks. Beowulf is a hero, a knight-errant before the days of chivalry, as the leaders of the German bands were feudal chiefs before the institution of feudalism.\* He has "rowed upon the sea, his naked sword hard in his hand, amid the fierce waves and coldest of storms, and the rage of winter hurtled over the waves of the deep." The sea-monsters, "the many-colored foes, drew him to the bottom of the sea, and held him fast in their gripe." But he reached "the wretches with his point and with his war-bill." "The mighty sea-beast received the war-rush through his hands," and he slew nine nickors (sea-monsters). And now behold him, as he comes across the waves to succor the old King Hrothgar, who with his vassals sits afflicted in his great mead-hall, high and curved with pinnacles. For "a grim stranger, Grendel, a mighty haunter of the marshes," had entered his hall during the night, seized thirty of the thanes who were asleep, and returned in his war-craft with their carcasses; for twelve years the dreadful ogre, the beastly and greedy creature, father of Orks and Jötuns, devoured men and emptied the best of houses. Beowulf, the great warrior, offers to grapple with the fiend, and foe to foe contend for life, without the bearing of either sword or ample shield, for he has "learned also that the wretch for his cursed hide recketh not of weapons," asking only that if death takes him, they will bear forth his bloody corpse and bury it; mark his fen-dwelling; send to Hygelác, his chief, the best of war-shrouds that guards his breast.

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\* Kemble thinks that the origin of this poem is very ancient, perhaps contemporary with the invasion of the Angles and Saxons, but that the version we possess is later than the seventh century.—Kemble's *Beowulf*, text and translation, 1833. The characters are Danish.



He is lying in the hall, "trusting in his proud strength; and when the mists of night arose, lo, Grendel comes, tears open the door," seized a sleeping warrior: "he tore him unawares, he bit his body, he drank the blood from the veins, he swallowed him with continual tearings." But Beowulf seized him in turn, and "raised himself upon his elbow."

"The lordly hall thundered, the ale was spilled. . . . both were enraged; savage and strong warders; the house resounded; then was it a great wonder that the wine-hall withstood the beasts of war, that it fell not upon the earth, the fair palace; but it was thus fast. . . . The noise arose, new enough; a fearful terror fell on the North Danes, on each of those who from the wall heard the outcry, God's denier sing his dreadful lay, his song of defeat, lament his wound.\* . . . The foul wretch awaited the mortal wound; a mighty gash was evident upon his shoulder; the sinews sprung asunder, the junctures of the bones burst; success in war was given to Beowulf. Thence must Grendel fly sick unto death, among the refuges of the fens, to seek his joyless dwelling. He all the better knew that the end of his life, the number of his days, was gone by."†

For he had left on the land, "hand, arm, and shoulder;" and "in the lake of Nicors, where he was driven, the rough wave was boiling with blood, the foul spring of waves all mingled, hot with poison; the dye, discolored with death, bubbled with warlike gore." There remained a female monster, his mother, who, like him, "was doomed to inhabit the terror of waters, the cold streams," who came by night, and amidst drawn swords tore and devoured another man, Æschere, the king's best friend. A lamentation arose in the palace, and Beowulf offered himself again. They went to the den, a hidden land, the refuge of the wolf, near the windy promontories, where a mountain-stream rusheth downwards under the darkness of the hills, a flood beneath the earth; the wood fast by its roots overshadoweth the water; there may one by night behold a marvel, fire upon the flood: the stepper over the heath, when wearied out by the hounds, sooner will give up his soul, his life upon the brink, than plunge therein to hide his head. Strange dragons and serpents swam there; "from time to time the horn sang a dirge, a terrible song." Beowulf plunged into the wave, descended, passed monsters who tore his coat of mail, to the ogress, the hateful manslayer, who, seizing him in her grasp, bore him off

\* Kemble's *Beowulf*, xi. p. 32.

† *Ibid.* xii. p. 34.

to her dwelling. A pale gleam shone brightly, and there, face to face, the good champion perceived

“the she-wolf of the abyss, the mighty sea-woman; he gave the war-onset with his battle-bill; he held not back the swing of the sword, so that on her head the ring-mail sang aloud a greedy war-song. . . . The beam of war would not bite. Then he caught the Grendel’s mother by the shoulder; twisted the homicide, that she bent upon the floor. . . . She drew her knife, broad, brown-edged, (and tried to pierce) the twisted breast-net which protected his life. . . . Then saw he among the weapons a bill fortunate with victory, an old gigantic sword, doughty of edge, ready for use, a work of giants. He seized the belted hilt; the warrior of the Scyldings, fierce and savage whirled the ring-mail; despairing of life, he struck furiously, so that it grappled hard with her about her neck; it broke the bone-rings, the bill passed through all the doomed body; she sank upon the floor; the sword was bloody, the man rejoiced in his deed; the beam shone, light stood within, even as from heaven mildly shines the lamp of the firmament.” \*

Then he saw Grendel dead in a corner of the hall; and four of his companions, having with difficulty raised the monstrous head, bore it by the hair to the palace of the king.

That was his first labor; and the rest of his life was similar. When he had reigned fifty years on earth, a dragon, who had been robbed of his treasure, came from the hill and burned men and houses “with waves of fire.”

“Then did the refuge of earls command to make for him a variegated shield, all of iron; he knew that a shield of wood could not help him, linden-wood opposed to fire. . . . The prince of rings was then too proud to seek the wide flier with a troop, with a large company; he feared not for himself that battle, nor did he make any account of the dragon’s war, his laboriousness and valor.”

And yet he was sad, and went unwillingly, for he was “fated to abide the end.” Then

“he was ware of a cavern, a mound under the earth, nigh to the sea-wave, the dashing of waters, which was full within of embossed ornaments and wires. . . . Then the king, hard in war, sat upon the promontory, and bade farewell to his household comrades. . . . I, the old guardian of my people, seek a feud.”

He let words proceed from his heart, the dragon came, vomiting fire; the blade bit not his body, and the king suffered painfully,

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\* *Beowulf*, xxii., xxiii., p. 62 *et passim*.

involved in fire. His comrades had turned into the woods, all save Wiglaf, who went through the fatal smoke, knowing well "that it was not the old custom" to abandon relation and prince, "that he alone shall suffer distress, shall sink in battle."

"The worm became furious, the foul insidious stranger, variegated with waves of fire, . . . hot and warlike fierce, he clutched the whole neck with bitter banes; he was bloodied with life-gore, the blood boiled in waves."\*

They with their swords carved the worm in the midst. Yet the wound of the king became burning and swelled; he soon discovered that the poison boiled in his breast within, and sat by the wall upon a stone; "he looked upon the work of giants, how the eternal cavern held within stone arches fast upon pillars."

Then he said, "I have held this people fifty years; there was not any king of my neighbors who dared to greet me with warriors, to oppress me with terror. . . . I held mine own well, I sought not treacherous malice, nor swore unjustly many oaths; on account of all this, I, sick with mortal wounds, may have joy. . . . Now do thou go immediately to behold the hoard under the hoary stone, my dear Wiglaf. . . . Now, I have purchased with my death a hoard of treasures; it will be yet of advantage at the need of my people. . . . I give thanks . . . that I might, before my dying day, obtain such for my people . . . longer may I not here be."†

This is thorough and real generosity, not exaggerated and pretended, as it will be later on in the romantic imaginations of babbling clerics, mere composers of adventure. Fiction, as yet, is not far removed from fact: the man breathes manifest under the hero. Rude as the poetry is, its hero is grand; he is so, simply by his deeds. Faithful, first to his prince, then to his people, he went alone in a strange land, to venture himself for the delivery of his fellow-men; he forgets himself in death, while thinking only that it profits others. "Each one of us," he says in one place, "must abide the end of his present life." Let, therefore, each do justice, if he can, before his death. Compare with him the monsters whom he destroys, the last traditions of the ancient wars against inferior races, and of the primitive

\* *Beowulf*, xxxiii.—xxxvi., p. 94 *et passim*.

† *Ibid*, xxxvii., xxxviii., p. 110 *et passim*. I have throughout always used the very words of Kemble's translation.—Tr.

religion ; think of his life of danger, nights upon the waves, man's efforts against the brute creation, the indomitable breast crushing the breasts of beasts, powerful muscles which, when exerted, tear the flesh of the monsters : you will see through the mist of legends, and under the light of poetry, the valiant men who, amid the furies of war and the raging of their own mood, began to settle a people and to found a state.

§ 5.—One poem nearly whole, and two or three fragments are all that remain of this lay-poetry of England. The rest of the pagan current, German and barbarian, was arrested or overwhelmed, first by the influx of the Christian religion, then by the conquest of the Norman-French. But the remnant more than suffices to show the strange and powerful poetic genius of the race, and to exhibit beforehand the flower in the bud.

A race so constituted was predisposed to Christianity, by its gloom, its aversion to sensual and reckless living, its inclination for the serious and sublime. When their sedentary habits had reconciled their souls to a long period of ease, and weakened the fury which fed their sanguinary religion, they readily inclined to a new faith. Society, on its formation, introduced the idea of peace and the need for justice, and the war-gods faded from the minds of men, with the passions which had created them. A century and a half after the invasion by the Saxons,\* Roman missionaries, bearing a silver cross with a picture of Christ, came in procession chanting a litany. Presently the high priests of the Northumbrians declared in presence of the nobles that the old gods were powerless, and confessed that formerly "he knew nothing of that which he adored ;" and he among the first, lance in hand, assisted to demolish their temple. At his side a chief rose in the assembly, and said :

" You remember, it may be, O king, that which sometimes happens in winter when you are seated at table with your earls and thanes. Your fire is lighted, and your hall warmed, and without is rain and snow and storm. Then comes a swallow flying across the hall ; he enters by one door and leaves by another. The brief moment while he is within is pleasant to him ; he feels not rain nor cheerless winter weather ; but the moment is brief—the bird flies away in the twinkling of an eye, and he passes from winter to winter. Such, methinks, is the life of man on earth, compared

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\* 596-625. Aug. Thierry, i. 81 ; Bede, xii. 2.

with the uncertain time beyond. It appears for awhile; but what is the time which comes after—the time which was before? We know not. If, then, this new doctrine may teach us somewhat of greater certainty, it were well that we should regard it.”

This restlessness, this feeling of the infinite and dark beyond, this sober, melancholy eloquence, were the harbingers of spiritual life. We find nothing like it among the nations of the south, naturally pagan, and preoccupied with the present life. These utter barbarians embrace Christianity straightway, through sheer force of mood and clime. To no purpose are they brutal, heavy, shackled by infantine superstitions, capable, like King Knut, of buying for a hundred golden talents the arm of Augustine. They possess the idea of God. This grand God of the Bible, omnipotent and unique, who disappears almost entirely in the middle ages,\* obscured by His court and His family, endures among them in spite of absurd and grotesque legends. They do not blot Him out under pious romances, by the elevation of the saints, or under feminine caresses, to benefit the infant Jesus and the Virgin. More than any race in Europe, they approach, by the simplicity and energy of their conceptions, the old Hebraic spirit. Cædmon, their old poet,† says Bede, was a more ignorant man than the others, who knew no poetry; so that in the hall, when they handed him the harp, he was obliged to withdraw, being unable to sing like his companions. Once, keeping night-watch over the stable, he fell asleep. A stranger appeared to him, and asked him to sing something, and these words came into his head: “Now we ought to praise the Lord of heaven, the power of the Creator, and His skill, the deeds of the Father of glory; how He, being eternal God, is the author of all marvels; who, almighty guardian of the human race, created first for the sons of men the heavens as the roof of their dwelling, and then the earth.”‡ Remembering this when he woke, he came to the town, and they brought him before the learned men, before the abbess Hilda, who, when they had heard him, thought that he had received a gift from heaven, and made him a monk in the abbey. There he spent

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\* Michelet, preface to *La Renaissance*; Didron, *Histoire de Dieu*.

† About 630. See *Codex Exoniensis*, Thorpe.

‡ Bede, iv. 24.

his life listening to portions of Holy Writ, which were explained to him in Saxon, "ruminating over them like a pure animal, turned them into most sweet verse." Thus is true poetry born. These men pray with all the emotion of a new soul; they kneel; they adore; the less they know, the more they think. Some one has said that the first and most sincere hymn is this one word O! Theirs were hardly longer; they only repeated time after time some deep passionate word, with monotonous vehemence. "In heaven art Thou, our aid and succor, resplendent with happiness! All things bow before Thee, before the glory of Thy Spirit. With one voice they call upon Christ; they all cry: Holy, holy art Thou, King of the angels of heaven, our Lord! and Thy judgments are just and great: they reign for ever and in all places, in the multitude of Thy works." We are reminded of the songs of the servants of Odin, tonsured now, and clad in the garments of monks. Their poetry is the same; they think of God, as of Odin, in a string of short, accumulated, passionate images, like a succession of lightning-flashes; the Christian hymns embody the pagan. One of them, Adhelm, stood on a bridge leading to the town where he lived, and repeated warlike and profane odes alternately with religious poetry, in order to attract and instruct the men of his time. He could do it without changing his key. By this natural conformity they were able to make their religious poems indeed poems. If they can describe religious tragedies, it is because their soul was tragic, and in a degree biblical. They introduce their fierce vehemence into their verses, like the old prophets of Israel, their murderous hatreds, their fanaticism, all the shudderings of their flesh and blood. One of them, whose poem is mutilated, has related the history of Judith—with what inspiration we shall see. It needed a barbarian to display in such strong light excesses, tumult, murder, vengeance, and combat.

"Then was Holoferne: exhilarated with wine; in the halls of his guests he laughed and shouted, he roared and dinned. Then might the children of men afar off hear how the stern one stormed and clamored, animated and elated with wine. He admonished amply that they should bear it well to those sitting on the bench. So was the wicked one over all the day, the lord and his men, drunk with wine, the stern dispenser of wealth; till that they swimming lay over drunk, all his nobility, as they were death-slain."\*

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\* Turner, *Hist. of Anglo-Saxons*, iii. book 9, ch. 3, p. 271.

The night having arrived, he commands them to bring into his tent "the illustrious virgin;" then, going in to visit her, he falls drunk on his bed. The moment was come for "the maid of the Creator, the holy woman."

"She took the heathen man fast by his hair; she drew him by his limbs towards her disgracefully; and the mischief-ful odious man at her pleasure laid; so as the wretch she might the easiest well command. She with the twisted locks struck the hateful enemy, meditating hate, with the red sword, till she had half cut off his neck; so that he lay in a swoon, drunk and mortally wounded. He was not then dead, not entirely lifeless. She struck then earnest, the woman illustrious in strength, another time the heathen hound, till that his head rolled forth upon the floor. The foul one lay without a coffer; backward his spirit turned under the abyss, and there was plunged below, with sulphur fastened; for ever afterwards wounded by worms. Bound in torments, hard imprisoned, in hell he burns. After his course he need not hope, with darkness overwhelmed, that he may escape from that mansion of worms; but there he shall remain, ever and ever, without end, henceforth in that cavern-house, void of the joys of hope."\*

Has any one ever heard a sterner accent of satisfied hate? When Clovis had listened to the Passion play, he cried, "Why was I not there with my Franks!" So here the old warrior instinct swelled into flame over the Hebrew wars. As soon as Judith returned,

"Men under helms (went out) from the holy city at the dawn itself. They dinned shields; men roared loudly. At this rejoiced the lank wolf in the wood, and the wan raven, the fowl greedy of slaughter, both from the west, that the sons of men for them should have thought to prepare their fill on corpses. And to them flew in their paths the active devourer, the eagle, hoary in his feathers. The willowed kite, with his horned beak, sang the song of Hilda. The noble warriors proceeded, they in mail, to the battle, furnished with shields, with swelling banners. . . . They then speedily let fly forth showers of arrows, the serpents of Hilda, from their horn bows; the spears on the ground hard stormed. Loud raged the plunderers of battle; they sent their darts into the throng of the chiefs. . . . They that awhile before the reproach of the foreigners, the taunts of the heathen endured."†

Among all these unknown poets‡ there is one whose name we know, Cædmon, perhaps the old Cædmon who wrote the first hymn; like him, at all events, who, paraphrasing the Bible with a barbarian's vigor and sublimity, has shown the grandeur

\* Turner, *Hist. of Anglo-Saxons*, iii. book 9, ch. 3, p. 272.

† *Ibid.*, p. 274.

‡ Grein, *Bibliothek der Angelsächsischen poesie*.

and fury of the sentiment with which the men of these times entered into their new religion. Like the others, he wrestles with God in his heart; triumphs like a warrior in destruction and victory; and in relating the death of Pharaoh, can hardly speak from anger, or see, because the blood mounts to his eyes:

"The folk was affrighted, the flood-dread seized on their sad souls; ocean wailed with death, the mountain heights were with blood besteam'd, the sea foamed gore, crying was in the waves, the water full of weapons, a death-mist rose: the Egyptians were turned back; trembling they fled, they felt fear; would that host gladly find their homes; their vaunt grew sadder: against them, as a cloud, rose the fell rolling of the waves; there came not any of that host to home, but from behind inclosed them fate with the wave. Where ways ere lay sea rag'd. Their might was merged, the streams stood, the storm rose high to heaven; the loudest army-cry the hostile uttered; the air above was thickened with dying voices. . . . Ocean rag'd, drew itself up on high, the storms rose, the corpses rolled."\*

Is the song of the Exodus more abrupt, more vehement, or more savage? These men can speak of the creation like the Bible, because they speak of destruction like the Bible. They have only to look into their own minds in order to discover an emotion sufficiently strong to raise their souls to the height of their Creator. This emotion existed already in their pagan legends; and Cædmon, in order to recount the origin of things, has only to turn to the ancient dreams, such as have been preserved in the prophecies of the *Edda*.

"There had not here as yet, save cavern-shade, aught been; but this wide abyss stood deep and dim, strange to its Lord, idle and useless; on which looked with his eyes the King firm of mind, and beheld those places void of joys; saw the dark cloud lower in eternal night, swart under heaven, dark and waste, until this worldly creation through the word existed of the Glory-King. . . . The earth as yet was not green with grass; ocean covered, swart in eternal night, far and wide the dusky ways."†

In this manner will Milton hereafter speak, the descendant of the Hebrew seers, last of the Scandinavian seers, but assisted in the development of his thought by all the resources of Latin culture and civilization. And yet he will add nothing to the primitive sentiment. Milton's Satan exists already in Cædmon's,

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\* Thorpe, *Cædmon*, 1832, xlvi. p. 206.

† *Ibid.*, ii. p. 7. A likeness exists between this song and corresponding portions of the *Edda*.



as the picture exists in the sketch ; because both have their model in the race ; and Cædmon found his originals in the northern warriors, as Milton did in the Puritans :

“ Why shall I for his favor serve, bend to him in such vassalage ? I may be a god as he. Stand by me, strong associates, who will not fail me in the strife. Heroes stern of mood, they have chosen me for chief, renowned warriors ! with such may one devise counsel, with such capture his adherents ; they are my zealous friends, faithful in their thoughts ; I may be their chieftain, sway in this realm ; thus to me it seemeth not right that I in aught need cringe to God for any good ; I will no longer be his vassal.”\*

He is overcome ; shall he be subdued ? He is cast into the place “ where torment they suffer, burning heat intense, in midst of hell, fire and broad flames : so also the bitter seeks smoke and darkness ; ” will he repent ? At first he is astonished, he despairs ; but it is a hero's despair.

“ This narrow place is most unlike that other that we ere knew, † high in heaven's kingdom, which my master bestow'd on me. . . . Oh, had I power of my hands, and might one season be without, be one winter's space, then with this host I—But around me lie iron bonds, presseth this cord of chain : I am powerless ! me have so hard the clasps of hell, so firmly grasped ! Here is a vast fire above and underneath, never did I see a loathlier landscape ; the flame abateth not, hot over hell. Me hath the clasping of these rings, this hard-polish'd band, impeded in my course, debarr'd me from my way ; my feet are bound, my hands manacled, . . . so that with aught I cannot from these limb-bonds escape.” ‡

As there is nothing to be done against God, it is with His new creature, man, that he must busy himself. To him who has lost everything, vengeance is left ; and if the conquered can enjoy this, he will find himself happy ; “ he will sleep softly, even under his chains.”

§ 6.—Here the foreign culture ceased. Beyond Christianity it could not graft upon this barbarous stock any fruitful or living branch. All the circumstances which elsewhere softened the wild sap, failed here. The Saxons found Britain abandoned by the Romans ; they had not yielded, like their brothers on the

\* Thorpe, *Cædmon*, iv. p. 18.

† This is Milton's opening also. (See *Paradise Lost*, Book i. verse 242, etc.) One would think that he must have had some knowledge of Cædmon from the translation of Junius.

‡ Thorpe, *Cædmon*, iv. p. 23.

continent, to the ascendancy of a superior civilization ; they had not become mingled with the inhabitants of the land ; they had always treated them like enemies or slaves, pursuing like wolves those who escaped to the mountains of the west, oppressing like beasts of burden those whom they had conquered with the land. While the Germans of Gaul, Italy, and Spain became Romans, the Saxons retained their language, their genius and manners, and created in Britain a Germany outside of Germany. A hundred and fifty years after the Saxon invasion, the introduction of Christianity and the dawn of security attained by a society inclining to peace, gave birth to a kind of literature ; and we meet with the venerable Bede, and later on, Alcuin, John Scotus Erigena, and some others, commentators, translators, teachers of barbarians, who tried not to originate but to compile, to pick out and explain from the great Greek and Latin encyclopedia something which might suit the men of their time. But the wars with the Danes came and crushed this humble plant, which, if left to itself, would have come to nothing. When Alfred \* the Deliverer became king, "there were very few ecclesiastics," he says, "on this side of the Humber, who could understand in English their own Latin prayers, or translate any Latin writing into English. On the other side of the Humber I think there were scarce any ; there were so few that, in truth, I cannot remember a single man south of the Thames, when I took the kingdom, who was capable of it." He tried, like Charlemagne, to instruct his people, and turned into Saxon for their use several works, above all some moral books, as the *de Consolatione* of Boethius ; but this very translation bears witness to the barbarism of his audience. He adapts the text in order to bring it down to their intelligence ; the pretty verses of Boethius, somewhat pretentious, labored, elegant, crowded with classical allusions of a refined and polished style worthy of Seneca, become an artless, long drawn out and yet abrupt prose, like a nurse's fairy tale, explaining everything, recommencing and breaking off its phrases, making ten turns about a single detail ; so low was it necessary to stoop to the level of this new intelligence, which had never thought or known anything.

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\* Died in 901 ; Adhelm died 709, Bede died 735, Alcuin lived under Charlemagne, Erigena under Charles the Bald (843-877).

Boethius had for his audience senators, men of culture, who understood as well as we the slightest mythological allusion. Alfred is obliged to take them up and develop them, like a father or a master, who draws his little boy between his knees, and relates to him names, qualities, crimes and their punishments, which the Latin only hints at. But the ignorance is such that the teacher himself needs correction. He takes the *Parcæ* for the *Erinyes*, and gives *Charon* three heads like *Cerberus*. There is no adornment in his version; no *finesse* as in the original. Alfred himself has hard work to be understood. He has to call everything by its name, and turn the eyes of his people to tangible and visible things; the Danes whom he had converted by the sword needed a clear moral. If he had translated for them exactly the fine words of Boethius, they would have opened wide their big stupid eyes and fallen asleep.

Alfred himself was almost the last man of culture; he, like Charlemagne, became so only by dint of determination and patience. In vain the great spirits of this age endeavor to link themselves to the relics of the old civilization, and to raise themselves above the chaotic and muddy ignorance in which the others wallow. They rise almost alone, and on their death the rest are again enveloped in the mire. It is the human beast that remains master; genius cannot find a place amid revolt and bloodthirstiness, gluttony and brute force. Even in the little circle where he moves, his labor comes to nought. The model which he proposed to himself oppresses and enchains him in a cramping imitation; he aspires but to be a good copyist: he produces a gathering of centos which he calls Latin verses; he applies himself to the discovery of expressions, sanctioned by good models; he succeeds only in elaborating an emphatic, spoiled Latin, bristling with incongruities. A few, like Adhelm, wrote square acrostics, in which the first line, repeated at the end, was found also to the left and right of the piece. Thus made up of the first and last letters of each verse, it forms a border to the whole piece, and the morsel of verse is like a morsel of tapestry. Strange literary tricks, which changed the poet into an artisan! They bear witness to the contrariety which then impeded culture and nature, and spoiled at once the Latin form and the Saxon genius.

This very Adhelm, a relative of King Ina, who sang on the

town-bridge profane and sacred hymns alternately, too much imbued with Saxon poesy simply to imitate the antique models, adorned his Latin prose and verse with all the "English magnificence."\* You might compare him to a barbarian who seizes a flute from the skilled hands of a player of Augustus' court, in order to blow on it with inflated lungs, as if it were the bellowing horn of an aurochs. The sober speech of the Roman orators and senators becomes in his hands full of exaggerated and incoherent images; he heaps up his colors, and gives vent to the extraordinary and unintelligible nonsense of the later Skalds.

§ 7.—Such was this race, the last born of the sister races, Saxon, Latin, and Greek, which, in the decay of the other two, brings to the world a new civilization, with a new character and genius. Inferior to these in many respects, it surpasses them in not a few. Amid the woods and fens and snows, under a sad, inclement sky, gross instincts have gained the day. The German has not acquired gay humor, unreserved facility, the idea of harmonious beauty; his great phlegmatic body continues fierce and coarse, greedy and brutal; his rude and unpliant mind is still inclined to savagery, and restive under culture. Hitherto at least the race is intact—intact in its primitive rudeness; the Roman cultivation could neither develop nor deform it. If Christianity took root, it was owing to natural affinities, but it produced no change in the native genius. Now approaches a new conquest, which is to bring this time men, as well as ideas. The Saxons, meanwhile, after the wont of German races, vigorous and fertile, have within the past six centuries multiplied enormously. They were now about two millions, and the Norman army numbered sixty thousand.† In vain these Normans become transformed, galled; by their origin, and

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\* William of Malmesbury's expression.

† [The tradition that William's army numbered sixty thousand rests upon two uncritical statements of William of Poitiers and Ordericus Vitalis, and is, in all probability, erroneous. It is not likely that the Norman army numbered more than twenty-five thousand, a large proportion of whom were Bretons and Frenchmen. See Sismondi, *Hist. des Français*, tom iv. pp. 351–353, and a paper of mine in *Appleton's Journal*, Oct. 16, 1869. The effect of William's conquest upon English history was incalculably great: its effect upon English race-constitution was incalculably small.—J. F.]

substantially in themselves they are still the relatives of those whom they conquered. In vain they imported their manners and their poesy, and introduced into the language a third part of its words ; this language continues altogether German in element and in substance.\* Though the grammar changed, it changed integrally, by an internal action, in the same sense as its continental cognates. At the end of three hundred years the conquerors themselves were conquered ; their speech became English ; and owing to frequent intermarriage, the English blood ended by gaining the predominance over the Norman blood in their veins. The race finally remains Saxon. If the old poetic genius disappears after the Conquest, it is as a river disappears, and flows for a while under ground. In five centuries it will emerge once more.

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\* Warton, *History of English Poetry*, 1840, 3 vols., preface.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE NORMANS.

§ 8.—LET us now consider the Frenchman or Norman, the man from Anjou or Maine, who in his well-closed coat of mail, with sword and lance, came to seek his fortune in England. He took the manor of some slain Saxon, and settled himself in it with his soldiers and comrades, gave them land, houses, the right of levying taxes, on condition of their fighting under him and for him, as men-at-arms, marshals, standard-bearers ; it was a league in case of danger. Each one hastened to build for himself a place of refuge, castle or fortress, well fortified, of solid stone, with narrow windows, strengthened with battlements, garrisoned by soldiers, pierced with loopholes. They are an armed colony, and encamped in their dwellings, like the Spartans among the Helots ; and they make laws accordingly. When a Frenchman is found dead in any district, the inhabitants are to give up the murderer, unless they pay forty-seven marks as compensation ; if the dead man is English, it rests with the people of the place to prove it by the oath of four near relatives of the deceased. They are to beware of killing a stag, boar, or fawn ; for an offence against the forest-laws they will lose their eyes. They have nothing of all their property assured to them except as alms, or on condition of tribute, or by taking the oath of homage. Here a free Saxon proprietor is made a body-slave on his own estate. Here a noble and rich Saxon lady feels on her shoulder the weight of the hand of a Norman valet, who is become by force her husband or her lover. There were Saxons of one sou, or of two sous, according to the sum which they brought to their masters ; they sold them, hired them, worked them on joint account, like an ox or an ass. The Normans would not and could not borrow any idea or cus-

tom from such boors;\* they despised them as coarse and stupid. They stood among them, superior in force and culture, more versed in letters, more expert in the arts of luxury. They preserved their own manners and their speech.

The statutes of the universities obliged the students to converse either in French or Latin. "Gentilmen children beeth taught to speke Frensche from the tyme that they bith rokked in hire cradell; and uplondissche men will likne himself to gentylnen, and fondeth with greet besynesse for to speke Frensche." Of course the poetry is French. The Norman, who ridiculed the Saxon kings, who dug up the Saxon saints, and cast them without the walls of the church, loved none but French ideas and verses. It was into French verse that Robert Wace rendered the legendary history of the England which was conquered, and the actual history of the Normandy in which he continued to live. Enter one of the abbeys where the minstrels come to sing, "where the clerks, after dinner and supper, read poems, the chronicles of kingdoms, the wonders of the world," you will only find Latin or French verses, Latin or French prose. What becomes of English? Obscure, despised, we hear it no more, except in the mouths of degraded franklins, outlaws of the forest, swineherds, peasants, the lowest orders. It is no longer, or scarcely written; gradually we find in the Saxon chronicle that the idiom alters, is extinguished; the chronicle itself ceases within a century after the Conquest.† The people who have leisure or security enough to read or write are French; for them authors devise and compose; literature always adapts itself to the taste of those who can appreciate and pay for it. Even the English‡ endeavor to write in French: thus Robert Grostete, in his allegorical poem on Christ; Peter Langtoft, in his *Chronicle of England*, and in his *Life of Thomas à Becket*; Hugh de Rotheland, in his poem of *Hippomedon*; John Hoveden, and many others. Gower, one of their best poets, at the end of his French works, excuses himself humbly for not having

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\* "In the year 652," says Warton, i. 3, "it was the common practice of the Anglo-Saxons to send their youth to the monasteries of France for education; and not only the language but the manners of the French were esteemed the most polite accomplishments."

† In 1154.

‡ Warton, i. 72-78.

“de Français la faconde. Pardonnez moi,” he says, “que de ce je forsvoie ; je suis Anglais.”\*

And yet, after all, neither the race nor the tongue has perished. It is necessary that the Norman should learn English, in order to command his serfs ; his Saxon wife speaks it to him, and his sons receive it from the lips of their nurse. Scholarly speech, the language of law, abstract and philosophical expressions,—in short, all words depending on reflection and culture may be French, since there is nothing to prevent it. On the other hand, as regards the speech employed about common actions and sensible objects, it is the people, the Saxons, who fix it ; these living words are too firmly rooted in their experience to allow of their removing them, and thus the whole substance of the language comes from them. Here, then, we have the Norman, who, slowly and constrainedly, speaks and understands English, a deformed, gallicised English, yet English, vigorous and original ; but he has taken his time about it, for it has required two centuries. It was only under Henry III. that the new tongue is complete, with the new constitution, and that, after the like fashion, by alliance and intermixture ; the burgesses come to take their seats in Parliament with the nobles, at the same time that Saxon words settle down in the language side by side with French words.

§ 9.—So was modern English formed, by compromise, and the necessity of being understood. But one can well imagine that these nobles, even while speaking the growing dialect, have their hearts full of French tastes and ideas ; France remains the land of their genius, and the literature which now begins is but translation. Translators, copyists, imitators—there is nothing else. England is a distant province, which is to France what the United States were, thirty years ago, to Europe : she exports her wool, and imports her ideas. Open the *Voyage and Travaile of Sir John Maundeville*,† the oldest prose-writer, the Villehardouin of the country ; his book is but the translation of a translation. He writes first in Latin, the language of scholars ; then in French, the language of society ; finally he reflects, and discovers that the barons, his compatriots, by governing the

\* Gower died in 1408 ; his French ballads belong to the end of the fourteenth century.

† He wrote in 1356, and died in 1372.



rustic Saxons, have ceased to speak their own Norman, and that the rest of the nation never knew it; he translates his book into English, and, in addition, takes care to make it plain, feeling that he speaks to less expanded understandings. He says in French:

“Il advint une fois que Mahomet allait dans une chapelle où il y avait un saint ermite. Il entra en la chapelle où il y avait une petite huisserie et basse, et était bien petite la chapelle; et alors devint la porte si grande qu’il semblait que ce fut la porte d’un palais.”

He stops, recollects himself, wishes to explain himself better for his readers across the Channel, and says in English:

“And at the desertes of Arabye, he wente in to a Chapelle where a Eremyte dwelte. And whan he entred in to the Chapelle that was but a lytille and a low thing, and had but a lytill Dore and a low, than the Entree began to wexe so gret and so large, and so highe, as though it had ben of a gret Mynstre, or the Zate of a Paleys.”

Let us see, then, what our Norman baron gets translated for him: first, the chronicles of Geoffrey Gaimar and Robert Wace, which consist of the fabulous history of England continued up to their day, a dull-rhymed rhapsody, turned into English in a rhapsody no less dull. The first Englishman who attempts it is Layamon, a monk of Ernely, still fettered in the old idiom, who sometimes happens to rhyme, sometimes fails, altogether barbarous and childish, unable to develop a continuous idea, babbling in little confused and incomplete phrases, after the fashion of the ancient Saxon; after him a monk, Robert of Gloucester, and a canon, Robert of Brunne, both as insipid and clear as their French models, having become gallicised, and adopted the significant characteristic of the race, namely, the faculty and habit of easy narration, and seeing moving spectacles without deep emotion, of writing prosaic poetry, of discoursing and developing, of believing that phrases ending in the same sounds form real poetry. Our honest English versifiers, like their preceptors in Normandy and Ile-de-France, garnished with rhymes their dissertations and histories, and called them poems. At this epoch, in fact, on the Continent, the whole learning of the schools descends into the street; and Jean de Meung, in his poem of *la Rose*, is the most tedious of doctors. So in England, Robert of Brunne transposes into verse the *Manuel des Pêchés* of Bishop Grostête; Adam Davie,\* certain Scripture histories; Hampole † composes

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\* About 1312.

† About 1349.

the *Pricke of Conscience*. The titles alone make one yawn ; what of the text ?

“ Mankynde mad ys to do Goddus wylle,  
 And alle Hys byddyngus to fulfille ;  
 For of al His makyng more and les,  
 Man most principal creature es.  
 Al that He made for man hit was done,  
 As ye schal here after sone.” \*

There is a poem ! You did not think so ; call it a sermon if you will give it its proper name. It goes on, well divided, well prolonged, flowing and hollow ; the literature which contains and resembles it bears witness of its origin by its loquacity and its clearness.

It bears witness to it by other and more agreeable features. Here and there we find divergences more or less awkward into the domain of genius ; for instance, a ballad full of quips against Richard, King of the Romans, who was taken at the battle of Lewes. Moreover, charm is not lacking, nor sweetness either. No one has ever spoken so lively and so well to the ladies as the French of the Continent, and they have not quite forgotten this talent while settling in England. You perceive it readily in the manner in which they celebrate the Virgin. Nothing could be more different from the Saxon sentiment, which is altogether biblical, than the chivalric adoration of the sovereign Lady, the fascinating Virgin and Saint, who was the real deity of the middle ages. It breathes in this pleasing hymn :

“ Blessed beo thu, lavedi,  
 Ful of hovene blisse ;  
 Swete flur of parais,  
 Moder of milternisse. . . .  
 I-blessed beo thu, Lavedi,  
 So fair and so briht ;  
 Al min hope is uppon the,  
 Bi day and bi nicht. . . .  
 Bricht and scene quen of storre,  
 So me liht and lere.  
 In this false fikele world,  
 So me led and steore.” †

\* Warton, ii. 36.

† Time of Henry III., *Reliquiæ Antiquæ*, edited by Messrs. Wright and Halliwell, i. 102.

There is but a short and easy step between this tender worship of the Virgin and the sentiments of the court of love. The English rhymesters take it ; and when they wish to praise their earthly mistresses, they borrow, here as elsewhere, our ideas and very form of verse. One compares his lady to all kinds of precious stones and flowers ; others sing truly amorous songs, at times sensual.

They speak of spring-time and of love, "the fine and lovely weather," like *trouvères*, even like *troubadours*. The dirty, smoke-grimed cottage, the black feudal castle, where all but the master lie higgledy-piggledy on the straw in the great stone hall, the cold rain, the muddy earth, make the return of the sun and the warm air delicious.

"Sumer is i-cumen in,  
 Lhude sing cuccu :  
 Groweth sed, and bloweth med,  
 And springeth the wde nu.  
 Sing cuccu, cuccu.  
 Awe bleteth after lomb,  
 Llouth after calue cu,  
 Bulluc sterteth, bucke verteth :  
 Murie sing cuccu,  
 Cuccu, cuccu.  
 Wel singes thu cuccu ;  
 Ne swik thu nauer nu.  
 Sing cuccu, nu,  
 Sing, cuccu."\*

Here are glowing pictures, such as Guillaume de Lorris was writing at the same time, even richer and more lively, perhaps, because the poet found here for inspiration that love of country-life which in England is deep and national.

But it was the poems of chivalry, which represented to him in fair language his own mode of life, that the baron preferred to have translated. He desired that his *trouvère* should set before his eyes the magnificence which he has spread around him, and the luxury and enjoyments which he has introduced from France. Life, at that time, without and even during war, was a great pageant, a brilliant and tumultuous kind of fête. Out of the very exuberancy of genius they practised the art of poetry ; out of the buoyancy of their imagination they made a

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\* Warton, i. 30.

sport of life. Edward III. built at Windsor a round hall and a round table; and in one of his tourneys in London, sixty ladies, seated on palfreys, led, as in a fairy tale, each her knight by a golden chain. His wife Philippa sat as a model to the artists for their Madonnas. She appeared on the field of battle; listened to Froissart, who provided her with moral-plays, love-stories, and "things fair to listen to." At once goddess, heroine, and scholar, and all this so agreeably, was she not a true queen of polite chivalry? Now, as in France under Louis of Orleans and the Dukes of Burgundy, the most elegant flower of this romanesque civilization appeared, void of common sense, given up to passion, bent on pleasure, immoral and brilliant, but, like its neighbors of Italy and Provence, for lack of serious intention, it could not last.

Amid such fancies and splendors the poets delight and lose themselves; and the result, like the embroideries of their canvas, bears the mark of this love of decoration. They weave it out of adventures, of extraordinary and surprising events. Now it is the life of King Horn, who, thrown into a vessel when quite young, is driven upon the coast of England, and, becoming a knight, reconquers the kingdom of his father. Now it is the history of Sir Guy, who rescues enchanted knights, cuts down the giant Colbrand, challenges and kills the Sultan in his tent. It is not for me to recount these poems, which are not English, but only translations: still, here as in France, they are multiplied, they fill the imaginations of the young society, and they grow by exaggeration, until, falling to the lowest depth of insipidity and improbability, they are buried forever by Cervantes. What would you say of a society which had no literature but the opera with its unrealities? Yet it was a literature of this kind which nourished the genius of the middle ages. They did not ask for truth, but entertainment, and that vehement and hollow, full of glare and startling events. They asked for impossible voyages, extravagant challenges, a racket of contests, a confusion of magnificence and entanglement of chances. For introspective history they had no liking, cared nothing for the adventures of the heart, devoted their attention to the outside. They lived like children, with eyes glued to a series of exaggerated and colored images, and, for lack of thinking, did not perceive that they had learnt nothing.

What was there beneath this fanciful dream? Brutal and evil human passions; even in chivalrous accounts break out the fierce and unbridled instincts of the bloodthirsty brute. The authentic narratives show it equally. Henry II., irritated against a page, attempted to tear out his eyes.\* John Lackland let twenty-three hostages die in prison of hunger. Edward II. caused at one time twenty-eight nobles to be hanged and disembowelled, and was himself put to death by the insertion of a red-hot iron into his bowels. Look in Froissart for the debaucheries and murders, in France as well as in England, of the Hundred Years' War, and then for the slaughters of the Wars of the Roses. In both countries feudal independence ended in civil war, and the middle age founders under its vices. Chivalrous courtesy, which cloaked the native ferocity, disappears like a garment suddenly consumed by the breaking out of a fire; at that time in England they killed nobles in preference, and prisoners too, even children, with insults, in cold blood. What, then, did man learn in this civilization and by this literature? He dreamed, he imagined a sort of elegant ceremonial in order to address better lords and ladies; he discovered the gallant code of little Jehan de Saintré. But where is the true education? Wherein has Froissart profited by all his vast experience? He was a fine specimen of a babbling child; what they called his poesy, the *poésie neuve*, is only a refined gabble, a senile puerility. Sir John Maundeville, who travelled all over the world a hundred and fifty years after Villehardouin, is as contracted in his ideas as Villehardouin himself. Extraordinary legends and fables, every sort of credulity and ignorance, abound in his book. He has seen at Jerusalem, on the steps of the temple, the footmarks of the ass which our Lord rode on Palm Sunday. He describes the Ethiopians as a people who have only one foot, but so large that they can make use of it as a parasol. He instances one island "where be people as big as gyants, of 28 feet long, and have no cloathing but beasts' skins;" then another island, "where there are many evil and foul women, but have precious stones in their eyes, and have such force that if they behold any man with wrath, they slay him with beholding, as the basilisk doth." The

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\* See Lingard's *History*, ii. 55, note 4.—TR.

good man relates ; that is all : hesitation and good sense scarcely exist in the world he lives in. He has neither judgment nor personal reflection ; he piles facts one on top of another, with no further connection ; his book is simply a mirror which reproduces recollections of his eyes and ears. "And all those who will say a Peter and an Ave Maria in my behalf, I give them an interest and a share in all the holy pilgrimages I ever made in my life." That is his farewell, and accords with all the rest. Neither public morality nor public knowledge has gained anything from these three centuries of culture. This French culture, copied in vain throughout Europe, has but superficially adorned mankind, and the varnish with which it decked them, already fades away or scales off. It was worse in England, where the thing was more superficial and the application worse than in France, where strange hands daubed it on, and where it only half-covered the Saxon crust, which remained coarse and rough. That is the reason why, during three centuries, throughout the first feudal age, the literature of the Normans in England, made up of imitations, translations, and clumsy copies, ends in nothing.

§ 10.—Meantime, what has become of the conquered people? Has the old stock continued barren during this time under the Norman axe, which stripped it of all its shoots? It grew very feebly, but it grew nevertheless. The subjugated race is not a dismembered nation, dislocated, uprooted, sluggish, like the populations of the Continent, which, after the long Roman oppression, were delivered over to the disorderly invasion of barbarians ; it remained united, fixed in its own soil, full of sap : its members were not displaced ; it was simply lopped in order to receive on its crown a cluster of foreign branches. True, it had suffered, but at last the wound closed, the saps mingled. Even the hard, stiff ligatures, with which the Conqueror bound it, henceforth contributed to its fixity and vigor.

Gradually and slowly, through the gloomy complainings of the chroniclers, we find the new man fashioned by action, like a child who cries because a steel instrument, though it improves his figure, gives him pain. However reduced and down-trodden the Saxons were, they did not all sink into the populace. These men, even though fallen to the condition of socagers, even sunk into villeins, had a stiffer neck than the wretched colonists of

the Continent, trodden down and moulded by four centuries of Roman taxation. If they have acquired liberties, it is because they have conquered them ; circumstances have assisted, but character has done more. The protection of the great barons and the alliance of the plain knights have strengthened them ; but it was by their native roughness and energy that they maintained their independence. For, look at the contrast they offer at this moment to their neighbors. What occupies the mind of the French people ? The fabliaux, the naughty tricks of Renard, the art of deceiving Master Ysengrin, of stealing his wife, of cheating him out of his dinner, of getting him beaten by a third party without danger to one's self ; in short, the triumph of poverty and cleverness over power united to folly. The popular hero is already the artful plebeian, chaffing, light-hearted, who, later on, will ripen into Panurge and Figaro, not apt to withstand you to your face, too sharp to care for great victories and habits of strife, inclined by the nimbleness of his wit to dodge round an obstacle ; if he but touch a man with the tip of his finger, that man tumbles into the trap. But here we have other customs : it is Robin Hood, a valiant outlaw, living free and bold in the green forest, waging frank and open war against sheriff and law. If ever a man was popular in his country, it was he. In fact, he is the national hero. Saxon in the first place, and waging war against the men of law, against bishops and archbishops, whose sway was so heavy ; generous, moreover, giving to a poor ruined knight clothes, horse, and money to buy back the land he had pledged to a rapacious abbot ; compassionate too, and kind to the poor, enjoining his men not to injure yeomen and laborers ; but before all, rash, bold, proud, who would go and draw his bow under the sheriff's eyes and to his face ; ready with blows, whether to receive or to return them. He slew fourteen out of fifteen foresters who came to arrest him ; he slays the sheriff, the judge, the town gate-keeper ; he is ready to slay plenty more ; and all this joyously, jovially, like an honest fellow who eats well, has a hard skin, lives in the open air, and revels in animal life.

“ In somer when the shawes be sheyne,  
 And leves be large and long,  
 Hit is fulle mery in feyre foreste  
 To here the foullys song.”

That is how many ballads begin ; and the fine weather, which

makes the stags and oxen rush headlong with extended horns, inspires them with the thought of exchanging blows with sword or stick. Robin dreamed that two yeomen were thrashing him, and he wants to go and find them, angrily repulsing Little John, who offers to go in advance:

“ Ah John, by me thou settest noe store,  
And that I farley finde:  
How oft send I my men before,  
And tarry myselfe behinde?

“ It is no cunning a knave to ken,  
An a man but heare him speake;  
An it were not for bursting of my bowe,  
John, I thy head wold breake.”\*

He goes alone, and meets the robust yeoman, Guy of Gisborne:

“ He that had neyther beene kythe nor kin,  
Might have seen a full fayre fight,  
To see how together these yeomen went  
With blades both browne and bright,

“ To see how these yeomen together they fought  
Two howres of a summer’s day;  
Yett neither Robin Hood nor sir Guy  
Them fettled to flye away.”†

You see Guy the yeoman is as brave as Robin Hood; he came to seek him in the wood, and drew the bow almost as well as he. This old popular poetry is not the praise of a single bandit, but of an entire class—the yeomanry. “God haffe mersey on Robin Hodys solle, and saffe all god yemanry.” That is how many ballads end. The strong yeoman, inured to blows, a good archer, clever at sword and stick, is the favorite. There was also redoubtable, armed townsfolk, accustomed to make use of their arms. Here they are at work:

“ O that were a shame,’ said jolly Robin,  
‘ We being three, and thou but one.’  
The pinder ‡ leapt back then thirty good foot,  
’Twas thirty good foot and one.

“ He leaned his back fast unto a thorn,  
And his foot against a stone,  
And there he fought a long summer’s day,  
A summer’s day so long,

“ Till that their swords on their broad bucklers  
Were broke fast into their hands.”§ . . .

\* Ritson, *Robin Hood Ballads*, i. iv. v. 41-48. † *Ibid.* v. 145-152.

‡ A pinder’s task was to pin the sheep in the fold, cattle in the penfold or pound (Richardson).—TR.

§ Ritson, ii. 3, v. 17-26.



Often even Robin does not get the advantage :

“ ‘I pass not for length,’ bold Arthur reply’d,  
 ‘ My staff is of oke so free ;  
 Eight foot and a half, it will knock down a calf,  
 And I hope it will knock down thee.’

“ Then Robin could no longer forbear,  
 He gave him such a knock,  
 Quickly and soon the blood came down  
 Before it was ten a clock.

“ Then Arthur he soon recovered himself,  
 And gave him such a knock on the crown,  
 That from every side of bold Robin Hood’s head  
 The blood came trickling down.

“ Then Robin raged like a wild boar,  
 As soon as he saw his own blood :  
 Then Bland was in hast, he laid on so fast,  
 As though he had been cleaving of wood.

“ And about and about and about they went,  
 Like two wild bores in a chase,  
 Striving to aim each other to maim,  
 Leg, arm, or any other place.

“ And knock for knock they lustily dealt,  
 Which held for two hours and more,  
 Till all the wood rang at every bang,  
 They ply’d their work so sore.

“ ‘ Hold thy hand, hold thy hand,’ said Robin Hood,  
 ‘ And let thy quarrel fall ;  
 For here we may thrash our bones all to mesh,  
 And get no coyn at all.

“ ‘ And in the forrest of merry Sherwood,  
 Hereafter thou shalt be free.’  
 ‘ God a mercy for nought, my freedom I bought,  
 I may thank my staff, and not thee.’ ” \* . . .

“ Who are you, then ? ” says Robin :

“ ‘ I am a tanner,’ bold Arthur reply’d,  
 ‘ In Nottingham long I have wrought ;  
 And if thou’lt come there, I vow and swear,  
 I will tan thy hide for nought.’

“ ‘ God a mercy, good fellow,’ said jolly Robin,  
 ‘ Since thou art so kind and free ;  
 And if thou wilt tan my hide for nought,  
 I will do as much for thee.’ ” †

\* Ritson, ii. 6, v. 58-89.

† *Ibid.* v. 94-101.

With these generous offers, they embrace ; a free exchange of honest blows always prepares the way for friendship. It was so Robin Hood tried Little John, whom he loved all his life after. Little John was seven feet high, and being on a bridge, would not give way. Honest Robin would not use his bow against him, but went and cut a stick seven feet long ; and they agreed amicably to fight on the bridge until one should fall into the water. They hit and smite to such a tune that " their bones did sound." In the end Robin falls, and he feels nothing but respect for Little John. Another time, having a sword with him, he was thrashed by a tinker who had only a stick. Full of admiration, he gives him a hundred pounds. One time it was by a potter, who refused him toll ; another by a shepherd. They fight for pastime. Even nowadays boxers give each other a friendly grip before meeting ; they knock one another about in this country honorably, without malice, fury or shame. Broken teeth, black eyes, smashed ribs, do not call for murderous vengeance ; it would seem that the bones are more solid and the nerves less sensitive in England than elsewhere. Blows once exchanged, they take each other by the hand, and dance together on the green grass :

" Then Robin took them both by the hands,  
And danc'd round about the oke tree.

' For three merry men, and three merry men,  
And three merry men we be.' "

Observe, moreover, that these people, in each parish, practised the bow every Sunday, and were the best archers in the world,—that from the close of the fourteenth century the general emancipation of the villeins multiplied their number enormously, and you may understand how, amidst all the operations and changes of the great central powers, the liberty of the subject endured. After all, the only permanent and unalterable guarantee, in every country and under every constitution, is this unspoken declaration in the heart of the mass of the people, which is well understood on all sides : " If any one touches my property, enters my house, obstructs or molests me, let him be ware. I have patience, but I have also strong arms, good comrades, a good blade, and, on occasion, a firm resolve, happen what may, to plunge my blade up to its hilt in his throat."

§ 11.—Thus thought Sir John Fortescue, Chancellor of England under Henry VI., exiled in France during the Wars of the

Roses, one of the oldest prose-writers, and the first who weighed and explained the constitution of his country.\* He says:

“ It is cowardise and lack of hartes and corage that kepeth the Frenchmen from rysyng, and not povertye; which corage no Frenche man hath like to the English man. It hath ben often seen in Englonde that iij or iv thefes, for povertie, hath sett upon vij or viij true men, and robbyd them al. But it hath not ben seen in Fraunce, that vij or viij thefes have ben hardy to robbe iij or iv true men. Wherefor it is right seld that Frenchmen be hangyd for robberye, for that they have no hertys to do so terryble an acte. There be therfor mo men hangyd in Englonde, in a yere, for robberye, and manslaughter, than ther be hangid in Fraunce for such cause of crime in vij yers.” †

This throws a sudden and terrible light on the violent condition of this armed community, where blows are an every-day matter, and where every one, rich and poor, lives with his hand on his sword. Read the letters of the Paston family, under Henry VI. and Edward IV., and you will see how private war was at every door, how it was necessary to defend oneself with men and arms, to be alert for the defence of one's property, to be self-reliant, to depend on one's own strength and courage. It is this excess of vigor and readiness to fight which, after their victories in France, set them against one another in England, in the butcheries of the Wars of the Roses. The strangers who saw them were astonished at their bodily strength and courage of heart, at the great pieces of beef “ which feed their muscles, at their military habits, their fierce obstinacy, as of savage beasts.” ‡ They are like their bull-dogs, an untameable race, who in their mad courage “ cast themselves with shut eyes into the den of a Russian bear, and get their head broken like a rotten apple.” This strange condition of a military community, so full of danger, and requiring so much effort, does not make them afraid. King Edward having given orders to send dis-

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\* *The Difference between an Absolute and Limited Monarchy—A learned Commendation of the Politic Laws of England* (Latin). I frequently quote from the second work, which is complete.

† *The Difference*, etc., 3d ed. 1724, ch. xiii. p. 98. There are nowadays in France 42 highway robberies as against 738 in England. In 1843, there were in England four times as many accusations of crimes and offences as in France, having regard to the number of inhabitants (*Moreau de Jonnés*).

‡ Benvenuto Cellini, quoted by Froude, i. 20, *H' st. of England*. Shakspeare, *Henry V.*; conversation of French lords before the battle of Agincourt.

turburs of the peace to prison without legal proceedings, and not to liberate them, on bail or otherwise, the Commons declared the order "horribly vexatious;" resist it, refuse to be too much protected. Less peace, but more independence. They maintain the guarantees of the subject at the expense of public security, and prefer turbulent liberty to arbitrary order. Better suffer marauders whom one can fight, than provosts under whom they would have to bend.

When, as here, men are endowed with a serious character, strengthened by a resolute spirit, and entrenched in independent habits, they meddle with their conscience as with their daily business, and end by laying hands on church as well as state. It is now a long time since the exactions of the Roman See provoked, the resistance of the people,\* and a presuming priesthood became unpopular. Men complained that the best livings were given by the Pope to non-resident strangers; that some Italian, unknown in England, possessed fifty or sixty benefices in England; that English money poured into Rome; and that the clergy, being judged only by clergy, gave themselves up to their vices, and abused their state of impunity. In the first years of Henry III. there were reckoned nearly a hundred murders committed by priests still alive. At the beginning of the fourteenth century the ecclesiastical revenue was twelve times greater than the civil; about half the soil was in the hands of the clergy. At the end of the century the commons declared that the taxes paid to the church were five times greater than the taxes paid to the crown; and some years afterwards,† considering that the wealth of the clergy only served to keep them in idleness and luxury, they proposed to confiscate it for the public benefit. Already the idea of the Reformation had forced itself upon them. They remembered how in the ballads Robin Hood ordered his folk to "spare the yeomen, laborers, even knights, if they are good fellows," but never to pardon abbots or bishops. The prelates grievously oppressed the people with

\* *Pict. Hist.* i. 802. In 1246, 1376. Thierry, iii. 79.

† 1404—1409. The commons declared that with these revenues the king would be able to maintain 15 earls, 1500 knights, 6200 squires, and 100 hospitals: each earl receiving annually 300 marks; each knight 100 marks, and the produce of four ploughed lands; each squire 40 marks, and the produce of two ploughed lands. *Pict. Hist.* ii. 142.

their laws, tribunals, and tithes ; and suddenly, amid the pleasant banter and the monotonous babble of the Norman versifiers, we hear resound the indignant voice of a Saxon, a man of the people and a victim.

It is the vision of *Piers Ploughman*, a carter, written, it is supposed, by a secular priest of Oxford.\* Doubtless the traces of French taste are perceptible. It could not be otherwise : the people from below can never quite prevent themselves from imitating the people above ; and the most unshackled popular poets, Burns and Béranger, too often preserve an academic style. So here a fashionable machinery, the allegory of the *Roman de la Rose*, is pressed into service. We have Do-well, Covetousness, Avarice, Simony, Conscience, and a whole world of talking abstractions. But in spite of these vain foreign phantoms, the body of the poem is national, and true to life. The old language reappears in part ; the old metre altogether ; no more rhymes, but barbarous alliterations ; no more jesting, but a harsh gravity, a sustained invective, a grand and sombre imagination, heavy Latin texts, hammered down as by a Protestant hand. *Piers Ploughman* went to sleep on the Malvern hills, and there had a wonderful dream :

“ Thanne gan I meten—a merveillous swevene,  
That I was in a wilderness—wiste I nevere where ;  
And as I biheeld into the eest,—an heigh to the sonne,  
I seigh a tour on a toft,—trieliche y-maked,  
A deep dale bynethe—a dongeon thereinne  
With depe diches and derke—and drcdfalle of sighte.  
A fair feeld ful of folk—fond I ther bitwene,  
Of alle manere of men,—the meene and the riche,  
Werchyng and wandryng—as the world asketh.  
Some putten hem to the plough,—pleiden ful selde,  
In settyng and sowyng—swonken ful harde,  
And wonnen that wastours—with glotonye dystroyeth.”†

A gloomy picture of the world, like the frightful dreams which occur so often in Albert Durer and Luther. The first reformers were persuaded that the earth was given over to evil ; that the devil had in it his empire and his officers ; that Antichrist, seated on the throne of Rome, spread out ecclesiastical pomps

\* About 1362.

† *Piers Ploughman's Vision and Creed*, ed. T. Wright, 1856, i. p. 2, v. 21-44.

to seduce souls, and cast them into the fire of hell. So here Antichrist, with raised banner, enters a convent; bells are rung; monks in solemn procession go to meet him, and receive with congratulations their lord and father.\* With seven great giants, the seven deadly sins, he besieges Conscience; and the assault is led by Idleness, who brings with her an army of more than a thousand prelates: for vices reign, more hateful from being in holy places, and employed in the church of God in the devil's service:

“ Ac now is Religion a rydere—a romere aboute,  
A ledere of love-dayes—and a lond-buggere,  
A prikere on a palfrey—fro manere to manere. . . .  
And but if his knave knele—that shal his coppe brynge,  
He loureth on hym, and asketh hym—who taughte hym curteisie.” †

But this sacrilegious show has its day, and God puts His hand on men in order to warn them. By order of Conscience, Nature sends up a host of plagues and diseases:

“ Kynde Conscience tho herde,—and cam out of the planctes,  
And sente forth his forreyours—feveres and fluxes,  
Coughes and cardiacles,—crampes and tooth-aches,  
Reumes and radegundes,—and roynous scabbes,  
Biles and bocches,—and brennyng agues,  
Frenesies and foule yveles,—forageres of kynde. . . .  
There was ‘ Harrow! and Help!—Here cometh Kynde!  
With Deeth that is dredful—to undo us alle!’  
The lord that lyved after lust—tho aloud cryde. . . .  
Deeth cam dryvyng after,—and al to duste passhed  
Kynges and knyghtes,—kaysers and popes, . . .  
Manye a lovely lady—and lemmans of knyghtes,  
Swowned and swelted for sorwe of hise dyntes.” †

Here is a crowd of miseries, like those which Milton has described in his vision of human life; tragic pictures and emotions, such as the reformers delight to dwell upon. There is a like speech delivered by John Knox, before the fair ladies of Mary Stuart, which tears the veil from the human corpse just as brutally, in order to exhibit its shame. The conception of the world, proper to the people of the north, all sad and moral, shows itself already.

\* The Archdeacon of Richmond, on his tour in 1216, came to the priory of Bridlington with ninety-seven horses, twenty-one dogs, and three falcons.

† *Piers Ploughman's Vision*, i. p. 191, v. 6217-6228.

‡ *Ibid.* ii. Last book, p. 430, v. 14084-14135.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE NEW TONGUE.

§ 12.—AMID so many barren endeavors, throughout the long impotence of Norman literature, which was content to copy, and of Saxon literature, which bore no fruit, a definite language was nevertheless attained, and there was room for a great writer. Geoffrey Chaucer appeared, a man of mark, inventive though a disciple, original though a translator, who, by his genius, education, and life, was enabled to know and to depict a whole world, but above all to satisfy the chivalric world and the splendid courts which shone upon the heights.\* He belonged to it, though learned and versed in all branches of scholastic knowledge; and he took such part in it that his life, from beginning to end, was that of a man of the world, and a man of action. We find him alternately in King Edward's army, in the king's train, husband of a queen's maid of honor, a pensioner, a placeholder, a deputy in parliament, a knight, a founder of a family which was hereafter to become allied to royalty. Moreover, he was in the king's counsel, brother-in-law of the Duke of Lancaster, employed more than once in open embassies or secret missions at Florence, Genoa, Milan, Flanders; commissioner in France for the marriage of the Prince of Wales; high up and low down in the political ladder—disgraced, restored to place. This experience of business, travel, war, the court, was not like a book-education. He was at the court of Edward III., the most splendid in Europe, amidst tournaments, grand entrances, displays; he took part in the pomps of France and Milan; conversed with Petrarch, perhaps with Boccaccio and Froissart; was actor in, and spectator of, the finest and most tragical of dramas. In these few words, what ceremonies and processions

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\* Born between 1328 and 1345, died in 1400.

are implied ! what pageantry of armor, caparisoned horses, be-decked ladies ! what display of gallant and lordly manners ! what a varied and brilliant world, well suited to occupy the mind and eyes of a poet ! Like Froissart, better than he, Chaucer could depict the character of the nobles, their mode of life, their amours, even other things, and please them by his portraiture.

Chaucer translated first that great storehouse of gallantry, the *Roman de la Rose*. There is no pleasanter entertainment. It is about a rose which the lover wished to pluck : the pictures of the May months, the groves, the flowery earth, the green hedgerows, abound and display their bloom. Then come portraits of the smiling ladies, Richesse, Fraunchise, Gaiety, and by way of contrast, two sad characters, Daunger and Travail, all crowding, and minutely described, with detail of features, clothing, attitude ; they walk about, as in a piece of tapestry, amid landscapes, dances, castles, with allegorical groups, in lively sparkling colors, displayed, contrasted, ever renewed and varied so as to entertain the sight. For an evil has arisen, unknown to serious ages—*ennui* : novelty and brilliancy followed by novelty and brilliancy are necessary to withstand it ; and Chaucer, like Boccaccio and Froissart, enters into the struggle with all his heart. He borrows from Boccaccio his history of Palamon and Arcite, from Lollius his history of Troilus and Cressida, and re-arranges them. How the two young Theban knights, Arcite and Palamon, both fall in love with the beautiful Emily ; and how Arcite, victorious in tourney, falls and dies, bequeathing Emily to his rival ; how the fine Trojan knight Troilus wins the favors of Cressida, and how Cressida abandons him for Diomedes—these are still tales in verse, tales of love. A little long they may be ; all the writings of this age, French, or imitated from French, are born of too prodigal minds ; but how they glide along ! A winding stream, which flows smoothly on level sand, and glitters now and again in the sun, is the only image we can find. The characters speak too much, but then they speak so well ! Even when they dispute, we like to listen, their anger and offences are so wholly based on a happy overflow of unbroken converse. Remember Froissart, how slaughters, assassinations, plagues, the butcheries of the Jacquerie, the whole chaos of human misery, is forgotten in his fine uniform



humor, so that the furious and raving figures seem but ornaments and choice embroiderings to relieve the train of shaded and colored silk which forms the groundwork of his narrative!

But, in particular, a multitude of descriptions spread their gilding over all. Chaucer leads you among arms, palaces, temples, and halts before each scene. Here :

“ The statue of Venus glorious for to see  
Was naked fleting in the large see,  
And fro the navel doun all covered was  
With wawes grene, and bright as any glas.  
A citole in hire right hand hadde she,  
And on hire hed, ful semely for to see,  
A rose gerlond fressh, and wel smelling,  
Above hire hed hire doves fleckering.”\*

Further on, the temple of Mars :

“ First on the wall was peinted a forest,  
In which ther wonneth neyther man ne best,  
With knotty knarry barrein trees old  
Of stubbes and sharp and hidous to behold ;  
In which ther ran a romble and a swough,  
As though a storm should bresten every bough :  
And downward from an hill under a bent,  
Ther stood the temple of Mars armipotent,  
Wrought all of burned stele, of which th’ entree  
Was longe and streite, and gastly for to see.  
And therout came a rage and swiche a vise,  
That it made all the gates for to rise.  
The northern light in at the dore shone,  
For window on the wall ne was ther none,  
Thurgh which men mighten any light discerne.  
The dore was all of athamant eterne,  
Yclenched overthwart and endelong  
With yren tough, and for to make it strong.  
Every piler the temple to sustene  
Was tonne-gret, of yren bright and shene.”†

Everywhere on the wall were representations of slaughter ; and in the sanctuary

“ The statue of Mars upon a carte stood  
Armed, and loked grim as he were wood, . . .  
A wolf ther stood beforne him at his fete  
With eyen red, and of a man he ete.”‡

\* *Knights Tale*, ii. p. 59, v. 1957-1964.

† *Ibid*, v. 1977-1996.

‡ *Ibid*, p. 61, v. 2043-2050.

Are not these contrasts well designed to rouse the imagination? You will meet in Chaucer a succession of similar pictures. Observe the train of combatants who came to joust in the tilting-field for Arcite and Palamon :

“ With him ther wenten knightes many on.  
 Som wol ben armed in an habergeon  
 And in a brestplate, and in a gipon ;  
 And som wol have a pair of plates large ;  
 And som wol have a Puce sheld, or a targe,  
 Som wol ben armed-on his legges wele,  
 And have an axe, and som a mace of stele. . . .  
 Ther maist thou se coming with Palamon  
 Licurge himself, the grete king of Trace :  
 Blake was his berd, and manly was his face.  
 The cercles of his eyen in his hed  
 They gloweden betwixen yelwe and red,  
 And like a griffon loked he about,  
 With kemped heres on his browes stout ;  
 His limmes gret, his braunes hard and stronge,  
 His shouldres brode, his armes round and longe.  
 And as the guise was in his contree,  
 Ful highe upon a char of gold stood he,  
 With foure white bolles in the trais.  
 Insteede of cote-armure on his harnais,  
 With nayles yelwe, and bright as any gold,  
 He hadde a beres skin, cole-blake for old.  
 His longe here was kempt behind his bak,  
 As any ravenes fether it shone for blake.  
 A wreth of gold arm-gret, of huge weight,  
 Upon his hed sate ful of stones bright,  
 Of fine rubins and of diamants.  
 About his char ther wenten white alauns,  
 Twenty and mo, as gret as any stere,  
 To hunten at the leon or the dere,  
 And folwed him, with mosel fast ybound,  
 Colered with gold, and torettes filed round.  
 An hundred lordes had he in his route,  
 Armed ful wel, with hertes sterne and stoute.  
 With Arcita, in stories as men find,  
 The gret Emetrius the king of Inde,  
 Upon a stede bay, trapped in stele,  
 Covered with cloth of gold diapred wele,  
 Came riding like the god of armes Mars.  
 His cote-armure was of a cloth of Tars,  
 Couched with perles, white, and round and grete.  
 His sadel was of brent gold new ybete ;

A mantelet upon his shouldres hanging  
 Bret-ful of rubies red, as fire sparkling.  
 His criske here like ringes was yronne,  
 And that was yelwe, and glitered as the sonne.  
 His nose was high, his eyen bright citrin,  
 His lippes round, his colour was sanguin . . .  
 And as a leon he his loking caste.  
 Of five and twenty yere his age I caste.  
 His berd was wel begonnen for to spring;  
 His vois was a trompe thondering.  
 Upon his hed he wered of laurer grene  
 A gerlond fresshe and lusty for to sene.  
 Upon his hond he bear for his deduit  
 An egle tame, as any lily whit.  
 An hundred lordes had he with him there,  
 All armed save bir hedes in all hir gere,  
 Ful richlely in alle manere thinges. . . .  
 About this king ther ran on every part  
 Ful many a tame leon and leopart.”\*

A herald would not describe them better or more fully. The lords and ladies of the time would recognize here their tourneys and masquerades.

There is something more pleasant than a fine narrative, and that is a collection of fine narratives, especially when the narratives are all of different colorings. Froissart gives us such under the name of *Chronicles*; Boccaccio, still better; after him, the lords of the *Cent Nouvelles nouvelles*; and, later still, Marguerite de Navarre. What more natural among people who meet, talk, and try to amuse themselves? The manners of the time suggest them; for the habits and tastes of society had begun, and fiction thus conceived only brings into books the conversations which are heard in the hall and by the wayside. Chaucer describes a troop of pilgrims, people of every rank, who are going to Canterbury: a knight, a sargeant of law, an Oxford clerk, a doctor, a miller, a prioress, a monk, who agree to relate a story all round:

“ For trewely comfort ne mirthe is non,  
 To riden by the way domb as the ston.”

They relate accordingly; and on this slender and flexible thread all the jovialities of the feudal imagination, true and false, come and contribute their motley figures to the chain; alternately

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\* *Knight's Tale*, ii. p. 63, v. 2120-2188.

noble, chivalrous stories: the miracle of the infant whose throat was cut by Jews, the trials of patient Griselda, Canace and the marvellous fictions of Oriental fancy, obscene stories of marriage and monks, allegorical or moral tales, the fable of the cock and hen, a list of great unfortunate persons: Lucifer, Adam, Samson, Nebuchadnezzar Zenobia, Cræsus, Ugolin, Peter of Spain. I leave out some, for I must be brief. Chaucer is like a jeweller with his hands full: pearls and glass beads, sparkling diamonds and common agates, black jet and ruby roses, all that history and imagination had been able to gather and fashion during three centuries in the East, in France, in Wales, in Provence, in Italy, all that had rolled his way, clashed together, broken or polished by the stream of centuries, and by the great jumble of human memory; he holds in his hand, arranges it, composes therefrom a long sparkling ornament, with twenty pendants, a thousand facets, which by its splendor, varieties, contrasts, may attract and satisfy the eyes of those most greedy for amusement and novelty.

He does more. He observes characters, notes their differences, studies the coherence of their parts, endeavors to bring forward living and distinct persons,—a thing unheard of in his time, but which the renovators in the sixteenth century, and first among them Shakspeare, will do afterwards. It is the English positive good sense, and aptitude for seeing the inside of things, beginning to appear. A new spirit, almost manly, pierces through, in literature as in painting, with Chaucer as with Van Eyck, with both at the same time; no longer the childish imitation of chivalrous life\* or monastic devotion, but the grave spirit of inquiry and craving for deep truths, whereby art becomes complete. For the first time, in Chaucer as in Van Eyck, character stands out in relief; its parts are held together; it is no longer an unsubstantial phantom. You may comprehend its past and see its present action. Its externals manifest the personal and incommunicable details of its inner nature, and the infinite complexity of its economy and motion. To this day, after four centuries, that character is individualised, and typical; it remains distinct in our memory, like the creations of Shakspeare and Rubens. We observe this growth in the very act.

\* See in *The Canterbury Tales* the Rhyme of Sir Topas, a parody on the chivalric histories. Each character there seems a precursor of Cervantes.

Not only does Chaucer, like Boccaccio, bind his tales into a single history; but in addition—and this is wanting in Boccaccio—he begins with the portrait of all his narrators, knight, summoner, man of law, monk, bailiff or reeve, host, about thirty distinct figures, of every sex, condition, age, each painted with his disposition, face, costume, turns of speech, little significant actions, habits, antecedents, each maintained in his character by his talk and subsequent actions, so well, that we can discern here, before any other nation, the germ of the domestic novel as we write it to-day. Think of the portraits of the franklin, the miller, the mendicant friar, and merchant. There are plenty of others which show the broad brutalities, the coarse tricks, and the pleasantries of vulgar life, as well as the gross and plentiful feastings of sensual life. Here and there honest old soldiers, who double their fists, and tuck up their sleeves; or the contented beadles, who, when they have drunk, will speak nothing but Latin. But by the side of these there are select characters; the knight, who went on a crusade to Granada and Prussia, brave and courteous:

“ And though that he was worthy he was wise,  
 And of his port as meke as is a mayde.  
 He never yet no vilanie ne sayde  
 In alle his lif, unto no manere wight,  
 He was a veray parfit gentil knight,”\*

“ With him, ther was his sone, a yonge Squier,  
 A lover, and a lusty bacheler,  
 With lockes crull as they were laide in presse.  
 Of twenty yere of age he was I gesse.  
 Of his stature he was of even lengthe,  
 And wonderly deliver, and grete of strengthe.  
 And he hadde be somtime in chevachie,  
 In Flaundes, in Artois, and in Picardie,  
 And borne him wel, as of so litel space.  
 In hope to stonden in his ladies grace.  
 Embrouded was he, as it were a mede  
 Alle ful of fresshe floures, white and rede.  
 Singing he was, or floyting alle the day,  
 He was as fresshe, as in the moneth of May.  
 Short was his goune, with slevs long and wide.  
 Wel coude he sitte on hors, and fayre ride.

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\* Prologue to *Canterbury Tales*, ii. p 3, v. 68-72.

He coude songes make, and wel endite,  
 Juste and eke dance, and wel pourtraie and write.  
 So hote he loved, that by nightertale  
 He slep no more than doth the nightingale.  
 Curteis he was, lowly and servisable,  
 And carf befor his fader at the table." \*

There is also a poor and learned clerk of Oxford; and finer still, and more worthy of a modern hand, the Prioress, "Madame Eglantine," who as a nun, a maiden, a great lady, is ceremonious, and shows sign of exquisite taste. Would a better be found now-a-days in a German chapter, amid the most modest and lively bevy of sentimental and literary canonesses?

" Ther was also a Nonne, a Prioresse,  
 That of hire smiling was ful simple and coy;  
 Hire gretest othe n'as but by Seint Eloy;  
 And she was cleped Madame Eglentine.  
 Ful wel she sange the service devine,  
 Entuned in hire nose ful swetely;  
 And Frenche she spake ful fayre and fetisly,  
 After the scole of Stratford-atte-howe,  
 For Frenche of Paris was to hire unknowe.  
 At mete was she wel ytaughte withalle:  
 She lette no morsel from hire lippes falle,  
 Ne wette hire fingres in hire sauce depe.  
 Wel coude she carie a morsel, and wel kepe,  
 Thatte no drope ne fell upon hire brest.  
 In curtesie was sette ful moche hire lest.  
 Hir over lippe wiped she so clene,  
 That in hire cuppe was no ferthing sene  
 Of grese, whan she dronken hadde hire draught,  
 Ful semely after hire mete she raught.  
 And sikerly she was of grete disport,  
 And ful plesant, and amiable of port,  
 And peined hire to contrefeten chere.  
 Of court, and ben estatelich of manere,  
 And to ben holden digne of reverence." †

Are you offended by these provincial affectations? On the contrary, it is delightful to behold these nice and pretty ways, these little affectations, the waggery and prudery, the half-worldly, half-monastic smile. We inhale a delicate feminine perfume, preserved and grown old under the stomacher:

" But for to speken of hire conscience,  
 She was so charitable and so plitous,

\* Prologue to *Canterbury Tales* ii. p. 3, v. 79-100. † *Ibid.* p. 3, v. 68-72.

She wolde wepe if that she saw a mous  
 Caughte in a trappe, if it were ded or bledde.  
 Of smale houndes hadde she, that she fedde  
 With rosted flesh, and milk, and wastel brede,  
 But sore wept she if on of hem were dede,  
 Or if men smote it with a yerde smert :  
 And all was conscience and tendre herte,"\*

Many elderly ladies throw themselves into such affections as these, for lack of others. Elderly! what an objectionable word have I employed! She was not elderly:

" Ful semely hire wimple ypinched was,  
 Hire nose tretis ; hire eyen grey as glas ;  
 Hire mouth ful smale, and therto soft and red ;  
 But sikerly she hadde a fayre forehed.  
 It was almost a spanne brode I trowe ;  
 For hardily she was not undergrowe.

Ful fetise was hire cloke, as I was ware.  
 Of small corall aboute hire arm she bare  
 A pair of bedes gauded al with grene ;  
 And thereon heng a broche of gold ful sheno,  
 On whiche was first ywriten a crowned A,  
 And after, *Amor vincit omnia.*"†

A pretty ambiguous device for gallantry or devotion ; the lady was both of the world and the cloister : of the world, you may see it in her dress ; of the cloister, you gather it from "another Nonne also with hire hadde she, that was hire chapelleine, and Preestes thre ;" from the Ave Maria which she sings, the long edifying stories which she relates. She is like a fresh, sweet, and ruddy cherry, made to ripen in the sun, but which, preserved in an ecclesiastical jar, is candied and made insipid in the syrup.

Such is the reflection which begins to dawn, such the high art. Chaucer studies here, rather than aims at amusement ; he ceases to gossip, and thinks ; instead of surrendering himself to the facility of glowing improvisation, he plans. Each tale is suited to the teller: the young squire relates a fantastic and Oriental history ; the tipsy miller a loose and comical story ; the honest clerk the touching legend of Griselda. All these tales are bound together, and that much better than by Boccaccio, by little veritable incidents, which spring from the characters of the personages, and such as we light upon in our travels. The

\* Prologue to *Canterbury Tales*, p. 5, v. 142-150.

† *Ibid.* v, 151-162.

horsemen ride on in good humor in the sunshine, in the open country ; they converse. The miller has drunk too much ale, and will speak, "and for no man forbere." The cook goes to sleep on his beast, and they play practical jokes on him. The monk and the summoner get up a dispute about their respective lines of business. The host restores peace, makes them speak or be silent, like a man who has long presided in the inn parlor, and who has often had to check brawlers. They pass judgment on the stories they listen to : declaring that there are few Griseldas in the world ; laughing at the misadventures of the tricked carpenter ; drawing a lesson from the moral tale. The poem is no longer, as in contemporary literature, a mere procession, but a painting in which the contrasts are arranged, the attitudes chosen, the general effect calculated, so that life is invigorated ; we forget ourselves at the sight, as in the case of every life-like work ; and we conceive the desire to get on horseback on a fine sunny morning, and canter along green meadows with the pilgrims to the shrine of the good saint of Canterbury.

Weigh the value of this general effect. Is it a dream or not, in its maturity or infancy ? The whole future is before us. Savages or half savages, warriors of the Heptarchy or knights of the middle-age ; up to this period, no one had reached to this point. They had strange emotions, tender at times, and they expressed them each according to the gift of his race, some by short cries, others by continuous babble. But they did not command or guide their impressions ; they sang or conversed by impulse, at hazard, according to the bent of their disposition, leaving their ideas to present themselves, and to take the lead ; and when they hit upon order, it was ignorantly and involuntarily. Here for the first time appears a superiority of intellect, which at the instant of conception suddenly halts, rises above itself, passes judgment, and says to itself, "This phrase tells the same thing as the last—remove it ; these two ideas are disjointed—bind them together ; this description is feeble—reconsider it." When a man can speak thus he has an idea, not learned in the schools, but personal and practical, of the human mind, its process and needs, and of things also, their composition and combinations ; he has a style that is, he is capable of making everything understood and seen by the human mind. He can extract from every object, landscape, situation, character, the special and signifi-



cant marks, so as to group and arrange them, to compose an artificial work which surpasses the natural work in its purity and completeness. He is capable, as Chaucer was, of seeking out in the old common forest of the middle-ages, stories and legends, to replant them in his own soil, and make them send out new shoots. He has the right and the power, as Chaucer had, of copying and translating, because by dint of retouching he impresses on his translations and copies his original mark; he recreates what he imitates, because through or by the side of worn-out fancies and monotonous stories, he can display, as Chaucer did, the charming ideas of an amiable and elastic mind, the thirty master-forms of the fourteenth century, the splendid freshness of the moist landscape and spring-time of England. He is not far from conceiving an idea of truth and life. He is on the brink of independent thought and fertile discovery. This was Chaucer's position. At the distance of a century and a half, he has affinity with the poets of Elizabeth \* by his gallery of pictures, and with the reformers of the sixteenth century by his portrait of the good parson.

Affinity merely. He advanced a few steps beyond the threshold of his art, but he paused in the vestibule. He half opens the great door of the temple, but does not take his seat there; at most, he sat down at intervals. In *Arcite and Palamon*, in *Troilus and Cressida*, he sketches sentiments, but does not create characters; he easily and ingeniously traces the winding course of events and conversations, but does not mark the precise outline of a striking figure. If occasionally, as in the description of the temple of Mars, after the *Thebaid* of Statius, feeling at his back the glowing breeze of poetry, he draws out his feet, clogged with the mud of the middle-age, and at a bound stands upon the poetic plain on which Statius imitated Virgil and equalled Lucan, he, at other times, again falls back into the childish gossip of the *trouvères*, or the stale pedantry of learned clerks—to "Dan Phebus or Apollo-Delphicus." Elsewhere, a commonplace remark on art intrudes in the midst of an impassioned description. He uses three thousand verses to conduct

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\* Tennyson, in his *Dream of Fair Women*, sings:

"Dan Chaucer, the first warbler, whose sweet breath  
Prelude those melodious bursts, that fill  
The spacious times of great Elizabeth  
With sounds that echo still."—TR.

Troilus to his first interview. He is like a precocious and poetical child, who mingles in his love-dreams quotations from his prayer-book and recollections of his alphabet.\* Even in the *Canterbury Tales* he repeats himself, unfolds artless developments, forgets to concentrate his passion or his idea. He begins a jest, and scarcely ends it. He dilutes a bright coloring in a monotonous stanza. His voice is like that of a boy breaking into manhood. At first a manly and firm accent is maintained, then a shrill sweet sound shows that his growth is not finished, and that his strength is subject to weakness. Chaucer sets out as if to quit the middle-age; but in the end he is there still. To-day he composes the *Canterbury Tales*; yesterday he was translating the *Roman de la Rose*. To-day he is studying the complicated machinery of the heart, discovering the issues of primitive education or of the ruling disposition, and realising the comedy of manners; to-morrow, he will have no pleasure but in curious events, smooth allegories, amorous discussions, imitated from the French, or learned moralities from the ancients. Alternately he is an observer and a trouvère; instead of the step he ought to have advanced, he has but made a half-step.

Who has prevented him, and the others who surround him? We meet with the obstacle in his tale of *Melibeus*, of the *Parson*, in his *Testament of Love*; in short, so long as he writes verse, he is at his ease; as soon as he takes to prose, a sort of chain winds around his feet and stops him. His imagination is free, and his reasoning a slave. The rigid scholastic divisions, the mechanical manner of arguing and replying, the ergo, the Latin quotations, the authority of Aristotle and the Fathers, come and weigh down his budding thought. His native invention disappears under the discipline imposed. The servitude is so heavy, that even in his *Testament of Love*, amid the most touching plaints and the most smarting pains, the beautiful ideal lady whom he has always served, the heavenly mediator who appears to him in a vision, Love, sets her theses, establishes that the cause of a cause is the cause of the thing caused, and reasons as pedantic-

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\* Speaking of Cressida, IV., book i. p. 236, he says:

“Right as our first letter is now an a,  
 In beutie first so stood she makeles,  
 Her goodly looking gladed all the prees,  
 Nas never seene thing to be praised so derre,  
 Nor under cloude blacke so bright a sterre.”

ally as they would at Oxford. In what can talent, even genius, end, when it loads itself with such shackles? What succession of original truths and new doctrines could be found and proved, when in a moral tale, like that of *Melibæus* and his wife Prudence, it was thought necessary to establish a formal controversy, to quote Seneca and Job, to forbid tears, to bring forward the weeping Christ to authorise tears, to enumerate every proof, to call in Solomon, Cassiodorus, and Cato; in short, to write a book for schools? The public has only pleasant and lively thoughts; not serious and general ideas; they are retained in possession of others. As soon as Chaucer gets into a reflective mood, straight-way Saint Thomas, Peter Lombard, the manual of sins, the treatise on definition and syllogism, the army of the ancients and of the Fathers, descend from their glory, enter his brain, speak in his stead; and the trouvère's amiable voice becomes, though he has no suspicion of it, the dogmatic and sleep-inspiring voice of a doctor. In love and satire he has experience, and he invents; in what regards morality and philosophy he has learning, and remembers. For an instant, by a solitary leap, he entered upon the close observation and the genuine study of man; he could not keep his ground, he did not take his seat, he took a poetic excursion; and no one followed him. The level of the century is lower; he is on it himself for the most part. He is in the company of narrators like Froissart, of elegant speakers like Charles of Orléans, of gossipy and barren verse-writers like Gower, Lydgate and Occleve. There is no fruit, but frail and fleeting blossom, many useless branches, still more dying or dead branches; such is this literature. And why? Because he had no longer a root; after three centuries of effort, a heavy instrument cut it underground. This instrument was the Scholastic Philosophy.

§ 13.—Beneath every literature there is a philosophy. Beneath every work of art is an idea of nature and of life; this idea leads the poet. Whether the author knows it or not, he writes in order to exhibit it; and the characters which he fashions, like the events which he arranges, only serve to bring to light the dim creative conception which raises and combines them. Underlying Homer appears the noble life of heroic paganism and of happy Greece. Underlying Dante, the sad and violent life of fanatical Catholicism and of the much-hating Italians. From either we might draw a theory of man and of

the beautiful. It is so with others ; and this is how, according to the variations, the birth, blossom, death, or sluggishness of the master-idea, literature varies, is born, flourishes, degenerates, comes to an end. Whoever plants the one, plants the other ; whoever undermines the one, undermines the other. Place in all the minds of any age a new grand idea of nature and life, so that they feel and produce it with their whole heart and strength, and you will see them, seized with the craving to express it, invent forms of art and groups of figures. Take away from these minds every grand new idea of nature and life, and you will see them, deprived of the craving to express all-important thoughts, copy, sink into silence, or rave.

What has become of these all-important thoughts ? What labor worked them out ? What studies nourished them ? The laborers did not lack zeal. In the twelfth century the energy of their minds was admirable. At Oxford there were thirty thousand scholars. No building in Paris could contain the crowd of Abelard's disciples ; when he retired in solitude, they accompanied him in such a multitude that the desert became a town. No suffering repulsed them. There is a story of a young boy, who, though beaten by his master, was wholly bent on remaining with him, that he might still learn. When the terrible encyclopedia of Aristotle was introduced, all disfigured and unintelligible, it was devoured. The only question presented to them, that of universals, so abstract and dry, so embarrassed by Arabic obscurities and Greek subtleties, during three centuries, was seized upon eagerly. Heavy and awkward as was the instrument supplied to them, I mean syllogism, they made themselves masters of it, rendered it still more heavy, used it upon every object, in every sense. They constructed monstrous books, by multitudes, cathedrals of syllogism, of unheard of architecture, or prodigious exactness, heightened in effect by intensity of intellectual power, which the whole sum of human labor has only twice been able to match.\* These young

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\* Under Proclus and Hegel. Duns Scotus, at the age of thirty-one, died, leaving beside his sermons and commentaries, twelve folio volumes, in a small close handwriting, in a style like Hegel's, on the same subject as Proclus treats of. Similarly with Saint Thomas and the whole train of schoolmen. No idea can be formed of such a labor before handling the books themselves.

and valiant minds thought they had found the temple of truth; they rushed at it headlong, in legions, breaking in the doors, clambering over the walls, leaping into the interior, and so found themselves at the bottom of a moat. Three centuries of labor at the bottom of this black moat added no single idea to the human mind.

For consider the questions which they treat of. They seem to be marching, but are merely marking time. One would say, to see them moil and toil, that they will educe from heart and brain some great original creed; all belief was imposed upon them from the outset. The system was made; they could only arrange and comment upon it. Under this constraint men ceased to think; for he who speaks of thought, speaks of an effort at invention, an individual creation, an energetic action. They recite a lesson, or sing a catechism; even in paradise, even in ecstasy and the divinest raptures of love, Dante thinks himself bound to show an exact memory and a scholastic orthodoxy. How then with the rest? Some, like Raymond Lully, set about inventing an instrument of reasoning to serve in place of the understanding. About the fourteenth century, under the blows of Occam, this verbal science began to totter; they saw that it had no other substance but one of words; it was discredited. In 1367, at Oxford, of thirty thousand students, there remained six thousand; they still set their Barbara and Felapton, but only in the way of routine. Each one in turn mechanically traversed the petty region of threadbare cavils, scratched himself in the briars of quibbles, and burdened himself with his bundle of texts; nothing more. The vast body of science which was to have formed and vivified the whole thought of man, was reduced to a text-book.

So, little by little, the conception which fertilized and ruled all others, dried up; the deep spring, whence flowed all poetic streams, was found empty; science furnished nothing more to the world. What further works could the world produce? As Spain, later on, renewing the middle-age, after having shone splendidly and vainly by her chivalry and devotion, by Lope de Vega and Calderon, Loyola and St. Theresa, became enervated through the Inquisition and through casuistry, and ended by sinking into a brutish silence; so the middle-age, outstripping Spain, after displaying the senseless heroism of the crusades, and

the poetical ecstacy of the cloister, after producing chivalry and saintship, Francis of Assisi, St. Louis, and Dante, languished under the Inquisition and the scholastic learning, and became extinguished in idle raving and inanity.

Must we quote all these good people who speak without having anything to say? You may find them in Warton;\* dozens of translators, importing the poverties of French literature, and imitating imitations; rhyming chroniclers, most commonplace of men, whom we only read because we must accept history from every quarter, even from imbeciles; spinners and spinsters of didactic stories, who pile up verses on the training of falcons, on armor, on chemistry; editors of moralities, who invent the same dream over again for the hundredth time, and get themselves taught universal history by the goddess Sapience. Like the writers of the Latin decadence, these folk only think of copying, compiling, abridging, constructing text-books, in rhymed memoranda, the encyclopaedia of their times.

Will you hear the most illustrious, the grave Gower—"morall Gower," as he was called?† His great poem, *Confessio Amantis*, is a dialogue between a lover and his confessor, imitated chiefly from Jean de Meung, having for object, like the *Roman de la Rose*, to explain and classify the impediments of love. The superannuated theme is always reappearing, and beneath it an indigested erudition. You will find here an exposition of hermetic science, a treatise on the philosophy of Aristotle, a discourse on politics, a litany of ancient and modern legends gleaned from the compilers, marred in the passage by the pedantry of the schools and the ignorance of the age. It is a cart-load of scholastic rubbish; the sewer tumbles upon this feeble spirit, which of itself was flowing clearly, but now, obstructed by tiles, bricks, plaster, ruins from all quarters of the globe, drags on darkened and slackened. Gower, one of the most learned of his time,‡ supposed that Latin was invented by the old prophetess Carmens; that the grammarians, Aristarchus, Donatus, and Didymus, regulated its syntax, pronunciation, and prosody; that it was adorned by Cicero with the flowers of eloquence and rhetoric; then enriched by translations from the Arabic, Chal-

\* *Hist. of English Poetry*, vol. ii.

† Contemporary with Chaucer. The *Confessio Amantis* dates from 1393.

‡ Warton, ii. 240.

dæan, and Greek; and that at last, after much labor of celebrated writers, it attained its final perfection in Ovid, the poet of love. Elsewhere he discovers that Ulysses learned rhetoric from Cicero, magic from Zoroaster, astronomy from Ptolemy, and philosophy from Plato. And what a style! so long, so dull,\* so drawn out by repetitions, the most minute details, garnished with references to his text, like a man who, with his eyes glued to his Aristotle and his Ovid, a slave of his musty parchments, can do nothing but copy and string his rhymes together. Scholars even in old age, they seem to believe that every truth, all wit, is in their great wood-bound books; that they have no need to find out and invent for themselves; that their whole business is to repeat; that this is, in fact, man's business. The scholastic system had enthroned the dead letter, and peopled the world with dead understandings.

After Gower come Occleve and Lydgate.† “My father Chaucer would willingly have taught me,” says Occleve, “but I was dull, and learned little or nothing.” He paraphrased in verse a treatise of Egidius, on government; these are moralities. There are others, on compassion, after Augustine, and on the art of dying; then love-tales; a letter from Cupid, dated from his court in the month of May. Love and moralities,‡ that is, abstractions and refinements, were the taste of the time; and so, in the time of Lebrun, of Esménard, at the close of contemporaneous French literature,§ they produced collections of didactic poems, and odes to Chloris. As for the monk Lydgate, he had some talent, some imagination, especially in high-toned descriptions: it was the last flicker of a dying literature; gold received a golden coating, precious stones were placed upon diamonds, ornaments multiplied and made fantastic; as in their dress and buildings, so in their style.¶ Look at the costumes of Henry iv. and Henry v., monstrous heart-shaped or horn-shaped head-

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\* See, for instance, his description of the sun's crown, the most poetical passage in book vii.

† 1420, 1430.

‡ This is the title Froissart (1397) gave to his collection when presenting it to Richard II.

§ Lebrun, 1729-1807; Esménard, 1770-1812.

¶ Lydgate, *The Destruction of Troy*—description of Hector's chapel. Especially read the *Pageants* or *Solemn Entries*.

dresses, long sleeves covered with ridiculous designs, the plumes, and again the oratories, armorial tombs, little gaudy chapels, like conspicuous flowers under the naves of the Gothic perpendicular. When we can no more speak to the soul, we try to speak to the eyes. This is what Lydgate does, nothing more. Pageants or shows are required of him, "disguisings" for the Company of goldsmiths; a mask before the king, a May-entertainment for the sheriffs of London, a drama of the creation for the festival of Corpus Christi, a masquerade, a Christmas show; he gives the plan and furnishes the verses. In this matter he never runs dry; two hundred and fifty-one poems are attributed to him. Poetry thus conceived, becomes a manufacture; it is composed by the yard. Such was the judgment of the Abbot of St. Albans, who, having got him to translate a legend in verse, pays a hundred shillings for the whole, verse, writing, and illuminations, placing the three works on a level. In fact, no more thought was required for one than for the others. His three great works, *The Fall of Princes*, *The Destruction of Troy*, and *The Siege of Thebes*, are only translations or paraphrases, verbose, erudite, descriptive, a kind of chivalrous processions, colored for the twentieth time, in the same manner, on the same vellum. Poetry and religion are no longer capable of suggesting a genuine sentiment. Authors copy, and copy again. Hawes\* copies the *House of Fame* of Chaucer, and a sort of allegorical, amorous poem, after the *Roman de la Rose*. Barclay† translates the *Mirror of Good Manners* and the *Ship of Fools*. Continually we meet with dull abstractions, used up and barren; it is the scholastic phase of poetry. If anywhere there is an accent of greater originality, it is in this *Ship of Fools*, and in Lydgate's *Dance of Death*, bitter buffooneries, sad gayeties, which, in the hands of artists and poets, were having their run throughout Europe. They mock at each other, grotesquely and gloomily; poor, dull, and vulgar figures, shut up in a ship, or made to dance on their tomb to the sound of a fiddle played by a grinning skeleton. At the end of all this mouldy talk, and amid the disgust which they have conceived for each other, a clown, a tavern Triboulet,‡ composer of little jeering and maca-

\* About 1506. *The Temple of Glass. Passcyme of Pleasure.*

† About 1500.

‡ The court fool in Victor Hugo's drama of *Le Roi s'amuse*.—TR.



ronic verses, Skelton\* makes his appearance, a virulent pamphleteer, who, jumbling together French, English, Latin phrases, with slang, and fashionable words, invented words, intermingled with short rhymes, fabricates a sort of literary mud, with which he bespatters Wolsey and the bishops. Style, metre, rhyme, language, art of every kind, is at an end; beneath the vain parade of official style, there is only a heap of rubbish. Yet, as he says,

“ Though my rhyme be ragged,  
 Tattered and gagged,  
 Rudely rain-beaten,  
 Rnsty, moth-eaten,  
 Yf ye take welle therewithe,  
 It hath in it some pithe.”

It is full of political animus, sensual liveliness, English and popular instincts; it lives. It is a coarse life, still elementary, swarming with ignoble vermin, like that which appears in a great decomposing body. It is life, nevertheless, with its two great features which it is destined to display: the hatred of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, which is the Reformation; the return to the senses and to natural life, which is the Renaissance.

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\* Died 1529; Poet Lanreate 1489. His *Bouge of Court*, his *Crown of Laurel*, his *Elegy on the Death of the Earl of Northumberland*, are well written, and belong to official poetry.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE PAGAN RENAISSANCE.

§ 14. *Manners of the Time.*—For seventeen centuries a deep and sad thought had weighed upon the spirit of man, first to overwhelm it, then to exalt and to weaken it, never losing its hold throughout this long space of time. It was the idea of the impotence and decadence of man. Greek corruption, Roman oppression, and the dissolution of the old world had given it birth; it, in its turn, had produced a stoical resignation, an epicurean indifference, Alexandrian mysticism, and the Christian hope in the kingdom of God. “The world is evil and lost; let us escape by insensibility, amazement, ecstasy.” Thus spoke the philosophers; and religion coming after, announced that the end was near: “Prepare, for the kingdom of God is at hand.” For a thousand years, universal ruin incessantly drove still deeper into their hearts this gloomy thought; and when man in the feudal state raised himself, by sheer force of courage and arms, from the depths of final imbecility and general misery, he discovered his thought and his work fettered by the crushing idea, which, forbidding a life of nature and worldly hopes, erected into ideals the obedience of the monk and the dreams of fanatics.

At last, however, invention makes another start; and it makes it by the efforts of the lay society, which rejected theocracy, kept the State free, and which presently discovered, or re-discovered, one after another, the industries, sciences, and arts. All was renewed; America and the Indies were added to the map; the shape of the earth was ascertained, the system of the universe propounded; modern philology was inaugurated, the experimental sciences set on foot, art and literature shot forth like a harvest, religion was transformed: there was no province

of human intelligence and action which was not refreshed and fertilized by this universal effort. It was so great, that it passed from the innovators to the laggards, and reformed Catholicism in the face of Protestantism, which it formed. This was Europe's grand age, and the most notable epoch of human growth. To this day we live from its sap, we only carry on its pressure and efforts.

When human power is manifested so clearly and in such great works, it is no wonder if the ideal changes, and the old pagan idea recurs. It recurs, bringing with it the worship of beauty and vigor, first in Italy; for this, of all countries in Europe, is the most pagan, the nearest to the ancient civilization; thence in France and Spain, in Flanders, even in Germany; and finally in England. How is it propagated? What revolution of manners reunited mankind at this time, in every country, under a sentiment which they had forgotten for fifteen hundred years? Merely that their condition had improved, and they felt it. The idea ever expresses the actual situation, and the creatures of the imagination, like the conceptions of the spirit, only manifest the state of society and the degree of its welfare; there is a fixed connection between what man admires and what he is. While misery overwhelms him, while the decadence is visible, and hope shut out, he is inclined to curse his life on earth, and seek consolation in another sphere. As soon as his sufferings are alleviated, his power made manifest, his perspective enlarged, he begins once more to love the present life, to be self-confident, to love and praise energy, genius, all the effective faculties which labor to procure him happiness.

Toward the close of the fifteenth century\* the impetus was given; commerce and the woollen-trade made a sudden advance, and such an enormous one that corn-fields were changed into pasture-lands. It was already the England which we see to-day, a land of meadows, green, intersected by hedge-rows, crowded with cattle, abounding in ships, a manufacturing, opulent land, with a people of beef-eating toilers, who enrich it while they enrich themselves. At the base and on the summit of society, in all ranks of life, in all grades of human condition, this new welfare became visible.

Now that the battle-axe and sword of the civil wars had

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\* 1488, Act of Parliament on Enclosures.

beaten down the independent nobility, and the abolition of the law of maintenance had destroyed the petty royalty of each great feudal baron, the lords quitted their sombre castles, battlemented fortresses, surrounded by stagnant water, pierced with narrow windows, a sort of stone breastplates of no use but to preserve the life of their masters. They flock into new palaces, with vaulted roofs and turrets, covered with fantastic and manifold ornaments, adorned with terraces and vast staircases, with gardens, fountains, statues, such as were the palaces of Henry VIII. and Elizabeth, half Gothic and half Italian,\* whose convenience, grandeur, and beauty announced already habits of society and the taste for pleasure. They came to court and abandoned their old manners; the four meals which scarcely sufficed their former voracity were reduced to two; gentlemen soon became refined, placing their glory in the elegance and singularity of their amusements and their clothes. They dressed magnificently in splendid materials, with the luxury of men who rustle silk and make gold sparkle for the first time: doublets of scarlet satin; cloaks of sable costing a thousand ducats; velvet shoes, embroidered with gold and silver, covered with rosettes and ribbons; boots with falling tops, from whence hung a cloud of lace, embroidered with figures of birds, animals, constellations, flowers in silver, gold, or precious stones; ornamented shirts, costing ten pounds. "It is a common thing to put a thousand goats and a hundred oxen on a coat, and to carry a whole manor on one's back."† The costumes of the time were like shrines. When Elizabeth died, they found three thousand dresses in her wardrobe. Need we speak of the monstrous ruffs of the ladies, their puffed-out dresses, their stomachers stiff with diamonds? There was something more than puppyism in this masquerade of splendid costume. It was an artistic spirit which induced it. There was an incredible outgrowth of living forms from their brains. They must enjoy the beautiful; they would be happy through their eyes; they perceive in consequence naturally the relief and energy of forms. From the accession of Henry VIII. to the death of James I. we find nothing but tournaments, processions, public entries, mas-

\* This was called the Tudor style. Under James I., in the hands of Inigo Jones, it became entirely Italian, approaching the antique.

† Burton, *Anatomy of Melancholy*, 12th ed. 1821. Stubbes, *Anatomie of Abuses*, ed. Turnbull, 1836.

querades. Count, if you can,\* the mythological entertainments, the theatrical receptions, the open-air operas played before Elizabeth, James, and their great lords. At Kenilworth the pageants lasted ten days. There was everything; learned recreations, novelties, popular plays, sanguinary spectacles, coarse farces, juggling and feats of skill, allegories, mythologies, chivalric exhibitions, rustic and national commemorations.

Think of the feasts which the Earl of Carlisle introduced, where was served first of all a table loaded with sumptuous viands, as high as a man could reach, in order to remove it presently, and replace it by another similar table. This prodigality of magnificence, these costly follies, this unbridling of the imagination, this intoxication of eye and ear, this comedy played by the lords of the realm, showed, like the pictures of Rubens, Jordaens, and their Flemish contemporaries, so open an appeal to the senses, so complete a return to nature, that our chilled and gloomy age is scarcely able to imagine it.

To vent the feelings, to satisfy the heart and eyes, to set free boldly on all the roads of existence the pack of appetites and instincts, this was the craving which the manners of the time betrayed. It was "merry England," as they called it then. It was not yet stern and constrained. It expanded widely, freely, and rejoiced to find itself so expanded. No longer at court only was the drama found, but in the village. Strolling companies betook themselves thither, and the country folk supplied any deficiencies, when necessary. Shakspeare saw, before he depicted them, stupid fellows, carpenters, joiners, bellow-menders, play *Pyramus and Thisbe*,† represent the lion roaring as gently as possible, and the wall, by stretching out their hands. Every holiday was a pageant, in which townspeople, workmen, and children bore their parts. On the Sunday after Twelfth-night the laborers parade the streets, with their shirts over their coats, decked with ribbons, dragging a plough to the sound of music, and dancing a sword-dance; on another day they draw in a cart a figure made of ears of corn, with songs, flutes, and drums; on another, Father Christmas and his company; or else

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\* Holinshed, iii., *Reign of Henry VIII. Elizabeth and James Progresses*, by Nichols.

† *Midsummer Night's Dream*.

they enact the history of Robin Hood, the bold poacher, around the May-pole, or the legend of Saint George and the Dragon. We might occupy half a volume in describing all these holidays, such as Harvest Home, All Saints, Martinmas, Sheepshearing, above all Christmas, which lasted twelve days, and sometimes six weeks. They eat and drink, junket, tumble about, kiss the girls, ring the bells, satiate themselves with noise: coarse drunken revels, in which man is an unbridled animal, and which are the incarnation of natural life. The Puritans made no mistake about that. At this period, in the temporary decay of Christianity, and the sudden advance of corporal well-being, man adored himself, and there endured no life within him but that of paganism.

Observe the process of ideas at this time. A few sectarians, chiefly in the towns and of the people, clung gloomily to the Bible. But the court and the men of the world sought their teachers and their heroes from pagan Greece and Rome. About 1490\* they began to read the classics; one after the other they translated them; it was soon the fashion to read them in the original. Elizabeth, Jane Grey, the Duchess of Norfolk, the Countess of Arundel, many other ladies, were conversant with Plato, Xenophon, and Cicero in the original, and appreciated them. Gradually, by an insensible change, men were raised to the level of the great and healthy minds who had freely handled ideas of all kinds fifteen centuries ago. After the terrible night of the middle-age, and the dolorous legends of spirits and the damned, it was a delight to see again Olympus shining upon us from Greece; its heroic and beautiful deities once more ravishing the heart of men; they raised and instructed this young world by speaking to it the language of passion and genius; and the age of strong deeds, free sensuality, bold invention, had only to follow its own bent, in order to discover in them the eternal promoters of liberty and beauty.

Nearer still was another paganism, that of Italy; the more seductive because more modern, and because it circulates fresh sap in an ancient stock; the more attractive, because more sensuous and present, with its worship of force and genius, of

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\* Warton, vol. ii. sect. 35. Before 1600 all the great poets were translated into English, and between 1550 and 1616 all the great historians of Greece and Rome. Lyly in 1500 first taught Greek in public.

pleasure and voluptuousness. The rigorists knew this well, and were shocked at it. Ascham writes :

“ These bee the enchantments of Circes, brought out of Italie to marre mens maners in England ; much, by example of ill life, but more by preceptes of fonde bookes, of late translated out of Italian into English, sold in every shop in London. . . . There bee noe of these ungratious bookes set out in Printe wythin these fewe monethes, than have bene sene in England many score yeares before. . . . Than they have in more reverence the triumphes of Petrarche : than the Genesis of Moses : They make more account of Tullies offices, than S. Paules epistles ; of a tale in Bocace than a storie of the Bible.”\*

In fact, at that time Italy clearly led in everything, and civilization was to be drawn thence, as from its spring. What is this civilization which is thus imposed on the whole of Europe, whence every science and every elegance comes, whose laws are obeyed in every court, in which Surrey, Sidney, Spenser, Shakspeare sought their models and their materials? It was pagan in its elements and in its birth ; in its language, which is but slightly different from Latin ; in its Latin traditions and recollections, which no gap has come to interrupt ; in its constitution, whose old municipal life first led and absorbed the feudal life ; in the genius of its race, in which energy and enjoyment always abounded. More than a century before other nations, from the time of Petrarch, Rienzi, Boccaccio, the Italians began to recover the lost antiquity, to deliver the manuscripts buried in the dungeons of France and Germany, to restore, interpret, comment upon, study the ancients, to make themselves Latin in heart and mind, to compose in prose and verse with the polish of Cicero and Virgil, to hold spirited converse and intellectual pleasures as the ornament and the fairest flower of life. They adopt not merely the externals of the old existence, but the elements, that is, preoccupation with the present life, forgetfulness of the future, the appeal to the senses, the renunciation of Christianity. The ideal to which all efforts were turning, on which all thoughts depended, and which completely raised this civilization, was the strong and happy man fortified by all powers to accomplish his wishes, and disposed to use them in pursuit of his happiness.

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\* Ascham, *The Scholemaster* (1570), ed. Arber, 1870, first book, 78 *et passim*.

§ 15. *Poetry*.—Transplanted into different races and climates, this paganism receives from each, distinct features and a distinct character. In England it becomes English; the English Renaissance is the Renaissance of the Saxon genius. Invention recommences; and to invent is to express one's genius. A Latin race can only invent by expressing Latin ideas; a Saxon race by expressing Saxon ideas; and we shall find in the new civilization and poetry, descendants of Cædmon and Adhelm, of Piers Plowman, and Robin Hood.

Old Puttenham says:

"In the latter end of the same king (Henry the eight) reigne, sprong up a new company of courtly makers, of whom Sir Thomas Wyat th' elder and Henry Earle of Surrey were the two chieftaines, who having travailed into Italie, and there tasted the sweete and stately measures and stile of the Italian Poesie, as novices newly crept out of the schooles of Dante, Arioste, and Petrarch, they greatly polished our rude and homely maner of vulgar Poesie, from that it had bene before, and for that cause may justly be sayd the first reformers of our English meetre and stile."\*

Not that their style was very original, or openly exhibits the new spirit: the middle-age is nearly ended, but it was not yet finished. By their side Andrew Borde, John Bale, John Heywood, Skelton himself, repeat the platitudes of the old poetry and the coarseness of the old style. Their manners, half refined, were still half feudal. Parades, combats, wounds, challenges, love, appeals to the judgment of God, penances,—all these were found in the life of Surrey as in a chivalric romance. A great lord, an earl, a relative of the king, who had figured in processions and ceremonies, had made war, commanded fortresses, ravaged countries, mounted to the assault, fallen in the breach, had been saved by his servant, magnificent, sumptuous, irritable, ambitious, four times imprisoned, finally beheaded. At the coronation of Ann of Cleves he was one of the challengers of the tourney. Denounced and placed in durance, he offered to fight unarmed against an armed adversary. Another time he was put in prison for having eaten flesh in Lent. No wonder if this prolongation of chivalric manners brought with it a prolongation of chivalric poetry; if in an age which had known Petrarch, poets displayed the sentiments of Petrarch. Lord Berners,

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\* Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie*, ed. Arber, 1869, book i. ch. 31, p. 74.



Lord Sheffield, Sir Thomas Wyatt, and Surrey in the first rank, were, like Petrarch, plaintive and platonic lovers. It was pure love to which Surrey gave expression ; for his lady, the beautiful Geraldine, like Beatrice and Laura, was an ideal personage, and a child of thirteen years.

And yet, amid this languor of mystical tradition, a personal feeling had sway. In this spirit which imitated, and that badly at times, which still groped for an outlet, and now and then admitted into its polished stanzas the old, simple expressions and stale metaphors of heralds of arms and trouvères, there was already visible the Northern melancholy, the inner and gloomy emotion. This feature, which presently, at the finest moment of its richest blossom, in the splendid expansiveness of natural life, spreads a sombre tint over the poetry of Sidney, Spenser, Shakspeare, already in the first poet separates this pagan yet Teutonic world from the other, all in all voluptuous, which in Italy, with lively and refined irony, had no taste, except for art and pleasure. Surrey translated the Ecclesiastes into verse. Is it not singular, at this early hour, in this rising dawn, to find such a book in his hand? A disenchantment, a sad or bitter dreaminess, an innate consciousness of the vanity of human things, are never lacking in this country and in this race. Surrey's finest verses bear witness thus soon to his serious bent, this instinctive and grave philosophy. He records his griefs, regretting his beloved Wyatt, his friend Clère, his companion the young Duke of Richmond, all dead in their prime. Alone, a prisoner at Windsor, he recalls the happy days they have passed together :

“ So cruel prison how could betide, alas,  
 As proud Windsor, where I in lust and joy,  
 With a Kinges son, my childish years did pass,  
 In greater feast than Priam's son of Troy.  
 Where each sweet place returns a taste full sour,  
 The large green courts, where we were wont to hove,  
 With eyes cast up into the Maiden's tower,  
 And easy sighs, such as folk draw in love.  
 The stately seats, the ladies bright of hue.  
 The dances short, long tales of great delight,  
 With words and looks, that tigers could but rue ;  
 Where each of us did plead the other's right.  
 The palme-play, where, despoiled for the game,  
 With dazed eyes oft we by gleams of love

Have miss'd the ball, and got sight of our dame,  
 To bait her eyes, which kept the leads above. . . .  
 The secret thoughts, imparted with such trust ;  
 The wanton talk, the divers change of play ;  
 The friendship sworn, each promise kept so just,  
 Wherewith we past the winter night away.  
 And with his thought the blood forsakes the face ;  
 The tears berain my cheeks of deadly hue :  
 The which, as soon as sobbing sighs, alas !  
 Up-supp'd have, thus I my plaint renew :  
 O place of bliss ! renewer of my woes !  
 Give me account, where is my noble fere ?  
 Whom in thy walls thou dost each night enclose ;  
 To other lief ; but unto me most dear.  
 Echo, alas ! that doth my sorrow rue,  
 Returns thereto a hollow sound of plaint."\*

So in love, it is the sinking of a weary soul, to which he gives vent :

" For all things having life, sometime hath quiet rest ;  
 The bearing ass, the drawing ox, and every other beast ;  
 The peasant, and the post, that serves at all assays ;  
 The ship-boy, and the galley-slave, have time to take their ease ;  
 Save I, alas ! whom care of force doth so constrain,  
 To wail the day, and wake the night, continually in pain,  
 From pensiveness to plaint, from plaint to bitter tears,  
 From tears to painful plaint again ; and thus my life it wears."†

That which brings joy to others brings him grief:

" The soote season, that bud and bloom forth brings,  
 With green hath clad the hill, and eke the vale.  
 The nightingale with feathers new she sings ;  
 The turtle to her mate hath told her tale.  
 Summer is come, for every spray now springs ;  
 The hart has hung his old head on the pale ;  
 The buck in brake his winter coat he slings ;  
 The fishes flete with new repaired scale ;  
 The adder all her slough away she slings ;  
 The swift swallow pursueth the flies smale ;  
 The busy bee her honey now she mings ;  
 Winter is worn that was the flowers' bale.

\* Surrey's *Poems*, Pickering, 1831, p. 17.

† *Ibid.* " The faithful lover declareth his pains and his uncertain joys, and with only hope recomforteth his woful heart," p. 53.

And thus I see among these pleasant things  
 Each care decays, and yet my sorrow springs !”\*

For all that, he will love on to his last sigh.

“Yea, rather die a thousand times, than once to false my faith;  
 And if my feeble corpse, through weight of woful smart  
 Do fail, or faint, my will it is that still she keep my heart.  
 And when this carcass here to earth shall be rebur’d  
 I do bequeath my wearied ghost to serve her afterward.” †

An English Petrarch: no juster title could be given to Surrey, for it expresses his talent as well as his disposition. In fact, like Petrarch, the oldest of the humanists, and the earliest exact writer of the modern tongue, Surrey introduces a new style, a manly style, which marks a great transformation of the mind; for this new form of writing is the result of a superior reflection, which, governing the primitive impulse, calculates and selects with an end in view. At last the intellect has grown capable of self-criticism, and actually criticises itself. It corrects its unconsidered works, infantine and incoherent, at once incomplete and superabundant; it strengthens and binds them together; it prunes and perfects them; it takes from them the master idea, to set it free and in the light of day. This is what Surrey does, and his education had prepared him for it; for he had studied Virgil as well as Petrarch, and translated two books of the *Æneid*, almost verse for verse. In such company one cannot but select one's ideas and arrange one's phrases. We do not find in Surrey a bold genius, an impassioned writer capable of wide expansion, but a courtier, a lover of elegance, who, penetrated by the beauties of two complete literatures, imitates Horace and the chosen masters of Italy, corrects and polishes little morsels, aims at speaking perfectly a fine language. Among semi-barbarians he wears a dress-coat becomingly. Yet he does not wear it completely at his ease: he keeps his eyes too exclusively on his models, and does not venture to permit himself frank and free gestures. He is still a scholar, makes too great use of hot and cold, wounds and martyrdom. Although a lover, and a genuine one, he thinks too much that he must be so in Petrarch's manner, that his phrase must be balanced and

\* Surrey's *Poems*, Pickering, 1831, p. 3. "Description of Spring, where-  
 in everything renews, save only the lover."

† *Ibid.* p. 56.

his image kept up. I had almost said that, in his sonnets of disappointed love, he thinks less often of the strength of love than of the beauty of his writing. He has conceits, ill-chosen words ; he uses trite expressions ; he relates how Nature, having formed his lady, broke the mould ; he assigns parts to Cupid and Venus ; he employs the old machinery of the troubadours and the ancients, like a clever man who wishes to pass for a gallant. Scarce any mind dares be at first quite itself : when a new art arises, the first artist listens not to his heart, but to his masters, and asks himself at every step whether he be setting foot on solid ground, or whether he is not stumbling.

§ 16.—In 1580 appeared *Euphues, the Anatomy of Wit*, by Lyly, which was the text-book, master-piece, and caricature of a new, strange, overloaded style, destined to remain in force until the Restoration. It was received with universal admiration. The ladies knew the phrases of *Euphues* by heart : strange, studied, and refined phrases, enigmatical ; whose author seems of set purpose to seek the least natural expressions and the most far-fetched, full of exaggeration and antithesis, in which mythological allusions, illustrations from alchemy, botanical and astronomical figures, all the rubbish and medley of learning, travels, mannerism, roll in a flood of conceits and comparisons. Do not judge it by the grotesque picture that Walter Scott drew of it. Sir Piercie Shafton is but a pedant, a cold and dull copyist ; it is its warmth and originality which give this style a true force and an accent of its own. You must conceive it, not as dead and inert, such as we have it today in old books, but springing from the lips of ladies and young lords in pearl-bedecked doublet, quickened by their vibrating voices, their laughter, the flash of their eyes, the motion of their hands as they played with the hilt of their swords or with their satin cloaks. They were witty, their heads full to overflowing ; and they amused themselves, as our sensitive and eager artists do, at their ease in the studio. They did not speak to convince or be understood, but to satisfy their excited imagination, to expend their overflowing wit. They played with words, twisted, put them out of shape, rejoiced in sudden views, strong contrasts, which they produced one after another, ever and anon, in quick succession, caring nothing for clearness, order, common sense. Yet in that time, even when

the man was feeble, his work lived : force and creative fire penetrate through all this bombast and affectation. Lyly himself, so fantastic that he seems to write purposely in defiance of common sense, is at times a genuine poet, a singer, a man capable of rapture, akin to Spenser and Shakspeare ; one of those introspective dreamers, who see dancing fairies, the purpled cheeks of goddesses, drunken, amorous woods, as he says :

“ Adorned with the presence of my love,  
The woods I fear such secret power shall prove,  
As they'll shut up each path, hide every way,  
Because they still would have her go astray.”\*

Luxuriance and irregularity were the two features of this spirit and this literature,—features common to all the literatures of the Renaissance, but more marked here than elsewhere, because the German race is not confined, like the Latin, by the taste for harmonious forms, and prefers strong impression to fine expression. We must select amidst this crowd of poets ; and here is one among the first, who will exhibit by his writings as well as by his life, the greatness and the folly of the prevailing manners and the public taste : Sir Philip Sidney, nephew of the Earl of Leicester, a man of action, accomplished in every kind of culture ; who, after a good training in polite literature, travelled in France, Germany, and Italy ; read Plato and Aristotle, studied astronomy and geometry at Venice ; pondered over the Greek tragedies, the Italian sonnets, the pastorals of Montemayor, the poems of Ronsard ; displaying an interest in science, keeping up an exchange of letters with the learned Hubert Languet ; and withal a man of the world, a favorite of Elizabeth, having had enacted in her honor a flattering and comic pastoral ; a genuine “ jewel of the Court ;” a judge, like d'Urfú, of lofty gallantry and fine language ; above all, chivalrous in heart and deed, who had desired to follow maritime adventure with Drake, and, to crown all, fated to die an early and heroic death. He was a cavalry officer, and had saved the English army at Gravelines. Shortly after, mortally wounded, and dying of thirst, as some water was brought to him, he saw by his side a soldier still more desperately hurt, who was looking at the water with anguish in his face : “ Give it to this man,” said he ; “ his necessity is yet greater than mine.”

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\* *The Maid her Metamorphosis.*

His pastoral epic, the *Arcadia*, is but a recreation, a sort of poetical romance, written in the country for the amusement of his sister; a work of fashion, which, like *Cyrus* and *Clélie*,\* is not a monument, but a relic. This kind of book shows only the externals, the current elegance and politeness, the jargon of the world of culture,—in short, that which should be spoken before ladies; and yet we perceive from it the bent of the general spirit. In *Clélie*, oratorical development, fine and collected analysis, the flowing converse of men seated quietly on elegant arm-chairs; in the *Arcadia*, fantastic imagination, excessive sentiments, a medley of events which suited men scarcely recovered from barbarism. Indeed, in London they still used to fire pistols at each other in the streets; and under Henry VIII. and his children, queens, a Protector, the highest nobles, knelt under the axe of the executioner. Armed and perilous existence long resisted in Europe the establishment of peaceful and quiet life. It was necessary to change society and the soil, in order to transform men of the sword into citizens. At this period men's heads were full of tragical images. Sidney's *Arcadia* contains enough of them to supply half-a-dozen epics. In the first twenty-five pages you meet with a shipwreck, an account of pirates, a half-drowned prince rescued by shepherds, a voyage in Arcadia, various disguises, the retreat of a king withdrawn into solitude with his wife and children, the deliverance of a young imprisoned lord, a war against the Helots, the conclusion of peace, and many other things. Go on, and you will find princesses shut up by a wicked fairy, who beats them, and threatens them with death if they refuse to marry her son; a beautiful queen condemned to perish by fire if certain knights do not come to her succor; a treacherous prince tortured for his crimes, then cast from the top of a pyramid; fights, surprises, abductions, travels: in short, the whole programme of the most romantic tales. That is the serious element: the agreeable is of a like nature; the fantastic predominates. Improbable pastoral serves, as in Shakspeare or Lope de Vega, for an intermezzo to improbable tragedy. You are always coming upon dancing shepherds. They are very courteous, good poets, and subtle metaphysicians. There are many disguised princes who pay their court to the princesses.

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\* Two French novels of the age of Louis XIV., each in ten volumes, and written by Mademoiselle de Scudéry.—Tr.

They sing continually, and get up allegorical dances ; two bands approach, servants of Reason and Passion ; their hats, ribbons, and dress are described in full. They quarrel in verse, and their hurried retorts, which follow close on one another, over-refined, keep up a tournament of wit. Who cared for what was natural or possible in this age? There were such festivals at Elizabeth's entries ; and you have only to look at the engravings of Sadler, Martin de Vos, and Goltzius, to find this mixture of sensuous beauties and philosophical enigmas.

In Sidney's second work, *The Defence of Poesie*, we meet with genuine imagination, a sincere and serious tone, a grand, commanding style, all the passion and elevation which he carries in his heart and puts into his verse. In his eyes, if there is any art or science capable of augmenting and cultivating generosity, it is poetry. He draws comparison after comparison between it and philosophy or history, whose pretensions he laughs at and dismisses.\* He fights for poetry as a knight for his lady, and in what heroic and splendid style ! He says :

" I never heard the old Song of Percie and Douglas, that I found not my heart moved more than with a trumpet ; and yet it is sung by some blinde Crowder, with no rougher voyce, than rude stile ; which beeing so evill appavelled in the dust and Cobweb of that uncivill age, what would it work, trimmed in the gorgeous eloquence of Pindare ?" †

The philosopher repels, the poet attracts :

" Nay hee doth as if your journey should lie through a faire vineyard, at the very first, give you a cluster of grapes, that full of that tast, you may long to passe further," ‡

What description of poetry can displease you? Pastoral, so easy and genial?

" Is it the bitter but wholesome Iambicke, who rubbes the galled minde, making shame the Trumpet of villanie, with bold and open crying out against naughtinesse." §

At the close, he reviews his arguments, and the vibrating martial accent of his poetical period is like a trump of victory :

" So that since the excellencies of it (poetry) may bee so easily and so

\* *The Defence of Poesie*, ed. fol. 1629, p. 558 : " I dare undertake, that Orlando Furioso, or honest King Arthur, will never displease a soldier : but the quidditie of *Ens* and *prima materia*, will hardly agree with a Corselet." See also, in these pages, the very lively and spirited personification of History and Philosophy. It contains genuine talent.

† *Ibid.* p. 553.

‡ *Ibid.* p. 550.

§ *Ibid.* p. 552.

justly confirmed, and the low-creeping objections so soone trodden downe, it not being an Art of lyes, but of true doctrine; not of effeminateesse, but of notable stirring of courage; not of abusing man's wit, but of strengthening man's wit; not banished, but honored by Plato; let us rather plant more Laurels for to ingarland the Poets heads than suffer the ill-savoured breath of such wrong speakers, once to blow upon the cleare springs of Poesie."\*

From such vehemence and gravity you may anticipate what his verses will be. One example, from *Astrophel and Stella*, must suffice.

On the return of Spring, when May spreads over the fields her dappled dress of new flowers, Astrophel and Stella sit in the shade of a retired grove, in the warm air, full of birds' voices and pleasant exhalations. Heaven smiles, the wind kisses the trembling leaves, the inclining trees interlace their sappy branches, amorous earth sighs greedily for the rippling water :

“ In a grove most rich of shade,  
Where hirts wanton musicke made,  
May, then yong, his py'd weeds showing,  
New perfum'd with flowers fresh growing.  
Astrophel with Stella sweet,  
Did for mutuall comfort meet,  
Both within themselves oppressed,  
But each in the other blessed. . . .  
Their eares hungry of each word,  
Which the deere tongue would afford,  
But their tongues restrained from walking,  
Till their hearts had ended talking.  
But when their tongues could not speake,  
Love it selfe did silence breake ;  
Love did set his lips asunder,  
Thus to speake in love and wonder. . . .  
This small winde which so sweet is,  
See how it the leaves doth kisse,  
Each tree in his best attyring,  
Sense of love to love inspiring.”†

On his knees, with beating heart, oppressed, it seems to him that his mistress is transformed :

“ Stella, souveraigne of my joy, . . .  
Stella, starre of heavenly fire,

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\* *The Defence of Poesie*, ed. fol. 1629, p. 560. Here and there we find also verse as spirited as this :

“ Or Pindar's apes, flaunt they in phrases fine,  
Enam'ling with pide flowers their thoughts of gold.”—(3d Sonnet.)

† *Astrophel and Stella*, ed. fol. 1629, 8th song, p. 603.



Stella, load-starre of desire,  
 Stella, in whose shining eyes  
 Are the lights of Cupid's skies. . . .  
 Stella, whose voice when it speakes  
 Senses all asunder breakes ;  
 Stella, whose voice when it singeth,  
 Angels to acquaintance bringeth."\*

These cries of adoration are like a hymn. Every day he writes thoughts of love which agitate him, and in this long journal of a hundred pages we feel the inflamed breath swell each moment. A smile from his mistress, a curl lifted by the wind, a gesture,—all are events. He paints her in every attitude; he cannot see her too constantly. There are Oriental splendors in the sparkling sonnet in which he asks why Stella's cheeks have grown pale :

"Where be those Roses gone, which sweetened so our eyes?  
 Where those red cheekes, which oft with faire encrease doth frame  
 The height of honour in the kindly badge of shame?  
 Who hath the crimson weeds stolne from my morning skies?"†

As he says, his "life melts with too much thinking." Exhausted by ecstasy, he pauses; then he flies from thought to thought, seeking a cure for his wound, like the Satyr whom he describes :

"Promethens, when first from heaven hie  
 He brought downe fire, ere then on earth not seene,  
 Fond of delight, a Satyr standing by,  
 Gave it a kisse, as it like sweet had beene.  
 Feeling forthwith the other burning power,  
 Wood with the smart with showts and shryking shrill,  
 He sought his ease in river, field and bower,  
 But for the time his grieffe went with him still."‡

At last, like Socrates in the banquet, he turns his eyes to deathless beauty, heavenly brightness :

"Leave me, O Love, which reachest but to dust,  
 And thou my minde aspire to higher things :  
 Grow rich in that which never taketh rust :  
 Whatever fades, but fading pleasure brings. . . .  
 O take fast hold, let that light be thy guide,  
 In this small course which birth drawes out to death."§

\* *Astrophel and Stella*, 8th song, p. 603. † *Ibid.* sonnet 102, p. 614.

‡ *Ibid.* p. 525: this sonnet is headed E. D. Wood, in his *Athen. Oxon.* i., says it was written by Sir Edward Dyer, Chancellor of the Most noble Order of the Garter.—Tr.

§ Last sonnet, p. 539.

Divine love continues the earthly love; he was imprisoned in this and frees himself. By this nobility, these lofty aspirations, recognize one of those serious souls of which there are so many in the same climate and race. Spiritual instincts pierce through the dominant paganism, and ere they make Christians, make Platonists.

§ 17.—Sidney was only a soldier in an army; there is a multitude about him, a multitude of poets. In fifty-two years, beyond the drama, two hundred and thirty-three are enumerated,\* of whom forty have genius or talent: Breton, Donne, Drayton, Lodge, Greene, the two Fletchers, Beaumont, Spenser, Shakspeare, Ben Jonson, Marlowe, Wither, Warner, Davison, Carew, Suckling, Herrick;—we should grow tired in counting them. There is a crop of them, and so there is at the same time in Catholic and heroic Spain; and as in Spain, it was a sign of the times, the mark of a public want, the index to an extraordinary and transient condition of the mind. What is this condition which gives rise to so universal a taste for poetry? What is it that breathes life into their books? How happens it, that among the least, in spite of pedantries, awkwardnesses, in the rhyming chronicles or descriptive cyclopedias, we meet with brilliant pictures and genuine love-cries? It was because an epoch of the mind had come—that, namely, of instinctive and creative conception. These men had new senses, and no theories in their heads. They are happy in contemplating beautiful things, and wish only that they should be the most beautiful possible. They are not preoccupied, as we are, with theories. They do not labor to express moral or philosophical ideas. They wish to enjoy through the imagination, through the eyes, like these Italian nobles, who, at the same time were so captivated by fine colors and forms, that they covered with paintings, not only their rooms and their churches, but the lids of their chests and the saddles of their horses. The rich and green sunny country; young, gaily-attired ladies, blooming with health and love; half-draped gods and goddesses, masterpieces and models of strength and grace,—these are the most lovely objects which man can contemplate, the most capable of satisfying his senses and his heart—of

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\* Nathan Drake, *Shakspeare and his Times*, i. Part 2, ch. 2, 3, 4. Among these 233 poets the authors of isolated pieces are not reckoned, but only those who published or gathered their works together.

giving rise to smiles and to joy ; and these are the objects which occur in all the poets in a most wonderful abundance of songs, pastorals, sonnets, little fugitive pieces, so lively, delicate, easily unfolded, that we have never since had their equals. What though Venus and Cupid have lost their altars? Like the contemporary painters of Italy, they willingly imagine a beautiful naked child, drawn on a chariot of gold through the limpid air ; or a woman, redolent with youth, standing on the waves, which kiss her snowy feet. Harsh Ben Jonson is ravished with the scene. The disciplined battalion of his sturdy verses changes into a band of little graceful strophes, which trip as lightly as Raphael's children. He sees his lady approach, sitting on the chariot of Love, drawn by swans and doves. Love leads the car ; she passes calm and smiling, and all hearts, charmed by her divine looks, wish no other joy than to see and serve her forever.

“ See the chariot at hand here of Love,  
 Wherein my lady rideth !  
 Each that draws is a swan or a dove,  
 And well the car Love guideth.  
 As she goes, all hearts do duty  
 Unto her beauty ;  
 And, enamour'd, do wish so they might  
 But enjoy such a sight,  
 That they still were to run by her side,  
 Through swords, through seas, whither she would ride.  
 Do but look on her eyes, they do light  
 All that Love's world compriseth !  
 Do but look on her hair, it is bright  
 As Love's star when it riseth ! . . .  
 Have you seen but a bright lily grow,  
 Before rude hands have touched it ?  
 Have you marked but the fall o' the snow,  
 Before the soil hath smutched it ?  
 Have you felt the wool of heaver ?  
 Or swan's down ever ?  
 Or have smelt o' the bud o' the brier ?  
 Or the nard in the fire ?  
 Or have tasted the bag of the bee ?  
 O so white ! O so soft ! O so sweet is she ! ”\*

Marlowe himself, the terrible painter of the agony of Edward

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\* Ben Jonson's Poems, ed. R. Bell. *Celebration of Charis : her Triumph*, p. 125.

II., the impressive and powerful poet, who wrote *Faustus*, *Tam-erlane*, and the *Few of Malta*, leaves his sanguinary dramas, his high-sounding verse, his images of fury, and nothing can be more musical and sweet than his song. A shepherd, to gain his lady-love, says to her :

“ Come live with me and be my Love,  
 And we will all the pleasures prove  
 That hills and valleys, dale and field,  
 And all the craggy mountains yield.  
 There we will sit upon the rocks,  
 And see the shepherds feed their flocks,  
 By shallow rivers, to whose falls  
 Melodious birds sing madrigals.  
 There I will make thee beds of roses,  
 And a thousand fragrant posies ;  
 A cap of flowers and a kirtle,  
 Embroider'd all with leaves of myrtle.  
 A gown made of the finest wool,  
 Which from our pretty lambs we pull ;  
 Fair lined slippers for the cold,  
 With buckles of the purest gold.  
 A belt of straw and ivy buds,  
 With coral clasps and amber studs ;  
 And if these pleasures may thee move,  
 Come live with me and be my Love. . . .  
 The shepherd swains shall dance and sing,  
 For thy delight each May-morning ;  
 If these delights thy mind may move,  
 Then live with me and be my Love.”\*

The unpolished gentlemen of the period, returning from a falcon hunt, were more than once arrested by such a rustic picture ; such as they were, that is to say, imaginative and not very citizen-like, they had dreamed of figuring in them on their own account. But while entering into, they reconstructed them ; in their parks, prepared for the queen's entrance, with a profusion of costumes and devices, not troubling themselves to copy rough nature exactly. Improbability did not disturb them ; they were

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\* This poem was, and still is, frequently attributed to Shakspeare. It appears as his in Knight's edition, published a few years ago. Isaac Walton, however, writing about fifty years after Marlowe's death, attributes it to him. In Palgrave's *Golden Treasury* it is also ascribed to the same author. As a confirmation, let us state that Ithamore, in Marlowe's *Few of Malta*, says to the courtesan (Act iv. Sc. 4) :

“ Thou in those groves, by Dis above,  
 Shalt live with me, and be my love.”—TR.

not minute imitators, students of manners: they created; the country for them was but a setting, and the complete picture came from their fancies and their hearts. Romantic it may have been, even impossible, but it was on this account the more charming. Is there a greater charm than putting on one side this actual world which fetters or oppresses us, to float vaguely and easily in the azure and the light, on the summit of the land of fairies and clouds, to arrange things according to the pleasure of the moment, no longer feeling the oppressive laws, the harsh and resisting framework of life, adorning and varying everything after the caprice and the refinements of fancy? That is what is done in these little poems. Usually the events are such as happen nowhere, or happen in the land where kings turn shepherds and marry shepherdesses. The beautiful Argentile\* is detained at her uncle's court, who wishes to deprive her of her kingdom, and commands her to marry Curan, a boor in his service; she flees, and Curan in despair goes and lives two years among the shepherds. One day he meets a beautiful country-woman, and loves her; while speaking to her he thinks of Argentile, and weeps; he describes her sweet face, her lithe figure, her blue-veined delicate wrists, and suddenly sees that the peasant girl is weeping. She falls into his arms, and says, "I am Argentile." Now Curan was a king's son, who had disguised himself thus for love of Argentile. He resumes his armor, and defeats the wicked king. There was never a braver knight; and they both reigned long in Northumberland. From a hundred such tales, tales of the spring-time, the reader will perhaps bear with me while I pick out one more, gay and simple as a May morning. The Princess Dowsabel came down one morning into her father's garden: she gathers honeysuckles, primroses, violets, and daisies; then, behind a hedge, she heard a shepherd singing, and that so finely that she loved him at once. He promises to be faithful, and asks for a kiss. Her cheeks became as crimson as a rose:

" With that she bent her snow-white knee,  
Down by the shepherd kneeled she,  
And him she sweetly kiss'd.

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\* *Chalmers' English poets*, William Warner, *Fourth Book of Albion's England*, ch. xx. p. 551.

With that the shepherd whoop'd for joy ;  
 Quoth he : ' There's never shepherd boy  
 That ever was so blest.' '\*

Nothing more ; is it not enough ? It is but a moment's fancy ; but they had such fancies every moment. Think what poetry was likely to spring from them, how superior to common events, how free from literal imitation, how smitten with ideal beauty, how capable of creating a world beyond our sad world. In fact, among all these poems there is one truly divine, so divine that the reasoners of succeeding ages have found it wearisome, that even now but few understand it—Spenser's *Faërie Queene*.

Spenser belonged to an ancient family, allied to great houses ; was a friend of Sidney and Raleigh, the two most accomplished knights of the age—a knight himself, at least in heart ; who had found in his connections, his friendships, his studies, his life, everything calculated to lead him to ideal poetry. We find him at Cambridge, where he imbues himself with the noblest ancient philosophies ; in a northern country, where he passes through a deep and unfortunate passion ; at Penshurst, in the castle and in the society where the *Arcadia* was produced ; with Sidney, in whom survived entire the romantic poetry and heroic generosity of the feudal spirit ; at court, where all the splendors of a disciplined and gorgeous chivalry were gathered about the throne ; finally, at Kilcolman, on the borders of a beautiful lake, in a lonely castle, from which the view embraced an amphitheatre of mountains, and the half of Ireland. Poor on the other hand, not fit for court, and though favored by the queen, unable to obtain from his patrons anything but inferior employment ; in the end, tired of solicitations, and banished to dangerous Ireland, whence a revolt expelled him, after his house and child had been burned ; he died three months later, of misery and a broken heart.† Expectations and rebuffs, many sorrows and many dreams, some few joys, and a sudden and frightful calamity, a small fortune and a premature end ; this indeed was a poet's life. But the heart within was the true poet—from it all proceeded ; circumstances furnished the subject only ; he transformed them more than they him ; he received

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\* *Chalmers' English Poets*, M. Drayton's *Fourth Eclogue*, iv. p. 436.

† " He died for want of bread, in King Street." Ben Jonson, quoted by Drummond.

less than he gave. Philosophy and landscapes, ceremonies and ornaments, splendors of the country and the court, on all which he painted or thought, he impressed his inward nobleness. Before all, his was a soul captivated by sublime and chaste beauty, eminently platonic ; one of these lofty and refined souls most charming of all, who, born in the lap of nature, draw thence their mother's milk, but soar above, enter the regions of mysticism, and mount instinctively in order to open at the confines of another world. Spenser leads us to Milton, and thence to Puritanism, as Plato to Virgil, and thence to Christianity. Sensuous beauty is perfect in both, but their main worship is for moral beauty. Spenser never considers beauty a mere harmony of color and form, but an emanation of unique, heavenly, imperishable beauty, which no mortal eye can see, and which is the prime work of the great Author of the worlds. Bodies only render it sensible ; it does not live in the bodies ; grace and attraction are not in things, but in the deathless idea which shines through things :

“ For that same goodly hew of white and red,  
 With which the cheekes are sprinckled, shall decay,  
 And those sweete rosy leaves, so fairly spred  
 Upon the lips, shall fade and fall away  
 To that they were, even to corrupted clay :  
 That golden wyre, those sparckling stars so bright,  
 Shall turne to dust, and lose their goodly light.  
 But that faire lampe, from whose celestiall ray  
 That light proceedes, which kindleth lovers fire,  
 Shall never be extinguisht nor decay ;  
 But, when the vitall spirits doe expyre,  
 Upon her native planet shall retyre ;  
 For it is heavenly borne, and cannot die,  
 Being a parcell of the purest skie.”\*

What distinguishes Spenser from all other poets is the mode of his imagination. Generally with a poet his spirit ferments vehemently and by fits and starts ; his ideas gather, jostle each other, suddenly appear in masses and heaps, and burst out in sharp, piercing, concentrative words ; it seems that they need these sudden accumulations to imitate the unity and life-like energy of the objects which they reproduce ; at least almost all the surrounding poets, Shakspeare at their head, act thus. Spenser remains calm in the fervor of invention. The visions

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\* *A Hymne in Honor of Beautie*, v. 92-95

which would be fever to another, leave him at peace. They come and spread before him, easily, entire, uninterrupted, without starts. He is epic, that is, a narrator, and not a singer like an ode-writer, nor a mimic like a play-writer. No modern is more like Homer. Like Homer and the great epic writers, he presents consecutive and noble, almost classical images, so nearly ideas, that the mind seizes them unaided and unawares. Like Homer, he is always simple and clear: he makes no leap, he omits no argument, he robs no word of its primitive and ordinary sense, he preserves the natural sequence of ideas. Like Homer again, he is redundant, ingenuous, even childish. He says everything, he puts down reflections which we have made beforehand; he repeats without limit his ornamental epithets. We can see that he beholds objects in a beautiful uniform light, with infinite detail; that he wishes to show all this detail, never fearing to see his happy dream change or disappear; that he traces its outline with a regular movement, never hurrying or slackening. He is even a little prolix, too unmindful of the public, too ready to lose himself and fall into a dream. His thought expands in vast repeated comparisons, like those of the old Ionic poet. If a wounded giant falls, he finds him

“As an aged tree,

High growing on the top of rocky clift,  
Whose hart-strings with keene steele nigh hewen be,  
The mightie trunck halfe rent with ragged rift,  
Doth roll adowne the rocks, and fall with fearefull drift.

Or as a castle reared high and round,  
By subtile engins and malicious slight  
Is undermined from the lowest ground,  
And her foundation forst, and feebled quight,  
At last downe falles; and with her heaped hight  
Her hastie ruine does more heaueie make,  
And yields it selfe unto the victours might:  
Such was this Gyaunt's fall, that seemd to shake  
The stedfast globe of earth, as it for feare did quake.”\*

He develops all the ideas which he handles. He stretches all his phrases into periods. Instead of compressing, he expands. To bear this ample thought and its accompanying train, he requires a long stanza, ever renewed, long recurring lines, reiterated rhymes, whose uniformity and fulness recall majestic sounds

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\* *The Faërie Queene* i. c. 8, st. 22, 23.



which undulate eternally through the woods and the fields. To expand these epic faculties, and to expand them in the sublime region where his soul is naturally borne, he requires an ideal stage, situated beyond the bounds of reality, with personages who could hardly exist, and in a world which could never be.

What world could furnish materials to so elevated a fancy? One only, that of chivalry; for none is so far from the actual. Alone and independent in his castle, freed from all the ties which society, family, toil, usually impose on the actions of men, the feudal hero had attempted every kind of adventure, but yet he had done less than he imagined: the boldness of his deeds had been exceeded by the madness of his dreams. Under this stimulus his poetry had become a world of imagery. Insensibly strange conceptions had grown and multiplied in his brains, one over the other, like ivy woven round a tree, and the original stock had disappeared beneath their rank growth and their obstruction. The delicate fancies of the old Welsh poetry, the grand ruins of the German epics, the marvellous splendors of the conquered East, all the relics which four centuries of adventure had dispersed among the minds of men, had become gathered into one great dream; and giants, dwarfs, monsters, the whole medley of imaginary creatures, of superhuman exploits and splendid follies, were grouped about a unique conception, exalted and sublime love, like courtiers prostrated at the feet of their king. It was an ample and an elastic subject-matter, from which the great artists of the age, Ariosto, Tasso, Cervantes, Rabelais, had hewn their poems. But they belonged too completely to their own time to admit of their belonging to one which had passed. They created a chivalry afresh, but it was not genuine. The ingenious Ariosto, an ironical epicurean, delights his gaze with it, and grows merry over it, like a man of pleasure, a skeptic who rejoices doubly in his pleasure, because it is sweet, and because it is forbidden. By his side poor Tasso, inspired by a fanatical, revived, factitious Catholicism, amid the tinsel of an old school of poetry, works on the same subject, in sickly fashion, with great effort and scant success. Cervantes, himself a knight, albeit he loves chivalry for its nobleness, perceives its folly, and crushes it to the ground, with heavy blows, in the mishaps of the wayside inns.\* More coarsely,

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\* "Cervantes smiled Spain's chivalry away."—BYRON'S *Don Juan*, canto xiii. st. xi.—TR.

more openly, Rabelais, a rude commoner, drowns it with a burst of laughter in his merriment and nastiness. Spenser alone takes it seriously and naturally. He is on the level of so much nobleness, dignity, reverie. He is not yet settled and shut in by that species of exact common sense which was to found and cramp the whole modern civilization. In his heart he inhabits the poetic and misty land from which men were daily drawing further and further away. He is enamored of it, even to its very language; he retains the old words, the expressions of the middle-age, the style of Chancer, especially in the *Shepherd's Calendar*. He enters straightway upon the strangest dreams of the old story-tellers, without astonishment, like a man who has still stranger ones on his own account. Enchanted castles, monsters and giants, duels in the woods, wandering ladies, all spring up under his hands, the mediæval fancy with the mediæval generosity; and it is just because this world is unlikelike that this world suits his humor.

The reader will feel that such a poem cannot be recounted. In fact, there are six poems, each of a dozen cantos, in which the action is ever diverging and converging again, becoming confused and starting again; and all the imaginations of antiquity and of the middle-age are, I believe, combined in it. The knight "pricks along the plaine," among the trees, and at a crossing of the paths meets other knights with whom he engages in combat; suddenly from within a cave appears a monster, half woman and half serpent, surrounded by a hideous offspring; further on a giant, with three bodies; then a dragon, great as a hill, with sharp talons and vast wings. For three days he fights him, and twice overthrown, he comes to himself only by aid of "a gracious ointment." After that there are savage tribes to be conquered, castles surrounded by flames to be captured. Meanwhile ladies are wandering in the midst of forests, on white palfreys, exposed to the assaults of miscreants, now guarded by a lion which follows them, now delivered by a band of satyrs who adore them. Magicians work manifold charms; palaces display their festivities; tilt-yards furnish tournaments; sea-gods, nymphs, fairies, kings, mingle feasts, surprises, dangers.

You will say it is a phantasmagoria. What matter, if we see it? And we do see it, for Spenser does. His sincerity wins

over. He is so much at home in this world, that we end by finding ourselves at home in it. He has no appearance of astonishment at astonishing events ; he comes upon them so naturally, that he makes them natural ; he defeats the miscreants, as if he had done nothing else all his life. Venus, Diana, and the old deities, dwell by his threshold, and enter, and he takes no notice of them. His serenity becomes ours. We grow credulous and happy by contagion, and to the same extent as he. How could it be otherwise ? Is it possible to refuse credence to a man who paints things for us with so just a detail and in so lively colors ? Here he describes a forest for you on a sudden ; are you not instantly in it with him ? Beech trees with their silvery stems, “loftie trees iclad with sommers pride, did spred so broad, that heavens light did hide ;” rays of light tremble on the bark and shine on the ground, on the reddening ferns and low bushes, which, suddenly smitten with the luminous track, glisten and glimmer. Footsteps are scarcely heard on the thick beds of heaped leaves ; and at distant intervals, on the tall herbage, drops of dew are sparkling. Yet the sound of a horn reaches us through the foliage ; how sweetly it falls on the ear, with what unlooked for cheer in this vast silence ! It resounds more loudly ; the clatter of a hunt draws near ; “eft through the thicke they heard one rudely rush ;” a nymph approaches, the most chaste and beautiful in the world.

The train of splendors and of scenery never ends. Desolate promontories, cleft with gaping chasms ; thunder-stricken and blackened masses of rocks, against which the hoarse breakers dash ; palaces sparkling with gold, wherein ladies, like angels, reclining carelessly on purple cushions, listen with sweet smiles to the harmony of music played by unseen hands ; lofty silent walks, where avenues of oaks spread their motionless shadows over tufts of virgin violets, and turf which never mortal foot has trod ;—to all these beauties of art and nature he adds the marvels of mythology, and describes them with as much of love and of full credence as a painter of the Renaissance or an ancient poet. Here approach on chariots of shell, Cymoënt and her nymphs :

“ A teme of dolphins raunged in aray  
 Drew the smooth charett of sad Cymoënt ;  
 They were all taught by Triton to obay  
 To the long raynes at her commaundément :

As swifte as swallowes on the waves they went,  
 That their brode flaggy finnes no fome did reare,  
 Ne bubling rowndell they behinde them sent ;  
 The rest, of other fishes drawn wear ;  
 Which with their finny oars the swelling sea did sheare.”\*

Nothing, again, can be sweeter or calmer than the description of the palace of Morpheus :

“ He, making speedy way through spersed ayre,  
 And through the world of waters wide and deepe,  
 To Morpheus house doth hastily repaire.  
 Amid the bowels of the earth full steepe,  
 And low, where dawning day doth never peepe,  
 His dwelling is ; there Tethys his wet bed  
 Doth ever wash, and Cynthia still doth steepe  
 In silver dew his ever-drouping hed,  
 Whiles sad Night over him her mantle black doth spred.  
 And, more to lulle him in his slumber soft,  
 A trickling streame from high rock tumbling downe,  
 And ever-drizzling raine upon the loft,  
 Mixt with a murmuring winde, much like the sowne  
 Of swarming bees, did cast him in a swowne.  
 No other noyse, nor peoples troublous cries,  
 As still are wont t’ annoy the walled towne,  
 Might there be heard ; but careless Quiet lyes,  
 Wrapt in eternall silence farre from enimyess.”†

Yet however much mythology and chivalry can supply, they do not suffice for the needs of this poetical fancy. Spenser’s characteristic is the vastness and the overflow of picturesque invention. Like Rubens, he creates whole scenes, beyond the region of all traditions, to express distinct ideas. For three days Sir Guyon is led by the cursed spirit, the tempter Mammon, in the subterranean realm, across wonderful gardens, trees laden with golden fruits, glittering palaces, and a confusion of all worldly treasures. They have descended into the bowels of the earth, and pass through caverns, unknown abysses, silent depths. “ An ugly Feend . . . with monstrous stalke behind him stept,” without his knowledge, ready to devour him on the least show of covetousness. The brilliancy of the gold lights up the hideous figures, and the beaming metal shines with a beauty more seductive in the gloom of the infernal prison.

“ That Houses forme within was rude and strong,  
 Lyke an huge cave hewne out of rocky clifte,

\* *The Faërie Queene*, iii. c. 4, st. 33.

† *Ibid.* i. c. I, st. 39 and 41.

From whose rough vault the ragged breaches hong  
 Embost with massy gold of glorious guifte,  
 And with rich metall loaded every rifte,  
 That heavy ruine they did seeme to threat ;  
 And over them Arachne high did lifte  
 Her cunning web, and spread her subtile nett,  
 Enwrapped in fowle smoke and clouds more black than iett.

Both rooffe, and floore, and walls, were all of gold,  
 But overgrowne with dust and old decay,  
 And hid in darknes, that none could behold  
 The hew thereof ; for view of cherefull day  
 Did never in that House itselife display,  
 But a faint shadow of uncertein light ;  
 Such as a lamp, whose life doth fade away ;  
 Or as the moone, cloathed with cloudy night,  
 Does shew to him that walkes in feare and sad affright.

In all that rowme was nothing to be seene  
 But huge great yron chests and coffers strong,  
 All bard with double bends, that none could weene  
 Them to enforce by violence or wrong ;  
 On every side they placed were along.  
 But all the grownd with sculs was scattered  
 And dead mens bones, which round about were flong,  
 Whose lives, it seemed, whilome there were shed,  
 And their vile carcasses now left unburied. . . .

Thence, forward he him ledd and shortly brought  
 Unto another rowme, whose dore forthright  
 To him did open as it had bene taught :  
 Therein an hundred raunges weren pight,  
 And hundred founnaces all burning bright ;  
 By every founnace many Feends did byde,  
 Deformed creatures, horrible in sight ;  
 And every Feend his busie paines applyde  
 To melt the golden metall, ready to be tryde.

One with great bellowes gathered filling ayre,  
 And with forst wind the fewell did inflame ;  
 Another did the dying bronds repayre  
 With yron tongs, and sprinkled ofte the same  
 With liquid waves, fiers Vulcans rage to tame,  
 Who, maystring them, renewd his former heat :  
 Some scumd the drosse that from the metall came ;  
 Some stird the molten owre with ladles great :  
 And every one did swincke, and every one did sweat. . . .

He brought him, through a darksom narrow strayt,  
 To a broad gate all built of beaten gold :

The gate was open ; but therein did wayt  
 A sturdie Villein, stryding stiffe and bold,  
 As if the Highest God defy he would :  
 In his right hand an yron club he held,  
 But he himselfe was all of golden mould,  
 Yet had both life and sence, and well could weld  
 That cursed weapon, when his cruell foes he queld. . .

He brought him in. The rowme was large and wyde,  
 As it some gyeld or solemne temple weare ;  
 Many great golden pillours did upbeare  
 The massy rooffe, and riches huge sustayne ;  
 And every pillour decked was full deare  
 With crownes, and diademes, and titles vaine,  
 Which mortall princes wore whiles they on earth did rayne.

A route of people there assembled were,  
 Of every sort and nation under skye,  
 Which with great uprore preaced to draw nere  
 To th' upper part, where was advaunched hye  
 A stately sieg of soveraine maiestye ;  
 And thereon satt a Woman gorgeous gay,  
 And richly cladd in robes of royaltie,  
 That never earthly prince in such aray  
 His glory did enhance, and pompous pryde display . . .

There, as in glistring glory she did sitt,  
 She held a great gold chaine ylincked well,  
 Whose upper end to highest heven was knitt,  
 And lower part did reach to lowest hell. ”\*

No artist's dream matches these visions: the glowing of the furnace under the vaults of the cavern, the lights flickering over the crowded figures, the throne, and the strange glitter of the gold shining in every direction through the darkness. The allegory assumes gigantic proportions. When the object is to show Temperance at issue with temptations, Spenser deems it necessary to mass all the temptations together. He is treating of a general virtue; and as such a virtue is capable of every sort of resistance, he requires from it every sort of resistance at one time;—after the test of gold, that of pleasure. Thus the grandest and most exquisite spectacles follow and are contrasted with each other supernaturally; the graceful and the terrible side by side,—the happy gardens side by side with the cursed subterranean cavern.

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\* *The Faërie Queene*, ii. c. 7, st. 28-46.

“ No gate, but like one, being goodly dight  
 With bowes and braunches, which did broad dilate  
 Their clasping armes in wanton wreathings intricate :

So fashioned a porch with rare device,  
 Archt over head with an embracing vine,  
 Whose bounches hanging downe seemd to entice  
 All passers-by to taste their lushious wine,  
 And did themselves into their hands incline,  
 As freely offering to be gathered ;  
 Some deepe empurpled as the hyacine,  
 Some as the rubine laughing sweetely red,  
 Some like faire emeraudes, not yet well ripened. . . .

And in the midst of all a fountaine stood,  
 Of richest substance that on earth might bee,  
 So pure and shiny that the silver flood  
 Through every channell running one might see ;  
 Most goodly it with curious ymageree  
 Was over-wrought, and shapes of naked boyes,  
 Of which some seemd with lively iollitee  
 To fly about, playing their wanton toyes,  
 Whylest others did themselves embay in liquid ioyes.

And over all of purest gold was spred  
 A trayle of yvie in his native hew ;  
 For the rich metall was so coloured,  
 That wight, who did not well avis'd it vew,  
 Would surely deeme it to bee yvie trew :  
 Low his lascivious armes adown did creepe,  
 That themselves dipping in the silver dew  
 Their fleecy flowres they fearfully did steepe,  
 Which drops of christall seemd for wantones to weep.

Infinit streames continually did well  
 Out of this fountaine, sweet and faire to see,  
 The which into an ample laver fell,  
 And shortly grew to so great quantitie,  
 That like a little lake it seemd to bee ;  
 Whose depth exceeded not three cubits hight,  
 That through the waves one might the bottom see,  
 All pay'd beneath with jasper shining bright,  
 That seemd the fountaine in that sea did sayle upright.

The ioyous birdes, shrouded in chearefull shade,  
 Their notes unto the voice attempted sweet ;  
 Th' angelicall soft trembling voyces made  
 To th' instruments divine responce meet ;  
 The silver-sounding instruments did meet  
 With the base murmure of the waters fall ;

The waters fall with difference discreet,  
 Now soft, now loud, unto the wind did call ;  
 The gentle warbling wind low answered to all . . .

Is not this a fairy land? We find here finished pictures, genuine and complete, composed with a painter's feeling, with choice of tints and lines; our eyes are delighted by it. An Italian artist might copy these gardens, flowing waters, sculptured loves, wreaths of creeping ivy, thick with glossy leaves and fleecy flowers. Just before, in the infernal depths, the lights, with their long streaming rays, were fine, half smothered by the darkness; the lofty throne in the vast hall, between the pillars, in the midst of a swarming multitude, connected all the forms around it by centring all regards. The poet, here and throughout, is a colorist and an architect. Art is matured: this is the great characteristic of the age, which distinguishes this poem from all similar tales heaped up by the middle-age. Incoherent, mutilated, they lay like rubbish, or rough-hewn stones, which the weak hands of the *trouvères* could not build into a monument. At last the poets and artists are here, and with them the conception of beauty, to wit, the idea of the general effect. They understand proportions, relations, contrasts; they compose. In their hands the misty vague sketch becomes defined, complete, separate; it assumes color—is made a picture. Every object thus conceived and imagined acquires a definite existence as soon as it acquires a true form; centuries after, it will be acknowledged and admired, and men will be touched by it; and more, they will be touched by its author; for, besides the object which he paints, the poet paints himself. His ruling idea is stamped upon the work which it produces and controls. Spenser is superior to his subject, comprehends it fully, frames it with a view to the end, in order to impress upon it the proper mark of his soul and his genius. Each story is modified with respect to another, and all with respect to a certain effect which is being worked out. Thus a beauty issues from this harmony,—the beauty in the poet's heart,—which his whole work strives to express; a noble and yet a laughing beauty, made up of moral elevation and sensuous seductions, English in sentiment, Italian in externals, chivalric in subject, modern in its perfection, representing a unique and admirable epoch, the appearance of paganism in a Christian race, and the worship of form by an imagination of the North.



§ 18. *Prose*.—Such an epoch can scarcely last, and the poetic vitality expends itself in a blossom of prose, so that its expansion leads to its decline. From the beginning of the seventeenth century, the literature undergoes a change; the powerful breeze which had guided it, and which, amidst singularity, refinements, exaggerations, has made it great, slackened and diminished. With Carew, Suckling, and Herrick, prettiness takes the place of the beautiful. They no longer boast of that overflow of emotions, that excess of ideas and images, which compelled a man to relieve himself by words, to act externally, to represent freely and boldly the interior drama which made his whole body and heart tremble. They are rather wits of the court, cavaliers of fashion, who wish to try their hand at imagination and style. In their hands love becomes gallantry; they write songs, fugitive pieces, compliments to the ladies. The only objects they can paint, at last, are little graceful things, a kiss, a May-day festivity, a dewy primrose, a marriage morning, a bee. Herrick and Suckling especially produce little exquisite poems, delicate, ever laughing or smiling, like those attributed to Anacreon, or those which abound in the *Anthology*.

“ About the sweet bag of a bee,  
 Two Cupids fell at odds;  
 And whose the pretty prize shu'd be,  
 They vow'd to ask the Gods,  
 Which Venus hearing, thither came,  
 And for their boldness stript them;  
 And taking thence from each his flame,  
 With rods of mirtle whipt them.  
 Which done, to still their wanton cries,  
 When quiet grown sh'ad seen them,  
 She kist and wip'd their dove-like eyes,  
 And gave the bag between them.”\*

In fact, here, as at the time alluded to, we are at the decline of paganism; energy departs, the reign of the agreeable begins. Side by side with prettiness comes affectation; it is the second mark of the decadence. Instead of writing to say things, they write to say them well.

In all arts, the first masters, the inventors, discover the idea, steep themselves in it, and leave it to effect its outward form. Then come the second class, the imitators, who sedulously re-

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\* Herrick's *Hesperides*, ed. Walford, 1859; *The Bag of the Bee*, p. 41.

peat this form, and alter it by exaggeration. Some nevertheless have talent, as Quarles, Herbert, Babington, Donne in particular, a pungent satirist, of terrible crudeness,\* a powerful poet, of a precise and intense imagination, who still preserves something of the energy and thrill of the original inspiration. But he deliberately abuses all these gifts, and succeeds with great difficulty in concocting a piece of nonsense.

On this boundary line of a closing and a dawning literature a poet appeared, one of the most fanciful and illustrious of his time, Abraham Cowley,† a precocious child, a reader and a versifier like Pope, having known passions less than books, busied himself less about things than about words. Literary exhaustion has seldom been more manifest. He possesses all the capacity to say whatever pleases him, but he has just nothing to say. The substance has vanished, leaving in its place a hollow shadow. You say to yourself that, after all, Cowley had perhaps talent; you find that he had in fact one, a new talent, unknown to the old masters, the sign of a new culture, which needs other manners, and announces a new society. Cowley is an author by profession, the oldest of those who in England deserve the name. His prose is as easy and sensible as his poetry is contorted and unreasonable. A polished man, writing for polished men, pretty much as he would speak to them in a drawing-room,—this I take to be the idea which they had of a good author in the seventeenth century. It is the idea which Cowley's *Essays* leave of his character; it is the kind of talent which the writers of the coming age take for their model; and he is the first of that grave and amiable group which, continued in Temple, reaches so far as to include Addison.

Having reached this point, the Renaissance seemed to have attained its limit, and, like a drooping and faded flower, to be ready to leave its place for a new bud which began to rise from

\* See in particular, his satire against the courtiers. The following is against imitators:

“ But he is worst, who (beggary) doth chaw  
 Other's wits fruits, and in his ravenous maw  
 Rankly digested, doth those things outspue,  
 As his owne things; and they are his owne, 'tis true  
 For if one eate my meate, though it be knowne  
 The meat was mine, th' excrement is his owne.”

DONNE'S *Satires*, 1639. *Satire* ii. p. 128.

† 1608-1667.

the ruins. At all events, a living and unexpected shoot sprang from the old declining stock. At the moment when art languished, science shot forth; the whole labor of the age ended in this. The fruits are not unlike; on the contrary, they come from the same sap, and by the diversity of the shape only manifest two distinct periods of the inner growth which has produced them. Every art ends in a science, and every poetry in a philosophy. When enthusiasm is past, curiosity begins. The sentiment of beauty gives way to the sentiment of truth. The gaze continues fixed on nature, not to admire now, but to understand. From painting we pass to anatomy, from the drama to moral philosophy, from grand poetical divinations to great scientific views; the second continue the first, and the same spirit shows in both; for what art had represented, and science proceeds to observe, are living things, with their complex and complete structure, set in motion by their internal forces, with no supernatural intervention.

An astonishing irruption of facts—the discovery of America, the revival of antiquity, the restoration of philology, the invention of the arts, the development of industries, the march of human curiosity over the whole of the past and the whole of the globe—came to furnish subject-matter, and prose began its reign. Sidney, Wilson, Ascham, and Puttenham explored the rules of style; Hackluyt and Purchas compiled the cyclopædia of travel and the description of every land; Holinshed, Speed, Raleigh, Stowe, Knolles, Daniel, Thomas More, Lord Herbert, founded history; Camden, Spelman, Cotton, Usher, and Selden inaugurate scholarship; a legion of patient workers, of obscure collectors, of literary pioneers, amassed, arranged, and sifted the documents which Sir Robert Cotton and Sir Thomas Bodley stored up in their libraries; while utopists, moralists, painters of manners—Thomas More, Joseph Hall, John Earle, Owen Feltham, Burton—described and passed judgment on the modes of life, continued with Fuller, Sir Thomas Browne, and Isaac Walton up to the middle of the next century, and increase the number of controversialists and politicians who, with Hooker, Taylor, Chillingworth, Algernon Sidney, Harrington, study religion, society, church and state. A copious and confused fermentation, from which abundance of thoughts proceeded, but few notable books. It is an extraordinary chaos of thoughts and forms,

often abortive, still more often barbarous, sometimes grand. But from this superfluity something lasting and great is produced, namely—science, and we have only to examine more closely into one or two of these works to see the new creation emerge from the blocks and the debris.

Two writers above all display this state of mind. The first, Robert Burton, an ecclesiastic and university recluse, who passed his life in libraries, and dabbled in all the sciences, as learned as Rabelais, of an inexhaustible and overflowing memory; unequal, moreover, gifted with enthusiasm, and spasmodically gay, but as a rule sad and morose, to the extent of confessing in his epitaph that melancholy made up his life and his death; in the first place original, enamored of his own intelligence, and one of the earliest models of that singular English mood which, withdrawing man within himself, develops in him, at one time imagination, at another scrupulousness, at another oddity, and makes of him, according to circumstances, a poet, an eccentric, a humorist, a madman, or a puritan. He read on for thirty years, put an encyclopædia into his head, and now to amuse and relieve himself, takes a folio of blank paper. Twenty lines of a poet, a dozen lines of a treatise on agriculture, a folio column of heraldry, the record of the fever fits of hypochondria, the history of the particle *que*, a scrap of metaphysics,—this is what passes through his brain in a quarter of an hour: it is a carnival of ideas and phrases, Greek, Latin, German, French, Italian, philosophical, geometrical, medical, poetical, astrological, musical, pedagogic, heaped one on the other; an enormous medley, a prodigious mass of jumbled quotations, jostling thoughts with the vivacity and the transport of a “feast of unreason.”\*

What subject does he take? Melancholy, his individual mood; and he takes it like a schoolman. None of St. Thomas' treatises is more regularly constructed than his. After the scholastic process, he descends from the general to the particular, and disposes each emotion and idea in its labelled case. In this framework, supplied by the middle-age, he heaps up the whole, like a man of the Renaissance,—the literary description of passions and the medical description of mental alienation, details of the hospital with a satire on human follies, physiological treatises side by side with personal confidences, the recipes of

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\* See for this feast Walter Scott's *Abbot*, chs. xiv. and xv.—TR.

the apothecary with moral counsels, remarks on love with the history of evacuations. The discrimination of ideas has not yet been effected ; doctor and poet, man of letters and savant, he is all at once ; for want of dams, ideas pour like different liquids into the same vat, with strange spluttering and bubbling, with an unsavory smell and odd effect. But the vat is full, and from this admixture are produced potent compounds which no preceding age had known.

For in this mixture there is an effectual leaven, the poetic sentiment, which stirs up and animates the vast erudition, which will not be confined to dry catalogues ; which, interpreting every fact, every object, disentangles or divines a mysterious soul within it, and agitates the whole spirit of man, by representing to him the restless world within and without him as a grand enigma. Let us conceive a kindred spirit to Shakspeare's, a scholar and an observer instead of an actor and a poet, who in place of creating is occupied in comprehending, but who, like Shakspeare, applies himself to living things, penetrates their internal structure, puts himself in communication with their actual laws, imprints in himself fervently and scrupulously the smallest details of their figure ; who at the same time extends his penetrating surmises beyond the region of observation, discerns behind visible phenomena a world obscure yet sublime, and trembles with a kind of veneration before the vast, indistinct, but populous abyss on whose surface our little universe hangs quivering. Such a one is Sir Thomas Browne, a naturalist, a philosopher, a scholar, a physician and a moralist, almost the last of the generation which produced Jeremy Taylor and Shakspeare. No thinker bears stronger witness to the wandering and inventive curiosity of the age. No writer has better displayed the brilliant and sombre imagination of the North. No one has spoken with a more eloquent emotion of death, the vast night of forgetfulness, of the all-devouring pit, of human vanity, which tries to create an immortality out of ephemeral glory or sculptured stones. No one has revealed, in more glowing and original expressions, the poetic sap which flows through all the minds of the age.

“ But the iniquity of oblivion blindly scattereth her poppy, and deals with the memory of men without distinction to merit of perpetuity. Who can but pity the founder of the pyramids ? Herostratus lives that burnt the temple

of Diana, he is almost lost that built it. Time hath spared the epitaph of Adrian's horse, confounded that of himself. In vain we compute our felicities by the advantage of our good names, since bad have equal duration; and Thersites is like to live as long as Agamemnon. Who knows whether the best of men be known, or whether there be not more remarkable persons forgot than any that stand remembered in the known account of time? Without the favor of the everlasting register, the first man had been as unknown as the last, and Methuselah's long life had been his only chronicle.

"Oblivion is not to be hired. The greater part must be content to be as though they had not been, to be found in the register of God, not in the record of man. Twenty-seven names make up the first story before the flood, and the recorded names ever since contain not one living century. The number of the dead long exceedeth all that shall live. The night of time far surpasseth the day, and who knows when was the equinox? Every hour adds unto the current arithmetic which scarce stands one moment. And since death must be the Lucina of life, and even Pagans could doubt, whether thus to live were to die; since our longest sun sets at right declensions, and makes but winter arches, and therefore it cannot be long before we lie down in darkness, and have our light in ashes; since the brother of death daily haunts us with dying mementos, and time, that grows old in itself, bids us hope no long duration;—dinturnity is a dream, and folly of expectation.

"Darkness and light divide the course of time, and oblivion shares with memory a great part even of our living beings; we slightly remember our felicities, and the smartest strokes of affliction leave but short smart upon us. Sense endureth no extremities, and sorrows destroy us or themselves. To weep into stones are fables. Afflictions induce callosities; miseries are slippery, or fall like snow upon us, which notwithstanding is no unhappy stupidity. To be ignorant of evils to come, and forgetful of evils past, is a merciful provision of nature, whereby we digest the mixture of our few and evil days; and our delivered senses not relapsing into cutting remembrances, our sorrows are not kept raw by the edge of repetitions. . . . All was vanity, feeding the wind, and folly. The Egyptian mummies, which Cambyses or time hath spared, avarice now consumeth. Mummy is become merchandise, Mizraim cures wounds, and Pharaoh is sold for balsams. . . . Man is a noble animal, splendid in ashes, and pompous in the grave, solemnizing natiivities and deaths with equal lustre, nor omitting ceremonies of bravery in the infancy of his nature. . . . Pyramids, arches, obelisks, were but the irregularities of vain glory, and wild enormities of ancient magnanimity."\*

These are almost the words of a poet, and it is just this poet's imagination which urges him onward into science. Amidst the productions of nature he abounds with conjectures, generalizations; he gropes about, proposing explanations, making trials, extending his guesses like so many flexible and vibrating tentacula into the four corners of the globe, into the most

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\* *The Works of Sir Thomas Browne*, ed. Wilkin, 1852, 3 vols. *Hydrotophia*, iii. ch. v. 44 *et passim*.

distant regions of fancy and truth. Archæology, chemistry, history, nature, there is nothing in which he is not interested to the extent of a passion, which does not cause his memory and his ingenuity to overflow, which does not summon up within him the idea of some force, certainly admirable, possibly infinite. But what finishes in depicting him, what signalizes the advance of science, is the fact that his imagination provides a counterbalance against itself. He is as fertile in doubts as he is in explanations. Having made a guess, he knows that it is but a guess. After all, he proposes questions, suggests explanations, suspends his judgments; nothing more, but this is enough: when the search is so eager, when the paths in which it proceeds are so numerous, when it is so scrupulous in making certain of its basis, the issue of the pursuit is sure; we are but a few steps from the truth.

§ 19.—In this band of scholars, dreamers, and enquirers, appears the most comprehensive, sensible, originative of the minds of the age, Francis Bacon, a great and luminous intellect, one of the finest of this poetic progeny, who, like his predecessors, was naturally disposed to clothe his ideas in the most splendid dress: in this age, a thought did not seem complete until it had assumed a form and color. But what distinguishes him from the others is, that with him an image only serves to concentrate meditation. He reflected long, stamped on his mind all the parts and joints of his subject; and then, instead of dissipating his complete idea in a graduated chain of reasoning, he embodies it in a comparison so expressive, exact, transparent, that behind the figure we perceive all the details of the idea, like a liquor in a fair crystal vase. Judge of his style by a single example:

“For as water, whether it be the dew of Heaven or the springs of the earth, easily scatters and loses itself in the ground, except it be collected into some receptacle, where it may by union and consort comfort and sustain itself (and for that cause, the industry of man has devised aqueducts, cisterns, and pools, and likewise beautified them with various ornaments of magnificence and state, as well as for use and necessity); so this excellent liquor of knowledge, whether it descend from divine inspiration or spring from human sense, would soon perish and vanish into oblivion, if it were not preserved in books, traditions, conferences, and especially in places appointed for such matters as universities, colleges, and schools, where it may have both a fixed habitation, and means and opportunity of increasing and collecting itself.”\*

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\* Bacon's *Works*. Translation of the *De Augmentis Scientiarum*, Book ii; To the King.

“ The greatest error of all the rest, is the mistaking or misplacing of the last or farthest end of knowledge: for men have entered into a desire of learning and knowledge, sometimes upon a natural curiosity and inquisitive appetite; sometimes to entertain their minds with variety and delight; sometimes for ornament and reputation; and sometimes to enable them to victory of wit and contradiction; and most times for lucre and profession; and seldom sincerely to give a true account of their gift of reason, to the benefit and use of men: as if there were sought in knowledge a couch whereupon to rest a searching and restless spirit; or a terrace, for a wandering and variable mind to walk up and down with a fair prospect; or a tower of state, for a proud mind to raise itself upon; or a fort or commanding ground, for strife and contention; or a shop, for profit or sale; and not a rich storehouse, for the glory of the Creator, and the relief of man’s estate.”\*

This is his mode of thought, by symbols, not by analysis; instead of explaining his idea, he transposes and translates it,— translates it entire, to the smallest details, enclosing all in the majesty of a grand period, or in the brevity of a striking sentence. Thence springs a style of admirable richness, gravity, and vigor, now solemn and symmetrical, now concise and piercing, always elaborate and full of color.† There is nothing in English prose superior to his diction.

Thence is derived also his manner of conceiving of things. He is not a dialectician, like Hobbes or Descartes, apt in arranging ideas, in educing one from another, in leading his reader from the simple to the complex by an unbroken chain. He is a producer of conceptions and of sentences. The matter being explored, he says to us: “ Such it is; touch it not on that side; it must be approached from the other.” Nothing more; no proof, no effort to convince: he affirms, and does nothing more; he has thought in the manner of artists and poets, and he speaks after the manner of prophets and seers. *Cogita et visa*, this title of one of his books might be the title of all. The most admirable, the *Novum Organum*, is a string of aphorisms,—a collection, as it were, of scientific decrees, as of an oracle who foresees the future and reveals the truth. And to make the resemblance complete, he expresses them by poetical figures, by enigmatic abbreviations, almost in Sibylline verses: *Idola specûs*, *Idola tribûs*, *Idola fori*, *Idola theatri*, every

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\* Bacon’s *Works*, Book i. The true end of learning mistaken.

† Especially in the *Essays*.



one will recall these strange names, by which he signifies the four kinds of illusions to which man is subject. Shakspeare and the seers do not contain more vigorous or expressive condensations of thought, more resembling inspiration, and in Bacon they are to be found everywhere. In short, his process is that of the creators ; it is intuition, not reasoning. When he has laid up his store of facts, the greatest possible, on some vast subject, on some entire province of the mind, on the whole anterior philosophy, on the general condition of the sciences, on the power and limits of human reason, he casts over all this a comprehensive view, as it were a great net, brings up a universal idea, condenses his idea into a maxim, and hands it to us with the words, "Verify and profit by it."

There is nothing more hazardous, more like fantasy, than this mode of thought, when it is not checked by natural and strong good sense. This common sense, which is a kind of natural divination, the stable equilibrium of an intellect always gravitating to the true, like the needle to the north pole, Bacon possesses in the highest degree. He has a preëminently practical, even an utilitarian mind, such as we meet with later in Bentham, and such as their business habits were to impress more and more upon the English. At the age of sixteen, while at the university, he was satisfied with Aristotle's philosophy, not that he thought meanly of the author, whom, on the contrary, he calls a great genius ; but because it seemed to him of no practical utility, "incapable of producing works which might promote the well-being of men." The syllogism was good in the schools, not in nature ; it made disputants, not discoverers. From the moment that science had art for an end, and men studied in order to act, all was transformed ; for we cannot act without certain and precise knowledge. Forces, before they can be employed, must be measured and verified ; before we can build a house, we must know exactly the resistance of the beams, or the house will collapse ; before we can cure a sick man, we must know with certainty the effect of a remedy, or the patient will die. Practice makes certainty and exactitude a necessity to science, because practice is impossible when it has nothing to lean upon but guesses and approximations. How can we eliminate guesses and approximations? We must imitate the cases in which science, issuing in practice, is shown to be pre-

cise and certain, and these cases are the industries. We must, as in the industries, observe, essay, attempt, verify, keep our mind fixed "on sensible and particular things," advance to general rules only step by step; "not anticipate" experience, but follow it; not imagine nature, but "interpret it." For every general effect, such as heat, whiteness, hardness, liquidity, we must seek a general condition, so that in producing the condition we may produce the effect. And for this it is necessary, "by fit rejections and exclusion," to extract the condition sought from the heap of facts in which it lies buried, construct the table of cases from which the effect is absent, the table where it is present, the table where the effect is shown in various degrees, so as to isolate and bring to light the condition which produced it. Then we shall have, not useless universal axioms, but "efficacious mediate axioms," true laws from which we can derive works, and which are the sources of power in the same degree as the sources of light. Bacon described and predicted in this modern science and industry, their correspondence, method, resources, principle; and after more than two centuries, it is still to him that we go to discover the theory of what we are attempting and doing.

Beyond this great view, he has discovered nothing. Cowley, one of his admirers, justly said that, like Moses on Mount Pisgah, he was the first to announce the promised land; but he might have added quite as justly, that, like Moses, he did not enter there. He pointed out the route, but did not travel it; he taught men how to discover natural laws, but discovered none.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE THEATRE.

§ 20.—WE must look at this world more closely, and beneath the ideas which are developed seek for the men who live ; it is the theatre especially which is the original product of the English Renaissance, and it is the theatre especially which will exhibit the men of the English Renaissance. Forty poets, among them ten of superior rank, and the greatest of all artists who have represented the soul in words ; many hundreds of pieces, and nearly fifty masterpieces ; the drama extended over all the provinces of history, imagination and fancy,—expanded so as to embrace comedy, tragedy, pastoral and fanciful literature—to represent all degrees of human condition, and all the caprices of human invention—to express all the sensitive details of actual truth, and all the philosophic grandeur of general reflection ; the stage disencumbered of all precept, and freed from all imitation, given up and appropriated in the minutest particulars to the reigning taste and the public intelligence : all this was a vast and manifold work, capable by its flexibility, its greatness, and its form, of receiving and preserving the exact imprint of the age and of the nation.

When an original and national drama springs up, the poets who establish it, carry in themselves the sentiments which it represents. They display better than other men the public spirit, because the public spirit is stronger in them than in other men. The passions which surround them break forth in their heart with a harsher or a juster cry, and hence their voices become the voices of all. Chivalric and Catholic Spain had her interpreters in her enthusiasts and her Don Quixotes ; in Calderon, first a soldier, afterwards a priest ; in Lope de Vega, a volunteer at fifteen, a passionate lover, a wandering duellist, a soldier of the Armada, finally a priest and familiar of the Holy

Office ; so ardent that he fasts till he is exhausted, faints with emotion while singing mass, and in his flagellations stains the walls of his cell with blood. Calm and noble Greece had in her principal tragic poet one of the most accomplished and fortunate of her sons : Sophocles, first in song and palæstra ; who at fifteen sang, unclad, the pæan before the trophy of Salamis, and who afterwards, as ambassador, general, ever loving the gods and impassioned for his state, offered, in his life as in his works, the spectacle of the incomparable harmony which made the beauty of the ancient world, and which the modern world will never more attain to. Eloquent and worldly France, in the age which carried the art of decency and conversation to its highest pitch, finds, to unite her oratorical tragedies and to paint her drawing-room passions, the most able craftsman of words : Racine, a courtier, a man of the world ; the most capable, by the delicacy of his tact and the adaptation of his style, of making men of the world and courtiers speak. Equally in England, the poets are in harmony with their works. Almost all are Bohemians, born of the people,\* yet educated, and for the most part having studied at Oxford or Cambridge, but poor, so that their education contrasts with their condition. Ben Jonson is the step-son of a bricklayer, and himself a bricklayer ; Marlowe is the son of a shoemaker ; Shakspeare of a woollen merchant ; Massinger of a servant.† They live as they can, get into debt, write for their bread, go on the stage. Peele, Lodge, Marlowe, Jonson, Shakspeare, Heywood, are actors ; most of the details which we have of their lives are taken from the journal of Henslowe, an old pawnbroker, later a money-lender and manager of a theatre, who gives them work, advances money to them, receives their manuscripts or their wardrobes as security. For a play he gives seven or eight pounds ; after the year 1600 prices rise, and reach as high as twenty or twenty-five pounds. It is clear that, even after this increase, the trade of author scarcely brings in bread. In order to earn money, it was necessary, like Shak-

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\* Except Beaumont and Fletcher.

† Hartley Coleridge, in his *Introduction to the Dramatic Works of Massinger and Ford*, says of Massinger's father : " We are not certified in the situation which he held in the noble household (Earl of Pembroke), but we may be sure that it was neither menial nor mean. Service in those days was not derogatory to gentle birth."—TR.

spare, to become a manager, to try to have a share in the property of a theatre ; but the case is rare, and the life which they lead, a life of comedians and actors, improvident and full of excess, generally leads them to exhaustion, poverty, and death. Heywood, who played almost every day, bound himself, in addition, to write a sheet daily, composes wretchedly in the taverns, labors and sweats like a true literary hack, and dies leaving two hundred and twenty pieces, of which most are lost. Massinger dies unknown ; and in the parish register we find only this sad mention of him : “ Philip Messinger, a stranger.” A few months after the death of Middleton, his widow was obliged to ask alms of the City, because he had left nothing. Many are roysterers, sad roysterers of the same sort as Musset and Murger, who give themselves up to every passion, and shake off restraint ; capable of the purest and most poetic dreams, of the most delicate and touching tenderness, and who yet can only undermine their health and mar their glory. Such are Nash, Dekker, and Greene ; Nash, a fanciful satirist, who abused his talent, and conspired like a prodigal against good fortune ; Dekker, who passed three years in the King’s Bench prison ; Greene, above all, a pleasing wit, rich, graceful, who gave himself up to all pleasures, publicly with tears confessing his vices, and the next moment plunging into them again. Quitting Cambridge, “ with good fellows as free-living as himself,” Greene had travelled over Spain, Italy, “ in which places he saw and practizde such villainie as is abhominable to declare.” On his return he became, in London, a supporter of taverns, a haunter of evil places. A little later he is seized with remorse, marries, depicts in delicious lines the regularity and calm of an upright life ; then returns to London, devours his property and his wife’s fortune in the company of ruffians, sharpers, courtesans ; drinking, blaspheming, wearing himself out by sleepless nights and orgies ; very often disgusted with himself, and writing little pieces to accuse himself, or to convert his comrades. By this process he was soon worn out ; six years were enough to exhaust him. An indigestion arising from Rhenish wine and pickled herrings finished him. If it had not been for his hostess, who succored him, he “ would have perished in the streets.” He lasted a little longer, and then his light went out ; now and then he begged her “ pittifully for a

penny pott of malmesie ;” he was covered with lice, he had but one shirt, and when his own was “a washing” he was obliged to borrow her husband’s. “His doublet and hose and sword were sold for three shillings,” and the poor folks paid the cost of his burial. four shillings for the winding-sheet, and six and fourpence for the burial. In such low places, on such dunghills, amid such excesses and violence, dramatic genius forced its way, and among others, that of the first, of the most powerful, of the true founder of the dramatic school, Christopher Marlowe.

Marlowe was an ill-regulated, dissolute, outrageously vehement and audacious spirit, but grand and sombre, with the genuine poetic frenzy ; pagan moreover, and rebellious in manners and creed. In this universal return to the senses, and in this impulse of natural forces which brought on the Renaissance, the corporeal instincts and the ideas which give them their warrant, break forth impetuously. Marlowe, like Greene, is a skeptic, denies God and Christ, blasphemes the Trinity, declares Moses “a juggler,” Christ more worthy of death than Barabbas, says that “yf he wer to write a new religion, he wolde undertake both a more excellent and more admirable methode,” and “almost in every company he commeth, perswadeth men to Atheisme.”\* Such were the rages, the rashnesses, the excesses which liberty of thought gave rise to in these new minds, who for the first time, after so many centuries, dared to walk unfettered. From his father’s shop, crowded with children, from the stirrups and awls, he found himself at Cambridge, probably through the patronage of a great man, and on his return to London, in want, amid the licence of the green-room, the low houses and taverns, his head was in a ferment, and his passions were heated. He turned actor ; but having broken his leg in a scene of debauchery, he remained lame and could no longer appear on the boards. He openly avowed his infidelity, and a prosecution was begun, which, if time had not failed, would probably have brought him to the stake. He made love to an abandoned woman, and trying to stab his rival, his hand was turned, so that his own blade entered his eye and his brain, and he died, still cursing and blaspheming. He was only thirty years old. Think what poetry could emanate from a life so passionate, and

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\* The translator always refers to Marlowe’s *Works*, ed. Dyce, 3 vols., 1850. Append. i. vol. 3.

occupied in such a manner! First, exaggerated declamation, heaps of murder, atrocities, a pompous and furious display of tragedy soaked in blood, and passions raised to a pitch of madness. The characters struggle and jostle, stamp on the earth, gnash their teeth, shake their fists against heaven. The trumpets sound, the drums beat, coats of mail file past, armies clash together, men stab each other, or themselves; speeches are full of gigantic threats or lyrical figures; kings die, straining a bass voice; "now doth ghastly death with greedy talons gripe my bleeding heart, and like a harpy tires on my life." The hero in *Tamburlaine the Great* is seated on a chariot drawn by chained kings, burns towns, drowns women and children, puts men to the sword, and finally, seized with an invisible sickness, raves in monstrous outcries against the gods, whose hands afflict his soul, and whom he would fain dethrone. These are the ferocities of the middle age; we might find them to this day among the companions of Ali Pacha, among the pirates of the Archipelago; we retain pictures of them in the paintings of the fifteenth century, which represent a king with his court, seated calmly round a living man who is being flayed; in the midst the flayer on his knees is working conscientiously, very careful not to spoil the skin.\*

All this is rough work, you will say; these people kill too readily, and too quickly. It is on this very account that the painting is a true one. For the specialty of the men of the time, as of Marlowe's characters, is the abrupt commission of a deed; they are children, robust children. As a horse kicks out instead of speaking, so they pull out their knives instead of an explanation. Nowadays we hardly know what nature is; we still keep in its place the benevolent prejudices of the eighteenth century; we only see it humanized by two centuries of culture, and we take its acquired calm for an innate moderation. Rage seizes these men like a fit, and then they are forced to kill. Benvenuto Cellini relates how, being offended, he tried to restrain himself, but was nearly suffocated; and that he might not die of the torments, he rushed with his dagger upon his opponent. So, in *Edward II.*, the nobles immediately appeal to arms; all is excessive and unforeseen; between two replies the

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\* In the Museum of Ghent.

heart is turned upside down, transported to the extremes of hate or tenderness. Edward, seeing his favorite Gaveston again, pours out before him his treasure, casts his dignities at his feet, gives him his seal, himself, and, on a threat from the Bishop of Coventry, suddenly cries :

“ Throw off his golden mitre, rend his stole,  
And in the channel christen him anew.”\*

Furies and hatreds clash together like horsemen in a battle. The Duke of Lancaster draws his sword on Gaveston to slay him, before the king; Mortimer wounds Gaveston. These powerful loud voices growl; the noblemen will not even let a dog approach the prince, and rob them of their rank. Lancaster says of Gaveston :

“ . . . He comes not back,  
Unless the sea cast up his shipwrack'd body.  
*Warwick.* And to behold so sweet a sight as that,  
There's none here but would run his horse to death.”†

They have seized Gaveston, and intend to hang him “ at a bough ;” they refuse to let him speak a single minute with the king. In vain they are entreated ; when they do at last consent, they recall their promise ; it is a prey they want immediately, and Warwick, seizing him by force, “ strake off his head in a trench.” Those are the men of the middle-age. They have the fierceness, the rage, the pride of big, well-fed, thorough-bred bull-dogs. It is this sternness and impetuosity of primitive passions which produced the Wars of the Roses, and for thirty years drove the nobles on each other's swords and to the block.

What is there beyond all these frenzies and gluttings of blood? The idea of crushing necessity and inevitable ruin in which everything sinks and comes to an end. Mortimer, brought to the block, says with a smile :

“ Base Fortune, now I see, that in thy wheel  
There is a point, to which when men aspire,  
They tumble headlong down : that point I touch'd,  
And, seeing there was no place to mount up higher,  
Why should I grieve at my declining fall?—  
Farewell, fair queen ; weep not for Mortimer,

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\* Marlowe, *Edward the Second*, i. p. 173.

† *Ibid.* p. 188.



That scorns the world, and, as a traveller,  
Goes to discover countries yet unknown.”\*

Weigh well these grand words ; they are a cry from the heart, the profound confession of Marlowe, as also of Byron, and of the old sea-kings. The northern paganism is fully expressed in this heroic and mournful sigh ; it is thus they imagine the world so long as they remain on the outside of Christianity, or as soon as they quit it. So also, when they see in life but a battle of unchecked passions, and in death but a gloomy sleep, perhaps filled with mournful dreams, there is no other supreme good but a day of joy and victory. They glut themselves, shutting their eyes to the issue, except that they may be swallowed up on the morrow. That is the master-thought of *Doctor Faustus*, the greatest of Marlowe’s dramas ; to satisfy his soul, no matter at what price, or with what results :

“A sound magician is a mighty god. . . .  
How I am gluted with conceit of this ! . . .  
I’ll have them fly to India for gold,  
Ransack the ocean for orient pearl. . . .  
I’ll have them read me strange philosophy,  
And tell the secrets of all foreign kings ;  
I’ll have them wall all Germany with brass,  
And make swift Rhine circle fair Wertenberg. . . .  
Like lions shall they guard us when we please ;  
Like Almain rutters with their horsemen’s staves,  
Or Lapland giants, trotting by our sides ;  
Sometimes like women, or unwedded maids,  
Shadowing more beauty in their airy brows  
Than have the white breasts of the queen of love.”†

What brilliant dreams, what desires, what vast or voluptuous wishes, worthy of a Roman Cæsar or an eastern poet, eddy in this teeming brain ! To satiate them, to obtain four-and-twenty years of power, Faustus gives his soul, without fear, without need of temptation, at the first outset, voluntarily, so sharp is the prick within :

“Had I as many souls as there be stars,  
I’d give them all for Mephistophilis.  
By him I’ll be great emperor of the world,  
And make a bridge through the moving air. . . .  
Why shouldst thou not ? Is not thy soul thy own ?”‡

\* *Edward the Second*, last scene, p. 288.

† Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus*, i. p. 9 *et passim*.

‡ *Ibid.* pp. 22, 29.

And with that he gives himself full swing: he wants to know everything, to have everything; a book in which he can behold all herbs and trees which grow upon the earth; another in which shall be drawn all the constellations and planets; another which shall bring him gold when he wills it; another which summons "men in armor" ready to execute his commands, and which holds "thunder, whirlwinds, thunder and lightning" chained at his disposal. He is like a child, he stretches out his hands for everything shining; then grieves to think of hell, then lets himself be diverted by shows:

*Faustus.* O, this feeds my soul!

*Lucifer.* Tut, Faustus, in hell is all manner of delight.

*Faustus.* Oh, might I see hell, and return again,  
How happy were I then!" . . . †

He is conducted, being invisible, over the whole world; lastly to Rome, among the ceremonies of the Pope's court. Like a schoolboy during a holiday, he has insatiable eyes, he forgets everything before a pageant, he amuses himself in playing tricks, in giving the Pope a box on the ear, in beating the monks, in performing magic tricks before princes, finally in drinking, feasting, filling his belly, deadening his thoughts. In his transport he becomes an atheist, and says there is no hell, that those are "old wives' tales." Then suddenly the sad idea knocks at the gates of his brain:

"I will renounce this magic, and repent. . .

My heart's so harden'd, I cannot repent:

Scarce can I name salvation, faith, or heaven,

But fearful echoes thunder in mine ears,

'Faustus, thou art damn'd!' then swords, and knives,

Poison, guns, halters, and envenom'd steel

Are laid before me to despatch myself,

Had not sweet pleasure conquer'd deep despair.

Have not I made blind Homer sing to me

Of Alexander's love and Cænon's death?

And hath not he, that built the walls of Thebes

With ravishing sound of his melodious harp,

Made music with my Mephistophilis?

Why should I die, then, or basely despair?

I am resolv'd; Faustus shall ne'er repent.—

Come Mephistophilis, let us dispute again,

And argue of divine astrology.

Tell me, are there many heavens above the moon?  
 Are all celestial bodies but one globe,  
 As is the substance of this centric earth? . . . \*  
 "One thing . . . let me crave of thee  
 To glut the longing of my heart's desire. . . .  
 Was this the face that launch'd a thousand ships,  
 And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?  
 Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss!  
 Her lips suck forth my soul: see, where it flies!—  
 Come, Helen, come, give me my soul again.  
 Here will I dwell, for heaven is in these lips,  
 And all is dross that is not Helena. . . .  
 O thou art fairer than the evening air  
 Clad in the beauty of a thousand stars!" †

"Ah, my God, I would weep! but the devil draws in my tears.  
 Gush forth blood, instead of tears! yea, life and soul! Oh, he  
 stays my tongue! I would lift up my hands; but see, they  
 hold them, they hold them; Lucifer and Mephistophilis." . . . ‡

"Ah, Faustus,  
 Now hast thou but one bare hour to live,  
 And then thou must be damn'd perpetually!  
 Stand still, you ever-moving spheres of heaven,  
 That time may cease, and midnight never come. . . .  
 The stars move still, time runs, the clock will strike,  
 The devil will come, and Faustus must be damn'd.  
 Oh, I'll leap up to my God!—Who pulls me down?—  
 See, see, where Christ's blood streams in the firmament!  
 One drop would save my soul, half a drop: ah, my Christ,  
 Ah, rend not my heart for naming of my Christ!  
 Yet will I call on him. . . .  
 Ah, half the hour is past! 'twill all be past anon. . . .  
 Let Faustus live in hell a thousand years,  
 A hundred thousand, and at last be sav'd. . . .  
 It strikes, it strikes. . . .  
 Oh soul, be chang'd into little water-drops,  
 And fall into the ocean, ne'er be found!" §

There is the living, struggling, natural, personal man, not the  
 philosophic type which Goethe has created, but a primitive and  
 genuine man, hot-headed, fiery, the slave of his passions,  
 the sport of his dreams, wholly engrossed in the present,  
 moulded by his lusts, contradictions, and follies, who amidst  
 noise and starts, cries of pleasure and anguish, rolls, knowing it

\* Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus*, p. 37. † *Ibid.* p. 75. ‡ *Ibid.* p. 78. § *Ibid.* p. 80.

and willing it, down the slope and crags of his precipice. The whole English drama is here, as a plant in its seed, and Marlowe is to Shakspeare what Perugino was to Raphael.

§ 21.—Opposed to this band of tragic figures, with their contorted features, brazen fronts, combative attitudes, is a troop of sweet and timid figures, tender before everything, the most graceful and lovable, whom it has been given to man to depict. In Shakspeare you will meet them in Miranda, Juliet, Desdemona, Virginia, Ophelia, Cordelia, Imogen; but they abound also in the others; and it is a characteristic of the English race to have furnished them, as it is of the English drama to have represented them. By a singular coincidence, the women are more of women, the men more of men, here than elsewhere. The two natures go each to its extreme: in the one to boldness, the spirit of enterprise and resistance, the warlike, imperious, and unpolished character; in the other to sweetness, devotion, patience, inextinguishable affection,\*—a thing unknown in distant lands, and in France especially: a woman here gives herself without drawing back, and places her glory and duty in obedience, forgiveness, adoration, wishing and pretending only to be melted and absorbed daily deeper and deeper in him whom she has freely and forever chosen.† It is this, an old German instinct, which these great painters of instinct diffuse here, one and all: Penthea, Dorothea, in Ford and Greene, Isabella and the Duchess of Malfi, in Webster; Bianca, Ordeella, Arethusa, Juliana, Euphrasia, Amoret, and others, in Beaumont and Fletcher: there are a score of them who, under the severest tests and strongest temptations, display this admirable power of self-abandonment and devotion.‡ The Duchess of Brachiano is betrayed, insulted by her faithless husband; to shield him from the vengeance of her family, she takes upon

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\* Hence the happiness and strength of the marriage tie. In France it is but an association of two comrades, tolerably alike and tolerably equal, which gives rise to endless disturbance and bickering.

† See the representation of this character throughout English and German literature. Stendhal, an acute observer, saturated with Italian and French morals and ideas, is astonished at this phenomenon. He understands nothing of this kind of devotion, "this slavery which English husbands have had the wit to impose on their wives under the name of duty." These are "the manners of a seraglio." See also *Corinne*, by Madame de Staël.

‡ A perfect woman already; meek and patient.—HEYWOOD.

herself the blame of the rupture, purposely plays the shrew, and leaving him at peace with his courtesan, dies embracing his picture. Arethusa allows herself to be wounded by Philaster, stays the people who would hold back the murderer's arm, declares that he has done nothing, that it is not he, prays for him, loves him in spite of all, even to the end, as though all his acts were sacred, as if he had power of life and death over her. Ordella devotes herself, that the king, her husband, may have children;\* she offers herself for a sacrifice, simply, without grand words, with her whole heart :

" *Ordella*. Let it be what it may, then, what it dare,  
I have a mind will hazard it.

*Thierry*. But hark you ;  
What may that woman merit, makes this blessing ?

*O*. Only her duty, sir. *T*. 'Tis terrible !

*O*. 'Tis so much the more noble.

*T*. 'Tis full of fearful shadows ! *O*. So is sleep, sir,  
Or anything that's merely ours, and mortal ;  
We were begotten gods else ; but those fears,  
Feeling but once the fires of nobler thoughts,  
Fly, like the shapes of the clouds we form, to nothing.

*T*. Suppose it death ! *O*. I do. *T*. And endless parting  
With all we can call ours, with all our sweetness,  
With youth, strength, pleasure, people, time, nay reason  
For in the silent grave, no conversation,  
No joyful tread of friends, no voice of lovers,  
No careful father's counsel, nothing's heard,  
Nor nothing is, but all oblivion,  
Dust and an endless darkness ; and dare you, woman,  
Desire this place ? *O*. 'Tis of all sleeps the sweetest :  
Children begin it to us, strong men seek it,  
And kings from height of all their painted glories  
Fall, like spent exhalations to this centre. . .

*T*. Then you can suffer ? *O*. As willingly as say it.

*T*. Martell, a wonder !

Here is a woman that dares die.—Yet tell me,  
Are you a wife ? *O*. I am, sir. *T*. And have children ?—  
She sighs, and weeps ! *O*. Oh, none, sir. *T*. Dare you venture,  
For a poor barren praise you ne'er shall hear,  
To part with these sweet hopes ? *O*. With all but heaven."†

Is not this grand ? Can you understand how one human being

\* Beaumont and Fletcher, *Thierry and Theodoret, The Maid's Tragedy, Philaster*. See also the part of Lucina in *Valentinian*.

† *Thierry and Theodoret*, iv. 1.

can thus be separated from herself, forget and lose herself in another? They do so lose themselves, as in an abyss. When they love in vain, and without hope, neither reason nor life resist; they languish, grow mad, die like Ophelia. *Aspasia*, forlorn,

“ Walks discontented with her watery eyes  
Bent on the earth. The unfrequented woods  
Are her delight; and when she sees a bank  
Stuck full of flowers, she with a sigh will tell  
Her servants what a pretty place it were  
To bury lovers in; and make her maids  
Pluck 'em, and strew her over like a corse.  
She carries with her an infectious grief  
That strikes all her beholders; she will sing  
The mournful'st things that ever ear hath heard,  
And sigh and sing again; and when the rest  
Of our young ladies, in their wanton blood,  
Tell mirthful tales in course, that fill the room  
With laughter, she will with so sad a look  
Bring forth a story of the silent death  
Of some forsaken virgin, which her grief  
Will put in such a phrase, that, ere she end,  
She'll send them weeping one by one away.”\*

When we find a constitution of soul so new, and capable of such great effects, it behoves us to look at the bodies. Consider then the species in this case—the race, that is; for the sisters of Shakspeare's *Ophelia* and *Virginia*, Goethe's *Clara* and *Margaret*, Otway's *Belvidera*, Richardson's *Pamela*, constitute a race by themselves, soft and fair, with blue eyes, lily whiteness, blushing, of timid delicacy, serious sweetness, framed to yield, bend, cling. Their poets feel it clearly when they bring them on the stage; they surround them with the poetry which becomes them, the murmur of streams, the pendent willow-tresses, the frail and humid flowers of the country, so like themselves:

“ The flower, that's like thy face, pale primrose, nor  
The azure harebell, like thy veins; no, nor  
The leaf of eglantine, whom not to slander,  
Out-sweeten'd not thy breath.”†

The idyl is self-produced among these human flowers; the drama delays before the angelic sweetness of their tenderness and modesty. Sometimes even the idyl is born complete and pure, and

\* Beaumont and Fletcher, *The Maid's Tragedy*, i. 1. † *Cymbeline*, iv. 2.

the whole theatre is occupied by a sentimental and poetical kind of opera. There are two or three such in Shakspeare; in rude Jonson, *The Sad Shepherd*; in Fletcher, *The Faithful Shepherdess*. Ridiculous titles nowadays, for they remind us of the interminable platitudes of d'Urfé, or the affected conceits of Florian; charming titles, if we note the sincere and overflowing poetry which they contain. Amoret, the faithful shepherdess, lives in an imaginary country, full of old gods, yet English, like the dewy verdant landscapes in which Rubens sets his nymphs dancing:

“ Thro’ yon same bending plain  
That flings his arms down to the main,  
And thro’ these thick woods have I run,  
Whose bottom never kiss’d the sun  
Since the lusty spring began.” . . .

“ For to that holy wood is consecrate  
A virtuous well, about whose flow’ry banks  
The nimble-footed fairies dance their rounds,  
By the pale moon-shine, dipping oftentimes  
Their stolen children, so to make them free  
From dying flesh and dull mortality.” . . .\*

“ See the dew-drops, how they kiss  
Ev’ry little flower that is ;  
Hanging on their velvet heads,  
Like a rope of crystal beads,  
See the heavy clouds low falling,  
And bright Hesperus down calling  
The dead Night from underground.” †

These are the plants and the aspects of the ever fresh English country, now enveloped in a pale diaphanous mist, now glistening under the absorbing sun, teeming with plants so full of sap, so delicate, that in the midst of their most brilliant splendor and their most luxuriant life, we feel that to-morrow will wither them. There, on a summer-night, the young men and girls, after their custom, ‡ go to gather flowers and plight their troth. Amoret and Perigot are together; Amoret,

“ Fairer far  
Than the chaste blushing morn, or that fair star  
That guides the wand’ring seaman thro’ the deep,”

modest like a virgin, and tender as a wife, says to Perigot :

\* Beaumont and Fletcher, *The Faithful Shepherdess*, i. 1. † *Ibid.* ii. 1.

‡ See the description in Nathan Drake, *Shakspeare and his Times*.

"I do believe thee: 'Tis as hard for me  
To think thee false, and harsher, than for thee  
To hold me foul."\*

Strongly as she is tried, her heart, once given, never draws back. Perigot, deceived, driven to despair, persuaded that she is unchaste, strikes her with his sword, and casts her bleeding to the ground. The sullen Shepherd throws her into a well; but the god lets fall "a drop from his watery locks" into the wound: the chaste flesh closes at the touch of the divine water, and the maiden, recovering, goes once more in search of him she loves:

"Speak if thou be here,  
My Perigot! Thy Amoret, thy dear,  
Calls on thy loved name. . . . 'Tis thy friend,  
Thy Amoret; come hither to give end  
To these consumings. Look up, gentle boy;  
I have forgot those pains and dear annoy  
I suffer'd for thy sake, and am content  
To be thy love again. Why hast thou rent  
Those curled locks, where I have often hung  
Ribbons, and damask roses, and have flung  
Waters distill'd to make thee fresh and gay,  
Sweeter than nosegays on a bridal day?  
Why dost thou cross thine arms, and hang thy face  
Down to thy bosom, letting fall apace,  
From those two little Heav'ns, upon the ground,  
Show'rs of more price, more orient, and more round,  
Than those that hang upon the moon's pale brow?  
Cease these complainings, shepherd! I am now  
The same I ever was, as kind and free,  
And can forgive before you ask of me:  
Indeed, I can and will."†

Who could resist her sweet and sad smile? Still deceived, Perigot wounds her again; she falls, but without anger.

"So this work hath end!  
Farewell, and live! be constant to thy friend  
That loves thee next."‡

A nymph cures her, and at last Perigot, disabused, comes and throws himself on his knees before her. She stretches out her arms; in spite of all that he had done, she was not changed:

"I am thy love!  
Thy Amoret, for evermore thy love!

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\* Beaumont and Fletcher, *The Faithful Shepherdess*, i. 1.

† *The Faithful Shepherdess*, iv.

‡ *Ibid.*



Strike once more on my naked breast, I'll prove  
As constant still. Oh, cou'dst thou love me yet,  
How soon could I my former griefs forget!"\*

Such are the touching and poetical figures which these poets introduce in their dramas, or in connection with their dramas, amid murders, assassinations, the clash of swords, the howl of slaughter, in contrast with the furious men who adore or woo them, like them carried to excess, transported by their tenderness as the others by their violence: it is the complete exposition, the perfect opposition, of the feminine instinct led to self-abandoning recklessness, and the masculine harshness led to murderous rage. Thus built up and thus provided, the drama of the age was enabled to exhibit the inner depths of man, and to set in motion the most powerful human emotions; to bring upon the stage Hamlet and Lear, Ophelia and Cordelia, the death of Desdemona and the butcheries of Macbeth.

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\* *The Faithful Shepherdess*, v. Compare, as an illustration of the contrast of races, the Italian pastorals, Tasso's *Aminta*, Guarini's *Il Pastor fido*, etc.

## CHAPTER VI.

BEN JONSON.

§ 22.—WHEN a new civilization brings a new art to light, there are about a dozen men of talent who express the general idea, surrounding one or two men of genius who express it thoroughly. Guilhem de Castro, Montalvan, Molina, Alarcon, Moreto, surrounding Calderon and Lope de Vega ; Grayer, Van Oost, Romboust, Van Thulden, Van Dyke, Honthorst, surrounding Rubens ; Ford, Marlowe, Massinger, Webster, Beaumont, Fletcher, surrounding Shakspeare and Ben Jonson. The first constitute the chorus, the others are the leaders. They sing the same piece together, and at times the chorus is equal to the solo ; but only at times. Thus, in the dramas which I have just referred to, the poet occasionally reaches the summit of his art, hits upon a complete character, a burst of sublime passion ; then he falls back, gropes amid qualified successes, rough sketches, feeble imitations, and at last takes refuge in the tricks of his trade. It is not in him, but in great men like Ben Jonson and Shakspeare, that we must look for the attainment of his idea and the fulness of his art. “ Numerous were the wit-combats,” says Fuller, “ betwixt him (Shakspeare) and Ben Jonson, which two I behold like a Spanish great galleon and an English man-of-war. Master Jonson (like the former) was built far higher in learning ; solid, but slow in his performances. Shakspeare, with the English man-of-war, lesser in bulk, but lighter in sailing, could turn with all tides, tack about and take advantage of all winds, by the quickness of his wit and invention.”\* Such was Jonson, physically and morally. He was a genuine Englishman, big and coarsely framed, energetic, combative, proud, often morose, and prone to strange splenetic imaginations. He related to Drummond that for a whole night he

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\* Fuller's *Worthies*, ed. Nuttall, 1840, 3 vols., iii. 284.

imagined "that he saw the Carthaginians and the Romans fighting on his great toe."\* Not that he is melancholic by nature ; on the contrary, he loves to escape from himself by a wide and blustering licence of merriment, by copious and varied converse, assisted by good Canary wine, with which he drenches himself, and which ends by becoming a necessity to him. What we know of his life is in harmony with his person: he suffered much, fought much, dared much. He was studying at Cambridge, when his father-in-law, a bricklayer, recalled him, and set him to the trowel. He ran away, enlisted as a volunteer into the army of the Low Countries, killed and despoiled a man in single combat, "in the view of both armies." You see he was a man of bodily action, and that he exercised his limbs in early life.† On his return to England, at the age of nineteen, he went on the stage for his livelihood, and occupied himself also in touching up dramas. Having been provoked, he fought, was seriously wounded, but killed his adversary ; after that, he was cast into prison, and found himself "nigh the gallows." A Catholic priest visited and converted him; quitting his prison penniless, at twenty years of age, he married. At last, two years later, he produced his first play. Children came, he must earn them bread ; and he was not of the stuff to follow the beaten track to the end, being persuaded that a fine philosophy ought to be introduced into comedy, a special nobleness and dignity,—that it was necessary to follow the example of the ancients, to imitate their severity and their accuracy, to be above the theatrical racket and the rude improbabilities in which the common herd delighted. He openly proclaimed his intention in his prefaces, roundly railed at his rivals, proudly set forth on the stage‡ his doctrines, his morality, his character. He thus made bitter enemies, who defamed him outrageously and before their audiences, whom he exasperated by the violence of his satires, and against whom he struggled without intermission to the end. Toward the end of his life, money failed him ; he was liberal, improvident ; his pockets always had holes in them, as his hand was always open ; though he had written a vast quan-

\* There is a similar hallucination to be met with in the life of Lord Castlereagh, who afterwards cut his throat.

† At the age of forty-four he went to Scotland on foot.

‡ Parts of *Crites and Asper*.

tity, he was obliged to write still in order to live. Paralysis came on, his scurvy was aggravated, dropsy attacked him. He could not leave his room, or walk without assistance. His last plays did not succeed. In the epilogue to the *New Inn* he says :

“ If you expect more than you had to night,  
The maker is sick and sad. . . .  
All that his faint and falt’ring tongue doth crave,  
Is, that you not impute it to his brain,  
That’s yet unhurt, altho’ set round with pain,  
It cannot long hold out.”

His enemies brutally insulted him :

“ Thy Pegasus. . .  
He had bequeathed his belly unto thee,  
To hold that little learning which is fled  
Into thy guts from out thy emptye head.”

Inigo Jones, his colleague, deprived him of the patronage of the court. He was obliged to beg a supply of money from the Lord Treasurer, then from the Earl of Newcastle :

“ Disease, the enemy, and his engineers,  
Want, with the rest of his concealed compeers,  
Have cast a trench about me, now five years. . . .  
The muse not peeps out, one of hundred days ;  
But lies blocked up and straitened, narrowed in,  
Fixed to the bed and boards, unlike to win  
Health, or scarce breath, as she had never been.”\*

His wife and children were dead ; he lived alone, forsaken, served by an old woman.

This is the life of a combatant, bravely endured, worthy of the seventeenth century by its crosses and its energy ; courage and force abounded throughout. Few writers have labored more, and more conscientiously ; his knowledge was vast, and in this age of great scholars he was one of the best classics of his time, as deep as he was accurate and thorough, having studied the minutest details of ancient life. It was not enough for him to have stored himself from the best writers, to have their whole works continually in his mind, to scatter his pages, whether he would or no, with recollections of them. He dug into the orators, critics, scholiasts, grammarians, and compilers of inferior rank ; he picked up stray fragments ; he took characters, jokes,

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\* Ben Jonson's *Poems*, ed. Bell, *An Epistle Mendicant*, to Richard, Lord Weston, Lord High Treasurer (1631), p. 244.

refinements, from Athenæus, Libanius, Philostratus. He had so well entered into and digested the Greek and Latin ideas, that they were incorporated with his own. They enter into his speech without discord; they spring forth in him as vigorous as at their first birth; he originates even when he remembers. On every subject he had this thirst for knowledge, and this gift of mastering knowledge. He knew alchemy when he wrote the *Alchemist*. He is familiar with alembics, retorts, receivers, as if he had passed his life seeking after the philosopher's stone. He explains incineration, calcination, imbibition, rectification, reverberation, as well as Agrippa and Paracelsus. If he speaks of cosmetics,\* he brings out a shopful of them; one might make out of his plays a dictionary of the oaths and costumes of courtiers; he seems to have a specialty in all branches. A still greater proof of his force is, that his learning in nowise mars his vigor; heavy as is the mass with which he loads himself, he carries it without stooping.

In the great dash of this heavy advance, he finds a path which suits him. He has his style. Classical erudition and education made him a classic, and he writes like his Greek models and his Roman masters. Jonson received from his acquaintance with the ancients the habit of decomposing ideas, unfolding them part by part in natural order, making himself understood and believed. From the first thought to the final conclusion, he conducts the reader by a continuous and uniform ascent. Hence his talent, his successes, and his faults: if he has a better style and better plots than the others, he is not, like them, a creator of souls. He is too much of a theorist, too preoccupied by rules. His argumentative habits spoil him when he seeks to shape and motion complete, and living men. His characters, like those of la Bruyère and Theophrastus, were hammered out of solid deductions. Now it is a vice selected from the catalogue of moral philosophy, sensuality thirsting for gold: this perverse double inclination becomes a personage, Sir Epicure Mammon; before the alchemist, before the famulus, before his friend, before his mistress, in public or alone, all his words denote a greed of pleasure and of gold, and they express nothing more.† Now it is a piece of madness gathered from the old

\* *The Devil is an Ass.*

† Compare Sir Epicure Mammon with Baron Hulot from Balzac's *Cousine Bette*. Balzac, who is learned like Jonson, creates real beings like Shak-

sophists, a babbling with horror of noise ; this form of mental pathology becomes a personage, Morose ; the poet has the air of a doctor who has undertaken the task of recording exactly all the desires of speech, all the necessities of silence, and of recording nothing else. Now he picks out a laughable incident, an affectation, a species of folly, from the manners of the dandies and the courtiers ; a mode of swearing, an extravagant style, a habit of gesticulating, or any other oddity contracted by vanity or fashion. The hero whom he covers with these eccentricities, is overloaded by them. He disappears beneath his enormous trappings ; he drags them about with him everywhere ; he cannot get rid of them for an instant. We no longer see the man under the dress ; he is like a manikin, oppressed under a cloak, too heavy for him. Thus Jonson put on the stage and gave a representation of moral treatises, fragments of history, scraps of satire ; he did not stamp new beings on the imagination of mankind.

He possesses all the other gifts, and in particular the classical ; first of all, the talent for composition. For the first time we see a concocted plot, a complete intrigue, with its beginning, middle, and end ; subordinate actions well arranged, well combined ; an interest which grows and never flags ; a leading truth which all the events combine to demonstrate ; a ruling idea which all the characters combine to illustrate ; in short, an art like that which Molière and Racine were about to apply and teach. He does not, like Shakspeare, take a novel from Greene, a chronicle from Hollinshed, a life from Plutarch, promiscuously, to cut them into scenes, irrespective of likelihood, indifferent as to order and unity, caring only to set up men, at times wandering into poetic reveries, at need finishing up the piece abruptly with a recognition or a butchery. He governs himself and his characters ; he wills and he knows all that they do, and all that he does. But beyond his habits of Latin regularity, he possesses the great faculty of his age and race,—the sentiment of nature and existence, the exact knowledge of precise detail, the power in frankly and boldly handling frank passions.

Whatever Jonson undertakes, whatever be his faults, haughtiness, rough-handling, predilection for morality and the past, antiquarian and censorious instincts, he is never little or commonplace. It signifies nothing that in his Latinized tragedies,

*Sejanus, Catiline*: he is fettered by the worship of the old worn models of the Roman decadence; nothing that he plays the scholar, hammers out Ciceronian harangues, hauls in choruses imitated from Seneca, holds forth in the style of Lucan and the rhetoricians of the empire: he more than once attains a genuine accent; through his pedantry, heaviness, literary adoration of the ancients, nature forces its way; he lights, at his first attempt, on the crudities, horrors, shameless depravity of imperial Rome; he takes in hand and sets in motion the lusts and ferocities, the passions of courtesans and princesses, the daring of assassins and of great men, which produced Messalina, Agrippina, Catiline, Tiberius.\* In the Rome which he places before us we go boldly and straight to the end; justice and pity oppose no barriers. Amid victorious and slavish customs, human nature is upset; corruption and crime are held as marks of insight and energy. Observe how, in *Sejanus*, assassination is plotted and carried out with marvellous coolness. Livia discusses with Sejanus the methods of poisoning her husband, in a clear style, without circumlocution, as if the subject were how to gain a lawsuit or how to serve up a dinner. There are no equivocations, no hesitation, no remorse in the Rome of Tiberius. Glory and virtue consist in power; scruples are for common souls; the mark of a lofty heart is to desire all and to dare all. Macro says rightly:

“Men’s fortune there is virtue; reason their will;  
 Their license, law; and their observance skill.  
 Occasion is their foil; conscience, their stain;  
 Profit, their lustre: and what else is vain.”†

Sejanus addresses Livia thus:

“Royal lady, . . . .  
 Yet, now I see your wisdom, judgment, strength,  
 Quickness, and will, to apprehend the means  
 To your own good and greatness, I protest  
 Myself through rarified, and turn’d all flame  
 In your affection.”‡

After this you find one after another all the scenes of Roman life unfolded, the bargain of murder, the comedy of justice, the shamelessness of flattery, the anguish and vacillation of the

\* See the second Act of *Catiline*.

† *The Fall of Sejanus*, iii. last Scene.

‡ *Ibid* ii.

senate. When Sejanus wishes to buy a conscience, he questions, jokes, plays round the offer he is about to make, throws it out as if in pleasantry, so as to be able to withdraw it, if need be; then, when the intelligent look of the rascal, whom he is trafficking with, shows that he is understood :

“Protest not.

Thy looks are vows to me. . . .

Thou art a man, made to make consuls. Go.”\*

Elsewhere, the senator Latiaris brings to him his friend Sabinus, storms before the latter against tyranny, openly expresses a desire for liberty, provoking him to speak. Then two spies who were hid behind the door, cast themselves on Sabinus, crying: “Treason to Cæsar!” and drag him, with his face covered, before the tribunal, thence to “be thrown upon the Gemonies.”† So, when the senate is assembled, Tiberius has chosen beforehand the accusers of Silius, and their parts distributed to them. They mumble in a corner, while aloud is heard, in the emperor’s presence :

“Cæsar,

Live long and happy, great and royal Cæsar ;

The gods preserve thee and thy modesty,

Thy wisdom and thy innocence. . . . Guard

His meekness, Jove, his piety, his care,

His bounty.”‡

Then the herald cites the accused ; Varro, the consul, pronounces the indictment ; Afer hurls upon them his bloodthirsty eloquence : the senators get excited ; we see laid bare, as in Tacitus and Juvenal, the depths of Roman servility, hypocrisy, insensibility, the venomous craft of Tiberius. At last, after so many others, the turn of Sejanus comes. The fathers anxiously assemble in the temple of Apollo ; for some days past Tiberius has seemed to be trying to contradict himself ; he has removed the friend of his favorite, and next day sets his enemies in high positions. They mark the face of Sejanus, and know not what to anticipate ; Sejanus is troubled, then after a moment’s cringing is more arrogant than ever. The plots are confused, the rumors contradictory. Macro alone is in the confidence of Tiberius, and soldiers are seen, drawn up at the porch of the temple, ready to enter at the earliest sound. The formula of

\* *The Fall of Sejanus*, i.

† *Ibid.* iv.

‡ *Ibid.* iii.



convocation is read, and the council marks the names of those who do not respond to the summons ; then Regulus addresses them, and announces that Cæsar

“ Propounds to this grave senate, the bestowing  
Upon the man he loves, honor'd Sejanus,  
The tribunitial dignity and power :  
Here are his letters, signed with his signet.  
What pleaseth now the Fathers to be done ! ”

“ *Senators.* Read, read 'em, open, publicly read 'em.

*Cotta.* Cæsar hath honor'd his own greatness much  
In thinking of this act. *Trio.* It was a thought  
Happy, and worthy Cæsar. *Latianis.* And the lord  
As worthy it, on whom it is directed !

*Haterius.* Most worthy ! *Sanquinus.* Rome did never boast the virtue  
That could give envy bounds, but his : Sejanus.—

*1st Sen.* Honor'd and noble ! *2d Sen.* Good and great Sejanus !

*Præcons.* Silence ! ”\*

Tiberius' letter is read. First, long obscure and vague phrases, mingled with indirect protests and accusations, foreboding something and revealing nothing. Suddenly comes an insinuation against Sejanus. The fathers are alarmed, but the next line reassures them. A word or two further on, the same insinuation is repeated with greater exactness. “ Some there be that would interpret this his public severity to be particular ambition ; and that, under a pretext of service to us, he doth but remove his own lets: alleging the strengths he hath made to himself, by the prætorian soldiers, by his faction in court and senate, by the offices he holds himself, and confers on others, his popularity and dependents, his urging (and almost driving) us to this our unwilling retirement, and lastly, his aspiring to be our son-in-law.” The fathers rise : “ This 's strange ! ” Their eager eyes are fixed on the letter, on Sejanus, who perspires and grows pale ; their thoughts are busy with conjectures, and the words of the letter fall one by one, amidst a sepulchral silence, caught as they fall with a devouring eagerness of attention. The senators anxiously weigh the value of these varying expressions, fearing to compromise themselves with the favorite or with the prince, all feeling that they must understand, if they value their lives.

“ Your wisdoms, Conscript Fathers, are able to examine, and censure

\* *The Fall of Sejanus*, v.

these suggestions. But, were they left to our absolving voice, we durst pronounce them, as we think them, most malicious.

*Senator.* O, he has restor'd all ; list.

*Præco.* Yet are they offer'd to be averr'd, and on the lives of the informers." \*

At this word the letter becomes menacing. Those next Sejanus forsake him. "Sit farther. . . Let's remove!" The heavy Sanquinius leaps panting over the benches. The soldiers come in; then Macro. And now, at last, the letter orders the arrest of Sejanus.

.. *Regulus.* Take him hence.

And all the gods guard Cæsar! *Trio.* Take him hence.

*Haterius.* Hence. *Cotta.* To the dungeon with him. *San.* He deserves it.

*Sen.* Crown all our doors with bays. *San.* And let an ox, With gilded horns and garlands, straight be led Unto the Capitol. *Hat.* And sacrific'd To Jove, for Cæsar's safety. *Trio.* All our gods Be present still to Cæsar! . . .

*Cotta.* Let all the traitor's titles be defac'd.

*Trio.* His images and statues be pull'd down. . .

*Sen.* Liberty! liberty! liberty! Lead on,  
And praise to Macro that hath saved Rome." †

It is the baying of a furious pack of hounds; let loose at last on him, under whose hand they had crouched, and who had for a long time beaten and bruised them. Jonson discovered in his own energetic soul the energy of these Roman passions; and the clearness of his mind, added to his profound knowledge, unable to construct characters, furnished him with general ideas and striking incidents, which suffice to depict manners.

Moreover, it was to this that he turned his talent. Nearly all his work consists of comedies, not sentimental and fanciful as Shakspeare's, but imitative, and satirical, written to represent and correct follies and vices. Men, as we see them in the streets, with their whims and humors—

"When some one peculiar quality  
Doth so possess a man, that it doth draw  
All his affects, his spirits, and his powers  
In their confluxions, all to run one way,  
This may be truly said to be a humor ;" †

\* *The Fall of Sejanus*, v.

† *Ibid.*

† *Every Man out of His Humor*, Prologue.

—it is these humors which he exposes to the light, not with the artist's curiosity, but with the moralist's hate :

“ I will scourge those apes,  
 And to these courteous eyes oppose a mirror,  
 As large as is the stage whereon we act ;  
 Where they shall see the time's deformity  
 Anatomized in every nerve, and sinew,  
 With constant courage and contempt of fear. . . .

My strict hand  
 Was made to seize on vice, and with a gripe  
 Squeeze out the humor of such spongy natures  
 As lick up every idle vanity.”\*

Doubtless a determination so strong and decided does violence to the dramatic spirit. Jonson's comedies are not rarely harsh ; his characters are too grotesque, laboriously constructed, mere automatons ; the poet thought less of making living beings than of scotching a vice ; the scenes get arranged mechanically, or are confused together ; we see the process, we feel the satirical intention throughout ; delicate and easy-flowing imitation is absent, as well as the graceful sprightliness which abounds in Shakspeare. But if Jonson comes across harsh passions, visibly evil and vile, he will derive from his energy and wrath the talent to render them odious and visible, and will produce a *Volpone*, a sublime work, the sharpest picture of the manners of the age, in which lewdness, cruelty, love of gold, shamelessness of vice, display a sinister yet splendid poetry, worthy of one of Titian's bacchanalians.

Jonson did not go beyond this ; he was not a philosopher like Molière, able to grasp and dramatize the crises of human life, education, marriage, sickness, the chief characters of his country and century, the courtier, the tradesman, the hypocrite, the man of the world. He remained on a lower level, in the comedy of plot, the painting of the grotesque, the representation of too transient subjects of ridicule, too general vices. If at times, as in the *Alchemist*, he has succeeded by the perfection of plot and the vigor of satire, he has miscarried more frequently by the ponderousness of his work and the lack of comic lightness. The critic in him mars the artist ; his literary calculations strip him of spontaneous invention ; he is too much

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\* *Every Man out of his Humor*, Prologue.

of a writer and moralist, not enough of a mimic and an actor. But he is loftier from another side, for he is a poet; almost all writers, prose-authors, preachers even, were so at the time we speak of. Fancy abounded, as well as the perception of colors and forms, the need and wont of enjoying through the imagination and the eyes. Many of Jonson's pieces, the *Staple of News*, *Cynthia's Revels*; are fanciful and allegorical comedies, like those of Aristophanes. He there dallies with the real, and beyond the real, with characters who are but theatrical masks, abstractions personified, buffooneries, decorations, dances, music, pretty laughing whims of a picturesque and sentimental imagination. Thus, in *Cynthia's Revels*, three children come on "pleading possession of the cloke" of black velvet, which an actor usually wore when he spoke the prologue. They draw lots for it; one of the losers, in revenge, tells the audience beforehand the incidents of the piece. The others interrupt him at every sentence, put their hands on his mouth, and taking the cloak one after the other, begin the criticism of the spectators and authors. This child's play, these gestures and voices, this little amusing dispute, divert the public from their serious thoughts, and prepare them for the oddities which they are to look upon.

Jonson went further than this, and entered the domain of pure poetry. He wrote delicate, voluptuous, charming love poems, worthy of the ancient idyllic muse.\* Above all, he was the great, the inexhaustible inventor of Masques, a kind of masquerades, ballets, poetic dances, in which all the magnificence and the imagination of the English Renaissance is displayed. Even when he grew to be old, his imagination, like that of Titian, remained abundant and fresh. Though forsaken, gasping on his bed, feeling the approach of death, in his supreme bitterness he did not lose his tone, but wrote *The Sad Shepherd*, the most graceful and pastoral of his pieces. Consider that this beautiful dream was dreamed in a sick chamber, to an accompaniment of bottles, physic, doctors, with a nurse at his side, amidst the anxieties of poverty and the choking-fits of a dropsy! He is transported to a green forest, in the days of Robin Hood, amidst jovial chase and the great barking greyhounds. There are the malicious fairies, the Oberon and Titania, who lead men

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\* *Celebration of Charis—Miscellaneous Poems.*

afflounder in misfortune. There are open-souled lovers, the Daphne and Chloe, tasting with awe the painful sweetness of the first kiss. There lived Earine, whom the stream has "suck'd in," whom her lover, in his madness, will not cease to lament :

" Earine,

Who had her very being, and her name  
With the first knots or buddings of the spring,  
Born with the primrose or the violet,  
Or earliest roses blown ; when Cupid smil'd,  
And Venus led the graces out to dance,  
And all the flowers and sweets in nature's lap  
Leap'd out, and made their solemn conjuration  
To last but while she liv'd." . . . \*

" But she, as chaste as was her name, Earine,  
Dy'd undeflower'd : and now her sweet soul hovers  
Here in the air above us." †

Above the poor old paralytic artist, poetry still hovers like a haze of light. Yes, he had cumbered himself with science, clogged himself with theories, constituted himself theatrical critic and social censor, filled his soul with unrelenting indignation, fostered a combative and morose disposition ; but heaven's dreams never deserted him. He is the brother of Shakspeare.

\* *The Sad Shepherd*, i. 5.

† *Ibid.* iii. 2.

## CHAPTER VII.

### SHAKSPEARE.

§ 23.—I AM about to describe an extraordinary species of mind, perplexing to all the French modes of analysis and reasoning, all-powerful, excessive, equally master of the sublime and the base ; the most creative that ever engaged in the exact copy of the details of actual existence, in the dazzling caprice of fancy, in the profound complications of superhuman passions ; a nature poetical, not shackled by its morality, inspired, superior to reason by the sudden revelations of his seer's-madness ; so extreme in joy and pain, so abrupt of gait, so stormy and impetuous in his transports, that this great age alone could have cradled such a child.

Of Shakspeare all came from within—I mean from his soul and his genius ; external circumstances contributed but slightly to his development. He was intimately bound up with his age ; that is, he knew by experience the manners of country, court, and town ; he had visited the heights, depths, the middle regions of the condition of mankind ; nothing more. For the rest, his life was commonplace ; the irregularities, troubles, passions, successes through which he passed, were, on the whole, such as we meet with everywhere else.\* His father, a glover and wool stapler, in very easy circumstances, having married a sort of country heiress, had become high-bailiff and chief alderman in his little town ; but when Shakspeare reached the age of fourteen he was on the verge of ruin, mortgaging his wife's property, obliged to resign his municipal offices, and to remove his son from school to assist him in his business. The young fellow applied himself to it as well as he could, not without some scrapes and escapades : if we are to believe tradition, he was

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\* Born 1564, died 1616. He adapted plays as early as 1591. The first play entirely from his pen appeared in 1593.—PAYNE COLLIER.

one of the thirsty souls of the place, with a mind to support the reputation of his little town in its drinking powers. Once, they say, having been beaten at Bideford in one of these ale-bouts, he returned staggering from the fight, or rather could not return, and passed the night with his comrades under an apple-tree by the roadside. Without doubt he had already begun to write verses, to rove about like a genuine poet, taking part in the noisy rustic feasts, the gay pastoral plays, the rich and bold outbreak of pagan and poetical life, as it was then to be found in an English village. At all events, he was not a pattern of propriety, and his passions were as precocious as they were reckless. While not yet nineteen years old, he married the daughter of a substantial yeoman, about eight years older than himself—and not too soon, as she was about to become a mother.\* Other of his outbreaks were no more fortunate. It seems that he was fond of poaching, after the manner of the time, “being much given to all unluckinesse in stealing venison and rabbits,” says the Rev. Richard Davies; “particularly from Sir — Lucy, who had him oft whipt and sometimes imprisoned, and at last made him fly the country; . . . but his revenge was so great, that he is his Justice Clodpate.” Moreover, about this time Shakspeare’s father was in prison, his affairs were desperate, and he himself had three children, following one close upon the other; he must live, and life was hardly possible for him in his native town. He went to London, and took to the stage: took the lowest parts, was a “servant” in the theatre, that is, an apprentice, or perhaps a supernumerary. They even said that he had begun still lower, and that to earn his bread he had held gentlemen’s horses at the door of the theatre.† At all events he tasted misery, and felt, not in imagination but in fact, the sharp thorn of care, humiliation, disgust, forced labor, public discredit, the power of the people. He was a comedian, one of “His majesty’s poor players,”‡—a sad trade, degraded

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\* Mr. Halliwell and other commentators try to prove that at this time the preliminary trothplight was regarded as the real marriage; that this trothplight had taken place, and that there was therefore no irregularity in Shakspeare’s conduct.

† All these anecdotes are traditions, and consequently more or less doubtful; but the other facts are authentic.

‡ Terms of an extant document. He is named along with Burbadge and Greene.

in all ages by the contrasts and the falsehoods inseparable from it; still more degraded then by the brutalities of the crowd, who not seldom would stone the actors, and by the severities of the magistrates, who would sometimes condemn them to lose their ears. He felt it, and spoke of it with bitterness :

“ Alas, 'tis true I have gone here and there  
And made myself a motley to the view,  
Gored mine own thoughts, sold cheap what is most dear.”\*

And again :

“ When in disgrace with fortune † and men's eyes,  
I all alone beweepe my outcast state,  
And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries,  
And look upon myself and curse my fate,  
Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,  
Featured like him, like him with friends possessed. . .  
With what I most enjoy contented least ;  
Yet in those thoughts myself almost despising.”‡

It was not long, however, before he found his resting-place. Early, at least from an external point, he settled down to an orderly, sensible, citizen-like existence, engaged in business, provident of the future. He remained on the stage for at least seventeen years, though taking secondary parts ; § he set his wits at the same time to the touching up of plays with so much activity, that Greene called him “ an upstart crow beautified with our feathers ; . . . an absolute *Fohannes factotum*, in his owne conceyt the onely shake-scene in a countrey.” || At the age of thirty-three he had amassed enough to buy at Stratford a house with two barns and two gardens, and he went on steadier and steadier in the same course. A man attains only to easy circumstances by his own labor ; if he gains wealth, it is by making others labor for him. This is why, to the trades of actor and author, Shakspeare added those of manager and director of a theatre. He acquired a partial proprietorship in the Blackfriars and Globe theatres, farmed tithes, bought large pieces of land, more houses, gave a

\* *Sonnet* 110.

† See *Sonnets* 91 and 111 ; also *Hamlet*, iii. 2. Many of Hamlet's words would come better from the mouth of an actor than a prince. See also the 66th *Sonnet*, “ Tired with all these.”

‡ *Sonnet* 29.

§ The part in which he excelled was that of the ghost in *Hamlet*.

|| Greene's *A Groatsworth of Wit*, etc.



dowry to his daughter Susanna, and finally retired to his native town on his property, in his own house, like a good landlord, an honest citizen, who manages his fortune fitly, and takes his share of municipal work. He had an income of two or three hundred pounds, which would be equivalent to about eight or twelve hundred at the present time, and according to tradition, lived cheerfully and on good terms with his neighbors; at all events, it does not seem that he thought much about his literary glory, for he did not even take the trouble to collect and publish his works. One of his daughters married a physician, the other a wine merchant; the last did not even know how to sign her name. He lent money, and cut a good figure in this little world. Strange close; one which at first sight resembles more that of a shopkeeper than of a poet. Must we attribute it to that English instinct which places happiness in the life of a country gentleman and a landlord with a good rent-roll, well connected, surrounded by comforts, who quietly rejoices in his settled respectability,\* his domestic authority, and his county standing? Or rather, was Shakspeare, like Voltaire, a common-sense man, though of an imaginative brain, keeping a sound judgment under the sparkling of his genius, prudent from skepticism, economical through lack of independence, and capable, after going the round of human ideas, of deciding with *Candide*,† that the best thing one can do is “to cultivate one’s garden?” I would rather think, as his full and solid head suggests,‡ that by the mere force of his overflowing imagination he escaped, like Goethe, the perils of an overflowing imagination; that in depicting passion, he succeeded, like Goethe, in quelling passion in his own case; that the lava did not break out in his conduct, because it found issue in his poetry; that his theatre redeemed his life; and that, having passed, by sympathy, through every kind of folly and wretchedness that is incident to human existence, he was able to settle down amidst them with a calm and melancholy smile, listening, for distraction, to the aerial music of the fancies in which he revelled.§ I am willing to believe, lastly, that in frame

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\* “He was a respectable man.” “A good word; what does it mean?” “He kept a gig.”—(From Thurtell’s trial for the murder of Weare.)

† The model of an optimist, the hero of one of Voltaire’s tales.—TR.

‡ See his portraits, and in particular his bust.

§ Especially in his later plays: *Tempest*, *Twelfth Night*.

as in the rest, he belonged to his great generation and his great age ; that with him, as with Rabelais, Titian, Michael Angelo, and Rubens, the solidity of his muscles balanced the sensibility of his nerves. Of all this we can but conjecture: if we would see the man more closely, we must seek him in his works.

Let us then look for the man in his style. The style explains the work ; while showing the principal features of the genius, it infers the rest. When we have once grasped the dominant faculty, we see the whole artist developed like a flower.

Shakspeare imagines with copiousness and excess ; he spreads metaphors profusely over all he writes ; every instant abstract ideas are changed into images ; it is a series of paintings which is unfolded in his mind. He does not seek them, they come of themselves ; they crowd within him, covering his arguments ; they dim with their brightness the pure light of logic. He does not labor to explain or prove ; picture on picture, image on image, he is for ever copying the strange and splendid visions which are engendered one within another, and are heaped up within him. Compare to our dull writers this passage, which I take at hazard from a tranquil dialogue :

“ The single and peculiar life is bound,  
 With all the strength and ardour of the mind,  
 To keep itself from noyance ; but much more  
 That spirit upon whose weal depend and rest  
 The lives of many. The cease of majesty  
 Dies not alone ; but, like a gulf, doth draw  
 What’s near it with it : it is a massy wheel,  
 Fix’d on the summit of the highest mount,  
 To whose huge spokes ten thousand lesser things  
 Are mortised and adjoin’d ; which, when it falls,  
 Each small annexment, petty consequence,  
 Attends the boisterous ruin. Never alone  
 Did the king sigh, but with a general groan.”\*

Here we have three successive images to express the same thought. It is a whole blossoming ; a bough grows from the trunk, from that another, which is multiplied into numerous fresh branches. Instead of a smooth road, traced by a regular line of dry and well-fixed stakes, you enter a wood, crowded with inter-

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\* *Hamlet*, iii. 3.

woven trees and luxuriant bushes, which conceal you and close your path, which delight and dazzle your eyes by the magnificence of their verdure and the wealth of their bloom. This is because objects were taken into his mind organized and complete; they pass into ours disjointed, decomposed, fragmentarily. He thought in the lump, we think piecemeal; hence his style and our style—two languages not to be reconciled. We employ but general terms, which every mind can understand, and regular constructions into which any mind can enter; we attain justness and clearness, not life. Shakspeare lets justness and clearness look out for themselves, and attains life. From amidst his complex conception and his colored semi-vision he grasps a fragment, a quivering fibre, and shows it; it is for you, from this fragment, to divine the rest. This is why Shakspeare is strange and powerful, obscure and original, beyond all the poets of his or any other age; the most immoderate of all violators of language, the most marvellous of all creators of souls, the farthest removed from regular logic and classical reason, the one most capable of exciting in us a world of forms, and of placing living beings before us.

§ 24.—Let us reconstruct this world, so as to find in it the imprint of its creator. A poet does not copy at random the manners which surround him; he selects from this vast material, and involuntarily brings upon the stage the moods of the heart and the conduct which best suit his talent. If he is a logician, a moralist, an orator, as, for instance, one of the French great tragic poets (Racine) of the seventeenth century, he will only represent noble manners, he will avoid low characters; he will observe the greatest decorum in respect of the strongest outbreaks of passion; he will reject as scandalous every low or indecent word; he will suppress the familiarity, childishness, artlessness, gay banter of domestic life; he will blot out precise details, special traits, and will raise tragedy into a serene and sublime region, where his abstract personages, unencumbered by time and space, after an exchange of eloquent harangues and able dissertations, will kill each other becomingly, and as though they were merely concluding a ceremony. Shakspeare does just the contrary, because his genius is the exact opposite. His master faculty is an impassioned imagination, freed from the fetters of reason and morality. He abandons himself

to it, and finds in man nothing that he would care to lop off. He accepts nature, and finds it beautiful in its entirety. He paints it in its littlenesses, its deformities, its weaknesses, its excesses, its irregularities, and in its rages; he exhibits man at his meals, in bed, at play, drunk, mad, sick; he adds that which passes behind the stage to that which passes on the stage. He does not dream of ennobling, but of copying human life, and aspires only to make his copy more energetic and more striking than the original.

Hence the morals of this drama; and first, the want of dignity. Dignity arises from self-command. A man selects the most noble of his acts and attitudes, and allows himself no other. Shakspeare's characters select none, but allow themselves all. His kings are men, and fathers of families. The terrible Leontes, who is about to order the death of his wife and his friend, plays like a child with his son: caresses him, gives him all the pretty little pet names which mothers are wont to employ; he dares be trivial; he gabbles like a nurse; he has her language, and fulfils her offices:

*“Leontes.* What, hast smutch'd thy nose?  
They say it is a copy out of mine. Come, captain,  
We must be neat; not neat, but cleanly, captain: . . .  
Come, sir page,  
Look on me with your welkin eye: sweet villain!  
Most dear'st! my collop . . . Looking on the lines  
Of my boy's face, methoughts I did recoil  
Twenty-three years, and saw myself unbreech'd,  
In my green velvet coat, my dagger muzzled,  
Lest it should bite its master. . . .  
How like, methought, I then was to this kernel,  
This squash, this gentleman! . . . My brother,  
Are you so fond of your young prince as we  
Do seem to be of ours?

*Polixenes.* If at home, sir,  
He's all my exercise, my mirth, my matter,  
Now my sworn friend and then mine enemy,  
My parasite, my soldier, statesman, all:  
He makes a July's day short as December,  
And with his varying childness cures in me  
Thoughts that would thicken my blood.”\*

There are a score of such passages in Shakspeare. The

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\* *Winter's Tale*, i. 2.

great passions, with him as in nature, are preceded or followed by trivial actions, scraps of talk, commonplace sentiments. Strong emotions are accidents in our life: to drink, to eat, to talk of indifferent things, to carry out mechanically an habitual duty, to dream of some stale pleasure or some ordinary annoyance, that is the business of our lives. Shakspeare paints us as we are; his heroes bow, ask people for news, speak of rain and fine weather, as often and as casually as ourselves, on the very eve of falling into the extremity of misery, or of plunging into fatal resolutions. Hamlet asks what's o'clock, finds the wind biting, talks of feasts and music heard without; and this quiet talk, so little in harmony with action, so full of slight, insignificant facts, which chance alone has raised up, lasts until the moment when his father's ghost, rising in the darkness, reveals the assassination which it is his duty to avenge.

The manners of that stage are unbridled, like those of the age, and like the poet's imagination. To copy the common actions of every-day life, the puerilities and feeblenesses to which the greatest continually sink, the transports which degrade them, the indecent, harsh, or foul words, the atrocious deeds in which licence revels, the brutality and ferocity of primitive nature, is the work of a free and unencumbered imagination. To copy this hideousness and these excesses with a selection of such familiar, significant, precise details, that they reveal under every word of every personage the complete condition of civilization, is the work of a concentrated and all-powerful imagination. This species of manners and this energy of description indicate the same faculty, unique and excessive, which the style had already indicated.

On this common background stands out a population of distinct living figures, illuminated by an intense light, in striking relief. This creative power is Shakspeare's great gift, and it communicates an extraordinary significance to his words. He had the prodigious faculty of seeing in a twinkling of the eye a complete character, body, mind, past and present, in every detail and every depth of his being, with the exact attitude and the expression of face, which the situation demanded. These characters are all of the same family. Good or bad, gross or delicate, refined or awkward, Shakspeare gives them all the same kind of spirit which is his own. He has made of them imagi-

native people, void of will and reason, impassioned machines, vehemently hurled one upon another, who were the representation of whatever is most natural and most abandoned in human nature. Let us act the play to ourselves, and see in all its stages this clanship of figures, this prominence of portraits.

Lowest of all are the stupid folk, babbling or brutish. Imagination already exists there, where reason is not yet born ; it exists also here, where reason is dead. The idiot and the brute blindly follow the phantoms which exist in their benumbed or mechanical brains. No poet has understood this mechanism like Shakspeare. His Caliban, for instance, a deformed savage, fed on roots, growls like a beast under the hand of Prospero, who has subdued him. He howls continually against his master, though he knows that every curse will be paid back with "cramps and aches." He is a chained wolf, trembling and fierce, who tries to bite when approached, and who crouches when he sees the lash raised above him. He has a foul sensuality, a loud base laugh, the gluttony of degraded humanity. He cries for his food, and gorges himself when he gets it. A sailor who had landed in the island, Stephano, gives him wine ; he kisses his feet, and takes him for a god ; he asks if he has not dropped from heaven, and adores him. We find in him rebellious and baffled passions, which are eager to be avenged and satiated. Stephano had beaten his comrade. Caliban cries, "Beat him enough : after a little time I'll beat him too." He prays Stephano to come with him and murder Prospero in his sleep ; he thirsts to lead him there, and sees his master already with his throat cut, and his brains scattered on the earth :

"Prithee, my king, be quiet. See'st thou here,  
This is the mouth o' the cell : no noise, and enter.  
Do that good mischief which may make this island  
Thine own for ever, and I, thy Caliban,  
For aye thy foot-licker."\*

Others, like Ajax and Cloten, are more like men, and yet it is pure mood that Shakspeare depicts in them, as in Caliban. The clogging corporeal machine, the mass of muscles, the thick blood coursing in the veins of these fighting brutes, oppress the intelligence, and leave no life but for animal passions. Others, again, are but babblers : for example, Polonius, the grave brain-

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\* *The Tempest*, iv. i.

less counsellor; a solemn booby, who rains on men a shower of counsels, compliments, and maxims. But the most complete of all these characters is that of the nurse in *Romeo and Juliet*, a gossip, loose in her talk, a regular kitchen-oracle, smelling of the stew-pan and old boots, foolish, impudent, immoral, but otherwise a good creature, and affectionate to her child.

The mechanical imagination produces Shakspeare's fool-characters: a quick, venturesome imagination produces his men of wit. Of wit there are many kinds. One, altogether French, which is but reason, a foe to paradox, scorner of folly, a sort of incisive common sense, having no occupation but to render truth amusing and evident: such was the wit of Voltaire and the drawing-rooms. The other, that of improvisators and artists, is a mere inventive transport, paradoxical, unshackled, exuberant, a phantasmagoria of images, quibbles, strange ideas, dazing and intoxicating, like the movement and illumination of a ball. Such is the wit of Mercutio, of the clowns, of Beatrice, Rosalind, and Benedick. They laugh, not from a sense of the ridiculous, but from the desire to laugh. You must look elsewhere for the campaigns which aggressive reason makes against human folly. Here folly is in its full bloom. Our folk think of amusement, and nothing more. They are good-humored; they let their wit ride gaily over the possible and the impossible. They play upon words, contort their sense, draw absurd and laughable inferences, exchange them alternately, like shuttle-cocks, one after another, and vie with each other in singularity and invention. They dress all their ideas in strange or sparkling metaphors. The taste of the time was for masquerades; their conversation is a masquerade of ideas. They say nothing in a simple style; they only seek to heap together subtle things, far-fetched, difficult to invent and to understand; all their expressions are over-refined, unexpected, extraordinary; they strain their thought, and change it into a caricature. "Alas, poor Romeo!" says Mercutio, "he is already dead, stabbed with a white wench's black eye; shot through the ear with a love-song, the very pin of his heart cleft with the blind bow-boy's butt-shaft." Benedick relates a conversation he has just held with his mistress: "O, she misused me past the endurance of a block! an oak, with but one green leaf on it would have answered her; my very visor began to assume life, and scold with

her." These gay and perpetual extravagances show the bearing of the interlocutors. They do not remain quietly seated in their chairs, like the Marquis in the *Misanthrope*; they wheel about, leap, paint their faces, gesticulate boldly their ideas; their wit-rockets end with a song. Young folk, soldiers and artists, they let off their fireworks of phrases, and gambol round about. "There was a star danced, and under that was I born." This expression of Beatrice's aptly describes the kind of poetical, sparkling, unreasoning, charming wit, more akin to music than to literature, a sort of outspoken and wide-awake dream, not unlike that described by Mercutio in the well-known passage beginning

"O, then, I see Queen Mab hath been with you."

Falstaff has the passions of an animal, and the imagination of a man of wit. There is no character which better exemplifies the dash and immorality of Shakspeare. Falstaff is a great supporter of disreputable places, swearer, gamester, brawler, wine-bag, as low as he well can be. He is as big a swindler as Panurge, who had sixty-three ways of making money, "of which the honestest was by sly theft." And what is worse, he is an old man, a knight, a courtier, and well bred. Must he not be odious and repulsive? By no means; you cannot help liking him. At bottom, like his brother Panurge, "he is the best fellow in the world." He has no malice in his composition; no other wish than to laugh and be amused. If he has vices, he exposes them so frankly that we are obliged to forgive him them. Conscience ends at a certain point; nature assumes its place, and the man rushes upon what he desires, without more thought of being just or unjust than an animal in the neighboring wood. His second excuse is his unfailing spirit. If ever there was a man who could talk, it is he. Insults and oaths, curses, protests, flow from him as from an open barrel. He is never at a loss; he devises a shift for every difficulty. Lies sprout out of him, fructify, increase, beget one another, like mushrooms on a rich and rotten bed of earth. He lies still more from his imagination and nature than from interest and necessity. It is evident from the manner in which he strains his fictions. He says he has fought alone against two men. The next moment it is four. Presently we have seven, then eleven, then fourteen. He is stopped in time, or he would soon be talking of a whole army.



When unmasked, he does not lose his temper, and is the first to laugh at his boastings. This big pot-bellied fellow, a coward, a jester, a brawler, a drunkard, is one of Shakspeare's favorites. The reason is, that his manners are those of pure nature, and Shakspeare's mind is congenial with his own.

Nature is shameless and gross amidst this mass of flesh, heavy with wine and fatness. It is delicate in the delicate body of women, but as unreasoning and impassioned in Desdemona as in Falstaff. Shakspeare's women are charming children, who feel in excess and love with folly. They have unconstrained manners, little rages, pretty words of friendship, coquettish rebelliousness, a graceful volubility, which recall the warbling and the prettiness of birds. The heroines of the French stage are almost men; these are women, and in every sense of the word. More imprudent than Desdemona a woman could not be. She is moved with pity for Cassio, and asks a favor for him passionately, recklessly, be the thing just or no, dangerous or no. She knows nothing of man's laws, and thinks nothing of them. All that she sees is, that Cassio is unhappy :

“ Be thou assured, good Cassio . . . My lord shall never rest ;  
I'll watch him tame, and talk him out of patience ;  
His bed shall seem a school, his board a shrift ;  
I'll intermingle everything he does  
With Cassio's suit.”\*

This vivacity, this petulance, does not prevent shrinking modesty and silent timidity : on the contrary, they spring from a common cause, extreme sensibility. She, who feels much and deeply, has more reserve and more passion than others ; she breaks out or is silent ; she says nothing or everything. Such is this Imogen,

“ So tender of rebukes that words are strokes,  
And strokes death to her.”†

Such is Virgilia, the sweet wife of Coriolanus : her heart is not a Roman one ; she is terrified at her husband's victories : when Volumnia describes him stamping on the field of battle, and wiping his bloody brow with his hand, she grows pale :

“ His bloody brow ! O Jupiter, no blood ! . . .  
Heavens bless my lord from fell Aufidius !”‡

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\* *Othello*, iii. 3.

† *Cymbeline*, iii. 5.

‡ *Coriolanus*, i. 3.

When Cordelia hears her father, an irritable old man, already half insane, ask her how she loves him, she cannot make up her mind to say aloud the flattering protestations which her sisters have been lavishing. She is ashamed to display her tenderness before the world, and to buy a dowry by it. He disinherits her, and drives her away; she holds her tongue. And when she afterwards finds him abandoned and mad, she goes on her knees before him, with such a touching emotion, she weeps over that dear insulted head with so gentle a pity, that you might fancy it was the tender accent of a desolate but delighted mother, kissing the pale lips of her child:

“O you kind gods,  
Cure this great breach in his abused nature!  
The untuned and jarring senses, O, wind up  
Of this child-changed father! . . .  
O my dear father! Restoration hang  
Thy medicine on my lips; and let this kiss  
Repair those violent harms that my two sisters  
Have in thy reverence made! . . . Was this a face  
To be opposed against the warring winds?  
. . . Mine enemy's dog,  
Though he had bit me, should have stood that night  
Against my fire.  
How does my royal lord? How fares your majesty?”\*

Nothing is easier to such a poet than to create perfect villains. Throughout he is handling the unruly passions which make their character, and he never hits upon the moral law which restrains them; but at the same time, and by the same faculty, he changes the inanimate masks, which the conventions of the stage mould on an identical pattern, into living and illusory figures. How shall a demon be made to look as real as a man? Iago is a soldier of fortune who has roved the world from Syria to England, who, nursed in the lowest ranks, having had close acquaintance with the horrors of the wars of the sixteenth century, had drawn thence the maxims of a Turk and the philosophy of a butcher; principles he has none left. “O my reputation, my reputation!” cries the dishonored Cassio. “As I am an honest man,” says Iago, “I thought you had received some bodily wound; there is more sense in that than in reputation.” Desdemona, on the shore, trying to forget her care, begs

\* *King Lear*, iv. 7.

him to sing the praises of her sex. For every portrait ne finds the most insulting insinuations. He says : " O gentle lady, do not put me to't ; for I am nothing, if not critical." This is the key to his character. He despises man ; he only speaks in sarcasms ; he has them ready for every one, even for those whom he does not know. When he wakes Brabantio to inform him of the elopement of his daughter, he tells him the matter in coarse terms, sharpening the sting of the bitter pleasantry, like a conscientious executioner, rubbing his hands when he hears the culprit groan under the knife. " Thou art a villain ! " cries Brabantio. " You are—a senator ! " answers Iago. But the feature which really completes him, and makes him rank with Mephistopheles, is the atrocious truth and the cogent reasoning by which he likens his crime to virtue. Cassio, under his advice, goes to see Desdemona, to obtain her intercession for him ; this visit is to be the ruin of Desdemona and Cassio. Iago, left alone, hums for an instant quietly, then cries :

" And what's he then that says I play the villain ?  
 When this advice is free I give and honest,  
 Probal to thinking and indeed the course  
 To win the Moor again."

To all these features must be added a diabolical energy, an inexhaustible inventiveness in images, caricatures, obscenity, the manners of a guard-room, the brutal bearing and tastes of a trooper, habits of dissimulation, coolness and hatred, patience, contracted amid the perils and devices of a military life, and the continuous miseries of long degradation and frustrated hope ; you will understand how Shakspeare could transform abstract treachery into a concrete form, and how Iago's atrocious vengeance is only the natural consequence of his character, life, and training.

§ 25.—How much more visible is this impassioned and unfettered genius of Shakspeare in the great characters which sustain the whole weight of the drama ! The startling imagination, the furious velocity of the manifold and exuberant ideas, the unruly passion, rushing upon death and crime, hallucinations, madness, all the ravages of delirium bursting through will and reason : such are the forces and ravings which engender them. Shall I speak of dazzling Cleopatra, who holds Antony in the whirlwind of her devices and caprices, who fascinates and kills,

who scatters to the winds the lives of men as a handful of desert-dust, the fatal Eastern sorceress who sports with life and death, headstrong, irresistible, child of air and fire, whose life is but a tempest, whose thought, ever repointed and broken, is like the crackling of a lightning flash? Of Othello, who, when the toils close around him, cries at every word of Iago like a man on the rack; who, his nerves hardened by twenty years of war and shipwreck, grows mad and swoons for grief, and whose soul, poisoned by jealousy, is distracted and disorganized in convulsions and in stupor? Or of old King Lear, violent and weak, whose half unseated reason is gradually toppled over under the shocks of incredible treacheries, who presents the frightful spectacle of madness, first increasing, then complete, of curses, howlings, superhuman sorrows, into which the transport of the first access of fury carries him, and then of peaceful incoherence, chattering imbecility, into which the shattered man subsides: a marvellous creation, the supreme effort of pure imagination, a disease of reason which reason could never have conceived? Amid so many portraitures let us choose two or three to indicate the depth and nature of them all. The critic is lost in Shakspeare, as in an immense town; he will describe a couple of monuments, and entreat the reader to imagine the city.

Plutarch's Coriolanus is an austere, coldly haughty patrician, a general of the army. In Shakspeare's hands he becomes a coarse soldier, a man of the people as to his language and manners, an athlete of war, with a voice like a trumpet; whose eyes by contradiction are filled with a rush of blood and anger, proud and terrible in mood, a lion's soul in the body of a steer. The philosopher Plutarch told of him a lofty philosophic action, saying that he had been at pains to save his landlord in the sack of Corioli. Shakspeare's Coriolanus has indeed the same disposition, for he is really a good fellow; but when Lartius asks him the name of this poor Volscian, in order to secure his liberty, he yawns out:

“By Jupiter! forgot.

I am weary; yea, my memory is tired.

Have we no wine here?”\*

He is hot, he has been fighting, he must drink; he leaves his Volscian in chains, and thinks no more of him. He fights

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\* *Coriolanus*, i. 9.

like a porter, with shouts and insults, and the cries from that deep chest are heard above the din of the battle like the sounds from a brazen trumpet. He has scaled the walls of Corioli, he has butchered till he is gorged with slaughter. Instantly he turns to the other army, and arrives red with blood, "as he were flay'd." "Come I too late?" Cominius begins to compliment him. "Come I too late?" he repeats. The battle is not yet finished: he embraces Cominius:

"O! let me clip ye  
In arms as sound as when I woo'd, in heart  
As merry as when our nuptial day was done."\*

For the battle is a real holiday to him. Such senses, such a frame, need the outcry, the din of battle, the excitement of death and wounds. This haughty and indomitable heart needs the joy of victory and destruction. Mark the display of his patrician arrogance and his soldier's bearing, when he is offered the tenth of the spoils:

"I thank you, general;  
But cannot make my heart consent to take  
A bribe to pay my sword."†

The soldiers cry, *Marcus! Marcus!* and the trumpets sound. He gets into a passion; rates the brawlers:

"No more, I say! For that I have not wash'd  
My nose that bled, or foil'd some debile wretch,—  
. . . You shout me forth  
In acclamations hyperbolical;  
As if I loved my little should be dieted  
In praises sauced with lies."‡

They are reduced to loading him with honors; Cominius gives him a war-horse; decrees him the cognomen of *Coriolanus*: the people shout *Caius Marcus Coriolanus!* He replies:

"I will go wash;  
And when my face is fair, you shall perceive  
Whether I blush or no: howbeit, I thank you.  
I mean to stride your steed."§

This loud voice, loud laughter, blunt acknowledgment of a man who can act and shout better than speak, foretell the mode in which he will treat the plebeians. He loads them with insults; he cannot find abuse enough for the cobblers, tailors, greedy

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\* *Coriolanus*, i. 6.

† *Ibid.* i. 9.

‡ *Ibid.*

§ *Ibid.*

cowards, down on their knees for a copper. "To beg of Hob and Dick!" "Bid them wash their faces and keep their teeth clean." But he must do this, if he would be consul; his friends constrain him. It is then that the passionate soul, incapable of self-restraint, such as Shakspeare knew how to paint, breaks forth without let. He is there in his candidate's gown, gnashing his teeth, and getting up his lesson in this style :

"What must I say?

'I pray, sir'—Plague upon't! I cannot bring  
My tongue to such a pace:—'Look, sir, my wounds!  
I got them in my country's service, when  
Some certain of you brethren roar'd and ran  
From the noise of our own drums.'\*"

The tribunes have no difficulty in stopping the election of a candidate who begs in this fashion. They taunt him in full senate, reproach him with his speech about the corn. He repeats it, with aggravations. Once roused, neither danger nor prayer restrains him :

"His heart's his mouth :

And, being angry, 'does forget that ever  
He heard the name of death."†

He rails against the people, the tribunes, street-magistrates, flatterers of the plebs. "Come, enough," says his friend Menenius. "Enough, with over-measure," says Brutus the tribune. He retorts :

"No, take more :

What may be sworn by, both divine and human,  
Seal what I end withal! . . . At once pluck out  
The multitudinous tongue; let them not lick  
The sweet which is their poison."‡

The tribune cries, Treason! and bids seize him. He cries :

"Hence, old goat! . . .

Hence, rotten thing! or I shall shake thy bones  
Out of thy garments!"§

He strikes him, drives the mob off: he fancies himself among Volscians. "On fair ground, I could beat forty of them!" And when his friends hurry him off, he threatens still, and

"Speak(s) o' the people,

As if you (he) were a god to punish, not a man  
Of their infirmity."||

\* *Coriolanus*, ii. 3.

† *Ibid.* iii. 1.

‡ *Ibid.*

§ *Ibid.*

|| *Ibid.*

Yet he bends before his mother, for he has recognized in her a soul as lofty and a courage as intractable as his own. He has submitted from his infancy to the ascendancy of this pride which he admires. Volumnia reminds him: "My praises made thee first a soldier." Without power over himself, continually tost on the fire of his too hot blood, he has always been the arm, she the thought. He obeys from involuntary respect, like a soldier before his general, but with what effort!

"*Coriolanus*. The smiles of knaves  
Tent in my cheeks, and schoolboys' tears take up  
The glances of my sight! a beggar's tongue  
Make motion through my lips, and my arm'd knees,  
Who bow'd but in my stirrup, bend like his  
That hath received an alms!—I will not do't. . . .

*Volumnia*. . . . Do as thou list.  
Thy valiantness was mine, thou suck'dst it from me,  
But owe thy pride thyself. *Cor*. Pray, be content:  
Mother, I am going to the market-place;  
Chide me no more. I'll mountebank their loves,  
Cog their hearts from them, and come home beloved  
Of all the trades in Rome."\*

He goes, and his friends speak for him. Except a few bitter asides, he appears to be submissive. Then the tribunes pronounce the accusation, and summon him to answer as a traitor:

"*Cor*. How! traitor! *Men*. Nay, temperately: your promise.

*Cor*. The fires i' the lowest hell fold-in the people!  
Call me their traitor! Thou injurious tribune!  
Within thine eyes sat twenty thousand deaths,  
In thy hands clutch'd as many millions, in  
Thy lying tongue both numbers, I would say,  
'Thou liest,' unto thee with a voice as free  
As I do pray the gods."†

His friends surround him, entreat him: he will not listen; he foams, he is like a wounded lion:

"Let them pronounce the steep Tarpeian death,  
Vagabond exile, flaying, pent to linger  
But with a grain a day, I would not buy  
Their mercy at the price of one fair word."‡

The people vote exile, supporting by their shouts the sentence of the tribune:

"*Cor*. You common cry of curs! whose breath I hate  
As reek o' the rotten fens, whose love I prize

\* *Coriolanus*, iii. 2.

† *Ibid.* iii. 3.

‡ *Ibid.*

As the dead carcasses of unburied men  
That do corrupt my air, I banish you. . . Despising,  
For you, the city, thus I turn my back :  
There is a world elsewhere.”\*

Judge of his hatred by these raging words. It goes on increasing by the expectation of vengeance. We find him next with the Volscian army before Rome. His friends kneel before him, he lets them kneel. Old Menenius, who had loved him as a son, only comes now to be driven away. “Wife, mother, child, I know not.”† It is himself he knows not. For this power of hating in a noble heart is equal with the power of loving. He has transports of tenderness as of hating, and can contain himself no more in joy than in grief. He runs, spite of his resolution, to his wife’s arms ; he bends his knee before his mother. He had summoned the Volscian chiefs to make them witnesses of his refusals ; and before them, he grants all and weeps. On his return to Corioli, an insulting word from Aufidius maddens him, and drives him upon the daggers of the Volscians. Vices and virtues, glory and misery, greatness and feebleness, the unbridled passion which composes his nature, endowed him with all.

If the life of Coriolanus is the history of a mood, that of Macbeth is the history of a monomania. The witches’ prophecy was buried in his heart, instantaneously, like a fixed idea, which gradually corrupts and transforms the man. He is haunted ; he forgets the thanes who surround him and “who stay upon his leisure ;” he already sees in the future an indistinct chaos of images of blood :

. . . Why do I yield to that suggestion  
Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair  
And make my seated heart knock at my ribs ? . . .  
My thought, whose murder yet is but fantastical,  
Shakes so my single state of man that function  
Is smother’d in surmise, and nothing is  
But what is not.”‡

This is the language of hallucination. Macbeth’s hallucination becomes complete when his wife has resolved on the assassination of the king. He sees in the air a blood-stained dagger, “in form as palpable, as this which now I draw.” His whole brain is filled with grand and terrible phantoms, which the mind

\* *Coriolanus*, iii. 3.† *Ibid.* v. 2.‡ *Macbeth*, i. 3



of a common murderer would never have conceived ; the poetry of which indicates a generous heart, enslaved to an idea of fate, and capable of remorse :

. . . " Now o'er the one half world  
Nature seems dead, and wicked dreams abuse  
The curtain'd sleep ; witchcraft celebrates  
Pale Hecate's offerings, and wither'd murder,  
Alarum'd by his sentinel, the wolf,  
Whose howl's his watch, thus with his stealthy pace,  
With Tarquin's ravishing strides, towards his design  
Moves like a ghost. . . . (A bell rings.)  
I go, and it is done ; the bell invites me.  
Hear it not, Duncan ; for it is a knell  
That summons thee to heaven or to hell."\*

He has done the deed, and returns tottering, haggard, like a drunken man. He is horrified at his bloody hands, "these hangman's hands." Nothing now can cleanse them. The whole ocean might sweep over them, but they would keep the hue of murder. "What hands are here? ha, they pluck out mine eyes!" He is disturbed by a word which the sleeping chamberlains uttered :

" One cried, ' God bless us ! ' and ' Amen,' the other ;  
As they had seen me with these hangman's hands  
Listening their fear, I could not say ' Amen,'  
When they did say, ' God bless us ! '  
. . . But wherefore could not I pronounce ' Amen ? '  
I had most need of blessing, and ' Amen '  
Stuck in my throat."†

Then comes a strange dream ; a frightful vision of punishment descends upon him.

Above the beating of his heart, the tingling of the blood which boils in his brain, he had heard them cry :

" ' Sleep no more !  
Macbeth does murder sleep,' the innocent sleep,  
Sleep that knits up the ravell'd sleave of care,  
The death of each day's life, sore labour's bath,  
Balm of hurt minds, great nature's second course,  
Chief nourisher in life's feast."‡

And the voice, like an angel's trumpet, calls him by all his titles :

" Glamis hath murder'd sleep, and therefore Cawdor  
Shall sleep no more ; Macbeth shall sleep no more ! "§

\* *Macbeth*, ii. 1.

† *Ibid.* ii. 2.

‡ *Ibid.*

§ *Ibid.*

This mad idea, incessantly repeated, beats in his brain, with monotonous and hard-pressing strokes, like the tongue of a bell. Insanity begins; all the force of his mind is occupied by keeping before him, in spite of himself, the image of the man whom he has murdered in his sleep:

“To know my deed, ’twere best not know myself. (Knock.)  
Wake Duncan with thy knocking! I would thou couldst!”\*

Thenceforth, in the rare intervals in which the fever of his mind is assuaged, he is like a man worn out by a long malady. It is the sad prostration of maniacs worn out by their fits of rage:

“Had I but died an hour before this chance,  
I had lived a blessed time; for, from this instant  
There’s nothing serious in mortality:  
All is but toys: renown and grace is dead;  
The wine of life is drawn, and the mere lees  
Is left this vault to brag of.”†

When rest has restored some force to the human machine, the fixed idea shakes him again, and drives him onward, like a pitiless horseman, who has left his panting horse only for a moment, to leap again into the saddle, and spur him over precipices. The more he has done, the more he must do:

“I am in blood  
Steep’d in so far that, should I wade no more,  
Returning were as tedious as go o’er.”‡ . . .

He kills in order to preserve the fruit of his murders. The fatal circlet of gold attracts him like a magic jewel; and he beats down, from a sort of blind instinct, the heads which he sees between the crown and him:

“But let the frame of things disjoint, both the worlds suffer,  
Ere we will eat our meal in fear and sleep  
In the affliction of these terrible dreams  
That shake us nightly: better be with the dead,  
Whom we, to gain our peace, have sent to peace,  
Than on the torture of the mind to lie  
In restless ecstasy. Duncan is in his grave;  
After life’s fitful fever he sleeps well;  
Treason has done his worst: nor steel, nor poison,  
Malice domestic, foreign levy, nothing,  
Can touch him further.”§

Macbeth has Banquo murdered, and in the midst of a great

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\* *Macbeth*, ii. 2. † *Ibid.* ii. 3. ‡ *Ibid.* iii. 4. § *Ibid.* iii. 2.

feast he is informed of the success of his plan. He smiles, and proposes Banquo's health. Suddenly, conscience-smitten, he sees the ghost of the murdered man; for this phantom, which Shakspeare summons, is not a mere stage-trick: we feel that here the supernatural is unnecessary, and that Macbeth would create it, even if hell would not send it. With stiffened muscles, dilated eyes, his mouth half open with deadly terror, he sees it shake its bloody head, and cries with that hoarse voice which is only to be heard in maniacs' cells:

“Prithee, see there! Behold! look! lo! how say you?  
 Why, what care I? If thou canst nod, speak too.  
 If charnel-houses and our graves must send  
 Those that we bury, back our monuments  
 Shall be the maws of kites. . . .  
 Blood hath been shed ere now, i' th' olden time, . . .  
 Ay, and since too, murders have been perform'd  
 Too terrible for the ear: the times have been  
 That, when the brains were out, the man would die,  
 And there an end; but now they rise again,  
 With twenty mortal murders on their crowns,  
 And push us from our stools: . . .  
 Avaunt! and quit my sight! let the earth hide thee!  
 Thy bones are marrowless, thy blood is cold;  
 Thou hast no speculation in those eyes  
 Which thou dost glare with!”\*

His body trembling like that of an epileptic, his teeth clenched, foaming at the mouth, he sinks on the ground, his limbs beat against the floor, shaken with convulsive quiverings, while a dull sob swells his panting breast, and dies in his swollen throat. What joy can remain for a man besieged by such visions? The wide dark country, which he surveys from his towering castle, is but a field of death, haunted by deadly apparitions; Scotland, which he is depopulating, a cemetery,

“Where . . . the dead man's knell  
 Is there scarce ask'd for who; and good men's lives  
 Expire before the flowers in their caps,  
 Dying or ere they sicken.”†

His soul is “full of scorpions.” He has “supp'd full with horrors,” and the faint odor of blood has disgusted him with all else. He goes stumbling over the corpses which he has heaped up, with the mechanical and desperate smile of a maniac-murderer.

\* *Macbeth*, iii. 4.

† *Ibid.*, iv. 3.

Thenceforth death, life, all is one to him ; the habit of murder has placed him beyond humanity. They tell him that his wife is dead :

“ *Macb.* She should have died hereafter ;  
 There would have been a time for such a word,  
 To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,  
 Creeps in this petty pace from day to day  
 To the last syllable of recorded time,  
 And all our yesterdays have lighted fools  
 The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle !  
 Life’s but a walking shadow, a poor player  
 That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,  
 And then is heard no more : it is a tale  
 Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,  
 Signifying nothing.”\*

There remains for him the hardening of the heart in crime, the fixed belief in destiny. Hunted down by his enemies, “bear-like, tied to a stake,” he fights, troubled only by the prediction of the witches, sure of being invulnerable so long as the man whom they have pointed at does not appear. His thoughts inhabit a supernatural world, and to the last he walks with his eyes fixed on the dream which has possessed him from the first.

The history of Hamlet, like that of Macbeth, is the story of a moral poisoning. Hamlet’s is a delicate soul, an impassioned imagination, like that of Shakspeare. He has lived hitherto, occupied in noble studies, apt in bodily and mental exercises, with a taste for art, loved by the noblest father, enamored of the purest and most charming girl, confiding, generous, not yet having perceived, from the height of the throne to which he was born, aught but the beauty, happiness, grandeur of nature and humanity.† On this soul, which character and training make more sensitive than others, misfortune suddenly falls, extreme, overwhelming, of the very kind to destroy all faith and every spring of action : with one look he has seen all the vileness of humanity ; and this insight is given him in his mother. His mind is yet intact ; but judge from the violence of his style, the crudity of his exact details, the terrible tension of the whole nervous machine, whether he has not already one foot on the verge of madness :

“ O that this too, too solid flesh would melt,  
 Thaw and resolve itself into a dew !

\* *Macbeth* v. 5.

† Goethe *Wilhelm Meister*.

Or that the Everlasting had not fix'd  
 His canon 'gainst self-slaughter ! O God ! God !  
 How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable,  
 Seem to me all the uses of this world !  
 Fie on't ! ah fie ! 'tis an unweeded garden,  
 That grows to seed ; things rank and gross in nature  
 Possess it merely. That it should come to this !  
 But two months dead : nay, not so much, not two :  
 So excellent a king, . . . so loving to my mother,  
 That he might not betem the winds of heaven  
 Visit her face too roughly. Heaven and earth !

. . . And yet, within a month,—  
 Let me not think on't—Frailty, thy name is woman !—  
 A little month, or ere those shoes were old  
 With which she follow'd my poor father's body, . . .  
 Ere yet the salt of most unrighteous tears  
 Had left the flushing in her galled eyes,  
 She married”\*

Here already are contortions of thought, earnest of hallucination, the symptoms of what is to come after. In the middle of a conversation the image of his father rises before his mind. He thinks he sees him. How then will it be when the “canonised bones have burst their cerements,” “the sepulchre hath oped his ponderous and marble jaws,” and when the ghost comes in the night, upon a high “platform” of land, to hint to him of the tortures of his prison of fire, and to tell him of the fratricide, who has driven him thither? Hamlet grows faint, but grief strengthens him, and he has a cause for living :

“ Hold, hold, my heart ;  
 And you my sinews, grow not instant old,  
 But bear me stiffly up ! Remember thee !  
 Ay, thou poor ghost, while memory holds a seat  
 In this distracted globe.—Remember thee !  
 Yea, from the table of my memory  
 I'll wipe away all trivial fond records,  
 All saws of books, all forms, all pressures past, . . .  
 And thy commandment all alone shall live. . . .  
 O villain, villain, smiling, damned villain !  
 My tables,—meet it is I set it down,  
 That one may smile, and smile, and be a villain ;  
 At least I'm sure it may be so in Denmark :  
 So, uncle, there you are.” † (*writing.*)

This convulsive outburst, this fevered writing hand, this

\* *Hamlet*, i. 2.

† *Ibid.* i. 5.

frenzy of intentness, prelude the approach of a monomania. When his friends come up, he treats them with the speeches of a child or an idiot. He is no longer master of his words; hollow phrases whirl in his brain, and fall from his mouth as in a dream. They call him; he answers by imitating the cry of a sportman whistling to his falcon: "Hillo, ho, ho, boy! come, bird, come." Whilst he is in the act of swearing them to secrecy, the ghost below repeats "Swear." Hamlet cries, with a nervous excitement and fitful gayety:

"Ah ha, boy! say'st thou so? art thou there, truepenny?

Come on—you hear this fellow in the cellarage,—

Consent to swear. . . .

*Ghost (beneath).* Swear.

*Ham.* *Hic et ubique?* then we'll shift our ground.

Come hither, gentlemen. . . . Swear by my sword.

*Ghost (beneath).* Swear.

*Ham.* Well said, old mole! canst work i' the earth so fast?

A worthy pioneer!" \*

Understand that as he says this his teeth chatter, "pale as his shirt, his knees knocking each other." Intense anguish ends with a burst of laughter, which is nothing else than a spasm. Thenceforth Hamlet speaks as though he had a continuous nervous attack. His madness is feigned, I admit; but his mind, as a door whose hinges are twisted, swings and bangs to every wind with a mad precipitance, and with a discordant noise. He has no need to search for the strange ideas, apparent incoherencies, exaggerations, the deluge of sarcasms which he accumulates. He finds them within him; he does himself no violence, he simply gives himself up to them. When he has the piece played which is to unmask his uncle, he raises himself, lounges on the floor, would lay his head in Ophelia's lap; he addresses the actors, and comments on the piece to the spectators; his nerves are strung, his excited thought is like a waving and crackling flame, and cannot find fuel enough in the multitude of objects surrounding it, upon all of which it seizes. When the king rises unmasked and troubled, Hamlet sings, and says, "Would not this, sir, and a forest of feathers—if the rest of my fortunes turn Turk with me—with two Provincial roses on my razed shoes, get me a fellowship in a cry of players, sir?" †

\* *Hamlet*, i. 5.

† *Ibid.* iii. 2.

And he laughs terribly, for he is resolved on murder. It is clear that this state is a disease, and that the man will not survive it.

In a soul so ardent of thought, and so mighty of feeling, what is left but disgust and despair? We tinge all nature with the color of our thoughts; we shape the world according to our own ideas; when our soul is sick, we see nothing but sickness in the universe:

“This goodly frame, the earth, seems to me a sterile promontory, this most excellent canopy, the air, look you, this brave o’erhanging firmament, this majestical roof fretted with golden fire, why, it appears no other thing to me than a foul and pestilent congregation of vapors. What a piece of work is a man! how noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! in form and moving how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the world! the paragon of animals! And yet, to me, what is this quintessence of dust? man delights not me: no, nor woman neither.”\*

Henceforth his thought tarnishes whatever it touches. He rails bitterly before Ophelia against marriage and love. When he has killed Polonius by accident, he hardly repents it; it is one fool less. He jeers lugubriously:

*King.* Now Hamlet, where’s Polonius?

*Hamlet.* At supper.

*K.* At supper! where?

*H.* Not where he eats, but where he is eaten: a certain convocation of politic worms are e’en at him.”†

And he repeats in five or six fashions these grave-digger jests. His thoughts already inhabit a churchyard: to this hopeless philosophy your true man is a corpse. Duties, honors, passions, pleasures, projects, science, all this is but a borrowed mask, which death removes, that we may see ourselves what we are, an evil-smelling and grinning skull. It is this sight he goes to see by Ophelia’s grave. He counts the skulls which the grave-digger turns out: this was a lawyer’s, that a courtier’s. What salutations, intrigues, pretensions, arrogance! And here now is a clown knocking it about with his spade, and playing “at loggats with ’em.” Cæsar and Alexander have turned to clay, and make the earth fat; the masters of the world have served to “patch a wall.” “Now get you to my lady’s chamber, and tell her, let her paint an inch thick, to this favor she must come;

\* *Hamlet*, ii. 2.

† *Ibid.* iv. 3.

make her laugh at that."\* When one has come to this, there is nothing left but to die.

This heated imagination, which explains Hamlet's nervous disease and his moral poisoning, explains also his conduct. If he hesitates to kill his uncle, it is not from horror of blood or from our modern scruples. He belongs to the sixteenth century. On board ship he wrote the order to behead Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, and to do so without giving them "shriving-time." He killed Polonius, he caused Ophelia's death, and has no great remorse for it. If for once he spared his uncle, it was because he found him praying, and was afraid of sending him to heaven. He thought he was killing him when he killed Polonius. What his imagination robs him of, is the coolness and strength to go quietly and with premeditation to plunge a sword into a breast. He can only do the thing on a sudden suggestion; he must have a moment of enthusiasm; he must think the king is behind the arras, or else, seeing that he himself is poisoned, he must find his victim under his foil's point. He is not master of his acts; occasion dictates them; he cannot plan a murder, but must improvise it. A too lively imagination exhausts energy, by the accumulation of images and by the fury of intentness which absorbs it. You recognize in him a poet's soul, made not to act, but to dream, which is lost in contemplating the phantoms of its creation, which sees the imaginary world too clearly to play a part in the real world; an artist whom evil chance has made a prince, whom worse chance has made an avenger of crime, and who, destined by nature for genius, is condemned by fortune to madness and unhappiness. Hamlet is Shakspeare, and, at the close of this gallery of portraits which have all some features of his own, Shakspeare has painted himself in the most striking of all.

If Racine or Corneille had framed a psychology, they would have said, with Descartes: Man is an incorporeal soul, served by organs, endowed with reason and will, living in palaces or porticos, made for conversation and society, whose harmonious and ideal action is developed by discourse and replies, in a world constructed by logic beyond the realms of time and space.

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\* *Hamlet*, v. 1.



If Shakspeare had framed a psychology, he would have said with Esquirol : \* Man is a nervous machine, governed by a mood, disposed to hallucinations, transported by unbridled passions, essentially unreasoning, a mixture of animal and poet, having no rapture but mind, no sensibility but virtue, imagination for prompter and guide, and led at random, by the most determinate and complex circumstances, to pain, crime, madness, and death. †

§ 26.—Could such a poet always confine himself to the imitation of nature? Will this poetical world which is going on in his brain, never break loose from the laws of the world of reality? Is he not powerful enough to follow his own? He is; and the poetry of Shakspeare naturally finds an outlet in the fantastical. This is the highest grade of unreasoning and creative imagination. Despising ordinary logic, it creates therefrom another; it unites facts and ideas in a new order, apparently absurd, at bottom legitimate; it lays open the land of dreams, and its dreams deceive us like the truth.

When we enter upon Shakspeare's comedies, and even his half dramas, ‡ it is as though we met him on the threshold, like an actor to whom the prologue is committed, to prevent misunderstanding on the part of the public, and to tell them: "Do not take too seriously what you are about to hear; I am joking. My brain, being full of fancies, desired to make plays of them, and here they are. Palaces, distant landscapes, transparent mists which blot the morning sky with their gray clouds, the red and glorious flames into which the evening sun descends, white cloisters in endless vista through the ambient air, grottos, cottages, the fantastic pageant of all human passions, the mad sport of unlooked-for chances,—this is the medley of forms, colors, sentiments, which I shuffle and mingle before me, a many-tinted skein of glistening silks, a slender arabesque, whose sinuous curves, crossing and confused, bewilder the mind by the whimsical variety of their infinite complications. Don't regard it as

\* A French physician (1772-1844), celebrated for his endeavors to improve the treatment of the insane.—TR.

† And in this contrast we see the immeasurable superiority of Shakspeare as compared with Racine or Corneille.—J. F.

‡ *Twelfth Night, As You Like It, Tempest, Winter's Tale, etc., Cymbeline, Merchant of Venice, etc.*

a picture. Don't look for a precise composition, harmonious and increasing interest, the skilful management of a well-ordered and congruous plot. I have novels and romances in my mind which I am cutting up into scenes. Never mind the *finis*, I am amusing myself on the road. It is not the end of the journey which pleases me, but the journey itself. Is there any good in going so straight and quick? Do you only care to know whether the poor merchant of Venice will escape Shylock's knife? Here are two happy lovers seated under the palace walls on a calm night; wouldn't you like to listen to the peaceful reverie which rises like a perfume from the bottom of their hearts?

"How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank!

Here will we sit and let the sounds of music

Creep in our ears: soft stillness and the night

Become the touches of sweet harmony.

Sit, Jessica. Look how the floor of heaven

Is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold:

There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st,

But in his motion like an angel sings,

Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubins;

Such harmony is in immortal souls;

But whilst this muddy vesture of decay

Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it.

(*Enter musicians.*)

Come, ho! and wake Diana with a hymn:

With sweetest touches pierce your mistress' ear,

And draw her home with music.

*Jessica.* I am never merry when I hear sweet music.\*

"Have I not the right, when I see the big laughing face of a clownish servant, to stop near him, see him mouth, frolic, gossip, go through his hundred pranks and his hundred grimaces, and treat myself to the comedy of his spirit and gayety? Two fine gentlemen pass by. I hear the rolling fire of their metaphors, and I follow their skirmish of wit. Here in a corner is the artless arch face of a young wench. Do you forbid me to linger by her, to watch her smiles, her sudden blushes, the childish pout of her rosy lips, the coquetry of her pretty motions? You are in a great hurry if the prattle of this fresh and musical voice can't stop you. Is it no pleasure to view this succession of sentiments and figures? Is your fancy so dull that you must

\* *Merchant of Venice*, v. 1.

have the mighty mechanism of a geometrical plot to shake it? My sixteenth century playgoers were easier to move. A sun-beam that had lost its way on an old wall, a foolish song thrown into the middle of a drama, occupied their mind as well as the blackest of catastrophes. After the horrible scene in which Shylock brandished his butcher's knife before Antonio's bare breast, they saw just as willingly the petty household wrangle, and the amusing bit of raillery which ends the piece. Like soft moving water, their soul rose and sank in an instant to the level of the poet's emotion, and their sentiments readily flowed in the bed he had prepared for them. They let him go about on his journey, and did not forbid him to make two voyages at once. They allowed several plots in one. If but the slightest thread united them, it was sufficient. Lorenzo eloped with Jessica, Shylock was frustrated in his revenge, Portia's suitors failed in the test imposed upon them; Portia, disguised as a doctor of laws, took from her husband the ring which he had promised never to part with; these three or four comedies, disunited, mingled, were shuffled and unfolded together, like an unknotted skein in which threads of a hundred colors are entwined. Together with diversity, my spectators allowed improbability. Comedy is a slight-winged creature, which flutters from dream to dream, whose wings you would break if you held it captive in the narrow prison of common sense. Do not press its fictions too hard; do not probe their contents. Let them float before your eyes like a charming swift dream. Let the fleeting apparition plunge back into the bright misty land from whence it came. For an instant it deceived you; let it suffice. It is sweet to leave the world of realities behind you; the mind can rest amidst impossibilities. We are happy when delivered from the rough chains of logic, when we wander among strange adventures, when we live in sheer romance, and know that we are living there. I do not try to deceive you, and make you believe in the world where I take you. One must disbelieve in it in order to enjoy it. We must give ourselves up to illusion, and feel that we are giving ourselves up to it. We must smile as we listen. We smile in *The Winter's Tale* when Hermione descends from her pedestal, and when Leontes discovers his wife in the statue, having believed her to be dead. We smile in *Cymbeline*, when we see the lone cavern in which the young princes have lived

like savage hunters. Improbability deprives emotions of their sting. The events interest or touch us without making us suffer. At the very moment when sympathy is too lively, we remind ourselves that it is all a fancy. They become like distant objects, whose distance softens their outline, and wraps them in a luminous veil of blue air. Your true comedy is an opera. We listen to sentiments without thinking too much of plot. We follow the tender or gay melodies without reflecting that they interrupt the action. We dream elsewhere on hearing music; here I bid you dream on hearing verse."

So the prologue retires, and then the actors come on.

*As You Like It* is a caprice.\* Action there is none, interest barely; likelihood still less. And the whole is charming. Two cousins, princes' daughters, come to a forest with a court clown, Celia disguised as a shepherdess, Rosalind as a boy. They find here the old duke, Rosalind's father, who, driven out of his duchy, lives with his friends like a philosopher and a hunter. They find amorous shepherds, who with songs and prayers pursue intractable shepherdesses. They discover or they meet with lovers who become their husbands. Suddenly it is announced that the wicked Duke Frederick who had usurped the crown, has just retired to a cloister, and restored the throne to the old exiled duke. Every one gets married, every one dances, everything ends with a "rustic revelry." Where is the pleasantness of these puerilities? First, the fact of its being puerile; the absence of the serious permits repose. There are no events, and there is no plot. We peacefully follow the easy current of graceful or melancholy emotions, which guides and conducts us without wearying. The place adds to the illusion and charm. It is an autumn forest, in which the warm rays permeate the blushing oak leaves, or the half-stript ashes tremble and smile to the feeble breath of evening. The lovers wander by brooks that "brawl" under antique roots. As you listen to them, you see the slim birches, whose cloak of lace grows glossy under the slant rays of the sun that gilds them, and the thoughts wander down the mossy vistas in which their footfall is lost. What better place could be chosen for the comedy of

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\* In English, a word is wanting to express the French *fantaisie*, used by M. Taine, in describing this scene: what in music is called a *capriccio*. Tennyson calls the *Princess* a medley, but it is ambiguous.—Tr.

sentiment and the play of heart-fancies? Is not this a fit spot in which to listen to love-talk? Some one has seen Orlando, Rosalind's lover, in this glade; she hears it and blushes. "Alas the day! . . . What did he, when thou sawest him? What said he? How looked he? Wherein went he? What makes he here? Did he ask for me? Where remains he? How parted he with thee? And when shalt thou see him again?" Then, with a lower voice, somewhat hesitating: "Looks he as freshly as he did the day he wrestled?" Not yet exhausted: "Do you not know I am a woman? When I think I must speak. Sweet, say on."\* Question on question, she closes the mouth of her friend, who is ready to answer. At every word she jests, but agitated, blushing, with a forced gayety; her bosom heaves, and her heart beats. Nevertheless she is calmer when Orlando comes; bandies words with him; sheltered under her disguise, she makes him confess that he loves Rosalind. Then she plagues him, like the frolic, the wag, the coquette she is. "Why, how now, Orlando, where have you been all this while? You a lover?" Orlando repeats his love, and she pleases herself by making him repeat it more than once. She sparkles with wit, jests, mischievous pranks; pretty fits of anger, feigned sulks, bursts of laughter, deafening babble, engaging caprices. "Come, woo me, woo me; for now I am in a holiday humor, and like enough to consent. What would you say to me now, an I were your very very Rosalind?" And every now and then she repeats with an arch smile, "And I am your Rosalind; am I not your Rosalind?"† Orlando protests that he would die. Die! Who ever thought of dying for love! Leander? He took one bath too many in the Hellespont; so poets have said he died for love. Troilus? A Greek broke his head with a club; so poets have said he died for love. Come, come, Rosalind will be softer. And then she plays at marriage with him, and makes Celia pronounce the solemn words. She irritates and torments her pretended husband; tells him all the whims she means to indulge in, all the pranks she will play, all the bother he will have to endure. The retorts come one after another like fireworks. At every phrase we follow the looks of these sparkling eyes, the curves of this laughing mouth, the quick movements of this supple

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\* *As You Like It*, iii, 2.

† *Ibid.* iv, 1.

figure. It is a bird's petulance and volubility. "O coz, coz, coz, my pretty little coz, that thou didst know how many fathom deep I am in love." Then she plays with her cousin Celia, sports with her hair, calls her by every woman's name. Antitheses without end, words all a-jumble, quibbles, pretty exaggerations, word-racket; as you listen you fancy it is the warbling of a nightingale. The trill of repeated metaphors, the melodious roll of the poetical gamut, the summer-symphony rustling under the foliage, change the piece into a veritable opera. The three lovers end by chanting a sort of trio. The first throws out a fancy, the others take it up. Four times this strophe is renewed; and the symmetry of ideas, added to the jingle of the rhymes, makes of a dialogue a concerto of love:

"*Phebe*. Good shepherd, tell this youth what 'tis to love.

*Silvius*. It is to be all made of sighs and tears;

And so am I for Phebe.

*P*. And I for Ganymede.

*O*. And I for Rosalind.

*R*. And I for no woman. . . .

*S*. It is to be all made of fantasy,

All made of passion, and all made of wishes,

All adoration, duty and observance,

All humbleness, all patience and impatience,

All purity, all trial, all observance;

And so I am for Phebe.

*P*. And so am I for Ganymede.

*O*. And so am I for Rosalind.

*R*. And so am I for no woman."\*

The necessity of singing is so urgent, that a minute later songs break out of themselves. The prose and the conversation end in lyric poetry. We pass straight on into these odes. We do not find ourselves in a new country. We feel the distraction and foolish gayety as if it were a holiday. We see the graceful couple whom the song brings before us, passing in the misty light, "o'er the green corn-field," amid the hum of sportive insects, on the finest day of the flowering spring-time. The unlikelihood grows natural, and we are not astonished when we see Hymen leading the two brides by the hand to give them to their husbands.

Whilst the young folk sing, the old folk talk. Their life also is a romance, but a sad one. Shakspeare's delicate soul, bruised

by the shocks of social life, took refuge in contemplations of solitary life. To forget the strife and annoyances of the world he must bury himself in a wide silent forest, and

“ Under the shade of melancholy boughs,  
Lose and neglect the creeping hours of time.”\*

We may look at the bright images which the sun carves on the white beech-boles, the shade of trembling leaves flickering on the thick moss, the long waves of the summit of the trees ; the sharp sting of care is blunted ; we suffer no more, simply remembering that we suffered once ; we feel nothing but a gentle misanthropy, and being renewed, we are the better for it. The old duke is happy in his exile. Solitude has given him rest, delivered him from flattery, reconciled him to nature. He pities the stags which he is obliged to hunt for food :

“ Come, shall we go and kill us venison ?  
And yet it irks me the poor dappled fools,  
Being native burghers of this desert city,  
Should in their own confines with forked heads,  
Have their round haunches gored.”†

Nothing sweeter than this mixture of tender compassion, dreamy philosophy, delicate sadness, poetical complaints, and rustic songs. One of the lords sings :

“ Blow, blow, thou winter wind,  
Thou art not so unkind  
As man’s ingratitude ;  
Thy tooth is not so keen,  
Because thou art not seen,  
Although thy breath be rude.  
Heigh-ho ! sing heigh-ho ! unto the green holly :  
Most friendship is feigning, most loving mere folly :  
Then, heigh-ho, the holly !  
This life is most jolly.”‡

Among these lords is found a soul that suffers more, Jacques the melancholy, one of Shakspeare’s best-loved characters, a transparent mask behind which we perceive the face of the poet. He is sad because he is tender ; he feels the contact of things too keenly, and what leaves the rest indifferent, makes him weep.§ He does not scold, he is sad ; he does not reason, he is moved ; he has not the combative spirit of a reforming

\* *As You Like It*, ii. 7.

† *Ibid.* ii. 1.

‡ *Ibid.* ii. 7.

§ Compare Jacques with the Alceste of Molière. It is the contrast between a misanthrope through reasoning and one through imagination.

moralist ; his soul is sick and weary of life. Impassioned imagination leads quickly to disgust. Like opium, it excites and shatters. It leads man to the loftiest philosophy, then lets him down to the whims of a child. Jacques leaves the others brusquely, and goes to the quiet nooks to be alone. He loves his sadness, and would not exchange it for joy. Meeting Orlando, he says :

“ Rosalind is your love’s name ?

*O.* Yes, just.

*J.* I do not like her name.”\*

He has the fancies of a nervous woman. He is scandalized because Orlando writes sonnets on the forest trees. He is whimsical, and finds subjects of grief and gayety, where others would see nothing of the sort :

“ A fool, a fool ! I met a fool i’ the forest,  
 A motley fool ; A miserable world !  
 As I do live by food, I met a fool ;  
 Who laid him down and bask’d him in the sun,  
 And rail’d on Lady Fortune in good terms,  
 In good set terms and yet a motley fool. . . .  
 O noble fool ! A worthy fool ! Motley’s the only wear. . . .  
 O that I were a fool !  
 I am ambitious for a motley coat.”†

The next minute he returns to his melancholy dissertations, bright pictures whose vivacity explains his character, and betrays Shakspeare, hiding under his name :

“ All the world’s a stage,  
 And all the men and women merely players :  
 They have their exits and their entrances ;  
 And one man in his time plays many parts,  
 His acts being seven ages. At first the infant,  
 Mewling and puking in the nurse’s arms.  
 And then the whining schoolboy, with his satchel,  
 And shining morning face, creeping like snail  
 Unwillingly to school. And then the lover,  
 Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad  
 Made to his mistress’ eyebrow. Then a soldier,  
 Full of strange oaths and bearded like the pard,  
 Jealous in honour, sudden and quick in quarrel,  
 Seeking the bubble reputation  
 Even in the cannon’s mouth, And then the justice,  
 In fair round belly with good capon lined,

\* *As You Like It*, iii. 2.

† *Ibid.* ii. 7.



With eyes severe and beard of formal cut,  
 Full of wise saws and modern instances ;  
 And so he plays his part. The sixth age shifts  
 Into the lean and slipper'd pantaloon,  
 With spectacles on nose and pouch on side,  
 His youthful hose, well saved, a world too wide  
 For his shrunk shank ; and his big manly voice,  
 Turning again toward childish treble pipes  
 And whistles in his sound. Last scene of all,  
 That ends this strange eventful history,  
 Is second childishness and mere oblivion,  
 Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything." \*

*As You Like It* is a half-dream. *Midsummer Night's Dream* is a complete one.

The scene, buried in the far-off mist of fabulous antiquity, carries us back to Theseus, Duke of Athens, who is preparing his palace for his marriage with the beautiful queen of the Amazons. The style, loaded with contorted images, fills the mind with strange and splendid visions, and the airy elf-world divert the comedy into the fairy-land from whence it sprung.

Love is still the theme ; of all sentiments, is it not the greatest fancy-weaver ? But we have not here for language the charming tittle-tattle of *Rosalind* ; it is glaring like the season of the year. It does not brim over in slight conversations, in supple and skipping prose ; it breaks forth into long rhyming odes, dressed in magnificent metaphors, sustained by impassioned accents, such as a warm night, odorous and star-spangled, inspires in a poet who loves. *Lysander* and *Hermia* agree to meet :

" *Lys.* To-morrow night, when *Phoebe* doth behold  
 Her silver visage in the watery glass,  
 Decking with liquid pearl the bladed grass,  
 A time that lovers' flights doth still conceal,  
 Through Athens' gates have we devised to steal.

*Her.* And in the wood, where often you and I  
 Upon faint primrose-beds were wont to lie. . . .  
 There my *Lysander* and myself shall meet." †

They get lost, and fall asleep, wearied, under the trees. *Puck* squeezes in the youth's eyes the juice of a magic flower, and changes his heart. Presently, when he awakes, he will become

\* *As You Like It*, ii. 7.

† *Midsummer Night's Dream*, i. 1.

enamoured of the first woman he sees. Meanwhile Demetrius, Hermia's rejected lover, wanders with Helena, whom he rejects, in the solitary wood. The magic flower changes him in turn: he now loves Helena. The lovers flee and pursue one another, beneath the lofty trees, in the calm night. We smile at their transports, their complaints, their ecstasies, and yet we join in them. This passion is a dream, and yet it moves us. It is like those airy webs which we find at morning on the crest of the hedgerows where the dew has spread them, and whose weft sparkles like a jewel casket. Nothing can be more fragile, and nothing more graceful. The poet sports with emotions; he mingles, confuses, redoubles, interweaves them; he twines and untwines these loves like the mazes of a dance, and we see the noble and tender figures pass by the verdant bushes, under the radiant eyes of the stars, now wet with tears, now bright with rapture. They have the abandonment of true love, not the grossness of sensual love. Nothing causes us to fall from the ideal world in which Shakspeare conducts us. Dazzled by beauty, they adore it, and the spectacle of their happiness, their emotion, and their tenderness, is a kind of enchantment.

Above these two couples flutters and hums the swarm of elves and fairies. They also love. Titania, their queen, has a young boy for her favorite, son of an Indian king, of whom Oberon, her husband, wishes to deprive her. They quarrel, so that the elves creep for fear into the acorn cups, in the golden primroses. Oberon, by way of vengeance, touches Titania's sleeping eyes with the magic flower, and thus on waking, the nimblest and most charming of the fairies finds herself enamoured of a stupid blockhead with an ass' head. She kneels before him; she sets on his "hairy temples a coronet of fresh and fragrant flowers:"

"And that same dew, which sometime on the buds  
Was wont to swell like round and orient pearls,  
Stood now within the pretty flowerets' eyes,  
Like tears that did their own disgrace bewail."\*

She calls round her all her fairy attendants:

"Be kind and courteous to this gentleman:  
Hop in his walks, and gambol in his eyes;  
Feed him with apricocks and dewberries,

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\* *Midsummer Night's Dream*, iv. 1.

With purple grapes, green figs, and mulberries ;  
 The honey-bags steal from the humble-bees,  
 And for night-tapers crop their waxen thighs  
 And light them at the fiery glow-worm's eyes,  
 To have my love to bed and to arise ;  
 And pluck the wings from painted butterflies  
 To fan the moonbeams from his sleeping eyes. . . .  
 Come, wait upon him ; lead him to my bower.  
 The moon methinks, looks with a watery eye ;  
 And when she weeps, weeps every little flower,  
 Lamenting some enforced chastity.  
 Tie up my love's tongue, bring him silently."\*

It was necessary, for her love brayed horribly, and to all the offers of Titania, replied with a petition for hay. What can be sadder and sweeter than this irony of Shakspeare? What railery against love, and what tenderness for love! The sentiment is divine: its object unworthy. The heart is ravished, the eyes blind. It is a golden butterfly, fluttering in the mud; and Shakspeare, while painting its misery, preserves all its beauty:

"Come, sit thee down upon this flowery bed,  
 While I thy amiable cheeks do coy,  
 And stick musk-roses in thy sleek smooth head,  
 And kiss thy fair large ears, my gentle joy. . . .  
 Sleep thou, and I will wind thee in my arms. . . .  
 So doth the woodbine the sweet honeysuckle  
 Gently entwist; the female ivy so  
 Enrings the barky fingers of the elm.  
 O, how I love thee! how I dote on thee!" †

At the return of morning, when

"The eastern gate, all fiery red,  
 Opening on Neptune with fair blessed beams,  
 Turns into yellow gold his salt green streams," ‡

the enchantment ceases, Titania awakes on her couch of wild thyme and drooping violets. She drives the monster away; her recollections of the night are effaced in a vague twilight:

"These things seem small and undistinguishable,  
 Like far-off mountains turned into clouds." §

And the fairies

"Go seek some dew-drops here  
 And hang a pearl in every cowslip's ear." ||

\* *Midsummer Night's Dream*, iii. 1.

† *Ibid.* iii. 2.

§ *Ibid.* iv. 1.

† *Ibid.* iv. 1.

|| *Ibid.* ii. 1.

Such is Shakspeare's fantasy, a light tissue of bold inventions, of ardent passions, melancholy mockery, dazzling poetry, such as one of Titania's elves would have made. Nothing could be more like the poet's mind than these nimble genii, children of air and flame, whose flights "compass the globe" in a second, who glide over the foam of the waves and skip between the atoms of the winds. Ariel flies, an invisible songster, around shipwrecked men to console them, discovers the thoughts of traitors, pursues the savage beast Caliban, spreads gorgeous visions before lovers, and does all in a lightning-flash :

"Where the bee sucks, there suck I :  
 In a cowslip's bell I lie. . . .  
 Merrily, merrily shall I live now  
 Under the blossom that hangs on the bough. . . .  
 I drink the air before me, and return  
 Or ere your pulse twice beat."\*

Shakspeare glides over things on as swift a wing, by leaps as sudden, with a touch as delicate.

What a soul ! what extent of action, and what sovereignty of an unique faculty ! what diverse creations, and what persistence of the same impress ! There they all are reunited, and all marked by the same sign, void of will and reason, governed by mood, imagination, or pure passion, destitute of the faculties contrary to those of the poet, dominated by the corporeal type which his painter's eyes have conceived, endowed by the habits of mind and by the vehement sensibility which he finds himself. † Go through the groups, and you will only discover in them divers forms and divers states of the same power. Here, the flock of brutes, dotards, and gossips, made up of a mechanical imagination ; further on, the company of men of wit, animated by a gay and foolish imagination ; then, the charming swarm of women whom their delicate imagination raises so high, and their self-forgetting love carries so far ; elsewhere the band of villains, hardened by unbridled passions, inspired by the artist's animation ; in the centre the mournful train of grand characters, whose excited brain is filled with sad or criminal visions, and whom an inner destiny urges to murder, madness, or death.

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\* *Tempest*, v. I.

† There is the same law in the organic and in the modern world. It is what Geoffrey Saint-Hilaire calls unity of composition.

Ascend one stage, and contemplate the whole scene: the aggregate bears the same mark as the details. The drama reproduces promiscuously uglinesses, basenesses, horrors, unclean details, profligate and ferocious manners, the whole reality of life just as it is, when it is unrestrained by decorum, common sense, reason, and duty. Comedy, led through a phantasmagoria of pictures, gets lost in the likely and the unlikely, with no other check but the caprice of an amused imagination, wantonly disjointed, and romantic, an opera without music, a concerto of melancholy and tender sentiments, which bears the mind into the supernatural world, and brings before our eyes on its fairy-wings the genius which has created it. Look now. Do you not see the poet behind the crowd of his creations? They have heralded his approach; they have all shown somewhat of him. Ready, impetuous, impassioned, delicate, his genius is pure imagination, touched more vividly and by slighter things than ours. Hence his style, blooming with exuberant images, loaded with exaggerated metaphors, whose strangeness is like incoherence, whose wealth is superabundant, the work of a mind, which at the least incitement produces too much and leaps too far. Hence his implied psychology, and his terrible penetration, which instantaneously perceiving all the effects of a situation, and all the details of a character, concentrates them in every response, and gives his figure a relief and a coloring which create illusion. Hence our emotion and tenderness. We say to him, as Desdemona to Othello: "I love thee for the battles, sieges, fortunes thou hast passed, and for the distressful stroke that thy youth suffered."

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE CHRISTIAN RENAISSANCE.

§ 27.—IT must be admitted that the Reformation entered England by a side door ; but it is enough that it came in, whatever the manner : for great revolutions are not introduced by court intrigues and official sleight of hand, but by social conditions and popular instincts. When five millions of men are converted, it is because five millions of men wish to be converted. Every great change has its root in the soul, and we have only to look close into this deep soil to discover the national inclinations and the secular irritations from which Protestantism has issued.

A hundred and fifty years before, it had been on the point of bursting forth ; Wyclif had appeared, the Lollards had sprung up, the Bible had been translated ; the Commons had proposed the confiscation of ecclesiastical property ; then, under the pressure of the united Church, royalty and aristocracy, the growing Reformation being crushed, disappeared underground, only to reappear at long intervals by the sufferings of its martyrs. The bishops had received the right of imprisoning without trial laymen suspected of heresy ; they had burned Lord Cobham alive ; the kings chose their ministers from the bench ; settled in authority and pride, they had made the nobility and people bend under the secular sword which had been intrusted to them, and in their hands the stern network of law, which from the conquest had compressed the nation in its iron grasp, had become more stringent and more injurious. Venial acts had been construed into crimes, and the judicial repression, extended to faults as well as to outrages, had changed the police into an inquisition. “Offences against chastity,” “heresy,” or “matter sounding thereunto,” “witchcraft,” “drunkenness,” “scandal,” “defamation,” “impatient words,” “broken promises,” “untruth,” “absence from church,” “speaking evil of saints,” “non-

payment of offerings," "complaints against the constitutions of the courts themselves;" all these transgressions, imputed or suspected, brought folk before the ecclesiastical tribunals, at enormous expense, with long delays, from great distances, under a captious procedure, resulting in heavy fines, strict imprisonments, humiliating abjurations, public penances, and the menace, often fulfilled, of torture and the stake. People saw their companion, relation, brother, bound by an iron chain, with clasped hands praying amid the smoke, while the flame blackened his skin and destroyed his flesh. Such sights are not forgotten; the last words uttered on the fagot, the last appeals to God and Christ, remain in their hearts all-powerful and ineffaceable. They carry them about with them, and silently ponder over them in the fields, at their labor, when they think themselves alone; and then, darkly, passionately, their brains work. For, beyond this universal sympathy which gathers mankind about the oppressed, there is the working of the religious sentiment. The crisis of conscience has begun, which is natural to this race; they meditate on salvation, they are alarmed at their condition: terrified at the judgments of God, they ask themselves whether, living under imposed obedience and ceremonies, they do not become culpable, and merit damnation. Thenceforth man has made up his mind; he will be saved at all costs. At the peril of his life he obtains one of the books which teach the way of salvation, Wyclif's *Wicket Gate*, *The Obedience of a Christian*, or sometimes Luther's *Revelations of Antichrist*, but above all some portion of the word of God, which Tyndale had just translated. One hid his books in a hollow tree; another learned by heart an epistle or a gospel, so as to be able to ponder it to himself even in the presence of his accusers. When sure of his friend, he speaks with him in private; and peasant talking to peasant, laborer to laborer—you know what the effect would be. It was the yeomen's sons, as Latimer said, who more than all others maintained the faith of Christ in England; and it was with the yeomen's sons that Cromwell afterwards reaped his Puritan victories. When such words are whispered through a nation, all official voices clamor in vain: the nation has found its poem, it stops its ears to the troublesome would-be distractors, and presently sings it out with a full voice and from a full heart.

But the contagion had even reached the men in office, and Henry VIII. at last permitted the English Bible to be published.\* England had her book. Every one, says Strype, who could buy this book either read it assiduously, or had it read to him by others, and many well advanced in years learned to read with the same object. On Sunday the poor folk gathered at the bottom of the churches to hear it read. In vain the king in his proclamation had ordered people not to rest too much upon their own sense, ideas, or opinions; not to reason publicly about it in the public taverns and alehouses, but to have recourse to learned and authorized men; the seed sprouted, and they chose rather to take God's word in the matter than men's. The preface itself invited men to independent study, saying that "the Bishop of Rome has studied long to keep the Bible from the people, and specially from princes, lest they should find out his tricks and his falsehoods; . . . knowing well enough, that if the clear sun of God's word came over the heat of the day, it would drive away the foul mist of his devilish doctrines."

I have before me one of these old square folios,† in black letter, in which the pages, worn by horny fingers, have been patched together, in which an old engraving figures forth to the poor folk the deeds and menaces of the God of Israel, in which the preface and table of contents point out to simple people the moral which is to be drawn from each tragic history, and the application which is to be made of each venerable precept. Hence have sprung much of the English language, and half of the English manners; to this day the country is biblical;‡ it was these big books which had transformed Shakspeare's England. To understand this great change, try to picture these yeomen, these shopkeepers, who in the evening placed this Bible on their table, and bareheaded, with veneration, heard or read one of its chapters. Think that they have no other books, that theirs was a virgin mind, that every impression would make a furrow, that they opened this book not for amusement, but to discover in it their doom of life and death. Tyndale, the translator, wrote with such sentiments, condemned, hunted, in concealment, his spirit full of the idea of a speedy death, and of the

\* In 1536. Strype's *Memorials*, appendix. Froude, iii. ch. 12.

† 1549. Tyndale's translation.

‡ An expression of Stendhal's; it was his general impression.



great God for whom at last he mounted the funeral pyre. The short Hebrew verse-style took hold upon them by its uncultivated severity. They have no need, like the French, to have the ideas developed, explained in fine clear language, to be modified and bound together.\* The serious and pulsating tone shakes them at once ; they understand it with the imagination and the heart ; they are not, like Frenchmen, enslaved to logical regularity ; and the old text, so confused, so lofty and terrible, can retain in their language its wildness and its majesty. More than any people in Europe, by their innate concentration and rigidity, they realize the Semitic conception of the solitary and almighty God. Never has a people been seen so deeply imbued by a foreign book, has let it penetrate so far into its manners and writings, its imagination and language. Thenceforth they have found their King, and will follow Him ; no word, lay or ecclesiastic, shall prevail over His word ; they have submitted their conduct to Him, they will give body and life for Him ; and if need be, a day will come when, out of fidelity to Him, they will overthrow the State.

It is not enough to hear this King, they must answer Him ; and religion is not complete until the prayer of the people is added to the revelation of God. In 1548, at last, England received her Prayer-book† from the hands of Cranmer, Peter Martyr, Bernard Ochin, Melancthon ; the chief and most ardent reformers of Europe were invited to compose a body of doctrines conformable to Scripture, and to express a body of sentiments conformable to the true Christian life,—an admirable book, in which the full spirit of the Reformation breathes out, where, beside the moving tenderness of the gospel, and the manly accents of the Bible, throb the profound emotion, the grave eloquence, the noble-mindedness, the restrained enthusiasm of the heroic and poetic souls who had re-discovered Christianity, and had passed near the fire of martyrdom.

One detail is still needed to complete this manly religion—human reason. The minister ascends the pulpit and speaks : he speaks coldly, I admit, with literary comments and over-long

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\* See Lemaistre de Sacy's translation, so slightly biblical.

† The first Primer of note was in 1545 ; Fronde, v. 141. The Prayer-book underwent several changes in 1552, others under Elizabeth, and a few, lastly, at the Restoration.

demonstrations ; but solidly, seriously, like a man who desires to convince, and that by worthy means, who addresses only the reason, and discourses only of justice. With Latimer and his contemporaries, preaching, like religion, changes its object and character ; like religion, it becomes popular and moral, and appropriate to those who hear it, to recall them to their duties. Few men have deserved better of their fellows, in life and word, than he. He was a genuine Englishman, conscientious, courageous, a man of common sense and good upright practice, sprung from the laboring and independent class, with whom were the heart and thews of the nation. His father, a brave yeoman, had a farm of about four pounds a year, on which he employed half-a-dozen men, with thirty cows which his wife milked, himself a good soldier of the king, keeping equipment for himself and his horse so as to join the army if need were, training his son to use the bow, making him buckle on his breastplate, and finding a few nobles at the bottom of his purse wherewith to send him to school, and thence to the university. Little Latimer studied eagerly, took his degrees, and continued long a good Catholic, or, as he says, "in darckense and in the shadow of death." At about thirty, having often heard Bilney the martyr, and having, moreover, studied the world and thought for himself, he, as he tells us, "began from that time forward to smell the word of God, and to forsooke the Schoole Doctours, and such fooleries ;" presently to preach, and forthwith to pass for a seditious man, very troublesome to the men in authority, who were indifferent to justice. For this was in the first place the salient feature of his eloquence : he spoke to people of their duties, in exact terms. One day, when he preached before the university, the Bishop of Ely came, curious to hear him. Immediately he changed his subject, and drew the portrait of a perfect prelate, a portrait which did not tally well with the bishop's character ; and he was denounced for the act. When he was made chaplain of Henry VIII., awe-inspiring as the king was, little as he was himself, he dared to write to him freely to bid him stop the persecution which was set on foot, and to prevent the interdiction of the Bible ; verily he risked his life. He had done it before, he did it again ; like Tyndale, Knox, all the leaders of the Reformation, he lived in almost ceaseless expectation of

death, and in contemplation of the stake. Sick, liable to racking headaches, stomach-aches, pleurisy, stone, he wrought a vast work, travelling, writing, preaching, delivering at the age of sixty-seven two sermons every Sunday, and generally rising at two in the morning, winter and summer, to study. Nothing can be simpler or more effective than his eloquence; and the reason is, that he never speaks for the sake of speaking, but of doing work. His sermons, among others those which he preached before the young king Edward VI., are not, like those of Massillon before Louis XV., hung in the air, in the calm region of philosophical amplifications: Latimer wishes to correct and he attacks actual vices, vices which he has seen, which every one can point at with the finger; he too points them out, calls things by their name, and people too, telling facts and details, like a brave heart; and sparing nobody, sets himself without hesitation to denounce and reform iniquity. Universal as his morality is, ancient as is his text, he applies it to the time, to his audience, at times to the judges who are there "in velvet cotes," who will not hear the poor, who give but a dog's hearing to such a woman in a twelvemonth, and who leave another poor woman in the Fleet, refusing to accept bail;\* at times to the king's officers, whose thefts he enumerates, whom he sets between hell and restitution, and of whom he obtains, nay extorts, pound for pound, the stolen money. Ever from abstract iniquity he proceeds to special abuse; for it is abuse which cries out and demands, not a discourser, but a champion. With him, theology holds but a secondary place; before all, practice: the true offence against God in his eyes is a bad deed; the true service, the suppression of bad deeds. He spoke the truth to the king, unmasked robbers, incurred all kind of hate, resigned his see rather than sign anything against his conscience; and at eighty years, under Mary, refusing to retract, after two years of prison and waiting—and what waiting!—he was led to the stake. His companion, Ridley, slept the night before as calmly, we are told, as ever he did in his life; and when ready to be chained to the post, said aloud, "O heavenly Father, I give Thee most hearty thanks, for that Thou hast called me to be a professor of Thee, even unto death." Latimer in his turn, when they brought the

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\* Latimer's *Seven Sermons before Edward VI.*, ed. Edward Arber, 1869. Second sermon, pp. 73 and 74.

lighted faggots, cried, "Be of good comfort, Master Ridley, and play the man: we shall this day light such a candle, by God's grace, in England, as I trust shall never be put out." He then bathed his hands in the flames, and resigning his soul to God, expired.

He had judged rightly: it is by this supreme proof that a creed demonstrates its power and gains its adherents; martyrdoms are a sort of propaganda as well as a witness, and make converts while they make martyrs. All the writings of the time, and all the commentaries which may be added to them, are weak beside actions which, one after the other, shone forth at that time from doctors and from people, down to the most simple and ignorant. In three years, under Mary, nearly three hundred persons, men, women, old and young, some all but children, let themselves be burned alive rather than abjure. The all-powerful idea of God, and of the fidelity due to Him, made them strong against all the revulsions of nature, and all the trembling of the flesh. "No one will be crowned," said one of them, "but they who fight like men; and he who endures to the end shall be saved." Doctor Rogers suffered first, in presence of his wife and ten children, one at the breast. He had not been told beforehand, and was sleeping soundly. The wife of the keeper of Newgate woke him, and told him that he must burn that day. "Then," said he, "I need not truss my points." In the midst of the flames he did not seem to suffer. "His children stood by consoling him, in such a way that he looked as if they were conducting him to a merry marriage." Before such examples the people were shaken. A woman wrote to Bishop Bonner, that there was not a child but called him Bonner the hangman, and knew on his fingers, as well as he knew his Pater, the exact number of those he had burned at the stake, or suffered to die of hunger in prison these nine months. "You have lost the hearts of twenty thousand persons who were inveterate Papists a year ago." The spectators encouraged the martyrs, and cried out to them that their cause was just. The Catholic envoy Renard wrote to Charles v. that it was said that several had desired to take their place at the stake, by the side of those who were being burned. In vain the queen had forbidden, on pain of death, all marks of approbation. "We know that they are men of God," cried one of the spectators; "that is why we

cannot help saying, God strengthen them." And all the people answered, "Amen, Amen." What wonder if, at the coming of Elizabeth, England cast in her lot with Protestantism? The threats of the Armada urged her further in advance; and the Reformation became national under the pressure of foreign hostility, as it had become popular through the triumph of its martyrs.

§ 28.—Two distinct branches receive the common sap,—one above, the other beneath: one respected, flourishing, shooting forth in the open air; the other despised, half buried in the ground, trodden under foot by those who would crush it: both living, the Anglican as well as the Puritan, the one in spite of the effort made to destroy it, the other in spite of the care taken to develop it.

The court has its religion, like the country—a sincere and winning religion. Amid the pagan poesies which up to the Revolution always had the ear of the world, we find gradually piercing through and rising higher the grave and grand idea which sent its roots to the depth of the public mind. Many poets, Drayton, Davies, Cowley, Giles Fletcher, Quarles, Crashaw, wrote sacred histories, pious or moral verses, noble stanzas on death and the immortality of the soul, on the frailty of things human, and on the supreme providence in which alone man finds the support of his weakness and the consolation of his sufferings. In the greatest prose writers, Bacon, Burton, Sir Thomas Browne, Raleigh, we see the fruits of veneration, a settled belief in the obscure beyond; in short, faith and prayer. Several prayers written by Bacon are among the finest known; and the courtier Raleigh, while writing of the fall of empires, and how the barbarous nations had destroyed this grand and magnificent Roman Empire, ended his book with the ideas and tone of a Bossuet.\*

If several poets are pious, several ecclesiastics are poetical,—Bishop Hall, Bishop Corbet, Wither a rector, and the preacher Donne. If several laymen rise to religious contemplations, sev-

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\* "O eloquent, just, and mightie Death! whom none could advise, thou hast persuaded; what none hath dared, thou hast done; and whom all the world hath flattered, thou only hast cast out of the world and despised: thou hast drawne together all the farre stretched greatnesse, all the pride, crueltie, and ambition of man, and covered it all over with these two narrow words, *Illic jacet.*"

eral theologians, Hooker, John Hales, Taylor, Chillingworth, set philosophy and reason by the side of dogma. Accordingly we find a new literature arising, elevated and original, eloquent and measured, armed at once against the Puritans, who sacrifice freedom of intellect to the tyranny of the letter, and against the Catholics, who sacrifice independence of criticism to the tyranny of tradition; opposed equally to the servility of literal interpretation and the servility of a prescribed interpretation. In front of all appears the learned and excellent Hooker, one of the sweetest and most conciliatory of men, the most solid and persuasive of logicians, a comprehensive mind, and a methodical writer, correct and always ample, worthy of being regarded not only as one of the fathers of the English Church, but as one of the founders of English prose. With a sustained gravity and simplicity, he shows the Puritans that the laws of nature, reason, and society, like the law of Scripture, are of divine institution, that all are equally worthy of respect and obedience, that we must not sacrifice the inner word, by which God reaches our intellect, to the outer word, by which God reaches our senses; that thus the civil constitution of the Church, and the visible ordinance of ceremonies, may be conformable to the will of God, even when they are not justified by a clear text of Scripture; and that the authority of the magistrates, as well as the reason of man, does not exceed its rights in establishing certain uniformities and disciplines on which Scripture is silent, in order that reason may decide:—

“For if the natural strength of man’s wit may by experience and study attain unto such ripeness in the knowledge of things human, that men in this respect may presume to build somewhat upon their judgment; what reason have we to think but that even in matters divine, the like wits furnished with necessary helps, exercised in Scripture with like diligence, and assisted with the grace of Almighty God, may grow unto so much perfection of knowledge, that men shall have just cause, when anything pertinent unto faith and religion is doubted of, the more willingly to incline their minds towards that which the sentence of so grave, wise, and learned in that faculty shall judge most sound.”\*

This “natural light” therefore must not be despised, but rather nourished so as to augment the other, † as we put torch

\* *Ecc. Pol.* i. book ii. ch. vii. 4, p. 405.

† See the *Dialogues of Galileo*. The same idea which is persecuted by the church at Rome is at the same time defended by the church in England. See also *Ecc. Pol.* i. book iii. 461–481.

to torch ; above all, nourished that we may live in harmony with each other.

“ Far more comfort it were for us (so small is the joy we take in these strifes) to labor under the same yoke, as men that look for the same eternal reward of their labors, to be conjoined with you in bands of indissoluble love and amity, to live as if our persons being many, our souls were but one, rather than in such dismembered sort to spend our few and wretched days in a tedious prosecuting of wearisome contentions.”

In fact, it is in such amity that the greatest theologians conclude : they quit an oppressive practice to grasp a liberal spirit. If by its political structure the English Church is persecuting, by its doctrinal structure it is tolerant ; it needs the reason of the laity too much to refuse it liberty ; it lives in a world too cultivated and thoughtful to proscribe thought and culture. John Hales, its most eminent doctor, declared several times that he would renounce the Church of England to-morrow, if she insisted on the doctrine that other Christians would be damned ; and that men believe other people to be damned only when they desire them to be so.\* So Chillingworth, a notably militant and loyal mind, the most exact, the most penetrating, and the most convincing of controversialists, first Protestant, then Catholic, then Protestant again and for ever, has the courage to say that these great changes, wrought in himself and by himself, through study and research, are, of all his actions, those which satisfy him most. He maintains that reason applied to Scripture alone ought to persuade men ; that authority has no claim in it ; “ that nothing is more against religion than to force religion ; ” that the great principle of the Reformation is liberty of conscience ; and that if the doctrines of the different Protestant sects are not absolutely true, at least they are free from all impiety and from all error damnable in itself, or destructive of salvation.

A writer of genius appears among these, a prose-poet, gifted with imagination like Spenser and Shakspeare,—Jeremy Taylor, who, from the bent of his mind, as well as from circumstances, was destined to present the alliance of the Renaissance with the Reformation, and to carry into the pulpit the ornate style of the court. A preacher at St. Paul’s, appreciated and admired by men of fashion “ for his youthful and fresh beauty, and his grace-

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\* Clarendon’s witness. See the same doctrines in Jeremy Taylor, *Liberty of Prophesying*, 1647.

ful bearing," as also for his splendid diction; patronized and promoted by Archbishop Laud, he wrote for the king a defence of episcopacy; became chaplain to the king's army; was taken, ruined, twice imprisoned by the Parliamentarians; married a natural daughter of Charles I.; then, after the Restoration, was loaded with honors; became bishop, member of the Privy Council, and chancellor of the Irish university: in every passage of his life, fortunate or otherwise, private or public, we see that he is an Anglican, a royalist, imbued with the spirit of the cavaliers and courtiers, not with their vices. On the contrary, there was never a better or more upright man, more zealous in his duties, more tolerant by principle; so that, preserving a Christian gravity and purity, he received from the Renaissance only its rich imagination, its classical erudition, and its liberal spirit. But he had these gifts entire, as they existed in the most brilliant and original of the men of the world, in Sir Philip Sidney, Lord Bacon, Sir Thomas Browne, with the graces, splendors, refinements which are characteristic of these sensitive and creative geniuses, and yet with the redundancies, singularities, incongruities inevitable in an age when excess of transport prevented the soundness of taste. Like all these writers, like Montaigne, he was imbued with the classic antiquity; in the pulpit he quotes Greek and Latin anecdotes, passages from Seneca, verses of Lucretius and Euripides, and this side by side with texts from the Bible, from the Gospels and the Fathers. Cant was not yet in vogue; the two great sources of teaching, Christian and Pagan, ran side by side; they were collected in the same vessel, without imagining that the wisdom of reason and nature could mar the wisdom of faith and revelation. Taylor will relate to you the history of the bears of Pannonia, which, when wounded, will press the iron deeper home; or of the apples of Sodom, which are beautiful to the gaze, but full within of rottenness and worms; and many others of the same kind. For it was a characteristic of men of this age and school not to possess a mind swept, levelled, regulated, laid out in straight paths, like our seventeenth century writers, and like the gardens at Versailles, but full, and crowded with circumstantial facts, complete dramatic scenes, little colored pictures, pell-mell and badly dusted. Metaphors multiply one above the other, jumbled, blocking each other's path, as in Shakspeare. Yet, just by



virtue of this same turn of mind, Taylor imagines objects, not vaguely and feebly, by some indistinct general conception, but precisely, entire, as they are, with their sensible color, their proper form, the multitude of true and particular details which distinguish them in their species. He is not acquainted with them by hearsay ; he has seen them. Better, he sees them now, and makes them to be seen. Read this piece, and say if it does not seem to have been copied from a hospital, or from the field of battle :—

“ And what can we complain of the weakness of our strengths, or the pressures of diseases, when we see a poor soldier stand in a breach almost starved with cold and hunger, and his cold apt to be relieved only by the heats of anger, a fever, or a fired musket, and his hunger slacked by a greater pain and a huge fear? This man shall stand in his arms and wounds, *patiens luminis atque solis*, pale and faint, weary and watchful; and at night shall have a bullet pulled out of his flesh, and shivers from his bones, and endure his mouth to be sewed up from a violent rent to its own dimensions ; and all this for a man whom he never saw, or, if he did, was not noted by him ; but one that shall condemn him to the gallows if he runs away from all this misery.” \*

This is the advantage of a full imagination over ordinary reason. It produces in a mass twenty or thirty ideas, and as many images, exhausting the subject which the other only outlines and sketches. There are a thousand circumstances and shades in every event ; and they are all grasped in living words like these :—

“ For so have I seen the little purls of a spring sweat through the bottom of a bank, and intenerate the stubborn pavement, till it hath made it fit for the impression of a child’s foot ; and it was despised, like the descending pearls of a misty morning, till it had opened its way and made a stream large enough to carry away the ruins of the undermined strand, and to invade the neighboring gardens ; but then the despised drops were grown into an artificial river, and an intolerable mischief. So are the first entrances of sin, stopped with the antidotes of a hearty prayer, and checked into sobriety by the eye of a reverend man, or the counsels of a single sermon ; but when such beginnings are neglected, and our religion hath not in it so much philosophy as to think anything evil as long as we can endure it, they grow up to ulcers and pestilential evils ; they destroy the soul by their abode, who at their first entry might have been killed with the pressure of a little finger.” †

\* Jeremy Taylor’s Works, ed. Eden, 1840, 10 vols., *Holy Dying*, ch. iii. sec. 4, § 3, p. 315.

† Sermon xvi., *Of Growth in Sin*.

All extremes meet in that imagination. The cavaliers who heard him, found, as in Ford, Beaumont, and Fletcher, the crude copy of the most coarse and unclean truth, and the light music of the most graceful and airy fancies ; the smell and horrors of a dissecting room, and all on a sudden the freshness and cheerfulness of a smiling dawn ; the hateful detail of a leprosy, its white spots, its inner rottenness ;\* and then this lovely picture of a lark, rising amid the early perfumes of the fields:—

“ For so have I seen a lark rising from his bed of grass, and soaring upwards, singing as he rises, and hopes to get to heaven, and climb above the clouds ; but the poor bird was beaten back with the loud sighings of an eastern wind, and his motion made irregular and inconstant, descending more at every breath of the tempest, than it could recover by the vibration and frequent weighing of his wings, till the little creature was forced to sit down and pant, and stay till the storm was over ; and then it made a prosperous flight, and did rise and sing, as if it had learned music and motion from an angel, as he passed sometimes through the air, about his ministries here below. So is the prayer of a good man.” †

And he continues with the charm, sometimes with the very words, of Shakspcare. In the preacher, as well as in the poet, as well as in all the cavaliers and all the artists of the time, the imagination is so full that it reaches the real, even to its filth, and the ideal as far as its heaven.

§ 29.—This was, however, but an imperfect Reformation, and the official religion was too closely bound up with the world to undertake to cleanse it thoroughly : if it repressed the excesses of vice, it did not attack its source ; and the paganism of the Renaissance, following its bent, already under James I. issued in the corruption, orgie, mincing, and drunken habits, appetizing and gross sensuality, which subsequently under the Restoration stank like a sewer in the sun. But underneath the established Protestantism was propagated the interdicted Protestantism: the yeomen were settling their faith like the gentlemen, and already the Puritans made headway under the Anglicans.

No culture here, no philosophy, no sentiment of harmonious and pagan beauty. Conscience only spoke, and its restlessness had become a terror. The son of the shopkeeper, of the farmer, who read the Bible in the barn or the counting-house, amid the

\* “ We have already opened up this dunghill covered with snow, which was indeed on the outside white as the spots of leprosy.”

† *Golden Grove Sermons*: V. “ The Return of Prayers.”

barrels or the wool-bags, did not take matters as the fine cavalier bred up in the old mythology, and refined by an elegant Italian education. They took them tragically, sternly examined themselves, pricked their hearts with their scruples, filled their imaginations with the vengeance of God and the terrors of the Bible. A gloomy epic, terrible and grand as the *Edda*, was fermenting in their melancholy imaginations. They steeped themselves in texts of Saint Paul, in the thundering menaces of the prophets; they burdened their minds with the pitiless doctrines of Calvin; they admitted that the majority of men were predestined to eternal damnation: many believed that this multitude were criminal before their birth; that God willed, foresaw, provided for their ruin; that He designed their punishment from all eternity; that He created them simply to give them up to it. Nothing but grace can save the wretched creature, free grace, God's sheer favor, which He only gives to a few, and which He grants not to the struggles and works of men, but after the arbitrary choice of His single and absolute will. We are "children of wrath," plague-stricken, and condemned from our birth; and wherever we look in all the expanse of heaven, we find but thunderbolts to deafen and destroy us.

Thenceforth rigor and rigidity mark their manners. The Puritan condemns the stage, the assemblies, the world's pomps and gatherings, the court's gallantry and elegance, the poetical and symbolical festivals of the country, the May-days, the merry feasts, bell-rings, all the outlets by which sensual or instinctive nature had essayed to relieve itself. He gives them up, abandons recreations and ornaments, crops his hair, wears a simple sombre-hued coat, speaks through his nose, walks stiffly, with his eyes in the air, absorbed, indifferent to visible things. The external and natural man is abolished; only the inner and spiritual man survives; there remains of the soul only the ideas of God and conscience,—a conscience alarmed and diseased, but strict in every duty, attentive to the least requirements, disdaining the equivocations of worldly morality, inexhaustible in patience, courage, sacrifice, enthroning purity on the domestic hearth, truth in the tribunal, probity in the counting-house, labor in the workshop, above all, a fixed determination to bear all and do all rather than fail in the least injunction of moral justice and Bible-law. The stoical energy, a fundamental honesty of

the race, were aroused at the appeal of an enthusiastic imagination ; and these unbending characteristics were displayed in their entirety in conjunction with abnegation and virtue.

Around them, fanaticism and folly gained ground. Independents, Millenarians, Antinomians, Anabaptists, Libertines, Familists, Quakers, Enthusiasts, Seekers, Perfectionists, Socinians, Arians, anti-Trinitarians, anti-Scripturalists, Sceptics ; the list of sects is interminable. Women, troopers, suddenly got up into the pulpit and preached. The strangest ceremonies took place in public. In 1644, says Dr. Featly, the Anabaptists rebaptized a hundred men and women together at twilight, in streams, in branches of the Thames and elsewhere, plunging them in the water over head and ears. One Oates, in the county of Essex, was brought before a jury for the murder of Anne Martin, who died a few days after her baptism of a cold which had seized her. George Fox the Quaker spoke with God, and witnessed with a loud voice, in the streets and market-places, against the sins of the age. William Simpson, one of his disciples, "was moved of the Lord to go, at several times, for three years, naked and barefoot before them, as a sign unto them, in the markets, courts, towns, cities, to priests' houses, and to great men's houses, telling them, so shall they all be stripped naked, as he was stripped naked. And sometimes he was moved to put on hair sackcloth, and to besmear his face, and to tell them, so would the Lord besmear all their religion as he was besmeared.\*

A Quaker came to the door of the Parliament House with a drawn sword, and wounded several who were present, saying "that he was inspired by the Holy Spirit to kill every man that sat in the house." The Fifth Monarchy men believed that Christ was about to descend to reign in person upon earth for a thousand years, with the saints for His ministers. The Ranters looked upon furious vociferations and contortions as the principal signs of faith. The Seekers thought that religious truth could only be seized in a sort of mystical fog, with doubt and fear. The Muggletonians decided that "John Reeve and Ludovick Muggleton were the two last prophets and messengers of God ;" they declared the Quakers possessed of the devil, exorcised him, and prophesied that William Penn would be damned.

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\* *A Journal of the Life, etc., of that Ancient, Eminent, and Faithful Servant of Jesus Christ, George Fox, 6th edit., 1836.*

James Nayler, an old quartermaster of General Lambert, was adored as a god by his followers. Several women led his horse, others cast before him their kerchiefs and scarfs, singing, Holy, holy, Lord God. When he was put in the pillory some of his disciples began to sing, weep, smite their breasts; others kissed his hands, rested on his bosom, and kissed his wounds.\* Bed-lam broken loose could not have surpassed them.

Underneath these disorderly bubbles at the surface, the wise and deep strata of the nation had settled, and the new faith was doing its work with them,—a practical and positive, a political and moral work. While the German Reformation, after the German wont, resulted in great volumes and a scholastic system, the English Reformation, after the English wont, resulted in action and establishments. “How the Church of Christ shall be governed;” that was the great question which was discussed among the sects. There was no separation here between theory and practice, between private and public life, between the spiritual and the temporal. They wished to apply Scripture to “establish the kingdom of heaven upon earth,” to institute not only a Christian church, but a Christian society, to change the law into a guardian of morals, to exact piety and virtue. “Though the discipline of the church was at an end, there was nevertheless an uncommon spirit of devotion among people in the parliament quarters; the Lord’s day was observed with remarkable strictness, the churches being crowded with numerous and attentive hearers three or four times in the day; the officers of the peace patrolled the streets, and shut up all public-houses; there was no travelling on the road, or walking in the fields, except in cases of absolute necessity. Religious exercises were set up in private families, as reading the Scriptures, family prayer, repeating sermons, and singing of psalms, which was so universal, that you might walk through the city of London on the evening of the Lord’s day without seeing an idle person, or hearing anything but the voice of prayer or praise from churches and private houses.”† During Cromwell’s expedition in Ireland

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\* Burton’s *Parliamentary Diary*, i. 46–173. Neal, *History of the Puritans*, iii., Suppl.

† Neal, ii. 553. Compare with the French Revolution. When the Bastille was demolished, they wrote on the ruins these words: “Ici l’on danse.” From this contrast we see the difference between the two doctrines and the two nations.

we read that no blasphemy was heard in the camp ; the soldiers spent their leisure hours in reading the Bible, singing psalms, and holding religious controversies. In 1650 the punishments inflicted on Sabbath-breakers were redoubled. Stern laws were passed against betting, gallantry was reckoned a crime ; the theatres were destroyed, the spectators fined, the actors whipt at the cart's tail ; adultery punished with death : in order to reach crime more surely, they persecuted pleasure. But if they were austere against others, they were so against themselves, and practised the virtues they exacted. After the Restoration, two thousand ministers, rather than conform to the new liturgy, resigned their cures, though they and their families had to die of hunger. Many of them, says Baxter, thinking that they were not justified in quitting their ministry after being set apart for it by ordination, preached to such as would hear them in the fields and in certain houses, until they were seized and thrown into prisons, where a great number of them perished. Cromwell's fifty thousand veterans, suddenly disbanded and without resources, did not bring a single recruit to the vagabonds and bandits. "The Royalists themselves confessed that, in every department of honest industry, the discarded warriors prospered beyond other men, that none was charged with any theft or robbery, that none was heard to ask an alms, and that, if a baker, a mason, or a waggoner attracted notice by his diligence and sobriety, he was in all probability one of Oliver's old soldiers."\* Purified by persecution and ennobled by patience, they ended by winning the tolerance of the law and the respect of the public, and raised the national morality, as they had saved the national liberty. But others, exiles in America, pushed to an extremity this great religious and stoical spirit, with its weaknesses and its power, with its vices and its virtues. Their determination, intensified by a fervent faith, employed in political and practical pursuits, invented the science of emigration, made exile tolerable, drove back the Indians, fertilized the desert, raised a rigid morality into a civil law, founded and armed a church, and on the Bible as a basis built up a new state.

That was not a conception of life from which a genuine literature might be expected to issue. The idea of the beautiful

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\* Macaulay, *Hist. of England*, ed. Lady Trevelyan, i. 121.

is wanting, and what is a literature without it? The natural expression of the heart's emotions is proscribed, and what is a literature without it? They abolished as impious the free stage and the rich poesy which the Renaissance had brought them. They rejected as profane the ornate style and ample eloquence which had been established around them by the imitation of antiquity and of Italy. They mistrusted reason, and were incapable of philosophy. They ignored the divine languor of Jeremy Taylor, and the touching tenderness of the gospel. Their character exhibits only manliness, their conduct austerity, their mind preciseness. We find among them only excited theologians, minute controversialists, energetic men of action, limited and patient minds, engrossed in positive proofs and practical labors, void of general ideas and refined tastes, resting upon texts, dry and obstinate reasoners, who twisted the Scripture in order to extract from it a form of government or a table of dogma. Seldom is a generation found more mutilated in all the faculties which produce contemplation and ornament, more limited in the faculties which nourish discussion and morality. They are without style; they speak like business men; their histories, like May's for instance, are flat and heavy. Their memoirs, even those of Ludlow and Mrs. Hutchinson, are long, wearisome, mere statements, destitute of personal feelings, void of enthusiasm or entertaining matter; "they seem to ignore themselves, and are engrossed by the general prospects of their cause."\* Good works of piety, solid and convincing sermons; sincere, edifying, exact, methodical books, like those of Baxter, Barclay, Calamy, John Owen; personal narratives, like that of Baxter, like Fox's journal, Bunyan's life, a large collection of documents and arguments, conscientiously arranged,—this is all they offer: the Puritan destroys the artist, stiffens the man, fetters the writer; and leaves of artist, man, writer, only a sort of abstract being, the slave of a watchword. If a Milton springs up among them, it is because by his wide curiosity, his travels, his comprehensive education, above all by his youth saturated in the great poetry of the preceding age, and by his independence of spirit, loftily adhered to even against the sectarians, Milton passes beyond sectarianism. Strictly speaking, they

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\* Guizot, *Portraits Politiques*, 5th ed., 1862.

could but have one poet, an involuntary poet, a madman, a martyr, a hero, and a victim of grace ; a genuine preacher, who attains the beautiful by accident, while pursuing the useful on principle ; a poor tinker, who, employing images so as to be understood by mechanics, sailors, servant-girls, attained, without pretending to it, eloquence and high art.

After the Bible, the book most widely read in England is the *Pilgrim's Progress*, by John Bunyan. The reason is, that the basis of Protestantism is the doctrine of salvation by grace, and that no writer has equalled Bunyan in making this doctrine understood.

To treat well of supernatural impressions, one must have been subject to them. Bunyan had that kind of imagination which produces them. Powerful as that of an artist, but more vehement, this imagination worked in the man without his co-operation, and besieged him with visions which he had neither willed nor foreseen. Bunyan, like Saint Theresa, was from infancy "greatly troubled with the thoughts of the fearful torments of hell-fire," sad in the midst of pleasures, believing himself damned, and so despairing, that he wished he was a devil, "supposing they were only tormentors ; that if it must needs be that I went thither, I might be rather a tormentor, than be tormented myself."\* There already was the assault of exact and bodily images. Already his ideas clung to him with that irresistible hold which constitutes monomania ; no matter how absurd they were, they ruled him, not by their truth, but by their presence. The thought of an impossible danger terrified him as much as the sight of an imminent peril. Like a man hung over an abyss by a sound rope, he forgot that the rope was sound, and vertigo seized upon him. After the fashion of English villagers, he loved bell-ringing : when he became a Puritan, he considered the amusement profane, and gave it up ; yet, impelled by his desire, he would go into the belfry and watch the ringers. "But quickly after, I began to think, 'How if one of the bells should fall?' Then I chose to stand under a main beam, that lay overthwart the steeple, from side to side, thinking here I might stand sure : but then I thought again, should the bell fall with a swing, it might first hit the wall, and then

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\* *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, § 7.



rebounding upon me, might kill me for all this beam. This made me stand in the steeple-door; and now, thought I, I am safe enough, for if a bell should then fall, I can slip out behind these thick walls, and so be preserved notwithstanding. So after this I would yet go to see them ring, but would not go any farther than the steeple-door; but then it came into my head, 'How if the steeple itself should fall?' And this thought (it may, for aught I know, when I stood and looked on) did continually so shake my mind that I durst not stand at the steeple-door any longer, but was forced to flee, for fear the steeple should fall upon my head." \* Frequently the mere conception of a sin became for him a temptation so involuntary and so strong, that he felt upon him the sharp claw of the devil. The fixed idea swelled in his head like a painful abscess, full of sensitiveness and of his life's blood.

In him circumstances develop character; his kind of life develops his kind of mind. He was born in the lowest and most despised rank, a tinker's son, himself a wandering tinker, with a wife as poor as himself, so that they had not a spoon or a dish between them. He had been taught in childhood to read and write, but he had since "almost wholly lost what he had learned." Education draws out and disciplines a man; fills him with varied and rational ideas; prevents him from sinking into monomania or being excited by transport; gives him determinate thoughts instead of eccentric fancies, pliable opinions for fixed convictions; replaces impetuous images by calm reasonings, sudden resolves by the results of reflection; furnishes us with the wisdom and ideas of others; gives us conscience and self-command. Suppress this reason and this discipline, and consider the poor working-man at his work; his head works while his hands work, not ably, with methods acquired from any logic he might have mustered, but with dark emotions, beneath a disorderly flow of confused images. Morning and evening, the hammer which he uses in his trade drives in with its deafening sounds the same thought perpetually returning and self-communing. A troubled, obstinate vision floats before him in the brightness of the hammered and quivering metal. In the red furnace where the iron is bubbling, in the clang of the ham-

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\* *Grace Abounding*, §§ 33, 34.

mered brass, in the black corners where the damp shadow creeps, he sees the flame and darkness of hell, and the rattling of eternal chains. Next day he sees the same image, the day after, the whole week, month, year. His brow wrinkles, his eyes grow sad, and his wife hears him groan in the night-time. She remembers that she has two volumes in an old bag, *The Plain Man's Pathway to Heaven* and *The Practice of Piety*; she spells them out to console him; and the impressive thoughtfulness, already sublime, made more so by the slowness with which it is read, sinks like an oracle into his subdued faith. The braziers of the devils—the golden harps of heaven—the bleeding Christ on the cross,—each of these deep-rooted ideas sprouts poisonously or wholesomely in his diseased brain, spreads, pushes out and springs higher with a ramification of fresh visions, so crowded, that in his encumbered mind he has no further place nor air for more conceptions. Will he rest when he sets forth in the winter on his tramp? During his long solitary wanderings, over wild heaths, in cursed and haunted bogs, always abandoned to his own thoughts, the inevitable idea pursues him. These neglected roads where he sticks in the mud, these sluggish rivers which he crosses on the cranky ferry-boat, these threatening whispers of the woods at night, where in perilous places the livid moon shadows out ambushed forms,—all that he sees and hears falls into an involuntary poem around the one absorbing idea; thus it changes into a vast body of sensible legends, and multiplies its power as it multiplies its details. Having become a dissenter, Bunyan is shut up for twelve years, having no other amusement but the *Book of Martyrs* and the Bible, in one of those infectious prisons where the Puritans rotted under the Restoration. There he is, still alone, thrown back upon himself by the monotony of his dungeon, besieged by the terrors of the Old Testament, by the vengeful outpourings or denunciations of the prophets, by the thunder-striking words of Paul, by the spectacle of trances and of martyrs, face to face with God, now in despair, now consoled, troubled with involuntary images and unlooked-for emotions, seeing alternately devil and angels, the actor and the witness of an internal drama whose vicissitudes he is able to relate. He writes them: it is his book. You see now the condition of this inflamed brain. Poor in ideas, full of images, given up to a fixed and single thought, plunged into

this thought by his mechanical pursuit, by his prison and his readings, by his knowledge and his ignorance, circumstances, like nature, make him a visionary and an artist, furnish him with supernatural impressions and sensible images, teaching him the history of grace and the means of expressing it.

The *Pilgrim's Progress* is a manual of devotion for the use of simple folk, while it is an allegorical poem of grace. In it we hear a man of the people speaking to the people, who would render intelligible to all the terrible doctrine of damnation and salvation.\* According to Bunyan, we are "children of wrath," condemned from our birth, guilty by nature, justly predestined to destruction. Under this formidable thought the heart gives way. The unhappy man relates how he trembled in all his limbs, and in his fits it seemed to him as though the bones of his chest would break. "One day," he tells us, "I walked to a neighboring town, and sat down upon a settle in the street, and fell into a very deep pause about the most fearful state my sin had brought me to; and after long musing, I lifted up my head, but methought I saw, as if the sun that shineth in the heavens

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\* This is an abstract of the events:—From highest heaven a voice has proclaimed vengeance against the *City of Destruction*, where lives a sinner of the name of *Christian*. Terrified, he rises up amid the jeers of his neighbors, and departs, for fear of being devoured by the fire which is to consume the criminals. A helpful man, *Evangelist*, shows him the right road. A treacherous man, *Worldlywise*, tries to turn him aside. His companion, *Pliable*, who had followed him at first, gets stuck in the Slough of Despond, and leaves him. He advances bravely across the dirty water and the slippery mud, and reaches the *Strait Gate*, where a wise *Interpreter* instructs him by visible shows, and points out the way to the Heavenly City. He passes before a cross, and the heavy burden of sins, which he carried on his back, is loosened and falls off. He painfully climbs the steep hill of *Difficulty*, and reaches a great castle, where *Watchful*, the guardian, gives him in charge to his good daughters *Piety* and *Prudence*, who warn him and arm him against the monsters of hell. He finds his road barred by one of these demons, *Apollyon*, who bids him abjure obedience to the heavenly King. After a long fight he slays him. Yet the way grows narrow, the shades all thicker, sulphurous flames rise along the road: it is the valley of the *Shadow of Death*. He passes it, and arrives at the town of *Vanity*, a vast fair of business, deceits, and shows, which he walks by with lowered eyes, not wishing to take part in its festivities or falsehoods. The people of the place beat him, throw him into prison, condemn him as a traitor and rebel, burn his companion *Faithful*. Escaped from their hands, he falls into those of *Giant Despair*, who beats him, leaves him in a poisonous dungeon without food, and giving him daggers and cords, advises him to rid himself from so many misfortunes. At last he reaches the *Delectable Mountains*, whence he sees the holy city. To enter it he has only to cross a deep river, where there is no foothold, where the water dims the sight, and which is called the *River of Death*.

did grudge to give light; and as if the very stones in the street, and tiles upon the houses, did bend themselves against me. O how happy now was every creature over I was! For they stood fast, and kept their station, but I was gone and lost.\* The devils gathered together against the repentant sinner; they choked his sight, besieged him with phantoms, yelled at his side to drag him down their precipices; and the black valley into which the pilgrim plunges, almost matches by the horror of its sight the anguish of the terrors by which he is assailed:—

“I saw then in my Dream, so far as this Valley reached, there was on the right hand a very deep Ditch; that Ditch is it into which the blind have led the blind in all ages, and have both there miserably perished. Again, behold on the left hand, there was a dangerous Quag, into which, if even a good man falls, he can find no bottom for his foot to stand on. . . .

“The path-way was here also exceeding narrow, and therefore good Christian was the more put to it; for when he sought in the dark to shun the ditch on the one hand, he was ready to tip over into the mire on the other; also when he sought to escape the mire, without great carefulness he would be ready to fall into the ditch. Thus he went on, and I heard him here sigh bitterly; for, besides the dangers mentioned above, the path-way was here so dark, that oftentimes, when he lift up his foot to set forward, he knew not where, or upon what he should set it next.

“About the midst of this Valley, I perceived the mouth of Hell to be, and it stood also hard by the wayside. Now thought Christian what shall I do? And ever and anon the flame and smoke would come out in such abundance, with sparks and hideous noises, . . . that he was forced to put up his Sword, and betake himself to another weapon, called All-prayer. So he cried in my hearing: ‘O Lord I beseech thee deliver my soul.’ Thus he went on a great while, yet still the flames would be reaching towards him: Also he heard doleful voices, and rushings to and fro, so that sometimes he thought he should be torn in picces, or trodden down like mire in the Streets.” †

Against this anguish, neither his good deeds, nor his prayers, nor his justice, nor all the justice and all the prayers of all other men, could defend him. Grace alone justifies. God must impute to him the purity of Christ, and save him by a free choice. What is more full of passion than the scene in which, under the name of his poor pilgrim, he relates his own doubts, his conversion, his joy, and the sudden change of his heart?

“Then the water stood in mine eyes, and I asked further, But Lord, may

\* Bunyan's *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, § 187.

† *Pilgrim's Progress*, Cambridge, 1862, First Part, p. 64.

such a great sinner as I am be indeed accepted of thee, and be saved by thee? And I heard him say, And him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. . . . And now was my heart full of joy, mine eyes full of tears, and mine affections running over with love to the Name, People, and Ways of Jesus Christ. . . .

“It made me see that all the World, notwithstanding all the righteousness thereof, is in a state of condemnation. It made me see that God the Father, though he be just, can justly justify the coming sinner. It made me greatly ashamed of the vileness of my former life, and confounded me with the sense of mine own ignorance; for there never came thought into my heart before now, that shewed me so the beauty of Jesus Christ. It made me love a holy life, and long to do something for the Honor and Glory of the name of the Lord Jesus; yea, I thought that had I now a thousand gallons of blood in my body, I could spill it all for the sake of the Lord Jesus.”\*

Such an emotion does not weigh literary calculations. Allegory, the most artificial kind, is natural to Bunyan. If he employs it here, it is because he does so throughout; if he employs it throughout, it is from necessity, not choice. As children, countrymen, and all uncultivated minds, he transforms arguments into parables; he only grasps truth when it is made simple by images; abstract terms elude him; he must touch forms and contemplate colors. Dry general truths are a sort of algebra, acquired by the mind slowly and after much trouble, against our primitive inclination, which is to observe detailed events and sensible objects; man being incapable of contemplating pure formulas until he is transformed by ten years' reading and reflection. We understand at once the term purification of heart; Bunyan understands it fully only, after translating it by this fable:—

“Then the Interpreter took Christian by the hand, and led him into a very large Parlor that was full of dust, because never swept; the which after he had reviewed a little while, the Interpreter called for a man to sweep. Now when he began to sweep, the dust began so abundantly to fly about, that Christian had almost therewith been choaked. Then said the Interpreter to a Damsel that stood by, Bring hither the Water, and sprinkle the Room; the which when she had done, it was swept and cleansed with pleasure.

“Then said Christian, What means this?”

“The Interpreter answered, This parlour is the heart of a man that was never sanctified by the sweet Grace of the Gospel; the dust is his Original Sin, and inward Corruptions, that have defiled the whole man. He that began to sweep at first, is the Law; but she that brought water, and did

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\* *Pilgrim's Progress*, First Part, p. 160.

sprinkle it, is the Gospel. Now, whereas thou sawest that so soon as the first began to sweep, the dust did so fly about that the Room by him could not be cleansed, but that thou wast almost choaked therewith; this is to shew thee, that the Law, instead of cleansing the heart (by its working) from sin, doth revive, put strength into, and increase it in the soul, even as it doth discover and forbid it, for it doth not give power to subdue.

"Again, as thou sawest the Damsel sprinkle the room with Water, upon which it was cleansed with pleasure; this is to shew thee, that when the Gospel comes in the sweet and precious influences thereof to the heart, then I say, even as thou sawest the Damsel lay the dust by sprinkling the floor with Water, so is sin vanquished and subdued, and the soul made clean, through the faith of it, and consequently fit for the King of Glory to inhabit."\*

These repetitions, embarrassed phrases, familiar comparisons, this frank style, whose awkwardness recalls the childish periods of Herodotus, and whose light-heartedness recalls tales for children, prove that if his work is allegorical, it is so in order that it may be intelligible, and that Bunyan is a poet because he is a child.†

Again, under his simplicity you will find power, and in his puerility the vision. These allegories are hallucinations as clear, complete, and sound as ordinary perceptions. No one but Spenser is so lucid. Imaginary objects rise of themselves within him. He has no trouble in calling them up or forming them. They agree in all their details with all the details of the precept which they represent, as a pliant veil fits the body which it covers. Dialogues flow from his pen as in a dream. He does not seem to be thinking; we should even say that he was not himself there. Events and speeches seem to grow and dispose themselves within him, independently of his will. Nothing,

\* *Pilgrim's Progress*, First Part, p. 26.

† Here is another of his allegories, almost spiritual, so just and simple it is. See *Pilgrim's Progress*, First Part, p. 68: Now I saw in my Dream, that at the end of this Valley lay blood, bones, ashes, and mangled bodies of men, even of Pilgrims that had gone this way formerly; and while I was musing what should be the reason, I espied a little before me a Cave, where two Giants, Pope and Pagan, dwelt in old time; by whose power and tyranny the men whose bones, blood, ashes, etc., lay there, were cruelly put to death. But by this place Christian went without much danger, whereat I somewhat wondered; but I have learnt since, that Pagan has been dead many a day; and as for the other, though he be yet alive, he is by reason of age, and also of the many shrewd brushes that he met with in his younger days, grown so crazy, and stiff in his joints, that he can now do little more than sit in his Cave's mouth, grinning at Pilgrims as they go by, and biting his nails, because he cannot come at them.

as a rule, is colder than the characters in an allegory; his are living. Looking upon these details, so small and familiar, illusion gains upon us. Giant Despair, a simple abstraction, becomes as real in his hands as an English jailer or farmer. He is heard talking by night in bed with his wife Diffidence, who gives him good advice, because here, as in other households, the strong and brutal animal is the least cunning of the two:—

“Then she counselled him that when he arose in the morning he should (take the two prisoners and) beat them without mercy. So when he arose, he getteth him a grievous Crab-tree Cudgel, and goes down into the Dungeon to them, and there first falls to rating of them as if they were dogs, although they gave him never a word of distaste. Then he falls upon them, and beats them fearfully, in such sort, that they were not able to help themselves, or to turn them upon the floor.”\*

This stick, chosen with a forester's experience, this instinct of rating first and storming to get oneself into trim for knocking down, are traits which attest the sincerity of the narrator, and succeed in persuading the reader. Bunyan has the freedom, the tone, the ease, and the clearness of Homer; he is as close to Homer as an Anabaptist tinker could be to an heroic singer, a creator of gods. Nay, he is nearer. Before the sentiment of the sublime, inequalities are levelled. The depth of emotion raises peasant and poet to the same eminence; and here also, allegory stands the peasant in stead. It alone, in the absence of ecstasy, can paint heaven; for it does not pretend to paint it: expressing it by a figure, it declares it invisible, as a glowing sun at which we cannot look full, and whose image we observe in a mirror or a stream. The ineffable world thus retains all its mystery; warned by the allegory, we imagine splendors beyond all which it presents to us; we feel behind the beauties which are opened to us, the infinite which is concealed.

He was imprisoned for twelve years and a half; in his dungeon he made wire snares to support himself and his family; he died at the age of sixty in 1688. At the same time Milton lingered obscure and blind. The last two poets of the Reformation thus survived, amid the classical coldness which then dried up English literature, and the social excess which then corrupted English morals. “Shorn hypocrites, the psalm-singers, gloomy bigots,” such were the names by which men who reformed the

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\* *Pilgrim's Progress*, First Part, p. 126.

manners and renewed the constitution of England were insulted. But oppressed and insulted as they were, their work continued of itself and without noise below the earth ; for the ideal which they had raised was, after all, that which the clime suggested and the race demanded. Gradually Puritanism began to approach the world, and the world to approach Puritanism. The restoration was to fall into evil odor, the Revolution was to come, and under the insensible progress of national sympathy, as well as under the incessant effort of public reflection, parties and doctrines were to rally around a free and moral Protestantism.



## CHAPTER IX.

### MILTON.

§ 30.—ON the borders of the licentious Renaissance which was drawing to a close, and of the exact school of poetry which was springing up, between the monotonous conceits of Cowley and the correct gallantries of Waller, appeared a mighty and superb mind, prepared by logic and enthusiasm for eloquence and the epic style ; liberal, Protestant, a moralist and a poet ; adorning the cause of Algernon Sidney and Locke with the inspiration of Spenser and Shakspeare ; the heir of a poetical age, the precursor of an austere age, holding his place between the epoch of unbiassed dreamland and the epoch of practical action ; like his own Adam, who, entering a hostile earth, heard behind him, in the closed Eden, the dying strains of heaven.

John Milton was not one of those fevered souls, void of self-command, whose rapture takes them by fits, whom a sickly sensibility drives for ever to the extreme of sorrow or joy, whose pliability prepares them to produce a variety of characters, whose inquietude condemns them to paint the insanity and contradictions of passion. Vast knowledge, close logic, and grand passion : these were his marks. His mind was lucid, his imagination limited. He was incapable of disturbed emotion or of transformation. He conceived the loftiest of ideal beauties, but he conceived only one. He was not born for the drama, but for the ode. He does not create souls, but constructs arguments and experiences emotions. Emotions and arguments, all the forces and actions of his soul, assemble and are arranged beneath a unique sentiment, that of the sublime ; and the broad river of lyric poetry streams from him, impetuous, with even flow, splendid as a cloth of gold.

Milton was of a family in which courage, moral nobility, the love of art, were present to whisper the most beautiful and eloquent words around his cradle. His mother was a most ex-

emplary woman, well known through all the neighborhood for her benevolence. His father, a student of Christ Church, and disinherited as a Protestant, had alone made his fortune, and, amidst his occupations as a scrivener or writer, had preserved the taste for letters, being unwilling to give up "his liberal and intelligent tastes to the extent of becoming altogether a slave to the world ;" he wrote verses, was an excellent musician, one of the best composers in his time ; he gave his son the widest and fullest literary education. Let the reader try to picture this child, in the street inhabited by merchants, in this citizen-like and scholarly, religious and poetical family, whose manners were regular and their aspirations lofty, where music, letters, painting, all the adornments of the beauty-loving Renaissance, decorated the sustained gravity, the hard-working honesty, the deep Christianity of the Reformation. All Milton's genius springs from this ; he carried the splendor of the Renaissance into the earnestness of the Reformation, the magnificence of Spenser into the severity of Calvin, and, with his family, found himself at the confluence of the two civilizations which he combined. Before he was ten years old he had a learned tutor, "a Puritan, who cut his hair short ;" after that he went to St. Paul's School, then to the University of Cambridge, that he might be instructed in "polite literature ;" and at the age of twelve he worked, in spite of his weak eyes and headaches, until midnight and even later. In fact, at school, then at Cambridge, then with his father, he was strengthening and preparing himself with all his power, free from all blame, and loved by all good men ; traversing the vast fields of Greek and Latin literature, not only the great writers, but all the writers, down to the half of the middle-age ; and simultaneously the ancient Hebrew, Syriac and rabbinical Hebrew, French and Spanish, the old English literature, all the Italian literature, with such zeal and profit that he wrote Italian and Latin verse and prose like an Italian or a Roman ; beyond this, music, mathematics, theology, and much besides. A serious thought regulated this great toil. "The church, to whose service, by the intentions of my parents and friends, I was destined of a child, and in mine own resolutions : till coming to some maturity of years, and perceiving what tyranny had invaded the church, that he who would take orders must subscribe slave, and take an oath withal, which unless he took with a con-

science that would retch, he must either straight perjure, or split his faith ; I thought it better to prefer a blameless silence before the sacred office of speaking, bought and begun with servitude and forswearing.”\*

He refused to be a priest from the same feelings that he had wished it: the desire and the renunciation all sprang from the same source—a fixed resolve to act nobly. Falling back into the life of a layman, he continued to cultivate and perfect himself, studying with passion and with method, but without pedantry or rigor ; nay, rather, after his master, Spenser, in *L'Allegro, Il Penseroso, Comus*, he set forth in sparkling and variegated dress the wealth of mythology, nature and fancy ; then, sailing for the land of science and beauty, he visited Italy, made the acquaintance of Grotius and Galileo, sought the society of the learned, the men of letters, the men of the world, heard the musicians, steeped himself in all the beauties stored up by the Renaissance at Florence and Rome. Everywhere his learning, his fine Italian and Latin style, secured him the friendship and attachment of scholars, so that, on his return to Florence, he “ was as well received as if he had returned to his native country.” He collected books and music, which he sent to England, and thought of traversing Sicily and Greece, those two homes of ancient letters and arts. Of all the flowers that opened to the Southern sun under the influence of the two great Paganisms, he gathered freely the sweetest and most exquisite of odors, but without staining himself with the mud which surrounded them. When the Revolution began to threaten, he returned, drawn by conscience, as a soldier who hastens to danger at the noise of arms, convinced, as he himself tells us, that it was a shame to him leisurely to spend his life abroad, and for his own pleasure, while his fellow-countrymen were striving for their liberty. In battle he appeared in the front ranks as a volunteer, courting danger everywhere. Throughout his education and throughout his youth, in his profane readings and his sacred studies, in his acts and his maxims, already a ruling and permanent thought grew manifest—the resolution to develop and unfold within him the ideal man.

On his return to England, Milton fell back among his books,

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\* Milton's *Prose Works*, ed. St. John, 5 vols., 1848, *The Reason of Church Government*, ii. 482.

and received a few pupils, from whom he exacted, as from himself, continuous toil, serious reading, a frugal diet, a strict behavior; the life of a recluse, almost of a monk. Suddenly, in a month, after a country visit, he married.\* A few weeks afterwards, his wife returned to her father's house, would not return, took no notice of his letters, and sent back his messenger with scorn. The two characters had come into collision. The "priest" character is made for solitude; the tact, abandon, charm, pleasantness, and sweetness necessary to all companionship, is wanting to it; we admire him, but we go no further, especially if, like Milton's wife, we are somewhat dull and common-place, adding mediocrity of intellect to the repugnance of our hearts. He had, so his biographers say, a certain gravity of nature, or severity of mind which would not condescend to petty things, but kept him in the clouds, in a region which is not that of the household. He was accused of being harsh, choleric; and certainly he stood upon his manly dignity, his authority as a husband, and was not so greatly esteemed, respected, studied, as he thought he deserved to be. In short, he passed the day among his books, and the rest of the time his heart lived in an abstracted and sublime world of which few wives catch a glimpse, his wife least of all. He had, in fact, chosen like a student, the more at random because his former life had been of "a well-governed and wise appetite." Equally like a man of the closet, he resented her flight, being the more irritated because the world's ways were unknown to him. Without dread of ridicule, and with the sternness of a speculative man suddenly in collision with actual life, he wrote treatises on *Divorce*, signed them with his name, dedicated them to Parliament, held himself divorced, *de facto* because his wife refused to return, *de jure* because he had four texts of Scripture for it; whereupon he paid court to a young lady, and suddenly, seeing his wife on her knees and weeping, forgave her, took her back, renewed the dry and sad marriage-tie, not profiting by experience, but on the other hand fated to contract two other unions, the last with a wife thirty years younger than himself. Other parts of his domestic life were neither better managed nor happier. He had taken his daughters for secretaries, and made

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\* 1643, at the age of 35.

them read languages which they did not understand,—a repelling task of which they bitterly complained. In return, he accused them of being “undutiful and unkind,” of neglecting him, not caring whether they left him alone, of conspiring with the servants to rob him in their purchases, of stealing his books, so that they would have disposed of the whole of them. Mary, the second, hearing one day that he was going to be married, said that his marriage was no news; the best news would be his death. An incredible speech, and one which throws a strange light on the miseries of this family. Neither circumstances nor nature had created him for happiness.

They had created him for strife, and from his return to England he had thrown himself heartily into it, armed with logic, indignation, and learning, protected by conviction and conscience. In 1641 he wrote his *Reformation in England*, jeering at and attacking with haughtiness and scorn the prelacy and its defenders. Refuted and attacked in turn, he doubled his bitterness, and crushed those whom he had beaten. Transported to the limits of his creed, and like a knight making a rush, and who pierces with a dash the whole line of battle, he hurled himself upon the prince, concluded the abolition of Royalty as well as the overthrow of the Episcopacy; and one month after the death of Charles I., justified his execution, replied to the *Eikon Basilike*, then to Salmasius' *Defence of the King*, with incomparable breadth of style and scorn, like a soldier, like an apostle, like a man who everywhere feels the superiority of his science and logic, who wishes to make it felt, who proudly treads down and crushes his adversaries as ignoramuses, inferior minds, base hearts. Thus absorbed in strife, he lived out of the world, as blind to palpable facts as he was protected against the seductions of the senses, placed above the stains and the lessons of experience, as incapable of leading men as of yielding to them. There was nothing in him akin to the devices and delays of the statesman, the crafty schemer, who pauses on his way, experimentalizes, with eyes fixed on what may turn up, who gauges what is possible, and employs logic for practical purposes. He was speculative and chimerical. With closed eyes, sacred text in hand, he advances from consequence to consequence, trampling upon the prejudices, inclinations, habits, wants of men, as if a reasoning or religious spirit were the whole man, as if evi-

dence always created belief, as if belief always resulted in practice, as if, in the struggle of doctrines, truth or justice gave doctrines the victory and sovereignty.

But his obstinacy constituted his power, and the inner constitution, which closed his mind to instruction, armed his heart against weaknesses. He lived complete and untainted to the end; experience could not instruct nor misfortune depress him; he endured all, and repented of nothing. He lost his sight, willingly, by writing, though ill, and against the prohibition of his doctors, to justify the English people against the invectives of Salmasius. He saw the funeral of the Republic, the proscription of his doctrines, the defamation of his honor. Around him rioted the disgust of liberty, the enthusiasm of slavery. A whole people threw itself at the feet of a young, incapable and treacherous libertine. The glorious leaders of the Puritan faith were condemned, executed, cut down alive from the gallows, quartered amidst insults; others, whom death had saved from the hangman, were dug up and exposed on the gibbet; others, exiles in foreign lands, lived under the menaces and outrages of royalist arms; others again, more unfortunate, had sold their cause for money and titles, and sat amid the executioners of their former friends. The most pious and austere citizens of England filled the prisons, or wandered in poverty and opprobrium; and gross vice, shamelessly seated on the throne, stirred up around it the riot of unbridled lusts and sensualities. Milton himself had been constrained to hide; his books had been burned by the hand of the hangman; even after the general act of indemnity he was imprisoned; when set at liberty, he lived in the expectancy of assassination, for private fanaticism might seize the weapon relinquished by public revenge. Other smaller misfortunes came to aggravate by their stings the great wounds which afflicted them. Confiscations, a bankruptcy, finally, the great fire of London, had robbed him of three-fourths of his fortune;\* his daughters neither esteemed nor respected him; he sold his books, knowing that his family could not profit

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\* A scrivener caused him to lose £2000. At the Restoration he was refused payment of £2000 which he had put into the Excise Office, and deprived of an estate of £50 a year, bought by him from the property of the Chapter of Westminster. His house was burnt in the great fire. When he died he only left £1500, including the produce of his library.

by them after his death ; and amidst so many private and public miseries, he continued calm. Instead of repudiating what he had done, he gloried in it ; instead of being cast down, he increased in firmness.

Milton lived in a small house in London, or in the country, in Buckinghamshire, where he wrote his *History of Britain*, his *Logic*, a *Treatise on True Religion and Heresy*, and meditated his great *Treatise on Christian Doctrine*. Of all consolations, work is the most fortifying and the most healthy, because it solaces a man not by bringing him ease, but by requiring efforts. Every morning he had a chapter of the Bible read to him in Hebrew, and remained for some time in silence, grave, in order to meditate on what he had heard. He never went to a place of worship. Independent in religion as in all else, he was sufficient to himself ; finding in no sect the marks of the true church, he prayed to God alone, without needing others' help. He studied till mid-day ; then, after an hour's exercise, he played the organ or the bass-viol. Then he resumed his studies till six, and in the evening enjoyed the society of his friends. When any one came to visit him, he was usually found in a room hung with old green hangings, seated in an arm-chair, and dressed quietly in black ; his complexion was pale, says one of his visitors, but not sallow ; his hands and feet were gouty ; his hair, of a light brown, was parted in the midst, and fell in long curls ; his eyes, grey and clear, showed no sign of blindness. He had been very beautiful in his youth, and his English cheeks, once delicate as a young girl's, retained their color almost to the end. His face, we are told, was pleasing ; his straight and manly gait bore witness to intrepidity and courage. Something great and proud breathes out yet from all his portraits ; and certainly few men have done such honor to their kind. Thus expired this noble life, like a setting sun, bright and calm. Amid so many trials, a pure and lofty joy, altogether worthy of him, had been granted to him : the poet, buried under the Puritan, had reappeared, more sublime than ever, to give to Christianity its second Homer. The dazzling dreams of his youth and the reminiscences of his ripe age were found in him, side by side with Calvinistic dogmas and the visions of John, to create the Protestant epic of damnation and grace ; and the vastness of primitive horizons, the flames of the infernal dungeon, the splendors of

the celestial court, opened to the inner eye of the soul unknown regions beyond the sights which the eyes of flesh had lost.

§ 31.—I have before me the formidable volume in which, some time after Milton's death, his prose works were collected.\* What a book! The chairs creak when you place it upon them, and a man who had turned its leaves over for an hour, would have less pain in his head than in his arm. As the book, so were the men: from the mere outsides we might gather some notion of the controversialists and theologians whose doctrines they contain. We think involuntarily of the portraits of the theologians of the age, severe faces engraved on steel by the hard tool of masters, whose square brows and steady eyes stand out in startling prominence against the black oak panel. We compare them to modern countenances, in which the delicate and complex features seem to shudder at the alternate contact of hardly begun sensations and innumerable ideas. We try to imagine the heavy Latin education, the physical exercises, the rude treatment, the rare ideas, the imposed dogmas, which once occupied, oppressed, fortified, and hardened the young; and we might fancy ourselves looking at a museum of megatheria and mastodons, reconstructed by Cuvier.

The race of living men is changed. Our mind fails us nowadays at the idea of this greatness and this barbarism; but we discover that barbarism was then the cause of greatness. Milton fought in the front rank, pre-ordained to barbarism and greatness by his individual nature and surrounding manners, capable of displaying in high prominence the logic, style, and spirit of his age. It is drawing-room life which trims men into shape: the society of ladies, the lack of serious interests, idleness, vanity, security, are needed to bring men to elegance, urbanity, fine and light humor, to teach the desire to please, the fear of becoming wearisome, a perfect clearness, a finished precision, the art of insensible transitions and delicate tact, the taste for suitable images, continual ease, and choice diversity. Seek nothing like this in Milton. The old scholastic system

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\* The titles of Milton's chief writings in prose are these:—*History of Reformation*; *The Reason of Church Government urged against Prelacy*; *Animadversions upon the Remonstrants' Defence*; *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*; *Tetrachordon*; *Tractate on Education*; *Areopagitica*; *Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*; *Eikonoklastes*; *History of Britain*; *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae*; *History of Moscovia*; *De Logice Arte*.



was not far off; it still weighed on those who were destroying it. Under this secular armor discussion proceeded pedantically, with measured steps. The first thing was to propound a thesis; and then follow, legion after legion, the disciplined army of the arguments. Battalion after battalion they pass by, numbered very distinctly. There is a dozen of them together, each with its title in clear characters, and the little brigade of sub-divisions which it commands. And yet there is a lack of order, the question is not reduced to a single idea; we cannot see our way; proofs succeed proofs without logical sequence; we are rather tired out than convinced. We remember that the author speaks to Oxford men, lay or cleric, trained in pretended discussions, capable of obstinate attention, accustomed to digest indigestible books. They are at home in this thorny thicket of scholastic brambles; they beat a path through, somewhat at hazard, hardened against the hurts which repulse us, and not giving a thought to the daylight which we require.

With such ponderous reasoners, you must not look for wit. Wit is the nimbleness of victorious reason: here, because all is powerful, all is heavy. When Milton wishes to joke, he looks like one of Cromwell's pikemen, who, entering a room to dance, should fall upon the floor, and that with the extra momentum of his armor. At the end of an argument his adversary concludes with this specimen of theological wit: "In the meanwhile see, brethren, how you have with Simon fished all night, and caught nothing." And Milton boastfully replies: "If we, fishing with Simon the apostle, can catch nothing, see what you can catch with Simon Magus; for all his hooks and fishing implements he bequeathed among you." Here a great savage laugh would break out. The spectators saw a charm in this way of insinuating that his adversary was simoniacal.

Neither can we expect urbanity here? Urbanity is the elegant dignity which answers insult by calm irony, and respects man while piercing a dogma. Milton coarsely knocks his adversary down. A bristling pedant, born from a Greek lexicon and a Syriac grammar, Salmasius had disgorged upon the English people a vocabulary of insults and a folio of quotations. Milton replies to him in the same style; calling him a buffoon, a mountebank, "*professor triobolaris*," a hired pedant, a nobody, a rogue, a heartless being, a wretch, an idiot, sacrilegious, a

slave worthy of rods and a pitchfork. A dictionary of big Latin words passed between them. He ends by calling him savage beast, apostate, and devil. "Doubt not that you are reserved for the same end as Judas, and that, driven by despair rather than repentance, self-disgusted, you must one day hang yourself, and like your rival, burst asunder in your belly." We fancy we are listening to the bellowing of two bulls.

So much coarseness and dulness was as an outer breastplate, the mark and the protection of the superabundant force and life which coursed in those athletic limbs and chests. Nowadays, the mind being more refined, has become feebler; convictions, being less stern, have become less strong. The attention, delivered from the heavy scholastic logic and scriptural tyranny, is softer. The faith and the will, dissolved by universal tolerance and by the thousand opposing shocks of multiplied ideas, have engendered an exact and refined style, the instrument of conversation and pleasure, and have expelled the poetic and rude style, the weapon of war and enthusiasm. Force and greatness are manifested in Milton, displayed in his opinions and his style, the sources of his belief and his talent. This superb reason aspired to unfold itself without shackles; it demanded that reason might unfold itself without shackles. It claimed for humanity what it coveted for itself, and championed every liberty in his every work. From the first he attacked the corpulent bishops,\* scholastic upstarts, persecutors of free discussion, pensioned tyrants of Christian conscience. Above the clamor of the Protestant Revolution, his voice was heard thundering against tradition and obedience. He sourly railed at the pedantic theologians, devoted worshippers of old texts, who took a mouldy martyrology for a solid argument, and answered a demonstration with a quotation. He declared that most of the Fathers were turbulent and babbling intriguers, that they were not worth more collectively than individually, that their councils were but a pack of underhand intrigues and vain disputes; he rejected their authority† and their example, and set up logic as the only interpreter of Scripture.

Throw open, then, all the doors; let there be light; let every

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\* *Of Reformation in England*, ii.

† "The loss of Cicero's works alone, or those of Livy, could not be repaired by all the Fathers of the church."—*Avopagitica*.

man think, and bring his thoughts to the light. Dread not any divergence, rejoice in this great work ; why insult the laborers by the name of schismatics and sectarians ?

“ Yet these are the men cried out against for schismatics and sectaries, as if, while the temple of the Lord was building, some cutting, some squaring the marble, others hewing the cedars, there should be a sort of irrational men, who could not consider there must be many schisms and many dissections made in the quarry and in the timber ere the house of God can be built. And when every stone is laid artfully together, it cannot be united into a continuity, it can but be contiguous in this world : neither can every piece of the building be of one form ; nay, rather the perfection consists in this, that out of many moderate varieties and brotherly dissimilitudes that are not vastly disproportional, arises the goodly and the graceful symmetry that commends the whole pile and structure.”\*

Milton triumphs here through sympathy ; he breaks forth into magnificent images, he displays in his style the force which he perceives around him and in himself. He lauds the Revolution, and his praises seem like the blast of a trumpet, to come from a brazen throat :—

“ Behold now this vast city, a city of refuge, the mansion-house of liberty, encompassed and surrounded with his protection ; the shop of war has not there more anvils and hammers working, to fashion out the plates and instruments of armed justice in defence of beleaguered truth, than there be pens and heads there, sitting by their studious lamps, musing, searching, revolving new notions and ideas wherewith to present, as with their homage and their fealty, the approaching reformation. . . . What could a man require more from a nation so pliant, and so prone to seek after knowledge ? What wants there to such a towardly and pregnant soil, but wise and faithful laborers, to make a knowing people, a nation of prophets, of sages, and of worthies ? † . . . Methinks I see in my mind a noble and puissant nation rousing herself like a strong man after sleep, and shaking her invincible locks : methinks I see her as an eagle mewing her mighty youth, and kindling her undazzled eyes at the full midday beam ; purging and unscaling her long-abused sight at the fountain itself of heavenly radiance ; while the whole noise of timorous and flocking birds, with those also that love the twilight, flutter about, amazed at what she means, and in their envious gabble would prognosticate a year of sects and schisms.” ‡

Do not take these metaphors for an accident. Milton lavishes them, like a priest who in his worship exhibits splendors and wins the eye, to gain the heart. He has been nourished by the reading of Spenser, Drayton, Shakspeare, Beaumont, all

\* *Areopagitica*, ii. 92.

† *Ibid.* ii. 91.

‡ *Ibid.* ii. 94.

the most sparkling poets; and the golden flow of the preceding age, though impoverished all around him and slackened in himself, has become enlarged like a lake through being dammed up in his heart. Like Shakspeare, he imagines at every turn, and even out of turn, and scandalises the classical and French taste.

“ . . . As if they could make God earthly and fleshly, because they could not make themselves heavenly and spiritual; they began to draw down all the divine intercourse betwixt God and the soul, yea, the very shape of God himself, into an exterior and bodily form; . . . they hallowed it, they fumed up, they sprinkled it, they bedecked it, not in robes of pure innocence, but of pure linen, with other deformed and fantastic dresses, in palls and mitres, and gewgaws fetched from Aaron's old wardrobe, or the flamins vestry: then was the priest set to con his motions and his postures, his liturgies and his luries, till the soul by this means of overbodying herself, given up justly to fleshly delights, bated her wing apace downward: and finding the ease she had from her visible and sensuous colleague, the body, in performance of religious duties, her pinions now broken, and flagging, shifted off from herself the labor of high soaring any more, forgot her heavenly flight, and left the dull and droiling carcase to plod on in the old road, and drudging trade of outward conformity.”\*

If we did not discern here the traces of theological coarseness, we might fancy we were reading an imitator of the *Phædo*, and under the fanatical anger recognize the images of Plato. There is one phrase which for manly beauty and enthusiasm recalls the tone of the *Republic*:—

“I cannot praise a fugitive and cloistered, unexercised and unbreathed virtue, that never sallies out and sees her adversary, but slinks out of the race where that immortal garland is to be run for, not without dust and heat.”

But Milton is only Platonic by his richness and exaltation. For the rest, he is a man of the Renaissance, pedantic and harsh; he insults the Pope, who, after the gift of Pepin le Bref, “never ceased baiting and goring the successors of his best lord Constantine, what by his barking curses and excommunications;”† he is mythological in his defence of the press, showing that formerly “no envious Juno sat cross-legged over the nativity of any man's intellectual offspring.” It matters little: these learned, familiar, grand images, whatever they be, are powerful and nat-

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\* *Of Reformation in England*, ii. book first, p. 365.

† *Ibid.*, second book, 395.

ural.\* Superabundance, like crudity, here only manifests the vigor and lyric dash which Milton's character had predicted.

Is Milton truly a prose-writer? Entangled dialectics, a heavy and awkward mind, fanatical and ferocious provincialism, an epic grandeur of sustained and superabundant images, the blast and the temerities of implacable and all-powerful passion, the sublimity of religious and lyric exaltation: we do not recognize in these features a man born to explain, persuade, and prove. The scholasticism and grossness of the time have blunted or rusted his logic. Imagination and enthusiasm carried him away and enchained him in metaphor. Thus dazzled or marred, he could not produce a perfect work; he did but write useful tracts, called forth by practical interest and actual hate, and fine isolated morsels, inspired by collision with a grand idea, and by the momentary flight of genius. Yet, in all these abandoned fragments, the man shows in his entirety. The systematic and lyric spirit is manifested in the pamphlet as well as in the poem; the faculty of embracing general effects, and of being shaken by them, remains on an equality in Milton's two careers, and you will see in the *Paradise* and *Comus* what you have met with in the *Treatise on the Reformation*, and in the *Animadversions on the Remonstrant*.

§ 32.—“Milton has acknowledged to me,” writes Dryden, “that Spenser was his original.” In fact, by the purity and elevation of their morals, by the fulness and connection of their style, by the noble chivalric sentiments, and their fine classical arrangement, they are brothers. But he had yet other masters—Beaumont, Fletcher, Burton, Drummond, Ben Jonson, Shakspeare, the whole splendid English Renaissance, and behind it the Italian poesy, Latin antiquity, the fine Greek literature, and all the sources whence the English Renaissance sprang. He continued the great current, but in a manner of his own. He took their mythology, their allegories, sometimes their conceits,† and found the trick of their rich coloring, their magnificent sensi-

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\* “Whatsoever time, or the heedless hand of blind chance, hath drawn down from of old to this present, in her huge drag-net, whether fish or seaweed, shells or shrubs, unpicked, unchosen, those are the fathers.” (*Of Prelatical Episcopacy*, ii. 422.)

† See the *Hymn on the Nativity*; among others, the first few strophes. See also *Lycidas*.

ment of living nature, their inexhaustible admiration of forms and colors. But, at the same time, he transformed their diction, and employed poetry in a new service. He wrote, not by impulse, and at the mere contact with things, but like a man of letters, a classic, in a scholarlike manner, with the assistance of books, seeing objects as much through previous writings as in themselves, adding to his images the images of others, borrowing and re-casting their inventions, as an artist who unites and multiplies the bosses and driven gold, already entwined on a diadem by twenty workmen. He made thus for himself a composite and brilliant style, less natural than that of his precursors, less fit for effusions, less akin to the lively first glow of sensation, but more solid, more regular, more capable of concentrating in one large patch of light all their sparklings and splendors. He brings together, like Æschylus, words of "six cubits," plumed and decked in purple, and made them flow like a royal train before his idea, to exalt and announce it. He introduces to us

" The breathing roses of the wood,  
Fair silver-buskin'd nymphs ;"\*

and tells how

" The gray-hooded Even,  
Like a sad votarist in palmer's weed,  
Rose from the hindmost wheels of Phœbus' wain ;"†

and speaks of

" All the sea-girt isles,  
That, like to rich and various gems, inlay  
The unadorned bosom of the deep ;"‡

and—

" That undisturbed song of pure concert,  
Aye sung before the sapphire-color'd throne,  
To Him that sits thereon,  
With saintly shout, and solemn jubilee ;  
Where the bright Seraphim, in burning row,  
Their loud-uplifted angel-trumpets blow."§

He gathered into full nosegays the flowers scattered through the other poets :

" Ye valleys low, where the mild whispers use  
Of shades, and wanton winds, and gushing brooks,  
On whose fresh lap the swart-star sparely looks ;

\* *Arcades*, v. 32.

† *Comus*, v. 188-190.

‡ *Ibid.* v. 21-23.

§ *Ode at a Solemn Music*, v. 6-11.

Throw hither all your quaint enamell'd eyes,  
 That on the green turf suck the honied showers,  
 And purple all the ground with vernal flowers.  
 Bring the rathe primrose that forsaken dies,  
 The tufted crow-toe, and pale jessamine,  
 The white pink, and the pansy freak'd with jet,  
 The glowing violet,  
 The musk-rose, and the well-attired woodbine,  
 With cowslips wan that hang the pensive head,  
 And every flower that sad embroidery wears :  
 Bid amaranthus all his beauty shed,  
 And daffodillies fill their cups with tears,  
 To strew the laureat hearse where Lycid lies."\*

When still quite young, on his quitting Cambridge, he inclined to the magnificent and grand ; he wanted a great rolling verse, an ample and sounding strophe, vast periods of fourteen and four-and-twenty lines. He did not face objects on a level, as a mortal, but from on high, like those archangels of Goethe,† who embrace at a glance the whole ocean lashing its coasts, and the earth rolling on, wrapt in the harmony of the fraternal stars. It was not life that he felt, like \*the masters of the Renaissance, but greatness, like Æschylus, and the Hebrew seers, ‡ manly and lyric spirits like his own, who, nourished like him in religious emotions and continuous enthusiasm, like him displayed sacerdotal pomp and majesty. To express such a sentiment, images, and poetry addressed only to the eyes, were not enough ; sounds also were requisite, and that more introspective poetry which, purged from corporeal shows, could reach the soul : Milton was a musician ; his hymns rolled with the slowness of a measured song and the gravity of a declamation ; and he seems himself to be describing his art in these incomparable verses, which are evolved like the solemn harmony of a motett :

“ But else, in deep of night, when drowsiness  
 Hath lock'd up mortal sense, then listen I  
 To the celestial sirens' harmony,  
 That sit upon the nine infolded spheres,  
 And sing to those that hold the vital shears,  
 And turn the adamantine spindle round,

\* *Lycidas*, v. 136-151.

† *Faust*, Prolog im Himmel.

‡ See the prophecy against Archbishop Laud in *Lycidas*, v. 130 :

“ But that two-handed engine at the door  
 Stands ready to smite once, and smite no more.”

On which the fate of gods and men is wound.  
 Such sweet compulsions doth in musick lie,  
 To lull the daughters of Necessity,  
 And keep unsteady Nature to her law,  
 And the low world in measured motion draw  
 After the heavenly tune, which none can hear  
 Of human mould, with gross unperg'd ear."\*

From the first, at St. Paul's School and at Cambridge, he had written *Paraphrases of the Psalms*, then composed odes on the *Nativity*, *Circumcision*, and *Passion*. Presently appeared sad poems on the *Death of a Fair Infant*, *An Epitaph on the Marchioness of Winchester*; then grave and noble verses *On Time*, at a *Solemn Musick*, a sonnet *On his being arrived to the Age of Twenty-three*, "a late spring which shew'th no bud or blossom." At last we have him in the country with his father, and the hopes, dreams, first enchantments of youth, rise from his heart like the morning breath of a summer's day. But what a distance between these calm and bright contemplations and the warm youth, the voluptuous *Adonis* of Shakspeare! He walked, used his eyes, listened; there his joys ended; they are but the poetic joys of the soul:

"To hear the lark begin his flight,  
 And singing, startle the dull night,  
 From his watch-tower in the skies,  
 Till the dappled dawn doth rise; . . .  
 While the plowman, near at hand,  
 Whistles o'er the furrowed land,  
 And the milk-maid singeth blithe,  
 And the mower whets his sithe,  
 And every shepherd tells his tale  
 Under the hawthorn in the dale."†

To see the village dances and gayety; to look upon the "high triumphs" and the "busy hum of men" in the "tower'd cities;" above all, to abandon himself to melody, to the divine roll of sweet verse, and the charming dreams which they spread before us in a golden light;—this is all; and presently, as if he had gone too far, to counterbalance this eulogy of sensuous joys, he summons Melancholy:

"Come, pensive Nun, devout and pure,  
 Sober, steadfast, and demure,

---

\* *Arcades*, v. 61-73.

† *L'Allegro*, v. 41-68.



All in a robe of darkest grain,  
 Flowing with majestick train,  
 And sable stole of Cyprus lawn  
 Over thy decent shoulders drawn.  
 Come, but keep thy wonted state,  
 With even step, and musing gait ;  
 And looks commercing with the skies,  
 Thy rapt soul sitting in thine eyes."\*

With her he wanders amidst grave thoughts and grave sights, which recall a man to his condition, and prepare him for his duties, now among the high colonnades of primeval trees, whose "high-embowed roof" retains the silence and the twilight under their shade ; now in

"The studious cloysters pale, . . .  
 With antick pillars massy proof,  
 And storied windows richly dight,  
 Casting a dim religious light ;"†

now again in the retirement of the study, where the cricket chirps, where the lamp of labor shines, where the mind, alone with the noble minds of the past, may

"Unsphere  
 The spirit of Plato, to unfold  
 What worlds or what vast regions hold  
 The immortal mind, that hath forsook  
 Her mansion in this fleshly nook."‡

He was filled with this lofty philosophy. Whatever the language he used, English, Italian, or Latin, whatever the kind of verse, sonnets, hymns, stanzas, tragedy or epic, he always returned to it. He praised above all chaste love, piety, generosity, heroic force. It was not from scruple, but it was innate in him ; his chief need and faculty led him to noble conceptions. He took a delight in admiring, as Shakspeare in creating, as Swift in destroying, as Byron in combating, as Spenser in dreaming. Even on ornamental poems, which were only employed to exhibit costumes and introduce fairy-tales, in Masques, like those of Ben Jonson, he impressed his own character. They were amusements for the castle ; he made out of them lectures on magnanimity and constancy: one of them, *Comus*, well worked out, with a complete originality and extraordinary elevation of style, is perhaps his masterpiece, and is simply the eulogy of virtue.

\* *Il Penseroso*, v. 31-40.

† *Ibid.* v. 156-160.

‡ *Ibid.* v. 88-92.

Here we are in the heavens at the first dash. A spirit, descended in the midst of wild woods, repeats this ode :

“ Before the starry threshold of Jove’s court  
 My mansion is, where those immortal shapes  
 Of bright aerial spirits live insphered  
 In regions mild of calm and serene air,  
 Above the smoke and stir of this dim spot,  
 Which men call earth ; and with low-thoughted care  
 Confined, and pester’d in this pinfold here,  
 Strive to keep up a frail and feverish being,  
 Unmindful of the crown that Virtue gives,  
 After this mortal change, to her true servants,  
 Amongst the enthroned gods on sainted seats.”\*

Such characters cannot speak ; they sing. The drama is an antique opera, composed like the *Prometheus* of solemn hymns. The spectator is transported beyond the real world. He does not listen to men, but to sentiments. He assists at a concert, as in Shakspeare ; the *Comus* continues the *Midsummer Night’s Dream*, as a choir of deep men’s voices continues the glowing and sad symphony of the instruments :

“ Through the perplex’d paths of this drear wood,  
 The nodding horror of whose shady brows  
 Threats the forlorn and wandering passenger,”†

strays a noble lady, separated from her two brothers, troubled by the savage cries and turbulent joy which she hears from afar. There the son of Circe the enchantress, sensual Comus, dances and shakes his torches amid the clamor of men transformed into brutes ; it is the hour when

“ The sounds and seas, with all their finny drove,  
 Now to the moon in wavering morrice move ;  
 And, on the tawny sands and shelves  
 Trip the pert faeries, and the dapper elves.”‡

The lady is terrified, and sinks on her knees ; and in the misty forms which float above in the pale light, perceives the mysterious and heavenly guardians who watch over her life and honor :

“ O, welcome, pure-eyed Faith ; white-handed Hope,  
 Thou hovering angel, girt with golden wings ;  
 And thou, unblemish’d form of Chastity !  
 I see ye visibly, and now believe  
 That He, the Supreme Good, to whom all things ill  
 Are but as slavish officers of vengeance,

\* *Comus*, v. 1-11.

† *Ibid.* v. 37-39.

‡ *Ibid.* v. 115-118.

Would send a glistering guardian, if need were,  
 To keep my life and honour unassail'd.  
 Was I deceived, or did a sable cloud  
 Turn forth her silver lining on the night?  
 I did not err; there does a sable cloud  
 Turn forth her silver lining on the night,  
 And casts a gleam over this tufted grove."\*

She calls her brothers :

" At last a soft and solemn-breathing sound  
 Rose like a steam of rich distill'd perfumes,  
 And stole upon the air, †

across the "violet-embroider'd vale," to the dissolute god whom she enchants. He comes disguised as a "gentle shepherd," and says :

" Can any mortal mixture of earth's mould  
 Breathe such divine, enchanting ravishment?  
 Sure something holy lodges in that breast,  
 And with these raptures moves the vocal air  
 To testify his hidden residence.  
 How sweetly did they float upon the wings  
 Of silence, through the empty-vaulted night,  
 At every fall smoothing the raven down  
 Of darkness, till it smiled! I have oft heard  
 My mother Circe with the syrens three,  
 Amidst the flowery-kirtled Naiades,  
 Culling their potent herbs and baleful drugs;  
 Who, as they sung, would take the prison'd soul,  
 And lap it in Elysium: Scylla wept,  
 And chid her barking waves into attention. . . .  
 But such a sacred and home-felt delight,  
 Such sober certainty of waking bliss,  
 I never heard till now." ‡

They were heavenly songs which Comus heard; Milton describes, and at the same time imitates them; he makes us understand the saying of his master Plato, that virtuous melodies teach virtue.

Circe's son has by deceit carried off the noble lady, and seats her, with "nerves all chained up," in a sumptuous palace before a table spread with all dainties. She accuses him, resists, insults him, and the style assumes an air of heroic indignation, to scorn the offer of the tempter.

\* *Comus*, v. 213-225.

† *Ibid.* v. 555-557.

‡ *Ibid.* v. 244-264.

“When lust,  
 By unchaste looks, loose gestures, and foul talk,  
 But most by lewd and lavish act of sin,  
 Lets in defilement to the inward parts ;  
 The soul grows clotted by contagion,  
 Imbodies and imbrates, till she quite lose  
 The divine property of her first being.  
 Such are those thick and gloomy shadows damp,  
 Oft seen in charnel vaults and sepulchres  
 Lingerin', and sitting by a new-made grave,  
 As loth to leave the body that it loved.”\*

Confounded, Comus pauses ; and at the same instant the brothers, led by the attendant Spirit, cast themselves upon him with drawn swords. He flees, carrying off his magic wand. To deliver the enchanted lady, they summon Sabrina, the benevolent naiad, who sits

“Under the glassy, cool, translucent wave,  
 In twisted braids of lilies knitting  
 The loose train of thy (her) amber-dropping hair.” †

The “goddess of the silver lake” rises lightly from her “coral-paven bed,” and her chariot “of turkis blue and emerald-green,” sets her down

“By the rushy-fringed bank,  
 Where grows the willow, and the osier dank.” †

Sprinkled by this chaste and cool hand, the lady leaves the “venom'd seat” which held her spell-bound ; the brothers, with their sister, reign peacefully in their father's palace ; and the Spirit, who has conducted all, pronounces this ode, in which the poetry leads up to philosophy : the voluptuous light of an Oriental legend bathes the Elysium of the good, and all the splendors of nature assemble to add a seductiveness to virtue.

“To the ocean now I fly,  
 And those happy climes that lie  
 Where day never shuts his eye  
 Up in the broad fields of the sky :  
 There I suck the liquid air  
 All amidst the gardens fair  
 Of Hesperus, and his daughters three  
 That sing about the golden tree :  
 Along the crisped shades and bowers

\* *Comus*, v. 463-473. It is the elder brother who utters these lines when speaking of his sister.—Tr.

† *Ibid.* v. 861-863.

‡ *Ibid.* v. 890.

Revels the spruce and jocund Spring ;  
 The Graces, and the rosy-bosom'd Hours,  
 Thither all their bounties bring ;  
 There eternal Summer dwells,  
 And west winds, with musky wing,  
 About the cedar'n alleys fling  
 Nard and cassia's balmy smells.  
 Iris there with humid bow  
 Waters the odorous banks, that blow  
 Flowers of more mingled hew  
 Than her purpled scarf can shew ;  
 And drenches with Elysian dew  
 (List, mortals, if your ears be true)  
 Beds of hyacinth and roses,  
 Where young Adonis oft reposes,  
 Waxing well of his deep wound  
 In slumber soft, and on the ground  
 Sadly sits the Assyrian queen :  
 But far above in spangled sheen  
 Celestial Cupid, her famed son, advanced,  
 Holds his dear Psyche sweet entranced,  
 After her wandering labors long,  
 Till free consent the gods among  
 Make her his eternal bride,  
 And from her fair unspotted side  
 Two blissful twins are to be born,  
 Youth and Joy ; so Jove hath sworn.  
 But now my task is smoothly done,  
 I can fly, or I can run,  
 Quickly to the green earth's end,  
 Where the bow'd welkin slow doth bend ;  
 And from thence can soar as soon  
 To the corners of the moon.  
 Mortals, that would follow me,  
 Love Virtue ; she alone is free :  
 She can teach ye how to climb  
 Higher than the sphery chime ;  
 Or, if Virtue feeble were,  
 Heaven itself would stoop to her."\*

That, I think, was his last secular poem. Already, in the one which followed, *Lycidas*, celebrating in the style of Virgil the death of a beloved friend,† he suffers the Puritan wrath and prejudices to shine through, inveighs against the bad teaching and tyranny of the bishops, and speaks of "that two-handed

\* *Comus*, v. 976-1023.

† Edward King, 1637.

engine at the door, ready to smite once, and smite no more." On his return from Italy, controversy and action carried him away; prose begins, poetry is arrested. From time to time a patriotic or religious sonnet comes to break the long silence; now to praise the chief Puritans, Cromwell, Vane, Fairfax; now to celebrate the death of a pious lady, or the life of "a virtuous young lady;" once to pray God "to avenge his slaughter'd saints," the unhappy Protestants of Piedmont, "whose bones lie scatter'd on the Alpine mountains cold;" again, on his second wife, dead a year after their marriage, his well-beloved "saint" — "brought to me, like Alcestis, from the grave, . . . came, vested all in white, pure as her mind;" loyal friendships, sorrows bowed to or subdued, aspirations generous or stoical, which reverses did but purify. Old age came; cut off from power, action, even hope, he returned to the great dreams of his youth. As of old, he went out of this low world in search of the sublime; for the actual is petty, and the familiar seems dull. He selects his new characters on the verge of sacred antiquity, as he selected his old ones on the verge of fabulous antiquity, because distance adds to their stature; and habit, ceasing to measure, ceases also to depreciate them. Just now we had creatures of fancy: Joy, daughter of Zephyr and Aurora; Melancholy, daughter of Vesta and Saturn; Comus, son of Circe, ivy-crowned, god of echoing woods and turbulent excess. Now, Samson, despiser of giants, elect of the strong god, exterminator of idolators, Satan and his peers, Christ and his angels, come and rise before our eyes like superhuman statues; and their far removal, rendering vain our curious hands, will preserve our admiration and their majesty. Let us rise further and higher, to the origin of things, among eternal beings, to the commencement of thought and life, to the battles of God, in this unknown world where sentiments and existences, raised above the ken of man, elude his judgment and criticism to command his veneration and awe; let the sustained song of solemn verse unfold the actions of these shadowy figures: we shall experience the same emotion as in a cathedral, while the organ prolongs its reverberations among the arches, and through the dim light of the tapers the incense clouds envelope the colossal bulk of the columns.

But if the heart remains unchanged, the genius is trans-

formed. Manliness has supplanted youth. The richness has decreased, the severity has increased. Seventeen years of fighting and misfortune have steeped his soul in religious ideas. Mythology has yielded to theology; the habit of discussion has ended by subduing the lyric flight; accumulated learning by choking the original genius. The poet no more sings sublime verse, he relates or harangues in grave verse. He no longer invents a personal style; he imitates antique tragedy or epic. In *Samson* he finds a cold and lofty tragedy, in *Paradise Regained* a cold and noble epic; he composes an imperfect and sublime poem in *Paradise Lost*. Learning and reflection led Milton to a metaphysical poem which was not the natural offspring of the age, while inspiration and ignorance revealed to Bunyan the psychological narrative which suited the age, and the great man's genius was feebler than the tinker's simplicity.

And why? Milton's poem, suppressing lyrical illusion, admitted critical inquiry. Free from enthusiasm, we judge his characters; we demand that they shall be living, real, complete, harmonious, like those of a novel or a drama. No longer hearing odes, we would see objects and souls: we ask that Adam and Eve should act in conformity with their primitive nature; that God, Satan, and Messiah should act and feel in conformity with their superhuman nature. Shakspeare would barely have discharged the task; Milton, the logician and reasoner, failed in it. He gives us correct solemn discourse, and gives us nothing more; his characters are speeches, and in their sentiments we find only heaps of puerilities and contradictions.

Adam and Eve, the first pair! I approach, and it seems as though I discovered the Adam and Eve of Raphael Sanzio, imitated by Milton, so his biographers tell us, glorious, strong, voluptuous children, naked in the light of heaven, motionless and absorbed before grand landscapes, with bright vacant eyes, with no more thought than the bull or the horse on the grass beside them. I listen, and I hear an English household, two reasoners of the period—Colonel Hutchinson and his wife. What dialogues! Dissertations capped by politeness, mutual sermons concluded by bows. What bows! Philosophical compliments and moral smiles. This Adam entered Paradise *via* England. There he learned respectability, and there he studied moral speechifying. Adam is your true paterfamilias, with a

vote, an M. P., an old Oxford man, consulted at need by his wife, dealing out to her with prudent measure the scientific explanations which she requires. This night, for instance, the poor lady had a bad dream, and Adam, in his trencher-cap, administers this learned psychological draught :

“ Know, that in the soul  
 Are many lesser faculties that serve  
 Reason as chief ; among these Fancy next  
 Her office holds ; of all external things,  
 Which the five watchful senses represent,  
 She forms imaginations, aery shapes  
 Which Reason, joining or disjoining, frames  
 All what we affirm or what deny, and call  
 Our knowledge or opinion. . . .  
 Oft in her absence mimic fancy wakes  
 To imitate her ; but, misjoining shapes,  
 Wild work produces oft, and most in dreams ;  
 Ill matching words and deeds long past or late.”\*

Here was something to send Eve off to sleep again. Here, after the apple was eaten, interminable speeches come down on the reader, as numerous and cold as winter showers. The speeches of Parliament after *Pride's Purge* were hardly heavier. The serpent seduces Eve by a collection of arguments worthy of the punctilious Chillingworth, and then the syllogistic mist enters her poor brain :

“ His forbidding  
 Commends thee more, while it infers the good  
 By thee communicated, and our want :  
 For good unknown sure is not had ; or, had  
 And yet unknown, is as not had at all. . . .  
 Such prohibitions bind not.”†

Eve is from Oxford too, has also learned law in the inns about the Temple, and wears, like her husband, the doctor's trencher-cap.

The flow of dissertations never pauses ; from Paradise it gets into heaven. Milton's Jehovah is a grave king, who maintains a suitable state, something like Charles I. When we meet him for the first time, in Book III., he is holding council, and setting forth a matter of business. From the style we see his grand furred cloak, his pointed Vandyke beard, his velvet-covered throne and golden dais.

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\* *Paradise Lost*, book v. v. 100-113.

† *Ibid.*, book viii. v. 753-760.



What a heaven! It is enough to disgust one with Paradise; one would rather enter Charles 1.'s troop of lackeys, or Cromwell's Ironsides. We have orders of the day, a hierarchy, exact submission, extra duties, disputes, regulated ceremonials, prostrations, etiquette, furbished arms, arsenals, depots of chariots, and ammunition. Was it worth while leaving earth to find in heaven carriage-works, buildings, artillery, a manual of tactics, the art of salutations, and the Almanac de Gotha? Are these the things which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath entered into the heart to conceive?" What a gap between this monarchical frippery and the visions of Dante, the souls floating like stars amid the harmonies, the mingled splendors, the mystic roses radiating and vanishing in the azure, the impalpable world in which all the laws of earthly life are dissolved, the unfathomable abyss traversed by fleeting visions, like golden bees gliding in the rays of the deep central sun! Is it not a sign of extinguished imagination, of the inroad of prose, of the birth of the practical genius, replacing metaphysics by morality?

But if the innate and inveterate habits of logical argument, joined with the literal theology of the time, prevented him from attaining to lyrical allusion or creating living souls, the splendor of his grand imagination, joined with the Puritan passions, furnished him with an heroic character, several sublime hymns, and scenery which no one has surpassed. The finest thing in connection with this Paradise is hell; and in this history of God, the chief part is taken by the devil. The ridiculous devil of the middle-age, a horned enchanter, a dirty jester, a petty and mischievous ape, band-leader to a rabble of old women, has become a giant and a hero. Like a conquered and vanished Cromwell, he remains admired and obeyed by those whom he has drawn into the abyss. If he continues master, it is because he deserves it; firmer, more enterprising, more scheming than the rest, it is always from him that deep counsels, unlooked-for resources, courageous deeds, proceed. Though defeated, he prevails, since he has won from the Monarch on high the third part of his angels, and almost all the sons of his Adam. Though wounded, he triumphs, for the thunder which smote his head, left his heart invincible. Though feebler in force, he remains superior in nobility, since he prefers suffering independence to happy servility, and welcomes his defeat and his tor-

ments as a glory, a liberty, and a joy. These are the proud and sombre political passions of the constant though oppressed Puritans; Milton had felt them in the vicissitudes of war, and the emigrants who had taken refuge among the panthers and savages of America, found them strong and energetic in the depths of their heart.

“ Is this the region, this the soil, the clime,  
Said then the lost Archangel, this the seat  
That we must change for heaven? this mournful gloom  
For that celestial light? Be it so, since he,  
Who now is Sevran, can dispose and bid  
What shall be right: farthest from him is best,  
Whom reason has equal'd, force hath made supreme  
Above his equals. Farewell, happy fields,  
Where joy for ever dwells! Hail, horrors! hail,  
Infernal world! and thou, profoundest hell,  
Receive thy new possessour; one who brings  
A mind not to be changed by place or time.  
The mind is its own place, and in itself  
Can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven.  
What matter where, if I be still the same,  
And what I should be: all but less than he  
Whom thunder hath made greater? Here at least  
We shall be free; the Almighty hath not built  
Here for his envy; will not drive us hence:  
Here we may reign secure; and in my choice  
To reign is worth ambition, though in hell:  
Better to reign in hell than serve in heaven.”\*

This sombre heroism, this harsh obstinacy, this biting irony, these proud stiff arms which clasp grief as a mistress, this concentration of invincible courage which, cast on its own resources, finds everything in itself, this power of passion and sway over passion,—

“ The unconquerable will,  
And study of revenge, immortal hate,  
And courage never to submit or yield,  
And what is else not to be overcome,”†

are features proper to the English character and to English literature, and you will find them later on in Byron's *Lara* and *Conrad*.

Around the fallen angel, as within him, all is great. Dante's

\* *Paradise Lost*, book i. v. 242-263.

† *Ibid.* v. 106-109.

hell is but a hall of tortures, whose cells, one below another, descend to the deepest wells. Milton's hell is vast and vague :

“ A dungeon horrible on all sides round,  
As one great furnace, flamed ; yet from those flames  
No light, but rather darkness visible  
Served only to discover sights of woe,  
Regions of sorrow, doleful shades.\* . . .  
Beyond this flood a frozen continent  
Lies, dark and wild, beat with perpetual storms  
Of whirlwind, and dire hail which on firm land  
Thaws not ; but gathers heap, and ruin seems  
Of ancient pile.”†

The angels gather, innumerable legions :

“ As when heaven's fire  
Hath scathed the forest oaks or mountain pines,  
With singed top their stately growth, though bare,  
Stands on the blasted heath.”‡

Milton needs the grand and infinite ; he lavishes them. His eyes are only content in limitless space, and he produces colossuses to fill it. Such is Satan wallowing on the surges of the livid sea :

“ In bulk as huge . . . as . . . that sea-beast  
Leviathan, which God of all his works  
Created hugest that swim the ocean stream :  
Him, haply slumbering on the Norway foam,  
The pilot of some small night-fonnder'd skiff,  
Deeming some island, oft, as seamen tell,  
With fixed anchor in his scaly rind  
Moors by his side, under the lee, while night  
Invests the sea, and wished morn delays.”§

Spenser has discovered images just as fine, but he has not the tragic gravity which the idea of hell impresses on a Protestant. No poetic creation equals in horror and grandeur the spectacle that greeted Satan on leaving his dungeon :

“ At last appear  
Hell bounds, high reaching to the horrid roof,  
And thrice threefold the gates ; threefolds were brass,  
Three iron, three of adamant rock,  
Impenetrable, impaled with circling fire,  
Yet unconsumed. Before the gates there sat

\* *Paradise Lost*, book i. v. 61-65.

† *Ibid.* book ii. v. 587-591.

‡ *Ibid.* book i. v. 612-615.

§ *Ibid.* v. 196-208.

On either side a formidable shape ;  
 The one seem'd woman to the waist, and fair,  
 But ended foul in many a scaly fold  
 Voluminous and vast, a serpent arm'd  
 With mortal sting : about her middle round  
 A cry of hell hounds never ceasing bark'd  
 With wide Cerberean mouths full loud, and rung  
 A hideous peal : yet, when they list, would creep,  
 If aught disturb'd their noise, into her womb,  
 And kennel there ; yet there still bark'd and howl'd  
 Within unseen. . . . The other shape,  
 If shape it might be call'd, that shape had none  
 Distinguishable in member, joint, or limb,  
 Or substance might be call'd that shadow seem'd,  
 For each seem'd either : black it stood as night,  
 Fierce as ten furies, terrible as hell,  
 And shook a dreadful dart ; what seem'd his head  
 The likeness of a kingly crown had on.  
 Satan was now at hand, and from his seat  
 The monster moving onward came as fast,  
 With horrid strides ; hell trembled as he strode.  
 The undaunted fiend what this might be admir'd,  
 Admir'd, not fear'd."\*

The heroic glow of the old soldier of the Civil Wars animates the infernal battle ; and if one were to ask why Milton creates things greater than other men, I should answer, because he has a greater heart.

Hence the sublimity of his scenery. If I did not fear the paradox, I should say that this scenery was a school of virtue. Spenser is a smooth glass, which fills us with calm images. Shakspeare is a burning mirror, which overpowers us one after another, with multiplied and dazzling visions. The one distracts, the other disturbs us. Milton raises our mind. The force of the objects which he describes passes into us ; we become great by sympathy with their greatness. Such is the effect of his description of the Creation. The calm and creative command of the Messiah leaves its trace in the heart which listens to it, and we feel more vigor and moral health at the sight of this great work of wisdom and will :

" On heavenly ground they stood ; and from the shore  
 They view'd the vast immeasurable abyss  
 Outrageous as a sea, dark, wasteful, wild,

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\* *Paradise Lost*, book ii. v. 643-678.

Up from the bottom turn'd by furious winds  
 And surging waves, as mountains, to assault  
 Heaven's highth, and with the centre mix the pole.  
 'Silence, ye troubled waves, and thou deep, peace,'  
 Said then the omnific Word: 'your discord end!' . . .  
 Let there be light, said God; and forthwith light  
 Ethereal, first of things, quintessence pure,  
 Sprung from the deep; and from her native east  
 To journey through the aery gloom began,  
 Sphered in a radiant cloud. . . .  
 The earth was form'd; but in the womb as yet  
 Of waters, embryon immature involved,  
 Appear'd not: over all the face of earth  
 Main ocean flow'd, not idle, but, with warm  
 Prolific humor softening all her globe,  
 Fermented the great mother to conceive,  
 Satiated with genial moisture; when God said,  
 'Be gather'd now, ye waters under heaven,  
 Into one place, and let dry land appear.'  
 Immediately the mountains huge appear  
 Emergent, and their broad bare backs upheave  
 Into the clouds; their tops ascend the sky:  
 So high as heaved the tumid hills, so low  
 Down sunk a hollow bottom broad and deep,  
 Capacious bed of waters: thither they  
 Hasted with glad precipitance, uproll'd,  
 As drops on dust conglobing from the dry."\*

This is the primitive scenery; immense bare seas and mountains as Raphael Sanzio outlines them in the background of his biblical paintings. Milton embraces the general effects, and handles the whole as easily as his Jehovah.

A strange great man, and a strange spectacle! He was born with the instinct of noble things; and this instinct, strengthened in him by solitary meditation, by accumulated knowledge, by stern logic, becomes changed into a body of maxims and beliefs which no temptation could dissolve, and no reverse shake. Thus fortified, he passes life as a combatant, as a poet, with courageous deeds and splendid dreams, heroic and rude, chimerical and impassioned, generous and calm, like every self-contained reasoner, like every enthusiast, insensible to experience and enamoured of the beautiful. Thrown by the chance of a revolution into politics and theology, he demands for others the liberty which his powerful reason requires, and strikes at the

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\* *Paradise Lost*, book vii. v. 210-292.

public fetters which impede his personal energy. By the force of his intellect, he is more capable than any one of accumulating science; by the force of his enthusiasm, he is more capable than any of experiencing hatred. Thus armed, he throws himself into controversy with all the clumsiness and barbarism of the time; but this proud logic displays its arguments with a marvellous breadth, and sustains its images with an unwonted majesty: this lofty imagination, after having spread over his prose an array of magnificent figures, carries him into a torrent of passion even to the height of the sublime or excited ode—a sort of archangel's song of adoration or vengeance. The chance of a throne preserved, then re-established, carries him, before the revolution took place, into pagan and moral poetry, after the revolution into Christian and moral verse. In both he aims at the sublime, and inspires admiration: because the sublime is the work of enthusiastic reason, and admiration is the enthusiasm of reason. In both, he arrives at his point by the accumulation of splendors, by the sustained fulness of poetic song, by the greatness of his allegories, the loftiness of his sentiments, the description of infinite objects and heroic emotions. In the first, a lyrist and a philosopher, with a wider poetic freedom, and the creator of a stranger poetic illusion, he produces almost perfect odes and choruses. In the second, an epic writer and a Protestant, enslaved by a strict theology, robbed of the style which makes the supernatural visible, deprived of the dramatic sensibility which creates varied and living souls, he accumulates cold dissertations, transforms man and God into orthodox and vulgar machines, and only regains his genius in endowing Satan with his republican soul, in multiplying grand sceneries and colossal apparitions, in consecrating his poetry to the praise of religion and duty.

Placed, as it happened, between two ages, he participates in their two characters, as a stream which, flowing between two different soils, is tinged by their two hues. A poet and a Protestant, he receives from the closing age the free poetic afflatus, and from the opening age the severe political religion. He employed the one in the service of the other, and displayed the old inspiration in new subjects. In his works we recognize two Englands: one impassioned for the beautiful, devoted to the emotions of an unshackled sensibility and the fancies of pure

imagination, with no law but the natural feelings, and no religion but natural belief; voluntarily pagan, often immoral; such as it is exhibited by Ben Jonson, Beaumont, Fletcher, Shakspeare, Spenser, and the superb harvest of poets which covered the ground for a space of fifty years: the other fortified by a practical religion, void of metaphysical invention, altogether political, with worship and law, attached to measured, sensible, useful, narrow opinions, praising the virtues of the family, armed and stiffened by a rigid morality, driven into prose, raised to the highest degree of power, wealth, and liberty. In this sense, this style and these ideas are monuments of history: they concentrate, recall, or anticipate the past and the future; and in the limits of a single work are found the events and the feelings of several centuries and of a whole nation.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE RESTORATION.

§ 33.—Puritanism ended by bringing on an orgie, and fanatics talked down the virtues. For many years the gloomy English imagination, possessed by religious terrors, had desolated the life of men. Conscience had become disturbed at the thought of death and the dark eternity; half-expressed doubts swarmed within like a bed of thorns, and the sick heart, starting at every emotion, had ended by taking a disgust at all its pleasures, and a horror at all its natural instincts. Thus poisoned at its spring, the divine sentiment of justice became a mournful madness. Man, confessedly perverse and condemned, believed himself pent in a prison-house of perdition and vice, into which no effort and no chance could dart a ray of light, except a hand from above should come by free grace, to rend the sealed stone of the tomb. A new life was inaugurated which had blighted and expelled the old. All secular tastes were suppressed, all sensual joys forbidden; the spiritual man alone remained standing upon the ruins of the past, and the heart, debarred from all its natural safety-valves, could only direct its views or aspirations towards a sinister Deity. The typical Puritan walked slowly along the streets, his eyes raised towards heaven, with elongated features, yellow and haggard, with cropped hair, clad in brown or black, unadorned, clothed only to cover his nakedness. If a man had round cheeks, he passed for lukewarm.\* The whole body, the exterior, the very tone of his voice, all must wear the sign of penitence and divine grace. Man spoke slowly, with a solemn and somewhat nasal tone of voice, as if to destroy the vivacity of conversation and the melody of the natural voice.

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\* Colonel Hutchinson was at one time held in suspicion because he wore long hair and dressed well.



His speech stuffed with scriptural quotations, his style borrowed from the prophets, his name and the names of his children drawn from the Bible, bore witness that his thoughts were confined to the terrible world of the seers and ministers of divine vengeance. From within, the contagion spread outwards. The fears of conscience were converted into laws of the state. Personal asceticism grew into public tyranny. The Puritan proscribed pleasure as an enemy, for others as well as for himself. Parliament closed the gambling-houses and theatres, and had the actors whipped at the cart's tail; oaths were fined; the May-trees were cut down; the bears, whose fights amused the people, were put to death; the plaster of Puritan masons reduced nude statues to decency; the beautiful poetic festivals were forbidden. Fines and corporal punishments shut out, even from children, games, dancing, bell-ringing, rejoicings, junketings, wrestling, the chase, all exercises and amusements which might profane the Sabbath. The ornaments, pictures, and statues in the churches were pulled down or mutilated. The only pleasure which they retained and permitted was the singing of psalms through the nose, the edification of long sermons, the excitement of acrimonious controversies, the eager and sombre joy of a victory gained over the enemy of mankind, and of the tyranny exercised against the demon's supposed abettors. In Scotland, a colder and sterner land, intolerance reached the utmost limits of ferocity and pettiness, instituting a surveillance over the private life and the secret devotions of every member of a family, depriving Catholics of their children, imposing an oath of abjuration under pain of perpetual imprisonment or death, dragging crowds of witches to the stake. It seemed as though a black cloud had weighed down the life of man, drowning all light, wiping out all beauty, extinguishing all joy, pierced here and there by the glitter of the sword and by the flickering of torches, beneath which one might perceive the indistinct forms of gloomy despots, of bilious sectarians, of silent victims.

The king once re-established, a deliverance ensued. Like a checked and flooded stream, public opinion dashed with all its natural force and all its acquired momentum, into the bed from which it had been debarred. The outburst carried away the dams. The violent return to the senses drowned morality. Virtue had the semblance of Puritanism. Duty and fanaticism

became mingled in a common reproach. In this great reaction, devotion and honesty, swept away together, left to mankind but the wreck and the mire. The more excellent parts of human nature disappeared; there remained but the animal, without bridle or guide, urged by his desires beyond justice and shame.

When we see these manners in a Hamilton or a Saint Evremond, we can tolerate them. Their French varnish deceives us. Debauchery in a Frenchman is only half disgusting; with them, if the animal breaks loose, it is without abandoning itself to excess. The foundation is not, as with the Englishman, coarse and powerful. The Count de Grammont has too much wit to love an orgie. After all, an orgie is not pleasant; the breaking of glasses, brawling, lewd talk, gluttony in eating and drinking,—there is nothing in this very tempting to a delicate disposition: the Frenchman, after Grammont's type, is born an epicurean, not a glutton or a drunkard. To pass his time agreeably is his sole endeavor. "They had said good-bye to dulness in the army," observed Hamilton, "as soon as he was there." That is his pride and his aim; he troubles himself, and cares for nothing besides. His valet robs him: another would have brought the rogue to the gallows; but the theft was clever, and he keeps his rascal. He left England forgetting to marry the girl he was betrothed to; he is caught at Dover; he returns and marries her: this was an amusing *contretemps*; he asks for nothing better. One day, being penniless, he fleeces the Count de Caméran at play. "Could Grammont, after the figure he had once cut, pack off like any common fellow? By no means; he is a man of feeling; he will maintain the honor of France." He covers his cheating at play with a joke; at bottom, his notions of property are not over-clear. He regales Caméran with Caméran's own money; would Caméran have done it better, or otherwise? What matter if his money be in Grammont's purse or his own? The main point is arrived at, since there is pleasure in getting the money, and there is pleasure in spending it. The hateful and the ignoble vanish from a life conducted thus. If he pays his court to princes, you may be sure it is not on his knees; so lively a soul is not weighed down by respect; his wit places him on a level with the greatest; under pretext of amusing the king, he tells

him plain truths.\* If he finds himself in London, surrounded by open debauchery, he does not plunge into it; he passes through on tiptoe, and so daintily that the mire does not stick to him. We do not recognize any longer in his anecdotes the anguish and the brutality which the circumstances actually conceal; the narrative flows on quickly, raising a smile, then another, and another yet, so that the mind is brought by an adroit and easy progress to something like good humor. At table, Grammont will never stuff himself; at play, he will never grow violent; with his mistress, he will never give vent to coarse talk; in a duel, he will not hate his adversary. The wit of a Frenchman is like French wine; it makes men neither brutal, nor wicked, nor gloomy. Such is the spring of these pleasures: a supper will destroy neither the delicacy, nor the good nature, nor the enjoyment. The libertine remains sociable, polished, obliging; his gayety culminates only in the gayety of others; † he is attentive to them as naturally as to himself; and in addition, he is ever on the alert and in a mood for intellectual exertion: sallies, flashes of brilliancy, witty speeches, sparkle on his lips; he can think at table and in company, sometimes better than if alone or sober. It is clear that with him debauchery does not extinguish the man; Grammont would say that it perfects him, that wit, the heart, the intelligence only arrive at excellence and true enjoyment amid the elegance and animation of a choice supper.

It is quite the contrary in England. When we scratch the covering of an Englishman's morality, the brute appears in its violence and its deformity. One of the English statesmen said that with the French an unchained mob could be led by words of humanity and honor, but that in England it was necessary, in order to appease them, to throw to them raw flesh. ‡ Violence,

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\* The king was playing at backgammon; a doubtful throw occurs: "Ah, here is Grammont, who'll decide for us; Grammont, come and decide." "Sire, you have lost." "What! you do not yet know." . . . "Ah, Sire, if the throw had been merely doubtful, these gentlemen would not have failed to say you had won."

† Hamilton says of Grammont, "He sought out the unfortunate only to succour them."

‡ Incidents of French history—the Jacquerie insurrections, the Armagnac quarrels, the Bartholomew butchery, the Terror, and the Commune—furnish an amusing commentary on this contrast of M. Taine's. For an instance of French barbarity, difficult to match in English history, see Barante, *Hist. des Ducs de Bourgogne*, tom. iv. pp. 346–348.—J. F.

blood, orgie, that is the food on which this mob of noblemen precipitated itself. All that excuses a carnival was absent; and, in particular, wit. Three years after the return of the king, Butler published his *Hudibras*; and with what *éclat* his contemporaries only could tell, while the echo is sustained down to our own days. How mean is the wit, with what awkwardness and dulness he dilutes his splenetic satire! Here and there lurks a happy picture, the remnant of a poetry which has just perished; but the whole material of the work reminds one of a Scarron, as unworthy as the other, and more malignant. It is written, they say, on the model of Don Quixote; Hudibras is a Puritan knight, who goes about, like his antitype, redressing wrongs, and pocketing beatings. It would be truer to say that it resembles the wretched imitation of Avellaneda.\* The short metre, well suited to buffoonery, hobbles along without rest on its crutches, floundering in the mud which it delights in, as foul and as dull as that of the *Enéide Travestie*.† The description of Hudibras and his horse occupies the best part of a canto; forty lines are taken up by describing his beard, forty more by describing his shoes. Endless scholastic discussions, arguments as long as those of the Puritans, spread their wastes and briars over half the poem. No action, no nature, all is would-be satire and gross caricature; neither art, nor harmony, nor good taste: the Puritan style is converted into a harsh gibberish; and the engalled rancor, missing its aim by its mere excess, spoils the portrait it wishes to draw. Would you believe that such a writer gives himself airs, wishes to enliven us, pretends to be funny? What delicate raillery is there in this picture of Hudibras's beard!

"His tawny beard was th' equal grace  
Both of his wisdom and his face;  
In cut and die so like a tile,  
A sudden view it would beguile:

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\* A Spanish author, who continued and imitated Cervantes' *Don Quixote*.

† A work by Scarron. *Hudibras*, ed. Z. Grey, 1801, 2 vols., i. canto i. v. 289, says also:

"For as Æneas bore his sire  
Upon his shoulder through the fire,  
Our knight did bear no less a pack  
Of his own buttocks on his back."

The upper part whereof was why,  
 The nether orange, mix'd with grey,  
 The hairy meteor did denounce  
 The fall of sceptres and of crowns :  
 With grisly type did represent  
 Declining age of government,  
 And tell with hieroglyphic spade  
 Its own grave and the state's were made."\*

Butler is so well satisfied with his insipid fun, that he prolongs it for a good many lines:

"Like Samson's heart-breakers, it grew  
 In time to make a nation rue ;  
 Tho' it contributed its own fall,  
 To wait upon the public downfall. . . .  
 'Twas bound to suffer persecution  
 And martyrdom with resolution ;  
 T' oppose itself against the hate  
 And vengeance of the incens'd state,  
 In whose defiance it was worn,  
 Still ready to be pull'd and torn,  
 With red-hot irons to be tortur'd,  
 Revil'd, and spit upon, and martyr'd.  
 Maugre all which, 'twas to stand fast  
 As long as monarchy should last ;  
 But when the state should hap to reel,  
 'Twas to submit to fatal steel,  
 And fall, as it was consecrate,  
 A sacrifice to fall of state,  
 Whose thread of life the fatal sisters  
 Did twist together with its whiskers,  
 And twine so close, that time should never,  
 In life or death, their fortunes sever ;  
 But with his rusty sickle mow  
 Both down together at a blow."†

Could any one have taken pleasure in humor such as this:

"This sword a dagger had, his page,  
 That was but little for his age ;  
 And therefore waited on him so  
 As dwarfs upon knights-errant do. . . .  
 When it had stabb'd, or broke a head,  
 It would scrape trenchers, or chip bread. . . .  
 'Twould make clean shoes, and in the earth  
 Set leeks and onions, and so forth."‡

\* *Hudibras*, part i. canto i. v. 241-250.

† *Ibid.* v. 253-280.

‡ *Ibid.* v. 375-386.

Everything turns on the trivial: if any beauty presents itself, it is spoiled by burlesque. To read those long details of the kitchen, those boisterous and crude jokes, one might fancy oneself in the company of a common buffoon in the market; it is the talk of the quacks on the bridges, adapting their imagination and language to the manners of the beer-shop and the hovel. Such is the grotesque stuff in which the courtiers of the Restoration delighted; their spite and their coarseness took a pleasure in the spectacle of these bawling puppets; even now, after two centuries, we hear the ribald laughter of this audience of lackeys.

When the theatres, which Parliament had closed, were reopened, the change of public taste was soon manifested. Shirley, the last of the grand old school, wrote and lived no longer. Waller, Buckingham, and Dryden were compelled to dish up the plays of Shakspeare and Fletcher and Beaumont, and to adapt them to the modern style. Pepys, who went to see *Midsummer Night's Dream*, declared that he would never go there again; "for it is the most insipid, ridiculous play that ever I saw in my life."\* The comedy was transformed; the fact was, that the public was transformed.

What an audience was that of Shakspeare and Fletcher! What youthful and pleasing souls! In this evil-smelling room in which it was necessary to burn juniper, before that miserable half-lighted stage, before decorations worthy of an alehouse, with men playing the women's parts, illusion enchained them. They scarcely troubled themselves about probabilities; they could be carried in an instant over forest and ocean, from clime to clime, across twenty years of time, through ten battles and all the hurry of adventure. They did not care to be always laughing; comedy, after a burst of buffoonery, resumed its serious or tender tone. They came less to be amused than to muse. They raised themselves without any assistance to the summit of the world of ideas; they desired to contemplate extreme generosity, absolute love; they were not astonished at the sight of fairy-land; they entered without an effort into the region of poetical transformation, whose light was necessary to their eyes. They took in at a glance its excess and its caprices; they

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\* *Pepys' Diary*, ii. Sept. 29, 1662.

needed no preparation ; they followed its digressions, its whimsicalities, the crowding of its abundant creations, the sudden prodigality of its high coloring, as a musician follows a symphony. They were in that transient and strained condition in which the imagination, adult and pure, laden with desire, curiosity, force, develops man all at once, and in that man the most exalted and exquisite feelings.

The roisterers took the place of these. They were rich, they had tried to invest themselves with the polish of Frenchmen ; they added to the stage movable decorations, music, lights, probability, comfort, every external aid ; but they wanted the heart. Imagine those foppish and half-intoxicated men, who saw in love nothing beyond desire, and in man nothing beyond sensuality ; Rochester in the place of Mercutio. What part of his soul could comprehend poesy and fancy ? Romantic poetry was altogether beyond his reach ; he could only seize the actual world, and of this world but the palpable and gross externals. Give him an exact picture of ordinary life, commonplace and probable occurrences, literal imitations of what he himself is and does ; lay the scene in London, in the current year ; copy his coarse words, his brutal jokes, his attempts at French dissertation. Let him recognize himself, let him find again the people and the manners he has just left behind him in the tavern or the antè-chamber ; let the theatre and the street reproduce one another. Comedy will give him the same entertainment as real life ; he will wallow equally well there in vulgarity and lewdness ; to be present there will demand neither imagination nor wit ; eyes and memory are the only requisites. This exact imitation will amuse him and instruct him at the same time. Filthy words will make him laugh through sympathy ; shameless scenes will divert him by appealing to his recollections.

The hero of this society was William Wycherley, the coarsest writer who has polluted the stage. Being sent to France during the Revolution, he there became a Roman Catholic ; then on his return abjured ; then in the end, as Pope tells us, abjured again. Robbed of their Protestant ballast, these shallow brains ran from dogma to dogma, from superstition to incredulity or indifference, to end in a state of fear. He had learnt of M. de

Montausier\* the art of wearing gloves and a peruke, which sufficed in those days to make a gentleman. He married a woman of bad temper, ruined himself, remained seven years in prison, passed the remainder of his life in pecuniary difficulties, regretting his youth, losing his memory, scribbling bad verses, which he got Pope to correct, pestering him with his pride and self-esteem, stringing together dull obscenities, dragging his spent body and enervated brain through the stages of misanthropy and libertinage, playing the miserable part of a toothless roisterer and a white-haired blackguard. He ended as he had begun, by unskilfulness and misconduct, having succeeded neither in becoming happy nor honest, having used his vigorous intelligence and real talent only to his own injury and the injury of others.

The reason was, that Wycherley was not an epicurean born. His nature, genuinely English, that is to say, energetic and sombre, rebelled against the easy and amiable carelessness which enables one to take life as a pleasure-party. His style is labored, and troublesome to read. His tone is virulent and bitter. He frequently forces his comedy in order to get at spiteful satire. The only fault he rejects is hypocrisy; the only virtue he preaches is frankness. He wants others to confess their vice, and he begins by confessing his own.

"Though I cannot lie like them (the poets), I am as vain as they; I cannot but publicly give your Grace my humble acknowledgements. . . . This is the poet's gratitude, which in plain English is only pride and ambition."

We find in him no poetry of expression, no glimpse of the ideal, no system of morality which could console, raise, or purify men. He shuts them up in their waywardness and uncleanness, and settles himself along with them. He shows them the filth of the shoals in which he confines them; he expects them to breathe this atmosphere; he plunges them into it, not to disgust them with it as by an accidental fall, but to accustom them to it as if it were their natural element. He strips their lusts, sets them forth at full length, feels them in their rebound; and while he condemns them as nauseous, he relishes them. People take what pleasure they can get: the drunkards in the

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\* Himself a Huguenot, who had become a Roman Catholic, and the husband of Julie d'Angennes, for whom the French poets composed the celebrated *Guirlande*.—TR.



suburbs, if asked how they can relish their miserable liquor, will tell you it makes them drunk as soon as better stuff, and that is the only pleasure they have.

A certain gift hovers over all—namely, vigor—which is never absent in England, and gives a peculiar character to their virtues as to their vices. When we have removed the oratorical and heavily constructed phrases in the French manner, we get at the genuine English talent—a deep sympathy with nature and life. Wycherley had that lucid and vigorous perspicacity which in any particular situation seizes upon gesture, physical expression, evident detail, which pierces to the depths of the crude and base, which hits off, not men in general, and passion as it ought to be, but an individual man, and passion as it is. He is a realist, not of set purpose, as the realists of our day, but naturally. In a violent manner he lays on his plaster over the grinning and pimpled faces of his rascals, in order to bring under our very eyes the stern mask to which the living imprint of their ugliness has clung in a fleeting manner. He crams his plays with incident, he multiplies action, he pushes comedy to the verge of dramatic effect; he hustles his characters amidst surprises and violence, and all but stultifies them in order to exaggerate his satire. Observe in Olivia, a copy of Célimène, the fury of the passions which he depicts. She paints her friends as does Célimène, but with what insults! Novel, a coxcomb, says: “But, as I was saying, madam, I have been treated to-day with all the ceremony and kindness imaginable at my lady Autumn’s. But the nauseous old woman at the upper hand of her table” . . . Olivia: “Revives the old Grecian custom, of serving in a death’s head with their banquets. . . . I detest her hollow cherry cheeks: she looks like an old coach new painted. . . . She is still most splendidly, gallantly ugly, and looks like an ill piece of daubing in a rich frame.”\* The scene is borrowed from Molière’s *Misanthrope* and the *Critique de l’Ecole des Femmes*; but how transformed! Our modern nerves would not endure the portrait Olivia draws of Manly, her lover; he hears her unawares; she forthwith stands before him, laughs at him to his face, declares herself to be married; tells him she means to keep the diamonds which he has given her, and defies him. Fidelia says to her:

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\* *The Plain Dealer*, ii. 1.

"But, madam, what could make you dissemble love to him, when 'twas so hard a thing for you; and flatter his love to you?" *Olivia*. "That which makes all the world flatter and dissemble, 'twas his money: I had a real passion for that. . . . As soon as I had his money, I hastened his departure like a wife, who when she has made the most of a dying husband's breath, pulls away his pillow."\*

This character, Manly, the "plain dealer," is so manifestly the author's favorite, that his contemporaries gave him the name of his hero for a surname. Manly is copied after *Alceste*, and the great difference between the two heroes shows the difference between the two societies and the two countries. Manly is not a courtier, but a ship-captain, with the bearing of a sailor of the time, his cloak stained with tar, and smelling of brandy,† ready with blows or foul oaths, calling those he came across dogs and slaves, and when they displeased him kicking them down stairs. And he speaks in this fashion to a lord with a voice like a mastiff. Then, when the poor nobleman tries to whisper something in his ear—

"My lord, all that you have made me know by your whispering which I knew not before, is that you have a stinking breath; there's a secret for your secret."

When he is in *Olivia's* drawing-room, with "these fluttering parrots of the town, these apes, these echoes of men," he bawls out as if he were on his quarter-deck, "Peace, you Bartholemew, fair buffoons!" He seizes them by the collar, and says:

"Why, you impudent, pitiful wretches, . . . you are in all things so like women, that you may think it in me a kind of cowardice to beat you. Begone, I say. . . . No chattering, baboons; instantly begone, or" . . .

Then he turns them out of the room. These are the manners of a plain-dealing man. All these actions then appeared natural. *Wycherley* took to himself in his dedication the title of his hero, *Plain Dealer*; he fancied he had drawn the portrait of a frank, honest man, and praised himself for having set the public a fine example; he had only given them the model of an avowed and energetic brute. That was all that was left of manliness in this pitiable world. *Wycherley* deprived man of his ill-fitting

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\* *The Plain Dealer*, iv. 2.

† *Olivia* says: "I shall not have again my alcove smell like a cabin, my chamber perfumed with his tarpaulin *Brandenburgh*; and hear vollies of brandy-sighs, enough to make a fog in one's room."—*The Plain Dealer*, ii. 1.

French cloak, and displayed him with his framework of muscles, and in his naked shamelessness.

And in their midst, a great poet, blind, and fallen, his soul saddened by the misery of the times, thus depicted the madness of the infernal rout :

“ Belial came last, than whom a spirit more lewd  
 Fell not from heaven, or more gross to love  
 Vice for itself . . . who more oft than he  
 In temples and at altars, when the priest  
 Turns atheist, as did Eli's sons, who fill'd  
 With lust and violence the house of God ?  
 In courts and palaces he also reigns,  
 And in luxurious cities where the noise  
 Of riot ascends above their loftiest towers,  
 An injury and outrage : and when night  
 Darkens the streets, then wander forth the sons  
 Of Belial, flown with insolence and wine.”\*

§ 34.—In the seventeenth century a new mode of life was inaugurated in Europe, the worldly, which soon took the lead of and shaped every other. In France especially, and in England, it appeared and gained ground, from the same causes and at the same time.

In order to people the drawing-rooms, a certain political condition is necessary ; and this condition, which is the supremacy of the king in combination with a regular system of police, was established at the same period on both sides of the Channel. A regular police brings about peace among men, draws them out of their feudal independence and provincial isolation, increases and facilitates intercommunication, confidence, union, conveniences, and pleasures. The kingly supremacy calls into existence a court, the centre of intercourse, from which all favors flow, and which calls for a display of pleasure and splendor. The aristocracy thus attracted to one another, and attracted to the throne by security, curiosity, amusement, and interest, meet together, and become at once men of the world and men of the court. They are no longer, like the barons of a preceding age, standing in their lofty halls, armed and stern, possessed by the idea that they might perhaps, when they quit their palace, cut each other to pieces, and that if they fall to blows in the precincts of the court, the executioner is ready to

\* *Paradise Lost*, book i. v. 490-502.

cut off their hand and stop the bleeding with a red-hot iron ; knowing, moreover, that the king may probably have them beheaded to-morrow, and ready accordingly to cast themselves on their knees and break out into protestations of faithful submissiveness, but counting under their breath the number of swords that will be mustered on their side, and the trusty men who keep sentinel behind the drawbridge of their castles. The rights, privileges, constraints, and attractions of feudal life have disappeared. There is no more need that the manor should be a fortress. These men can no longer experience the joy of reigning there as in a petty state. It has palled on them, and they quit it. Having no further cause for quarrelling with the king, they go to him. His court is a drawing-room, most agreeable to the sight, and most serviceable to those who frequent it. Here are festivities, splendid furniture, a decked and chosen company, news and tittle-tattle ; here they find pensions, titles, places for them and theirs ; they receive both amusement and profit. It is all gain and all pleasure. The great object here is selfish amusement, and to put on appearances ; people strive to be men of fashion ; a coat gives glory. "A gentleman," said Etheredge, "ought to dress well, dance well, fence well, have a talent for love-letters, a pleasant voice in a room, to be always very amorous, sufficiently discreet, but not too constant." These are already the court manners as they continued in France up to the time of Louis xvi. With such manners, words take the place of deeds. Life is passed in visits and conversations. The art of conversing became the chief of all ; of course, to converse agreeably, to employ an hour, twenty subjects in an hour, hinting always, without going deep, in such a fashion that conversation should not be a labor, but a promenade. It was followed up by letters written in the evening, by madrigals or epigrams to be read in the morning, by drawing-room tragedies, or caricatures of society. In this manner a new literature was produced, the work and the portrait of the world, which was at once its audience and its model, which sprung from it, and ended in it. The art of conversation being then a necessity, people set themselves to acquire it. A revolution was effected in mind as well as in manners. As soon as circumstances assume new aspects, thought assumes a new form. The Renaissance is ended, the Classic Age begins, and

the artist makes room for the author. When conversation becomes the chief business of life, it modifies style after its own image, and according to its peculiar needs. It repudiates digression, excessive metaphor, impassioned exclamations, all loose and overstrained ways. We cannot bawl, gesticulate, dream aloud in a drawing-room; we restrain ourselves; we criticise and keep watch over ourselves; we stand in need of concise expression, exact language, clear and connected reasoning; otherwise we cannot fence or comprehend each other. Correct style, good language, conversation, are self-generated, and very quickly perfected; for refinement is the aim of the man of the world: he studies to render everything more becoming and more serviceable, his chattels and his speech, his periods and his dress. Art and artifice are there the distinguishing mark. People pride themselves on being perfect in their mother tongue, never to miss the correct sense of any word, to avoid vulgar expressions, to string together their antitheses, to develop their thoughts, to employ rhetoric. Nothing is more marked than the contrast of the conversations of Shakspeare and Fletcher with those of Wycherly and Congreve. In Shakspeare the dialogue resembles an assault of arms; we could imagine men of skill fencing with words as it were in a fencing-school. They play the buffoon, sing, think aloud, burst out into a laugh, into puns, into fishwomen's talk and into poets' talk, into quaint whimsicalities; they have a taste for the ridiculous, the sparkling. Here, on the other hand, the characters are steady; ratiocination is the basis of their style; they are so perfect that the thing is overdone, and we see through it all the author stringing his phrases. They arrange a tableau, multiply ingenious comparisons, balance well-ordered periods. One character delivers a satire, another serves up a little essay on morality. We might draw from the comedies of the time a volume of sentences; they are charged with literary morsels which foreshadow the *Spectator*.\* They hunt for clever and humorous expressions, they clothe indecent circumstances with decent words; they skip nimbly over the fragile ice of decorum, and leave their mark without breaking it. I see gentlemen, seated in gilt arm-chairs, of quiet wit and studied speech, cool in observation,

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\* Take, for example, Farquhar's *Beaux Stratagem*, ii. 1.

eloquent skeptics, expert in the fashions, lovers of elegance, dainty of fine talk as much from vanity as from taste, who, while conversing between a compliment and a reverence, will no more neglect their good style than their neat gloves or their hat.

Among the best and most agreeable specimens of this new refinement, appears Sir William Temple, a diplomatist and man of the world, prudent, wise, and polite, gifted with tact in conversation and in business, expert in the knowledge of the times, and in not compromising himself, who knew how to obtain the eulogies of men of letters, of savants, of politicians, of the people, to gain a European reputation, to win all the crowns appropriated to science, patriotism, virtue, genius, without having too much of science, patriotism, genius, or virtue. Such a life is the masterpiece of that age: fine externals on a foundation not so fine; this is its abstract. His mode as an author agrees with his maxims as a politician. His principles and style are homogeneous; a genuine diplomatist, such as one meets in the drawing-rooms, having probed Europe and touched everywhere the bottom of things; tired of everything, especially of enthusiasm, admirable in an arm-chair or at a levee, a good story-teller, waggish if need were, but in moderation, accomplished in the art of maintaining the dignity of his station and of enjoying himself. In his retreat at Sheen, afterwards at Moor Park, he employs his leisure in writing; and he writes as a man of his rank would speak, very well, that is to say, with dignity and facility, particularly when he writes of the countries he has visited, of the incidents he has seen, the noble amusements which serve to pass his time.\* He has an income of fifteen hundred a year, and a nice sinecure in Ireland. He retired from public life during momentous struggles, siding neither with the king nor against him, resolved, as he tells us himself, not to set himself against the current when the current is irresistible. He lives peacefully in the country with his wife, his sister, his secretary, his dependants, receiving the visits of strangers, who are anxious to see the negotiator of the Triple Alliance, and sometimes of the new King William, who, unable to obtain his services, comes occasionally

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\* Consult especially, *Observations upon the United Provinces of the Netherlands; Of Gardening.*

to seek his counsel. He plants and gardens, in a fertile soil, in a country the climate of which agrees with him, among regular flower-beds, by the side of a very straight canal, bordered by a straight terrace; and he lauds himself in set terms, and with suitable discreetness, for the character he possesses and the part he has chosen :—

“I have often wondered how such sharp and violent invectives come to be made so generally against Epicurus, by the ages that followed him, whose admirable wit, felicity of expression, excellence of nature, sweetness of conversation, temperance of life and constancy of death, made him so beloved by his friends, admired by his scholars, and honored by the Athenians.”\*

He does well to defend Epicurus, because he has followed his precepts, avoiding every great disorder of the intelligence, and installing himself, like one of Lucretius' gods, in the interspace of worlds; as he says :

“Where factions were once entered and rooted in a state, they thought it madness for good men to meddle with public affairs.”

And again :

“The true service of the public is a business of so much labour and so much care, that though a good and wise man may not refuse it, if he be called to it by his Prince or his country, and thinks he may be of more than vulgar use, yet he will seldom or never seek it; but leaves it commonly to men who under the disguise of public good, pursue their own designs of wealth, power and such bastard honors as usually attend them, not that which is the true, and only true, reward of virtue.”

This is how he reveals himself. Thus presented to us, he goes on to talk of the gardening which he practises, and first of the six grand Epicureans who have illustrated the doctrine of their master—Cæsar, Atticus, Lucretius, Horace, Mæcenas, Virgil; then of the various sorts of gardens which have a name in the world, from the garden of Eden, and the garden of Alcinous, to those of Holland and Italy; and all this at some length, like a man who listens to himself and is listened to by others, who does rather profusely the honors of his house and of his wit to his guests, but does them with grace and dignity, not dogmatically nor haughtily, but in varied tones, aptly modulating his voice and gestures. The ear, the mind even is charmed, captivated by the appropriateness of his diction, by the abundance of his ornate periods, by the dignity and fulness of a style which is

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\* Temple's Works: *Of Gardening*, ii. 190.

involuntarily regular, which, at first artificial, like good breeding, ends, like true good breeding, by being changed into a real necessity and a natural talent.

Unfortunately, this talent occasionally leads to blunders; when a man speaks well about everything, he thinks he has a right to speak of everything. He plays philosopher, critic, even man of learning; and indeed becomes so actually, at least with the ladies. Such a man writes, like Temple, *Essays on the Nature of Government*, on *Heroic Virtue*,\* on poetry; that is, little treatises on society, on the beautiful, on the philosophy of history. He is the Locke, the Herder, the Bentley of the drawing-room, and nothing else. Now and then, doubtless, his mother wit leads him to fair original judgments. Temple was the first to discover a Pindaric glow in the old chant of Ragnar Lodbrog, and to place Don Quixote in the first rank of modern fictions, and moreover, when he handles a subject within his range, like the causes of the power and decline of the Turks, his reasoning is admirable. But otherwise, he is simply the scholar; nay, in him the pedant crops out, and the worst of pedants, who, being ignorant, wishes to seem wise, who quotes the history of every land, hauling in Jupiter, Saturn, Osiris, Fo-hi, Confucius, Manco-Capac, Mahomet, and discourses on all these obscure and unknown civilizations, as if he had laboriously studied them, on his own behalf, at their source, and not at second hand, through the extracts of his secretary, or the books of others. One day he came to grief; having plunged into a literary dispute, and claimed superiority for the ancients over the moderns, he imagined himself a Hellenist, an antiquarian, related the voyages of Pythagoras, the education of Orpheus, and remarked that the Greek sages

“were commonly excellent poets, and great physicians: they were so learned in natural philosophy, that they foretold not only eclipses in the heavens but earthquakes at land and storms at sea, great drought and great plagues, much plenty or much scarcity of certain sorts of fruits or grain; not to mention the magical powers attributed to several of them, to allay storms, to raise gales, to appease commotions of people, to make plagues cease.”†

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\* Compare this essay with that of Carlyle, on *Heroes and Hero-Worship*, the title and subject are similar; it is curious to note the difference of the two centuries.

† Temple's Works, ii. . *An Essay upon the Ancient and Modern Learning*, 155.



Admirable faculties, which we no longer possess. He wished to enumerate the greatest modern writers, and forgot to mention in his catalogue, "among the Italians,\* Dante, Petrarch, Ariosto, and Tasso; in his list of French, Pascal, Bossuet, Molière, Corneille, Racine, and Boileau; in his list of Spaniards, Lope and Calderon; and in his list of English, Chaucer, Spenser, Shakspeare, and Milton;" though, by way of compensation, he inserted the names of Paolo Sarpi, Guevara, Sir Philip Sidney, Selden, Voiture, and Bussy-Rabutin, "author of the *Amours de Gaul.*" To cap all, he declared the fables of Æsop, a dull Byzantine compilation, and the letters of Phalaris—a wretched sophistical forgery—admirable and authentic:

"It may perhaps be further affirmed, in favor of the ancients, that the oldest books we have are still in their kind the best. The two most ancient that I know of in prose, among those we call profane authors, are Æsop's *Fables* and Phalaris' *Epistles*, both living near the same time, which was that of Cyrus and Pythagoras. As the first has been agreed by all ages since for the greatest master in his kind, and all others of that sort have been but imitations of his original; so I think the *Epistles of Phalaris* to have more grace, more spirit, more force of wit and genius, than any others I have ever seen, either ancient or modern."

And then, in order to commit himself beyond remedy, he gravely remarked:

"I know several learned men (or that usually pass for such, under the name of critics) have not esteemed them genuine, and Politian with some others have attributed them to Lucian; but I think he must have little skill in painting that cannot find out this to be an original: such diversity of passions, upon such variety of actions and passages of life and government, such freedom of thought, such boldness of expression, such bounty to his friends, such scorn of his enemies, such honour of learned men, such esteem of good, such knowledge of life, such contempt of death, with such fierceness of nature and cruelty of revenge, could never be represented but by him that possessed them; and I esteem Lucian to have been no more capable of writing than of acting what Phalaris did. In all one writ, you find the scholar or the sophist; and in all the other, the tyrant and the commander."†

Fine rhetoric truly; it is sad that a passage so aptly turned should cover so many stupidities. All this appeared very triumphant; and the universal applause with which this fine ora-

\* Macaulay's Works, vi. 319: *Essay on Sir William Temple.*

† *An Essay upon the Ancient and Modern Learning*, 173.

torical bombast was greeted . demonstrates the taste and the culture, the hollowness and the politeness, of the elegant world of which Temple was the marvel, and which, like Temple, loved only the varnish of truth.

In the front rank of the poets of this time is Edmund Waller, who lived and wrote in this manner to his eighty-second year: a man of wit and fashion, well-bred, familiar from his youth with great people, endowed with tact and foresight, quick at repartee, not easy to put out of countenance, but selfish, of indifferent feelings, having changed sides more than once, and bearing very well the memory of his tergiversations ; in short, a good model of the worlding and the courtier. It was he who, having once praised Cromwell, and afterward Charles II., but the latter more feebly than the former, said by way of excuse: "Poets, your Majesty, succeed better in fiction than in truth." In this kind of existence, three-quarters of the poetry is written for the occasion ; it is the small change of conversation or flattery ; it resembles the little events or the little sentiments from which it sprang. One piece is written on tea, another on the queen's portrait; it is necessary to pay one's court ; moreover, "His Majesty has requested some verses." One lady makes him a present of a silver pen, straight he throws his gratitude into rhyme ; another has the power of sleeping at will, straight a sportive stanza ; a false report is spread that she has just had her portrait painted, straight a copy of verses on this grave affair. A little further on there are verses to the Countess of Carlisle on her chamber, condolences to my Lord of Northumberland on the death of his wife, a pretty thing on a lady "passing through a crowd of people," an answer, verse for verse, to some rhymes of Sir John Suckling. He seizes anything frivolous, new, or convenient, on the wing ; and his poetry is only a written conversation,—I mean the conversation which goes on at a ball, when people speak for the sake of speaking, lifting a lock of one's wig, or twisting about a glove. Gallantry, as he confesses, holds the chief place here, and one may be pretty certain that the love is not over-sincere. In fact, Waller sighs on purpose (Sacharissa had a fine dowry), or at least for the sake of good manners. His despairs bear the same flavor ; he pierces the groves of Penshurst with his cries, "reports his flame to the beeches," and the well-bred beeches "bow their



his eyes ; in reference to a hill or a forest, he meditates upon man ; externals lead him inward ; impressions of the senses to contemplations of the soul. When he sees the Thames throw itself into the sea, he compares it with " mortal life hasting to meet eternity." The face of a mountain, beaten by storms, reminds him of " the common fate of all that's high or great." The course of the river suggests to him ideas of inner reformation :

" O could I flow like thee ! and make thy stream  
My great example, as it is my theme !  
Though deep, yet clear, though gentle yet not dull ;  
Strong without rage, without o'erflowing, full.

But his proud head the airy mountain hides  
Among the clouds ; his shoulders and his sides  
A shady mantle clothes ; his curled brows  
Frown on the gentle stream, which calmly flows ;  
While winds and storms his lofty forehead beat,  
The common fate of all that's high or great."\*

There is in the English mind an indestructible stock of moral instincts, and grand melancholy; and it is the greatest confirmation of this, that we can discover such a stock at the court of Charles II.

These are, however, but rare openings, and as it were levelings of the original rock. The habits of the worldling are as a thick layer which cover it throughout. Manners, conversation, style, the stage, taste, all is French, or tries to be ; they imitate France as they are able, and go there to mould themselves. Many cavaliers went there, driven away by Cromwell. Denham, Waller, Roscommon, and Rochester resided there ; the Duchess of Newcastle, a poetess of the time, was married at Paris ; the Duke of Buckingham served a campaign under Turenne : Wycherley was sent to France by his father, who wished to rescue him from the contagion of Puritan opinions ; Vanbrugh, one of the best comic playwrights, went thither to contract a polish. The two courts were allied almost always in fact, and always in heart, by a community of interests, and of religious and monarchical ideas. Charles II. accepted from Louis XIV. a pension, a mistress, counsels, and examples ; the nobility followed their

\* *The Poets of Great Britain*, v., Denham, 674.

prince, and France was the model of the English court. Her literature and manners, the finest of the classic age, led the fashion. We perceive in English writings that French authors are their masters, and that they were in the hands of all well-educated people. They consulted Bossuet, translated Corneille, imitated Molière, respected Boileau. It went so far, that the greatest gallants of them tried to be altogether French, to mix some scraps of French in every phrase. "It is as ill-breeding now to speak good English," says Wycherley, "as to write good English, good sense, or a good hand." These Frenchified coxcombs\* affect delicacy, they are fastidious; they find the English coarse, gloomy, stiff; they try to be giddy and thoughtless, placing the glory of man in the perfection of his wig and his bows. The theatre, which ridicules these imitators, is an imitator after their fashion. French comedy, like French politeness, becomes their model. They copy both, altering without equaling them; for monarchical and classic France is, among all nations, the best fitted from its instincts and institutions for the modes of worldly life, and the works of an oratorical mind. England follows it in this course, being carried away by the universal current of the age, but at a distance, and drawn aside by its national peculiarities. It is this common direction and this particular deviation which the society and its poetry have proclaimed, and which the stage and its characters will display.

Four principal writers established this comedy—Wycherley, Congreve, Vanbrugh, Farquhar: † the first gross, and in the first irruption of vice; the others more sedate, possessing more a taste for urbanity than debauchery; yet all men of the world, and priding themselves on their good breeding, on passing their days at court or in fine company, on having the tastes and bearing of gentlemen. "I am not a literary man," said Congreve to Voltaire, "I am a gentleman." I have said that Wycherley, under Charles II., was one of the most fashionable courtiers. He served in the army for some time, as did also Vanbrugh and Farquhar. They all wrote comedies on the same worldly and classical model, made up of probable incidents such as we observe around us every day, of well-bred characters such

\* Etherege's *Sir Fopling Flutter*; Wycherley's *The Gentleman Dancing-master*, i. 2.

† From 1672 to 1726.

as we commonly meet in a drawing-room, correct and elegant conversations such as well-bred men can carry on. Congreve, Farquhar, Vanbrugh, are only men of wit, not thinkers. They slip over the surface of things, but do not penetrate. They play with their characters. They aim at success, at amusement. They sketch caricatures, they spin out in lively fashion a vain and railing conversation; they make answers clash with one another, fling forth paradoxes; their nimble fingers manipulate and juggle with the incidents in a hundred ingenious and unlooked-for ways. They have animation, they abound in gesture and repartee; the constant bustle of the stage and its lively spirit surround them with continual excitement. But the pleasure is only skin-deep; you have seen nothing of the eternal foundation and the real nature of mankind; you carry no thought away; you have passed an hour, and that is all; the amusement leaves you vacant, and serves only to fill up the evenings of coquettes and coxcombs.

The English Restoration altogether was one of those great crises which, while warping the development of a society and a literature, show the inward spirit which they modify, but which contradicts them. Society did not lack vigor, nor literature talent; men of the world were polished, writers inventive. There was a court, drawing-rooms, conversation, worldly life, a taste for letters, the example of France, peace, leisure, the influence of the sciences, politics, theology,—in short, all the happy circumstances which can elevate the intellect and civilize manners. There was the vigorous satire of Wycherley, the sparkling dialogue and fine raillery of Congreve, the frank nature and animation of Vanbrugh, the manifold inventions of Farquhar, in brief, all the resources which might nourish the comic element, and add a genuine theatre to the best constructions of human intelligence. Nothing came to a head; all was abortive. The age has left nothing but the memory of corruption; their comedy remains a repertory of viciousness; society had only a soiled elegance, literature a frigid wit. Through disgust and reaction, a revolution was at hand in literary feeling and moral habits, as well as in general beliefs and political institutions. The same repugnance and the same experience was to detach him from every aspect of his old condition. The Englishman discovered that he was not monarchical, Papistical, nor skeptical, but lib-

eral, Protestant, and devout. He came to understand that he was not a roisterer nor a worldling, but reflective and introspective. He is content only in a serious and orderly life; there he finds the natural groove and the necessary outlet of his passions and his faculties. From this time he enters upon it, and this theatre itself exhibits the token. It remakes and transforms itself. Collier threw discredit upon it; Addison condemned it. National sentiment awoke from the dream; French manners are jeered at; the prologues celebrate the defeats of Louis XIV.; the licence, elegance, religion of his court, are presented under a ridiculous or odious light. Immorality gradually diminishes; we shall soon see Steele writing a moral treatise called *The Christian Hero*. Henceforth comedy declines, and literary talent flows into another channel. Essay, romance, pamphlet, dissertation, displace the drama; and the English classical spirit, abandoning the kinds of writing which are foreign to its nature, enters upon the great works which are destined to immortalize it and give it expression.

§ 35.—Nevertheless, in this continuous decline of dramatic invention, and in the great change of literary vitality, some shoots strike out at distant intervals towards comedy; for mankind always seeks for entertainment, and the theatre is always a place of entertainment. Even when the great subjects are worn out, there is still room here and there for a happy idea. Let a wit, clever and experienced, take it in hand, he will catch up a few oddities on his way, he will introduce on the scene some vice or fault of his time; the public will come in crowds, and ask no better than to recognize itself and laugh. There was one of these successes when Gay, in the *Beggars' Opera*, brought out the rascaldom of the great world, and avenged the public on Walpole and the court; another, when Goldsmith, inventing a series of mistakes, led his hero and his audience through five acts of blunders.\* The art of constructing plays is as capable of development as the art of clockmaking. The farce-writer of to-day sees that the catastrophe of half of Molière's plays is ridiculous; nay, many of them can produce effects better than Molière; in the long run, they succeed in stripping the theatre of all awkwardness and circumlocution.

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\* *She Stoops to Conquer*.

A piquant style, and perfect machinery ; pungency in all the words, and animation in all the scenes ; a superabundance of wit, and marvels of ingenuity ; over all this, a true physical activity, and the secret pleasure of depicting and justifying oneself, of public self-glorification: here is the foundation of the *School for Scandal*, here the source of the talent and the success of Sheridan.

He was the contemporary of Beaumarchais, and resembled him in his talent and in his life. The two epochs, the two schools of drama, the two characters, correspond. Like Beaumarchais, he was a lucky adventurer, clever, amiable, and generous, reaching success through scandal. Nothing failed him ; he attained all at the first leap, without apparent effort, like a prince who need only show himself to win his place. All the most surpassing happiness, the most brilliant in art, the most exalted in worldly position, he took as his birthright. The poor unknown youth, wretched translator of an unreadable Greek sophist, who at twenty walked about Bath in a red waistcoat and a cocked hat, destitute of hope, and ever conscious of the emptiness of his pockets, had gained the heart of the most admired beauty and musician of her time, had carried her off from ten rich, elegant, titled adorers, had fought with the best-hoaxed of the ten, beaten him, had carried by storm the curiosity and attention of the public. Then, challenging glory and wealth, he placed successively on the stage the most diverse and the most applauded dramas, comedies, farce, opera, serious verse ; he bought and worked a large theatre without a farthing, inaugurated a reign of successes and pecuniary advantages, and led a life of elegance amid the enjoyments of social and domestic joys, surrounded by universal admiration and wonder. Thence, aspiring yet higher, he conquered power, entered the House of Commons, showed himself a match for the first orators, opposed Pitt, accused Warren Hastings, supported Fox, jeered at Burke ; sustained with *éclat*, disinterestedness, and constancy, a most difficult and generous part ; became one of the three or four most noted men in England, an equal of the greatest lords, the friend of a royal prince, in the end even Receiver-General of the Duchy of Cornwall, treasurer to the fleet. In every career he took the lead. As Byron said of him :

“ Whatsoever Sheridan has done or chosen to do has been, *par excellence*



always the *best* of its kind. He has written the *best* comedy (*The School for Scandal*), the best drama (in my mind far before that St. Giles lampoon *The Beggars' Opera*), the best farce (*The Critic*—it is only too good for a farce), and the best Address (*Monologue on Garrick*), and, to crown all, delivered the very best oration (the famous Begum Speech) ever conceived or heard in this country.”\*

All ordinary rules were reversed in his favor. He was forty-four years old, debts began to shower down on him ; he had supped and drunk to excess ; his cheeks were purple, his nose red. In this state he met at the Duke of Devonshire's a charming young lady with whom he fell in love. At the first sight she exclaimed, “What an ugly man, a regular monster !” He spoke to her ; she confessed that he was very ugly, but that he had a good deal of wit. He spoke again, and again, and she found him very amiable. He spoke yet again, and she loved him, and resolved at all hazard to marry him. The father, a prudent man, wishing to end the affair, gave out that his future son-in-law must provide a dowry of fifteen thousand pounds ; the fifteen thousand pounds were deposited as by magic in the hands of a banker ; the young couple set off into the country ; and Sheridan, meeting his son, a fine strapping son, ill-disposed to the marriage, persuaded him that it was the most reasonable thing a father could do, and the most fortunate event that a son could rejoice over. Whatever the business, whoever the man, he persuaded ; none withstood him, every one fell under his charm. What is more difficult than for an ugly man to make a young girl forget his ugliness ?

There is one thing more difficult, and that is to make a creditor forget you owe him money. There is something more difficult still, and that is, to borrow money of a creditor who has come to demand it. One day one of his friends was arrested for debt ; Sheridan sends for Mr. Henderson, the crabbed tradesman, coaxes him, interests him, moves him to tears, lifts him out of himself, hedges him in with general considerations and lofty eloquence, so that Mr. Henderson offers his purse, actually wants to lend two hundred pounds, insists, and finally, to his great joy, obtains permission to lend it. No one was ever more amiable, quicker to win confidence than Sheridan ; rarely has the sympathetic, affectionate, and fascina-

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\* *The Works of Lord Byron*, 18 vols., ed. Moore, 1832, ii. p. 303.

ting character been more fully displayed ; he was literally seductive. In the morning, creditors and visitors filled the rooms in which he lived ; he came in smiling, with an easy manner, with so much loftiness and grace, that the people forgot their wants and their claims, and looked as if they had only come to see him. His animation was irresistible ; no one had a more dazzling wit ; he had an inexhaustible fund of puns, contrivances, sallies, novel ideas. Lord Byron, who was a good judge, said that he had never heard nor conceived of a more extraordinary conversation. Men spent nights in listening to him ; no one equalled him during a supper ; even when drunk he retained his wit. One day he was picked up by the watch, and they asked him his name ; he gravely answered, " Wilberforce." Against such a necessity for launching out in unconsidered speech, of indulgence, of self-outpouring, a man had need be well on his guard ; life cannot be passed like a holiday. If you sup too often, you will end by not having wherewithal to dine upon ; when your pockets have holes in them, the shillings will fall out ; nothing is more of a truism, but it is true. Sheridan's debts accumulated, his digestion failed. He lost his seat in Parliament, his theatre was burned ; sheriff's officer succeeded sheriff's officer, and they had long been in possession of his house. At last, a bailiff arrested the dying man in his bed, and was for taking him off in his blankets ; nor would he let him go until threatened with a lawsuit, the doctor having declared that the sick man would die on the road. A certain newspaper cried shame on the great lords who suffered such a man to end so miserably ; they hastened to leave their cards at his door. In the funeral procession two brothers of the king, dukes, earls, bishops, the first men in England, carried or followed the body. A singular contrast, picturing in abstract all his talent, and all his life : lords at his funeral, and bailiffs at his death-bed.

His theatre was in accordance ; all was brilliant, but the metal was not all his own, nor was it of the best quality. His comedies were comedies of society, the most amusing ever written, but merely comedies of society. Imagine the exaggerated caricatures artists are wont to improvise, in a drawing-room where they are intimate, about eleven o'clock in the evening. His first play, *The Rivals*, and afterwards his *Duenna*, and *The Critic*, are loaded with these, and scarce anything else. There

is Mrs. Malaprop, a silly pretentious woman, who uses grand words higgledy-piggledy, delighted with herself, in "a nice derangement of epithets" before her nouns, and declaring that her niece is "as headstrong as an allegory on the banks of the Nile." There is Mr. Acres, who suddenly becomes a hero, gets engaged in a duel, and being led on the ground, calculates the effect of the balls, thinks of his will, burial, embalmment, and wishes he were at home. There is another in the person of a clumsy and cowardly servant, of an irascible and brawling father, of a sentimental and romantic young lady, of a touchy Irish duellist. All this jogs and jostles on, without much order, amid the surprises of a twofold plot, by aid of expedients and rencontres, without the full and regular government of a dominating idea. But in vain one perceives it is a patchwork; the high spirit carries off everything: we laugh heartily; every single scene has its facetious and rapid movement; we forget that the clumsy valet makes remarks as witty as Sheridan himself,\* and that the irascible gentleman speaks as well as the most elegant of writers.† The playwright is also a man of letters; if, through mere animal and social spirit, he wished to amuse others and to amuse himself, he does not forget the interests of his talent and the care for his reputation. He has taste, he appreciates the refinements of style, the worth of a new image, of a striking contrast, of a witty and well-considered insinuation. He has, above all, wit, a wonderful conversational wit, the art of rousing and sustaining the attention, of being sharp, varied, of taking his hearers unawares, of throwing in a repartee, of setting folly in relief, of accumulating one after another witticisms and happy phrases. He brought himself to perfection subsequently to his first play, having acquired theatrical experience, writing and

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\* Acres. Odds blades! David, no gentleman will ever risk the loss of his honor!

David. I say, then, it would be but civil in honor never to risk the loss of a gentleman.—Look ye, master, this honor seems to me to be a marvellous false friend; ay, truly, a very courtier-like servant.—*The Dramatic Works of Richard Brinsley Sheridan*, 1828: *The Rivals*, iv. 1.

† *Sir Anthony*.—Nay, but Jack, such eyes! so innocently wild! so bashfully irresolute! Not a glance but speaks and kindles some thought of love! Then, Jack, her cheeks! so deeply blushing at the insinuations of her tell-tale eyes! Then, Jack, her lips! O Jack, lips, smiling at their own discretion! and if not smiling, more sweetly pouting, more lovely in sullenness!—*The Rivals*, iii. 1.

erasing ; trying various scenes, recasting, arranging ; his desire was that nothing should arrest the interest, no improbability shock the spectator ; that his comedy might glide on with the precision, certainty, uniformity of a good machine. He invents jests, replaces them by better ones ; he whets his jokes, binds them up like a sheaf of arrows, and writes at the bottom of the last page, "Finished, thank God. Amen." He is right, for the work costs him some pains ; he will not write a second. This kind of writing, artificial and condensed as the satires of La Bruyère, is like a cut phial, into which the author has distilled without reservation all his reflections, his reading, his understanding.

What is there in this celebrated *School for Scandal* ? And what is there, that has cast upon English comedy, which day by day was being more and more forgotten, the radiance of a last success ? Sheridan took two characters from Fielding—Blifil and Tom Jones ; two plays of Molière—*Le Misanthrope* and *Tartuffe* ; and from these puissant materials, condensed with admirable cleverness, he has constructed the most brilliant fire-work imaginable. Molière represents the malice of the world without exaggeration ; but here they are rather caricatured than depicted. "Ladies, your servant," says Sir Peter ; "mercy upon me ! the whole set—a character dead at every sentence."\* In fact they are ferocious : it is a regular quarry ; they even befoul one another, to deepen the outrage. Their animosity is so bitter that they descend to the part of buffoons. The most elegant person in the room, Lady Teazle, shows her teeth to ape a ridiculous lady, draws her mouth on one side, and makes faces. There is no pause, no softening ; sarcasms fly like pistol-shots. The author had laid in a stock, he had to use them up. It is he speaking through the mouth of each of his characters, he gives them all the same wit, that is his own, his irony, his harshness, his picturesque vigor ; whatever they are, clowns, fops, old women, girls, no matter, the author's main business is to break out into twenty explosions in a minute :

"Mrs. Candour. Well, I will never join in the ridicule of a friend ; so I tell my cousin Ogle, and ye all know what pretensions she has to beauty.

Crab. She has the oddest countenance—a collection of features from all the corners of the globe.

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\* *The School for Scandal*, ii. 2.

*Sir Benjamin.* She has, indeed, an Irish front.

*Crab.* Caledonian locks.

*Sir B.* Dutch nose.

*Crab.* Austrian lips.

*Sir B.* The complexion of a Spaniard.

*Crab.* And teeth *à la Chinoise*.

*Sir B.* In short, her face resembles a *table d'hôte* at Spa, where no two guests are of a nation.

*Crab.* Or a congress at the close of a general war, where every member seems to have a different interest, and the nose and chin are the only parties likely to join issue.\*

Or again :

"*Sir B.* Mr. Surface, I did not mean to hurt you, but depend on't your brother is utterly undone.

*Crab.* Oh ! undone as ever man was—can't raise a guinea.

*Sir B.* Everything is sold, I am told, that was moveable.

*Crab.* Not a moveable left, except some old bottles and some pictures and they seem to be framed in the wainscot, egad.

*Sir B.* I am sorry to hear also some bad stories of him.

*Crab.* Oh ! he has done many mean things, that's certain.

*Sir B.* But, however, he's your brother.

*Crab.* Ay ! as he is your brother—we'll tell you more another opportunity."†

In this manner has he pointed, multiplied, thrust to the quick, the measured epigrams of Molière. And yet is it possible to grow weary of such a well-sustained discharge of malice and witticisms ?

Observe also the change which the hypocrite undergoes under his treatment. Doubtless all the grandeur disappears from the part. Joseph Surface does not uphold, like Tartufe, the interest of the comedy ; he does not possess, like his ancestor, the nature of a cabman, the boldness of a man of action, the manners of a beadle, the neck and shoulders of a monk. He is merely selfish and cautious ; if he is engaged in an intrigue, it is rather against his will ; he is only half-hearted in the matter, like a correct young man, well dressed, with a fair income, timorous and fastidious by nature, discreet in manners, and without violent passions. There is nothing on which to construct a drama in this commonplace person ; and the fine situations which Sheridan takes from Molière lose half their force through

\* *The School for Scandal.* ii. 2.

† *Ibid.*

depending on such pitiful support. But how this insufficiency is covered by the quickness, abundance, naturalness of the incidents! how skill makes up for everything! how it seems capable of supplying everything, even genius! how the spectator laughs to see Joseph caught in his sanctuary like a fox in his hole; obliged to hide the wife, then to conceal the husband; forced to run from one to the other; busy in hiding the one behind his screen, and the other in his closet; reduced in casting himself into his own snares, in justifying those whom he wishes to ruin, the husband in the eyes of the wife, the nephew in the eyes of the uncle; to ruin the only man whom he wished to justify, namely the precious and immaculate Joseph Surface; to turn out in the end ridiculous, odious, baffled, confounded, in spite of his adroitness, even by reason of his adroitness, step by step, without quarter or remedy; to sneak off, poor fox, with his tail between his legs, his skin spoiled, amid hootings and laughter! And how, at the same time, side by side with this, the naggings of Sir Peter and his wife, the suppers, songs, the picture sale at the spendthrift's house, weave a comedy in a comedy, and renew the interest by renewing the attention! We cease to think of the meagreness of the characters, as we cease to think of the variation from truth; we are willingly carried away by the vivacity of the action, dazzled by the brilliancy of the dialogue; we are charmed, applaud; admit that, after all, next to great inventive faculty, animation and wit are the most agreeable gifts in the world: we appreciate them in their season, and find that they also have their place in the literary banquet; and that if they are not worth as much as the substantial joints, the natural and generous wines of the first course, at least they furnish the dessert.

The dessert over, we must leave the table. After Sheridan, we leave it forthwith. Henceforth comedy languishes, fails; there is nothing left but farce, such as Townley's *High Life Below Stairs*, the burlesques of George Colman, a tutor, an old maid, countrymen and their dialect; caricature succeeds painting; Punch raises a laugh when the days of Reynolds and Gainsborough are over. There is nowhere in Europe, at the present time, a more barren stage; good company abandons it to the people. The form of society, and the spirit which had called it into being, have disappeared. Vivacity, and the sub-

ject of original conceptions, had peopled the stage of the Renaissance in England,—a surfeit which, unable to display itself in systematic argument, or to express itself in philosophical ideas, found its natural outlet only in mimic action and talking characters. The wants of polished society had nourished the English comedy of the seventeenth century,—a society which, accustomed to the representations of the court and the displays of the world, sought on the stage the copy of its intercourse and its drawing-rooms. With the decadence of the court and the check of mimic invention, the genuine drama and the genuine comedy disappeared; they passed from the stage into books. The reason of it is, that people no longer live in public, like the embroidered dukes of Louis XIV. and Charles II., but in their family, or at the study table; the novel replaces the theatre at the same time as citizen life replaces the life of the court.

## CHAPTER XI.

DRYDEN.

§ 36.—COMEDY has led us a long way ; we must return and consider other kind of writings. A higher spirit moves amidst the great current. In the history of this talent we shall find the history of the English classical spirit, its structure, its gaps and its powers, its formation and its development.

The subject is a young man, Lord Hastings, who died of smallpox at the age of nineteen :

“ His body was an orb, his sublime soul  
Did move on virtue’s and on learning’s pole ;  
. . . Come, learned Ptolemy, and trial make  
If thou this hero’s altitude canst take.

. . . Blisters with pride swell’d, which through ’s flesh did sprout  
Like rose-buds, stuck i’ the lily skin about.  
Each little pimple had a tear in it,  
To wail the fault its rising did commit. . . .

Or were these gems sent to adorn his skin,  
The cabinet of a richer soul within ?  
No comet need foretel his change drew on  
Whose corpse might seem a constellation.” \*

With such a fine specimen, Dryden, the greatest poet of the classical age, made his appearance.

Such enormities indicate the close of a literary age. Excess of folly in poetry, like excess of injustice in political matters, lead up to and foretell revolutions. The Renaissance, unchecked and original, abandoned the minds of men to the fire and caprices of imagination, the oddities, curiosities, outbreaks of an inspiration which cares only to content itself,

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\* Dryden’s *Works*, ed. Sir Walter Scott, 2d ed., 18 vols., 1821, xi. 94.



breaks out into singularities, has need of novelties, and loves audacity and extravagance, as reason loves justice and truth. After the extinction of genius folly remained; after the removal of inspiration nothing was left but absurdity. Formerly the internal disorder and dash produced and excused *concelli* and wild flights; thenceforth men threw them out in cold blood, by calculation and without excuse. Formerly they expressed the state of the mind, now they belie it. So are literary revolutions accomplished. The form, no longer original or spontaneous, but imitated and passed from hand to hand, outlives the old spirit which had created it, and is in opposition to the new spirit which destroys it. This preliminary strife and progressive transformation make up the life of Dryden, and account for his impotence and his falls, his talent and his success.

Dryden's beginnings are in striking contrast with those of the poets of the Renaissance, actors, vagabonds, soldiers, who were tossed about from the first in all the contrasts and miseries of active life. He was born in 1631, of a good family; his grandfather and uncle were baronets; Sir Gilbert Pickering, his relative, was a knight, member of Parliament, one of Cromwell's council of twenty-one, one of the great office-holders of the new court. Dryden was brought up in an excellent school, under Dr. Busby, then in high repute; after which he passed four years at Cambridge. Having inherited by his father's death a small estate, he used his liberty and fortune only to maintain him in his studious life, and continued in seclusion at the University for three years more. Here you see the regular habits of an honorable and well-to-do family, the discipline of a connected and solid education, the taste for classical and exact studies. Such circumstances announce and prepare, not an artist, but a man of letters.

I find the same inclination and the same signs in the remainder of his life, private or public. He regularly spends his mornings in writing or reading, then dines with his family. His reading was that of a man of culture and a critical mind, who does not think of amusing or exciting himself, but who learns and judges. Virgil, Ovid, Horace, Juvenal, and Persius were his favorite authors; he translated several; their names were always on his pen; he discusses their opinions and their merits, feeding himself on this reasoning which oratorical customs had

imprinted on all the works of the Roman mind. He is familiar with the new French literature, the heir of the Latin, with Corneille and Racine, Boileau, Rapin and Bossu;\* he reasons with them, often in their spirit, writes reflectively, seldom fails to arrange some good theory to justify each of his new works. He knew very well the literature of his own country, though sometimes not very accurately, gave to authors their due rank, classified the different kinds of writing, went back as far as old Chaucer, whom he transcribed and put into a modern dress. His mind thus filled, he would go in the afternoon to Will's coffeehouse, the great literary rendezvous; young poets, students fresh from the University, literary diletanti crowded round his chair, carefully placed in summer near the balcony, in winter by the fireside, thinking themselves fortunate to get in a word, or a pinch of snuff respectfully extracted from his learned snuff-box. For indeed he was the monarch of taste and the umpire of letters; he criticised novelties—Racine's last tragedy, Blackmore's heavy epic, Swift's first poems; slightly vain, praising his own writings, to the extent of saying that "no one had ever composed or will ever compose a finer ode" than his on Alexander's Feast; but gossip, fond of that interchange of ideas which discussion never fails to produce, capable of enduring contradiction, and admitting his adversary to be in the right. These manners show that literature had become a matter of study rather than of inspiration, an employment for the taste rather than for the enthusiasm, a source of distraction rather than of emotion.

His audience, his friendships, his actions, his strifes, had the same tendency. He lived amongst great men and courtiers, in a society of artificial manners and measured language. He had married the daughter of Thomas Earl of Berkshire; he was historiographer, then poet-laureate. He often saw the king and the princes. He dedicated each of his works to some lord, in a laudatory, flunkeyish preface, bearing witness to his intimate acquaintance with the great. He received a purse of gold for each dedication, went to return thanks: introduces

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\* Rapin (1621-1687), a French Jesuit, a modern Latin poet and literary critic. Bossu, or properly Lebossu (1631-1680), wrote a *Traité du Poème épique*, which had a great success in its day. Both critics are now completely forgotten.—TR.

some of these lords under pseudonyms in his *Essay on the Dramatic Art*; wrote introductions for the works of others, called them Mæcenas, Tibullus, or Pollio; discussed with them literary works and opinions. The re-establishment of the court had brought back the art of conversation, vanity, the necessity for appearing to be a man of letters and of possessing good taste, all the company-manners which are the source of classical literature, and which teach men the art of speaking well.\* On the other hand, literature, brought under the influence of society, entered into society's interests, and first of all in petty private quarrels. Whilst men of letters learned etiquette, courtiers learned how to write. They soon became jumbled together, and naturally fell to blows. The Duke of Buckingham wrote a parody on Dryden, *The Rehearsal*, and took infinite pains to teach the chief actor Dryden's tone and gestures. Later, Rochester took up the cudgels against the poet, supported Settle against him, and hired a band of ruffians to beat him. Besides this, Dryden had quarrels with Shadwell and a crowd of others, and finally with Blackmore and Jeremy Collier. To crown all, he entered into the strife of political parties and religious sects, fought for the Tories and Anglicans, then for the Roman Catholics; wrote *The Medal*, *Absalom and Achitophel*, against the Whigs; *Religio Laici* against Dissenters and Papists; then *The Hind and Panther* for James II., with the logic of controversy and the bitterness of party. It is a long way from this combative and argumentative existence to the reveries and seclusion of the true poet. Such circumstances teach the art of writing clearly and soundly, methodical and connected discussion, strong and exact style, banter and refutation, eloquence and satire: these gifts are necessary to make a man of letters heard or believed, and the mind enters compulsorily upon a track when it is the only one that can conduct it to its goal. Dryden entered upon it spontaneously. In his second production,† the abundance of well-ordered ideas, the oratorical energy and harmony, the

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\* In his *Defence of the Epilogue of the Second Part of the Conquest of Granada*, iv. 226, Dryden says: "Now, if they ask me, whence it is that our conversation is so much refined? I must freely, and without flattery, ascribe it to the court."

† *Heroic stanzas to the memory of Oliver Cromwell.*

simplicity, the gravity, the heroic and Roman spirit, announce a classic genius, the relative not of Shakspeare, but of Corneille, capable not of dramas, but of discussions.

And yet, at first, he devoted himself to the drama: he wrote twenty-seven pieces, and signed an agreement with the actors of the King's Theatre to supply them with three every year. The theatre, forbidden under the Commonwealth, had just reopened with extraordinary magnificence and success. The rich scenes made moveable, the women's parts no longer played by boys, but by women, the novel and splendid wax-lights, the machinery, the recent popularity of actors who had become heroes of fashion, the scandalous importance of the actresses, who were mistresses of the aristocracy and of the king, the example of the court and the imitation of France, drew spectators in crowds. The thirst for pleasure, long repressed, knew no bounds. Men indemnified themselves for the long abstinence imposed by fanatical Puritans. They wished to enjoy life, and that in a new fashion; for a new world, that of the courtiers and the idle, had been formed. The abolition of Feudal tenures, the vast increase of commerce and wealth, the concourse of landed proprietors, who let their lands and came to London to enjoy the pleasures of the town and to court the favors of the king, had installed on the summit of society, in England as in France, rank, authority, the manners and tastes of the world of fashion, of the idle, the drawing-room frequenters, lovers of pleasure, conversation, wit, and breeding, occupied with the piece in vogue, less to amuse themselves than to criticise it. Thus was Dryden's drama built up; the poet, greedy of glory and pressed for money, found here both money and glory, and was half an innovator, with a large reinforcement of theories and prefaces, diverging from the old English drama, approaching the new French tragedy, attempting a compromise between classical eloquence and romantic truth, accommodating himself as well as he could to the new public, which paid and applauded him.

There is a vigor and art in Dryden's tragedy, *All for Love*. "He has informed us, that this was the only play written to please himself."\* And he has really composed it learnedly,

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\* See the introductory notice, by Sir Walter Scott, of *All for Love*, v. 290.

according to history and logic. And what is better still, he wrote it in a manly style. In the preface he says:—

“The fabric of the play is regular enough, as to the inferior parts of it; and the unities of time, place, and action, more exactly observed, than perhaps the English theatre requires. Particularly, the action is so much one, that it is the only of the kind without episode, or underplot; every scene in the tragedy conducing to the main design, and every act concluding with a turn of it.”

He did more; he abandoned the French ornaments, and returned to national tradition:—

“In my style I have professed to imitate the divine Shakspeare; which that I might perform more freely, I have disincumbered myself from rhyme. . . . Yet, I hope, I may affirm, and without vanity, that, by imitating him, I have excelled myself throughout the play; and particularly, that I prefer the scene betwixt Antony and Ventidius in the first act, to anything which I have written in this kind.”

Dryden was right. Ventidius, the old general, who comes to rescue Antony from his illusion and servitude, is worthy to speak in behalf of honor. Doubtless he was a plebeian, a rude and plain-speaking soldier, with the frankness and jests of his profession, sometimes clumsy, who, out of simplicity of soul, from the coarseness of his training, unsuspectingly brings Antony back to the meshes, which he seemed to be breaking through. Falling into a trap, he tells Antony that he has seen Cleopatra with Dolabella:—

*Antony.* My Cleopatra?

*Ventidius.* Your Cleopatra.

Dolabella's Cleopatra.

Every man's Cleopatra.

*Antony.* Thóu liest.

*Ventidius.* I do not lie my lord.

Is this so strange? Should mistresses be left,  
And not provide against a time of change? ”\*

It was just the way to make Antony jealous, and bring him back furious to Cleopatra. But what a noble heart has this Ventidius, and how we catch, when he is alone with Antony, the man's voice, the deep tones which had been heard on the battle-field! He loves his general like a good dog, and asks no better than to die, so it be at his master's feet. He growls

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\* *All for Love*, 4. 1.

ominously on seeing him cast down, crouches round him, and suddenly weeps :—

“*Ventidius*. Look, emperor, this is no common dew.

I have not wept these forty years ; but now  
My mother comes afresh into my eyes,  
I cannot help her softness.

*Antony*. By Heaven, he weeps ! poor, good old man, he weeps !  
The big round drops course one another down  
The furrows of his cheeks.—Stop them, *Ventidius*,  
Or I shall blush to death ; they set my shame,  
That caused them, full before me,

*Ventidius*. I’ll do my best.

*Antony*. Sure there’s contagion in the tears of friends :  
See, I have caught it too. Believe me, ’tis not  
For my own griefs, but thine. Nay, father.\*

As we hear these terrible sobs, we think of Tacitus’ veterans, who, escaping from the marshes of Germany, with scarred breasts, white heads, limbs stiff with service, kissed the hands of Drusus, carried his fingers to their gums, that he might feel their worn and loosened teeth, incapable to bite the wretched bread which was given to them :

“No ; ’tis you dream ; you sleep away your hours  
In desperate sloth, miscalled philosophy.

Up, up, for honor’s sake ; twelve legions wait you,  
And long to call you chief : By painful journies,  
I led them, patient both of heat and hunger,  
Down from the Parthian marshes to the Nile.

’Twill do you good to see their sun-burnt faces,  
Their scarr’d cheeks, and chopt hands ; there’s virtue in them.  
They’ll sell those mangled limbs at dearer rates  
Than yon trim bands can buy.” †

And when all is lost, when the Egyptians have turned traitors, and there is nothing left but to die well, *Ventidius* says :—

“There yet remain

Three legions in the town. The last assault  
Lopt off the rest ; if death be your design,—  
As I must wish it now,—these are sufficient  
To make a heap about us of dead foes,  
An honest pile for burial. . . . Chuse your death ;  
For, I have seen him in such various shapes,  
I care not which I take ; I’m only troubled.

\* *Ibid.* i. i.

† *Ibid.*

The life I bear is worn to such a rag,  
 'Tis scarce worth giving. I could wish, indeed,  
 We threw it from us with a better grace ;  
 That, like two lions taken in the toils,  
 We might at least thrust out our paws, and wound  
 The hunters that enclose us." \*

Antony begs him to go, but he refuses :—

*Antony.* Do not deny me twice.

*Ventidius.* By Heaven I will not.

Let it not be to outlive you.

*Antony.* Kill me first.

And then die thou ; for 'tis but just thou serve  
 Thy friend, before thyself.

*Ventidius.* Give me your hand.

We soon shall meet again. Now, farewell, emperor !

. . . I will not make a business of a trifle :

And yet I cannot look on you, and kill you.

Pray, turn your face.

*Antony.* I do : strike home, be sure.

*Ventidius.* Home, as my sword will reach." †

And with one blow he kills himself. These are the tragic, stoical manners of a military monarchy, the great profusion of murders and sacrifices wherewith the men of this overturned and shattered society killed and died. This Antony, for whom so much has been done, is not undeserving of their love ; he has been one of Cæsar's heroes, the first soldier of the van ; kindness and generosity breathe from him to the last ; if he is weak against a woman, he is strong against men ; he has the muscles and heart, the wrath and passions of a soldier ; it is this heat of blood, this too quick sentiment of honor, which has caused his ruin ; he cannot forgive his own crime ; he possesses not that lofty genius which, dwelling in a region superior to ordinary rules, emancipates a man from hesitation, from discouragement and remorse ; he is only a soldier, he cannot forget that he has not executed the orders given to him :

*Ventidius.* Emperor !

*Antony.* Emperor ? Why, that's the style of victory ;  
 The conquering soldier, red with unfelt wounds,  
 Salutes his general so ; but never more  
 Shall that sound reach my ears.

\* *All for Love*, 5. 1.

† *Ibid.*

*Ventidius.* I warrant you.

*Antony.* Actium, Actium! Oh——

*Ventidius.* It sits too near you.

*Antony.* Here, here it lies; a lump of lead by day;  
And in my short, distracted, nightly slumbers,  
The hag that rides my dreams. . . .

*Ventidius.* That's my royal master;  
And shall we fight?

*Antony.* I warrant thee, old soldier.  
Thou shalt behold me once again in iron;  
And at the head of our old troops, that beat  
The Parthians, cry aloud, "Come, follow me."\*†

He fancies himself on the battle-field, and already passion carries him away. Such a man is not one to govern men; we cannot master fortune until we have mastered ourselves; this man is only made to belie and destroy himself, and to be veered round alternately by every passion. As soon as he believes Cleopatra faithful, honor, reputation, empires, everything vanishes;

"*Ventidius.* And what's this toy,  
In balance with your fortune, honor, fame?"

*Antony.* What is't, Ventidius? it outweighs them all.  
Why, we have more than conquer'd Cæsar now.  
My queen's not only innocent, but loves me. . . .  
Down on thy knees, blasphemous as thou art,  
And ask forgiveness of wrong'd innocence!

*Ventidius.* I'll rather die than take it. Will you go?

*Antony.* Go! Whither? Go from all that's excellent!  
. . . Give, you gods,  
Give to your boy, your Cæsar,  
This rattle of a globe to play withal,  
This gewgaw world; and put him cheaply off:  
I'll not be pleased with less than Cleopatra."†

Dejection follows excess; these souls are only tempered against fear; their courage is but that of the bull and the lion; to be fully themselves, they need bodily action, visible danger; their temperament sustains them; before great moral sufferings they give way. When Antony thinks himself deceived, he despairs, and has nothing left but to die:

"Let him (Cæsar) walk  
Alone upon't. I'm weary of my part.

\* *All for Love*, I. 1.

† *Ibid.* 2. 1, *end.*



My torch is out ; and the world stands before me,  
 Like a black desert at the approach of night ;  
 I'll lay me down, and stray no farther on."\*

Such verses remind us of Othello's gloomy dreams, of Macbeth, of Hamlet's even ; beyond the pile of swelling tirades and characters of painted cardboard, it is as though the poet had touched the ancient drama, and brought its emotion away with him.

By his side another also has felt it, a young man, a poor adventurer, by turns a student, actor, officer, always wild and always poor, who lived madly and sadly in excess and misery, like the old dramatists, with their inspiration, their fire, and who died at the age of thirty-four, according to some, of a fever caused by fatigue, according to others, of a prolonged fast, at the end of which he swallowed too quickly a morsel of bread bestowed on him in charity. Through the pompous cloak of the new rhetoric, Thomas Otway now and then reached the passions of the other age. It is plain that the times he lived in marred him ; that the oratorical style, the literary phrases, the classical declamation, the well-poised anitheses, buzzed about him, and drowned his note in their sustained and monotonous hum. Had he but been born a hundred years earlier ! In his *Orphan* and *Venice Preserved* we encounter the sombre imaginations of Webster, Ford, and Shakspeare, their gloomy idea of life, their atrocities, murders, pictures of irresistible passions, which riot blindly like a herd of savage beasts, and make a chaos of the battlefield, with their yells and tumult, leaving behind them but devastation and heaps of dead. Like Shakspeare, his events are human transports and furies ; like Shakspeare, he has found poignant and living words, which lay bare the depths of humanity, the strange noise of a machine which is getting out of order, the tension of the will stretched to breaking-point, the simplicity of real sacrifice, the humility of exasperated and craving passion, which longs to the end and against all hope for its fuel and its gratification. Like Shakspeare, he has conceived genuine women,—Monimia, above all Belvidera, who, like Imogen, has given herself wholly, and is lost as in an abyss of adoration for him whom she has

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\* *All for Love*, 5. 1.

chosen, who can but love, obey, weep, suffer, and who dies like a flower plucked from the stalk, when her arms are torn from the neck around which she has locked them. Like Shakspeare again, he has found, at least once, the large bitter buffoonery, the crude sentiment of human baseness ; and he has introduced into his most painful tragedy, an obscene caricature, an old Senator, who unbends from his official gravity in order to play at his mistress' house the clown or the valet.

These, however, are but gleams : for the most part Otway is a poet of his time, dull and forced in color ; buried, like the rest, in the heavy, grey, clouded atmosphere, half English, half French, in which the bright lights brought over from France, are snuffed out by the insular fogs. He is a man of his time ; like the rest, he writes obscene comedies, *The Soldier's Fortune*, *The Atheist*, *Friendship in Fashion*. He depicts coarse and vicious cavaliers, rogues on principle, as harsh and corrupt as those of Wycherley. Truly this society sickens us. They thought to cover all their filth with fine correct metaphors, neatly ended poetical periods, a garment of harmonious phrases and noble expressions. They thought to equal Racine by counterfeiting his style. They did not know that in this style visible elegance conceals an admirable justness ; that if it is a masterpiece of art, it is also a picture of manners ; that it paints a civilization, as Shakspeare's does ; and not, it is true, wild and entire, as in Shakspeare, but pared down and refined by courtly life ; that this is a spectacle as unique as the other ; that nature perfectly polished is as complex and as difficult to understand as nature perfectly intact ; that as for them, they were as far below the one as above the other.

Lct us then leave this drama in the obscurity which it deserves, and seek elsewhere, in studied writings, for a happier employment of a fuller talent.

This is the true domain of Dryden and of classical reason ; pamphlets and dissertations in verse, letters, satires, translations and imitations, this is the field on which logical faculties and the art of writing find their best occupation.

Dryden was an excellent reasoner, accustomed to discriminate his ideas, armed with good long-meditated proofs, strong in discussion, asserting principles, establishing his sub-divisions, citing authorities, drawing inferences ; so that if we read

his prefaces without reading his dramas, we might take him for one of the masters of the dramatic art. He naturally attains a definite prose style; his ideas are unfolded with breadth and clearness; his style is well moulded, exact and simple, free from the affectations and ornaments with which Pope afterwards burdened his own; his expression is, like that of Corneille, ample and periodic, by virtue simply of the internal argumentativeness which unfolds and sustains it. We can see that he thinks, and that on his own behalf; that he combines and verifies his thoughts; that beyond all this, he naturally has a just perception, and that with his method he has good sense. He has the tastes and the weaknesses which suit his cast of intellect. He holds in the highest estimation "the admirable Boileau, whose numbers are excellent, whose expressions are noble, whose thoughts are just, whose language is pure, whose satire is pointed, and whose sense is close: What he borrows from the ancients, he repays with usury of his own, in coin as good, and almost as universally valuable."\* He has the stiffness of the logician poets, too strict and argumentative, blaming Ariosto, "who neither designed justly, nor observed any unity of action, or compass of time, or moderation in the vastness of his draught; his style is luxurious, without majesty or decency, and his adventures without the compass of nature and possibility. He understands delicacy no better than fancy. Speaking of Horace, he finds that "his wit is faint and his salt almost insipid. Juvenal is of a more vigorous and masculine wit; he gives me as much pleasure as I can bear." For the same reason he depreciates the French style: "Their language is not strung with sinews, like our English; it has the nimbleness of a greyhound, but not the bulk and body of a mastiff. . . . They have set up purity for the standard of their language; and a masculine vigor is that of ours."† Two or three such words depict a man; Dryden has just affirmed, unwittingly, the measure and quality of his mind.

This mind, as we may imagine, is heavy, and especially in flattery. Flattery is the chief art in a monarchical age. Dryden is hardly skilful in it, any more than his contemporaries.

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\* *Essay on Satire*, dedicated to the Earl of Dorset, xiii. 84.

† Dedication of the *Æneis*, xiv. 204.

His dedications are as a rule nauseous. He says to the Duchess of Monmouth :

"To receive the blessings and prayers of mankind, you need only be seen together. We are ready to conclude, that you are a pair of angels sent below to make virtue amiable in your persons, or to sit to poets when they would pleasantly instruct the age, by drawing goodness in the most perfect and alluring shape of nature. . . . No part of Europe can afford a parallel to your noble Lord in masculine beauty and in goodliness of shape." \*

Elsewhere he says to the Duke of Monmouth :

"You have all the advantages of mind and body, and an illustrious birth, conspiring to render you an extraordinary person. The Achilles and the Rinaldo are present in you, even above their originals ; you only want a Homer or a Tasso to make you equal to them. Youth, beauty, and courage (all which you possess in the height of their perfection), are the most desirable gifts of Heaven." †

But the man of spirit was often manifest ; in spite of several falls and many slips, he shows a mind constantly upright, bending rather from conventionality than from nature, with a dash and afflatus, occupied with grave thoughts, and subjecting his conduct to his convictions. He was converted loyally and by conviction to the Roman Catholic creed, persevered in it after the fall of James II., lost his post of historiographer and poet-laureate, and though poor, burdened with a family, and infirm, refused to dedicate his *Virgil* to King William. He wrote to his sons :

"Dissembling, though lawful in some cases, is not my talent ; yet, for your sake, I will struggle with the plain openness of my nature. . . . In the meantime, I flatter not myself with any manner of hopes, but do my duty, and suffer for God's sake. . . . You know the profits (of *Virgil*) might have been more ; but neither my conscience nor my honor would suffer me to take them ; but I can never repent of my constancy, since I am thoroughly persuaded of the justice of the cause for which I suffer." ‡

One of his sons having been expelled from school, he wrote to the master, Dr. Busby, his own old teacher, with extreme gravity and nobleness, asking without humiliation, disagreeing without giving offence, in a sustained and proud style, which is calculated to please, seeking again his favor, if not as a debt

\* Dedication of *The Indian Emperor*, ii. 261.

† Dedication of *Tyrannic Love*, iii. 347.

‡ Letter 23, "to his sons at Rome," xviii. 133.

to the father, at least as a gift to the son, and concluding, "I have done something, so far to conquer my own spirit as to ask it." He was a good father to his children, as well as liberal, and sometimes even generous, to the tenant of his little estate.\* He says :—

"More libels have been written against me than almost any man now living. . . . I have seldom answered any scurrilous lampoon, . . . and, being naturally vindictive, have suffered in silence, and possessed my soul in quiet." †

Insulted by Collier as a corrupter of morals, he endured this coarse reproof, and nobly confessed the faults of his youth :—

"I shall say the less of Mr. Collier, because in many things he has taxed me justly; and I have pleaded guilty to all thoughts and expressions of mine which can be truly argued of obscenity, profaneness, or immorality, and retract them. If he be my enemy, let him triumph; if he be my friend, as I have given him no personal occasion to be otherwise, he will be glad of my repentance." ‡

There is some wit in what follows :—

"He (Collier) is too much given to horseplay in his raillery, and comes to battle like a dictator from the plough. I will not say "the zeal of God's house has eaten him up," but I am sure it has devoured some part of his good manners and civility." §

Such a repentance raises a man; to humble oneself thus, one must be a great man. He was so, in mind and in heart, full of solid arguments and individual opinions, above the petty mannerism of rhetoric and affectations of style, a master of verse, a slave to his idea, with that abundance of thoughts which is the sign of true genius :—

"Thoughts, such as they are, come crowding in so fast upon me, that my only difficulty is to chuse or to reject, to run them into verses, or to give them the other harmony of prose: I have so long studied and practised both, that they are grown into a habit, and become familiar to me." ||

With these powers he entered upon his second career; the English constitution and genius opened it to him.

"A man," says La Bruyère, "born a Frenchman and a Christian, finds himself constrained in satire; great subjects

\* Scott's *Life of Dryden*, i. 449.

† *Essay on Satire*, xiii. 80.

‡ Preface to the *Fables*, xi. 238.

§ *Ibid.* || *Ibid.* xi. 209.

are forbidden to him ; he essays them sometimes, and then turns aside to small things, which he elevates by the beauty of his genius and his style." It was not so in England. Great subjects were given up to vehement discussion ; politics and religion, like two arenas, invited to boldness and to battle, every talent and every passion. The king, at first popular, had roused opposition by his vices and errors, and bent before public discontent as before the intrigue of parties. It was known that he had sold the interests of England to France ; it was believed that he would deliver up the consciences of Protestants to the Papists. The lies of Oates, the murder of the magistrate Godfrey, his corpse solemnly paraded in the streets of London, had inflamed the imagination and prejudices of the people ; the judges, blind or intimidated, sent innocent Roman Catholics to the scaffold, and the mob received with insults and curses their protestations of innocence. The king's brother had been excluded from his offices ; it was endeavored to exclude him from the throne. The pulpit, the theatres, the press, the hustings, resounded with discussions and recriminations. The names of Whigs and Tories arose, and the deepest debates of political philosophy were carried on, nursed by sentiments of present and practical interests, embittered by the rancor of old as well as of freshly roused passions. Dryden plunged in ; and his poem of *Absalom and Achitophel* was a political pamphlet. " They who can criticise so weakly," he says in the preface, " as to imagine that I have done my worst, may be convinced at their own cost that I can write severely with more ease than I can gently." A biblical allegory, suited to the taste of the time, hardly concealed the names, and did not hide the men. He describes the tranquil old age and incontestable right of King David ;\* the charm, pliant humor, popularity of his natural son Absalom ;† the genius and treachery of Achitophel,‡ who stirs up the son

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\* Charles II.

† The Duke of Monmouth.

‡ The Earl of Shaftesbury :

" Of these the false Achitophel was first,  
A name to all succeeding ages curst :  
For close designs and crooked counsels fit,  
Sagacious, bold and turbulent of wit—  
Restless, unfixed in principles and place,  
In power unpleas'd, impatient of disgrace ;

against the father, unites the clashing ambitions, and reanimates the conquered factions. There is hardly any wit here; there is no time to be witty in such contests; think of the roused people who listened, men in prison or exile who heard him; fortune, liberty, life was at stake. The thing is to strike the nail on the head and hard, not gracefully. The public must recognize the characters, shout their names as they recognize the portraits, applaud the attacks which are made upon them, rail at them, hurl them from the high rank which they covet. Dryden passes them all in review:—

“ In the first rank of these did Zimri\* stand,  
 A man so various that he seemed to be  
 Not one, but all mankind’s epitome:  
 Stiff in opinions, always in the wrong,  
 Was everything by starts and nothing long;  
 But in the course of one revolving moon  
 Was chymist, fiddler, statesman, and buffoon;  
 Then all for women, painting, rhyming, drinking,  
 Besides ten thousand freaks that died in thinking.  
 Blest madman, who could every hour employ  
 With something new to wish or to enjoy!  
 Railing and praising were his usual themes;  
 And both, to show his judgment, in extremes;  
 So over-violent, or over-civil,  
 That every man with him was God or devil.  
 In squandering wealth was his peculiar art;  
 Nothing went unrewarded but desert.

A fiery soul, which working out its way,  
 Fretted the pigmy body to decay  
 And o’er-informed the tenement of clay.  
 A daring pilot in extremity,  
 Pleased with the danger, when the waves went high,  
 He sought the storms; but, for a calm unfit,  
 Would steer too nigh the sands to boast his wit.  
 Great wits are sure to madness near allied  
 And thin partitions do their bounds divide;  
 Else, why should he, with wealth and honor blest,  
 Refuse his age the needful hours of rest?  
 Punish a body which he could not please,  
 Bankrupt of life, yet prodigal of ease?  
 And all to leave what with his toil he won,  
 To that unfeathered two-legged thing, a son,  
 Got, while his soul did huddled notions try,  
 And born a shapeless lump, like anarchy.  
 In friendship false, implacable in hate,  
 Resolved to ruin or to rule the state.”

Beggared by fools whom still he found too late,  
 He had his jest, and they had his estate.  
 He laugh'd himself from Court ; then sought relief  
 By forming parties, but could ne'er be chief :  
 For spite of him, the weight of business fell  
 On Absalom and wise Achitophel ;  
 Thus wicked but in will, of means bereft,  
 He left not faction, but of that was left. . . .  
 Shimei,\* whose youth did early promise bring  
 Of zeal to God and hatred to his King ;  
 Did wisely from expensive sins refrain  
 And never broke the Sabbath but for gain :  
 Nor ever was he known an oath to vent,  
 Or curse, unless against the government."

Against these attacks their chief Shaftesbury made a stand : when accused of high treason he was declared guiltless by the grand jury, in spite of all the efforts of the court, amidst the applause of a vast multitude ; and his partisans caused a medal to be struck, bearing his face, and boldly showing on the reverse the Tower obscured by a cloud. Dryden replied by his poem of the *Medal*, and the violent diatribe overwhelmed the open provocation :

" Oh, could the style that copied every grace  
 And plow'd such furrows for an eunuch face,  
 Could it have formed his ever-changing will,  
 The various piece had tired the graver's skill !  
 A martial hero first, with early care,  
 Blown, like a pigmy by the winds, to war ;  
 A beardless chief, a rebel ere a man,  
 So young his hatred to his Prince began.  
 Next this, (how wildly will ambition steer !)  
 A vermin wriggling in the usurper's ear ;  
 Bartering his venal wit for sums of gold,  
 He cast himself into the saint-like mould,  
 Groaned, sighed, and prayed, while godliness was gain,  
 The loudest bag-pipe of the squeaking train."

The same bitterness envenomed religious controversy. Disputes on dogma, for a moment cast into the shade by debauched and sceptical manners, had broken out again, inflamed by the bigoted Catholicism of the prince, and by the just fears of the nation. The poet who in *Religio Laici* was still an

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\* Slingsby Bethel.



Anglican, though lukewarm and hesitating, drawn on gradually by his absolutist inclinations, had become a convert to Romanism, and in his poem of *The Hind and the Panther* fought for his new creed. "The nation," he says in the preface, "is in too high a ferment for me to expect either fair war, or even so much as fair quarter, from a reader of the opposite party." And then, making use of the mediæval allegories, he represents all the heretical sects as beasts of prey, worrying a white hind of heavenly origin; he spares neither coarse comparisons, nor gross sarcasms, nor open objurgations. The argument is close and theological throughout. His hearers were not wits, who cared to see how a dry subject could be adorned, theologians accidentally and for a moment, with mistrust and reserve, like Boileau in his *Amour de Dieu*. They were oppressed men, barely recovered from a secular persecution, attached to their faith by their sufferings, ill at ease under the visible menaces and ominous hatred of their restrained foes. Their poet must be a dialectician and a schoolman; he needs all the sternness of logic; he is immeshed in it, like a recent convert, saturated with the proofs which have separated him from the national faith, and which support him against public reprobation, fertile in distinctions, putting his finger on the weakness of an argument, subdividing replies, bringing back his adversary to the question, thorny and unpleasing to a modern reader, but the more praised and loved in his own time. In all English minds there is a basis of gravity and vehemence; hate rises tragic, with a gloomy outbreak, like the breakers in the North Sea. In the midst of his public strife Dryden attacks a private enemy, Shadwell, and overwhelms him with immortal scorn.\* A great epic style and solemn rhyme gave weight to his sarcasm, and the unlucky rhymester was drawn in a ridiculous triumph on the poetic car, whereon the muse sets the heroes and the gods. Dryden represented the Irishman Mac Flecknoe, an old king of folly, deliberating on the choice of a worthy successor, and choosing Shadwell as an heir to his gabble, a propagator of nonsense, a boastful conqueror of common sense. From all sides, through the streets littered with paper, the nations assembled to look upon the young hero, standing

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\* Mac Flecknoc.

near the throne of his father, his brow surrounded with fogs, the vacant smile of satisfied imbecility floating over his countenance :

“ The hoary prince in majesty appear’d,  
 High on a throne of his own labors rear’d.  
 At his right hand our young Ascanius sate,  
 Rome’s other hope, and pillar of the state ;  
 His brows thick fogs instead of glories grace,  
 And lambent dulness play’d around his face.  
 As Hannibal did to the altars come,  
 Sworn by his sire, a mortal foe to Rome ;  
 So Shadwell swore, nor should his vow be vain,  
 That he, till death, true dulness would maintain ;  
 And, in his father’s right and realm’s defence,  
 Ne’er to have peace with wit nor truce with sense.  
 The king himself the sacred unction made,  
 As king by office and as priest by trade.  
 In his sinister hand, instead of ball,  
 He placed a mighty mug of potent ale.”

His father blesses him :

“ ‘ Heavens bless my son ! from Ireland let him reign  
 To far Barbadoes on the western main ;  
 Of his dominion may no end be known,  
 And greater than his father’s be his throne ;  
 Beyond love’s Kingdom let him stretch his pen !’  
 He paused, and all the people cried Amen.  
 Then thus continued he : ‘ My son, advance  
 Still in new impudence, new ignorance.  
 Success let others teach, learn thou from me,  
 Pangs without birth and fruitless industry.  
 Let Virtuosos in five years be writ ;  
 Yet not one thought accuse thy toil of wit. . . .  
 Let them be all by thy own model made  
 Of dulness and desire no foreign aid,  
 That they to future ages may be known,  
 Not copies drawn, but issue of thy own :  
 Nay, let thy men of wit too be the same,  
 All full of thee and differing but in name. . . .  
 Like mine, thy gentle numbers feebly creep ;  
 Thy tragic Muse gives smiles, thy comic sleep.  
 With whate’er gall thou set’st thyself to write,  
 Thy inoffensive satires never bite ;  
 In thy felonious heart though venom lies,  
 It does but touch thy Irish pen, and dies,  
 Thy genius calls thee not to purchase fame  
 In kear Tambics but mild Anagram

Leave writing plays, and choose for thy command  
 Some peaceful province in Acrostic land.  
 There thou may'st wings display, and altars raise,  
 And torture one poor word ten thousand ways ;  
 Or, if thou wouldst thy different talents suit,  
 Set thy own songs, and sing them to thy lute.'  
 He said, but his last words were scarcely heard,  
 For Bruce and Longville had a trap prepared,  
 And down they sent the yet declaiming bard.  
 Sinking he left his drugget robe behind,  
 Borne upwards by a subterranean wind.  
 The mantle fell to the young prophet's part,  
 With double portion of his father's art."

Thus the insulting masquerade goes on, not studied and polished like Boileau's *Lutrin*, but rude and pompous, inspired by a coarse and poetical afflatus, as you may see a great ship enter the muddy Thames, with spread canvas, cleaving the waters.

In these poems, the art of writing, the mark and the source of classical literature, appeared for the first time. A new spirit was born and renewed this art, like everything else ; thenceforth, and for a century to come, ideas sprang up and fell into their place after another law than that which had hitherto shaped them. Under Spenser and Shakspeare, living words, like cries or music, betrayed the internal imagination which gave them forth. A kind of vision possessed the artist ; landscapes and events were unfolded in his mind as in nature ; he concentrated in a glance all the details and all the forces which make up a being, and this image acted and was developed within him like the external object.

Dryden, on the other hand, develops, defines, concludes ; he declares his thought, then takes it up again, that his reader may receive it prepared, and having received, may retain it. He contrasts ideas with ideas, phrases with phrases, that the reader, guided by the contrast, may not deviate from the route marked out for him. You may imagine the possible beauty of such a work. This poesy is but a stronger prose. Closer ideas, more marked contrasts, bolder images, only add weight to the argument. Metre and rhyme transform the judgments into sentences. The mind, held on the stretch by the rhythm, studies itself more, and by means of reflection arrives at a noble conclusion. The judgments are embossed in abbrevia-

tive images, or symmetrical lines, which give them the solidity and popular form of a dogma. General truths acquire the definite form which transmits them to posterity, and propagates them in the human race. Such is the merit of these poems; they please by their good expressions; and in truth they have scarcely any other literary merit. If Dryden is a skilled politician, a trained controversialist, well armed with arguments, versed in the history of men and parties, this pamphleteering aptitude, practical and English, confines him to the low region of everyday and personal combats, far from the lofty philosophy and speculative freedom which give endurance and greatness to the classical style of his French contemporaries. In this age, in England, all discussion was fundamentally narrow. Except the terrible Hobbes, they all lack grand originality. Dryden, like the rest, is confined to the arguments and insults of sect and fashion. This is why the subject matter fell below the art of writing. Dryden had no personal philosophy to develop; he does but versify themes given to him by others. In this sterility, art is soon reduced to the clothing of foreign ideas, and the writer becomes an antiquarian or a translator. In fact, the greatest part of Dryden's poems are imitations, adaptations, or copies. He translated Persius, Virgil, part of Horace, Theocritus, Juvenal, Lucretius, and Homer, and put into modern English several tales of Boccaccio and Chaucer. These translations then appeared to be as great works as original compositions. When he took the *Æneid* in hand, the nation, as Johnson tells us, appeared to think its honor interested in the issue. Addison furnished him with the arguments of every book, and an essay on the *Georgics*; others supplied him with editions and notes; great lords vied with one another in offering him hospitality; subscriptions flowed in. They said that the English Virgil was to give England the Virgil of Rome. This work was long considered his highest glory. Even so at Rome, under Cicero, in the early dearth of national poetry, the translators of Greek works were as highly praised as the original authors.

This sterility of invention alters or depresses the taste. For taste is an instinctive system, and leads us by internal maxims, which we ignore. The mind, guided by it, perceives connections, shuns discordances, enjoys or suffers, chooses or

rejects, according to general conceptions which master it, but are not visible. These removed, we see the tact, which they engendered, disappear; the writer is clumsy, because philosophy fails him. Such is the imperfection of the stories handled by Dryden, from Boccaccio and Chaucer. Dryden does not see that fairy tales or tales of chivalry only suit a poetry in its infancy; that ingenious subjects require an artless style; that the talk of Renard and Chanticleer, the adventures of Palamon and Arcite, the transformations, tournaments, apparitions, need the astonished carelessness and the graceful gossip of old Chaucer. Vigorous periods, reflective antitheses, here oppress these amiable ghosts; classical phrases embarrass them in their too stringent embrace; they are lost to our sight; to find them again, we must go to their first parent, quit the too harsh light of a learned and manly age; we cannot pursue them fairly except in their first style in the dawn of credulous thought, under the mist which plays about their vague forms, with all the blushes and smile of morning. Moreover, when Dryden comes on the scene, he crushes the delicacies of his master, hauling in tirades or reasonings, blotting out sincere and self-abandoning tenderness. What a difference between his account of Arcite's death and Chaucer's! How wretched are all his fine words, his gallantry, his symmetrical phrases, his cold regrets, compared to the cries of sorrow, the true outpouring, the deep love in Chaucer! But the worst fault is that almost everywhere he is a copyist, and retains the faults like a literal translator, with eyes glued on the work, powerless to comprehend and recast it, more a rhymester than a poet. When La Fontaine put *Æsop* or Boccaccio into verse, he breathed a new spirit into them; he took their matter only: the new soul, which constitutes the value of his work, is his, and only his; and this soul befits the work. In place of the Ciceronian periods of Boccaccio, we find slim, little lines, full of delicate raillery, dainty voluptuousness, feigned frankness, which relish the forbidden fruit because it is fruit, and because it is forbidden. The tragic departs, the relics of the middle-ages are a thousand leagues away; there remains nothing but the jeering gayety, Gallic and racy, as of a critic and an epicurean. In Dryden, incongruities abound; and our author is so little shocked by them, that he imports them elsewhere, in his theological poems,

representing the Roman Catholic Church, for instance, as a hind, and the heresies by various animals, who dispute at as great length and as learnedly as Oxford graduates.\* I like him no better in his Epistles; as a rule, they are but flatteries, almost always awkward, often mythological, interspersed with somewhat vulgar sentences. "I have studied Horace," he says,† "and hope the style of his Epistles is not ill imitated here." Do not imagine it to be true. Horace's Epistles, though in verse, are genuine letters, brisk, unequal in movement, always unstudied, natural. Nothing is further from Dryden than this original and sociable spirit, the most refined and the most nervous of epicureans, a kinsman (at eighteen centuries' distance) of Alfred de Musset and Voltaire. Like Horace, an author must be a thinker and a man of the world to write agreeable morality; and Dryden was, no more than his contemporaries, a thinker or a man of the world.

But other no less English characteristics sustain him. Suddenly, in the midst of the yawns which these Epistles excited, our eyes are arrested. A true accent, new ideas, are brought out. Dryden, writing to his cousin, a country gentleman, has lighted on an English original subject. He depicts the life of a rural squire, the referee of his neighbors, who shuns lawsuits and town doctors, who keeps himself in health by hunting and exercise. Here is his portrait:

"How bless'd is he, who leads a country life,  
Unvex'd with anxious cares, and void of strife! . . .  
With crowds attended of your ancient race,  
You seek the champaign sports, or sylvan chase;  
With well-breathed beagles you surround the wood,  
Even then industrious of the common good;  
And often have you brought the wily fox  
To suffer for the firstlings of the flocks;  
Chased even amid the folds, and made to bleed,  
Like felons, where they did the murderous deed.  
This fiery game your active youth maintained;  
Not yet by years extinguish'd though restrain'd: . . .  
A patriot both the king and country serves;  
Prerogative and privilege preserves:

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\* Though Huguenots condemn our ordination, succession, ministerial vocation, etc. (*The Hind and the Panther*, Part ii. v. 139), such are the harsh words we often find in his books.

† Preface to the *Religio Laici*.

Of each our laws the certain limit show ;  
 One must not ebb, nor t'other overflow :  
 Betwixt the prince and parliament we stand,  
 The barriers of the state on either hand ;  
 May neither overflow, for then they drown the land.  
 When both are full, they feed our bless'd abode ;  
 Like those that water'd once the paradise of God.  
 Some overpoise of sway, by turns they share ;  
 In peace the people, and the prince in war :  
 Consuls of moderate power in calms were made ;  
 When the Gauls came, one sole dictator sway'd.  
 Patriots, in peace, assert the people's right,  
 With noble stubbornness resisting might ;  
 No lawless mandates from the court receive,  
 Nor lend by force, but in a body give." \*

This serious converse shows a political mind, fed on the spectacle of affairs, having in the matter of public and practical debates the superiority which the French have in speculative discussions and social conversation. So, amidst the dryness of polemics break forth sudden splendors, a poetic fount, a prayer from the heart's depths ; the English well of concentrated passion is on a sudden opened again with a flow and a dash which Dryden does not elsewhere exhibit :

“ Dim as the borrow'd beams of moon and stars  
 To lonely, weary, wand'ring travellers,  
 Is reason to the soul : and as on high  
 Those rolling fires discover but the sky,  
 Not light us here ; so Reason's glimm'ring ray  
 Was lent, not to assure our doubtful way,  
 But guide us upward to a better day.  
 And as those nightly tapers disappear  
 When day's bright lord ascends our hemisphere,  
 So pale grows Reason at Religion's sight,  
 So dies, and so dissolves in supernatural light.” †

“ But, gracious God ! how well dost thou provide  
 For erring judgments an unerring guide !  
 Thy throne is darkness in th' abyss of light,  
 A blaze of glory that forbids the sight.  
 O teach me to believe Thee thus conceal'd,  
 And search no farther than Thy self reveal'd ;  
 But her alone for my director take,  
 Whom Thou hast promised never to forsake !

\* Epistle 15, xi. 75.

† Beginning of *Religio Laici*.

My thoughtless youth was wing'd with vain desires ;  
 My manhood, long misled by wandering fires,  
 Follow'd false lights ; and when their glimpse was gone,  
 My pride struck out new sparkles of her own.  
 Such was I, such by nature still I am ;  
 Be Thine the glory and be mine the shame !  
 Good life be now my task ; my doubts are done."\*

Such is the poetry of these serious minds. After having strayed in the debaucheries and pomps of the Restoration, Dryden found his way to grave emotions of inner life ; though a Romanist, he felt like a Protestant the wretchedness of man and the presence of grace : he was capable of enthusiasm. Here and there a manly and effective verse discloses, in the midst of his reasonings, the power of conception and the inspiration of desire. When the tragic is met with, he takes to it as to his own domain ; at need, he deals in the horrible. He has described the infernal chase, and the torture of the young girl worried by dogs, with the savage energy of Milton.† As a contrast, he loved nature : this taste always endures in England ; the sombre, reflective passions are unstrung in the wide peace and harmony of the fields. Landscapes are to be met with amidst theological disputation :

“ New blossoms flourish and new flowers arise,  
 As God had been abroad, and walking there  
 Had left his footsteps and reformed the year.  
 The sunny hills from far were seen to glow  
 With glittering beams, and in the meads below  
 The burnished brooks appeared with liquid gold to flow.  
 As last they heard the foolish Cuckoo sing,  
 Whose note proclaimed the holy-day of spring.”‡

Under his regular versification the artist's soul is brought to light ; though contracted by habits of classical argument, though stiffened by controversy and polemics, though unable to create souls or to depict artless and delicate sentiments, he is a genuine poet : he is troubled, raised by beautiful sounds and forms ; he writes boldly under the pressure of vehement ideas ; he surrounds himself willingly with splendid images ; he is moved by the buzzing of their swarms, the glitter of their

\* *The Hind and the Panther*, Part i. v. 64-75.

† *Theodore and Honoria*, xi.

‡ *The Hind and the Panther*, Part iii. v. 553-560.



splendors ; he is, when he wishes it, a musician and a painter ; he writes stirring airs, which shake all the senses, even if they do not sink deep into the heart. Such is his *Alexander's Feast*, an ode in honor of St. Cecilia's day, an admirable trumpet-blast, in which metre and sound impress upon the nerves the emotions of the mind, a masterpiece of rapture and of art. Alexander is on his throne in the Palace of Persepolis ; the lovely Thais sate by his side ; before him, in a vast hall, his glorious captains. And Timotheus sings :

“ The praise of Bacchus, then, the sweet musician sung ;  
 Of Bacchus ever fair, and ever young.  
 The jolly God in triumph comes ;  
 Sound the trumpets, beat the drums ;  
     Flush'd with a purple grace,  
     He shews his honest face.  
 Now, give the hautboys breath ; he comes, he comes.  
     Bacchus, ever fair and young,  
     Drinking joys did first ordain ;  
     Bacchus' blessings are a treasure,  
     Drinking is the soldier's pleasure ;  
         Rich the treasure,  
         Sweet the pleasure,  
     Sweet is pleasure after pain.”

And at the stirring sounds the king is troubled ; his cheeks are glowing ; his battles return to his memory ; he defies heaven and earth. Then a sad song depresses him. Timotheus mourns the death of the betrayed Darius. Then a tender song softens him ; Timotheus lauds the dazzling beauty of Thais. Suddenly he strikes the lyre again :—

“ A louder yet, and yet a louder strain.  
 Break his bands of sleep asunder,  
 And rouse him, like a rattling peal of thunder.  
     Hark, hark ! the horrid sound  
     Has raised up his head ;  
     As awaked from the dead,  
     And amazed, he stares around.  
 Revenge, revenge ! Timotheus cries,  
     See the furies arise ;  
     See the snakes that they rear,  
     How they hiss in their hair !  
 And the sparkles that flash from their eyes !  
     Behold a ghastly band,  
     Each a torch in his hand !

Those are Grecian ghosts that in battle were slain,  
 And unburied remain  
 Inglorious on the plain :  
 Give the vengeance due  
 To the valiant crew.

Behold how they toss their torches on high,  
 How they point to the Persian abodes,  
 And glittering temples of their hostile gods.—  
 The princes applaud, with a furious joy.  
 And the king seized a flambeau with zeal to destroy ;  
 Thais led the way,  
 To light him to his prey,  
 And, like another Helen, fired another Troy.”

Thus already music softened, exalted, mastered men ; Dryden's verses acquire power in describing it.

This was one of his last works ; brilliant and poetical, it was born amidst the greater sadness. The king for whom he had written was deposed and in exile ; the religion which he had embraced was despised and oppressed ; a Roman Catholic and a royalist, he was bound to a conquered party, which the nation resentfully and mistrustfully considered as the natural enemy of liberty and reason. He had lost the two places which were his support ; he lived wretchedly, burdened with a family, obliged to support his son abroad ; treated as a hireling by a coarse publisher, and persecuted with pamphlets by his enemies. He had long been in ill-health, crippled, constrained to write much, reduced to exaggerate flattery in order to earn from the great the indispensable money which the publishers would not give him :— \*

“ What Virgil wrote in the vigor of his age, in plenty and at ease, I have undertaken to translate in my declining years ; struggling with wants, oppressed with sickness, curbed in my genius, liable to be misconstrued in all I write ; and my judges, if they are not very equitable, already prejudiced against me, by the lying character which has been given them of my morals.” †

Although well meant for his own part, he knew that his conduct had not always been worthy, and that all his writings would not endure. Born between two epochs, he had oscillated between two forms of life and two forms of thought,

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\* He was paid two hundred and fifty guineas for ten thousand lines.

† Postscript of Virgil

having reached the perfection of neither, having kept the faults of both ; having found in surrounding manners no support worthy of his character, and in surrounding ideas no subject worthy of his talent. If he had founded criticism and good style, this criticism had only found scope in pedantic treatises or unconnected prefaces ; this good style continued out of the track in inflated tragedies, dispersed over multiplied translations, scattered in occasional pieces, in odes written to order, in party poems, meeting only here and there an afflatus capable of employing it, and a subject capable of sustaining it. What efforts for such a moderate result ! For a long time gravel and gout left him no peace ; erysipelas seized one of his legs. In April, 1700, he tried to go out ; “ a slight inflammation in one of his toes became, from neglect, a gangrene ;” the doctor would have tried amputation, but he decided that what remained him of health and happiness was not worth the pain. He died at the age of sixty-nine.

## CHAPTER XII.

### ADDISON.

§ 37.—IN the vast transformation of the minds which occupies the whole eighteenth century, and gives England its political and moral standing, two superior men appear in politics and morality, both accomplished writers ; both masters in the art of persuasion and conviction ; both limited in philosophy and art, incapable of considering sentiments in a disinterested fashion ; otherwise differing, and even in contrast with one another : one happy, kind, loved ; the other hated, hating and most unfortunate ; the one a partisan of liberty and the noblest hopes of man ; the other an advocate of a retrograde party, and an eager detractor of humanity : the one measured, delicate, furnishing a model of the most solid English qualities, perfected by continental culture ; the other unbridled and formidable, showing an example of the harshest English instincts, luxuriating without limit or rule in every kind of devastation and amid every degree of despair. To penetrate to the interior of this civilization and this people, there are no means better than to pause and dwell upon Swift and Addison.

§ 38.—“I have often reflected,” says Steele, “after a night spent with him (Addison), apart from all the world, that I had had the pleasure of conversing with an intimate acquaintance of Terence and Catullus, who had all their wit and nature heightened with humor, more exquisite and delightful than any other man ever possessed,” And Pope, a rival of Addison, and a bitter rival, adds : “His conversation had something in it more charming than I have found in any other man.” These sayings express the whole talent of Addison : his writings are conversations, masterpieces of English urbanity and reason ; nearly all the details of his character and life

have contributed to nourish this urbanity and this reasonableness.

At the age of seventeen we find him at Oxford, studious and peaceful, loving solitary walks under the elm avenues, and amongst the beautiful meadows on the banks of the Cherwell. From the thorny brake of school education he chose the only flower—a withered one, doubtless Latin verse—but one which, compared to the erudition, to the theology, to the logic of the time, is still a flower. He celebrates, in strophes or hexameters, the peace of Ryswick, or the system of Dr. Burnett; he composes little ingenious poems on a puppet-show, on the battle of the pigmies and cranes; he learns to praise and jest—in Latin, it is true—but with such success, that his verses recommend him for the rewards of the ministry, and even reach Boileau. At the same time he imbues himself with the Latin poets; he knows them by heart, even the most affected, Claudian and Prudentius; presently in Italy quotations will rain from his pen; from top to bottom, in all its nooks and under all its aspects, his memory is stuffed with Latin verses. We see that he loves them, scans them with delight, that a fine cæsura charms him, that every delicacy touches him, that no hue of art or emotion escapes him, that his literary tact is refined, and prepared to relish all the beauties of thought and expression. This inclination, too long retained, is a sign of a little mind, I allow; a man ought not to spend so much time in inventing cantos. Addison would have done better to enlarge his knowledge—to study Latin prose-writers, Greek literature, Christian antiquity, modern Italy, which he hardly knew. But this limited culture, leaving him weaker, made him more refined. He formed his art by studying only the monuments of Latin urbanity; he acquired a taste for the elegance and refinements, the triumphs and artifices of style; he became self-contemplative, correct, capable of knowing and perfecting his own tongue. In the designed reminiscences, the happy allusions, the discreet tone of his own little poems, I find beforehand many traits of the *Spectator*.

Leaving the university, he travelled long in the two most polished countries in the world, France and Italy. He lived at Paris, in the house of the ambassador, in the regular and brilliant society which gave fashion to Europe. Thus was the fin-

ished writer perfected by contact with ancient and modern, foreign and national urbanity, by the sight of the fine arts, by experience of the world and study of style, by continuous and delicate choice of all that is agreeable in things and men, in life and art.

His politeness received from his character a singular bent and charm. It was not external, simply voluntary and official; it came from the heart. He was gentle and kind, of a refined sensibility, so timid even as to remain quiet and seem dull in a numerous company or before strangers, only recovering his spirits before intimate friends, and confessing that he could not talk well to more than one. He could not endure a sharp discussion; when the opponent was intractable, he pretended to approve, and for punishment, plunged him discreetly into his own folly. He withdrew by preference from political arguments; being invited to deal with them in the *Spectator*, he contented himself with inoffensive and general subjects, which could interest all whilst shocking none. He would have suffered in making others suffer. Though a very decided and faithful Whig, he continued moderate in polemics; and in a time when conquerors legally attempted to assassinate or ruin the conquered, he confined himself to show the faults of argument made by the Tories, or to rail courteously at their prejudices. At Dublin he went first of all to shake the hand of Swift, his great and fallen adversary. Insulted bitterly by Dennis and Pope, he refused to employ against them his influence or his wit, and praised Pope to the end. What could be more touching, when we have read his life, than his essay on kindness? we perceive that he is unconsciously speaking of himself:

“There is no society or conversation to be kept up in the world without good-nature, or something which must bear its appearance, and supply its place. For this reason mankind have been forced to invent a kind of artificial humanity, which is what we express by the word good-breeding. . . . The greatest wits I have conversed with are men eminent for their humanity. . . . Good-nature is generally born with us; health, prosperity and kind treatment from the world are great cherishers of it where they find it.”\*

It so happens that he is involuntarily describing his own charm and his own success. It is himself that he is unveiling; he was very prosperous, and his good fortune spread itself

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\* *Spectator*, No. 169,

around him in affectionate sentiments, in constant discretion, in calm cheerfulness. At college he was distinguished; his Latin verses made him a fellow at Oxford; he spent ten years there in grave amusements and the studies which pleased him. From the age of twenty-two, Dryden, the prince of literature, praised him splendidly. When he left Oxford, the ministers gave him a pension of three hundred pounds to finish his education, and prepare him for public service. On his return from his travels, his poem on Blenheim placed him in the first rank of the Whigs. He became a member of Parliament, twice Secretary for Ireland, Under-Secretary of State, Secretary of State. Party hatred spared him; amid the almost universal defeat of the Whigs, he was reëlected; in the furious war of Whigs and Tories, both united to applaud his tragedy of *Cato*; the most cruel pamphleteers respected him; his uprightness, his talent, seemed exalted by common consent above discussion. He lived in abundance, activity, and honors, wisely and usefully, amid the assiduous admiration and constant affection of learned and distinguished friends, who could never have too much of his conversation; amid the applause of all the good men and all the cultivated minds of England. If twice the fall of his party seemed to destroy or retard his fortune, he maintained his position without much effort, by reflection and coolness, prepared for all that might happen, accepting mediocrity, confirmed in a natural and acquired calmness, accommodating himself without yielding to men, respectful to the great without degrading himself, free from secret revolt or internal suffering. These are the sources of his talent; could any be purer or finer? could anything be more engaging than worldly polish and elegance, without the factitious ardor and the complimentary falseness of the world? And will you look for a more amiable conversation than that of a good and happy man, whose knowledge, taste and wit are only employed to give you pleasure?

This pleasure will be useful to you. Your interlocutor is as grave as he is polite; he would and can instruct as well as amuse you. "The great and only end of these speculations," says Addison, in a number of the *Spectator*, "is to banish vice and ignorance out of the territories of Great Britain." His papers are wholly moral—advice to families, reprimands to

thoughtless women, a portrait of an honest man, remedies for the passions, reflections on God, the future life. I hardly know, or rather I know very well, what success a newspaper full of sermons would have in France. In England it was extraordinary, equal to that of the most fortunate modern novelists. In the general disaster of the reviews, ruined by the Stamp Act, the *Spectator* doubled its price, and held its ground. This was because it offered to Englishmen the picture of English reason: the talent and the teaching were in harmony with the needs of the age and of the country. Of course the writer sets himself against licence without artlessness and the systematic debauchery which was the taste and the shame of the Restoration. He wrote whole articles against young fashionable men; he severely jeers at women who expose themselves to temptations; he fights like a preacher against the fashion of low dresses, and gravely demands the tucker and modesty of old times. You will find, further on, lectures on the masquerades, which end with a rendezvous; precepts on the number of glasses people might drink, and the dishes of which they might eat; condemnations of licentious professors of irreligion and immorality; all maxims now somewhat stale, but then new and useful, because Wycherley and Rochester had put the opposite maxims into use and credit. Debauchery passed for French and fashionable: this is why Addison proscribes in addition all French frivolities. He laughs at women who receive visitors in their dressing-rooms, and speak aloud at the theatre:—

“There is nothing which exposes a woman to greater dangers, than that gaiety and airiness of temper, which are natural to most of the sex. It should be, therefore, the concern of every wise and virtuous woman to keep this sprightliness from degenerating into levity. On the contrary, the whole discourse and behavior of the French is to make the sex more fantastical, or (as they are pleased to term it), more awakened, than is consistent either with virtue or discretion.”\*

You see already in these strictures the portrait of the sensible housewife, the modest English wife, domestic and grave, taken up with her husband and children. Addison returns a score of times to the artifices, the petty affected babyisms, the

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\* *Spectator*, No. 45.



coquetry, the futilities of women. He cannot suffer languishing or lazy habits. He is full of epigrams, written against flirtations, extravagant toilets, useless visits.\* He writes a satirical journal of a man who goes to his club, learns the news, yawns, studies the barometer, and thinks his time well occupied. He considers that our time is a capital, our business a duty, and our life a task.

Only a task. If he holds himself superior to sensual life, he is inferior to philosophical life. His morality, thoroughly English, always crawls among commonplaces, discovering no principles, making no deductions. The fine and lofty aspects of the mind are wanting. He gives inimitable advice, a clear watchword, justified by what happened yesterday, useful for to-morrow. He observes that fathers must not be inflexible, and that they often repent driving their children to despair. He finds that bad books are pernicious, because their endurance carries their poison to future ages. He consoles a woman who has lost her sweetheart, by showing her the misfortunes of so many other people who are suffering the greatest evils at the same time. His *Spectator*, is only an honest man's manual, and is often like the *Complete Lawyer*. It is practical, its aim being not to amuse, but to correct us. The conscientious Protestant, nourished with dissertations and morality, demands an effectual monitor and guide; he would like his reading to influence his conduct, and his newspaper to suggest a resolution. To this end Addison seeks motives everywhere. He thinks of the future life, but does not forget the present; he rests virtue on interest, rightly understood. He strains no principle to its limits; he accepts them all, as they are to be met with in the human domain, according to their manifest goodness, tracing only the primary consequences, shunning the powerful logical pressure which spoils all by expressing too much. See him establishing a maxim, recommending constancy for instance; his motives are mixed and incongruous; first, inconstancy exposes us to scorn; next, it puts us in continual distraction; again, it hinders us as a rule from attaining our end; moreover, it is the great feature of every human and mortal being; finally, it is most opposed to the inflexible nature

of God, who ought to be our model. The whole is illustrated at the close by a quotation from Dryden and a verse from Horace. This medley and jumble describe the ordinary mind which remains on the level of its audience, and the practical mind, which knows how to dominate over its audience. Addison persuades the public, because he draws from the public sources of belief. He is powerful because he is vulgar, and useful because he is narrow.

Picture now this mind, so characteristically mediocre, limited to the discovery of good motives of action. What a reflective man, always equal and dignified! What a store he has of resolutions and maxims! All rapture, instinct, inspiration, and caprice, are abolished or disciplined. No case surprises or carries him away. He is always ready and protected; so much so, that he is like an automaton. Argument has frozen and invaded him. See, for instance, how he puts us on our guard against involuntary hypocrisy, announcing, explaining, distinguishing the ordinary and extraordinary modes, dragging on with exordiums, preparations, methods, allusions to Scripture.\* After six lines of this morality, a Frenchman would go out for a mouthful of fresh air. What in the name of heaven would he do, if, in order to move him to piety, he was told† that God's omniscience and omnipresence furnished us with three kinds of motives, and then subdivided these motives into first, second, and third? To put calculation at every stage; to come with weight and figures into the thick of human passions, to ticket them, classify them like bales, to tell the public that the inventory is complete; to lead them, with the reckoning in their hand, and by the mere virtue of statistics, to honor and duty,—such is the morality of Addison and of England. It is a sort of commercial common sense applied to the interests of the soul; a preacher here is only an economist in a white tie, who treats conscience like food, and refutes vice as a set of prohibitions.

There is nothing sublime or chimerical in the end which he sets before us; all is practical, that is, business-like and sensible: the question is, How "to be easy here and happy afterwards." To be easy is a word which has no French equiva-

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\* *Spectator*, No. 399.

† *Ibid.* No. 571.

lent, meaning that comfortable state of the mind, a means of calm satisfaction, approved action and serene conscience. Addison makes it consist in labor and manly functions, carefully and regularly discharged. We must see with what complacency he paints in the *Freeholder* and *Sir Roger* the grave pleasures of a citizen and proprietor :

“ I have rather chosen this title (the Freeholder) than any other, because it is what I most glory in, and what most effectually calls to my mind the happiness of that government under which I live. As a British freeholder, I should not scruple taking place of a French marquis ; and when I see one of my countrymen amusing himself in his little cabbage-garden, I naturally look upon him as a greater person than the owner of the richest vineyard in Champagne. . . . There is an unspeakable pleasure in calling anything one’s own. A freehold, though it be but in ice and snow, will make the owner pleased in the possession, and stout in the defence of it. . . . I consider myself as one who give my consent to every law which passes. . . . A freeholder is but one remove from a legislator, and for that reason ought to stand up in the defence of those laws which are in some degree of his own making.”\*

These are all English feelings, made up of calculation and pride, energetic and austere ; and this portrait is capped by that of the married man :

“ Nothing is more gratifying to the mind of man than power or dominion ; and this I think myself amply possessed of, as I am the father of a family. I am perpetually taken up giving out orders, in prescribing duties, in hearing parties, in administering justice, and in distributing rewards and punishments. . . . I look upon my family as a patriarchal sovereignty, in which I am myself both king and priest. . . . When I see my little troop before me, I rejoice in the additions I have made to my species, to my country, and to my religion, in having produced such a number of reasonable creatures, citizens, and Christians. I am pleased to see myself thus perpetuated ; and as there is no production comparable to that of a human creature, I am more proud of having been the occasion of ten such glorious productions, than if I had built a hundred pyramids at my own expense, or published as many volumes of the finest wit and learning.”†

If now you take the man away from his estate and his household, alone with himself, in moments of idleness or reverie, you will find him just as positive. He observes, that he may cultivate his own reasoning power, and that of others ; he stores himself with morality ; he wishes to make the most of himself and of existence. The northern races willingly direct their thoughts

\* *Freeholder*, No. 1.

† *Spectator*, No. 500.

to final dissolution and the dark future. Addison often chose for his promenade gloomy Westminster Abbey, with its many tombs :

“ Upon my going into the church I entertained myself with the digging of a grave ; and saw in every shovel-full of it that was thrown up, the fragment of a bone or skull intermixt with a kind of fresh mouldering earth that some time or other had a place in the composition of an human body. . . . I consider that great day when we shall all of us be contemporaries and make our appearance together.”\*

And suddenly his emotion is transformed into profitable meditations. Under his morality is a balance which weighs the quantities of happiness. He stirs himself by mathematical comparisons to prefer the future to the present. He tries to realize, amidst an assemblage of dates, the disproportion of our short life to infinity. Thus arises this religion, a product of melancholic temperament and acquired logic, in which man, a sort of calculating Hamlet, aspires to the ideal by making a good business of it, and maintains his poetical sentiments by financial additions.

In such a subject these habits are offensive. We ought not to try and over-define or prove God ; religion is rather a matter of feeling than of science ; we compromise it by exacting too rigorous demonstrations, and too precise dogmas. It is the heart which sees heaven ; if you would make me believe in it, as you make me believe in the Antipodes, by geographical accounts and probabilities, I shall barely or not at all believe. Addison has little more than his college arguments or edification, very like those of the Abbé Pluche,† which let in objections at every cleft, and which we can only regard as dialectical essays, or sources of emotion. Add the motives of interest and calculations of prudence, which can make recruits, but not converts ; these are his proofs. There is an element of coarseness in this fashion of treating divine things, and we like still less the exactness with which he explains God, reducing him to a mere magnified man. This preciseness and this narrowness go so far as to describe heaven :

“ Though the Deity be thus essentially present through all the immensity

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\* *Spectator*, Nos. 26 and 575.

† The Abbé Pluche (1688–1761) was the author of a *Système de la Nature* and several other works.—Tr.

of space, there is one part of it in which he discovers himself in a most transcendent and visible glory. . . . It is here where the glorified body of our Saviour resides, and where all the celestial hierarchies, and the innumerable hosts of angels, are represented as perpetually surrounding the seat of God with hallelujahs and hymns of praise. . . . With how much skill must the throne of God be erected ! . . . How great must be the majesty of that place, where the whole art of creation has been employed, and where God has chosen to show himself in the most magnificent manner ! What must be the architecture of infinite power under the direction of infinite wisdom ? ”\*

Moreover, the place must be very grand, and they have music there : it is a noble palace ; perhaps there are antechambers. Enough ; I will not continue. The same dull and literal precision makes him inquire what sort of happiness the elect have. † They will be admitted into the councils of Providence, and will understand all its proceedings :

“ There is, doubtless, a faculty in spirits by which they apprehend one another as our senses do material objects ; and there is no question but our souls, when they are disembodied, or placed in glorified bodies, will by this faculty, in whatever part of space they reside, be always sensible of the Divine Presence. ‡

This grovelling philosophy repels you. One word of Addison will justify it, and make you understand it : “ The business of mankind in this life is rather to act than to know.” Now, such a philosophy is as useful in action as flat in science. All its faults of speculation become merits in practice. It follows in a prosy manner positive religion. § What support does it not attain from the authority of an ancient tradition, a national institution, an established priesthood, visible ceremonies, everyday customs ! It employs as arguments public utility, the example of great minds, heavy logic, literal interpretation, and unmistakable texts. What better means of governing the crowd, than to degrade proofs to the vulgarity of its intelligence and needs ? It humanizes the Divinity : is it not the only way to make men understand him ? It defines almost obviously a future life : is it not the only way to cause it to be wished for ? The poetry of high philosophical deductions is weak beside the inner persuasion, rooted by so many positive and detailed descriptions. In this way an active piety is born ;

\* *Spectator*, No. 580 ; see also No. 531.

† *Spectator*, Nos. 237, 571, 600.

‡ *Ibid.* Nos. 571 ; see also Nos. 237, 600.

§ *Tatler*, No. 257.

and religion thus constructed doubles the force of the moral spring. Addison's is admirable, because it is so strong. Energy of feeling rescues wretchedness of dogma. Beneath his dissertations we feel that he is moved ; minutæ, pedantry disappear. We see in him now only a soul deeply penetrated with adoration and respect ; no more a preacher classifying God's attributes, and pursuing his trade as a good logician ; but a man who naturally, and of his own bent, returns to a lofty spectacle, goes with awe into all its aspects, and leaves it only with a renewed or overwhelmed heart. The sincerity of his emotions makes us respect even his catechetical prescriptions. He demands fixed days of devotion and meditation to recall us regularly to the thought of our Creator and of our faith. He inserts prayers in his paper. He forbids oaths, and recommends to keep always before us the idea of a sovereign Master :

“Such an habitual homage to the Supreme Being would, in a particular manner, banish from among us that prevailing impiety of using his name on the most trivial occasions. . . . What can we then think of those who make use of so tremendous a name in the ordinary expressions of their anger, mirth, and most impertinent passions ? of those who admit it into the most familiar questions and assertions, ludicrous phrases, and works of humor ? not to mention those who violate it by solemn perjuries ? It would be an affront to reason to endeavor to set forth the horror and profaneness of such a practice.” \*

A Frenchman, at the first word, hearing himself forbidden to swear, would probably laugh ; in his eyes that is a matter of good taste, not of morality. But if he had heard Addison himself pronouncing what I have written, he would laugh no more.

It is no small thing to make morality fashionable. Addison did it, and it remained in fashion. Formerly honest men were not polished, and polished men were not honest ; piety was fanatical, and urbanity depraved ; in manners, as in letters, one could meet only Puritans or libertines. For the first time Addison reconciled virtue with elegance, taught duty in an accomplished style, and made pleasure subservient to reason :

“It was said of Socrates that he brought Philosophy down from heaven to inhabit among men ; and I shall be ambitious to have it said of me, that I have brought Philosophy out of closets and libraries, schools and colleges,

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\* *Spectator*, No. 531.

to dwell in clubs and assemblies, at tea-tables and in coffee-houses. I would therefore, in a very particular manner, recommend these my speculations to all well-regulated families, and set apart an hour in every morning for tea and bread and butter; and would earnestly advise them for their good to order this paper to be punctually served up, and to be looked upon as a part of the tea-equipage.\*

In this you may detect an inclination to smile; it is the tone of a polished man, who, at the first sign of ennui, turns round, delicately laughs at himself, and tries to please. It is Addison's general tone.

What an art it is to please! First, the art of making oneself understood, at once, always, completely, without difficulty to the reader, without reflection, without attention. Figure to yourself men of the world reading a page between two mouthfuls of "bohea rolls," ladies interrupting a phrase to ask when the ball begins: three special or learned words would make them throw the paper down. They only desire clear terms, in common use, into which wit enters all at once, as it enters ordinary converse; in fact, for them reading is only a conversation, and a better one than usual. For the select world refines language. It does not suffer the risks and approximations of extempore and inexperienced speaking. It requires a knowledge of style, like a knowledge of external forms. It will have exact words to express the fine shades of thought, and measured words to preclude shocking or extreme impressions. It wishes for developed phrases, which, presenting the same idea, under several aspects, may impress it easily upon its desultory mind. It demands harmonies of words, which, presenting a known idea in a smart form, may introduce it in a lively manner to its desultory imagination. Addison gives it all that it desires; his writings are the pure source of classical style; men never spoke in England better. Ornaments abound, and rhetoric has no part in them. Throughout we have just contrasts, which serve only for clearness, and are not too much prolonged; happy expressions, easily discovered, which give things a new and ingenious turn; harmonious periods, in which the sounds flow into one another with the diversity and sweetness of a quiet stream; a fertile vein of inventions and

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\* *Spectator*, No. 10.

images, through which runs the most amiable irony. We trust one example will suffice :

“ He is not obliged to attend her (Nature) in the slow advances which she makes from one season to another, or to observe her conduct in the successive production of plants and flowers. He may draw into his description all the beauties of the spring and autumn, and make the whole year contribute something to render it the more agreeable. His rose-trees, woodbines, and jessamines may flower together, and his beds be covered at the same time with lilies, violets, and amaranths. His soil is not restrained to any particular set of plants, but is proper either for oaks or myrtles, and adapts itself to the products of every climate. Oranges may grow wild in it ; myrrh may be met with in every hedge ; and if he thinks it proper to have a grove of spices, he can quickly command sun enough to raise it. If all this will not furnish out any agreeable scene, he can make several new species of flowers, with richer scents and higher colors, than any that grow in the gardens of nature. His concerts of birds may be as full and harmonious, and his woods as thick and gloomy as he pleases. He is at no more expense in a long vista than in a short one, and can as easily throw his cascades from a precipice half a mile high as from one of twenty yards. He has his choice of the winds, and can turn the course of his rivers in all the variety of meanders that are most delightful to the reader’s imagination.” \*

I find here that Addison profits by the rights which he accords, and is amused in explaining to us how we may amuse ourselves. Such is the charming tone of society. Reading this book, we fancy it still more amiable than it is : no pretension ; no efforts ; endless contrivances employed unconsciously, and obtained without asking ; the gift of being lively and agreeable ; a refined banter, raillery without bitterness, a sustained gaiety ; the art of finding in everything the most blooming and the freshest flower, and to smell it without bruising or sullyng it ; science, politics, experience, morality, bearing their finest fruits, adorning them, offering them at a chosen moment, ready to withdraw them as soon as conversation has received the flavor, and before it is tired of them ; such is the familiar spectacle in which the writer has formed and delighted himself.

So many advantages are not without their inconveniences. The compliments of society, which attenuate expressions, blunt the style ; by regulating what is instinctive and moderating what is vehement, they make speech threadbare and uniform. We must not always seek to please, above all, the ear. Monsieur Chateaubriand boasted of not admitting a single elision

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\* *Spectator*, No. 418.



into the song of *Cymodocée*; so much the worse for *Cymodocée*. So the commentators who have noted in Addison the balance of his periods, do him an injustice.\* They explain why he slightly wearies us. The rotundity of his phrases is a scanty merit, and mars the rest. To calculate longs and shorts, to be always thinking of sounds, of final cadences,—all these classical researches spoil a writer. Every idea has its accent, and all our labor ought to be to make it free and simple on paper, as it is in our mind. We ought to copy and mark our thought with the flow of emotions and images, which raise it, caring for nothing but its exactness and clearness. One true phrase is worth a hundred periods: the first is a document which fixes forever a movement of the heart or the senses; the other is a toy to amuse the empty heads of verse-makers. I would give twenty pages of Fléchier for three lines of Saint-Simon. Regular rhythm mutilates the impetus of natural invention; the shades of inner vision vanish; we see no more a soul which thinks or feels, but fingers which scan. The continuous period is like the shears of La Quintinie, † which crop all the trees round, under pretence of beautifying. This is why there is a coldness and monotony in Addison's style. He seems to be listening to himself. He is too measured and correct. His most touching stories, like that of *Theodosius and Constantia* touch us only partially. Who could feel inclined to weep over such periods as these?

“Constantia, who knew that nothing but the report of her marriage could have driven him to such extremities, was not to be comforted; she now accused herself for having so tamely given an ear to the proposal of a husband, and looked upon the new lover as the murderer of Theodosius: in short, she resolved to suffer the utmost effects of her father's displeasure rather than to comply with a marriage which appeared to her so full of guilt and horror.” ‡

Is this the way to paint horror and guilt? Where are the motions of passion which Addison pretends to paint? The story is related, not seen.

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\* See, in the notes of No. 409 of the *Spectator*, the pretty minute analysis of Hurd, the decomposition of the period, the proportion of long and short syllables, the study of the finals. A musician could not have done better.

† La Quintinie (1626–1688) was a celebrated gardener under Louis XIV., and planned the gardens of Versailles.

‡ *Spectator*, No. 164.

The classic simply cannot see. Always measured and rational, his first care is to proportion and arrange. He has his rules in his pocket, and brings them out for everything. He does not rise to the source of the beautiful at once, like genuine artists, by force and lucidity of natural inspiration; he lingers in the middle regions, amid precepts, subject to taste and common sense. This is why Addison's criticism is so solid and so poor. They who seek ideas will do well not to read his *Essays on Imagination*,\* so much praised, so well written, but so scant of philosophy, and so commonplace, dragged down by the intervention of final causes. His celebrated commentary on *Paradise Lost* is little better than the dissertations of Batteux and Bossu. In one place he compares, almost in a line, Homer, Virgil, and Ovid. The fine arrangement of a poem is with him the best merit. The pure classics enjoy better arrangement and good order than artless truth and strong originality. They have always their poetic manual in their hands: if you agree with the pattern of to-day, you have genius; if not, not. Addison, in praise of Milton, establishes that, according to the rule of epic poetry, the action of *Paradise Lost* is one, complete and great; that its characters are varied and of universal interest, and its sentiments natural, appropriate, and elevated; the style clear, diversified, and sublime; now you may admire Milton; he has a testimonial from Aristotle. Listen, for instance, to cold details of classical dissertation:

“Had I followed Monsieur Bossu's method in my first paper on Milton, I should have dated the action of *Paradise Lost* from the beginning of Raphael's speech in this book.” †

“But, notwithstanding the fineness of this allegory (Sin and Death) may atone for it (the defect in the subject of his poem) in some measure, I cannot think that persons of such a chimerical existence are proper actors in an epic poem.” ‡

Further on he defines poetical machines, the conditions of their structures, the advantage of their use. He seems to me a carpenter verifying the construction of a staircase. Do not suppose that artificiality shocks him; he rather admires it. He finds the violent declamations of the Miltonic divinity and

\* See *Spectator*, No. 411—No. 432. † *Ibid.* No. 327. ‡ *Ibid.* No. 273

the royal compliments, indulged in by the persons of the Trinity, sublime. The campaigns of the angels, their bearing in chapel and barrack, their scholastic disputes, their bitter puritanical or pious royalistic style, do not strike him as false or disagreeable. Adam's pedantry and household lectures appear to him suitable to the state of innocence. In fact, the classics of the last two centuries never looked upon the human mind, except in its cultivated state. The child, the artist, the barbarian, the inspired man, escaped them; so, of course, did all who were beyond humanity; their world was limited to the earth, and to the earth of the study and drawing-rooms; they rose neither to God nor nature, or if they did, it was to transform nature into a narrow garden, and God into a moral scrutator. They reduced genius to eloquence, poetry to discourse, the drama to a dialogue. They regarded beauty as if it were reason, a sort of middle faculty, not apt for invention, potent in rules, balancing imagination like conduct, and making taste the arbiter of letters, as it made morality the arbiter of actions. They dispensed with the play on words, the sensual grossness, the flights of imagination, the atrocities, and all the bad accompaniments of Shakspeare;\* but they only half imitated him in the deep intuitions by which he pierced the human heart, and discovered therein the God and the animal. They wanted to be moved, but not overwhelmed; they allowed themselves to be impressed, but demanded to be pleased. To please rationally was the object of their literature. Such is Addison's criticism, which resembles his art; born, like his art, of classical urbanity; fit, like his art, for the life of the world, having the same solidity and the same limits, because it had the same sources, to wit, rule and gratification.

But we must consider that we are in England, and that we find there many things not agreeable to a Frenchman. In France, the classical age attained perfection; so that, compared to it, other countries lack somewhat of finish. Addison, elegant at home, is not quite so in France. Compared with Tillotson, he is the most charming man possible; compared to Montesquieu, he is only half polished. His converse is hardly sparkling enough; the quick movement, the easy change of

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\* *Spectator*, 39, 40, 58.

tone, the facile smile, readily dropt and readily resumed, are hardly visible. He drags on in long and too uniform phrases; his periods are too square; we might cull a load of useless words. He tells us what he is going to say; he marks divisions and subdivisions; he quotes Latin, even Greek; he displays and protracts without end the serviceable and sticky plaster of his morality. He has no fear of being wearisome. That is not a point of fear amongst Englishmen. Men who love long demonstrative sermons of three hours are not difficult to amuse. Remember that here the women like to go to meeting, and are entertained by listening for half a day to discourses on drunkenness, or on the sliding scale for taxes; these patient creatures require nothing more than that the conversation should be lively and piquant. Consequently they can put up with a less refined politeness and less disguised compliments. When Addison bows to them, which happens often, it is gravely, and his reverence is always accompanied by a warning. Take the following on the gaudy dresses:—

“I looked with as much pleasure upon this little party-colored assembly, as upon a bed of tulips, and did not know at first whether it might not be an embassy of Indian queens; but upon my going about into the pit, and taking them in front, I was immediately undeceived, and saw so much beauty in every face, that I found them all to be English. Such eyes and lips, cheeks and foreheads, could be the growth of no other country. The complexion of their faces hindered me from observing any further the color of their hoods, though I could easily perceive, by that unspeakable satisfaction which appeared in their looks, that their own thoughts were wholly taken up on those pretty ornaments they wore upon their heads.” †

In this discreet raillery, modified by an almost official admiration, you perceive the English mode of treating women: man, by her side, is always a lay preacher; they are for him charming children or useful housewives, never queens of the drawing room, or equals, as amongst the French. When Addison wishes to bring back the Jacobite ladies to the Protestant party, he treats them almost like little girls, to whom we promise, if they will be good, to restore their doll or their cake:—

“They should first reflect on the great sufferings and persecutions to which they expose themselves by the obstinacy of their behavior. They lose their elections in every club where they are set up for toasts. They are obliged by their principles to stick a patch on the most unbecoming side of

their foreheads. They forego the advantage of birthday suits. . . . They receive no benefit from the army, and are never the better for all the young fellows that wear hats and feathers. They are forced to live in the country and feed their chickens; at the same time that they might show themselves at court, and appear in brocade, if they behaved themselves well. In short, what must go to the heart of every fine woman, they throw themselves quite out of the fashion. . . . A man is startled when he sees a pretty bosom heaving with such party-rage, as is disagreeable even in that sex which is of a more coarse and rugged make. And yet such is our misfortune, that we sometimes see a pair of stays ready to burst with sedition; and hear the most masculine passions expressed in the sweetest voices. . . . Where a great number of flowers grow, the ground at distance seems entirely covered with them, and we must walk into it, before we can distinguish the several weeds that spring up in such a beautiful mass of colors."\*

This gallantry is too deliberate; we are somewhat shocked to see a woman touched by such thoughtful hands. It is the urbanity of a moralist; albeit he is well bred, he is not quite amiable; and if a Frenchman can receive from him lessons of pedagogy and conduct, he must come over to France to find models of manners and conversation.

If the first care of a Frenchman in society is to be amiable, that of an Englishman is to be dignified; their mood leads them to immobility, as ours to gestures; and their pleasantry is as grave as ours is gay. Laughter with them is inward; they shun giving themselves up to it; they are amused silently. Make up your mind to understand this kind of temper, it will end by pleasing you. When phlegm is united to gentleness, as in Addison, it is as agreeable as it is piquant. We are charmed to meet a lively man who is yet master of himself. We are astonished to see these contrary qualities together. Each heightens and modifies the other. We are not repelled by venomous bitterness, as in Swift, or by continuous buffoonery, as in Voltaire. We rejoice altogether in the rare union, which for the first time combines serious bearing and good humor. Read this little satire against the bad taste of the stage and the public:

"There is nothing that of late years has afforded matter of greater amusement to the town than Signor Nicolini's combat with a lion in the Haymarket, which has been very often exhibited to the general satisfaction of most of the nobility and gentry in the kingdom of Great Britain. . . . The first lion was a candle-snuffer, who being a fellow of a testy, choleric temper,

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\* *Freeholder*, No. 26.

overdid his part, and would not suffer himself to be killed so easily as he ought to have done. . . . The second lion was a tailor by trade, who belonged to the playhouse, and had the character of a mild and peaceable man in his profession. If the former was too furious, this was too sheepish for his part; insomuch that, after a short modest walk upon the stage, he would fall at the first touch of Hydaspes, without grappling with him, and giving him an opportunity of shewing his variety of Italian trips. It is said, indeed, that he once gave him a rip in his flesh-colored doublet; but this was only to make work for himself, in his private character of a tailor, . . . The acting lion at present is, as I am informed, a country gentleman, who does it for his diversion, but desires his name may be concealed. He says, very handsomely, in his own excuse, that he does not act for gain, that he indulges an innocent pleasure in it; and that it is better to pass away an evening in this manner than in gaming and drinking. . . . This gentleman's temper is made up of such a happy mixture of the mild and the choleric, that he outdoes both his predecessors, and has drawn together greater audiences than have been known in the memory of man. . . . In the meantime, I have related this combat of the lion, to show what are at present the reigning entertainments of the politer part of Great Britain."\*

There is much originality in this grave gayety. As a rule, singularity is in accordance with the taste of the nation; they like to be struck strongly by contrasts. Our literature seems to them threadbare; we again find them not delicate. A number of the *Spectator* which seemed pleasant to London ladies would have shocked people in Paris. Thus, Addison relates in the form of a dream the dissection of a beau's brain:

"The pincal gland, which many of our modern philosophers suppose to be the seat of the soul, smelt very strong of essence and orange-flower water, and was encompassed with a kind of horny substance, cut into a thousand little faces or mirrors, which were imperceptible to the naked eye; insomuch that the soul, if there had been any here, must have been always taken up in contemplating her own beauties. We observed a large antrum or cavity in the sinciput, that was filled with ribbons, lace, and embroidery. . . . We did not find anything very remarkable in the eye, saving only, that the *musculi amatorii*, or, as we may translate it into English, the ogling muscles, were very much worn, and decayed with use; whereas, on the contrary, the elevator, or the muscle which turns the eye towards heaven, did not appear to have been used at all."†

These anatomical details, which would disgust us, amused a positive mind; crudity is for him only exactness; accustomed to precise images, he finds no objectionable odor in the medical style. Addison does not share our repugnance. To rail at a

\* *Spectator*, No. 13.

† *Ibid.* No. 275.

vice, he becomes a mathematician, an economist, a pedant, an apothecary. Special terms amuse him. He sets up a court to judge crinolines, and condemns petticoats in technical formulas. He teaches how to handle a fan as if he were teaching to prime and load muskets. He draws up a list of men dead or injured by love, and the ridiculous causes which have reduced them to such a condition :

“ Will Simple, smitten at the Opera by the glance of an eye that was aimed at one who stood by him.

“ Sir Christopher Crazy, Bart., hurt by the brush of a whalebone petticoat.

“ Ned Courtly, presenting Flavia with her glove (which she had dropped on purpose), she received it and took away his life with a curtsey.

“ John Gosselin, having received a slight hurt from a pair of blue eyes, as he was making his escape, was dispatched with a smile.”\*

Other statistics, with recapitulations and tables of numbers, relate the history of the Leucadian leap :

“ Aridæus, a beautiful youth of Epirus, in love with Praxinoe, the wife of Thespius, escaped without damage, saving only that two of his foreteeth were struck out, and his nose a little flatted.

“ Hipparchus, being passionately fond of his own wife, who was enamored of Bathyllus, leaped and died of his fall ; upon which his wife married her gallant.”†

You see this strange mode of painting human folly : in England it is called humor. It contains an incisive good sense, the habit of restraint, business habits, but above all a fundamental energy of invention. The race is less refined, but stronger ; and the pleasures which content its mind and taste are like the liquors which suit its palate and its stomach.

This potent Germanic spirit breaks even in Addison through his classical and Latin exterior. Albeit he relishes art, he still loves nature. His education, which has loaded him with maxims, has not destroyed his virgin sentiment of truth. In his travels in France he preferred the wildness of Fontainebleau to the correctness of Versailles. He shakes off worldly refinements to praise the simplicity of the old national ballads. He explains to his public the sublime images, the vast passions, the deep religion of *Paradise Lost*. It is curious to see him, compass in hand, kept back by Bossu, fettered in endless arguments and academical phrases, attaining with one spring, by strength

\* *Spectator*, No. 377.

† *Ibid.* No. 233.

of natural emotion, the high unexplored regions to which Milton rose by the inspiration of faith and genius. He would not say, with Voltaire, that the allegory of Sin and Death is enough to make people sick. He has a foundation of grand imagination, which makes him indifferent to the little refinements of social civilization. He sojourns willingly amid the grandeur and marvels of the other world. He is penetrated by the presence of the Invisible, he must escape from the interests and hopes of the petty life in which we crawl.\* This source of faith gushes from him everywhere ; in vain is it enclosed in the regular channel of official dogma ; the tests and arguments with which it is covered do not hide its true origin. It springs from the grave and fertile imagination which can only be satisfied with a sight of what is beyond.

Genuine imagination naturally ends in the invention of characters. For, if you clearly represent to yourself a situation or an action, you will see at the same time the whole network of its connection ; the passion and faculties, all the gestures and tones of voice, all details of dress, dwelling, society, which flow from it, will bring their precedents and their consequences ; and this multitude of ideas, slowly organized, will at last be concentrated in a single sentiment, from which, as from a deep spring, will break forth the portrait and the history of a complete character. There are several such in Addison ; the quiet observer Will Honeycomb, the country Tory Sir Roger de Coverley, which are not satirical theses, like those of La Bruyère, but genuine individuals, like, and sometimes equal to, the characters of the great contemporary novels. In fact, he invents the novel, without suspecting it, at the same time and in the same way as his most illustrious neighbors. His characters are taken from life, from the manners and conditions of the time, described at length and minutely in all the parts of their education and surroundings, with the precision and positive observation, marvellously real and English. A masterpiece as well as an historical record is Sir Roger de Coverley, the country gentleman, loyal servant of constitution and church, justice of the peace, patron of the church, whose estate shows on a small scale the structure of the English nation.

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\* See the last thirty numbers of the *Spectator*.



This domain is a little state, paternally governed, but still governed. Sir Roger rates his tenants, passes them in review in church, knows their affairs, gives them advice, assistance, commands; he is respected, obeyed, loved, because he lives with them, because the simplicity of his tastes and education puts him almost on a level with them; because in his position as magistrate, old landholder, rich man, benefactor, and neighbor, he exercises a moral and legal, a useful and respected authority. Addison at the same time shows in him the solid and peculiar English character, built of heart of oak, with all the knots of the primitive bark, which can neither be softened nor planed down, a great fund of kindness which extends to animals, love of country and bodily exercises, a disposition to command and discipline, the feeling of subordination and respect, much common sense and little finesse, the habit of displaying and establishing in public his singularities and oddities, careless of ridicule, without thought of bravado, solely because these men acknowledge no judge but themselves. A hundred traits depict the times; a lack of reading, a remnant of belief in witchcraft, peasant and hunting manners, the ignorances of an artless or backward mind. Sir Roger gives the children, who answer their catechism well, a Bible for themselves, and a quarter of bacon for their mothers. When a verse pleases him he sings it for half a minute after the congregation has finished. He kills eight fat pigs at Christmas, and sends a pudding and a pack of cards to each poor family in the parish. When he goes to the theatre, he supplies his servants with cudgels to protect themselves from the thieves which, he says, infest London. Addison returns a score of times to the old knight, always discovering some new aspect of his character, a disinterested observer of humanity, curiously assiduous and discerning, a true creator, having but a step to go to enter, like Richardson and Fielding, upon the great work of modern literature, the novel of manners and customs.

Beyond this, all is poetry. It has flowed through his prose a thousand times more sincere and beautiful than in his verses. Rich oriental fancies are displayed, not with a shower of sparks as in Voltaire, but under a calm and abundant light, which makes the regular folds of their purple and gold undulate. The music of the long cadenced and tranquil phrases leads the

mind sweetly amidst romantic splendors and enchantments, and the deep sentiment of ever young nature recalls the happy quietude of Spenser.\* Through gentle railleries or moral essays we feel that his imagination is happy, delighted in the contemplation of the sway of the forests which clothe the mountains, the eternal verdure of the valleys, invigorated by fresh springs, and the wide horizons undulating to the border of the distant sky. Great and simple sentiments come naturally to unite these noble images, and their measured harmony creates a unique spectacle, worthy to fascinate the heart of an honest man by its gravity and sweetness. Such are the Visions of Mirza, which I will give almost entire :

“ On the fifth day of the moon, which according to the custom of my forefathers I always keep holy, after having washed myself, and offered up my morning devotions, I ascended the high hills of Bagdat, in order to pass the rest of the day in meditation and prayer. As I was here airing myself on the tops of the mountains, I fell into a profound contemplation on the vanity of human life; and passing from one thought to another: Surely, said I, man is but a shadow and life a dream. Whilst I was thus musing, I cast my eyes towards the summit of a rock that was not far from me, where I discovered one in the habit of a shepherd, with a little musical instrument in his hand. As I looked upon him he applied it to his lips, and began to play upon it. The sound of it was exceeding sweet, and wrought into a variety of tunes that were inexpressibly melodious, and altogether different from any thing I had ever heard. They put me in mind of those heavenly airs that are played to the departed souls of good men upon their first arrival in Paradise, to wear out the impressions of the last agonies, and qualify them for the pleasures of that happy place. My heart melted away in secret raptures. . . .

“ He (the genius) then led me to the highest pinnacle of the rock, and placing me on the top of it, Cast thy eyes eastward, said he, and tell me what thou seest. I see, said I, a huge valley, and a prodigious tide of water rolling through it. The valley that thou seest, said he, is the Vale of Misery, and the tide of water that thou seest is part of the great tide of eternity. What is the reason, said I, that the tide I see rises out of a thick mist at one end, and again loses itself in a thick mist at the other? What thou seest, said he, is that portion of eternity which is called time, measured out by the sun, and reaching from the beginning of the world to its consummation. Examine now, said he, this sea that is bounded with darkness at both ends, and tell me what thou discoverest in it. I see a bridge, said I, standing in the midst of the tide. The bridge thou seest, said he, is human life; consider it attentively. Upon a more leisurely survey of it, I found that it

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\* *Story of Abdallah and of Hilpa.*

consisted of three-score and ten entire arches, with several broken arches, which added to those that were entire, made up the number about an hundred. As I was counting the arches, the genius told me that this bridge consisted at first of a thousand arches: but that a great flood swept away the rest, and left the bridge in the ruinous condition I now beheld it. But tell me further, said he, what thou discoverest on it. I see multitudes of people passing over it, said I, and a black cloud hanging on each end of it. As I looked more attentively I saw several of the passengers dropping through the bridge into the great tide that flowed underneath it; and upon further examination, perceived there were innumerable trap-doors that lay concealed in the bridge, which the passengers no sooner trod upon, but they fell through them into the tide, and immediately disappeared. These hidden pit-falls were set very thick at the entrance of the bridge, so that throngs of people no sooner broke through the cloud, but many of them fell into them. They grew thinner towards the middle, but multiplied and lay closer together towards the end of the arches that were entire.

“There were indeed some persons, but their number was very small, that continued a kind of hobbling march on the broken arches, but fell through one after another, being quite tired and spent with so long a walk.

“I passed some time in the contemplation of this wonderful structure, and the great variety of objects which it presented. My heart was filled with a deep melancholy to see several dropping unexpectedly in the midst of mirth and jollity, and catching at every thing that stood by them to save themselves. Some were looking up towards heaven in a thoughtful posture, and in the midst of a speculation stumbled and fell out of sight. Multitudes were very busy in the pursuit of bubbles that glittered in their eyes and danced before them; but often when they thought themselves within the reach of them, their footing failed, and down they sunk. In this confusion of objects, I observed some with scimitars in their hands, and others with urinals, who ran to and fro on the bridge, thrusting several persons on trap-doors which did not seem to lie in their way, and which they might have escaped had they not been thus forced upon them. . . .

“I here fetched a deep sigh. Alas, said I, man was made in vain! How is he given away to misery and mortality! tortured in life, and swallowed up in death!—The genius, being moved with compassion towards me, bid me quit so uncomfortable a prospect. Look no more, said he, on man in the first stage of his existence, in his setting out for eternity; but cast thine eye on that thick mist into which the tide bears the several generations of mortals that fall into it. I directed my sight as I was ordered, and (whether or no the good genius strengthened it with any supernatural force, or dissipated part of the mist that was before too thick for the eye to penetrate) I saw the valley opening at the farther end, and spreading forth into an immense ocean, that had a huge rock of adamant running through the midst of it, and dividing it into two equal parts. The clouds still rested on one half of it, insonmuch that I could discover nothing in it: but the other appeared to me a vast ocean planted with innumerable islands, that were covered with fruits and flowers, and interwoven with a thousand little shining seas that ran among

them. I could see persons dressed in glorious habits, with garlands upon their heads, passing among the trees, lying down by the sides of the fountains, or resting on beds of flowers; and could hear a confused harmony of singing birds, falling waters, human voices, and musical instruments. Gladness grew in me upon the discovery of so delightful a scene. I wished for the wings of an eagle, that I might fly away to those happy seats; but the genius told me there was no passage to them, except through the gates of death, that I saw opening every moment upon the bridge. The islands, said he, that lie so fresh and green before thee, and with which the whole face of the ocean appears spotted as far as thou canst see, are more in number than the sands on the sea-shore; there are myriads of islands behind those which thou here discoverest, reaching farther than thine eye, or even thine imagination, can extend itself. These are the mansions of good men after death, who according to the degree and kinds of virtue in which they excelled, are distributed among these several islands, which abound with pleasures of different kinds and degrees, suitable to the relishes and perfections of those who are settled in them: every island is a paradise accommodated to its respective inhabitants. Are not these, O Mirza, habitations worth contending for? Does life appear miserable, that gives thee opportunities of earning such a reward? Is death to be feared, that will convey thee to so happy an existence? Think not man was made in vain, who has such an eternity reserved for him. I gazed with inexpressible pleasure on these happy islands. At length, said I, shew me now, I beseech thee, the secrets that lie hid under those dark clouds which cover the ocean on the other side of the rock of adamant. The genius making me no answer, I turned me about to address myself to him a second time, but I found that he had left me; I then turned again to the vision which I had been so long contemplating; but instead of the rolling tide, the arched bridge, and the happy islands, I saw nothing but the long hollow valley of Bagdat, with oxen, sheep, and camels grazing upon the sides of it.\*"

In this ornate moral sketch, this fine piece of argument, so correct and so eloquent, this ingenious and noble imagination, I find an epitome of all Addison's characteristics. These are the English tints which distinguish this classical age from that of the French; a narrower and more practical argument, a more poetical and less eloquent urbanity, a structure of mind more inventive and more rich, less sociable and less refined.

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\* *Spectator*, No. 159.

## CHAPTER XIII.

SWIFT.

§ 39.—IN 1685, in the great hall of Dublin University, the professors engaged in examining for the bachelor's degree enjoyed a singular spectacle: a poor scholar, odd, awkward, with hard blue eyes, an orphan, friendless, poorly supported by the charity of an uncle, having failed once before to take his degree on account of his ignorance of logic, had come up again without having condescended to read logic. To no purpose his tutor set before him the most respectable folios—Smiglecius, Kechermannus, Burgerdiscius. He turned over a few pages, and shut them directly. When the argumentation came on, the proctor was obliged “to reduce his replies into syllogism.” He was asked how he could reason well without rules; he replied that he did reason pretty well without them. This folly shocked them; yet he was received, though barely, *speciali gratiâ*, says the register, and the professors went away, doubtless with pitying smiles, lamenting the feeble brain of Jonathan Swift.

This was his first humiliation and his first rebellion. His whole life was like this moment, overwhelmed and made wretched by sorrows and hatred. To what excess they rose, his portrait and his history alone can show. He had an exaggerated and terrible pride, and made the haughtiness of the most powerful ministers and most mighty lords bend beneath his arrogance. A simple journalist, possessing nothing but a small Irish living, he treated with them on an equality. Harley, the prime minister, having sent him a bank bill for his first articles, he was offended at being taken for a paid man, returned the money, demanded an apology; he received it, and wrote in his journal: “I have taken Mr. Harley into favor

again.”\* On another occasion, having observed that St. John, Secretary of State, looked upon him coldly, he rebuked him for it:

“One thing I warned him of, never to appear cold to me, for I would not be treated like a school-boy; that I expected every great minister who honored me with his acquaintance, if he heard or saw anything to my disadvantage, would let me know in plain words, and not put me in pain to guess by the change or coldness of his countenance or behavior; for it was what I would hardly bear from a crowned head; and I thought no subject’s favor was worth it; and that I designed to let my Lord Keeper and M. Harley know the same thing, that they might use me accordingly.” †

St. John approved of this, made excuses, said that he had passed several nights at “business, and one night at drinking,” and that his fatigue might have seemed like ill-humor. In the minister’s drawing-room Swift went up and spoke to some obscure person, and compelled the lords to come and speak to him;

“Mr. secretary told me the Duke of Buckingham had been talking to him much about me, and desired my acquaintance. I answered, it could not be, for he had not made sufficient advances. Then the Duke of Shrewsbury said, he thought the duke was not used to make advances. I said, I could not help that; for I always expected advances in proportion to men’s quality, and more from a duke than other men.” ‡

“Saw Lord Halifax at Court, and we joined and talked, and the Duchess of Shrewsbury came up and reproached me for not dining with her: I said that was not so soon done; for I expected more advances from ladies, especially duchesses: She promised to comply. . . . Lady Oglethorp brought me and the Duchess of Hamilton together to-day in the drawing-room, and I have given her some encouragement, but not much.§

He triumphed in his arrogance, and said with a restrained joy, full of vengeance:

“I generally am acquainted with about thirty in the drawing-room, and am so proud that I make all the lords come up to me. One passes half an hour pleasant enough.”

He carried his triumph to brutality and tyranny; writing to the Duchess of Queensberry, he says:

\* In Swift’s Works, ed. W. Scott, 19 vols. 1814; *Journal to Stella*, ii. Feb. 13 (1710-11). He says also (Feb. 7): “I will not see him (M. Harley) till he makes amends. . . . I was deaf to all entreaties, and have desired Lewis to go to him, and let him know that I expected farther satisfaction. If we let these great ministers pretend too much, there will be no governing them.”

† *Ibid.* April 3, 1711.

‡ *Ibid.* May 10, 1711.

§ *Ibid.* Oct. 7, 1711.

“I am glad you know your duty; for it has been a known and established rule about twenty years in England, that the first advances have been constantly made me by all ladies who aspired to my acquaintance, and the greater their quality, the greater were their advances.” \*

The famous General Webb, with his crutch and cane, limped up two flights of stairs to congratulate and invite him; Swift accepted, then an hour later withdrew his consent, preferring to dine elsewhere. He seemed to look upon himself as a superior being, exempt from the necessity of ceremony, entitled to homage, caring neither for sex, rank, nor fame, whose business it was to protect and destroy, distributing favors, insults, and pardons. He was eccentric and violent in everything, in his pleasantry, in his private affairs, with his friends, with unknown people; he was often taken for a madman. Addison and his friends had seen for several days at the St. James' Coffee-house a singular parson, who put his hat on the table, walked for half an hour backward and forward, paid his money, and left, having attended to nothing and said nothing. They called him the mad parson. One day this parson perceives a gentleman “just come out of the country, went straight up to him, and in a very abrupt manner, without any previous salute, asked him, ‘pray sir, do you know any good weather in the world?’ After staring a little at the singularity of Swift's manner and the oddity of the question, the gentleman answered, ‘Yes, sir, I thank God, I remember a great deal of good weather in my time.’ ‘That is more,’ said Swift, ‘than I can say. I never remember any weather that was not too hot or too cold, too wet or too dry; but, however God Almighty contrives it, at the end of the year 'tis all very well.’” † Another day, dining with the Earl of Burlington, the Dean said to the mistress of the house, “Lady Burlington, I hear you can sing; sing me a song.” The lady looked on this unceremonious manner of asking a favor with distaste, and positively refused. He said, “she should sing, or he would make her. Why, madam, I suppose you take me for one of your poor English hedge-parsons; sing when I bid you!” As the earl did nothing but laugh at this freedom, the lady was so vexed, that she burst into tears, and retired. His first compliment to her,

\* Swift's works, xvii. p. 352.

† Sheridan's *Life of Swift*.

when he saw her again, was, "Pray, madam, are you as proud and as ill-natured now, as when I saw you last?"\* People were astonished or amused at these outbursts; I see in them sobs and cries, the explosion of long overwhelming and bitter thoughts; they are the starts of a mind unsubdued, shuddering, rebelling, breaking the barriers, wounding, crushing, or bruising every one on its road, or those who wish to stop it. Swift became mad at last; he felt this madness coming, he has described it in a horrible manner; beforehand he has tasted all the disgust and bitterness of it; he showed it on his tragic face, in his terrible and wan eyes. This is the powerful and mournful genius which nature gave up as a prey to society and life; society and life poured all their poisons in him.

He knew what poverty and scorn were even at the age when the mind expands, when the heart is full of pride, † when he was hardly maintained by the alms of his family, gloomy and without hope, feeling his strength and the dangers of his strength. ‡ At twenty-one, as secretary to Sir W. Temple, he had twenty pounds a year salary, sat at the same table with the upper servants, § wrote Pindaric odes in honor of his master, spent ten years amidst the humiliations of servitude and the familiarity of the servants' hall, obliged to adulate a gouty and flattered courtier, to submit to my lady his sister, actually pained "when Sir William Temple would look cold and out of humor," || lured by false hopes, forced after an attempt at independence to resume the livery which was choking

\* W. Scott's *Life of Swift*, i. 477.

† At that time he had already begun the *Tale of a Tub*.

‡ He addresses his muse thus, in *Verses occasioned by Sir William Temple's late illness and recovery*, xiv. 45 :

"Wert thou right woman, thou should'st scorn to look  
On an abandoned wretch by hope forsook;  
Forsook by hope, ill-fortune's last relief,  
Assign'd for life to unremitting grief;  
To thee I owe that fatal bend of mind  
Still to unhappy restless thoughts inclined;  
To thee, what oft I vainly strive to hide,  
That scorn of fools, by fools mistook for pride."

§ These assertions have been denied. See Roscoe's *Life of Swift*, i. 14—Tr.

|| "Don't you remember how I used to be in pain when Sir William Temple would look cold and out of humour for three or four days, and I used to suspect a hundred reasons? I have plucked up my spirit since then, faith: he spoiled a fine gentleman."—*Journal to Stella*, April 4, 1710-11.



him. "When you find years coming on, without hopes of a place at court. . . I directly advise you to go upon the road which is the only post of honor left you; there you will meet many of your old comrades, and live a short life and a merry one." \* This is followed by instructions as to the conduct servants ought to display when led to the gallows. Such is his *Directions to Servants*; he was relating what he had suffered. At the age of thirty-one, expecting a place from William III., he edited the works of his patron, dedicated them to the sovereign, sent him a memorial, got nothing, and fell back upon the post of chaplain and private secretary to the Earl of Berkeley. He soon remained only chaplain to that nobleman, feeling all the disgust which the part of ecclesiastical valet must inspire in a man of feeling.

"You know I honor the cloth; I design to be a parson's wife. . . .  
And over and above, that I may prove your excellency's letter  
With an order for the chaplain aforesaid, or instead of him a better." †

Their excellencies, having promised him the deanery of Derry, gave it to another. Driven to politics, he wrote a Whig pamphlet, *A Discourse on the Contests and Dissensions in Athens and Rome*, received from Lord Halifax and the party leaders a score of fine promises, and was neglected. Twenty years of insults without revenge, and humiliations without respite; the inner tempest of nourished and crushed hopes, vivid and brilliant dreams, suddenly faded by the necessity of a mechanical duty; the habit of hatred and suffering, the necessity of concealing these, the baneful consciousness of superiority, the isolation of genius and pride, the bitterness of accumulated rage and pent-up scorn,—these were the goads which pricked him like a bull. More than a thousand pamphlets in four years, stung him still more, with such designations as renegade, traitor, and atheist. He crushed them all, set his foot on the Whig party, solaced himself with the poignant pleasure of victory. If ever a soul was saturated with the joy of tearing, outraging, and destroying, it was his. Excess of scorn, implacable irony, crushing logic, the cruel smile of the foeman, who sees beforehand the mortal spot in which he will strike his

\* *Directions to Servants*, xii. ch. iii. 434.

† *Mrs. Harris' Petition*, xiv. 52.

enemy, advances towards him, tortures him deliberately, eagerly, with enjoyment—such were the feelings which had leavened him and which broke from him with such harshness that he hindered his own career ;\* and that of so many high places for which he stretched out his hands, there remained for him only a deanery in poor Ireland. The accession of George I. exiled him thither ; the accession of George II., on which he had counted, confined him there. He contended there first against popular hatred, then against the victorious minister, then against entire humanity in sanguinary pamphlets, despairing satires ;† he tasted there once more the pleasure of fighting and wounding ; he suffered there to the end, soured by the advance of years, by the spectacle of oppression and misery, by the feeling of his own impotence, enraged to have to live amongst “an enslaved people,” chained and vanquished. He says :

“I find myself disposed every year, or rather every month to be more angry and revengeful ; and my rage is so ignoble that it descends even to resent the folly and baseness of the enslaved people among whom I live.†

This cry is the epitome of his public life ; these feelings are the materials which public life furnished to his talents.

He experienced these feelings also in private life more violent and familiar. He had brought up and purely loved a charming, well-informed, modest young girl, Esther Johnson, (“Stella”), who from infancy had loved and revered him alone. She lived with him, he had made her his confidante. From London, during his political struggles, he sent her the full journal of his slightest actions ; he wrote to her twice a day, with extreme ease and familiarity, with all the playfulness, vivacity, petting and caressing names of tenderest attachment. Yet another girl, beautiful and rich, Miss Vanhomrigh (“Vanessa”) attached herself to him, declared her passion, received from him several marks of his own, followed him to Ireland, now jealous, now submissive, but so impassioned, so unhappy, that her letters might have broken a harder heart :

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\* By the *Tale of a Tub* with the clergy, and by the *Prophesy of Windsor* with the queen.

† *Drapier's Letters*, *Gulliver's Travels*, *Rhapsody on Poetry*, *A Modest Proposal for preventing the Children*, etc., and several pamphlets on Ireland.

‡ Letter to Lord Bolingbroke, Dublin, March 21, 1728, xvii. 274,

"If you continue to treat me as you do, you will not be made uneasy by me long. . . . I am sure I could have borne the rack much better, than those killing, killing words of you. . . . Oh that you may have but so much regard for me left, that this complaint may touch your soul with pity!"\*

She pined and died. Swift married Miss Johnson from duty, but in secret, and on condition that she should only be his wife in name. She was twelve years dying; Swift went away to England as often as he could. His house was a hell to him; it is thought that some secret cause had influenced his loves and his marriage. Delany, his biographer, having once found him talking with Archbishop King, saw the archbishop in tears, and Swift rushing by with a countenance full of grief, and a distracted air. "Sir," said the prelate, "you have just met the most unhappy man upon earth; but on the subject of his wretchedness you must never ask a question." Overwork and excess of emotions had made him ill from his youth: he was subject to giddiness; he lost his hearing. He had long felt that reason was deserting him. One day he was observed "gazing intently at the top of a lofty elm, the head of which had been blasted. Upon his friend's approach, he pointed to it, significantly adding, "I shall be like that tree, and die first at the top."† His memory left him; he received the attentions of others with disgust, sometimes with rage. He lived alone, gloomy, unable to read. They say he passed a year without uttering a word, with a horror of the human face, walking ten hours a day, a maniac, then an idiot. A tumor came on one of his eyes, so that he continued a month without sleeping, and five men were needed to prevent his tearing out the eye with his nails. One of his last words was, "I am mad." When his will was opened, it was found that he left his whole fortune to build a madhouse.

§ 40.—These passions and these miseries were necessary to inspire the *Drapier's Letters*, *Gulliver's Travels* and the *Tale of a Tub*.

Small change was lacking in Ireland, and the English ministers had given William Wood a patent to coin one hundred and eight thousand pounds of copper money. A commission, of which Newton was a member, verified the pieces made,

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\* Letter of Miss Vanhomrigh, Dublin, 1714, xix. 421.

† Roscoe's *Life of Swift*, i. 80.

found them good, and several competent judges still think that the measure was loyal and serviceable to the land. Swift roused the people against it, speaking to them in an intelligible style, and triumphed over the common sense and state.

“ ‘ Brethren, friends, countrymen, and fellow-subjects, what I intend now to say to you is, next to your duty to God and the care of your salvation, of the greatest concern to you and your children: your bread and clothing and every common necessary of life depend upon it. Therefore I do most earnestly exhort you, as men, as Christians, as parents, and as lovers of your country, to read this paper with the utmost attention, or get it read to you by others; which that you may do at the less expense, I have ordered the printer to sell it at the lowest rate.’ \*

You see popular distrust spring up at a glance; this is the style which reaches workmen and peasants; this simplicity, these details, are necessary to penetrate their belief. The author is like a draper, and they trust only men of their own condition. Swift goes on to accuse Wood, declaring that his copper pieces are not worth one-eighth of their nominal value. There is no trace of proofs: no proofs are required to convince the people; it is enough to repeat the same accusation again and again, to abound in intelligible examples, to strike eye and ear. The imagination once gained, they will go on shouting, convincing themselves by their own cries, intractably. Swift says to his adversaries:

“ ‘ Your paragraph relates further that Sir Isaac Newton reported an assay taken at the Tower of Wood’s metal; by which it appears that Wood had in all respects performed his contract. His contract! With whom? Was it with the Parliament or the people of Ireland? Are not they to be the purchasers? But they detest, abhor, and reject it as corrupt, fraudulent, mingled with dirt and trash.’ †

And a little farther on:

“ ‘ His first proposal is, that he will be content to coin no more (than forty thousand pounds), unless *the exigencies of the trade require it*, although his patent empowers him to coin a far greater quantity. . . . To which if I were to answer, it should be thus: let Mr. Wood and his crew of founders and tinkers coin on, till there is not an old kettle left in the kingdom; let them coin old leather, tobacco-pipe clay, or the dirt in the street, and call their trumpery by what name they please, from a guinea to a farthing; we are not under any concern to know how he and his tribe of accomplices think fit to

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\* *Drapier’s Letters*, vii.; Letter 1, 97. † *Ibid.* vii.; Letter 2, 114.

employ themselves. But I hope, and trust, that we are all, to a man, fully determined to have nothing to do with him or his ware.\*

Swift gets angry and does not answer. In fact, this is the best way to answer; to move such hearers you must move their blood and their nerves; then shopkeepers and farmers will turn up their sleeves, double their fists; and the good arguments of their opponents will only increase their desire to knock them down.

Now see how a mass of examples makes a gratuitous assertion probable:

“Your Newsletter says that an assay was made of the coin. How impudent and insupportable is this! Wood takes care to coin a dozen or two halfpence of good metal, sends them to the Tower, and they are approved; and these must answer all that he has already coined, or shall coin for the future. It is true, indeed, that a gentleman often sends to my shop for a pattern of stuff; I cut it fairly off, and if he likes it, he comes or sends and compares the pattern with the whole piece, and probably we come to a bargain. But if I were to buy a hundred sheep, and the grazier should bring me one single wether, fat and well fleeced, by way of pattern, and expect the same price round for the whole hundred, without suffering me to see them before he was paid, or giving me good security to restore my money for those that were lean, or shorn, or scabby, I would be none of his customer. I have heard of a man who had a mind to sell his house, and therefore carried a piece of brick in his pocket, which he showed as a pattern to encourage purchasers; and this is directly the case in point with Mr. Wood’s assay.†

A burst of laughter follows; butchers and bricklayers were gained over. To finish, Swift showed them a practical expedient, suited to their understanding and their condition:

“The common soldier, when he goes to the market or ale house, will offer his money; and if it be refused, perhaps he will swagger and hector, and threaten to beat the butcher or alewife, or take the goods by force, and throw them the bad halfpence. In this and the like cases, the shopkeeper or victualler, or any other tradesman, has no more to do than to demand ten times the price of his goods, if it is to be paid in Wood’s money; for example, twenty-pence of that money for a quart of ale, and so in all things else, and never part with his goods till he gets the money.” ‡

Public clamor overcame the English Government; they withdrew the money and paid Wood a large indemnity. Such is the merit of Swift’s arguments; good tools, trenchant and han-

\* *Ibid.* vii.; Letter 2, 116.

† *Drapier’s Letters*, vii., Letter 2, 114.

‡ *Ibid.* vii.; Letter 1, 101.

dy, neither elegant nor bright, but whose value is proved by their effect.

The whole beauty of these pamphlets is in their tone. They have neither the generous fire of Pascal, nor the bewildering gayety of Beaumarchais, nor the chiselled delicacy of Paul Louis Courier, but an overwhelming air of superiority and a bitter and terrible rancor. Vast passion and pride, like the positive Drapier's mind just now described, have given all the blows their force. You should read his *Public Spirit of the Whigs*, against Steele. Page by page Steele is torn to pieces with a calmness and scorn never equalled. Swift approaches regularly, leaving no part unwounded, heaping wound on wound, every blow sure, knowing beforehand their reach and depth. Poor Steele, a vain, thoughtless fellow, is in his hands like Gulliver amongst the giants; it is a pity to see a contest so unequal; and this contest is pitiless. Swift crushes him carefully and easily, like an obnoxious animal. The unfortunate man, an old officer and semi-literary man, had made awkward use of constitutional words.

“Upon this rock the author . . . is perpetually splitting, as often as he ventures out beyond the narrow bounds of his literature. He has a confused remembrance of words since he left the university, but has lost half their meaning, and puts them together with no regard, except to their cadence; as I remember, a fellow nailed up maps in a gentleman's closet, some sidelong, others upside down, the better to adjust them to the pannels.”\*

He wrote the *Tale of a Tub* at Sir. W. Temple's, amidst all kind of reading, as an abstract of truth and science. Hence this tale is the satire of all science and all truth.

Of religion first. He seems here to defend the Church of England; but what church and what creed are not involved in his attack? To enliven his subject, he profanes and reduces questions of dogma to a question of clothes. A father had three sons, Peter, Martin, and Jack; he left each of them a coat at his death,† warning them to wear it clean and brush it often. The three brothers obeyed for some time, and travelled sensibly, slaying ‘a reasonable quantity of giants and dragons.’‡

\* *The Public Spirit of the Whigs*, iv. 405. See also in the *Examiner* the pamphlet against Marlborough under the name of Crassus, and the comparison between Roman generosity and English meanness.

† Christian truth.

‡ Persecutions and contests of the primitive church.

Unfortunately, having come up to a town, they adopted its manners, fell in love with several fashionable ladies, the Duchess d'Argent, Madame de Grands Titres, and the Countess d'Orgueil,\* and to gain their favors, began to live as gallants, taking snuff, swearing, rhyming, and contracting debts, keeping horses, fighting duels, and killing bailiffs. A sect was established who

“Held the universe to be a large suit of clothes, which invests every thing: that the earth is invested by the air, the air is invested by the stars, and the stars are invested by the primum mobile. . . . What is that which some call laud, but a fine coat faced with green? or the sea, but a waistcoat of water-tabby? . . . You will find how curious journeyman Nature has been, to trim up the vegetable beaux: observe how sparkish a periwig adorns the head of a beech, and what a fine doublet of white satin is worn by the birch. . . . Is not religion a cloak; honesty a pair of shoes worn out in the dirt; self-love a surtout; vanity a shirt; and conscience a pair of breeches? . . . If certain ermines and furs be placed in a certain position, we style them a judge; and so an apt conjunction of lawn and black satin, we entitle a bishop.†

Others held also, ‘that the soul was the outward, and the body the inward clothing. . . . This last they proved by Scripture, because in them we live, and move, and have our being.’ Thus our three brothers, having only very simple clothes, were embarrassed. For instance, the fashion at this time was for shoulder-knots, and their father’s will expressly forbade them to ‘add to or diminish from their coats one thread:’

“In this unhappy case they went immediately to consult their father’s will, read it over and over, but not a word of the shoulder-knot. . . . After much thought, one of the brothers, who happened to be more book-learned than the other two, said, he had found an expedient. “It is true,” said he, “there is nothing in this will, *totidem verbis*, making mention of Shoulder-Knot; but I dare conjecture, we may find them inclusive, or *totidem syllabis*.” This distinction was immediately approved by all; and so they fell again to examine; but their evil star had so directed the matter, the first syllable was not to be found in the whole writings. Upon which disappointment, he, who found the former evasion, took heart and said: “Brothers, there are yet hopes, for though we cannot find them *totidem verbis*, nor *totidem syllabis*, I dare engage we shall make them out *tertio modo*, or *totidem litteris*.” This discovery was also highly commended; upon which they fell once more to

\* Covetousness, ambition, and pride; the three vices that the ancient fathers inveighed against.

† *A Tale of a Tub*, xi. sec. 2, 79.

the scrutiny. and picked out S, H, O, U, L, D, E, R; when the same planet, enemy to their repose, had wonderfully contrived that a K was not to be found. Here was a weighty difficulty; but the distinguishing brother . . . now his hand was in, proved by a very good argument, that K was a modern illegitimate letter, unknown to the learned ages, nor anywhere to be found in ancient manuscripts. . . . Upon this all farther difficulty vanished; shoulder-knots were made clearly out to be *jure paterno*, and our three gentlemen swaggered with as large and flaunting ones as the best.\*

Other interpretations admitted gold lace, and a codicil authorized flame-colored satin linings:

"Next winter a player, hired for the purpose by the corporation of fringe-makers, acted his part in a new comedy, all covered with silver fringe, and according to the laudable custom gave rise to that fashion. Upon which the brothers consulting their father's will, to their great astonishment found these words: "Item, I charge and command my said three sons to wear no sort of silver fringe upon or about their said coats," etc. . . . However, after some pause, the brother so often mentioned for his erudition, who was well skilled in criticisms, had found in a certain author, which he said should be nameless, that the same word, which in the will is called fringe, does also signify a broomstick: and doubtless ought to have the same interpretation in this paragraph. This another of the brothers disliked, because of that epithet silver, which could not, he humbly conceived, in propriety of speech, be reasonably applied to a broomstick; but it was replied upon him that this epithet was understood in a mythological and allegorical sense. However, he objected again, why their father should forbid them to wear a broomstick on their coats, a caution that seemed unnatural and impertinent; upon which, he was taken up short, as one who spoke irreverently of a mystery, which doubtless was very useful and significant, but ought not to be over-curiously pried into, or nicely reasoned upon.' †

In the end the scholastic brother grew weary of searching farther, 'evasions,' locked up the old will in a strong box, authorized by tradition the fashions which became him, and having contrived to be left a legacy, styled himself My Lord Peter. His brothers, treated like servants, were discarded from his house; they reopened the will of their father, and began to understand it. Martin the Anglican, to reduce his clothes to the primitive simplicity, brought off a large handful of points, stripped away ten dozen yards of fringe, rid his coat of a huge quantity of gold-lace, but kept a few embroideries, which could not 'be got away without damaging the cloth.' Jack the Puritan tore off all in his enthusiasm, and was found in tatters,

\* *A Tale of a Tub*, 83.

† *Ibid.* 88.



moreover envious of Martin, and half mad. He then joined the Æolists, or inspired admirers of the wind, who pretend that the spirit, or breath, or wind, is heavenly, and contains all knowledge :

“‘First, it is generally affirmed or confirmed that learning puffeth men up; and secondly they proved it by the following syllogism: words are but wind; and learning is nothing but words; *ergo* learning is nothing but wind. . . . This, when blown up to its perfection, ought not to be covetously hoarded up, stifled, or hid under a bushel, but freely communicated to mankind. Upon these reasons, and others of equal weight, the wise Æolists affirm the gift of belching to be the noblest act of a rational creature. . . . At certain seasons of the year, you might behold the priests among them in vast number . . . linked together in a circular chain, with every man a pair of bellows applied to his neighbor . . . . . by which they blew each other to the shape and size of a tun; and for that reason with great propriety of speech, did usually call their bodies their vessels.’\* ”

After this explanation of theology, religious quarrels, and mystical inspirations, what is left, even of the Anglican Church? She is a sensible, useful, political cloak, but what else? Like a brush used with too strong a hand, the buffoonery has carried away the cloth as well as the stain.

Religion drowned, he turns against science. The book opens with introductions, prefaces, dedications, and other appendices generally employed to swell books—violent caricatures heaped up against the vanity and prolixity of authors. He professes himself one of them, and announces their discoveries. Admirable discoveries! The first of their commentaries will be on

“‘*Tom Thumb*, whose author was a Pythagorean philosopher. This dark treatise contains the whole scheme of the Metempsychosis, deducing the progress of the soul through all her stages. *Whittington and his Cat* is the work of that mysterious rabbi Jehuda Hannasi, containing a defence of the Gemara of the Jerusalem Misna, and its just preference to that of Babylon, contrary to the vulgar opinion.’ †

Then follow a multitude of pitiless sarcasms. Swift has the genius of insult; he is an inventor of irony, as Shakspeare of poetry; and as beseems an extreme force, he goes to extremes in his thought and art. He lashes reason after science, and leaves nothing of the whole human mind. With a medical

seriousness he establishes that vapors are exhaled from the whole body, which, 'getting possession of the brain,' leave it healthy if they are not abundant, but excite it if they are; that in the first place they make peaceful individuals, in the second great politicians, founders of religions, and deep philosophers, that is, fools, so that folly is the source of all genius and all the institutions of the universe. This is why it is very wrong to keep men shut up in Bedlam, and a commission appointed to examine them would find in this academy imprisoned geniuses 'which might produce admirable instruments for the several offices in a state ecclesiastical, civil, and military.'

"'Is any student tearing his straw in piece-meal, swearing and blaspheming, biting his grate, foaming at the mouth? . . . let the right worshipful commissioners of inspection give him a regiment of dragoons, and send him into Flanders among the rest. . . . You will find a third gravely taking the dimensions of his kennel; a person of foresight and insight, though kept quite in the dark. . . . He walks duly in one pace . . . talks much of hard times and taxes and the woman of Babylon; bars up the wooden window of his cell constantly at eight o'clock, dreams of fire. . . . Now what a figure would all those acquirements amount to if the owner were sent into the city among his brethren! Now is it not amazing to think the society of Warwick-lane should have no more concern for the recovery of so useful a member? . . . I shall not descend so minutely, as to insist upon the vast number of beaux, fiddlers, poets, and politicians that the world might recover by such a reformation. . . . Even I myself, the author of these momentous truths, am a person whose imaginations are hard-mouthed, and exceedingly disposed to run away with his reason, which I have observed, from long experience, to be a very light rider, and easily shaken off; upon which account my friends will never trust me alone, without a solemn promise to vent my speculations in this, or the like manner, for the universal benefit of mankind.'\*

Wretched he who knows himself and mocks himself. What madman's laughter, and what a sob in this hoarse gayety! Yet if it is sad to exhibit human folly, it is sadder to exhibit human perversity: we suffer less in seeing extravagance and folly than wickedness and baseness, and I find Swift more agreeable in his *Tale of a Tub* than in *Gulliver*.

All his talent and all his passions are assembled in this book; the positive mind has impressed upon it its form and force. There is nothing agreeable in the fiction or the style;

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\* *A Tale of a Tub; A Digression concerning Madness*, sec. 11, 167.

it is the journal of an ordinary man, a surgeon, then a captain, who describes coolly and sensibly the events and objects which he has seen; no feeling for the beautiful, no appearance of admiration or passion, no accent. But what a vehemence in this dryness! How ridiculous our interests and passions seem, degraded to the littleness of Lilliput, or compared to the vastness of Brobdignag! What is beauty, when the handsomest body, seen with piercing eyes, seems horrible? What is our power, when an insect, king of an ant-hill, can be called, like our princes, 'sublime majesty, delight and terror of the universe?' What is our homage worth, when a pigmy 'is taller, by almost the breadth of a nail, than any of his court, which alone is enough to strike an awe into its beholders?' Three-fourths of our sentiment are follies, and the weakness of our organs is the only cause of our veneration or love.

Society repels us still more than man. At Laputa, at Lilliput, amongst the horses and giants, Swift rages against it, and is never tired of abusing and reviling it. In his eyes, 'ignorance, idleness, and vice are the proper ingredients for qualifying a legislator; laws are best explained, interpreted, and applied by those whose interest and abilities lie in perverting, confounding and eluding them.\* A noble is a wretch, corrupted body and soul, 'combining in himself all the diseases and vices transmitted by ten generations of rakes and rascals. A lawyer is a hired liar, wont by twenty years of roguery to pervert the truth if he is an advocate, and to sell it if he is a judge. A minister of state is a go-between, who, having disposed of his wife, or brawled for the public good, is master of all offices; and who, in order better to rob the money of the nation, buys members of the House of Commons with the same money. A prince is a practiser of all the vices, unable to employ or love an honest man, persuaded that 'the royal throne could not be supported without corruption, because that positive, confident, restive temper, which virtue infused into a man, was a perpetual clog to public business.† At Lilliput the king chooses as his ministers those who dance best upon the tight-rope. At Luggnagg he compels all those, who are presented to him, to crawl on their bellies and lick the dust.

\* Swift's Works, xii. *Gulliver's Travels*, Part 2, ch. 6, p. 171.

† *Gulliver's Travels*, Part 3, ch. 8, p. 258.

“ ‘When the king has a mind to put any of his nobles to death in a gentle, indulgent manner, he commands the floor to be strewed with a certain brown powder of a deadly composition, which, being licked up, infallibly kills him in twenty-four hours. But in justice to this prince’s great clemency, and the care he has of his subjects’ lives (wherein it were much to be wished that the monarchs of Europe would imitate him), it must be mentioned for his honor, that strict orders are given to have the infected parts of the floor well washed after every such execution. . . . I myself heard him give directions that one of his pages should be whipped, whose turn it was to give notice about washing the floor after an execution, but maliciously had omitted it; by which neglect, a young lord of great hopes coming to an audience, was unfortunately poisoned, although the prince at that time had no design against his life. But this good prince was so gracious as to forgive the poor page his whipping, upon promise that he would do so no more, without special orders.’ \*

All these fictions of giants, pigmies, flying islands, are means for depriving human nature of the veils with which habit and imagination cover it, to display it in its truth and its ugliness. There is still one cloak to remove, the most deceitful and familiar. Swift must take away that appearance of reason in which we deck ourselves. He must suppress the sciences, arts, combinations of societies, inventions of industries, whose brightness dazzles us. He must discover the Yahoo in man. What a spectacle !

“ ‘At last I beheld several animals in a field, and one or two of the same kind sitting in trees. Their shape was very singular and deformed. . . . Their heads and breasts were covered with a thick hair, some frizzled, and others lank; they had beards like goats, and a long ridge of hair down their backs, and the forepart of their legs and feet; but the rest of their bodies was bare, so that I might see their skins, which were of a brown buff color. . . . They climbed high trees as nimbly as a squirrel, for they had strong extended claws before and behind, terminating in sharp points and hooked. . . . The females . . . had long lank hair on their head, but none on their faces, nor any thing more than a sort of down on the rest of their bodies. . . . Upon the whole I never beheld in all my travels so disagreeable an animal, or one against which I naturally conceived so great an antipathy.’ †

According to Swift, such are our brothers. He finds in them all our instincts. They hate each other, tear each other with their talons, with hideous contortions and yells: such is the source of our quarrels. If they find a dead cow, although they are but five, and there is enough for fifty, they strangle

\* *Ibid.* Part 3, ch. 9, p. 264.

† *Ibid.* Part 4, ch. 1, p. 286.

and wound each other: such is a picture of our greed and our wars. They dig up precious stones and hide them in their kennels, and watch them 'with great caution,' pining and howling when robbed: such is the origin of our love of gold. They devour indifferently 'herbs, berries, roots, the corrupted flesh of animals,' preferring 'what they could get by rapine or stealth,' gorging themselves till they vomit or burst: such is the portrait of our gluttony and injustice. They have a kind of juicy and unwholesome root, which they 'would suck with great delight,' till they 'howl, and grin, and chatter,' embracing or scratching each other, then reeling, hiccuping, wallowing in the mud: such is a picture of our drunkenness.

"In most herds there was a sort of ruling yahoo, who was always more deformed in body, and mischievous in disposition, than any of the rest: that this leader had usually a favorite as like himself as he could get, whose employment was to lick his master's feet, . . . and drive the female yahoos to his kennel; for which he was now and then rewarded with a piece of ass's flesh. . . . He usually continues in office till a worse can be found.\*"

Such is an abstract of our government. And yet he gives preference to the Yahoos over men, saying that our wretched reason has aggravated and multiplied these vices, and concluding with the king of Brobdignag that our species is 'the most pernicious race of little odious vermin that nature ever suffered to crawl on the face of the earth.†

Five years after this treatise on man, he wrote in favor of unhappy Ireland a pamphlet which is like the last effort of his despair and his genius.‡ I give it almost whole; it deserves it. I know nothing like it in any literature:

"It is a melancholy object to those who walk through this great town, or travel in the country, when they see the streets, the roads, and cabin-doors crowded with beggars of the female sex, followed by three, four, or six children, all in rags, and importuning every passenger for an alms. . . . I think it is agreed by all parties that this prodigious number of children . . . is, in the present deplorable state of the kingdom, a very great additional grievance; and therefore, whoever could find out a fair, cheap, and easy method of making these children sound, easy members of the Commonwealth, would deserve so well of the public, as to have his statue set up for

\* *Gulliver's Travels*, Part 4, ch. 7, p. 337.

† *Ibid.* Part 2, ch. 6, p. 172.

‡ *A Modest Proposal for preventing the children of the poor people in Ireland from becoming a burden on their parents or country, and for making them beneficial to the public.*

a preserver of the nation. . . . I shall now, therefore, humbly propose my own thoughts, which I hope will not be liable to the least objection.\*

When we know Swift, such a beginning frightens us :

“ I have been assured by a very knowing American of my acquaintance in London, that a young healthy child, well nursed, is, at a year old, a most delicious, nourishing, and wholesome food, whether stewed, roasted, baked, or boiled ; and I make no doubt that it will equally serve in a fricassee or a ragout.

“ I do therefore humbly offer it to public consideration, that of the hundred and twenty thousand children already computed, twenty thousand may be reserved for breed, whereof only one-fourth part to be males ; . . . that the remaining hundred thousand may, at a year old, be offered in sale to the persons of quality and fortune through the kingdom ; always advising the mother to let them suck plentifully in the last month, so as to render them plump and fat for a good table. A child will make two dishes at an entertainment for friends, and when the family dines alone, the fore or hind quarter will make a reasonable dish, and seasoned with a little pepper or salt, will be very good boiled on the fourth day, especially in winter.’

“ I have reckoned, upon a medium, that a child just born will weigh twelve pounds, and in a solar year, if tolerably nursed, will increase to twenty eight pounds.

“ I have already computed the charge of nursing a beggar’s child (in which list I reckon all cottagers, laborers, and four-fifths of the farmers), to be about two shillings per annum, rags included ; and I believe no gentleman would repine to give ten shillings for the carcass of a good fat child, which, as I have said, will make four dishes of excellent nutritive meat.

“ Those who are more thrifty (as I must confess the times require), may flay the carcass ; the skin of which, artificially dressed, will make admirable gloves for ladies, and summer boots for fine gentlemen.

“ As to our city of Dublin, shambles may be appointed for this purpose in the most convenient parts of it ; and butchers we may be assured will not be wanting ; although I rather recommend buying the children alive, than dressing them hot from the knife, as we do roasting pigs. . . .

“ I think the advantages by the proposal which I have made, are obvious and many, as well as of the highest importance. For first, as I have already observed, it would greatly lessen the number of Papists, with whom we are yearly overrun, being the principal breeders of the nation, as well as our most dangerous enemies. . . . Thirdly, whereas the maintenance of a hundred thousand children, from two years old and upward, cannot be computed at less than ten shillings a piece per annum, the nation’s stock will be thereby increased fifty thousand pounds per annum, beside the profit of a new dish introduced to the tables of all gentlemen of fortune in the kingdom, who have any refinement in taste. And the money will circulate among ourselves, the goods being entirely of our own growth and manufacture. . . .

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\* *A Modest Proposal*, etc., vii. 454.

Sixthly, this would be a great inducement to marriage, which all wise nations have either encouraged by rewards, or enforced by laws and penalties. It would increase the care and tenderness of mothers toward their children, when they were sure of a settlement for life to the poor babes, provided in some sort by the public, to their annual profit or expense. . . . Many other advantages might be enumerated, for instance, the addition of some thousand carcasses in our exportation of barrelled beef; the propagation of swine's flesh, and the improvement in the art of making good bacon. . . . But this, and many others, I omit, being studious of brevity.

“Some persons of desponding spirit are in great concern about that vast number of poor people who are aged, diseased, or maimed; and I have been desired to employ my thoughts, what course may be taken to ease the nation of so grievous an encumbrance. But I am not in the least pain upon that matter; because it is very well known, that they are every day dying and rotting, by cold and famine, and filth and vermin, as fast as can be reasonably expected. And as to the young laborers, they are now in almost as hopeful a condition; they cannot get work, and consequently pine away for want of nourishment, to a degree, that, if at any time they are accidentally hired to common labor, they have not strength to perform it; and thus the country and themselves are happily delivered from the evils to come.

“I profess, in the sincerity of my heart that I have not the least personal interest in endeavoring to promote this necessary work, having no other motive than the public good of my country, by advancing our trade, providing for infants, relieving the poor, and giving some pleasure to the rich. I have no children by which I can propose to get a single penny; the youngest being nine years old, and my wife past child-bearing.’\* ”

Much has been said of unhappy great men, Pascal, for instance. I think that his cries and his anguish are faint compared to this calm treatise.

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\* *A Modest Proposal*, etc., 457.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE NOVELISTS.

§ 41.—AMIDST these finished and perfect writings a new kind makes its appearance, appropriate to the public tendencies and circumstances, the anti-romantic novel, the work and the reading of positive minds, observers and moralists, destined not to exalt and amuse the imagination, like the novels of Spain and the middle ages, not to reproduce or embellish conversation, like the novels of France and the seventeenth century, but to depict real life, to describe characters, to suggest plans of conduct, and judge motives of action. It was a strange apparition, and like the voice of a people buried underground, when, amidst the splendid corruption of high life, this severe emanation of the middle class welled up, and when the obscenities of Mrs. Aphra Behn, still the diversion of ladies of fashion, were found on the same table with De Foe's *Robinson Crusoe*.

De Foe, a dissenter, a pamphleteer, a journalist, a novelist, successively a hosier, a tile-maker, an accountant, was one of those indefatigable laborers and obstinate combatants, who, ill-treated, calumniated, imprisoned, succeeded by their uprightness, common sense, and energy, in gaining England over to their side. At twenty-three, having taken arms for Monmouth, he was fortunate in not being hung or transported. Seven years later he was ruined, and obliged to hide. In 1702, for a pamphlet misunderstood, he was condemned to pay a fine, was set in the pillory, had his ears cut off, was imprisoned two years in Newgate, and only the charity of Godolphin prevented his wife and six children from dying of hunger. Being released and sent as a commissioner to Scotland, to treat



about the union of the two countries, he had a narrow escape of being stoned. Another pamphlet, again misconceived, sent him to prison, compelled him to pay a fine of eight hundred pounds, and only just in time he received the queen's pardon. He was caricatured, robbed, and slandered. He was obliged to protest against the plagiarists who borrowed and altered his works for their benefit; against the neglect of the Whigs, who did not find him tractable enough; against the animosity of the Tories, who saw in him the chief champion of the Whigs. In the midst of his self-defence he was struck with apoplexy, and continued to defend himself from his bed. Yet he lived, but with great difficulty; poor and burdened with a family, he turned, at fifty-five, to fiction, and wrote successively *Moll Flanders*, *Captain Singleton*, *Duncan Campbell*, *Colonel Jack*, the *History of the Great Plague in London*, etc. This vein exhausted, he diverged and tried another—the *Complete English Tradesman*, *a Tour through Great Britain*. Death comes on; poverty remains. In vain had he written in prose, in verse, on all subjects, political and religious, accidental or moral, satires and novels, histories and poems, travels and pamphlets, commercial essays and statistical information, in all two hundred and ten works, not of verbiage, but of arguments, documents, and facts, crowded and piled one upon another with such prodigality, that the memory, thought, and application of one man seem too small for such a labor; he died penniless, in debt. However we regard his life, we see only prolonged efforts and persecutions. Joy seems to be wanting; the idea of the beautiful never enters. When he comes to fiction, it is like a Presbyterian and a plebeian, with low subjects and moral aims, to treat of the adventures and reform the conduct of thieves and prostitutes, workmen and sailors. His whole delight was to think that he had a service to perform, and that he was performing it:

“He that opposes his own judgment against the current of the times ought to be backed with unanswerable truth; and he that has truth on his side, is a fool as well as a coward, if he is afraid to own it, because of the multitude of other men's opinions. 'Tis hard for a man to say, all the world is mistaken but himself. But if it be so, who can help it?”

De Foe is one of those brave, obscure, and useful soldiers, who, with empty belly and burdened shoulders, go through their du-

ties with their feet in the mud, pocket blows, receive day by day the fire of the enemy, and sometimes that of their friends into the bargain, and die sergeants, happy if it has been their lot to get hold of the legion of honor.

He had the kind of mind suitable to such a hard service, solid, exact, entirely destitute of refinement, enthusiasm, pleasantness.\* His imagination was that of a man of business, not of an artist, crammed and, as it were, jammed down with facts. He tells them as they come to him, without arrangement or style, like a conversation, without dreaming of producing an effect or composing a phrase, employing technical terms and vulgar forms, repeating himself at need, using the same thing two or three times, not seeming to suspect that there are methods of amusing, touching, engrossing, or pleasing, with no desire but to pour out on paper the fulness of the information with which he is charged. Even in fiction his information is as precise as in history. He gives dates, year, month, and day; notes the wind, north-east, south-west, north-west; he writes a log-book, an invoice, attorneys' and shopkeepers' bills, the number of moidores, interest, specie payments, payments in kind, cost and sale prices, the share of the king, of religious houses, partners, brokers, net totals, statistics, the geography and hydrography of the island, so that the reader is tempted to take an atlas and draw for himself a little map of the place, to enter into all the details of the history as clearly and fully as the author. It seems as though he had performed all Crusoe's labors, so exactly does he describe them, with numbers, quantities, dimensions, like a carpenter, potter, or an old tar. Never was such a sense of the real before or since. Our realists of to-day, painters, anatomists, decidedly men of business, are very far from this naturalness; art and calculation crop out amidst their too minute descriptions. De Foe creates illusion; for it is not the eye which deceives us, but the mind, and that literally: his account of the great plague has more than once passed for true; and Lord Chatham took his *Memoirs of a Cavalier* for authentic. This was his aim. In the preface to the old edition of *Robinson Crusoe* it is said:

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\* See his dull poems, amongst others *Jure Divino*, a poem in twelve books, in defence of every man's birthright by nature.

“The story is told. . . to the instruction of others by this example, and to justify and honor the wisdom of Providence. The editor believes the thing to be a just history of facts; neither is there any appearance of fiction in it.”

All his talents lie in this, and thus even his imperfections aid him; his lack of art becomes a profound art; his negligence, repetitions, prolixity, contribute to the illusion: we cannot imagine that such and such a detail, so minute, so dull, is invented; an inventor would have suppressed it; it is too tedious to have been put in on purpose: art chooses, embellishes, interests; art, therefore, cannot have piled up this heap of dull and vulgar accidents; it is the truth.

Never was art the tool of a more moral or more English work than *Robinson Crusoe*. Crusoe is quite one of his race, and might instruct it in the present day. He has that force of will, inner enthusiasm, dull ferment of a violent imagination which formerly produced the sea-kings, and now produces emigrants and squatters. The misfortunes of his two brothers, the tears of his relatives, the advice of his friends, the remonstrances of his reason, the remorse of his conscience, are all unable to restrain him: there was “a something fatal in his nature;” he had conceived the idea, he must go to sea. To no purpose is he seized with repentance during the first storm; he drowns in punch these “fits” of conscience. To no purpose is he warned by shipwreck and a narrow escape from death; he is hardened, and grows obstinate. To no purpose captivity among the Moors and the possession of a fruitful plantation invite repose; the indomitable instinct returns; he was born to be his own destroyer, and embarks again. The ship goes down; he is cast alone on a desert island; then his native energy found its vent and its employment; like his descendants, the pioneers of Australia and America, he must re-create and re-master one by one the inventions and acquisitions of human industry; one by one he does so. Nothing represses his effort; neither possession nor weariness.

“I had the biggest magazine of all kinds now that ever was laid up, I believe, for one man; but I was not satisfied still; for, while the ship sat upright in that posture, I thought I ought to get everything out of her that I could. . . . I got most of the pieces of cable ashore, and some of the iron, though with infinite labor; for I was fain to dip for it into the water; a work which fatigued me very much. . . . I believe, verily, had the

calm weather held, I should have brought away the whole ship, piece by piece."\*

In his eyes, work is natural. When, in order "to barricade himself, he goes to cut the piles in the woods, and drives them into the earth, which cost a great deal of time and labor," he says:

"A very laborious and tedious work. But what need I have been concerned at the tediousness of anything I had to do, seeing I had time enough to do it in? . . . My time or labor was little worth, and so it was as well employed one way as another."†

Application and fatigue of head and arms give occupation to his superfluous activity and force; the mill must find grist to grind, without which, turning round empty, it would consume itself. He works, therefore, all day and night, at once carpenter, oarsman, porter, hunter, tiller of the ground, potter, tailor, milkman, basketmaker, grinder, baker, invincible in difficulties, disappointments, expenditure of time and toil. Having but a hatchet and an adze, it took him forty-two days to make a board. He occupied two months in making his first two jars; five months in making his first boat; then, "by dint of hard labor," he levelled the ground from his timber-yard to the sea, tried to bring the sea up to his boat, and began to dig a canal; then, reckoning that he would require ten or twelve years to finish the task, he builds another boat at another place, with another canal half a mile long, four feet deep, six wide. He spends two years over it:

"I bore with this. . . . I went through that by dint of hard labor. . . . Many weary stroke it had cost. . . . This will testify that I was not idle. . . . As I had learned not to despair of anything. I never grudged my labor."

These strong expressions of indomitable patience are ever recurring. This hard race is framed for labor, as its sheep are for slaughter and its horses for the chase. Even now you may hear their mighty hatchet and pickaxe strokes in the claims of Melbourne and in the log-houses of Arizona. The reason of their success is the same there as here; they do everything with calculation and method; they rationalize their energy,

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\* De Foe's Works, 20 vols., 1819-21. *The Life and Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*, i. ch. iv. 65.

† *Ibid.* 76.

which is like a torrent they make a canal for. Crusoe sets to work only after deliberate calculation and reflection. When he seeks a spot for his tent, he enumerates the four conditions of the place he requires. When he wishes to escape despair, he draws up impartially, "like debtor and creditor," the list of his advantages and disadvantages, putting them in two columns, active and passive, item for item, so that the balance is in his favor. His courage is only the servant of his common sense :

"By stating and squaring everything by reason, and by making the most rational judgment of things, every man may be in time master of every mechanic art. I had never handled a tool in my life, and yet in time, by labor, application and contrivance, I found at last that I wanted nothing but I could have made it, especially if I had had tools."\*

There is a grave and deep pleasure in this painful success, and in this personal acquisition. The squatter, like Crusoe, takes pleasure in things, not only because they are useful, but because they are his work. He feels himself a man, whilst finding all about him the sign of his labor and thought ; he is pleased :

"I had everything so ready at my hand, that it was a great pleasure to me to see all my goods in such order, and especially to find my stock of all necessaries so great."†

He returns to his home willingly, because he is there a master and creator of all the comforts he has around him ; he takes his meals there gravely and "like a king."

Such are the pleasures of home. A guest enters there to fortify these natural inclinations by the ascendancy of duty. Religion appears, as it must, in emotions and visions ; for this is not a calm soul ; imagination breaks out into it at the least shock, and carries it to the threshold of madness. On the day when he saw the "print of a naked man's foot on the shore," he stood "like one thunderstruck," and fled "like a hare to cover ;" his ideas are in a whirl, he is no longer master of them ; though he is hidden and barricaded, he thinks himself discovered ; he intends "to throw down the enclosures, turn all the tame cattle wild into the woods, dig up the corn-fields." He has all kind of fancies ; he asks himself if it is not the devil who has left this footmark ; and reasons upon it :

"I considered that the devil might have found out abundance of other

\* *Robinson Crusoe*, ch. iv. 79.

† *Ibid.* 80.

ways to have terrified me ; . . . that, as I lived quite on the other side of the island, he would never have been so simple to leave a mark in a place where it was ten thousand to one whether I should ever see it or not, and in the sand too, which the first surge of the sea upon a high wind would have defaced entirely. All this seemed inconsistent with the thing itself, and with all notions we usually entertain of the subtlety of the devil.”\*

In this impassioned and uncultivated mind, which for eight years had continued without a thought, and as it were stupid, engrossed in manual labor and bodily wants, belief took root, fostered by anxiety and solitude. Amidst the risks of all-powerful nature, in this great uncertain upheaving, a Frenchman, a man bred like us, would cross his arms gloomily like a Stoic, or would wait like an epicure for the return of physical cheerfulness. As for Crusoe, at the sight of the ears of barley which have suddenly made their appearance, he weeps, and thinks at first “that God had miraculously caused this grain to grow.” Another day he has a terrible vision : in a fever he repents of his sins ; he opens the Bible, and finds these words, which “were very apt to his case :” “Call upon me in the day of trouble ; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.”† Prayer then rises to his lips, true prayer, the converse of the heart with a God who answers, and to whom we listen. He also read the words : “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.”‡

“Immediately it occurred that these words were to me. Why else should they be directed in such a manner, just at the moment when I was mourning over my condition, as one forsaken of God and man ?”§

Thenceforth spiritual life begins for him. To reach its very foundation, the squatter needs only his Bible ; with it he carries out his faith, his theology, his worship ; every evening he finds in it some application to his present condition : he is not alone ; God speaks to him, and provides for his energy matter for a second labor to sustain and complete the first. For he now undertakes against his heart the combat which he has maintained against nature ; he wants to conquer, transform, ameliorate, pacify the one as he has done with the other. Crusoe fasts, observes the Sabbath, three times a day he reads the Scripture, and says :

“I gave humble and hearty thanks . . . that he (God) could fully make

\* *Robinson Crusoe*, ch. xi. 184.

† Heb. xiii. 5.

‡ *Ibid.* 187. Ps. i. 15.

§ *Ibid.* ch. viii. 134.

up to me the deficiencies of my solitary state, and the want of human society by his presence, and the communication of his grace to my soul, supporting, comforting, and encouraging me to depend upon his providence, and hope for his eternal presence hereafter." \*

In this disposition of mind there is nothing a man cannot endure or do ; heart and hand come to the assistance of the arms ; religion consecrates labor, piety feeds patience ; and man, supported on one side by his instincts, on the other by his beliefs, finds himself able to clear the land, to people, to organize and civilize continents.

§ 42.—It was by chance that De Foe, like Cervantes, lighted on a novel of character : as a rule, like Cervantes, he only wrote novels of adventure ; he knew life better than the soul, and the general course of the world better than the particularities of the individual. But the impulse was given, nevertheless, and now the rest followed. Chivalrous manners had been blotted out, carrying with them the poetical and picturesque drama. Monarchical manners had been blotted out, carrying with them the witty and licentious drama. Citizen manners had been established, bringing with them domestic and practical reading. Like society, literature changed its course. Books were needed to read by the fireside, in the country, in the family : invention and genius turn to this kind of writing.

We have but to look around ; the same inclination begins on all sides the same task. The novel springs up everywhere, and shows the same spirit under all forms. At this time† appear the *Tatler*, *Spectator*, *Guardian*, and all those agreeable and serious essays which, like the novel, look for readers at home, to supply them with documents and provide them with counsels ; which, like the novel, describe manners, paint characters, and try to correct the public ; which, in fine, like the novel, turn spontaneously to fiction and portraiture. Addison, like a delicate amateur of moral curiosities, complacently follows the amiable oddities of Sir Roger de Coverley, smiles, and with discreet hand guides the excellent knight through all the awkward predicaments which may bring out his rural prejudices and his innate generosity ; whilst by his side the unhappy Swift, degrading man to the instincts of the beast of prey

\* *Robinson Crusoe*, ch. viii. 133.

† 1709, 1711, 1713.

and beast of burden, tortures humanity by forcing it to recognise itself under the execrable portrait of the Yahoo. Although they differ, both authors are working at the same task. They only employ imagination in order to study characters, and to suggest plans of conduct. They bring down philosophy to observation and application. They only dream of reforming or chastising vice. They are only moralists and psychologists. They both confine themselves to the consideration of vice and virtue ; one with calm benevolence, the other with savage indignation. The same point of view produces the graceful portraits of Addison and the frightful pictures of Swift. Their successors do the like, and all diversities of mood and talent do not hinder their works from acknowledging a single source, and concurring in a single effect.

Two principal ideas can rule, and have ruled, morality in England. Now it is conscience which is accepted as a sovereign ; now it is instinct which is taken for guide. Now they have recourse to grace ; now they rely on nature. Now they wholly enslave every thing to rule ; now they give every thing up to liberty. The two opinions have successively reigned in England ; both by their excesses have deserved their defeats and raised up their adversaries. From Shakspeare to the Puritans, from Milton to Wycherley, from Congreve to De Foe, from Wilberforce to Lord Byron, unruliness has provoked constraint and tyranny revolt. This great contest of rule and nature is developed again in the writings of Fielding and Richardson.

“*Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded*, in a series of familiar letters from a beautiful young damsel to her parents, published in order to cultivate the principles of virtue and religion in the minds of the youth of both sexes ; a narrative which has its foundation in truth, and at the same time that it agreeably entertains by a variety of curious and affecting incidents, is entirely divested of all those images which, in too many pieces calculated for amusement only, tend to inflame the minds they should instruct.”\* We can make no mistake, the title is clear. The preachers rejoiced to see assistance coming to them from the very spot where there was danger ; and Dr. Sherlock, from

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\* The translator has consulted the tenth edition, 1775, 4 vols.



his pulpit, recommended the book. Men inquired about the author. He was a printer and bookseller, a joiner's son, who, at the age of fifty, and in his leisure moments, wrote in his shop parlor: a laborious man, who, by work and good conduct, had raised himself to a competency and sound information; delicate, moreover gentle, nervous, often ill, with a taste for the society of women, accustomed to correspond for and with them, of reserved and retired habits, whose only fault was a timid vanity. He was severe in principles, and had acquired perspicacity by his rigor. In fact, conscience is a lamp; a moralist is a psychologist; Christian casuistry is a sort of natural history of the soul. He who through anxiety of conscience busies himself in drawing out the good or evil motives of his manifest actions, who sees vices and virtues at their birth, who follows the insensible progress of culpable thoughts, and the secret confirmation of good resolves, who can mark the force, nature, and moment of temptations and resistances, holds in his hand almost all the moving strings of humanity, and has only to make them vibrate regularly to draw from them the most powerful harmonies. In this consists the art of Richardson; he combines whilst he observes; his meditation develops the ideas of the moralist. No one in this age has equalled him in these detailed and comprehensive conceptions, which, grouping to a single end the passions of thirty characters, twine and color the innumerable threads of the whole canvas, to bring out a figure, an action, or a lesson.

The evil and the good of the English character is a too strong will. When tenderness and lofty reason fail, the native energy is turned to sternness, obstinacy, inflexible tyranny, and the heart becomes a den of malevolent passions, eager to rave and tear each other. Against a family, having such passions, *Clarissa Harlowe* has to struggle. Her father never would be "controuled, nor yet persuaded."\* He never "did give up one point he thought he had a right to carry."† He has broken down the will of his wife, and degraded her to the part of a dumb servant; he wishes to break down the will of his daughter, and give her for a husband a coarse and heartless fool. He is stern in these two harsh resolves, and thunders

\* *Clarissa Harlowe*, 4th ed. 1751, 7 vols. i. 92.

† *Ibid.* i. 105.

against the rebellious daughter. Above the outbursts of his voice we hear the loud wrath of his son, a sort of hot-blooded, over-fed bull-dog, excited by his greed, his youth, his fiery temper, and his premature authority; the shrill outcry of the eldest daughter, a coarse, plain-looking girl, with "a plump, high-fed face," exactly jealous, prone to hate, who, being neglected by Lovelace, revenges herself on her beautiful sister; the churlish growling of the two uncles, narrow-minded old bachelors, vulgar, pig-headed, through their notions of male authority; the grievous importunities of the mother, the aunt, the old nurse, poor timid slaves, reduced one by one to become instruments of persecution. The whole family have bound themselves to favor Mr. Solmes' proposal to marry Clarissa. Clarissa offers every submission; she consents to give up her property. It is all useless. The indomitable, crushing will oppresses her with its daily increasing mass. It reminds us of a pack of hounds in full cry after a deer, which is caught, and wounded; whilst the pack grow more eager and more ferocious, because they have tasted his blood.

At the last moment, when she thinks to escape them, a new chase begins, more dangerous than the other. Lovelace has all the evil passions of Harlowe, and in addition a genius which sharpens and aggravates them. What a character! How English! how different from the Don Juan of Mozart or of Molière! Before everything the cruel fair one, the desire to bend others, a combative spirit, a craving for triumph; only after these come the senses. He spares an innocent girl because he knows she is easy to conquer, and the grandmother "has besought him to be merciful to her." "The *Debellare superbos* should be my motto,"\* he writes to his friend Belford; and in another letter he says: "I always considered opposition and resistance as a challenge to do my worst."† There is no expense, fatigue, plot, disloyalty which he will not undertake. All weapons are the same to him. He has a remedy for everything; divines, dares everything, against all duty, humanity, common sense, in spite of the prayers of his friends, the entreaties of Clarissa, his own remorse. Excessive will, here as with the Harlowes, becomes a steel cog-wheel, which twists out

\* *Clarissa Harlowe*, i. Letter xxiv. 223. † *Ibid.* ii. Letter xliii. 315.

of shape and breaks to pieces what it ought to bend, so that at last, by blind impetuosity, it is broken by its own impetus, over the ruins it has made.

Against such assaults what resources has Clarissa? A will as determined as his own. She also is armed for war, and admits that she has as much of her father's spirit as of her mother's gentleness. Though gentle, though readily driven into Christian humility, she "had hoped to be an example to young persons" of her sex; she possesses the firmness of a man, and above all a masculine reflection. No action, or word, involuntary or other gesture of Lovelace is unobserved by her, uninterpreted, unjudged, with the perspicacity and clearness of mind of a diplomatist and a moralist! What a change since Shakspeare! Whence comes this new and original idea of woman? Who has encased these yielding and tender innocents with such heroism and calculation? Secularized Puritanism. Clarissa "never looked upon any duty, much less a voluntary vowed one, with indifference." She has passed her whole life in looking at these duties. She has set round her, like bristling and multiplied ramparts, a numberless army of inflexible precepts. This is her force, and also her weakness; for she is so carefully defended by her fortifications, that she is a prisoner. She wishes to preserve too much decorum. She refuses to apply to a magistrate, for it would make public the family quarrels. She does not resist her father openly; that would be against filial humility. She does not repel Solmes violently, and like a hound, as he is; it would be contrary to feminine delicacy. She will not leave home with Miss Howe; that might injure the character of her friend. She reproves Lovelace when he swears;\* a good Christian ought to protest against scandal. She is argumentative and pedantic, a politician and a preacher; she wearies us: she acts not like a woman. When a room is on fire, a young girl flies barefooted, and does not do what Miss Clarissa does—ask for her slippers. I am very sorry for it, but I say it with bated breath, Clarissa had a little mind; her virtue is like the piety of devotees, literal and over-nice. She does

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\* "Swearing is a most unmanly vice, and cursing as poor and low a one, since it proclaims the profligate's want of power and his wickedness at the same time; for could such a one punish as he speaks, he would be a fiend."  
—Vol. ii. Letter xxxviii. 282.

not carry you away, she has always her catechism in her hand ; she does not discover her duties, but follows instructions ; she has not the audacity of great resolutions, she possesses more conscience and firmness than enthusiasm and genius.\* This is the disadvantage of morality pushed to an extreme, no matter what the school or the aim is. By dint of regulating man, we narrow him.

Poor Richardson, unsuspectingly, has been at pains to set the thing forth in broad light, and has created Sir Charles Grandison "a man of true honor." I cannot say whether this model has converted many. There is nothing so insipid as an edifying hero. This Sir Charles is as correct as an automaton ; he passes his life in weighing his duties, and "with an air of gallantry."† When he goes to visit a sick person, he has scruples about going on a Sunday, but reassures his conscience by saying, "I am afraid I must borrow of the Sunday some hours on my journey ; but visiting the sick is an act of mercy."‡ Would you believe that such a man could fall in love ? Such is the case, however, but in a manner of his own. Thus he writes to his betrothed :

"And now, loveliest and dearest of women, allow me to expect the honor of a line, to let me know how much of the tedious month from last Thursday you will be so good to abate. . . . My utmost gratitude will ever be engaged by the condescension, whenever you shall distinguish the day of the year, distinguished as it will be to the end of my life that shall give me the greatest blessing of it and confirm me. For ever yours, Charles Grandison."§

A wax figure could not be more proper. All is in the same taste. There are eight wedding-coaches, each with four horses ; Sir Charles is attentive to old people ; at table, the gentlemen, each with a napkin under his arm, wait upon the ladies ; the bride is ever on the point of fainting ; he throws himself at her feet in every kind of way :

"What, my love ! In compliment to the best of parents, resume your usual presence of mind. I, else, who shall glory before a thousand witnesses in receiving the honor of your hand, shall be ready to regret that I acqui-

\* The contrary is the case with the heroines of George Sand's novels.

† See *Sir Charles Grandison*, 7 vols, 1811, iii. Letter xvi. 142 : "He received the letters, standing up, bowing ; and kissed the papers with an air of gallantry, that I thought greatly became him."

‡ *Ibid* vi. Letter xxxi. 236.

§ *Ibid*. vi. Letter xxiii. 252.

esced so cheerfully with the wishes of those parental friends for a public celebration." \*

Salutations begin, compliments fly about ; a swarm of proprieties flutters around, like a troop of little love-cherubs, and their devout wings serve to sanctify the blessed tendernesses of the happy couple. Tears abound ; Harriet bemoans the fate of Sir Hargrave Pollexfen, whilst Sir Charles,

"In a soothing, tender, and respectful manner, put his arm round me, and taking my own handkerchief, unresisted, wiped away the tears as they fell on my cheek. Sweet humanity ! Charming sensibility ! Check not the kindly gush. Dew-drops of heaven ! (wiping away my tears, and kissing the handkerchief), dew-drops of heaven, from a mind like that heaven mild and gracious !" †

It is too much ; we are surfeited, we tell ourselves that these phrases should be accompanied by a mandoline. The most patient of mortals feels himself sick at heart when he has swallowed a thousand pages of this sentimental twaddle, and all the milk and water of love. To crown all, Sir Charles, seeing Harriet embrace her rival, sketches the plan of a little temple, dedicated to friendship, to be built on the very spot ; it is the triumph of mythological bad taste. At the end, bouquets shower down as at the opera ; all the characters sing in unison a chorus in praise of Sir Charles, and his wife says :

"But could he be otherwise than the best of husbands who was the most dutiful of sons, who is the most affectionate of brothers ; the most faithful of friends ; who is good upon principle in every relation of life ?" ‡

He is great, he is generous, delicate, pious, irreproachable ; he has never done a mean action, nor made a wrong gesture. His conscience and his wig are unsullied. Amen ! Let us canonise him, and stuff him with straw.

Nor, my dear Richardson, have you, great as you are, exactly all the wit which is necessary in order to have enough. By seeking to serve morality, you prejudice it. Do you know the effect of these edifying advertisements which you stick on at the beginning or end of your books ? We are repelled, lose emotion, see the black-gowned preacher come snuffling out of the worldly dress which he had assumed for an hour ; we are annoyed by the deceit. Insinuate morality, but do not inflict

\* *Sir Charles Grandison*, vi. Letter lii. 358.

† *Ibid.* vi. Letter xxxi. 233.

‡ *Ibid.* vii. Letter lxi. 336.

it. Remember there is a substratum of rebellion in the human heart, and that if we too openly set ourselves to wall it up through discipline, it escapes and looks for free air outside. You print at the end of *Pamela* the catalogue of the virtues of which she is an example; the reader yawns, forgets his pleasure, ceases to believe, and asks himself if the heavenly heroine was not an ecclesiastical puppet, trotted out to give him a lesson. You relate at the end of *Clarissa Harlowe* the punishment of all the wicked, great and small, sparing none; the reader laughs, says that things happen otherwise in this world, and bids you put in here, like Arnolphe,\* a description "of the cauldrons in which the souls of those who have led evil lives are to boil in the infernal regions." We are not such fools as you take us for. There is no need that you should shout to make us afraid; that you should write out the lesson by itself, and in capitals, in order to distinguish it. We love art, and you have a scant amount of it; we want to be pleased, and you don't care to please us. You copy all the letters, detail the conversations, tell everything, prune nothing; your novels fill many volumes; spare us, use the scissors; be a literary man, not a registrar of archives. Do not pour out your library of documents on the high-road. Art is different from nature; the latter draws out, the first condenses. Twenty letters of twenty pages do not display a character; but one sharp word does. You are rendered heavy by your conscience, which drags you along step by step and low on the ground; you are afraid of your genius; you rein it in; you dare not use loud cries and frank words for violent moments. You flounder into emphatic and well-written phrases; † you will not show nature as it is, as Shakspeare shows it, when, stung by passion as by a hot iron, it cries out, rears, and plunges over your barriers. You cannot love it, and your punishment is that you cannot see it. ‡

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\* A selfish and misanthropical cynic in Molière's *École des Femmes*.—Tr.

† *Clarissa* and *Pamela* employ too many.

‡ In *Novels and Novelists*, by W. Forsyth, 1871, it is said, ch. vii.: "To me, I confess, *Clarissa Harlowe* is an unpleasant, not to say odious book. . . . If any book deserved the charge of sickly sentimentality, it is this; and that it should have once been so widely popular, and thought admirably adapted to instruct young women in lessons of virtue and religion, shows a strange and perverted state of the public taste, not to say public morals." Mrs. Oliphant, in her *Historical Sketches of the Reign of George Second*, 1869, says

§ 43.—Fielding protests on behalf of nature ; and certainly, to see his actions and his persons, we might think him made expressly for that : a robust, strongly built man, above six feet high, sanguine, with an excess of good humor and animal spirits, loyal, generous, affectionate, and brave, but imprudent, extravagant, a drinker, a roysterer, ruined as it were by heirloom, having seen the ups and downs of life, bespattered, but always jolly. Lady Wortley Montague says of him : “ His happy constitution made him forget everything when he was before a venison pasty, or over a flask of champagne.”\* Nature sways him ; he is somewhat coarse but generous. He does not restrain himself, he indulges, he follows nature’s bent, not too choice in his course, not confining himself to banks, muddy, but abundantly and in a broad channel. From the outset an abundance of health and physical impetuosity plunges him into gross jovial excess, and the immoderate sap of youth bubbles up in him until he marries and becomes ripe in years. He is gay, and seeks gayety ; he is careless, and has not even literary vanity. One day Garrick begged him to cut down an awkward scene, and told him “ that a repulse would flurry him so much, he should not be able to do justice to the part.” “ If the scene is not a good one, let them find that out.” Just as was foreseen, the house made a violent uproar, and the performer tried to quell it by retiring to the green-room, where the author was supporting his spirits with a bottle of champagne. “ What is the matter, Garrick ? are they hissing me now ? ” “ Yes, just the same passage that I wanted you to retrench.” “ Oh,” replied the author, “ I did not give them credit for it ; they have found it out, have they ? ”† In this easy manner he took all mischance. He went ahead without feeling the bruises much, like a confident man, whose heart expands and whose skin is thick. When he inherited some money he feasted, gave dinners to his neigh-

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of the same novel (ii. x. 264) : “ Richardson was a respectable tradesman, . . . a good printer, . . . a comfortable soul, . . . never owing a guinea nor transgressing a rule of morality ; and yet so much a poet, that he has added at least one character (Clarissa Harlowe) to the inheritance of the world, of which Shakspeare need not have been ashamed—the most celestial thing, the highest effort of his generation.”—Tr.

\* *Lady Montague’s Letters*, ed. Lord Wharnccliffe, 2d ed. 3 vols. 1837 ; Letter to the Countess of Bute, iii. 120.

† Roscoe’s *Life of Fielding*, p. xxv.

bors, kept a pack of hounds and a lot of magnificent lackeys in yellow livery. In three years he had spent it all; but courage remained, he finished his law studies, wrote two folios on the rights of the crown, became a magistrate, destroyed bands of robbers, and earned in the most insipid of labors "the dirtiest money upon earth." Disgust, weariness did not affect him; he was too solidly made to have the nerves of a woman. Force, activity, invention, tenderness, all overflowed in him. He had a mother's fondness for his children, adored his wife, became almost mad when he lost her, found no other consolation than to weep with his maid-servant, and ended by marrying that good and honest girl, that he might give a mother to his children; the last trait in the portrait of this valiant plebeian heart, quick in telling all, possessing no dislikes, but all the best parts of man, except delicacy. We read his books as we drink a pure, wholesome, and rough wine, which cheers and fortifies us, and which wants nothing but bouquet.

Such a man was sure to dislike Richardson. He who loves expansive and liberal nature, drives from him like foes the solemnity, sadness, and pruderies of the Puritans. To begin with, he caricatures Richardson. His first hero, Joseph, is the brother of Pamela, and resists the proposals of his mistress, as Pamela does those of her master. The temptation, touching in the case of a girl, becomes comical in that of a young man, and the tragic turns into the grotesque. Fielding laughs heartily, like Rabelais, like Scarron. He imitates the emphatic style; ruffles the petticoats and bobs the wigs; upsets with his rude jests all the seriousness of conventionality. If you are refined, or simply well dressed, don't go along with him. He will take you to prison, inns, dunghills, the mud of the roadside; he will make you flounder among rollicking, scandalous, vulgar adventures, and crude pictures. He has plenty of words at command, and his sense of smell is not delicate. This powerful genius, frank and joyous, loves boisterous fairs like Rubens; the red faces, beaming with good humor, sensuality, and energy, move about his pages, flutter hither and thither, and jostle each other, and their overflowing instincts break forth in violent actions. Out of such he creates his chief characters. If sober people like Allworthy remain in a corner of his vast canvas, characters full of natural impulse, like Western, stand out with



a relief and brightness, never seen since Falstaff. Western is a country squire, a good fellow in the main, but a drunkard, always in the saddle, full of oaths, ready with coarse language, blows, a sort of dull carter, hardened and excited by the brutality of the race, the wildness of a country life, by violent exercises, by abuse of coarse food and strong drink, full of English and rustic pride and prejudice, having never been disciplined by the constraint of the world, because he lives in the country; nor by that of education, since he can hardly read; nor of reflection, since he cannot put two ideas together; nor of authority, because he is rich and a justice of the peace, and given up, like a noisy and creaking weathercock, to every gust of passion. When contradicted, he grows red, foams at the mouth, wishes to thrash some one. They are even obliged to stop him by main force. He hastens to go to Allworthy to complain of Tom Jones, who has dared to fall in love with his daughter:

“It’s well for un I could not get at un; I’d a licked un; I’d a spoiled his caterwauling; I’d a taught the . . . . . to meddle with meat for his master. He shant ever have a morsel of meat of mine, or a varden to buy it. If she will have un, one smock shall be her portion. I’d sooner give my estate to the sinking fund, that it may be sent to Hanover to corrupt our nation with.”\*

Allworthy says he is very sorry for it. His daughter tries to reason with him; he storms. Then she speaks of tenderness and obedience; he leaps about the room for joy, and tears come to his eyes. Then she recommences her prayers; he grinds his teeth, clenches his fists, stamps his feet. He is like a blind bull, which butts to right and left, doubles on his path, touches no one, and paws the ground. Nothing holds or lasts with him; rancor, interest, no passions of long continuance affect him. He embraces people whom he just before wanted to knock down. Everything with him disappears in the fire of the passion of the hour, which comes over his brain, as it were, in sudden waves, which drown the rest. Now that he is reconciled to Tom, he cannot rest until Tom marries his daughter; and when he becomes a grandfather, he spends his time in the nursery, “where he declares the tattling of his little granddaughter, who is above a year and

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\* *History of a Foundling*, bk. vi. ch. x.

a half old, is sweeter music than the finest cry of dogs in England."\* This is pure nature, and no one has displayed it more free, more impetuous, ignoring all rule, more abandoned to physical passions, than Fielding.

It is not because he loves it like the great impartial artists, Shakspeare and Goethe; on the contrary, he is eminently a moralist; and it is one of the great marks of the age, that reformatory designs are as decided with him as with others. He gives his fictions a practical aim, and commends them by saying that the serious and tragic tone sours, whilst the comic style disposes men to be "more full of good humor and benevolence."† Moreover, he satirizes vice; he looks upon the passions not as simple forces, but as objects of approbation or blame. At every step he suggests moral conclusions; he wants us to take sides; he discusses, excuses, or condemns. He writes an entire novel in an ironical style,‡ to attack and destroy rascality and treason. He is more than a painter, he is a judge, and the two parts agree in him. For a psychology produces a morality: where there is an idea of man, there is an ideal of man; and Fielding, who has seen in man nature as opposed to law, praises in man nature as opposed to law; so that, according to him, virtue is but an instinct. Generosity in his eyes is, like all sources of action, a primitive inclination; like all sources of action, it flows on, receiving no good from catechisms and phrases; like all sources of action, it flows at times too copious and quick. Take it as it is, and do not try to oppress it under a discipline, or to replace it by an argument. Mr. Richardson, your heroes, so correct, constrained, so carefully made up with their impedimenta of maxims, are cathedral vergers, of use but to drone in a procession. Square or Thwackum, your tirades on philosophical or Christian virtue are mere words, only fit to be heard after dinner. Virtue is in the mood and the blood; a gossipy education and cloistral severity do not assist it. Give me a man, not a show-mannikin or a mere machine, to spout phrases. My hero is the man who is born generous, as a dog is born affectionate, and a horse brave. I want a living heart, full of warmth and force, not a dry pedant, bent on squaring

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\* Last chapter of the *History of a Foundling*.

† Preface to *Joseph Andrews*.

‡ *Jonathan Wild*.

all his actions. This ardent character will perhaps carry the hero too far; I pardon his escapades. He will get drunk unawares; he will pick up a girl on his way; he will hit out with a zest; he will not refuse a duel; he will suffer a fine lady to appreciate him, and will accept her purse; he will be imprudent, will injure his reputation, like Tom Jones; he will be a bad manager, and will get into debt, like Booth. Pardon him for having muscles, nerves, senses, and that overflow of anger or ardor which urges forward animals of a noble breed. But he will let himself be beaten till he bleeds, before he betrays a poor gamekeeper. He will pardon his mortal enemy readily, from sheer kindness, and will send him money secretly. He will be loyal to his mistress, and will be faithful to her, spite of all offers, in the worst destitution, and without the least hope of winning her. He will be liberal with his purse, his troubles, his sufferings, his blood; he will not boast of it; he will have neither pride, vanity, affectation, nor dissimulation; bravery and kindness will abound in his heart, as good water in a good spring. When a man possesses this, overlook the rest; with all his excesses and his follies, he is better than your well-dressed devotees.

To this we reply: You do well to defend nature, but let it be on condition that you suppress nothing. One thing is wanted in your strongly-built folks—refinement; the delicate dreams, enthusiastic elevation, and trembling delicacy, exist in nature equally with coarse vigor, noisy hilarity, and frank kindness. Poetry is true, like prose; and if there are eaters and boxers, there are also knights and artists. Cervantes, whom you imitate, and Shakspeare, whom you recall, had this refinement, and they have painted it; in this abundant harvest, with which you fill your arms, you have forgotten the flowers.

§ 44.—At all events, this hero is powerful and formidable; and if at this period you collect in your mind the scattered features of the faces which the novel-writers have made pass before us, you will feel yourself transported into a half-barbarous state, and to a race whose energy must terrify or revolt all your gentleness. Now open a more literal copyist of life: they are doubtless all such, and declare—Fielding amongst them—that if they imagine a feature, it is because they have seen it; but Smollett has this advantage, that, being mediocre, he chalks out

the figures insipidly, prosaically, without transforming them by the illumination of genius: the joviality of Fielding and the rigor of Richardson are not there to light up or ennoble the pictures. Observe carefully Smollett's manners; listen to the confessions of this imitator of Lesage, who reproaches that author with being gay, and jesting with the mishaps of his hero. He says :

"The disgraces of Gil Blas are, for the most part, such as rather excite mirth than compassion; he himself laughs at them, and his transitions from distress to happiness, or at least ease, are so sudden that neither the reader has time to pity him, nor himself to be acquainted with affliction. This conduct . . . prevents that generous indignation which ought to animate the reader against the sordid and vicious disposition of the world. I have attempted to represent modest merit struggling with every difficulty to which a friendless orphan is exposed from his own want of experience, as well as from the selfishness, envy, malice and base indifference of mankind."\*

It is no longer merely showers of blows, but also of knife and sword thrusts, as well as pistol shots. In such a world, when a girl goes out she runs the risk of coming back a woman; and when a man goes out he runs the risk of not coming back at all. The women bury their nails in the faces of the men; the well-bred gentlemen, like Peregrine Pickle, whip gentlemen soundly. Having deceived a husband, who refuses to demand satisfaction, Peregrine calls his two servants, and "ordered them to duck him in the canal."† Misrepresented by a curate, whom he has horsewhipped, he gets an innkeeper "to rain a shower of blows upon his (the priest's) carcass" who also "laid hold of one of his ears with his teeth, and bit it unmercifully."‡ I could quote from memory a score more of outrages begun or completed. Savage insults, broken jaws, men on the ground beaten with sticks, the churlish sourness of conversations, the coarse brutality of jests, give an idea of a pack of bull-dogs eager to fight each other, who, when they begin to get lively, still amuse themselves by tearing away pieces of flesh. A Frenchman can hardly endure the story of *Roderick Random*, or rather that of Smollett, when he is in a man-of-war. He is pressed, that is to say, carried off by force, knocked down, attacked with "cudgels and drawn cutlasses," "pinioned like a malefactor," and rolled

\* Preface to *Roderick Random*.

† *Peregrine Pickle*, ch. lx.

‡ *Ibid.* ch. xxix.

on board, covered with blood, before the sailors, who laugh at his wounds ; and one of them, "seeing my hair clotted together with blood, as it were, into distinct cords, took notice that my bows were manned with the red ropes, instead of my side."\* "He desired one of his fellow-captives, who was unfettered, to take a handkerchief out of his pocket, and tie it round his head to stop the bleeding ; he pulled out his handkerchief, 'tis true, but sold it before my face to a bum-boat woman for a quart of gin." Captain Oakum declares he will have no more sick in his ship, ordered them to be brought on the quarter-deck, commanded that some should receive a round dozen ; some spitting blood, others fainting from weakness, whilst not a few became delirious ; many died, and of the sixty-one sick, only a dozen remained alive.† To get into this dark, suffocating hospital, swarming with vermin, it is necessary to creep under the close hammocks, and forcibly separate them with the shoulders, before you can reach the patients. Read the story of Miss Williams, a wealthy young girl, of good family, reduced to the trade of a prostitute, robbed, hungry, sick, shivering, strolling about the streets in the long winter nights, amongst "a number of naked wretches reduced to rags and filth, huddled together like swine, in the corner of a dark alley," who depend "upon the addresses of the lowest class, and are fain to allay the rage of hunger and cold with gin ; degenerate into a brutal insensibility, rot and die upon a dunghill."‡ She was thrown into Bridewell, where, she says, "in the midst of a hellish crew I was subjected to the tyranny of a barbarian, who imposed upon me tasks that I could not possibly perform, and then punished my incapacity with the utmost rigor and inhumanity. I was often whipped into a swoon, and lashed out of it, during which miserable intervals I was robbed by my fellow-prisoners of everything about me, even to my cap, shoes, and stockings ; I was not only destitute of necessaries, but even of food, so that my wretchedness was extreme." One night she tried to hang herself. Two of her fellow-prisoners, who watched her, prevented her. "In the morning my attempt was published among the prisoners, and punished with thirty stripes, the pain

\* *Ibid.* ch. xxiv.† *Ibid.* ch. xxvii.‡ *Peregrine Pickle*, ch. xxiii.

of which, coöperating with my disappointment and disgrace, bereft me of my senses, and threw me into an ecstasy of madness, during which I tore the flesh from my bones with my teeth, and dashed my head against the pavement."\* In vain you turn your eyes on the hero of the novel, Roderick Random, to repose a little after such a spectacle. He is sensual and coarse, like Fielding's heroes, but not good and jovial as these. The generous wine of Fielding, in Smollett's hands, becomes brandy of the dram-shop. His heroes are selfish; they revenge themselves barbarously. Roderick oppresses the faithful Strap, and ends by marrying him to a prostitute. Peregrine Pickle attacks by a most brutal and cowardly plot the honor of a young girl, whom he wants to marry, and who is the sister of his best friend. We get to hate his rancorous, concentrated, obstinate character, which is at once that of an absolute king accustomed to please himself at the expense of others' happiness, and that of a boor with only the varnish of education. We should be uneasy at living near him; he is good for nothing but to shock or tyrannize over others. We avoid him as we would a dangerous beast; the sudden rush of animal passion and the force of his firm will are so overpowering in him, that when he fails he becomes outrageous. He draws his sword against an innkeeper; he must bleed him, grows mad. Everything, even to his generousities, is spoiled by pride; all, even to his gaieties, is clouded by harshness. Peregrine's amusements are barbarous, and those of Smollett are after the same style. He exaggerates caricature; he jumbles together the most repulsive oddities—a Lieutenant Lismahago half roasted by Red Indians; old jack-tars who pass their life in shouting and travestyng all sorts of ideas into their nautical jargon; old maids as ugly as monkeys, as withered as skeletons, and as sour as vinegar; maniacs steeped in pedantry, hypochondria, misanthrophy, and silence. Far from sketching them slightly, as *Le Sage* does in *Gil Blas*, he brings into prominent relief each disagreeable feature, overloads it with details, without considering whether they are too numerous, without reflecting that they are excessive, without feeling that they are odious, without perceiving that they are disgusting. The public whom he addresses is on a level with

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\* *Peregrine Pickle*, ch. xxiii.

his energy and his coarseness; and in order to move such nerves, a writer cannot strike too hard.\*

But, at the same time, to civilize this barbarity and to control this violence, a faculty appears, common to all, authors and public: serious reflection attached to the observation of character. Their eyes are turned toward the inner man. They note exactly the individual peculiarities, and mark them with such a precise imprint that their personage becomes a type, which cannot be forgotten. They are psychologists. The title of a comedy of old Ben Jonson's, *Every Man in his Humor*, indicates how this taste is ancient and national among them. Smollett writes a whole novel, *Humphrey Clinker*, on this idea. No action; the book is a collection of letters written during a tour in Scotland and England. Each of the travellers, after his bent of mind, judges variously of the same objects. A generous, grumbling old gentleman, who amuses himself by thinking himself ill, a crabbed old maid in search of a husband; a lady's maid, ingenious and vain, who bravely mutilates her spelling; a series of originals, who one after another bring their oddities on the scene,—such are the characters: the pleasure of the reader consists in recognizing their humor in their style, in foreseeing their follies, in perceiving the thread which pulls each of their motions, in verifying the agreement of their ideas and their actions. Push this study of human peculiarities to excess, and you will come upon the origin of Sterne's talent.

Figure to yourself a man who goes on a journey, wearing on his eyes a pair of marvellously magnifying spectacles. A

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\* In *Novels and Novelists*, by W. Forsyth, the author says, ch. v. 159: 'What is the character of most of these books (novels) which were to correct follies and regulate morality? Of a great many of them, and especially those of Fielding and Smollett, the prevailing features are grossness and licentiousness. Love degenerates into a mere animal passion. . . . The language of the characters abounds in oaths and gross expressions. . . . The heroines allow themselves to take part in conversations which no modest woman would have heard without a blush. And yet these novels were the delight of a bygone generation, and were greedily devoured by women as well as men. Are we therefore to conclude that our great-great-grandmothers . . . were less chaste and moral than their female posterity? I answer, certainly not; but we must infer that they were inferior to them in delicacy and refinement. They were accustomed to hear a spade called a spade, and words which would shock the more fastidious ear in the reign of Queen Victoria were then in common and daily use.'—TR.

hair on his hand, a speck on a tablecloth, a fold of a moving garment, will interest him : at this rate he will not go very far ; he will go six steps in a day, and will not quit his room. So Sterne writes four volumes to record the birth of his hero. He perceives the infinitely little, and describes the imperceptible. A man parts his hair on one side : this, according to Sterne, depends on his whole character, which is of a piece with that of his father, his mother, his uncle, and his whole ancestry ; it depends on the structure of his brain, which depends on the circumstances of his conception and his birth, and these on the fancies of his parents, the humor of the moment, the talk of the preceding hour, the contrarieties of the last curate, a cut thumb, twenty knots made on a bag ; I know not how many things besides. The six or eight volumes of *Tristram Shandy* are employed in summing them up ; for the smallest and dull-est incident, a sneeze, a badly-shaven beard, drags after it an inextricable network of inter-involved causes, which from above, below, right and left, by invisible prolongations and ramifications, are buried in the depths of a character and in the remote vistas of events. Instead of extracting, like the novel writers, the principal root, Sterne, with marvellous devices and success, devotes himself to drawing out the tangled skein of numberless threads, which are sinuously immersed and dispersed, so as to suck in from all sides the sap and the life. Slender, intertwined, buried as they are, he finds them ; he extricates them without breaking, brings them to the light ; and there, where we fancied was but a stalk, we see with wonder the underground mass and vegetation of the multiplied fibres and fibrils, by which the visible plant grows and is supported.

This is truly a strange talent, made up of blindness and insight, which resembles those diseases of the retina in which the over-excited nerve becomes at once dull and penetrating, incapable of seeing what the most ordinary eyes perceive, capable of observing what the most piercing sight misses. In fact, Sterne is a sickly and eccentric humorist, an ecclesiastic and a libertine, a fiddler and a philosopher, 'who whimpered over a dead donkey, but left his mother to starve,' selfish in act, selfish in word, who in every thing is the reverse of himself and of others. His book is like a great storehouse of articles of *virtu*, where the curiosities of all ages, kinds, and countries



lie jumbled in a heap; texts of excommunication, medical consultations, passages of unknown or imaginary authors, scraps of scholastic erudition, strings of absurd histories, dissertations, addresses to the reader. His pen leads him; he has neither sequence nor plan; nay, when he lights upon any thing orderly, he purposely contorts it; with a kick he sends the pile of folios next to him over the history he has commenced, and dances on the top of them. He delights in disappointing us, in sending us astray by interruptions and outrages.\* Gravity displeases him, he treats it as a hypocrite; to his liking folly is better, and he paints himself in Yorick. In a well-constituted mind ideas march one after another, with uniform motion or acceleration; in this uncouth brain they jump about like a rout of masks at a carnival, in troops, each dragging his neighbor by the feet, head, coat, amidst the most promiscuous and unforeseen hubbub. All his little lopped phrases are somersaults; we pant as we read. The tone is never for two minutes the same; laughter comes, then the beginning of emotion, then scandal, then wonder, then tenderness, then laughter again. The mischievous joker pulls and entangles the threads of all our feelings, and makes us go hither, thither, irregularly, like puppets. Amongst these various threads there are two which he pulls more willingly than the rest. Like all men who have nerves, he is subject to tenderness; not that he is really kindly and tender; on the contrary, his life is that of an egotist; but on certain days he must needs weep, and he makes us weep with him. He is moved on behalf of a captive bird, of a poor ass, which, accustomed to blows, 'looked up pensive,' and seemed to say, 'Don't thrash me with it (the halter); but if you will, you may.'† He will write a couple of pages on the attitude of this donkey, and Priam at the feet of Achilles was not more touching. Thus in a silence, in an oath, in the most trifling domestic action, he hits upon exquisite refinements and little heroisms, a sort of charming flowers, invisible to every-

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\* There is a distinct trace of a spirit similar to that which is here sketched, in a select few of the English writers. Pultock's *Peter Wilkins the Flying Man*, Armory's *Life of John Buncl*, and Southey's *Doctor*, are instances of this. Rabelais is probably their prototype.—TR.

† Sterne's Works, 7 vols., 1783, 3; *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy*, vii. ch. xxxii.

body else, which grow in the dust of the dryest road. One day Uncle Toby, the poor sick captain, catches, after 'infinite attempts,' a big buzzing fly, who has cruelly tormented him all dinner-time; he gets up, crosses the room on his suffering leg, and opening the window, cries: 'Go, poor devil, get thee gone; why should I hurt thee? This world surely is wide enough to hold both thee and me.'\* This womanish sensibility is too fine to be described; we should have to give a whole story—that of Lefevre, for instance—that the perfume might be inhaled; this perfume evaporates as soon as we touch it, and is like the weak fleeting odor of the plants, brought for one moment into a sick-chamber.

§45. The moment approaches when purified manners will, by purifying the novel, impress upon it its final character. Of the two great tendencies manifested by it, native brutality and intense reflection, one at last conquers the other: literature, grown severe, expels from fiction the coarseness of Smollett and the indecencies of Sterne; and the novel, in every respect moral, before falling into the almost prudish hands of Miss Burney, passes into the noble hands of Goldsmith. His *Vicar of Wakefield* is a 'prose idyl,' somewhat spoilt by phrases too well written, but at bottom as homely as a Flemish picture. Observe in Terburg or Mieris' paintings a woman at market or a burgomaster emptying his long glass of beer: the faces are vulgar, the ingenuousness is comical, the cookery occupies the place of honor; yet these good folks are so peaceful, so contented with their small but secure happiness, that we envy them. The impression left by Goldsmith's book is pretty much the same. The excellent Dr. Primrose is a country clergyman, the whole of whose adventures have for a long time consisted in 'migrations from the blue bed to the brown.' He has cousins, 'even to the fortieth remove,' who came to eat his dinner and sometimes to borrow a pair of boots. His wife, who has all the education of the time, is a perfect cook, can almost read, excels in pickling and preserving, and at dinner gives the history of every dish. His daughters aspire to elegance, and even 'make a wash for the face over the fire.' His son Moses gets cheated at the fair, and sells the pony for a gross of green

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\* *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy*, I, ii. ch. xii.

spectacles. Primrose himself writes treatises, which no one buys, against second marriages of the clergy; writes beforehand in his wife's epitaph, though she was still living, that she was the only wife of Dr. Primrose, and by way of encouragement, places this piece of eloquence in an elegant frame over the chimney-piece. But the household continues the even tenor of its way; the daughters and the mother slightly domineer over the father of the family; he lets them, like a good fellow; and now and again delivers himself at most of an innocent jest, busies himself in his new farm, with his two horses, wall-eyed Blackberry and the other without a tail:

"Nothing could exceed the neatness of my enclosures, the elms and hedge-rows appearing with inexpressible beauty. . . . Our little habitation was situated at the foot of a sloping hill, sheltered with a beautiful underwood behind, and a prattling river before; on one side a meadow, on the other a green. . . . (It) consisted but of one story, and was covered with thatch, which gave it an air of great snugness; the walls on the inside were whitewashed. . . . Though the same room served us for parlor and kitchen, that only made it the warmer. Besides, as it was kept with the utmost neatness, the dishes, plates, and coppers, being well scoured, and all disposed in bright rows on the shelves, the eye was agreeably relieved, and did not want richer furniture."\*

They make hay all together, sit under the honeysuckle to drink a bottle of gooseberry wine; the girls sing, the two little ones read; and the parents "would stroll down the sloping field, that was embellished with blue bells and centaury:"

"But let us have one bottle more, Deborah, my life, and Moses, give us a good song. What thanks do we not owe to Heaven for thus bestowing tranquillity, health, and competence! I think myself happier now than the greatest monarch upon earth. He has no such fire-side, nor such pleasant faces about it."†

Such is moral happiness. Their misfortune is no less moral. The poor vicar has lost his fortune, and, removing to a small living, turns farmer. The squire of the neighborhood seduces and carries off his eldest daughter; his house takes fire; his arm was burnt in a terrible manner in saving his two little children. He is put in prison, amongst wretches and rogues, who swear and blaspheme, in a vile atmosphere, sleeping on straw, feeling that his illness increases, foreseeing that his family will soon be without bread, learning that his daughter is dying. Yet

\* *The Vicar of Wakefield*, ch. iv.

† *Ibid.* ch. xvii.

he does not give way: he remains a priest and head of a family, prescribes to each of them his duty; encourages, consoles, orders, preaches to the prisoners, endures their coarse jests, reforms them; establishes in the prison useful work, and "institutes fines for punishment and rewards for industry." It is not hardness of heart nor a morose temperament which gives him strength; he has the most paternal soul, the most sociable, humane, open to gentle emotions and familiar tenderness. He says:

"I have no resentment now; and though he (the squire) has taken from me what I held dearer than all his treasures, though he has wrung my heart (for I am sick almost to fainting, very sick, my fellow-prisoner), yet that shall never inspire me with vengeance. . . . If this (my) submission can do him any pleasure, let him know, that if I have done him any injury, I am sorry for it. . . . I should detest my own heart, if I saw either pride or resentment lurking there. On the contrary, as my oppressor has been once my parishioner, I hope one day to present him up an unpolluted soul at the eternal tribunal."\*

Nothing is effectual: the wretch haughtily repulses the noble application of the vicar, and in addition causes his second daughter to be carried off, and the eldest son thrown into prison under a false accusation of murder. At this moment all the affections of the father are wounded, all his consolations lost, all his hopes ruined. "His heart weeps to behold" all this misery, he was going to curse the cause of it all; but soon, returning to his profession and his duty, he thinks how he will prepare to fit his son and himself for eternity, and by way of being useful to as many people as he can, he wishes at the same time to exhort his fellow-prisoners. He "made an effort to rise on the straw, but wanted strength, and was able only to recline against the wall; my son and his mother supported me on either side."† In this condition he speaks, and his sermon, contrasting with his condition, is the more moving. It is a dissertation in the English style, made up of close reasoning, seeking only to establish that, from the nature of pleasure and pain, the wretched must be repaid the balance of their sufferings in the life hereafter. We see the sources of this virtue, born of Christianity and natural kindness, but long nourished by inner reflection. Meditation, which usually produces only phrases, re-

\* *The Vicar of Wakefield*, ch. xxviii.

† *Ibid.* ch. xxviii.

sults with Dr. Primrose in actions. Verily reason has here taken the helm, and it has taken it without oppressing other feelings; a rare and excellent spectacle, which, uniting and harmonizing in one character the best features of the manners and morals of the time and country, creates an admiration and love for pious and orderly, domestic and disciplined, laborious and rural life. Protestant and English virtue has not a more approved and amiable exemplar. Religious, affectionate, rational, the Vicar unites dispositions which seemed irreconcilable; a clergyman, a farmer, a head of a family, he enhances those characters which appeared fit only for comic or homely parts.

§ 46.—In the centre of this group stands a strange character, the most esteemed of his time, a sort of literary dictator. Richardson was his friend, and gave him essays for his paper; Goldsmith, with an engaging vanity, admires him, whilst he suffers himself to be continually outshone by him; Miss Burney imitates his style, and reveres him as a father. Gibbon the historian, Reynolds the painter, Garrick the actor, Burke the orator, Sir William Jones the Orientalist, come to his club to converse with him. Lord Chesterfield, who had lost his favor, vainly tried to regain it, by proposing to assign to him, on every word in the language, the authority of a dictator.\* Boswell dogs his steps, sets down his opinions, and at night fills quartos with them. His criticism becomes law; men crowd to hear him talk; he is the arbiter of style. Let us transport in imagination this ruler of mind, Dr. Samuel Johnson, into France, among the pretty drawing-rooms, full of elegant philosophers and epicurean manners; the violence of the contrast will mark better than all argument, the bent and predilections of the English mind.

There appears then a man whose "person was large, robust, approaching to the gigantic, and grown unwieldy from corpulency,"† with a gloomy and unpolished air, "his countenance disfigured by the king's evil," and blinking with one of his eyes, "in full suit of plain brown clothes," and with not overclean linen, suffering from morbid melancholy since his birth, and moreover a hypochondriac.‡ In company he would sometimes retire to a window or corner of a room, and mutter a Latin verse

\* See, in Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, ed. Croker, 1853, ch. xi. p. 85, Chesterfield's complimentary paper on Johnson's *Dictionary*, printed in the *World*.  
 † *Ibid.* ch. xxx. 269.  
 ‡ *Ibid.* ch. iii. 14 and 15.

or a prayer.\* At other times, in a recess, he would roll his head, sway his body backward and forward, stretch out and then convulsively draw back his leg. His biographer relates that it "was his constant anxious care to go out or in at a door or passage, . . . so as that either his right or his left foot should constantly make the first actual movement; . . . when he had neglected or gone wrong in this sort of magical movement, I have seen him go back again, put himself in the proper posture to begin the ceremony, and having gone through it, walk briskly on and join his companion."† People sat down to table. Suddenly, in a moment of abstraction, he stoops, and clenching hold of the foot of a lady, draws off her shoe.‡ Hardly was the dinner served when he darted on the food; "his looks seemed riveted to his plate; nor would he, unless when in very high company, say one word, or even pay the least attention to what was said by others; (he) indulged with such intensesness, that, while in the act of eating, the veins of his forehead swelled, and generally a strong perspiration was visible."§ If by chance the hare was high, or the pie had been made with rancid butter, he no longer ate, but devoured. When at last his appetite was satisfied, and he consented to speak, he disputed, shouted, made a sparring-match of his conversation, snatched a triumph no matter how, laid down his opinion dogmatically, and maltreated those whom he was refuting. "Sir, I perceive you are a vile Whig."|| "My dear lady (to Mrs. Thrale), talk no more of this; nonsense can be defended but by nonsense."¶ "One thing I know, which you don't seem to know, that you are very uncivil."\*\* "In the intervals of articulating he made various sounds with his mouth, sometimes as if ruminating, . . . sometimes giving a half whistle, sometimes making his tongue play backwards from the roof of his mouth, as if clucking like a hen. . . . Generally, when he had concluded a period, in the course of a dispute, . . . he used to blow out his breath like a whale,"†† and swallow several cups of tea.

Then in a low voice, cautiously, men would ask Garrick and Bos-

\* *Life of Johnson*, ch. xviii. 165, n. 4.

† *Ibid.* ch. xviii. 166.

§ *Ibid.* ch. xvii. 159.

¶ *Ibid.* ch. xxii. 201.

†† *Ibid.* ch. xviii. 166.

‡ *Ibid.* ch. xlvi. 439. n. 3.

|| *Ibid.* ch. xxvi. 236.

\*\* *Ibid.* ch. lxviii. 628.

well the history and habits of this strange being. He had lived like a cynic and an eccentric, having passed his youth reading miscellaneously, especially Latin folios, even those least known, such as Macrobius; he had found on a shelf in his father's shop the Latin works of Petrarch, whilst he was looking for apples, and had read them;\* "he published proposals for printing by subscription the Latin poems of Politian."† At twenty-five he had married for love a woman of about fifty, "very fat, with swelled cheeks, of a florid red, produced by thick painting, flaring and fantastic in her dress,"‡ and who had children as old as himself. Having come to London to earn his bread, some, seeing his convulsive grimaces, took him for an idiot; others, seeing his robust frame, advised him to buy a porter's knot.§ For thirty years he worked like a hack for the publishers, whom he used to thrash when they became impertinent;|| always shabby, having once fasted two days;¶ content when he could dine on "a cut of meat for sixpence, and bread for a penny;"\*\* having written *Rasselas* in eight nights, to pay for his mother's funeral. Now pensioned†† by the king, freed from his daily labors, he gave way to his natural indolence, lying in bed often till mid-day and after. He is visited at that hour. We mount the stairs of a gloomy house on the north side of Fleet Street, the busy quarter of London, in a narrow and obscure court; and as we enter, we hear the scoldings of four old women and an old quack doctor, poor penniless creatures, bad in health and in disposition, whom he has rescued, whom he supports, who vex or insult him. We ask for the doctor, a negro opens the door; we gather round the master's bed; there are always many distinguished people at his levee, including even ladies. Thus surrounded; "he declaims, then goes to dinner at a tavern, where he commonly stays late,"‡‡ talks all the evening, goes out to enjoy in the streets the London mud and fog, picks up a

\* *Life of Johnson*, ch. ii. 12. † *Ibid.* ch. iv. 22. ‡ *Ibid.* ch. iv. 26.

§ *Ibid.* ch. v. 28, note 2. || *Ibid.* ch. vii. 46. ¶ *Ibid.* ch. xvii. 159.

\*\* *Ibid.* ch. v. 28.

†† He had formerly put in his *Dictionary* the following definition of the word pension: "*Pension*—an allowance made to any one without an equivalent. In England it is generally understood to mean pay given to a state-hireling for treason to his country." This drew of course afterwards all the sarcasms of his adversaries upon himself.

‡‡ *Ibid.* ch. xxiv. 216.

friend to talk again, and is busy pronouncing oracles and maintaining his opinions till four in the morning.

Whereupon we ask if it is the freedom of his opinions which is fascinating. His friends answer, that there is no more indomitable partisan of order. He is called the Hercules of Toryism. From infancy he detested the Whigs, and he never spoke of them but as public malefactors. He insults them even in his *Dictionary*. He exalts Charles the Second and James the Second as two of the best kings who have ever reigned.\* He justifies the arbitrary taxes which Government presumes to levy on the Americans.† He declares that “Whiggism is a negation of all principle:”‡ that the first Whig was the devil;§ that “the Crown has not power enough;”|| that “mankind are happier in a state of inequality and subordination.”¶ Frenchmen of the present time, the admirers of the *Contrat Social* soon feel, on reading or hearing all this, that they are no longer in France. And what must they feel when, a few moments later, the Doctor says :

“I think him (Rousseau) one of the worst of men ; a rascal who ought to be hunted out of society, as he has been. . . . I would sooner sign a sentence for his transportation, than that of any felon who has gone from the Old Bailey these many years. Yes, I should like to have him work in the plantations.”\*\*

It seems that in England people do not like philosophical innovators. Let us see if Voltaire will be spared: “It is difficult to settle the proportion of iniquity between them (Rousseau and Voltaire).†† In good sooth, this is clear. But can we not look for truth outside an Established Church? No; “no honest man could be a Deist; for no man could be so after a fair examination of the proofs of Christianity.”‡‡ Here is a peremptory Christian; there are scarcely any in France so decisive. Moreover, he is an Anglican, with a passion for the hierarchy, an admirer of established order, hostile to the Dissenters. You will see him bow to an archbishop with peculiar veneration.§§ You will hear him reprove one of his friends “for

\* Boswell's *Life*, ch. xlix. 444.

† *Ibid.* ch. xlvi. 435.

‡ *Ibid.* ch. xvi. 148.

§ *Ibid.* ch. lxvi. 606.

|| *Ibid.* ch. xxvi. 236.

¶ *Ibid.* ch. xxviii. 252.

\*\* *Ibid.* ch. xix. 175.

†† *Ibid.* ch. xix. 176.

‡‡ *Ibid.* ch. xix. 174.

§§ *Ibid.* ch. lxxv. 723.



saying grace without mention of the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."\* If you speak to him of a Quakers' meeting, and of a woman preaching, he will tell you that "a woman preaching is like a dog's walking on his hind legs; it is not done well, but you are surprised to find it done at all."† He is a Conservative, and does not fear being considered antiquated. He went at one o'clock in the morning into the Church of St. John, Clerkenwell, to interrogate a tormented spirit, which had promised to "give a token of her presence there by a knock upon her coffin."‡ If you look at Boswell's Life of him, you will find there fervent prayers, examinations of conscience, and rules of conduct. Amidst prejudices and follies he has a deep conviction, active faith, severe morality. He is a Christian from his heart and conscience, reason and practice. The thought of God, the fear of the last judgment, engross and reform him. He reproaches himself with his indolence, implores God's pardon, is humble, has scruples. All this is very strange. We ask men what can please them in this grumbling bear, with the manners of a beadle and the inclinations of a constable? They answer, that in London people are less exacting than in Paris, as to manners and politeness; that in England they allow energy to be rude and virtue odd; that they put up with a combative conversation; that public opinion is all on the side of the constitution and Christianity; and that society was right to take for its master a man who, by its style and precepts, best suited its bent.

We now send for his books, and after an hour we observe, that whatever the work be, tragedy or dictionary, biography or essay, he always keeps the same tone. "Dr. Johnson," Goldsmith said one day to him, "if you were to make little fishes talk, they would talk like whales."§ In fact, his phraseology rolls always in solemn and majestic periods, in which every substantive marches ceremoniously, accompanied by its epithet; great, pompous words peal like an organ; every proposition is set forth balanced by a proposition of equal length; thought is developed with the compassed regularity and official splendor of a procession. Classical prose attains its perfection in him,

\* *Life of Johnson*, ch. xxiv. 218.

† *Ibid.* ch. xv. 138, note 3.

‡ *Ibid.* ch. xvii. 157.

§ *Ibid.* ch. xxviii. 256.

as classical poetry in Pope. Art cannot be more consummate, or nature more forced. No one has confined ideas in more strait compartments; none has given stronger relief to dissertation and proof; none has imposed more despotically on story and dialogue the forms of argumentation and violent declamation; none has more generally mutilated the flowing liberty of conversation and life by antitheses and technical words. It is the completion and the excess, the triumph and the tyranny, of oratorical style.\* We understand now that an oratorical age would recognise him as a master, and attribute to him in eloquence the primacy which it attributed to Pope in verse.

We wish to know what ideas have made him popular. Here the astonishment of a Frenchman redoubles. We vainly turn over the pages of his *Dictionary*, his eight volumes of essays, his ten volumes of biographies, his numberless articles, his conversation so carefully collected; we yawn. His truths are too true; we already knew his precepts by heart. We learn from him that life is short, and we ought to improve the few moments accorded to us; † that a mother ought not to bring up her son as a dandy; that a man ought to repent of his crimes, and yet avoid superstition; that in every thing we ought to be active, and not hurried. We thank him for these sage counsels, but we mutter to ourselves that we could have done very well without them. We should like to know who could have been the lovers of *ennui* who have bought up thirteen thousand copies. We then remember that sermons are liked in England, and that these *Essays* are sermons. We discover that men of reflection do not need bold or striking ideas, but palpable and profitable truths. They demand to be furnished with a useful provision of authentic documents on man and his existence, and demand

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\* Here is a celebrated phrase, which will give some idea of his style (Boswell's *Journal*, ch. xliii. 381); "We were now treading that illustrious island, which was once the luminary of the Caledonian regions, whence savage clans and roving barbarians derived the benefits of knowledge and the blessings of religion. To abstract the mind from all local emotion would be impossible if it were endeavored, and would be foolish if it were possible. . . . Far from me and from my friends be such frigid philosophy as may conduct us indifferent and unmoved over any ground which has been dignified by wisdom, bravery, or virtue. The man is little to be envied, whose patriotism would not gain force upon the plain of Marathon, or whose piety would not grow warmer among the ruins of Iona."

† *Rambler*, 108, 109, 110, 111.

nothing more. No matter if the idea is vulgar ; meat and bread are vulgar too, and are no less good. They wish to be taught the kinds and degrees of happiness and unhappiness, the varieties and results of characters and conditions, the advantages and inconveniences of town and country, knowledge and ignorance, wealth and poverty, because they are moralists and utilitarians ; because they look in a book for the knowledge to turn them from folly, and motives to confirm them in uprightness ; because they cultivate in themselves sense, that is to say practical reason. A little fiction, a few portraits, the least amount of amusement, will suffice to adorn it. This substantial food only needs a very simple seasoning. It is not the novelty of the dishes ; nor dainty cookery, but solidity and wholesomeness, which they seek. For this reason the *Essays* are a national food. It is because they are insipid and dull for us that they suit the taste of an Englishman. We understand now why they take for a favorite the respectable, the unbearable Samuel Johnson.

## CHAPTER XV.

### THE CLASSIC POETS.

WHEN we take in in one view the vast literary region in England, extending from the restoration of the Stuarts to the French Revolution, we perceive that all the productions, independently of the English character, bear a classical impress, and that this impress, special to this region, is met with neither in the preceding nor in the succeeding time. This dominant form of thought is imposed on all writers from Waller to Johnson, from Hobbes and Temple to Robertson and Hume: there is an art to which they all aspire; the work of a hundred years, practice and theory, inventions and imitations, examples and criticism, are employed in attaining it. They comprehend only one kind of beauty; they establish only the precepts which may produce it; they re-write, translate, and disfigure on its pattern the great works of other ages; they carry it into all the different kinds of literature, and succeed or fail in them according as it is adapted to them or not. The sway of this style is so absolute, that it is imposed on the greatest, and condemns them to impotence when they would apply it beyond its domain. The possession of this style is so universal, that it is met with in the weakest, and raises them to the height of talent, when they apply it in its domain.\* This it is which brings to perfection prose, discourse, essay, dissertation, narration, and all the productions which form part of conversation and eloquence. This it is which destroyed the old drama, debased the new, impoverished and diverted poetry, produced a correct, agreeable, sensible, colorless, and concise history. This spirit, common to England and France, impressed its form on the in-

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\* P. L. Courier (1772-1825) says, 'a lady's maid, under Louis XIV., wrote better than the greatest of modern writers.'

finite diversity of literary works, so that in its universal manifest ascendancy we cannot but recognize the presence of one of those internal forces which bend and govern the course of human genius.

In no branch was it displayed more manifestly than in poetry, and at no time did it appear more clearly than under Queen Anne. The poets have just attained to the art which they had discerned. For sixty years they were approaching it ; now they possess it, handle it ; already they employ and exaggerate it. The style is at the same time finished and artificial. Open the first that comes to hand, Parnell or Philips, Addison or Prior, Gay or Tickell, you find a certain turn of mind, versification, language. Pass to the second, the same form reappears ; you would say that they were imitations one of another. Go on to a third ; the same diction, the same apostrophes, the same fashion of arranging an epithet and rounding a period. Turn over the whole lot ; with little individual differences, they seem to be all cast in the same mould ; one is more epicurean, another more moral, another more biting ; but the noble language, the oratorical pomp, the classical correctness, reign throughout ; the substantive is accompanied by its adjective, its knight of honor ; antithesis balances the symmetrical architecture ; the verb, as in Lucan or Statius, is displayed, flanked on each side by a noun decorated by an epithet ; one would say that the verse had been fabricated by a machine, so uniform is the make ; we forget what it means ; we are tempted to count the feet on our fingers ; we know beforehand what poetical ornaments are to embellish it. There is a theatrical dressing, contrasts, allusions, mythological elegances, Greek or Latin quotations. There is a scholastic solidity, sententious maxims, philosophic commonplaces, moral developments, oratorical exactness. You might imagine yourself to be before a family of plants ; if the size, color, accessories, names differ, the fundamental type does not vary ; the stamens are of the same number, similarly inserted, around similar pistils, above leaves arranged on the same plan ; he who knows one knows all ; there is a common organism and structure which involves the uniformity of the rest. If you review the whole family, you will doubtless find there some characteristic plant which displays the type in a clear light, whilst next

to it and by degrees it alters, degenerates, and at last loses itself in the surrounding families. So here we see classical art find its centre in the neighbors of Pope, and above all in Pope; then, after being half effaced, mingle with foreign elements, until it disappears in the poetry which succeeded it.

In 1688, at the house of a linen draper in Lombard Street, London, was born a little, delicate, and sickly creature, by nature artificial, constituted beforehand for a studious existence, having no taste but for books, who from his early youth derived his whole pleasure from the contemplation of printed books. He copied the letters, and thus learned to write. He passed his infancy with them, and was a versemaker as soon as he knew how to speak. At the age of twelve he had written a little tragedy out of the *Iliad*, and an *Ode on Solitude*. From thirteen to fifteen he composed a long epic of four thousand verses, called *Alexander*. For eight years shut up in a little house in Windsor Forest, he read all the best critics, almost all the English, Latin, and French poets who have a reputation, Homer, the Greek poets, and a few of the greater ones in the original, Tasso and Ariosto in translations, with such assiduity, that he nearly died from it. He did not search in them for passions, but style: there was never a more devoted adorer, never a more precocious master of form. Already his taste showed itself; amongst all the English poets, his favorite was Dryden, the least inspired and the most classical. He perceived his career. He states that Mr. Walsh told him there was one way left of excelling. "We had several great poets," he said, "but we never had one great poet that was correct; and he advised me to make that my study and aim."\* He followed this advice, tried his hand in translations of Ovid and Statius, and in recasting parts of old Chaucer. He appropriated all the poetic elegances and excellences, stored them up in his memory; he arranged in his head the complete dictionary of all happy epithets, all ingenious turns of expression, all sonorous rhythms by which one may exalt, render precise, illuminate an idea. He was like those little musicians, infant prodigies, who, brought up at the piano, suddenly acquire a marvellous touch, roll out scales, brilliant shakes, make the octaves vault

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\* R. Carruthers' *Life of Alexander Pope*, 2d ed. 1857 ch. i. 33.

with an agility and justice which drive off the stage the most famous artists. At seventeen, becoming acquainted with old Wycherley, who was sixty-nine, he undertook, at his request, to correct his poems, and corrected them so well, that the other was at once charmed and mortified. Pope blotted out, added, recast, spoke frankly, and eliminated firmly. The author, in spite of himself, admired the corrections secretly, and tried openly to make light of them, until at last his vanity, wounded at owing so much to so young a man, and at finding a master in a scholar, ended by breaking off an intercourse by which he profited and suffered too much. For the scholar had at his first step carried the art beyond his master's. At sixteen\* his Pastorals bore witness to a correctness which no one had possessed, not even Dryden. To read these choice words, these exquisite arrangements of melodious syllables, this science of division and rejection, this style so fluent and pure, these graceful images rendered still more graceful by the diction, and all this artificial and many-tinted garland of flowers which he called pastoral, people thought of the first eclogues of Virgil. Mr. Walsh declared "that it is not flattery at all to say that Virgil had written nothing so good at his age" † When later they appeared in one volume, the public was dazzled. "You have only displeased the critics," wrote Wycherley, "by pleasing them too well." ‡ The same year the poet of twenty-one finished his *Essay on Criticism*, a sort of *Ars Poetica*: it is the kind of poem a man might write at the end of his career, when he has handled all modes of writing, and has grown grey in criticism; and in this subject, whose treatment demands the experience of a whole literary life, he was in an instant as ripe as Boileau.

This consummate musician, who begins by a treatise on harmony, what will he make of his incomparable mechanism and his professional science? It is well to feel and think before writing; a full source of living ideas and candid passions is necessary to make a genuine poet, and in him, seen closely, we find that everything, to his very person, is tricked out and

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\* It is very doubtful whether Pope was not older than sixteen when he wrote the Pastorals. See on this subject, Pope's Works, ed. Elwin, London, 1871, i. 239 *et passim*.—TR.

† Pope's Works, ed. Elwin, i. 233.

‡ *Ibid.* i. 243.

artificial; he was a dwarf, four feet high, contorted, hunch-backed, thin, valetudinarian, appearing, when he arrived at maturity, no longer capable of existing. He could not get up himself, a woman dressed him; he wore three pairs of stockings, drawn on one over the other, so slender were his legs; "when he rose, he was invested in bodice made of stiff canvas, being scarce able to hold himself erect till they were laced, and he then put on a flannel waistcoat;"\* next came a sort of fur doublet, for the least thing made him shiver; and lastly, a thick linen shirt, very warm, with fine sleeves. Over all this he wore a black garment, a tye-wig, a little sword; thus equipped, he went and took his seat at the table of his great friend, Lord Oxford. He was so small, that he had to be raised on a chair of his own; so bald, that when he had no company he covered his head with a velvet cap; so punctilious and exacting, that the footmen avoided to go his errands, and the Earl had to discharge several "for their resolute refusal of his messages." At dinner he ate too much; like a spoiled child, he would have highly seasoned dishes, and thus "would oppress his stomach with repletion." When cordials were offered him, he got angry, but did not refuse them. He had all the appetite and whims of an old child, an old invalid, an old author, an old bachelor. You are prepared to find him whimsical and susceptible. He often, without saying a word, and without any known cause, quitted the house of the Earl of Oxford, and the ladies had to go repeatedly with messages to bring him back. If Lady Mary Wortley, his former poetical divinity, were unfortunately at table, there was no dining in peace; they would not fail to contradict, peck at each other, quarrel; and one or other would leave the room. He would be sent for, and would return, but he brought his hobbies back with him. He was crafty, malignant, like a nervous abortion as he was; when he wanted anything, he dared not ask for it plainly; with hints and contrivances of speech he induced people to mention it, to bring it forward, after which he would make use of it. "Thus he teased Lord Orrery until he obtained a screen. He hardly drank tea without a stratagem. Lady Bolingbroke used to

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\* Johnson, *Lives of the Most Eminent English Poets*, 3 vols., ed. Cunningham, 1854; 'A. Pope, iii. 96.



say that 'he payed the politician about cabbages and turnips.'”\*

The rest of his life is not much more noble. He wrote libels on the Duke of Chandos, Aaron Hill, Lady Mary Wortley, and then lied or equivocated to disavow them. He had an ugly liking for artifice, and prepared a disloyal trick against Lord Bolingbroke, his greatest friend. He was never frank, always acting a part; he aped the *blasé* man, the impartial great artist, a contemner of the great, of kings, of poetry itself. The truth is, that he thought of nothing but his phrases, his author's reputation, and "a little regard shown him by the Prince of Wales melted his obduracy."† When you read his correspondence, you find that there are not more than about ten genuine letters; he is a literary man even in the moments when he opened his heart; his confidences are formal rhetoric; and when he conversed with a friend he was always thinking of the printer, who would give his effusions to the public. Through his very pretentiousness he grew awkward, and unmasked himself. One day Richardson and his father, the painter, found him reading a pamphlet that Cibber had written against him. "These things," said Pope, "are my diversion." "They sat by him while he perused it, and saw his features writhing with anguish; and young Richardson said to his father, when they returned, that he hoped to be preserved from such diversion."‡ In fine, his great cause for writing was literary vanity; he wished to be admired, and nothing more; his life was that of a coquette studying herself in a glass, bedecking herself, smirking, paying compliments to herself, yet declaring that compliments weary her, that painting the face makes her dirty, and that she has a horror of affectation. Pope has no dash, no naturalness or manliness; no more ideas than passions; at least such ideas as a man feels it necessary to write, and in connection with which we lose thought of words. Religious controversy and party quarrels resound about him; he studiously avoids them; amidst all these shock his chief care is to preserve his writing-desk; he is a very lukewarm Catholic, all

\* Johnson, *Lives of the Most Eminent English Poets*, 3 vols. ed. Cunningham, 1854; A. Pope, iii. 99.

† Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, ch. lxxi. 670.

‡ Carruthers' *Life of Pope*, ch. x. 377.

but a deist, not well aware of what deism means ; and on this point he borrows from Bolingbroke ideas whose scope he cannot see, but which he thinks suitable to be put into verse. In a letter to Atterbury (1717) he says :

“In my politics, I think no further than how to prefer the peace of my life, in any government under which I live ; nor in my religion, than to preserve the peace of my conscience in any church with which I communicate. I hope all churches and governments are so far of God, as they are rightly understood and rightly administered : and where they err, or may be wrong, I leave it to God alone to mend or reform them.”\*

Such convictions do not torment a man. In reality, he did not write because he thought, but thought in order to write ; inky paper, and the noise it makes in the world, was his idol ; if he wrote verses, it was merely for the sake of doing so.

This is the best training for versification. Pope gave himself up to it ; he was a man of leisure, his father had left him a very fair fortune ; he earned a large sum by translating the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* ; he had an income of eight hundred pounds. He was never in the pay of a publisher ; he looked from an eminence upon the beggarly authors grovelling in their Bohemianism, and, calmly seated in his pretty house at Twickenham, in his grotto, or in the fine garden which he had himself planned, he could polish and file his writings as long as he chose. He did not fail to do so. When he had written a work, he kept it at least two years in his desk. From time to time he re-read and corrected it ; took counsel of his friends, then of his enemies ; no new edition was unamended ; he moulded without wearying. His first production was so much recast and transformed, that it could not be recognized in the final copy. The pieces which seem least retouched are two satires, and Dodsley says that in the manuscript “almost every line was written twice over ; I gave him a clean transcript, which he sent some time afterwards to me for the press, with almost every line written twice over a second time.” † Dr. Johnson says : “From his attention to poetry he was never diverted. If conversation offered anything that could be improved, he committed it to paper ; if a thought, or perhaps an expression, more happy

\* Carruthers' *Life of Pope*, ch. iv. 164.

† Johnson, *The Lives of the English Poets* ; Alexander Pope, iii. 114.

than was common, rose to his mind, he was careful to write it; an independent distich was preserved for an opportunity of insertion; and some little fragments have been found containing lines, or parts of lines, to be wrought upon at some other time.\* His writing-box had to be placed upon his bed before he rose. "Lord Oxford's domestic related that, in the dreadful winter of 1740, she was called from her bed by him four times in one night to supply him with paper, lest he should lose a thought."† Swift complains that he was never at leisure for conversation, because he "always had some poetical scheme in his head." Thus nothing was lacking for the attainment of perfect expression; the practice of a life-time, the study of every model, independent fortune, the company of men of the world, freedom from turbulent passions, the absence of dominant ideas, the facility of an infant prodigy, the assiduity of an old man of letters. It seems as though he were expressly endowed with faults and good qualities, here enriched, there impoverished, at once narrowed and developed, to set in relief the classical form by the diminution of the classical depth, to present the public with a model of a well-used and accomplished art, to reduce to a brilliant and rigid crystal the flowing sap of an expiring literature.

It is a great misfortune for a poet to know his business too well; his poetry then shows a man of business, and not the poet. I wish I could admire Pope's works of imagination, but I cannot. In vain I read the testimony of his contemporaries, and even that of the moderns, and repeat to myself that in his time he was the prince of poets; that his *Epistle from Eloisa to Abelard* was received with a cry of enthusiasm; that Johnson, that great literary critic, ranked it amongst 'the happiest productions of the human mind;' that Lord Byron himself preferred it to the celebrated ode of Sappho. I read it again and am bored; this is not as it ought to be; but, in spite of myself, I yawn, and I open the original letters of *Eloisa* to find the cause of my weariness.

Doubtless poor *Eloisa* is a barbarian, nay worse, a literary barbarian; she makes learned quotations, arguments, tries to imitate Cicero, to arrange her periods; she could not do oth-

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\* *Ibid.* iii. 111.

† *Ibid.* iii. 105.

erwise, writing a dead language, with an acquired style ; perhaps the reader would do as much if he were obliged to write to his mistress in Latin.\* But how the true sentiment pierces through the scholastic form !

“ Thou art the only one who can sadden me, console me, make me joyful. . . . I should be happier and prouder to be called thy mistress than to be the lawful wife of an emperor. . . . Never, God knows it, have I wished for any thing else in thee but thee. It is thee alone whom I desire ; nothing that thou couldst give ; it is not a marriage, a dowry : I never dreamt of doing my pleasure or my will, thou knowest it, but thine.’

All this is crude ; Pope has more wit than she, and how he endues her with it ; in his hands she becomes an academician, and her letter is a repertory of literary effects. Portraits and descriptions ; she paints to Abelard the nunnery and the landscape :

“ In these lone walls (their days eternal bound),  
 These moss-grown domes with spiry turrets crowned,  
 Where awful arches make a noon-day night,  
 And the dim windows shed a solemn light. . . .  
 The wandering streams that shine between the hills,  
 The grotts that echo to the tinkling rills,  
 The dying gales that pant upon the trees,  
 The lakes that quiver to the curling breeze.’ †

Declamation and commonplace : she sends Abelard discourses on love and the liberty which it demands, on the cloister and the peaceful life which it affords, on writing and the advantages of the post. ‡ Antitheses and contrasts, she forwards them to

\* Rev. W. Elwin, in his edition of Pope's Works, ii. 224, says : ‘ The authenticity of the Latin letters has usually been taken for granted, but I have a strong belief that they are a forgery. . . . It is far more likely that they are the fabrication of an unconcerned romancer, who speaks in the name of others with a latitude which people, not entirely degraded, would never adopt towards themselves. The suspicion is strengthened when the second party to the correspondence, the chief philosopher of his generation, exhibits the same exceptional depravity of taste.’—TR.

† Pope's Works, ed, Elwin ; *Eloisa to Abelard*, ii. 245, v. 141—160.

‡ *Eloisa to Abelard*, ii. 240, v. 51—58 :

“ Heav'n first taught letters for some wretch's aid,  
 Some banished lover, or some captive maid ;  
 They live, they speak, they breathe what love inspires,  
 Warm from the soul, and faithful to its fires,  
 The virgin's wish without her fears impart,  
 Excuse the blush, and pour out all the heart,  
 Speed the soft intercourse from soul to soul,  
 And waft a sigh from Indus to the Pole.’

Abelard by the dozen ; a contrast between the convent illuminated by his presence and desolate by his absence, between the tranquillity of the pure nun and the anxiety of the culpable nun, between the dream of human happiness and the dream of divine happiness. In fine it is a *bravura*, with contrasts of *forte* and *piano*, variations and change of key. Eloisa makes the most of her theme, and sets herself to crowd into it all the powers and effects of her voice. Admire the *crescendo*, the shakes by which she ends her brilliant *morceaux* ; to transport the hearer at the close of the portrait of the innocent nun, she says :

“ How happy is the blameless vestal’s lot !  
 The world forgetting, by the world forgot !  
 Eternal sunshine of the spotless mind !  
 Each prayer accepted, and each wish resigned ;  
 Labor and rest, that equal periods keep ;  
 ‘ Obedient slumbers that can wake and weep ;’  
 Desires composed, affections ever even ;  
 Tears that delight, and sighs that waft to heav’n.  
 Grace shines around her, with serenest beams,  
 And whisp’ring angels prompt her golden dreams.  
 For her, th’ unfading rose of Eden blooms,  
 And wings of seraphs shed divine perfumes,  
 For her the spouse prepares the bridal ring,  
 For her white virgins hymeneals sing,  
 To sounds of heavenly harps she dies away,  
 And melts in visions of eternal day.”\*

Observe the noise of the big drum, I mean the grand contrivances, for so may be called all that a person says who wishes to rave and cannot ; for instance, speaking to rocks and walls, praying the absent Abelard to come, fancying him present, apostrophising grace and virtue :

“ Oh grace serene ! Oh virtue heavenly fair !  
 Divine oblivion of low-thoughted care !  
 Fresh-blooming hope, gay daughter of the sky !  
 And faith, our early immortality !  
 Enter, each mild, each amicable guest ;  
 Receive, and wrap me in eternal rest !”†

Hearing the dead speaking to her, telling the angels :

“ I come ! I come ! Prepare your roseate bow’rs,  
 Celestial palms, and ever-blooming flow’rs.”‡

\* *Eloisa to Abelard*, 249, v. 207-222.

† *Ibid.* 254, v. 297-302.

‡ *Ibid.* ii. 255, v. 317.

This is the final symphony with modulations of the celestial organ. I suppose that Abelard cries "Bravo" when he hears it.

But this is nothing in comparison with the art exhibited by her in every phrase. She puts ornaments into every line. Imagine an Italian singer trilling every word. O what pretty sounds! how nimbly and brilliantly they roll along, how clear, and always exquisite! it is impossible to reproduce them in another tongue. Now it is a happy image, filling up a whole phrase; now a series of verses, full of symmetrical contrasts; two ordinary words set in relief by strange conjunction; an imitative rhythm completing the impression of the mind by the emotion of the senses; the most elegant comparisons and the most picturesque epithets; the closest style and the most ornate. Except truth, nothing is wanting. Eloisa is worse than a singer, she is an author: we look at the back of her epistle to Abelard to see if she has not written "For Press."

Pope has somewhere given a receipt for making an epic poem: take a storm, a dream, five or six battles, three sacrifices, funeral games, a dozen gods in two divisions; shake together until there rises the froth of a lofty style. You have just seen the receipt for making a love-letter. This kind of poetry resembles cookery; neither heart nor genius is necessary to produce it, but a light hand, an attentive eye, and a cultivated taste.

It seems that this kind of talent is made for light verses. It is factitious, and so are the manners of society. To make pretty speeches, to prattle with ladies, to speak elegantly of their chocolate or their fan, to jeer at fools, to criticise the last tragedy, to be good at compliments or epigrams,—this, it seems, is the natural employment of a mind such as this, but slightly impassioned, very vain, a perfect master of style, as careful of his verses as a dandy of his coat. Pope wrote the *Rape of the Lock* and the *Dunciad*; his contemporaries went into ecstasies on the charm of his badinage and the exactness of his raillery, and believed that he had surpassed Boileau's *Lutrin* and *Satires*. That may well be; at all events the praise would be scanty.

*The Rape of the Lock* is a buffoonery in a noble style. Lord Petre had cut off a lock of hair of a fashionable beauty, Mrs. Arabella Fermor; out of this trifle the problem is to make an epic, with invocations, apostrophes, the intervention of super-

natural beings, and the rest of poetic mechanism ; the solemnity of style contrasts with the littleness of the events ; we laugh at these bickerings as at an insect's quarrel. Pope dedicates his poem to Mistress Arabella Fermor with every kind of compliment. The truth is, he is not polite ; a Frenchwoman would have sent him back his book, and advised him to learn manners ; for one commendation of her beauty she would find ten sarcasms upon her frivolity. Is it very pleasant to have it said to one : ' You have the prettiest eyes in the world, but you live in the pursuit of trifles ? ' Yet to this all his homage is reduced. His complimentary emphasis, his declaration that the ' ravish'd hair . . . adds new glory to the shining sphere,' all his stock of phrases is but a parade of gallantry which betrays indelicacy and grossness. Will she

' Stain her honor, or her new brocade,  
Forget her pray'rs, or miss a masquerade,  
Or lose her heart, or necklace, at a ball ? '

No Frenchman of the eighteenth century would have imagined such a compliment. At most, that bearish Rousseau, that former lackey and Geneva moralist, might have delivered this disagreeable thrust. In England it was not found too rude. Mrs. Arabella Fermor was so pleased with the poem, that she gave about copies of it. Clearly she was not hard to please, for she had heard much worse compliments. If you read in Swift the literal transcript of a fashionable conversation, you will see that a woman of fashion of that time could endure much before she was angry.

As for his second poem, *The Dunciad*, we need much self-command not to throw down this masterpiece as insipid, and even disgusting. Rarely has so much talent been spent to produce greater tedium. Pope wished to be avenged on his literary enemies, and sang of Dulness, the sublime goddess of literature, ' daughter of Chaos and eternal Night, . . . gross as her sire, and as her mother grave,' queen of hungry authors, who chooses for her son and favorite Cibber. There he is, a king, and to celebrate his accession she institutes public games in imitation of the ancients ; first a race of booksellers, trying to seize a poet ; then the struggle of the authors, who first vie with each other in braying, and then dash into the Fleet-ditch filth ; then the strife of critics, who have to undergo the read-

ing of two voluminous authors without falling asleep. Strange paradise, to be sure, and in truth not very striking. Who is not deafened by these hackneyed and bald allegories, Dulness, poppies, mists, and Sleep? Pope does not flog the dunces, he knocks them down; to add to their punishment, he begins at the deluge, represents at length the past, present, and future empire of Dulness, the library of Alexandria burned by Omar, learning extinguished by the invasion of the barbarians and by the superstition of the middle-age, the empire of stupidity which extends over England and will swallow it up. What paving-stones to crush flies!

“See skulking Truth to her old cavern fled,  
Mountains of casuistry heap’d o’er head!  
Philosophy, that lean’d on Heav’n before,  
Shrinks to her second cause, and is no more.  
Physic of Metaphysic begs defence,  
And Metaphysic calls for aid on sense! . . .  
Religion blushing veils her sacred fires,  
And unawares Morality expires.  
Nor public flame, nor private, dares to shine;  
Nor human spark is left, nor glimpse divine!  
Lo! thy dread empire, Chaos! is restored;  
Light dies before thy uncreating word:  
Thy hand, great anarch! lets the curtain fall;  
And universal darkness buries all.’\* ”

There is, however, a poet in Pope, and to discover him we have only to read him by fragments; if the whole is, as a rule, wearisome or shocking, the details are admirable. It is so at the end of all literary ages. Pliny the younger, and Seneca, so affected and so inflated, are charming in small bits; each of their phrases, taken by itself, is a masterpiece; each verse in Pope is a masterpiece when taken alone. At this time, and after a hundred years of culture, there is no movement, no object, no action, which poets cannot describe. Every aspect of nature was observed; a sunrise, a landscape reflected in the water, † a breeze amid the foliage, and so forth. Ask Pope to

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\* *The Dunciad*, the end.

† Pope’s Works, i. 352; *Windsor Forest*, v. 211:

“‘Oft in her glass the musing shepherd spies  
The headlong mountains and the downward skies,  
The wat’ry landscape of the pendant woods,  
And absent trees that tremble in the floods.’ ”



paint in verse an eel, a perch, or a trout; he has the exact phrase ready; you might glean from him the contents of a 'Gradus.' He gives the features so exactly, that at once you think you see the thing; he gives the expression so copiously, that your imagination, however obtuse, will end by seeing it. He marks every thing in the flight of a pheasant:

“See! from the brake the whirring pheasant springs  
And mounts exulting on triumphant wings. . . .  
Ah! what avail his glossy, varying dyes,  
His purple crest, and scarlet-circled eyes,  
The vivid green his shining plumes unfold,  
His painted wings, and breast that flames with gold? \*

He possesses the richest store of words to depict the sylphs which flutter round his heroine Belinda:

“But now secure the painted vessel glides,  
The sun-beams trembling on the floating tides:  
While melting music steals upon the sky,  
And softened sounds along the waters die;  
Smooth flow the waves, the zephyrs gently play, . . .  
The lucid squadrons round the sails repair:  
Soft o'er the shrouds the aërial whispers breathe.  
That seemed but zephyrs to the train beneath.  
Some to the sun their insect-wings unfold,  
Waft on the breeze, or sink in clouds of gold;  
Transparent forms, too fine for mortal sight,  
Their fluid bodies half dissolved in light.  
Loose to the wind their airy garment flew,  
Thin glitt'ring textures of the filmy dew,  
Dipped in the richest tincture of the skies,  
Where light disports in ever-mingling dyes;  
While ev'ry beam new transient colors flings,  
Colors that change whene'er they wave their wings. †

Doubtless these are not Shakspeare's sylphs; but side by side with a natural and living rose, we may still look with pleasure on a flower of diamonds, as they come from the hand of the jeweller, a masterpiece of art and patience, whose facets make the light glitter, and cast a shower of sparkles over the flagree foliage in which they are embedded. A score of times in a poem of Pope's we stop to look with wonder on one of

\* *Windsor Forest*, 347, v. 111-118.

† Pope's Works, ii. 154; *The Rape of the Lock*, c. 2, v. 47-68.

these literary adornments. He feels so well in which the strong point of his talent lies, that he abuses it; he delights to show his skill. What can be staler than a card party, or more repellent of poetry than the queen of spades or the king of hearts? Yet, doubtless for a wager, he has recorded in the *Rape of the Lock* a game of ombre; we follow it, hear it, recognize the dresses:

“ Behold, four kings, in majesty revered,  
 With hoary whiskers and a forky beard;  
 And four fair queens whose hands sustain a flow’r,  
 Th’ expressive emblem of their softer power;  
 Four knaves in garb succinct, a trusty band;  
 Caps on their heads, and halberts in their hand;  
 And parti-colored troops, a shining train,  
 Drawn forth to combat on the velvet plain.’\* ”

We see the trumps, the cuts, the tricks, and instantly afterwards the coffee, the china, the spoons, the fiery spirits (to wit, spirits of wine); we have here in advance the modes and periphrases of Delille. The celebrated verses in which Delille at once employs and describes imitative harmony, are translated from Pope.† It is an expiring poetry, but poetry still: an ornament to put on a mantelpiece is an inferior work of art, but still it is a work of art.

To descriptive talent Pope unites oratorical talent. This art, proper to the classical age, is the art of expressing mediocre general ideas. For a hundred and fifty years men of both the thinking countries, England and France, employed herein all their studies. They seized these universal and limited truths, which, being situated between lofty philosophical abstractions and petty sensible details, are the subject-matter of eloquence and rhetoric, and form what we now-a-days call commonplaces. They arranged them in compartments, methodically developed them; made them obvious by grouping and symmetry; disposed them in regular successions, which with dignity and majesty advance under discipline, and in a body. The influence of this oratorical reason became so great, that it was imposed on poetry itself. Buffon ends by saying, in

\* *The Rape of the Lock*, c. 3, 160, v. 37-44.

† ‘Peins-moi légèrement l’amant léger de Flore,  
 Qu’un doux ruisseau murmure en vers plus doux encore,’ etc.

praise of verses, that they are as fine as fine prose. In fact, poetry at this time became a more affected prose subjected to rhyme. It was only a kind of higher conversation and more select discourse. It is found powerless when it is necessary to paint or represent an action, when the need is to see and make visible living passions, large genuine emotions, men of flesh and blood; it results only in college epics like the *Henriade*, freezing odes and tragedies like those of Voltaire and Jean-Baptiste Rousseau, or those of Addison, Thomson, Johnson, and the rest. It makes them up of dissertations, because it is capable of nothing else but dissertations. Here henceforth is its domain; and its final task is the didactic poem, which is a dissertation in verse. Pope excelled in it, and his most perfect poems are those made up of precepts and arguments. Artifice in these is less shocking than elsewhere. A poem—I am wrong, essays—like his upon *Criticism, on Man, and the Government of Providence*, on the *Knowledge and Characters of Men*, deserve to be written after reflection; they are a study, and almost a scientific monograph. We may, we even ought, to weigh all the words, and verify all the connections: art and attention are not superfluous; the question concerns exact precepts and close arguments. In this Pope is incomparable. I do not think that there is in the world a versified prose like his; that of Boileau does not approach it. Not that its ideas are very worthy of attention; we have worn them out, they interest us no longer. The *Essay on Criticism* resembles Boileau's *Épîtres* and *L'Art Poétique*, excellent works, but no longer read but in classes at school. It is a collection of very wise precepts, whose only fault is their being too true. To say that good taste is rare; that we ought to reflect and be instructed before deciding; that the rules of art are drawn from nature; that pride, ignorance, prejudice, partiality, envy, pervert our judgment; that a criticism should be sincere, modest, polished, kindly,—all these truths might then be discoveries, but not so now. I suppose that, at the time of Pope, Dryden, and Boileau, men had special need of setting their ideas in order, and of seeing them very clearly in very clear phrases. Now that this need is satisfied, it has disappeared: we demand ideas, not arrangement of ideas; the pigeon-holes are manufactured, fill them. Pope was obliged to do it once in the *Essay on Man*,

which is a sort of *Vicaire Savoyard*,\* less original than the other. He shows that God made all for the best, that man is limited in his capacity and ought not to judge God, that our passions and imperfections serve for the general good and for the end of Providence, that happiness lies in virtue and submission to the divine will. You recognize here a sort of deism and optimism, of which there was much at that time, borrowed, like those of Rousseau, from the *Theodicea* of Leibnitz, but tempered, toned down, and arranged for the use of honest people. The conception is not very lofty: this curtailed deity, making his appearance at the beginning of the eighteenth century, is but a residuum: religion being extinguished, he remained at the bottom of the crucible; and the reasoners of the time, having no metaphysical inventiveness, kept him in their system to stop a gap. In this state and at this place this deity resembles classic verse. He has an imposing appearance, is comprehended easily, is stripped of efficacy, is the product of cold argumentive reason, and leaves the people who attend to him, very much at ease; on all these accounts he is akin to an Alexandrine. This poor conception is all the more wretched in Pope from not belonging to him, for he is only accidentally a philosopher; and to find matter for his poem, three or four systems, deformed and attenuated, are amalgamated in his work. He boasts of having tempered them one with the other, and having "steered between the extremes.†" The truth is, that he did not understand them, and that he jumbles incongruous ideas at every step. There is a passage in which, to obtain an effect of style, he becomes a pantheist; moreover, he is bombastic, and assumes the supercilious, imperious tone of a young doctor. I find no individual invention except in his *Moral Essays*; in them is a theory of dominant passion which is worth reading. After all, he went farther than Boileau, for instance, in the knowledge of man. Psychology is indigenous in England; we meet it there throughout, even in the least creative minds. It gives rise to the novel, dispossesses philosophy, produces the essay, appears in the newspapers, fills

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\* A tale of J. J. Rousseau, in which he tries to depict a philosophical clergyman.—TR.

† These words are taken from the *Design of an Essay on Man*.

current literature, like those indigenous plants which multiply on every soil.

But if the ideas are mediocre, the art of expressing them is truly marvellous: marvellous is the word. "I chose verse," says Pope in his *Design of an Essay on Man*, "because I found I could express them (ideas) more shortly this way than in prose itself." In fact, every word is effective: every passage must be read slowly; every epithet is an epitome; a more condensed style was never written; and, on the other hand, no one labored more skilfully in introducing philosophical formulas into the current conversation of society. His maxims have become proverbs. I open his *Essay on Man* at random, and fall upon the beginning of his second book. An orator, an author of the school of Buffon, would be transported with admiration to see so many literary treasures collected in so small a space:

"Know then thyself, presume not God to scan,  
The proper study of mankind is man.  
Placed on this isthmus of a middle state,  
A being darkly wise, and rudely great:  
With too much knowledge for the sceptic side,  
With too much weakness for the stoic's pride,  
He hangs between; in doubt to act, or rest;  
In doubt to deem himself a God or beast;  
In doubt his mind or body to prefer;  
Born but to die, and reas'ning but to err;  
Alike in ignorance, his reason such,  
Whether he thinks too little or too much;  
Chaos of thought and passion, all confused;  
Still by himself abused, or disabused;  
Created half to rise, and half to fall;  
Great lord of all things, yet a prey to all;  
Sole judge of truth, in endless error hurled,  
The glory, jest, and riddle of the world."\*

This is the proper oratorical exordium, like those which Bossuet sets at the beginning of his funeral orations; a sort of elaborate portico to receive the audience on their entrance, and prepare them for the magnificence of the temple. There is a classical architecture of ideas as well as of stones: the first like the second, is a friend to clearness and regularity, majesty and calm; like the second, it was invented in Greece, transmitted through Rome to France, through France to England, and slight-

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\* Pope's Works, ii. ; *An Essay on Man*, Ep. ii. 375, v. 1-18.

ly altered in its passage. Of all the masters who have practised it in England, Pope is the most skilled.

People will say that this merit is small, and that I do not inspire them with a desire to read Pope's verses. True; at least I do not counsel them to read many. I would add, however, by way of excuse, that there is a kind in which he succeeds, that his descriptive and oratorical talents find in portraiture matter which suits them, and that in this he frequently approaches La Bruyère; that several of his portraits, those of Addison, Lord Hervey, Lord Wharton, the Duchess of Marlborough, are medals worthy of finding a place in the cabinet of the curious, and of remaining in the archives of the human race; that when he chisels one of these heads, the abbreviative images, the unlooked-for connections of words, the sustained and multiplied contrasts, the perpetual and extraordinary conciseness, the incessant and increasing impulse of all the strokes of eloquence combined upon the same spot, stamp upon the memory an impress which we never forget. It is better to repudiate these partial apologies, and frankly to avow that, on the whole, this great poet, the glory of his age, is wearisome, wearisome to us. "A woman of forty," says Stendhal, "is beautiful only to those who have loved her in their youth." The poor muse in question is not forty years old for us; she is a hundred and forty. The taste has been transformed an age ago, for the human mind has wheeled round. Now-a-days we demand new ideas and bare sentiments; we care no longer for the clothing, we want the thing. Exordium, transitions, peculiarities of style, elegances of expression, the whole literary wardrobe, is sent to the old-clothes shop; we only keep what is indispensable; we trouble ourselves no more about adornment, but about truth. The men of the preceding century were quite different. This was seen when Pope translated the *Iliad*; it was the *Iliad* written in the style of the *Henriade*: by virtue of this travesty the public admired it. They would not have admired it in the simple Greek guise; they only consented to see it in powder and ribbons. It was the costume of the time, and it was very necessary to put it on. Dr. Johnson in his commercial and academical style affirms even that the demand for elegance had increased so much, that pure nature could no longer be borne.

§ 48.—It is not everything to have a beautiful dress, strongly sewn and fashionable ; one must be able to get into it easily. Reviewing the whole train of the English poets of the eighteenth century, we perceive that they do not easily get into the classical dress. This gold-embroidered jacket, so well fitted for a Frenchman, hardly suits their figure ; from time to time a hasty, awkward movement makes rents in the sleeves and elsewhere. For instance, Matthew Prior seems at first sight to have all the qualities necessary to wear the jacket well ; he has been an ambassador to France, and writes pretty French *vers de société* ; he turns off with facility little jesting poems on a dinner, a lady ; he is gallant, a man of society, a pleasant storyteller, epicurean, even sceptical like the courtiers of Charles II., that is to say, as far as and including political roguery ; in short, he is an accomplished man of the world, as times went, with a correct and flowing style, having at command a light and a noble verse, and pulling, according to the rules of Bossu and Boileau, the string of mythological puppets. With all this, we find him neither gay enough nor refined enough. Bolingbroke called him wooden-faced, stubborn, and said he had something Dutch in his appearance. His manners smacked very strongly of those of Rochester, and the well-clad refuse which the Restoration bequeathed to the Revolution. On the other hand, he was not a common roysterer. Of his two principal poems, one on *Solomon* paraphrases and treats of the remark of Ecclesiastes, "All is vanity." From this picture you see forthwith that you are in a biblical land : such an idea would not then have occurred to a friend of the Regent of France, the Duke of Orleans. Solomon relates how he in vain "proposed his doubts to the lettered Rabbins," how he has been equally unfortunate in the hopes and desires of love, the possession of power, and ends by trusting to an "omniscient Master, omnipresent King." Here we have English gloom and English conclusions. Moreover, under the rhetorical and uniform composition of his verses, we perceive warmth and passion, rich paintings, a sort of magnificence, and the profusion of a surcharged imagination. Yet on the whole, with his coarseness, want of taste, prolixity, perspicacity, passion, there is something in this man not in accordance with classical elegance. He goes beyond it or does not attain it.

This uncongeniality increases, and attentive eyes soon discover under the regular cloak a kind of energetic and precise imagination, ready to break through it. In this age lived Gay, a sort of La Fontaine, as near La Fontaine as an Englishman can be, that is, not very near, but at least kind and amiable, very sincere, very frank, strangely thoughtless, born to be duped, and a young man to the last. It was his sad lot, he said, "that he could get nothing from the court, whether he wrote for or against it." And he wrote his own epitaph:

"Life is a jest; and all things show it,  
I thought so once; but now I know it."

This careless laughter, to revenge himself on the minister, wrote the *Beggars' Opera*, the fiercest and dirtiest of caricatures. Yet he was a laughter, but in a style of his own, or rather in that of his country. Seeing "certain young men of insipid delicacy," Ambrose Philips, for instance, who wrote elegant and tender pastorals, in the manner of Fontenelle, he amused himself by parodying and contradicting them, and in the *Shepherd's Week* introduced real rural manners into the metre and form of the visionary poetry:

"Thou wilt not find my shepherdesses idly piping on oaten reeds, but milking the kine, tying up the sheaves, or, if the hogs are astray, driving them to their styes. My shepherd . . . sleepeth not under myrtle shades, but under a hedge, nor doth he vigilantly defend his flocks from wolves, because there are none."\*

Fancy a shepherd of Theocritus or Virgil, compelled to put on hob-nailed shoes and the dress of a Devonshire cowherd; such an oddity would amuse us by the contrast of his person and his garments. So here *The Magician*, *The Shepherd's Struggle*, are travestied in a modern guise. Listen to the song of the first shepherd, "Lobbin Clout:"

"Leek to the Welch, to Dutchmen butter's dear,  
Of Irish swains potatoe is the chear;  
Oat for the feasts, the Scottish shepherds grind,  
Sweet turnips are the food of Blouzelind.  
While she loves turnips, butter I'll despise,  
Nor leeks, nor oatmeal, nor potatoe prize."†

The other shepherd answers in the same metre; and the duet

\* The Proeme to *The Shepherd's Week*, i. 66.

† Gay's Poems, *The Shepherd's Week*; first pastoral, *The Squabble*, p. 80.



continues, verse after verse, in the ancient manner, but now amidst turnips, strong beer, fat pigs, bespattered at will by modern country vulgarities and the dirt of a northern climate. Van Ostade and Teniers love these vulgar and clownish idyls; and in Gay, as well as with them, unvarnished and sensual drollery has its sway.

These men will do well to return to their manor, their country, the mud of their ditches, and the dunghill of their farmyards. The less man is fitted for social life, the more he is fitted for solitary life. He enjoys the country the more for enjoying the world less. Englishmen have always been more feudal and more fond of the country than Frenchmen. A sad and impassioned man, naturally self-dependent, converses with objects; a grand grey sky, whereon the autumn mists slumber, a sudden burst of sunshine lighting up a moist field, depress or excite him; inanimate things seem to him instinct with life; and the feeble clearness, which in the morning reddens the fringe of heaven, moves him as much as the smile of a young girl at her first ball. Thus is genuine descriptive poetry born. It appears in Dryden, in Pope himself, even in the writers of elegant pastorals, and breaks out in Thomson's *Seasons*. This poet, the son of a clergyman, and very poor, lived, like most of the literary men of the time, on benefactions and literary subscriptions, on sinecures and political pensions; he did not marry for lack of money; wrote tragedies, because tragedies were lucrative; and ended by settling in a country-house, lying in bed till mid-day, indolent, contemplative, but a good and honest man, affectionate and beloved. He saw and loved the country in its smallest details, not outwardly only, as Saint Lambert,\* his imitator; he made it his joy, his amusement, his habitual occupation; a gardener at heart, delighted to see the spring arrive, happy to be able to enclose an extra field in his garden. He paints all the little things, without being ashamed, for they interest him; takes pleasure in "the smell of the dairy;" you hear him speak of the "insect armies," and "when the envenomed leaf begins to curl,"† and of the birds which, foreseeing the approaching rain, "streak their wings

\* A French pastoral writer (1717-1803), who wrote, in imitation of Thomson, *Les Saisons*.—TR.

† *Poetical Works of J. Thomson*, ed. R. Bell, 1855, 2 vols.; ii. *Spring*, 18.

with oil, to throw the lucid moisture trickling off.”\* He perceives objects so clearly that he makes them visible: we recognise the English landscape, green and moist, half drowned in floating vapors, blotted here and there by violet clouds, which burst in showers at the horizon, which they darken:

“Th’ effusive South  
 Warms the wide air, and o’er the void of heaven  
 Breathes the big clouds with vernal showers distent.† . . .  
 Thus all day long the full-distended clouds  
 Indulge their genial stores, and well-showered earth  
 Is deep enriched with vegetable life;  
 Till, in the western sky, the downward sun,  
 Looks out, effulgent, from amid the flush  
 Of broken clouds, gay-shifting to his beam.  
 The rapid radiance instantaneous strikes  
 The illumined mountain; through the forest streams;  
 Shakes on the floods; and in a yellow mist,  
 Far smoking o’er the interminable plain,  
 In twinkling myriads lights the dewy gems.  
 Moist, bright, and green, the landscape laughs around.”‡

This is emphatic, but it is also opulent. In this air and this vegetation, in this imagination and this style, there is a heaping up, and, as it were, an imparting of effaced or sparkling tints; they are here the glistening and lustrous robe of nature and art. We must see them in Rubens—he is the painter and poet of the teeming and humid clime; but we find it also in others, and in this magnificence of Thomson: in this exaggerated, luxuriant, grand coloring, we find occasionally the rich palette of Rubens.

§ 49.—All this suits ill the classical embroidery. Thomson’s visible imitations of Virgil, his episodes inserted like a veneering, his invocations to spring, to the muse, to philosophy, all the relics of the conventionalisms of the college, produce an incongruity. But the contrast is much more marked in another way. The worldly artificial life such as Louis XIV. had made fashionable, began to weary Europe. It was found dry and hollow; people grew tired of always acting, submitting to etiquette. They felt that gallantry is not love, nor madrigals poetry, nor amusement happiness. They perceived that man

\* Poetical Works of Thomson, *Spring*, ii. 19.

† *Ibid.* 19.

‡ *Ibid.* 20.

is not an elegant doll, or a dandy the masterpiece of nature, and that there is a world outside the drawing-rooms. A Genevese plebeian (J. J. Rousseau), Protestant and solitary, whom religion, education, poverty, and genius had led more quickly and further than others, spoke out the public secret aloud; and it was thought that he had discovered or rediscovered the country, conscience, religion, the rights of man, and natural sentiments. Then appeared a new personality, the idol and model of his time, the sensitive man, who, by his grave character and relish of nature, contrasted with the man of the court. Doubtless this personality smacks of the places he has frequented. He is refined and insipid, melting at the sight of the young lambs nibbling the springing grass, blessing the little birds, who give a concert to celebrate their happiness. In spite of himself, he continues a man of the drawing-room and the academy; after uttering sweet things to the ladies, he utters them to nature, and declaims in polished periods about the Deity. But after all, it is through him that the revolt against classical customs begins; and in this respect, it is more precocious in Germanic England than in Latin France. Thirty years before Rousseau, Thomson had expressed all Rousseau's sentiments, almost in the same style. Like him, he painted the country with sympathy and enthusiasm. Like him, he contrasted the golden age of primitive simplicity with modern miseries and corruption. Like him, he exalted deep love, conjugal tenderness, the union of souls, and perfect esteem animated by desire, paternal affection, and all domestic joys. Like him, he combated contemporary frivolity, and compared the ancient with the modern republics:

“ Proofs of a people, whose heroic aims  
Soared far above the little selfish sphere  
Of doubting modern life.”\*

Like Rousseau, he praised gravity, patriotism, liberty, virtue; rose from the spectacle of nature to the contemplation of God, and showed to man glimpses of immortal life beyond the tomb. Like him, in fine, he marred the sincerity of his emotion and the truth of his poetry by sentimental vapidities, by pastoral billing and cooing, and by such an abundance of epithets, per-

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\* Poetical Works of Thomson, *Liberty*, part i. 102.

sonified abstractions, pompous invocations and oratorical tirades, that we perceive in him beforehand the false and decorative style of Thomas, David,\* and the Revolution. Others follow. The literature of that period might be called the library of the sensitive man. First there was Richardson, the puritanic printer, with his Sir Charles Grandison,† a man of principles, accomplished model of the gentleman, professor of decorum and morality, with a soul into the bargain. There is Sterne; too, the refined and sickly blackguard, who, amid his buffooneries and oddities, pauses to weep over an ass or an imaginary prisoner.‡ There is, in particular, Mackenzie, "the Man of Feeling," whose timid, delicate hero weeps five or six times a day; who grows consumptive through sensibility, dares not broach his love till at the point of death, and dies in broaching it. Naturally, praise induces satire; and in the opposite field we see Fielding, valiant roysterer, and Sheridan, brilliant rake, the one with Blifil, the other with Joseph Surface, two hypocrites, especially the second, not coarse, red-faced, and smelling of the vestry, like Tartuffe, but worldly, well-clad, a good speaker, loftily serious, sad and gentle from excess of tenderness, who with his hand on his heart and a tear in his eye, showers on the public his sentences and periods, whilst he soils his brother's reputation and seduces his neighbor's wife. A character, thus created, soon has an epic made for him. A Scotchman, a man of overmuch wit, having written to his cost an unsuccessful rhapsody, wished to recover himself, went amongst the mountains of his country, gathered picturesque images, collected fragments of legends, plastered over the whole an abundance of eloquence and rhetoric, and created a Celtic Homer, Ossian, who, with Oscar, Malvina, and his whole troop, made the tour of Europe, and, about 1830, ended by furnishing baptismal names for French *grisettes* and *perruquiers*. Macpherson displayed to the world an imitation of primitive manners, not over-true, for the extreme rudeness of barbarians would have shocked the people, but yet well enough preserved or portrayed to contrast with modern civilization, and persuade the public that they were looking upon pure nature. A keen

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\* See the paintings of David, called *Les Fêtes de la Révolution*.

† See above, p. 348.

‡ See above, pp. 359-362.

sympathy with Scotch landscape, so grand, so cold, so gloomy, rain on the hills, the birch trembling to the wind, the mist of heaven and the vagueness of the soul, so that every dreamer found there the emotions of his solitary walks and his philosophical glooms; chivalric exploits and magnanimity, heroes who set out alone to engage an army, faithful virgins dying on the tomb of their betrothed; an impassioned, colored style, affecting to be abrupt, yet polished; able to charm a disciple of Rousseau by its warmth and elegance: here was something to transport the young enthusiasts of the time, civilized barbarians, scholarly lovers of nature, dreaming of the delights of savage life, whilst they shook off the powder which the hair-dresser had left on their coats.

Yet this is not the course of the main current of poetry; it lies in the direction of sentimental reflection: the greatest number of poems, and those most sought after, are emotional dissertations. In fact, a sensitive man breaks out in violent declamations. When he sees a cloud, he dreams of human nature, and constructs a phrase. Hence at this time among poets, swarm the melting philosophers and the tearful academicians; Gray, the morose hermit of Cambridge, and Akenside, a noble thinker, both learned imitators of lofty Greek poetry; Beattie, a metaphysical moralist, with a young girl's nerves and an old maid's hobbies; the amiable and affectionate Goldsmith, who wrote the *Vicar of Wakefield*, the most charming of Protestant pastorals; poor Collins, a young enthusiast, who was disgusted with life, would read nothing but the Bible, went mad, was shut up in an asylum, and in his intervals of liberty wandered in Chichester cathedral, accompanying the music with sobs and groans; Glover, Watts, Shenstone, Smart and others. The titles of their works sufficiently indicate their character. One writes a poem on *The Pleasures of Imagination*, another on the *Passions* and on *Liberty*; one an *Elegy in a Country Churchyard* and a *Hymn to Adversity*, another a poem on a *Deserted Village*, and on the character of surrounding civilizations (Goldsmith's *Traveller*); another a sort of epic on *Thermopylæ*, and another the moral history of a young *Minstrel*. They were nearly all grave, spiritual men, impassioned for noble ideas, with Christian aspirations or convictions, given to meditating on man, inclined to melancholy, to descrip-

tions, invocations, lovers of abstraction and allegory, who, to attain greatness, willingly mounted on stilts. One of the least strict and most noted of them was Young, the author of *Night Thoughts*, a clergyman and a courtier, who, having vainly attempted to enter Parliament, then to become a bishop, married, lost his wife and children, and made use of his misfortunes to write meditations, *Life, Death, Immortality, Time, Friendship, The Christian Triumph, Virtue's Apology, A Moral Survey of the Nocturnal Heavens*, and many other similar pieces. Doubtless there are brilliant flashes of imagination in his poems; seriousness and elevation are not wanting; we can even see that he aims at them; but we discover much more quickly that he makes the most of his grief, and strikes attitudes. He exaggerates and declaims, studies effects and style, confuses Greek and Christian ideas. Fancy an unhappy father, who says:

“‘Silence and Darkness! Solemn sisters! Twins  
Of ancient night! I to Day's soft-ey'd sister pay my court  
(Endymion's rival), and her aid implore  
Now first implor'd in succor to the Muse.’

These writers have not yet shaken off the classical drapery; they write too well, they dare not be natural; their simplicity is conscious, their frankness archaic, their emotions compassed, their tears academical. At last there started up an unfortunate Scotch ploughman, rebelling against the world, and in love, with the yearnings, lusts, greatness, and irrationality of modern genius. Now and then, driving his plough, he lighted on genuine verses, verses such as Heine and Alfred de Musset have made in our own days. In those few words, combined after a new fashion, there was a revolution. Two hundred new verses sufficed. The human mind turned on its hinges, and so did civil society. When Roland, being made a minister, presented himself before Louis XVI. in a simple dress-coat and shoes without buckles, the master of the ceremonies raised his hands to heaven, thinking that all was lost. In fact all was changed.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE ROMANTIC POETS.

§ 50. THE new spirit broke out first in Robert Burns: in fact, the man and the circumstances were suitable; scarcely ever was seen together more of misery and talent. He was born in January 1759, in the frost and snow of a Scotch winter, in a cottage of clay built by his father, a poor farmer of Ayrshire; a sad condition, a sad country, a sad lot. Burns' father, already old, having little more than his arms to depend upon, having taken his farm at too high a rent, burdened with seven children, lived parsimoniously, or rather fasting, in solitude, to avoid temptations to expense. 'For several years butchers' meat was a thing unknown in the house.' Robert went bare-foot and bareheaded; at 'the age of thirteen he assisted in thrashing the crop of corn, and at fifteen he was the principal laborer on the farm.' The family did all the labor; they kept no servant, male or female. They scarcely ate, and they worked too much. 'This kind of life—the cheerless gloom of a hermit, with the unceasing toil of a galley slave—brought me to my sixteenth year,' Burns says. His shoulders were bowed, melancholy seized him; 'almost every evening he was constantly afflicted with a dull headache, which at a future period of his life was exchanged for a palpitation of the heart, and a threatening of fainting and suffocation in his bed in the night-time.' 'The anguish of mind which we felt,' says his brother, 'was very great.' The father grew old; his gray head, care-worn brow, temples 'wearing thin and bare,' his tall bent figure, bore witness to the grief and toil which had spent him. The factor wrote him insolent and threatening letters which 'set all the family in tears.' There was a respite when the father changed his farm, but a lawsuit sprang up between him and the proprietor:

“‘After three years’ tossing and whirling in the vortex of litigation, my father was just saved from the horrors of a gaol by a ‘consumption, which after two years’ promises kindly stepped in.’

In order to snatch something from the claws of the lawyers, the two sons were obliged to step in as creditors for arrears of wages. With this little sum they took another farm. Robert had seven pounds a year for his labor; for several years his whole expenses did not exceed this wretched pittance; he had resolved to succeed by force of abstinence and toil:

“‘I read farming books, I calculated crops, I attended markets; . . . but the first year, from unfortunately buying bad seed, the second from a late harvest, we lost half our crops.’

Troubles came apace; poverty always engenders them. The master-mason Armour, whose daughter was Burns’ sweetheart, was said to contemplate prosecuting him, to obtain a guarantee for the support of his expected progeny, though he refused to accept him as a son-in-law. Jean Armour abandoned him; he could not give his name to the child that was coming. He was obliged to hide; he had been subjected to a public punishment. He said: ‘Even in the hour of social mirth, my gayety is the madness of an intoxicated criminal under the hands of the executioner.’ He resolved to leave the country; he agreed with Mr. Charles Douglas for thirty pounds a year to be book-keeper or overseer on his estate in Jamaica; for want of money to pay the passage, he was about to ‘indent himself,’ that is, become bound as apprentice, when the success of his volume put a score of guineas into his hands, and for a time brought him brighter days. Such was his life up to the age of twenty-seven, and that which succeeded was little better.

Fancy in this condition a man of genius, a true poet, capable of the most delicate emotions and the most lofty aspirations, wishing to rise, to rise to the summit, of which he deemed himself capable and worthy.\*

Ambition had early made itself heard in him:

“‘I had felt early some stirrings of ambition, but they were the blind groping of Homer’s Cyclops round the walls of his cave. . . . The only two openings by which I could enter the temple of fortune were the gate of

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\* Most of these details are taken from the *Life and Works of Burns*, by R. Chambers, 1851, 4 vols.



niggardly economy, or the path of little chicaning bargain-making. The first is so contracted an aperture, I never could squeeze myself into it; the last I always hated—there was contamination in the very entrance.’ \*

Low occupations depress the soul even more than the body; man perishes in them—is obliged to perish; of necessity there remains of him nothing but a machine: for in the kind of action in which all is monotonous, in which throughout the long day the arms lift the same flail and drive the same plough, if thought does not take this uniform movement, the work is ill done. The poet must take care not to be turned aside by his poetry; to do as Burns did, ‘think only of his work whilst he was at it.’ He must think of it always, in the evening unyoking his cattle, on Sunday putting on his new coat, counting on his fingers the eggs and poultry, thinking of the kinds of dung, finding the means of using only one pair of shoes, and of selling his hay at a penny a truss more. He will not succeed if he has not the patient dulness of a laborer, and the crafty vigilance of a petty shopkeeper. How would you have poor Burns succeed? He was out of place from his birth, and tried his utmost to raise himself above his condition. At the farm at Lochlea, during meal-times, the only moments of relaxation, parents, brothers, and sisters ate with a spoon in one hand and a book in the other. Burns, at the school of Hugh Rodger, a teacher of mensuration, and later at a club of young men at Torbolton, strove to exercise himself in general questions, and debated *pro* and *con* in order to see both sides of every idea. He carried a book in his pocket to study in spare moments in the fields; he wore out thus two copies of Mackenzie’s *Man of Feeling*. ‘The collection of songs was my *vade mecum*. I pored over them driving my cart, or walking to labor, song by song, verse by verse, carefully noting the true, tender, sublime, or fustian.’ He maintained a correspondence with several of his companions in the same rank of life in order to form his style, kept a common-place book, entered in it ideas on man, religion, the greatest subjects, criticising his first productions. He thus divined what he did not learn, rose of himself to the level of the most highly cultivated; in a while, at Edinburgh, he was to read through and through respected doctors, Blair himself;

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\* Chambers’ *Life of Burns*, I. 14.

he was to see that Blair had attainments, but no depth. At this time he studied minutely and lovingly the old Scotch ballads; and by night in his cold little room, by day whilst whistling at the plough, he invented forms and ideas. We must think of this in order to understand his miseries and his revolt. We must think that the man in whom these great ideas are stirring, threshed the corn, cleaned his cows, went out to dig turf, waded in the muddy snow, and dreaded to come home and find the bailiffs to carry him off to prison. We must think also, that with the ideas of a thinker he had the delicacies and reveries of a poet. Once, having cast his eyes on an engraving representing a dead soldier, and his wife beside him, his child and dog lying in the snow, suddenly, involuntarily, he burst into tears. He writes :

“There is scarcely any earthly object gives me more—I do not know if I should call it pleasure—but something which exalts me, which enraptures me—than to walk in the sheltered side of a wood or high plantation, in a cloudy winter day, and hear the stormy wind howling among the trees and raving over the plain. . . . I listened to the birds and frequently turned out of my path, lest I should disturb their little songs or frighten them to another station. Even the hoary hawthorn twig that shot across the way, what heart, at such a time, but must have been interested for his welfare? ”\* This swarm of grand or graceful dreams, the slavery of mechanical toil and perpetual economy crushed as soon as they began to soar. Add to this a proud character, so proud, that afterwards in the world, amongst the great, ‘an honest contempt for whatever bore the appearance of meanness and servility’ made him ‘fall into the opposite error of hardness of manner.’ He had also the consciousness of his own merits. *Pauvre Inconnu* as I then was, I had pretty nearly as high an opinion of myself and of my works as I have at this moment, when the public has decided in their favor.† What wonder if we find at every step in his poems the bitter protests of an oppressed and rebellious plebeian?

We find such recriminations against all society, against State and Church. Burns has a harsh tone, often the very phrases of Rousseau, and wished to be a ‘vigorous savage,’ as

\* Extract from Burns’ commonplace book; Chambers’ *Life*, i. 79.

† Chambers’ *Life*, i. 231. Burns had a right to think so: when he spoke at night in an inn, the very servants woke their fellow-laborers to come and hear him.

he says, quit civilized life, the dependence and humiliations which it imposes on the wretched :

“It is mortifying to see a fellow, whose abilities would scarcely have made an eight-penny tailor, and whose heart is not worth three farthings, meet with attention and notice that are withheld from the son of genius and poverty.’\* ”

It is hard to

“ See yonder poor, o’erlabored wight,  
So abject, mean, and vile,  
Who begs a brother of the earth  
To give him leave to toil ;  
And see his lordly fellow-worm  
The poor petition spurn,  
Unmindful, though a weeping wife  
And helpless offspring mourn.’ † ”

Burns says also :

“ While winds frae off Ben-Lomond blaw,  
And bar the doors wi’ driving snaw, . . .  
I grudge a wee the great folks’ gift,  
That live so bien an’ snug :  
I tent less, and want less  
Their roomy fire-side ;  
But hanker and canker  
To see their cursed pride.  
It’s hardly in a body’s power  
To keep, at times, frae being sour,  
To see how things are shar’d ;  
How best o’ chieils are whiles in want,  
While coofs on countless thousands rant,  
And ken na how to wair ’t.’ ‡ ”

But ‘ a man’s a man for a’ that,’ and the peasant is as good as the lord. There are men noble by nature, and they alone are noble ; the coat is the business of the tailor, titles a matter for the Herald’s office. “ The rank is but the guinea’s stamp, the man’s the gowd for a’ that.”

Against such as reverse this natural equality Burns is pitiless ; the least thing puts him out of temper. He congratulates the French on having repulsed conservative Europe, in arms against them. He celebrates the Tree of Liberty, planted “ where ance the Bastile stood : ”

\* Chambers’ *Life and Works of Robert Burns*, ii. 68.

† *Man was made to Mourn*, a dirge.

‡ *First Epistle to Davie*, a brother poet.

" 'Upo' this tree there grows sic fruit.  
 Its virtues a' can tell, man ;  
 It raises man aboon the brute,  
 It makes him ken himsel', man.  
 Gif ance the peasant taste a bit,  
 He's greater than a Lord, man. . . .  
 King Loui' thought to cut it down,  
 When it was unco sma', man.  
 For this the watchman cracked his crown,  
 Cut off his head and a', man.' \*

Strange gayety, always savage and nervous, and which, in better style, resembles that of the *Ça ira*.

Burns is hardly more tender to the church. At that time the strait puritanical garment began to give way. Already the learned world of Edinburgh had Frenchified, widened, adapted it to the fashions of society, decked it with ornaments, not very brilliant, it is true, but select. In the lower strata of society dogma became less rigid, and approached by degrees the looseness of Arminius and Socinus. John Goldie, a merchant, had quite recently discussed the authority of Scripture. John Taylor had denied original sin. Burns' father, pious as he was, inclined to liberal and humane doctrines, and detracted from the province of faith to add to that of reason. Burns, after his wont, pushed things to an extreme, thought himself a deist, saw in the Saviour only an inspired man, reduced religion to an inner and poetic sentiment, and attacked with his railleries the paid and patented orthodox people. Since Voltaire, no one in religious matters was more bitter or more jocose. According to him, ministers are shopkeepers trying to cheat each other out of their customers, decrying at the top of their voice the shop next door, puffing their drugs on numberless posters, and here and there setting up fairs to push the trade. These 'holy fairs' are the gatherings of piety, where the sacrament is administered. Successively the clergymen preach and thunder, in particular a Rev. Mr. Moodie, who raves and fumes to throw light on points of faith—a terrible figure :

" 'Should Hornie, as in ancient days,  
 'Mang sons o' God present him,  
 The vera sight o' Moodie face

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\* *The Tree of Liberty.*

To's ain het hame had sent him  
 Wi' fright that day.  
 Hear how he clears the points o' faith  
 Wi' rattlin' an' wi' thumpin' ; . . .  
 He's stampin' an' he's jumpin' !  
 His lengthen'd chin, his turn'd-up snout,  
 His eldritch squeel and gestures,  
 Oh ! how they fire the heart devout,  
 Like cantharidian plasters,  
 On sic a day !' \*

The minister grows hoarse, and his audience take their ease ; they begin to eat. Each brings cakes and cheese from his bag ; the young folks have their arms round their lassies' waists. That was the attitude to listen in ! There is a great noise in the inn ; the cans rattle on the board ; whisky flows, and provides arguments to the tipplers commenting on the sermon. They demolish carnal reason, and exalt free faith. Arguments and stamping, shouts of sellers and drinkers, all mingle together. It is a 'holy fair :'

“ But now the Lord's ain trumpet touts,  
 Till a' the hills are rairin',  
 An' echoes back return the shouts ;  
 Black Russell is na spairin' ;  
 His piercing words, like Highlan' swords,  
 Divide the joints and marrow.  
 His talk o' hell, where devils dwell,  
 Our vera sauls does harrow  
 Wi' fright that day.

A vast unbottom'd boundless pit,  
 Fill'd fu' o' lowin' brunstane,  
 Wha's raging flame, an' scorchin' heat,  
 Wad melt the hardest whunstane.  
 The half-asleep start up wi' fear,  
 An' think they hear it roarin',  
 When presently it does appear  
 'Twas but some neebor snorin'  
 Asleep that day. . . .

How monie hearts this day converts  
 O' sinners and o' lasses !  
 Their hearts o' stane, gin night, are gane,  
 As saft as ony flesh is.  
 There's some are fou o' love divine,  
 There's some are fou o' brandy.' †

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\* *The Holy Fair.*

† *The Holy Fair.*

Elsewhere Burns says :

“ An honest man may like a glass,  
 An honest man may like a lass,  
 But mean revenge an’ malice fause  
     He’ll still disdain ;  
 An’ then cry zeal for gospel laws  
     Like some we ken. . . .  
 . . . I rather would be  
     An atheist clean,  
 Than under gospel colors hid be  
     Just for a screen.\*

There is here, something else than the instinct of destruction and the appeal to the senses ; there is hatred of cant and return to nature. Burns sings :

“ Morality, thou deadly bane,  
 Thy tens o’ thousands thou hast slain ;  
 Vain is his hope, whose stay and trust is  
 In moral mercy, truth and justice ! ” †

Mercy ! this great word renews all : as, eighteen centuries ago, men passed beyond legal formulas and prescriptions ; as, under Virgil and Marcus Aurelius, refined sensibility and wide sympathies embraced beings who seemed forever banished out of the pale of society and law. Burns grows tender, and that sincerely, over a wounded hare, a mouse whose nest was upturned by his plough, a mountain daisy. Man, beast, or plant, is there so much difference ? A mouse stores up, calculates, suffers like a man :

“ I doubt na, whiles, but thou may thieve ;  
 What then ? poor beastie, thou maun live.”

We even no longer wish to curse the fallen angels, the grand malefactors, Satan and his troop ; like the “ randie, gangrel bodies, who in Poesie Nancy’s held the splore,” they have their good points, and perhaps after all are not so bad as people say :

“ Hear me, auld Hangie, for a wee,  
 An’ let poor damned bodies be ;  
 I’m sure sma’ pleasure it can gie,  
     E’en to a deil,  
 To skelp an’ scaud poor dogs like me,  
 An’ hear us squeel ! . . .

\* *Epistle to the Rev. John M’Math.*

† *A Dedication to Gavin Hamilton.*

Then you, ye auld, snic-drawing dog !  
 Ye came to Paradise incog.  
 An' play'd on man a cursed brogue,  
 (Black be your fa' !)  
 An' gied the infant warld a shog,  
 'Maist ruin'd a'. . . .

But, fare you weel, auld Nickie-ben !  
 O wad ye tak a thought an' men' t'  
 Ye aiblins might—I dinna ken—  
 Still hae a stake—  
 I'm wae to think upo' yon den,  
 Ev'n for your sake." \*

We see that he speaks to the devil as to an unfortunate comrade, a quarrelsome fellow, but fallen into trouble. Another step, and you will see in a contemporary, Goethe, that Mephistopheles himself is not overmuch damned ; his god, the modern god, tolerates him, and tells him that he has never hated such as he. For wide conciliating nature assembles in her company, on equal terms, the ministers of destruction and life. In this deep change the ideal changes ; citizen and orderly life, strict Puritan duty, do not exhaust all the powers of man. Burns cries out in favor of instinct and joy, so as to seem epicurean. He has genuine gayety, comic energy ; laughter commends itself to him ; he praises it and the good suppers of good comrades, where the wine flows, pleasantries abound, ideas pour forth, poetry sparkles, and causes a carnival of beautiful figures and good-humored people to move about in the human brain.

In love he always was. From the age of fifteen this was his main business. He had for companion in his harvest toil a sweet and lovable girl, a year younger than himself :

" In short, she, altogether unwittingly to herself, initiated me in that delicious passion, which, in spite of acid disappointment, gin-horse prudence, and book-worm philosophy, I hold to be the first of human joys, our dearest blessing here below." †

He sat beside her, with a joy which he did not understand, to " pick out from her little hand the cruel nettle-stings and thistles." He had many other less innocent fancies ; it seems to me that he was at bottom in love with all women : as soon as he saw a pretty one, he grew gay ; his commonplace-book and his

\* *Address to the Deil.*

† *Chambers' Life of Burns*, i. 12.

songs show that he set off in pursuit after every butterfly, golden or not, which seemed about to settle. He thought that love, with the charming dreams it brings, poetry, pleasure, and the rest, are beautiful things, appropriate to human instincts, and therefore to the designs of God. In short, in contrast with morose Puritanism, he approved joy and spoke well of happiness.

Not that he was a mere epicurean ; on the contrary, he could be religious : and his *Cottar's Saturday Night* is the most feeling of virtuous idyls. Often, before Dugald Stewart at Edinburgh, he disapproved of the sceptical jokes which he heard at the supper table. He thought he had " every evidence for the reality of a life beyond the stunted bourne of our present existence ; " and many a time, side by side with a jocose satire, we find in his writings stanzas full of humble repentance, confiding fervor, or Christian resignation. These, if you will, are a poet's contradictions, but they are also a poet's divinations ; under these apparent variations there rises a new ideal ; old narrow moralities are to give place to the wide sympathy of the modern man, who loves the beautiful wherever it meets him, and who, refusing to mutilate human nature, is at once Pagan and Christian.

On the publication of his first volume he became suddenly famous. Coming to Edinburgh, he was feasted, caressed, admitted on a footing of equality in the best drawing-rooms, amongst the great and the learned, loved of a woman who was almost a lady. For one season he was sought after, and he behaved worthily amidst these rich and noble people. He was respected, and even loved. A subscription brought him a second edition and five hundred pounds. He also at last had won his position, like the great French plebeians, amongst whom Rousseau was the first. Unfortunately his success lasted only one winter, after which the wide incurable wound of plebeianism made itself felt,—I mean that he was obliged to work for his living. Soon he left his farm, with empty pockets, to fill at Dumfries the small post of exciseman, which was worth, in all, £90 a year. In this fine employment he branded leather, gauged casks, tested the make of candles, issued licences for the carriage of spirits. From his dunghills he passed to office work and grocery : what a life for such a man ! He would have



been unhappy, even if independent and rich. He was always in extremes, at the height or at the depth. He had never been prudent, and was so less than ever, after his success at Edinburgh. He had enjoyed too much; he henceforth felt too acutely the painful sting of modern man, to wit, the disproportion between desire and power. Debauch had all but spoiled his fine imagination, which had before been "the chief source of his happiness;" and he confessed that, instead of tender reveries, he had now nothing but sensual desires. He had been kept drinking till six in the morning; he was very often drunk at Dumfries, not that the whisky was very good, but it raises a carnival in the head; and hence poets, like the poor, are fond of it. Once, at Mr. Riddell's, he made himself so tipsy that he insulted the lady of the house; next day he sent her an apology which was not accepted, and, out of spite, wrote rhymes against her: lamentable excess, betraying an unseated mind. At thirty-seven he was worn out. One night, having drunk too much, he sat down and went to sleep in the street. It was January, and he caught rheumatic fever, which in a few days carried him off at the age of thirty-eight.

§ 51.—A sad life, most often the life of the men in advance of their age; it is not wholesome to go too quick. Burns was so much in advance, that it took forty years to catch him. At this moment in England, the conservatives and the believers took the lead before sceptics and revolutionists. New theories could not arise in this society armed against new theories. Yet the revolution made its entrance; it entered disguised, and through a byway, so as not to be recognized. It was not social ideas, as in France, that were transformed, nor philosophical ideas, as in Germany, but literary ideas; the great rising tide of the modern mind, which elsewhere overturned the whole edifice of human conditions and speculations, succeeded here only at first in changing style and taste. It was a slight change, at least apparently, but on the whole of equal value with the others; for this renovation in the manner of writing is a renovation in the manner of thinking: the one led to all the rest, as the movement of a central pivot constrains the movement of all the indented wheels.

Wherein consisted this reform of style? Before defining it, I prefer to exhibit it; and for that purpose, we must study

the character and life of a man who was the first to use it, without any system—William Cowper: for his talent is but the picture of his character, and his poems but the echo of his life. He was a delicate, timid child, of a tremulous sensibility, passionately tender, who, having lost his mother at six, was almost at once subjected to the flogging and brutality of a public school. These, in England, are peculiar: a boy of about fifteen singled him out as a proper object upon whom he might let loose the cruelty of his temper; and the poor little fellow, ceaselessly ill-treated, ‘conceived,’ he says, ‘such a dread of his (tormentor’s) figure, . . . that I well remember being afraid to lift my eyes upon him higher than his knees; and that I knew him better by his shoe-buckles than by any other part of his dress.’\* At the age of nine melancholy seized him, not the sweet reverie which we call by that name, but the profound dejection, gloomy and continual despair, the horrible malady of the nerves and the soul, which leads to suicide, Puritanism, and madness. “Day and night I was upon the rack, lying down in horror, and rising up in despair.” †

The evil changed form, diminished, but did not leave him. As he had only a small fortune, though born of a high family, he accepted, without reflection, the offer of his uncle, who wished to give him a place as clerk of the journals of the House of Lords; but he had to undergo an examination, and his nerves were unstrung at the very idea of having to speak in public. For six months he tried to prepare; but he read without understanding. His continual misery brought on at last a nervous fever. Cowper writes of himself:

“The feelings of a man when he arrives at the place of execution, are probably much like mine, every time I set my foot in the office, which was every day, for more than a half year together.” ‡

“In this situation, such a fit of passion has sometimes seized me, when alone in my chambers, that I have cried out aloud, and cursed the hour of my birth; lifting up my eyes to heaven not as a suppliant, but in the hellish spirit of rancorous reproach and blasphemy against my Maker.” §

The day of examination came on: he hoped he was going mad, so that he might escape from it; and as his reason held, he thought even of ‘self-murder.’ At last, whilst ‘in a horri-

\* *The Works of W. Cowper*, ed. Southey, 8 vols, 1843, i. 18.

† *Ibid.* 18.

‡ *Ibid.* 79.

§ *Ibid.* 81.

ble dismay of soul,' insanity came, and he was placed in an asylum, whilst 'his conscience was scaring him, and the avenger of blood pursuing him' \* to the extent even of thinking himself damned, like Bunyan and the first Puritans, After several months his reason returned, but it bore traces of the strange lands where it had journeyed alone. He remained sad, like a man who thought himself in disfavor with God, and felt himself incapable of an active life. However, a clergyman, Mr. Unwin and his wife, very pious and very regular people, had taken charge of him. He tried to busy himself mechanically, for instance, in making rabbit-hutches, in gardening, and in taming hares. He employed the rest of the day like a Methodist, in reading Scripture or sermons, in singing hymns with his friends, and speaking of spiritual matters. This way of living, the wholesome country air, the maternal tenderness of Mrs. Unwin and Lady Austin, brought him a few gleams of light. They loved him so generously, and he was so lovable! Affectionate, full of freedom and innocent raillery, with a natural and charming imagination, a graceful fancy, an exquisite delicacy, and so unhappy! He was one of those to whom women devote themselves, whom they love maternally, first from compassion, then by attraction, because they find in them alone the contrivances, minute and tender attentions, delicate observances which men's rude nature cannot give them, and which their more sensitive nature nevertheless craves. These sweet moments, however, did not last. He says:

“‘My mind has always a melancholy cast, and is like some pools I have seen, which, though filled with a black and putrid water, will nevertheless in a bright day reflect the sunbeams from their surface.’

He smiled as well as he could, but with effort; it was the smile of a sick man who knows himself incurable, and tries to forget it for an instant, at least to make others forget it:

“‘Indeed, I wonder that a sportive thought should ever knock at the door of my intellects, and still more that it should gain admittance. It is as if harlequin should intrude himself into the gloomy chamber where a corpse is deposited in state. His antic gesticulations would be unseasonable at any rate, but more specially so if they should distort the features of the mournful attendants into laughter. But the mind, long wearied with the sameness of a dull, dreary prospect, will gladly fix his eyes on any thing that may

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\* *The Works of W. Cowper*, ed. Southey, i. 97.

make a little variety in its contemplations, though it were but a kitten playing with her tail.'\*

In fine, he had too delicate and too pure a heart: pious, irreproachable, austere, he thought himself unworthy of going to church, or even of praying to God. He says also:

“As for happiness, he that once had communion with his Maker must be more frantic than ever I was yet, if he can dream at finding it at a distance from Him.†

Cowper states then:

“The heart of a Christian, mourning and yet rejoicing, (is) pierced with thorns, yet wreathed about with roses. I have the thorn without the rose. My brier is a wintry one; the flowers are withered, but the thorn remains.”

On his deathbed, when the clergyman told him to confide in the love of the Redeemer, who desired to save all men, he gave a passionate cry, begging him not to give him such consolations. He thought himself lost, and had thought so all his life. One by one, under this terror, all his faculties failed. Poor charming soul, perishing like a frail flower transplanted from a warm land to the snow: the world's temperature was too rough for it; and the moral law, which should have supported it, tore it with its thorns.

Such a man does not write for the pleasure of making a noise. He made verses as he painted or planed, to occupy himself, to distract his mind. His soul was overcharged; he need not go far for subjects. Picture this pensive figure, silently wandering and gazing along the banks of the Ouse. He gazes and dreams. A buxom peasant girl, with a basket on her arm; a distant cart slowly rumbling on behind, horses in a sweat; a shining spring, which polishes the blue pebbles,—this is enough to fill him with sensations and thoughts. He returned, sat in his little summer-house, as large as a sedan-chair, the window of which opened out upon a neighbor's orchard, and the door on a garden full of pinks, roses, and honeysuckle. In this nest he labored. In the evening, beside his friend, whose needles were working for him, he read, or listened to the drowsy sounds without. Rhymes are born in such a life as this. It sufficed for him, and for their birth. He did not need a more violent

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\* *The works of W. Cowper*, ii. 269; Letter to the Rev. John Newton, July 12, 1780.

† *Ibid.* ii. 387; Letter to Rev. J. Newton, August 5, 1786.

career: less harmonious or monotonous, it would have upset him; impressions small to us, were great to him; and in a room, a garden, he found a world. In his eyes the smallest objects were poetical. It is evening; winter; the postman comes:

“ The herald of a noisy world,  
 With spattered boots, strapped waist, and frozen locks,  
 News from all nations lumbering at his back.  
 True to his charge, the close-packed load behind,  
 Yet careless what he brings, his one concern  
 Is to conduct it to the destined inn,  
 And, having dropped the expected bag, pass on.  
 He whistles as he goes, light-hearted wretch,  
 Cold and yet cheerful: messenger of grief  
 Perhaps to thousands, and of joy to some.”

At last we have the precious “close-packed load;” we open it; we wish to hear the many noisy voices it brings from London and the universe:

“ Now stir the fire, and close the shutters fast,  
 Let fall the curtains, wheel the sofa round,  
 And while the bubbling and loud-hissing urn  
 Throws up a steamy column, and the cups,  
 That cheer but not inebriate, wait on each,  
 So let us welcome peaceful evening in.” \*

Then he unfolds the whole contents of the newspaper—politics, news, even advertisements—not as a mere realist, like so many writers of to-day, but as a poet; that is, as a man who discovers a beauty and harmony in the coal of a sparkling fire, or the movement of fingers over a piece of wool-work; for such is the poet's strange distinction. Objects not only spring up in his mind more powerful and more precise than they were of themselves; but also, once conceived, they are purified, ennobled, colored like gross vapors, which, being transfigured by distance and light, change into silky clouds, lined with purple and gold. For him there is a charm in the rolling folds of the vapor sent up by the tea-urn, sweetness in the concord of guests assembled about the same table in the same house. This one expression, “News from India,” causes him to see India itself, “with her plumed and jewelled turban.”† The mere notion of “excise” sets before his eyes “ten thousand casks, for ever

\* *The Task*, iv.; *The Winter Evening*.

† *Ibid*.

dribbling out their base contents, touched by the Midas finger of the State, (which) bleed gold for ministers to sport away.”\* Strictly, nature is like a gallery of splendid and various pictures, which to us ordinary folk are always covered up with cloths. At most, now and then, a rent suffers us to imagine the beauties hid behind the monotonous curtains; but these curtains the poet raises, one and all, and sees a picture where we see but a covering. Such is the new truth which Cowper’s poems brought to light. We know from him that we need no longer go to Greece, Rome, to the palaces, heroes, and academicians, to search for poetic objects. They are quite near us. If we see them not, it is because we do not know how to look for them; the fault is in our eyes, not in the things. We shall find poetry, if we wish, at our fireside, and amongst the beds of our kitchen-garden.†

Is the kitchen-garden indeed poetical? To-day, perhaps; but to-morrow, if my imagination is barren, I shall see there nothing but carrots and other kitchen stuff. It is my sensation which is poetic, which I must respect, as the most precious flower of beauty. Hence a new style. It is no longer a question, after the old oratorical fashion, of boxing up a subject in a regular plan, dividing it into symmetrical portions, arranging ideas into files, like the pieces on a draught-board. Cowper takes the first subject that comes to hand—one which Lady Austin gave him at hap-hazard—the *Sofa*, and speaks about it for a couple of pages; then he goes whither the bent of his mind leads him, describing a winter evening, a number of interiors and landscapes, mingling here and there all kinds of moral reflections, stories, dissertations, opinions, confidences, like a man who thinks aloud before the most intimate and beloved of his friends. “The best didactic poems,” says Southey, “when compared with the *Task*, are like formal gardens in comparison with woodland scenery.”‡ This is his great poem, the *Task*. If we enter into details, the contrast is greater still. He does not seem to dream that he is being listened to; he

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\* *The Task*, iv.; *The Winter Evening*.

† Crabbe may also be considered one of the masters and renovators of poetry, but his style is too classical, and he has been rightly nicknamed “a Pope in worsted stockings.”

‡ Southey, *Life of Cowper*, i. 341.

only speaks to himself. He does not dwell on his ideas, to set them in relief, and make them stand out by repetitions and antitheses; he marks his sensation, and that is all. We follow it in him as it is born, and we see it rising from a former one, swelling, falling, remounting, as we see vapor issuing from a spring, and insensibly rising, unrolling, and developing its shifting forms. Thought, which in others was curdled and rigid, becomes here mobile and fluent; the rectilinear verse grows flexible; the noble vocabulary widens its scope to let in vulgar words of conversation and life. At length poetry has again become lifelike; we no longer listen to words, but we feel emotions; it is no longer an author, but a man who speaks. His life is there perfect, beneath its black lines, without falsehood or concoction; his whole effort is bent on removing falsehood and concoction. When he describes his little river, his dear Ouse, "slow winding through a level plain of spacious meads, with cattle sprinkled o'er,"\* he sees it with his inner eye; and each word, cæsura, sound, answers to a change of that inner vision. It is so in all his verses; they are full of personal emotions, genuinely felt, never altered or disguised; on the contrary, fully expressed, with their transient shades and fluctuations; in a word, as they are, that is, in the process of production and destruction, not all complete, motionless, and fixed, as the old style represented them. Herein consists the great revolution of the modern style. The mind, outstripping the known rules of rhetoric and eloquence, penetrates into profound psychology, and no longer employs words except to mark emotions.

§ 52.—Now † appeared the English romantic school, closely resembling the French in its doctrines, origin, and alliances, in the truths which it discovered, the exaggerations it committed, and the scandal it excited. The followers of that school formed a sect, a sect of "dissenters in poetry," who spoke out aloud, kept themselves close together, and repelled settled minds by the audacity and novelty of their theories. For their foundation were attributed to them the anti-social principles and the sickly sensibility of Rousseau; in short, a sterile and misanthropical dissatisfaction with the present institutions of society. In fact, Southey, one of their leaders, had begun by being a Socinian and Jacobin; and one of his first poems, *Wat Tyler*,

\* *The Task*, i.; *The Sofa*.

† 1793-1794.

cited the glory of the past Jacquerie in support of the present revolution. Another, Coleridge, a poor fellow, who had served as a dragoon, his brain stuffed with incoherent reading and humanitarian dreams, had thought of founding in America a communist republic, purged of kings and priests; then, having turned Unitarian, steeped himself at Göttingen in heretical and mystical theories on the Word and the Absolute. Wordsworth himself, the third and most moderate, had begun with enthusiastic verses against kings:

“Great God, . . . grant that every sceptred child of clay,  
 Who cries presumptuous, ‘Here the flood shall stay,’  
 May in its progress see thy guiding hand,  
 And cease the acknowledged purpose to withstand;  
 Or, swept in anger from the insulted shore,  
 Sink with his servile bands, to rise no more!”\*

But these rages and aspirations did not last long; and at the end of a few years, the three, brought back into the pale of State and Church, were, Coleridge, a Pittite journalist, Wordsworth, a distributor of stamps, and Southey, poet-laureate; all converted zealots, decided Anglicans, and intolerant Conservatives. In point of taste, however, they had advanced, not retired. They had violently broken with tradition, and leaped over all classical culture to find their models from the Renaissance and the middle-age. One of their friends, Charles Lamb, like Sainte-Beuve, had discovered and restored the sixteenth century. The most unpolished dramatists, like Marlowe, seemed to these men admirable; and they sought in the collections of Percy and Warton, in the old national ballads and ancient foreign poetry, the fresh and primitive accent which had been wanting in classical literature, and whose presence seemed to them to be a sign of truth and beauty. Above every other reform, they labored to destroy the great aristocratical and oratorical style, such as it sprang from methodical analyses and court conventions, to adapt to poetry the ordinary language of conversation, such as is spoken in the middle and lower classes. They proposed to replace studied phrases and lofty vocabulary by natural tones and plebeian words. In place of the ancient mould, they tried the stanza, the sonnet, the ballad, blank verse, with

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\* Wordsworth's Works, new edition, 1870, 6 vols.; *Descriptive Sketches during a Pedestrian Tour*, i. 42.



the rudenesses and breaks of the primitive poets. They resumed or arranged the metres and diction of the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries. Charles Lamb wrote an archaic tragedy, *John Woodvill*, which one might fancy contemporary with Elizabeth's reign. Others, like Southey, and Coleridge in particular, manufactured totally new rhythms, as happy at times, and at times also as unfortunate, as those of Victor Hugo: for instance, a verse in which accents, and not syllables, were counted;\* a singular medley of confused attempts, manifest abortions, and original inventions. The plebeian, enfranchised from the aristocratical costume, sought another; borrowed one piece of his dress from the knights or the barbarians, another from peasants or journalists, not too critical of incongruities, pretentious, and satisfied with his motley and badly sewn cloak, till at last, after many attempts and many rents, he ended by knowing himself, and selecting the dress that fitted him.

In this confusion of labors two great ideas are distinguished: the first producing historical poetry, the second philosophical; the one especially manifest in Southey and Walter Scott, the other in Wordsworth and Shelley; both European, and displayed with equal brilliancy in France by Hugo, Lamartine, and Musset; with greater brilliancy in Germany by Goethe, Schiller, Rückert, and Heine; both so profound, that none of their representatives, except Goethe, divined their scope; and hardly now, after more than half a century, can we define their nature, so as to forecast their results.

The first consists in saying, or rather foreboding, that our ideal is not the ideal; it is one ideal, but there are others. The barbarian, the feudal man, the cavalier of the Renaissance, the Mussulman, the Indian, each age and each race has conceived its beauty, which was a beauty. Let us enjoy it, and for this purpose put ourselves in the place of the discoverers; altogether; for it will not suffice to represent, like the previous novelists and dramatists, modern and national manners under old and foreign names; let us paint the sentiments of other ages and other races with their own features, however different these features may be from our own, and however unpleasing

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\* In English poetry as since modified, no one dreams of limiting the number of syllables, even in blank verse.—TR.

to our taste. Let us show our character as he was, grotesque or not, with his costume and speech : let him be fierce and superstitious, if he was so ; let us dash the barbarian with blood, and load the covenanter with his bundle of biblical texts. Then one by one on the literary stage men saw the vanished or distant civilizations return : first the middle age and the Renaissance ; then Arabia, Hindustan, and Persia ; then the classical age, and the eighteenth century itself ; and the historic taste becomes so eager, that from literature the contagion spreads to other arts. The theatre changed its conventional costumes and decorations into true ones. Architecture built Roman villas in our northern climates, and feudal towers amidst our modern security. Painters travelled to imitate local coloring, and studied to reproduce moral coloring. Every one became a tourist and an archæologist ; the human mind, quitting its individual sentiments to adopt sentiments really felt, and finally all possible sentiments, found its pattern in the great Goethe, who by his *Tasso*, *Iphigenia*, *Divan*, his second part of *Faust*, became a citizen of all nations and a contemporary of all ages, seemed to live at pleasure at every point of time and place, and gave an idea of universal mind. Yet this literature, as it approached perfection, approached its limit, and was only developed in order to die. Men did comprehend at last that attempted resurrections are always incomplete, that every imitation is only an imitation, that the modern accent infallibly penetrates the words which we lend to antique characters, that every picture of manners must be indigenous and contemporaneous, and that archaic literature is a false kind. They saw at last that it is in the writers of the past that we must seek the portraiture of the past ; that there are no Greek tragedies but the Greek tragedies ; that the concocted novel must give place to authentic memoirs, as the fabricated ballad to the spontaneous ; in short, that historical literature must vanish and become transformed into criticism and history, that is, into exposition and commentary of documents.

In this multitude of travellers and historians, disguised as poets, how shall we select ? They abound like swarms of insects, hatched on a summer's day amidst the rank vegetation ; they buzz and glitter, and the mind is lost in their sparkle and hum. Which shall I quote ? Thomas Moore, the gayest

and most French of all, a witty railer,\* too graceful and *recherché*, writing descriptive odes on the Bermudas, sentimental Irish melodies, a poetic Egyptian romance,† a romantic poem on Persia and India ; ‡ Lamb, the restorer of the old drama ; Coleridge, a thinker and dreamer, poet and critic, who in *Christabel* and the *Ancient Mariner* hit the supernatural and the fantastic ; Campbell, who, having begun with a didactic poem on the *Pleasures of Hope*, entered the new school without giving up his noble and half-classical style, and wrote American and Celtic poems, only slightly Celtic and American ; in the first rank, Southey, a clever man, who, after several mistakes in his youth, became the professed defender of aristocracy and cant, an indefatigable reader, an inexhaustible writer, crammed with erudition, gifted in imagination, famed like Victor Hugo for the freshness of his innovations, the combative tone of his prefaces, the splendors of his picturesque curiosity, having spanned the universe and all history with his poetic shows, and embraced, in the endless web of his verse, Joan of Arc, Wat Tyler, Roderick the Goth, Madoc, Thalaba, Kehama, Celtic and Mexican traditions, Arabic and Indian legends, successively Catholic, Musulman, Brahman, but only in verse ; in fine, a prudent and licensed Protestant. You must receive these as examples merely—there are thirty others behind ; and I think that, of all fine visible or imaginable sceneries, of all great real or legendary events, at all points of time, in the four quarters of the world, not one has escaped them.§

One of them, a novelist, critic, historian and poet, the favorite of his age, read over the whole of Europe, was compared and almost equalled to Shakspeare, had more popularity than Voltaire, made dressmakers and duchesses weep, and earned about two hundred thousand pounds. Murray, the publisher, wrote to him : “ I believe I might swear that I never experienced such unmixed pleasure as the reading of this exquisite work (first series of *Tales of My Landlord*) has afforded me. . . . Lord Holland said, when I asked his opinion : “ Opinion ! we did

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\* See *The Fuzze Family*. † *The Epicurean*. ‡ *Lalla Rookh*.

§ See also *The History of The Caliph Vathek*, a fantastic but powerfully written tale, by W. Beckford, published first in French in 1784.

none of us go to bed last night—nothing slept but my gout.’”\* In France, 1,400,000 of these novels were sold, and they continue to sell. The author, born in Edinburgh, was the son of a writer to the Signet, learned in feudal law and ecclesiastical history, himself an advocate, then sheriff, and always fond of antiquities, especially national antiquities; so that by his family, education, person, he found the materials of his works and the stimulus for his talent. His past recollections were impressed on him at the age of three, in a farm-house, where he had been taken to try the effect of bracing air on his little shrunken leg. He was wrapt naked in the warm skin of a recently slain sheep, and he crept about in this attire, which passed for a specific. He continued to limp, and became a reader. From his infancy he had been bred amongst the stories which he afterwards gave to the public—that of the battle of Culloden, of the cruelties practiced on the Highlanders, the wars and sufferings of the Covenanters. As soon as he had heard “a Border-raid ballad,” he knew it by heart. For the rest, he was indolent, studied by fits and starts, did not readily learn dry hard facts; but for poetry, play-house ditties and ballads, the flow of his genius was precocious, swift and invincible. The day on which he first opened, “under a platanus tree,” the volumes in which Percy had collected the fragments of the ancient poetry, he forgot dinner, “notwithstanding the sharp appetite of thirteen,” and thenceforth he flooded with these old rhymes not only his school-fellows, but even all who would hear him. Becoming a clerk to his father, he stuffed into his desk all the works of imagination which he could find. “The whole Jemmy and Jenny Jessamy tribe I abhorred,” he said, “and it required the art of Burney, or the feeling of Mackenzie, to fix my attention upon a domestic tale. But all that was adventurous and romantic, . . . that touched upon knight-errantry, I devoured.”† Having contracted an illness, he was kept a long time in bed, forbidden to speak, with no other pleasure than to read the poets, novelists, historians and geographers, illustrating the battle descriptions by setting in line and disposing little

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\* Lockhart, *Life of Sir Walter Scott*; 10 vols., 2d ed., 1839, ii. ch. xxxvii. p. 170.

† *Ibid.*; Autobiography, I, 62.

pebbles, which represented the soldiers. Once cured, and able to walk well, he turned his walks to the same purpose, and developed a passion for the country, especially the historical regions. He said :

“ But show me an old castle or a field of battle, and I was at home at once, filled it with its combatants in their proper costume, and overwhelmed my hearers by the enthusiasm of my description. In crossing Magus Moor, near St. Andrew's, the spirit moved me to give a picture of the assassination of the Archbishop of St. Andrew's to some fellow-travellers with whom I was accidentally associated, and one of them, though well acquainted with the story, protested my narrative had frightened away his night's sleep.”\*

Amidst other studious excursions, he travelled for seven years successively in the wild district of Liddesdale, exploring every stream and every ruin, sleeping in the shepherds' huts, gleaned legends and ballads. Judge from this of his antiquarian tastes and habits. He read provincial charters, the wretched middle-age Latin verses, the parish registers, even contracts and wills. The first time he was able to lay his hand on one of the great “ old Border war-horns,” he blew it all along his route. Rusty mail and dirty parchment attracted him, filled his head with recollections and poetry. In truth, he had a feudal mind, and always wished to be the founder of a distinct branch. Literary glory was only secondary ; his talent was to him only as an instrument. He spent the vast sums which his prose and verse had won, in building a castle in imitation of the ancient knights, “ with a tall tower at either end, . . . sundry zigzagged gables, . . . a myriad of indentations and parapets, and machicollated eaves ; most fantastic waterspouts ; labelled windows, not a few of them painted glass ; . . . stones carved with heraldries innumerable ;” † apartments filled with sideboards and carved chests, adorned with “ cuirasses, helmets, swords of every order, from the claymore and rapier to some German executioner's swords.” For long years he held open house there, so to speak, and did to every stranger the “ honors of Scotland,” trying to revive the old feudal life, with all its customs and its display ; dispensing open and joyous hospitality to all comers, above all to relatives, friends and neighbors ; singing ballads and sounding pibrochs

\* Lockhart's *Life of Sir W. Scott*, Autobiography, i. 72.

† *Ibid.* vii. ; Abbotsford in 1825.

amidst the clinking of glasses ; holding gay hunting parties, where the yeomen and gentlemen rode side by side ; and encouraging lively dances, where the lord was not ashamed to give his hand to the miller's daughter. He himself, open, happy, amidst his forty guests, kept up the conversation with a profusion of stories, lavished from his vast memory and imagination, conducted his guests over his domain, extended at large cost, amidst new plantations whose future shade was to shelter his posterity ; and he thought with a poet's smile of the distant generations who would acknowledge for ancestor Sir Walter Scott, first baronet of Abbotsford.

*The Lady of the Lake, Marmion, The Lady of the Isles, The Fair Maid of Perth, Old Mortality, Ivanhoe, Quentin Durward*, who does not know these names by heart ? From Walter Scott we learned history. And yet is this history ? All these pictures of a distant age are false. Costumes, scenery, externals alone are exact ; actions, speech, sentiments, all the rest is civilized, embellished, arranged in modern guise. We might suspect it when looking at the character and life of the author ; for what does he desire, and what do the guests, eager to hear him, demand ? Is he a lover of truth as it is, foul and fierce ; an inquisitive explorer, indifferent to contemporary applause, bent alone on defining the transformations of living nature ? By no means. He is in history, as he is at Abbotsford, bent on arranging points of view and Gothic halls. The moon will come in well there between the towers ; here is a nicely placed breast-plate, the ray of light which it throws back is pleasant to see above these old hangings ; suppose we took out the feudal garments from the wardrobe and invited the guests to a masquerade ? The entertainment would be a fine one, agreeable with their reminiscences and their aristocratic principles. English lords, fresh from a bitter war against French democracy, ought to enter zealously into this commemoration of their ancestors. Moreover, there are ladies and young girls, and we must arrange the show, so as not to shock their severe morality and their delicate feelings, make them weep becomingly ; not put on the stage over-strong passions, which they would not understand ; on the contrary, select heroines to resemble them, always touching, but above all correct ; young gentlemen, Evandale, Morton, Ivanhoe, irreproachably brought up, tender and

grave, even slightly melancholic (it is the latest fashion), and worthy to lead them to the altar. Is there a man more suited than the author to compose such a spectacle? He is a good Protestant, a good husband, a good father, very moral, so decided a Tory, that he carries off as a relic a glass from which the king has just drunk. In addition, he has neither talent nor leisure to reach the depth of his characters. He devotes himself to the exterior; he sees and describes forms and externals much more at length than feelings and internals. Again, he treats his mind like a coal mine, serviceable for quick working, and for the greatest possible gain; a volume in a month, sometimes in a fortnight even, and this volume is worth one thousand pounds. How should he discover, or how dare exhibit, the structure of barbarous souls? This structure is too difficult to discover, and too little pleasing to show. Every two centuries, amongst men, the proportion of images and ideas, the source of passions, the degree of reflection, the species of inclinations, change. Who, without a long preliminary training, now understands and relishes Dante, Rabelais and Rubens? And how, for instance, could these great Catholic and mystical dreams, these vast temerities, or these impurities of carnal art, find entrance into the head of this gentlemanly citizen? Walter Scott pauses on the threshold of the soul, and in the vestibule of history, selects in the Renaissance and the Middle-age only the fit and agreeable, blots out frank language, licentious sensuality, bestial ferocity. After all, his characters, to whatever age he transports them, are his neighbors, "cannie" farmers, vain lairds, gloved gentlemen, young marriageable ladies, all more or less commonplace, that is, well-ordered by education and character, hundreds of miles away from the voluptuous fools of the Restoration, or the heroic brutes and fierce beasts of the Middle-age. As he has the richest supply of costumes, and the most inexhaustible talent for scenic effect, he makes his whole world get on very pleasantly, and composes tales which, in truth, have only the merit of fashion, but which yet may last a hundred years.

That which he himself acted lasted for a briefer time. To sustain his princely hospitality and his feudal magnificence, he had gone into partnership with his printers; lord of the manor in public and merchant in private, he had given them his sig-

nature, without keeping a check over the use they made of it. Bankruptcy followed; at the age of fifty-five he was ruined, and one hundred and seventeen thousand pounds in debt. With admirable courage and uprightness, he refused all favor, accepting nothing but time, set to work on the very day, wrote untiringly, in four years paid seventy thousand pounds, exhausted his brain so as to become paralytic, and to perish in the attempt. Neither in his conduct nor his literature did his feudal tastes succeed, and his manorial splendor was as fragile as his Gothic imaginations. He had relied on imitation, and we live by truth only; his glory lay elsewhere; and there was something solid in his mind as in his writings. Beneath the lover of the Middle-age we find, first the prudent Scotchman, an attentive observer, whose sharpness has become more intense by his familiarity with law; a good man too, easy and gay, as seems the national character, so different from the English. One of his walking companions (Shortreed) said:

“Eh me, sic an endless fund o’ humor and drollery as he had wi’ him! Never ten yards but we were either laughing or roaring and singing. · Whenever we stopped, how brawlie he suited himsel’ to every body! He aye did as the lave did; never made himself the great man, or took ony airs in the company.” \*

Grown older and graver, he was none the less amiable; the most agreeable of hosts, so that one of his guests, a farmer, I think, on leaving his house, said to his wife, that he was going to bed, and should like to sleep for a whole twelve months, for that there was only one thing in this world worth living for, namely, hunting at Abbotsford.

In addition to a mind of this kind, he had all-discerning eyes, an all-retentive memory, a ceaseless studiousness which comprehended the whole of Scotland, all conditions; and you see his true talent arise, so abundant and so easy, made up of minute observation and sweet raillery, recalling at once Teniers and Addison. Doubtless he wrote badly, at times in the worst possible manner: † it is clear that he dictated, hardly re-read

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\* Lockhart’s *Life*, i. ch. vii. 269.

† See the opening of *Ivanhoe*: “Such being our chief scene, the date of our story refers to a period towards the end of the reign of Richard I., when his return from his long captivity had become an event rather wished than hoped for by his despairing subjects, who were in the meantime subjected



his writing, and readily fell into a pasty and emphatic style—a style indigenous to the atmosphere, and which we read day after day in prospectuses and newspapers. What is worse, he is terribly long and diffuse; his conversations and descriptions are interminable; he is determined, at all events, to fill three volumes. But he has given to Scotland a citizenship of literature—I mean to Scotland altogether: scenery, monuments, houses, cottages, characters of every age and condition, from the baron to the fisherman, from the advocate to the beggar, from the lady to the fishwife. At his name alone they crowd forward; who does not see them coming from every niche of memory? The Baron of Bradwardine, Dominie Sampson, Meg Merrilies, the Antiquary, Edie Ochiltree, Jeanie Deans and her father—innkeepers, shopkeepers, old wives, an entire people. What Scotch features are absent? Saving, patient, ‘cannie,’ cunning, necessarily; the poverty of the soil and the difficulty of existence has compelled them to it: this is the specialty of the race. The same tenacity which they introduced into everyday affairs they have introduced into mental concerns,—studious readers and perusers of antiquities and controversies, poets also; legends spring up readily in a romantic land, amidst time-honored wars and brigandism. In a land thus prepared, and in this gloomy clime, Presbyterianism fixed its sharp roots. Such was the real and modern world, enlightened by the far-setting sun of chivalry, as Sir Walter Scott found it; like a painter who, passing from great show-pictures, finds interest and beauty in the shops of a paltry provincial town, or in a farm surrounded by beds of beetroots and turnips. A continuous archness throws its smile over these pictures of interiors and of peculiarities, so local and minute, which, like the Flemish, indicate the rise of a bourgeoisie. Most of these good folk are comic. Our author makes fun of them, brings out their little deceits, parsimony, fooleries, vulgarity, and the hundred thousand circumstances of ridicule with which their narrow sphere of life never fails to endow them. A barber, in *The Antiquary*, makes heaven and earth turn about his wigs; if the French Revolution takes root everywhere, it was

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to every species of subordinate oppression.” It is impossible to write in a heavier style.

because the magistrates renounced this ornament. He cries out in a lamentable voice :

“‘Haud a care, haud a care, Monkbarns ; God’s sake, haud a care !—Sir Arthur’s drowned already, and an’ ye fa’ over the cleugh too, there will be but ae wig left in the parish, and that’s the minister’s.’ \*

Mark how the author smiles, and without malevolence : the barber’s candid selfishness is the effect of the man’s calling, and does not repel us. Walter Scott is never bitter ; he loves men from the bottom of his heart, excuses or tolerates them ; does not chastise vices, but unmasks them, and that not rudely. His greatest pleasure is to pursue at length, not indeed a vice, but a hobby ; the mania for odds and ends in an antiquary, the archæological vanity of the Baron of Bradwardine, the aristocratic drivell of the dowager Lady Tillietudlem,—that is the amusing exaggeration of sane permissible taste ; and this without anger, because, on the whole, these ridiculous people are estimable, and even generous. Even in rogues like Dirck Hatteraick, in cut-throats like Bothwell, he allows some goodness. In no one, not even Major Dalgetty, a professional murderer, a production of the thirty years’ war, is the odious unveiled by the ridiculous. In this critical refinement and this benevolent philosophy, he resembles Addison.

He resembles him again by the purity and endurance of his moral principles. His assistant, Mr. Laidlaw, told him that he was doing great good by his attractive and noble tales, and that young people would no longer wish to look in the literary rubbish of the circulating libraries. When Walter Scott heard this, his eyes filled with tears :

“‘On his deathbed he said to his son-in-law : ‘Lockhart, I may have but a minute to speak to you. My dear, be a good man—be virtuous, be religious—be a good man. Nothing else will give you any comfort when you come to lie here.’ ” †

This was almost his last word. By this fundamental honesty and this wide humanity, he was the Homer of modern citizen life. Around and after him, the novel of manners, separated from the historical romance, has produced a whole literature, and preserved the character which he stamped upon it. Miss

\* Sir Walter Scott’s Works, 48 vols., 1829 ; *The Antiquary*, ch. viii.

† Lockhart’s *Life*, x. 217.

Austin, Miss Brontë, Mistress Gaskell, George Eliot, Bulwer, Thackeray, Dickens, and many others, paint, especially or entirely in his style, contemporary life, as it is, unembellished, in all ranks, often amongst the people, more frequently still amongst the middle class. And the causes which made the historical novel come to naught, in him and others, made the novel of manners, in him and others, succeed. These men were too minute copyists and too decided moralists, incapable of the great divinations and the wide sympathies which unlock the door of history; their imagination was too literal, and their judgment too decided. It is precisely by these faculties that they created a new species of novel, which multiplies to this day in thousands of offshoots, with such abundance, that men of talent in this respect may be counted by hundreds, and that we can only compare them, for their original and national sap, to the great age of Dutch painting. Realistic and moral, these are their two features. They are far removed from the great imagination which creates and transforms, as it appeared in the Renaissance or in the seventeenth century, in the heroic or noble ages. They renounce free invention; they narrow themselves to scrupulous exactitude; they paint with infinite detail costumes and places, changing nothing; they mark little shades of language; they are not disgusted by vulgarities or platitudes. Their information is authentic and precise. In short, they write like citizens for fellow-citizens, that is, for well-ordered people, members of a profession, whose imagination looks upon the earth, and sees things through a magnifying glass, unable to relish anything in the way of a picture except interiors and make-believes. Ask a cook which picture she prefers in the Museum, and she will point to a kitchen, in which the stewpans are so well painted that one is tempted to mix the soup in them. Yet beyond this inclination, which is now European, Englishmen have a special craving, which with them is national, and dates from the preceding century: they desire that the novel, like the rest, should contribute to their great work—the amelioration of man and society. They ask from it the glorification of virtue, and the chastisement of vice. They send it into all the corners of civil society, and all the events of private history, in search of documents and expedients, to learn thence the means of remedying abuses, succoring miseries, avoiding

temptations. They make of it an instrument of inquiry, education, and morality. A singular work, which has not its equal in all history, because in all history there has been no society like it, and which—middling to lovers of the beautiful, admirable to lovers of the useful—offers, in the countless variety of its painting, and the invariable fixity of its spirit, the picture of the only democracy which knows how to restrain, govern, and reform itself.

§ 53.—Side by side with this development there was another, and with history philosophy entered into literature, in order to widen and modify it. What is man, and what has he come into the world to do? What is this far-off greatness to which he aspires? Is there a haven which he may reach, and a hidden hand to conduct him thither? These are the questions which poets, transformed into thinkers, agreed to agitate; and Goethe, here as elsewhere the father and promoter of all lofty modern ideas, at once sceptical, pantheistic, and mystic, wrote in *Faust* the epic of the age and the history of the human mind.

This philosophical spirit was not born in England, and from Germany to England the passage was very long. For a considerable time it appeared dangerous or ridiculous. It did not make head; the English mind was too positive, the theologians too enslaved. It was constrained to transform itself and become Anglican, or to deform itself and become revolutionary; and, in place of a Schiller and Goethe, to produce a Wordsworth, a Byron, a Shelley.

The first, a new Cowper, with less talent and more ideas than the other, was essentially an interior man, that is, engrossed by the concerns of the soul. Such men ask what they have come to do in this world, and why life has been given to them; if they are just or unjust, and if the secret movements of their heart are conformable to the supreme law, without taking into account the visible causes of their conduct. Such, for men of this kind, is the master conception which renders them serious, meditative, and as a rule gloomy.\* They live with eyes turned inwards, not to mark and classify their ideas, like physiologists,

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\* The Jansenists, the Puritans, and the Methodists are the extremes of this class.

but as moralists, to approve or blame their feelings. Thus understood, life becomes a grave business, of uncertain issue, on which we must incessantly and scrupulously reflect. Thus understood, the world changes its aspect; it is no longer a machine of wheels working in each other, as the philosopher says, nor a splendid blooming plant, as the artist feels—it is the work of a moral being, displayed as a spectacle to moral beings.

Figure such a man facing life and the world; he sees them, and takes part in it, apparently like any one else; but how different he is in reality! His great thought pursues him; and when he beholds a tree, it is to meditate on human destiny. He finds or lends a sense to the least objects: a soldier marching to the sound of the drum makes him reflect on heroic sacrifice, the support of societies; a train of clouds lying heavily on the verge of a gloomy sky, endues him with that melancholy calm, so suited to nourish moral life. There is nothing which does not recall him to his duty and admonish him of his origin. Near or far, like a great mountain in a landscape, his philosophy will appear behind all his ideas and images. If he is restless, impassioned, sick with scruples, it will appear to him amidst storm and lightning, as it did to the genuine Puritans, to Cowper, Pascal, Carlyle. It will appear to him in a grey fog, imposing and calm, if he enjoys, like Wordsworth, a calm mind and a pleasant life. Wordsworth was a wise and happy man, a thinker and a dreamer, who read and walked. He was from the first in tolerably easy circumstances, and had a small fortune. Happily married, amidst the favors of government and the respect of the public, he lived peacefully on the margin of a beautiful lake, in sight of noble mountains, in the pleasant retirement of an elegant house, amidst the admiration and attentions of distinguished and chosen friends, engrossed by contemplations which no storm came to distract, and by poetry, which was produced without any hindrance. In this deep calm he listens to his own thoughts; the peace was so great, within him and around him, that he could perceive the imperceptible. "To me, the meanest flower that blows, can give thoughts that too often lie too deep for tears." He saw a grandeur, a beauty, lessons in the trivial events which weave the woof of our most commonplace days. He needed not, for the sake of emotion, either

splendid sights or unusual actions. The dazzling glare of the lamps, the pomp of the theatre, would have shocked him; his eyes are too delicate, accustomed to sweet and uniform tints. He was a poet of the twilight. Moral existence in commonplace existence, such was his object—the object of his preference. His paintings are cameos with a grey ground, which have a meaning; designedly he suppresses all which might please the senses, in order to speak solely to the heart.

Out of this character sprang his theory of art, altogether spiritualistic, which, after repelling classical habits, ended by rallying Protestant sympathies, and won for him as many partisans as it had raised enemies.\* Since the only important thing is moral life, let us devote ourselves solely to nourishing it. The reader must be moved, genuinely, with profit to his soul; the rest is indifferent: let us, then, show him objects moving in themselves, without dreaming of clothing them in a beautiful style. Let us strip ourselves of conventional language and poetic diction. Let us neglect noble words, scholastic and courtly epithets, and all the pomp of factitious splendor, which the classical writers thought themselves bound to assume, and justified in imposing. In poetry, as elsewhere, the grand question is, not ornament, but truth. Let us leave show, and seek effect. Let us speak in a bare style, as like as possible to prose, to ordinary conversation, even to rustic conversation, and let us choose our subjects at hand, in humble life. Let us take for our character an idiot boy, a shivering old peasant woman, a hawker, a servant stopping in the street. It is the true sentiment, not the dignity of the folks, which makes the beauty of a subject; it is the true sentiment, not the dignity of the words, which makes the beauty of poetry. What matters that it is a villager who weeps, if these tears enable me to see the maternal sentiment? What matters that my verse is a line of rhymed prose, if this line displays a noble emotion? You read that you may carry away emotions, not phrases; you come to us to look for a moral culture, not pretty ways of speaking. And thereon Wordsworth, classifying his poems according to the different faculties of men and the different ages of life, undertakes to lead us through all compartments

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\* See the preface of his second edition of *Lyrical Ballads*.

and degrees of inner education, to the convictions and sentiments which he has himself attained.

All this is very well, but on condition that the reader is in his own position; that is, an essentially moral philosopher, and an excessively sensitive man. When I shall have emptied my head of all worldly thoughts, and looked up at the clouds for ten years to refine my soul, I shall love this poetry. Meanwhile the web of imperceptible threads by which Wordsworth endeavors to bind together all sentiments and embrace all nature, breaks in my fingers; it is too fragile; it is a woof of woven spider-web, spun by a metaphysical imagination, and tearing as soon as a solid hand tries to touch it. Half of his pieces are childish, almost foolish; \* dull events described in a dull style, one nullity after another, and that on principle. All the poets in the world would not reconcile us to so much tedium. Certainly a cat playing with three dry leaves may furnish a philosophical reflection, and figure forth a wise man sporting with the fallen leaves of life; but eighty lines on such a subject make us yawn—much worse, smile. At this rate you will find a lesson in an old tooth-brush, which still continues in use. Doubtless, also, the ways of Providence are unfathomable, and a selfish and brutal workman like Peter Bell may be converted by the beautiful conduct of an ass full of virtue and unselfishness; but this sentimental prettiness quickly grows insipid, and the style, by its intentional ingenuousness, renders it still more insipid. We are not over-pleased to see a grave man seriously imitate the language of nurses, and we murmur to ourselves that, with so many emotions, he must wet many handkerchiefs. We will acknowledge, if you like, that your sentiments are interesting; yet you might do, without trotting them all out before us.

We imagine we hear him say: "Yesterday I read Walton's *Complete Angler*; let us write a sonnet about it. On Easter Sunday I was in a valley in Westmoreland; another sonnet. Two days ago I put too many questions to my little boy, and caused him to tell a lie; a poem. I am going to travel on the Continent and through Scotland; poems about all the incidents, monuments, adventures of the journey."

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\* *Peter Bell*; *The White Doe*; *The Kitten and Falling Leaves*, etc.

You must consider your emotions very precious, that you put them all under glass? There are only three or four events in each of our lives worthy of being related; our powerful sensations deserve to be exhibited, because they recapitulate our whole existence; but not the little effects of the little agitations which pass through us, and the imperceptible oscillations of our everyday condition. Else I might end by explaining in rhyme that yesterday my dog broke his leg, and that this morning my wife put on her stockings inside out. The specialty of the artist is to cast great ideas into moulds as great as they; Wordsworth's moulds are of bad common clay, notched, unable to hold the noble metal which they ought to contain.

But the metal is genuinely noble; and besides several very beautiful sonnets, there is now and then a work, amongst others *The Excursion*, in which we forget the poverty of the scenery to admire the purity and elevation of the thought. In truth, the author hardly puts himself to the trouble of imagination; he walked along and conversed with an old Scotch pedlar; this is the whole of the history. The poets of this school always walked, regarding nature and thinking of human destiny; it is their permanent attitude. He converses, then, with the pedlar, a meditative character, who had become educated by a long experience of men and things, who spoke very well (too well!) of the soul and of God, and relates to him the history of a good woman who died of grief in her cottage; then with a solitary, a sort of sceptical Hamlet—morose, made gloomy by the death of his family, and the deceptions of his long journeyings; then with the clergyman, who brought them to the village cemetery, and described to them the life of several interesting dead people. Observe that, *passim* and gradually, reflections and moral discussions, scenery and moral descriptions, spread before us in hundreds, dissertations entwine their long thorny hedgerows, and metaphysical thistles multiply in every corner. In short, the poem is grave and sad as a sermon. Well! in spite of this ecclesiastical air and the tirades against Voltaire and his age,\* we feel ourselves impressed as by a discourse of

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This dull product of a scoffer's pen  
 Impure conceits discharging from a heart  
 Hardened by impious pride!

Wordsworth's Works, 7 vols. 1849, viii.; *The Excursion*, book 2; *The Solitary*, 58.



Theodore Jouffroy. After all, the man is convinced; he has spent his life meditating on these kind of ideas; they are the poetry of his religion, race, climate; he is imbued with them; his pictures, stories, interpretations of visible nature and human life, tend only to put the mind in the grave disposition which is proper to the inner man. I come here as into the valley of Port Royal; a solitary nook, stagnant waters, gloomy woods, ruins, gravestones, and above all the idea of responsible man, and the obscure beyond, to which we involuntarily move. I forget the careless French fashions, the custom of not disturbing the even tenor of life. There is an imposing seriousness, an austere beauty in this sincere reflection; respect comes in, we stop and are touched. This book is like a Protestant temple, august, though bare and monotonous. The poet sets forth the great interests of the soul:

“ On Man, on Nature, and on Human Life,  
 Musing in solitude, I oft perceive  
 Fair trains of imagery before me rise,  
 Accompanied by feelings of delight  
 Pure, or with no unpleasing sadness mixed;  
 And I am conscious of affecting thoughts  
 And dear remembrances, whose presence soothes  
 Or elevates the Mind, intent to weigh  
 The good and evil of our mortal state.  
 —To these emotions, whencesoe’er they come,  
 Whether from breath of outward circumstance,  
 Or from the Soul—an impulse to herself—  
 I would give utterance in numerous verse.  
 Of Truth, of Grandeur, Beauty, Love, and Hope,  
 And melancholy Fear subdued by Faith;  
 Of blessed consolations in distress;  
 Of moral strength, and intellectual Power;  
 Of joy in widest commonalty spread;  
 Of the individual Mind that keeps her own  
 Inviolable retirement, subject there  
 To Conscience only, and the law supreme  
 Of that Intelligence which governs all—  
 I sing.”\*

This inviolable personage, the only holy part of man, is holy in all stages; for this, Wordsworth selects as his characters, a pedlar, a parson, villagers; in his eyes condition, education,

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\* Wordsworth's Works, 7 vols. 1849, vii.; *The Excursion*, Preface, 11.

habits, all the worldly envelope of a man, is without interest ; what constitutes our worth is the integrity of our conscience ; science itself is only profound when it penetrates moral life ; for this life fails nowhere :

“ To every Form of being is assigned . . .  
 An *active* principle :—howe’er removed  
 From sense and observation, it subsists  
 In all things, in all natures ; in the stars  
 Of azure heaven, the unending clouds,  
 In flower and tree, in every pebbly stone  
 That paves the brooks, the stationary rocks,  
 The moving waters, and the invisible air.  
 Whate’er exists hath properties that spread  
 Beyond itself, communicating good,  
 A simple blessing, or with evil mixed ;  
 Spirit that knows no insulated spot,  
 No chasm, no solitude ; from link to link  
 It circulates, the Soul of all the worlds.”\*

Reject, then, with disdain this arid science :

“ Where Knowledge, ill begun in cold remarks  
 On outward things, with formal inference ends ;  
 Or, if the mind turn inward, she recoils,  
 At once—or, not recoiling, is perplexed—†  
 Lost in a gloom of uninspired research. . . .  
 Viewing all objects unremittingly  
 In disconnection dead and spiritless ;  
 And still dividing, and dividing still,  
 Breaks down all grandeur.”‡

Beyond the vanities of science and the pride of the world, there is the soul, whereby all are equal, and the broad and familiar Christian life opens at once its gates to all who would enter :

“ The sun is fixed,  
 And the infinite magnificence of heaven  
 Fixed within reach of every human eye.  
 The sleepless Ocean murmurs for all ears,  
 The vernal field infuses fresh delight  
 Into all hearts. . . .  
 The primal duties shine aloft like stars,

\* Wordsworth’s Works, vii. book 9, *Discourse of the Wanderer*, opening verses, 315.

† *Ibid.* vii. ; *The Excursion*, book 4 ; *Despondency Corrected*, 137.

‡ *Ibid.* 149.

The charities that soothe and heal and bless  
Are scattered at the feet of man—like flowers.”

So, at the end of all agitation and all search appears the great truth, which is the abstract of the rest :

“Life, I repeat, is energy of love  
Divine or human ; exercised in pain,  
In strife and tribulation ; and ordained,  
If so approved and sanctified, to pass,  
Through shades and silent rest, to endless joy.” \*

The verses sustain these serious thoughts by their grave harmony, as it were a motet accompanying a meditation or a prayer. They resemble the grand and monotonous music of the organ, which in the eventide, at the close of the service, rolls slowly in the twilight of arches and pillars.

When a certain phasis of the human intelligence comes to light, it does so from all sides ; there is no part where it does not appear, no instincts which it does not renew. It enters simultaneously the two opposite camps, and seems to undo with one hand what it has made with the other. If it is, as it was formerly, the oratorical style, we find it at the same time in the service of cynical misanthropy, and in that of decorous humanity, in Swift and in Addison. If it is, as now, the philosophical spirit, it produces at once conservative harangues and socialistic utopias, Wordsworth and Shelley. † The latter, one of the greatest poets of the age, son of a rich baronet, beautiful as an angel, of extraordinary precocity, sweet, generous, tender, overflowing with all the gifts of heart, mind, birth, and fortune, marred his life, as it were, wantonly, by introducing into his conduct the enthusiastic imagination which he should have kept for his verses. From his birth he had “the vision” of sublime beauty and happiness, and the contemplation of the ideal world set him in arms against the actual. Having refused at Eton to be the fag of the big boys, he was treated by the boys and the masters with a revolting cruelty ; suffered himself to be made a martyr, refused to obey, and, falling back into forbidden studies, began to form the most immoderate and most poetical dreams. He judged society by the oppression which he underwent, and man by the generos-

\* Wordsworth's Works, vii. last lines of book 5, *The Pastor*, 20.

† See also the novels of Godwin, *Caleb Williams*.

ity which he felt in himself ; thought that man was good and society bad, and that it was only necessary to suppress established institutions to make earth "a paradise." He became a republican, a communist, preached fraternity, love, even abstinence from flesh, and as a means, the abolition of kings, priests, and God.\* Fancy the indignation which such ideas roused in a society so obstinately attached to established order—so intolerant, in which, above the conservative and religious instincts, Cant spoke like a master. He was expelled from the university ; his father refused to see him ; the Lord Chancellor, by a decree, took from him, as being unworthy, the custody of his two children ; finally, he was obliged to quit England. I forgot to say that at eighteen he married a girl of mean birth, that they had been separated, that she committed suicide, that he had undermined his health by his excitement and sufferings,† and that to the end of his life he was nervous or sick. Is not this the life of a genuine poet ? Eyes fixed on the splendid apparitions with which he peopled space, he went through the world not seeing the high road, stumbling over the stones of the roadside. That knowledge of life which most poets have in common with novelists, he had not. Seldom has a mind been seen in which thought soared in loftier regions, and more far from actual things. When he tried to create characters and events—in *Queen Mab*, in *Alastor*, in *The Revolt of Islam*, in *Prometheus*—he only produced unsubstantial phantoms. Once only, in the *Cenci*, did he inspire a living figure worthy of Webster or old Ford ; but in some sort in spite of himself, and because in it the sentiments were so unheard of and so strained that they suited superhuman conceptions. Elsewhere his world is throughout beyond our own. The laws of life are suspended or transformed. We move in this world between heaven and earth, in abstraction, dreamland, symbolism : the beings float in it like those fantastic figures which we see in the clouds, and which alternately undulate and change form capriciously, in their robes of snow and gold.

For souls thus constituted, the great consolation is nature.

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\* *Queen Mab*, and notes. At Oxford Shelly issued a kind of thesis, calling it "On the Necessity of Atheism."

† Some time before his death, when he was twenty-nine, he said, "If I die now, I shall have lived as long as my father."

They are too fairly sensitive to find a distraction in the spectacle and picture of human passions. Shelley instinctively avoided it; this sight re-opened his own wounds. He was happier in the woods, at the seaside, in contemplation of grand landscapes. The rocks, clouds, and meadows, which to ordinary eyes seem dull and insensible, are, to a wide sympathy, living and divine existences, which are an agreeable change from men. No virgin smile is so charming as that of the dawn, nor any joy more triumphant than that of the ocean when its waves creep and tremble, as far as the eye can see, under the prodigal splendor of heaven. At this sight the heart rises unwittingly to the sentiments of ancient legends, and the poet perceives in the inexhaustible bloom of things the peaceful soul of the great mother by whom every thing grows and is supported. Shelley spent most of his life in the open air, especially in his boat; first on the Thames, then on the Lake of Geneva, then on the Arno, and in the Italian waters. He loved desert and solitary places, where man enjoys the pleasure of believing infinite what he sees, infinite as his soul. And such was this wide ocean, and this shore more barren than its waves. This love was a deep Germanic instinct, which, allied to pagan emotions, produced his poetry, pantheistic and yet pensive, almost Greek and yet English, in which fancy plays like a foolish, dreamy child, with the splendid skein of forms and colors. A cloud, a plant, a sunrise—these are his characters: they were those of the primitive poets, when they took the lightning for a bird of fire, and the clouds for the flocks of heaven. But what a secret ardor beyond these splendid images, and how we feel the heat of the furnace beyond the colored phantoms, which it sets afloat over the horizon!\* Has any one since Shakspeare and Spenser lighted on such tender and such grand ecstasies? Has any one painted so magnificently the cloud which watches by night in the sky, enveloping in its net the swarm of golden bees, the stars:

“The sanguine sunrise, with his meteor eyes,  
And his burning plumes outspread,

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\* See in Shelley's Works, 1853, *The Witch of Atlas*, *The Cloud*, *To a Skylark*, the end of *The Revolt of Islam*, *Alastor*, and the whole of *Prometheus*.

Leaps on the back of my sailing rack,  
 When the morning star shines dead . . . \*  
 That orb'd maiden, with white fire laden,  
 Whom mortals call the moon,  
 Glides glimmering o'er my fleece-like floor,  
 By the midnight breezes strewn." †

Read again those verses on the garden, in which the sensitive plant dreams. Alas! they are the dreams of the poet, and the happy visions which floated in his virgin heart up to the moment when it opened out and withered. I will pause in time; I will not proceed, like him, beyond the recollections of his spring-time :

“ The snowdrop, and then the violet,  
 Arose from the ground with warm rain wet,  
 And their breath was mixed with fresh odor, sent  
 From the turf, like the voice and the instrument.  
 Then the pied wind-flowers and the tulip tall,  
 And narcissi, the fairest among them all,  
 Who gaze on their eyes in the stream's recess,  
 Till they die of their own dear loveliness.  
 And the Naiad-like lily of the vale,  
 Whom youth makes so fair and passion so pale,  
 That the light of its tremulous bells is seen  
 Through their pavilions of tender green ;  
 And the hyacinth purple, and white, and blue,  
 Which flung from its bells a sweet peal anew  
 Of music so delicate, soft, and intense,  
 It was felt like an odor within the sense ;  
 And the rose like a nymph to the bath address,  
 Which unveiled the depth of her glowing breast,  
 Till, fold after fold, to the fainting air  
 The soul of her beauty and love lay bare ;  
 And the wand-like lily, which lifted up,  
 As a Mænad, its moonlight-colored cup,  
 Till the fiery star, which is its eye,  
 Gazed through the clear dew on the tender sky . . .  
 And on the stream whose inconstant bosom  
 Was pranked, under boughs of embowering blossom,  
 With golden and green light, slanting through  
 Their heaven of many a tangled hue,  
 Broad water-lilies lay tremulously,  
 And starry river-buds glimmered by,

\* *The Cloud*, c. iii. 502.

† *Ibid.* c. iv. 503.

And around them the soft stream did glide and dance  
 With a motion of sweet sound and radiance.  
 And the sinuous paths of lawn and of moss,  
 Which led through the garden along and across,  
 Some open at once to the sun and the breeze,  
 Some lost among bowers of blossoming trees,  
 Were all paved with daisies and delicate bells,  
 As fair as the fabulous asphodels,  
 And flowerets which drooping as day drooped too,  
 Fell into pavilions, white, purple, and blue,  
 To roof the glow-worm from the evening dew.”\*

Everything lives here, everything breathes and yearns. This poem, the story of a plant, is also the story of a soul—Shelley’s soul, the sensitive. Is it not natural to confound them? Is there not a community of nature amongst all the dwellers in this world? Verily there is a soul in everything; in the universe is a soul: be the existence what it will, unhewn or rational, defined or vague, ever beyond its sensible form shines a secret essence and something divine, which we catch sight of by sublime illuminations, never reaching or penetrating it. It is this presentiment and yearning which raises all modern poetry, —now in Christian meditations, as with Campbell and Wordsworth, now in pagan visions, as with Keats† and Shelley. They hear the great heart of nature beat; they would reach it; they assay all spiritual and sensible approaches, through Judea and through Greece, by consecrated dogmas and by proscribed dogmas. In this splendid and senseless effort the greatest are exhausted and die. Their poetry, which they drag with them over these sublime tracks, is rent thereby. One alone, Byron, attains the summit; † and of all these grand poetic draperies,

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\* Shelley’s Works, 1853, *The Sensitive Plant*, 490.

† In this thoroughly French estimate of Byron, few English-speaking critics will be found to agree. Strikingly contrasted with M. Taine’s extensive treatment of Byron, is the way in which he passes over Keats—perhaps the greatest English poet since Milton. It is hardly in accordance with M. Taine’s general view of English literature that in the following *Ode to a Nightingale* we should find that classic perfectness of expression which is unjustly claimed as the attainment of Frenchmen only:

My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains  
 My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,  
 Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains  
 One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk;  
 ’Tis not through envy of thy happy lot,  
 But being too happy in thy happiness,—

which float like standards, and seem to summon men to the conquest of supreme truth, we see now but tatters scattered by the wayside.

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That thou, light-winged Dryad of the trees,  
 In some melodious plot  
 Of beechen green, and shadows numberless,  
 Singest of summer in full-throated ease.

O for a draught of vintage that hath been  
 Cooled a long age in the deep-delved earth,  
 Tasting of Flora and the country green,  
 Dance, and Provençal song, and sun-burnt mirth !

O for a beaker full of the warm South,  
 Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,  
 With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,  
 And purple-stained mouth ;  
 That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,  
 And with thee fade away into the forest dim :

Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget  
 What thou among the leaves hast never known,  
 The weariness, the fever, and the fret  
 Here, where men sit and hear each other groan ;  
 Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last grey hairs,  
 Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies ;  
 Where but to think is to be full of sorrow  
 And leaden-eyed despairs ;  
 Where beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,  
 Or new Love pine at them beyond to-morrow.

Away ! away ! for I will fly to thee,  
 Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards,  
 But on the viewless wings of Poesy,  
 Though the dull brain perplexes and retards :  
 Already with thee ! tender is the night,  
 And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne,  
 Clustered around by all her starry Fays ;  
 But here there is no light,  
 Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown  
 Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways.

I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,  
 Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,  
 But in embalmed darkness, guess each sweet  
 Wherewith the seasonable month endows  
 The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild ;  
 White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine ;  
 Fast-fading violets covered up in leaves ;  
 And mid-May's eldest child,  
 The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,  
 The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves.

Darkling I listen,—and for many a time  
 I have been half in love with easeful Death,  
 Called him soft names in many a mused rhyme,  
 To take into the air my quiet breath ;



§ 54.—If ever there was a violent and madly sensitive soul, but incapable of being otherwise ; ever agitated, but in an enclosure without issue ; predisposed to poetry by its innate fire,

Now more than ever seems it rich to die,  
 To cease upon the midnight with no pain,  
 While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad  
 In such an ecstasy !  
 Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in vain—  
 To thy high requiem become a sod.

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird !  
 No hungry generations tread thee down ;  
 The voice I hear this passing night was heard  
 In ancient days by emperor and clown :  
 Perhaps the self-same song that found a path  
 Through the sad heart of Ruth, when sick for home,  
 She stood in tears amid the alien corn ;  
 The same that oft-times hath  
 Charmed magic casements, opening on the foam  
 Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

Forlorn ! the very word is like a bell  
 To toll me back from thee to my sole self !  
 Adieu ! the fancy cannot cheat so well  
 As she is famed to do, deceiving elf.  
 Adieu ! adieu ! thy plaintive anthem fades  
 Past the near meadows, over the still stream,  
 Up the hill-side,—and now 'tis buried deep  
 In the next valley-glades :  
 Was it a vision, or a waking dream ?  
 Fled is that music :—do I wake or sleep ?

To my mind there is as much of a truly Attic finish in these lines as in those of any modern French poet known to me. But Keats had more in him than belongs to mere exquisiteness of expression. He could write in the grand style of Homer, Dante, and Milton—as witness these lines from *Hyperion*, describing the “sad place where the bruised Titans mourned :”

It was a den where no insulting light  
 Could glimmer on their tears,—where their own groans  
 They felt, but heard not, for the solid roar  
 Of thunderous waterfalls and torrents hoarse,  
 Pouring a constant bulk, uncertain where.  
 Crag jutting forth to crag, and rocks that seem'd  
 Ever as if just rising from a sleep,  
 Forehead to forehead held their monstrous horns.

Keats survives for us chiefly in these and the other wondrous lines—all too few!—which it was given him to write in his short career. His life is, on the whole, barren of striking incident. He was born Oct. 29th, 1795, and died at Rome, Feb. 27th, 1821, of consumption. The current story that his death was hastened by the effect upon his sensitive temperament of some harsh criticisms in “*Blackwood*” and the “*Quarterly*,” is discredited by his biographer, Lord Houghton, and is in all probability mythical. Such stories usually are born of the myth-making temperament. It was on the occasion of Keats's untimely death that Shelley wrote his magnificent poem “*Adonais*.”

—J. F.

but limited by its natural barriers to a single kind of poetry—it was Byron's.

This promptitude to extreme emotions was with him a family legacy, and the result of education. His great-uncle, a sort of raving and misanthropical maniac, had slain in a tavern brawl, by candle-light, Mr. Chaworth, his relative, and had been tried before the House of Lords. His father, a brutal roysterer, had eloped with the wife of Lord Carmarthen, ruined and ill-treated Miss Gordon, his second wife; and, after living like a madman and dishonest fellow, had gone, with the last of the family property, to die abroad. His mother, in her moments of fury, would tear to pieces her dresses and her bonnets. When her wretched husband died she almost lost her reason, and her cries were heard in the street. What a childhood Byron passed in the care of "this lioness;" in what storms of insults, interspersed with softer moods, he himself lived, just as passionate and more bitter, it would take a long story to tell. She ran after him, called him a "lame brat," shouted at him, and threw fire-shovel and tongs at his head. He held his tongue, bowed, and none the less felt the outrage. One day, when he was "in one of his silent rages," they had to take out of his hand a knife which he had taken from the table, and which he was already raising to his throat. Another time the quarrel was so terrible, that son and mother, each privately, went to "the apothecary's, inquiring anxiously whether the other had been to purchase poison, and cautioning the vendor of drugs not to attend to such an application, if made."\* When he went to school, "his friendships were passions." Many years afterwards, he never heard the name of Lord Clare, one of his old school-fellows, pronounced, without "a beating of the heart." † A score of times he got himself into trouble for his friends, offering them his time, his pen, his purse. One day, at Harrow, a big boy claimed the right to fag his friend, little Peel, and finding him refractory, gave him a beating on the inner fleshy side of his arm, which he had twisted round to make it more sensitive. Byron, too small to fight the rascal, came up to him, "blushing with rage," tears in his eyes, and asked with a trembling voice how many stripes he meant to in-

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\* Byron's Works, ed. Moore, 17 vols. 1822; *Life*, i. 102. † *Ibid.* i. 63.

flict. "Why," returned the executioner, "you little rascal, what is that to you?" "Because, if you please," said Byron, holding out his arm, "I would take half."\* He never met an object of distress without affording him succor.† Later, in Italy, he gave away a thousand pounds out of every four thousand he spent. The sources of life in this heart were too full, and flooded forth good and evil impetuously, at the least shock. Like Dante, at the age of eight he fell in love with a child named Mary Duff.

"How very odd that I should have been so utterly, devotedly fond of that girl, at an age when I could neither feel passion, nor know the meaning of the word! . . . I recollect all our caresses, . . . my restlessness, my sleeplessness. My misery, my love for that girl were so violent, that I sometimes doubt if I have ever been really attached since. When I heard of her being married, . . . it nearly threw me into convulsions."‡

"My passion had its usual effects upon me. I could not sleep—I could not eat—I could not rest; and although I had reason to know that she loved me, it was the texture of my life to think of the time which must elapse before we could meet again, being usually about twelve hours of separation. But I was a fool then, and am not much wiser now."§

At twelve years he fell in love with his cousin, Margaret Parker.

He was never wiser. Hard reading at school; vehement exercise, later on, at Cambridge, Newstead and London; prolonged debauches, long fasts, a destructive way of living—he rushed to the extreme of every taste and every excess. As he was a dandy, and one of the most brilliant, he nearly let himself die of hunger for fear of becoming fat, then drank and ate greedily during his nights of recklessness. Moore said:

"Lord Byron, for the last two days, had done nothing towards sustenance beyond eating a few biscuits and (to appease appetite) chewing mastic. . . . He confined himself to lobsters, and of these finished two or three to his own share—interposing, sometimes, a small liqueur-glass of strong white brandy, sometimes a tumbler of very hot water, and then pure brandy again, to the amount of near half a dozen small glasses of the latter. . . . After this we had claret, of which having despatched two bottles between us, at about four o'clock in the morning we parted."||

Another day we find in Byron's journal the following words:

"Yesterday, dined *tête-à-tête* at the 'Cocoa' with Scrope Davies—sat

\* Byron's Works, ed. Moore, 17 vols. 1832; *Life*, i. 69.

† *Ibid.* 137: ‡ *Ibid.* i. 26. § *Ibid.* i. 53. || *Ibid.* iii. 83.

from six till midnight—drank between us one bottle of champagne and six of claret, neither of which wines ever affect me.”\*

Later, at Venice :

“I have hardly had a wink of sleep this week past. I have had some curious masking adventures this carnival. . . . I will work the mine of my youth to the last vein of the ore, and then—good night. I have lived, and am content.”†

At this rate the organs wear out, and intervals of temperance are not sufficient to repair them. The stomach does not continue to act, the nerves get out of order, and the soul undermines the body, and the body the soul.

“I always wake in actual despair and despondency, in all respects, even of that which pleased me over-night. In England, five years ago, I had the same kind of hypochondria, but accompanied with so violent a thirst that I have drunk as many as fifteen bottles of soda-water in one night after going to bed, and been still thirsty, . . . striking off the necks of bottles from mere thirsty impatience.”‡

Much less is necessary to ruin mind and body wholly. Thus these vehement minds live, ever driven and broken by their own energy, like a cannon ball, which, when arrested, turns and seems motionless, so quickly it goes flying, but at the smallest obstacle leaps up, rebounds, raises a cloud of dust, and ends by burying itself in the earth. Beyle, a most shrewd observer, who lived with Byron for several weeks, says that on certain days he was mad; at other times, in presence of beautiful things, he became sublime. Though reserved and so proud, music made him weep. The rest of his time, petty English passions, pride of rank, for instance, a vain dandyism, unhinged him: he spoke of Brummel with a shudder of jealousy and admiration. But, small or great, the present passion swept down upon his mind like a tempest, roused him, transported him either into imprudence or genius. His journal, his familiar letters, all his unstudied prose, is, as it were, trembling with wit, anger, enthusiasm: since Saint Simon we have not seen more life-like confidences. All styles appear dull, and all souls sluggish by the side of his.

In this splendid rush of unbridled and disbanded faculties,

\* Byron's Works, *Life*, ii. 20, March 28, 1814.

† *Ibid.* iv. 81; Letter to Moore, Feb. 12, 1818.

‡ Byron's Works, *Life*, v. 96, Feb. 2, 1821.

which leaped up at random, and seemed to drive him without option to the four quarters of the globe, one took the reins, and cast him on the wall against which he was broken.

"Sir Walter Scott describes Lord Byron as being a man of real goodness of heart, and the kindest and best feelings, miserably thrown away by his foolish contempt of public opinion. Instead of being warned or checked by public opposition, it roused him to go on in a worse strain, as if he said, 'Ay, you don't like it; well, you shall have something worse for your pains.'"\*

This rebellious instinct is inherent in the race; there was a whole cluster of wild passions, born of the climate,† which nourished him; a gloomy humor, violent imagination, indomitable pride, a relish of danger, a craving for strife, the inner exaltation, only satiated by destruction, and that sombre madness which urged forward the Scandinavian Berserkers, when, in an open bark, under a sky cloven with the lightning, they launched out upon the tempest, whose fury they had breathed. This instinct is in the blood; people are born so, as they are born lions or bulldogs.‡ Byron was still a little boy in petticoats when his nurse scolded him rudely for having soiled or torn a new frock which he had just put on. He got into one of his silent rages, seized the garment with his hands, rent it from top to bottom, and stood erect, motionless and gloomy before the storming nurse, so as to set more effectually her wrath at defiance. His pride overflowed. When at ten he inherited the title of lord, and his name was first called at school, preceded by the title *dominus*, he could not answer the customary *adsum*, stood silent amidst the general stare of his school-fellows, and at last burst into tears. Another time, at Harrow, in a dispute which was dividing the school, a boy said, "Byron won't join us, for he never likes to be second anywhere." He was offered the command, and then only would he condescend to take part with them. Never to submit to a master; to rise with his whole soul against every semblance of encroachment or rule; to keep

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\* Lockhart's *Life of Sir Walter Scott*, vii. 323.

† "If I was born, as the nurses say, with a 'silver spoon in my mouth,' it has stuck in my throat, and spoiled my palate, so that nothing put into it is swallowed with much relish—unless it be cayenne. . . . I see no such horror in a dreamless sleep, and I have no conception of any existence which duration would not make tiresome."

‡ "I like Junius; he was a good hater. I don't understand yielding sensitiveness. What I feel is an immense rage for forty-eight hours."

his person intact and inviolate at all cost, and to the end against all; to dare everything rather than give sign of submission,—such was his character. This is why he was disposed to undergo anything rather than give signs of weakness. At ten he was a stoic from pride. His foot was painfully stretched in a wooden contrivance whilst he was taking his Latin lesson, and his master pitied him, saying “he must be suffering.” “Never mind, Mr. Rogers,” he said, “you shall not see any signs of it in me.”\* Such as he was as a child, he continued as a man. In mind and body he strove, or prepared himself for strife.† Every day, for hours at a time, he boxed, fired pistols, practised the sabre, ran and leaped, rode, overcame obstacles. These were the exploits of his hands and muscles; but he needed others. For lack of enemies he found fault with society, and made war upon it. We know to what excesses the dominant opinions then ran. England was at the height of the war with France, and thought it was fighting for morality and liberty. In their eyes, at this time, church and constitution were holy things: beware how you touch them, if you would not become a public enemy! In this fit of national passion and Protestant severity, whosoever publicly avowed liberal ideas and manners seemed an incendiary, and stirred up against himself the instincts of property, the doctrines of moralists, the interests of politicians, and the prejudices of the people. Byron chose this moment to praise Voltaire and Rousseau, to admire Napoleon, to avow himself a sceptic, to plead for nature and pleasure against cant and rule, to say that high English society, debauched and hypocritical, made phrases and killed men, to preserve their sinecures and rotten boroughs. As though political hatred was not enough, he contracted, in addition, literary animosities, attacked the whole body of critics,‡ ran down the new poetry, declared that the most celebrated were “Claudians,” men of the later empire, raged against the Lake school, and in consequence had in Southey a bitter and unwearied enemy. Thus provided with enemies, he laid himself open to attack on all sides.

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\* Byron's Works, *Life*, i. 41.

† “I like energy—even mental energy—of all kinds, and have need of both mental and corporeal.”—*Ibid.* ii.

‡ In *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*.

A last imprudence brought down the attack. As long as he was an unmarried man, his excesses might be excused by the over-strong fire of a temperament which often causes youth in this land to revolt against good taste and rule; but marriage settles them, and it was marriage which in him completed his unsettling. He found that his wife was a kind of model-virtue, mentioned as such, "a creature of rule," correct and dry, incapable of committing a fault herself, and of forgiving. His servant, Fletcher, observed, that he never knew a lady who could not govern his master, except his wife. Lady Byron thought her husband mad, and had him examined by physicians. Having learned that he was in his right mind, she left him, returned to her father, and refused ever to see him again. Thereupon he passed for a monster. The papers covered him with opprobrium; his friends induced him not to go to a theatre or to Parliament, fearing that he would be hooted or insulted. The fury and torture which so violent a soul, precociously accustomed to brilliant glory, felt in this universal storm of outrage, can only be learned from his verses. He grew stubborn, went to Venice, and steeped himself in the voluptuous Italian life, even in low debauchery, the better to insult the Puritan prudery which had condemned him, and left it only through an offence still more blamed, his public intimacy with the young Countess Guiccioli. Meanwhile he showed himself as bitterly republican in politics as in morality. He wrote in 1813: "I have simplified my politics into an utter detestation of all existing governments." This time, at Ravenna, his house was the centre and storehouse of conspirators, and he generously and imprudently prepared to take arms with them, to strike for the deliverance of Italy.

In the meantime he had quarrels with the police; his house was watched, he was threatened with assassination, and yet he rode out daily, and went into the neighboring pine forest to practice pistol shooting.

Amidst such splendors and anxieties he passed his life. Anguish endured, danger braved, resistance overcome, grief relished, all the greatness and sadness of the black warlike madness,—such are the images which he needs must let pass before him. In default of action he had dreams, and he only betook himself to dreams for want of action. He said, when embark-

ing for Greece, that he had taken poetry for lack of better, and that it was not his fit work. "What is a poet? what is he worth? what does he do? He is a babbler." He augured ill of the poetry of his age, even of his own; saying that, if he lived ten years more, they should see something else from him but verses. In fact, he would have been more at home as a sea king, or a captain of a band of troopers during the Middle-ages. Except two or three gleams of Italian sunshine, his poetry and life are those of a Scald transplanted into modern life, who, in this over-well regulated world, did not find his vocation.

Byron was a poet, then, but in his own fashion—a strange fashion, like that in which he lived. There were internal tempests within him, avalanches of ideas, which found issue only in writing. He wrote:

"I have written from the fulness of my mind, from passion, from impulse, from many motives, but not 'for their sweet voices.' To withdraw myself from myself has ever been my sole, my entire, my sincere motive in scribbling at all—and publishing also the continuance of the same object, by the action it affords to the mind, which else recoils upon itself."

He wrote almost always with astonishing rapidity, *The Corsair* in ten days, *The Bride of Abydos* in four days. While it was printing he added and corrected, but without recasting:

"I told you before that I can never recast anything. I am like the tiger. If I miss the first spring, I go grumbling back to my jungle again; but if I do it, it is crushing." \*

Doubtless he sprang, but he had a chain: never, in the freest flight of his thoughts, did he liberate himself from himself. He dreams of himself, and sees himself throughout. It is a boiling torrent, but hedged in with rocks. No such great poet has had so narrow an imagination; he could not metamorphose himself into another. They are his own sorrows, his own revolts, his own travels, which, hardly transformed and modified, he introduces into his verses. He does not invent, he observes; he does not create, he transcribes. His copy is darkly exaggerated, but it is a copy. "I could not write upon any thing," says he, "without some personal experience and foundation." You will find in his letters and notebook, almost feature for feature, the most striking of his descriptions. The capture of

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\* *Ibid.* v. 265.



Ismail, the shipwreck of Don Juan, are, almost word for word, like two accounts of it in prose. If none but cockneys could attribute to him the crimes of his heroes, none but blind men could fail to see in him the sentiments of his characters. This is so true, that he has not created more than one. Childe Harold, Lara, the Giaour, the Corsair, Manfred, Sardanapalus, Cain, Tasso, Dante, and the rest, are always the same—one man represented under various costumes, in several lands, with different expressions; but just as painters do, when, by change of garments, decorations, and attitudes, they draw fifty portraits from the same model. He meditated too much upon himself to be enamored of any thing else. The habitual sternness of his will prevented his mind from being flexible; his force, always concentrated for effort and strained for strife, shut him up in self-contemplation, and reduced him never to make a poem, save of his own heart.

In what style would he write? With these concentrated and tragic sentiments he had a classical mind. By the strangest mixture, the books, which he preferred, were at once the most violent or the most regular, the Bible above all:

“I am a great reader and admirer of those books (the Bible), and had read them through and through before I was eight years old; that is to say, the Old Testament, for the New struck me as a task, but the other as a pleasure.”\*

Observe this word: he did not relish the tender and self-denying mysticism of the gospel, but the cruel sternness and lyrical outcries of the old Hebrews. Next to the Bible he loved Pope, the most correct and formal of men:

“As to Pope, I have always regarded him as the greatest name in our poetry. Depend upon it, the rest are barbarians. He is a Greek Temple, with a Gothic Cathedral on one hand, and a Turkish Mosque and all sorts of fantastic pagodas and conventicles about him. You may call Shakspeare and Milton pyramids, but I prefer the Temple of Theseus or the Parthenon to a mountain of burnt brickwork. . . . The grand distinction of the underforms of the new school of poets is their vulgarity. By this I do not mean they are coarse, but shabby-genteel.”†

And he presently wrote two letters with incomparable vivacity and spirit, to defend Pope against the scorn of modern writers. These writers, according to him, have spoiled the public taste.

\* Moore, Byron's Works; *Life*, v. 265.

† *Ibid.* v. 150, Ravenna, May 3, 1821.

The only ones who were worth any thing—Crabbe, Campbell, Rogers—imitate the style of Pope. A few others had talent; but, take them all together, the newest ones had perverted literature: they did not know their language; their expressions are only approximate, above or below the true tone, forced or dull. He ranges himself amongst the corrupters,\* and we soon see that this theory is not an invention, springing from bad temper and polemics; he returns to it. In his two first attempts—*Hours of Idleness, English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*—he tried to follow it up. Later, and in almost all his works, we find its effect. He recommends and practices the rule of unity in tragedy. He loves oratorical form, symmetrical phrase, condensed style. He likes to plead his passions. Sheridan tried to induce Byron to devote himself to eloquence; and the vigor, piercing logic, wonderful vivacity, close argument of his prose, prove that he would have had the first rank amongst pamphleteers.† If he attains to it amongst the poets, it is partly due to his classical system. This oratorical form, in which Pope compresses his thought like La Bruyère, magnifies the force and swing of vehement ideas; like a narrow and straight canal, it collects and dashes them down its slope; there is then nothing which their impetus does not carry away; and it is thus Lord Byron from the first, through restless criticisms, it is thus Lord Byron from the first, through restless criticisms, over jealous reputations, has made his way to the public: ‡

Thus *Childe Harold* made its way. At the first onset every one was agitated. It was more than an author who spoke; it was a man. In spite of his disavowals, it was well seen that the author was but one with his hero: he calumniated himself, but he imitated himself. He was recognized in that young, voluptuous and disgusted man, ready to weep amidst his orgies, who

“ ‘Sore sick at heart,  
And from his fellow bacchanals would flee;  
'Tis said, at times the sullen tear would start,  
But Pride congeal'd the drop within his ee:  
Apart he stalk'd in joyless reverie,  
And from his native land resolved to go,

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\* “All the styles of the day are bombastic. I don't except my own; no one has done more through negligence to corrupt the language.”

† See his *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*.

‡ Thirty thousand copies of the *Corsair* were sold in one day.

And visit scorching climes beyond the sea ;  
With pleasure drugg'd, he almost long'd for woe.\*

Fleeing from his native land, he carried, amongst the splendors and cheerfulness of the south, his unwearied persecutor, "demon thought," implacable behind him. The scenery was recognized: it had been copied on the spot. And what was the whole book but a diary of travel? He said in it what he had seen and thought. What poetic fiction is so valuable as genuine sensation? What is more penetrating than confidence, voluntary or involuntary? Truly, every word here noted an emotion of eye or heart:

"The tender azure of the unruffled deep. . . .  
The mountain-moss by scorching skies imbrown'd. . . .  
The orange tints that gild the greenest bough."†

All these beauties, calm or imposing, he had enjoyed, and sometimes suffered through them; and hence we see them through his verse. Whatever he touched, he made palpitate and live; because, when he saw it, his heart had beaten and he had lived. He himself, a little later, quitting the mask of Harold, took up the parable in his own name; and who would not be touched by avowals so passionate and complete?

"Yet must I think less wildly:—I *have* thought  
Too long and darkly, till my brain became,  
In its own eddy boiling and o'erwrought,  
A whirling gulf of phantasy and flame:  
And thus, untaught in youth my heart to tame,  
My springs of life were poison'd. 'Tis too late!  
Yet am I changed; though still enough the same  
In strength to bear what time cannot abate,  
And feed on bitter fruits without accusing Fate. . . .

But soon he knew himself the most unfit  
Of men to herd with Man; with whom he held  
Little in common; untaught to submit  
His thoughts to others, though his soul was quell'd  
In youth by his own thoughts; still uncompell'd,  
He would not yield dominion of his mind  
To spirits against whom his own rebell'd;  
Proud though in desolation, which could find  
A life within itself, to breathe without mankind.

\* Byron's Works, viii. ; *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, c. i. 6.

† *Ibid.* c. l. 19.

Like the Chaldean, he could watch the stars,  
 Till he had peopled them with beings bright  
 As their own beams ; and earth, and earth-born jars,  
 And human frailties, were forgotten quite :  
 Could he have kept his spirit to that flight  
 He had been happy ; but this clay will sink  
 Its spark immortal, envying it the light  
 To which it mounts, as if to break the link  
 That keeps us from yon heaven which woos us to its brink.

But in Man's dwellings he became a thing  
 Restless and worn, and stern and wearisome,  
 Droop'd as a wild-born falcon with clipt wing,  
 To whom the boundless air alone were home :  
 Then came his fit again, which to o'ercome,  
 As eagerly the barr'd-up bird will beat  
 His breast and beak against his wiry dome  
 Till the blood tinge his plumage, so the heat  
 Of his impeded soul would through his bosom eat."\*

Such are the sentiments wherewith he surveyed nature and history, not to comprehend them and forget himself before them, but to seek in them and impress upon them the image of his own passions. He does not let objects speak, but forces them to answer him. Amidst their peace, he is only occupied by his own emotion. He raises them to the tone of his soul, and compels them to repeat his own cries. All is inflated here, as in himself ; the vast strophe rolls along, carrying in its overflowing bed the flood of vehement ideas ; declamation unfolds itself, pompous, and at times artificial (it was his first work), but potent, and so often sublime that the rhetorical dotings, which he yet preserved, disappeared under the afflux of splendors, with which it is loaded. Wordsworth, Walter Scott, by the side of this prodigality of accumulated splendors, seemed poor and gloomy ; never since Æschylus was seen so tragic a pomp ; and men followed, with a sort of pang, the train of gigantic figures, whom he brought in mournful ranks before our eyes, from the far past :

" I stood in Venice, on the Bridge of Sighs ;  
 A palace and a prison on each hand :  
 I saw from out the wave her structures rise  
 As from the stroke of the enchanter's wand :

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\* *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, c. iii. 7-15.

A thousand years their cloudy wings expand  
 Around me, and a dying Glory smiles  
 O'er the far times, when many a subject land  
 Look'd to the wing'd Lion's marble piles,  
 When Venice sate in state, throned on her hundred isles !

She looks a sea Cybele, fresh from ocean,  
 Rising with her tiara of proud towers  
 At airy distance, with majestic motion,  
 A ruler of the waters and their powers :  
 And such she was ;—her daughters had their dowers  
 From spoils of nations, and the exhaustless East  
 Pour'd in her lap all gems in sparkling showers.  
 In purple was she robed, and of her feast  
 Monarchs partook, and deem'd their dignity increased. . . .\*

Lo ! where the Giant on the mountain stands,  
 His blood-red tresses deep'ning in the sun,  
 With death-shot glowing in his fiery hands,  
 And eye that scorcheth all it glares upon ;  
 Restless it rolls, now fix'd, and now anon  
 Flashing afar,—and at his iron feet  
 Destruction cowers, to mark what deeds are done ;  
 For on this morn three potent nations meet,  
 To shed before his shrine the blood he deems most sweet.

By heaven ! it is a splendid sight to see  
 (For one who hath no friend, no brother there)  
 Their rival scarfs of mix'd embroidery,  
 Their various arms that glitter in the air !  
 What gallant war-hounds rouse them from their lair,  
 And gnash their fangs, loud yelling for the prey !  
 All join the chase, but few the triumph share ;  
 The Grave shall bear the chiefest prize away,  
 And Havoc scarce for joy can number their array. . . †

What from this barren being do we reap ?  
 Our senses narrow, and our reason frail,  
 Life short, and truth a gem which loves the deep,  
 And all things weigh'd in custom's falsest scale ;  
 Opinion an omnipotence,—whose veil  
 Mantles the earth with darkness, until right  
 And wrong are accidents, and men grow pale  
 Lest their own judgments should become too bright,  
 And their free thoughts be crimes, and earth have too much light.

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\* *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, c. iv. 1 and 2.

† *Ibid.* c. i. 39 and 40.

And thus they plod in sluggish misery,  
 Rotting from sire to son, and age to age,  
 Proud of their trampled nature, and so die,  
 Bequeathing their hereditary rage  
 To the new race of inborn slaves, who wage  
 War for their chains, and rather than be free,  
 Bleed gladiator-like, and still engage  
 Within the same arena where they see  
 Their fellows fall before, like leaves of the same tree." \*

Has ever style better expressed a soul? It is seen here laboring and expanding. Long and stormily the ideas boiled like metal heaped in the furnace. They melted there before the strain of the intense heat; they mingled therein their lava amidst shocks and explosions, and then at last the door is opened: a dull stream of fire descends into the trough prepared beforehand, heating the circumambient air, and its glittering hues scorch the eyes which persist in looking upon it.

Description and monologue did not suffice Byron; and he needed, to express his ideal, events and actions. Only events put to proof the force and spring of the soul; only actions manifest and measure this force and spring. Amidst events he sought for the most powerful, amidst actions the strongest; and we see appear successively *The Bride of Abydos*, *The Giaour*, *The Corsair*, *Lara*, *Parisina*, *The Siege of Corinth*, *Mazeppa*, and *The Prisoner of Chillon*.

Amongst these immoderate poems, which incessantly return and insist upon the same subject, there is one more imposing and lofty, *Manfred*, twin-brother of the greatest poem of the age, Goethe's *Faust*. Goethe says of Byron: "This singular intellectual poet has taken my Faustus to himself, and extracted from it the strongest nourishment for his hypochondriac humor. He has made use of the impelling principles in his own way, for his own purposes, so that no one of them remains the same; and it is particularly on this account that I cannot enough admire his genius." The play is indeed original. Byron writes:

"His (Goethe's) *Faust* I never read, for I don't know German; but Matthew Monk Lewis, in 1816, at Coligny, translated most of it to me *vivâ voce*, and I was naturally much struck with it; but it was the *Steinbach* and the

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\* *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, c. iv. 93 and 94.

*Jungfrau*, and something else, much more than Faustus, that made me write *Manfred*.\*”

Goethe adds: “The whole is so completely formed anew, that it would be an interesting task for the critic to point out not only the alterations he (Byron) has made, but their degree of resemblance with, or dissimilarity to, the original.” Let us speak of it, then, at leisure: the subject here is the dominant idea of the age, expressed so as to display the contrast of two masters and of two nations.

What constitutes Goethe’s glory is, that in the nineteenth century he could produce an epic poem—I mean a poem in which genuine gods act and speak. This appeared impossible in the nineteenth century, since the special work of our age is the refined consideration of creative ideas, and the suppression of the poetic characters by which other ages have never failed to represent them. Of the two divine families, the Greek and the Christian, neither seemed capable of reëntering the epic world. Classic literature had dragged down in its fall the mythological puppets, and the old gods slept on their old Olympus, whither history and archæology alone might go and arouse them. The angels and saints of the Middle-age, as strange and almost as distant, were asleep on the vellum of their missals and in the niches of their cathedrals; and if a poet, like Chateaubriand, tried to make them enter the modern world, he succeeded only in degrading them to the functions of vestry decorations and operatic machinery. The mythic credulity had disappeared in the growth of experience, the mystic in the growth of prosperity. Paganism, at the contact of science, was reduced to the recognition of natural forces; Christianity, at the contact of morality, was reduced to the adoration of the ideal. In order again to deify physical powers, man should have become once more a healthy child, as in Homer’s time. In order again to deify spiritual powers, man must have become once more a sickly child, as in Dante’s time. But he was an adult, and could not remount to the civilizations, or the epics, from which the current of his thought and his existence had withdrawn him forever. How show him his gods, the modern gods? how reclothe them for him in a

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\* Byron’s Works, iv. 321; Letter to Mr. Murray, Ravenna, June 7, 1820.

personal and sensible form, since it was precisely of all personal and sensible form that he had toiled and succeeded in despoiling them? Instead of rejecting legend, Goethe resumed it. He chose a mediæval story for his theme. Carefully, scrupulously he followed the track of the old manners and the old beliefs: an alchemist's laboratory, a sorcerer's conjuring book, coarse villagers, students' or drunkards' gayety, a witches' meeting on the Brocken, mass in the church; you might fancy you saw an engraving of Luther's time, conscientious and minute: nothing is omitted. Heavenly characters appear in consecrated attitudes, after the text of Scripture, like the old mysteries: the Lord with his angels, then with the devil, who comes to ask permission to tempt Faust, as formerly he tempted Job; heaven, as St. Francis imagined it and Van Eyck painted it, with anchorites, holy women and doctors—some in a landscape with blue-grey rocks, others above in the sublime air, about the glorious Virgin, region beyond region, hovering in choirs. Goethe pushes the affectation of orthodoxy so far as to write under each his Latin name, and his due niche in the Vulgate.\* And this very fidelity proclaims him a sceptic. We see that if he resuscitates the ancient world, it is as a historian, not as a believer. He is only a Christian through remembrance and poetic feeling. In him the modern spirit overflows designedly the narrow vessel into which he designedly seems to enclose it. The thinker penetrates through the narrator. At every instant a calculated word, which seems involuntary, opens up beyond the veils of tradition, glimpses of philosophy. Who are they, these supernaturals—this god, this Mephistopheles, these angels? Their substance incessantly dissolves and re-forms, to show or hide alternately the idea which fills it. Are they abstractions or characters? Mephistopheles, revolutionary and philosopher, who has read *Candide*, and cynically jeers at the Powers—is he anything but the “spirit of negation?”

The angels

“Rejoice to share  
The wealth exuberant of all that's fair,  
Which lives, and has its being everywhere!

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\* *Magna peccatrix*, S. Lucae, vii. 36; *Mulier Samaritana*, S. Johannis, iv.; *Maria Ægyptiaca* (Acta Sanctorum), etc.



And the creative essence which surrounds,  
 And lives in all, and worketh evermore,  
 Encompass . . . within love's gracious bounds;  
 And all the world of things, which flit before  
 The gaze in seeming fitful and obscure,  
 Do . . . in lasting thoughts embody and secure." \*

Are these angels, for an instant at least, any thing else than the ideal intelligence which comes, through sympathy, to love all, and through ideas to comprehend all? What shall we say of this Deity, at first biblical and individual, who little by little is unshaped, vanishes, and, sinking to the depths, behind the splendors of living nature and mystic reverie, is confused with the inaccessible absolute? Thus is the whole poem unfolded, action and characters, men and gods, antiquity and Middle-age, aggregate and details, always on the limits of two worlds—one sensitive and figurative, the other intelligible and formless; one comprehending the moving externals of history or of life, and all that hued and perfumed bloom which nature lavishes on the surface of existence, the other containing the profound generative powers and invisible fixed laws by which all these living beings come to the light of day.† At last see them, our gods: we no longer parody them, like our ancestors, by idols or persons; we perceive them as they are in themselves, and we need not for this renounce poetry, nor break with the past. We remain on our knees before the shrines where men have prayed for three thousand years; we do not tear a single rose from the chaplets with which they have crowned their divine Madonnas; we do not extinguish a single candle which they have crowded on the altar steps; we behold with an artist's pleasure the precious shrines where, amidst the wrought candlesticks, the suns of diamonds, the gorgeous copes, they have scattered the purest treasures of their genius and their heart. But our thought pierces further than our eyes. For us, at certain moments, these draperies, this marble, all this pomp vacillates; it is no longer aught but beautiful phantoms; it is dispersed in the smoke, and we discover through it and behind it the impalpable ideal, which has set up these

\* Goethe's *Faust*, translated by Theodore Martin. *Prologue in Heaven*.

† Goethe sings: "Wer ruft das Einzelne zur allgemeinen Weihe  
 Wo es in herrlichen Accorden schlägt?"

pillars, lighted these roofs, and hovered for centuries over the kneeling multitude.

To understand the legend and also to understand life, is the object of this work, and of the whole work of Goethe. Every thing, brute or rational, vile or sublime, fantastic or tangible, is a group of powers, of which our mind, through study and sympathy, may reproduce in itself the elements and the disposition. Let us reproduce it, and give it in our thought a new existence. Is a gossip like Martha, babbling and foolish—a drunkard like Frosch, brawling and dirty, and the rest of the Dutch boors—unworthy to enter a picture? Even the female apes, and the apes who sit beside the cauldron, watching that it does not boil over, with their hoarse cries and disordered fancies, may repay the trouble of art in restoring them. Wherever there is life, even bestial or maniacal, there is beauty. The more we look upon nature, the more we find it divine—divine even in rocks and plants. Consider these forests, they seem motionless; but the leaves breathe, and the sap mounts insensibly through the massive trunks and branches, to the slender shoots stretched like fingers at the end of the twigs; it fills the swollen ducts, leaks out in living forms, loads the frail aments with fecund dust, spreads profusely through the air which ferments the vapors and odors: this luminous air, this dome of verdure, this long colonnade of trunks of trees, this silent soil, labor and are transformed; they accomplish a work, and the poet's heart has but to listen to them to find a voice for their obscure instincts. They speak in his heart; still better, they sing, and other beings do the same; each, by its distinct melody, short or long, strange or simple, alone adapted to its nature, capable of manifesting it fully, like a sound, by its pitch, its height, its force, manifests the inner bodily structure, which has produced it. This melody the poet respects; he avoids altering it by the confusion of its ideas or accent; his whole care is to keep it intact and pure. Thus is his work produced, an echo of universal nature, a vast chorus in which gods, men, past, present, all periods of history, all conditions of life, all orders of existence agree without confusion, and in which the flexible genius of the musician, who is alternately transformed into each of them to interpret and comprehend them, only bears witness to his own thought in giving an insight, beyond this immense har-

mony, into the group of ideal laws whence it is derived, and the inner reason which sustains it.

Beside this lofty conception, what is the supernatural part of Manfred? Doubtless Byron is moved by the great things of nature; he leaves the Alps; he has seen those glaciers which are like "a frozen hurricane,"—those "torrents which roll the sheeted silver's waving column o'er the crag's headlong perpendicular, like the pale courser's tail, as told in the Apocalypse,"—but he has brought nothing from them but images. His witch, his spirits, his Arimanes, are but stage gods. He believes in them no more than we do. It is wholly otherwise with genuine gods: we must believe them; we must, like Goethe, have assisted long at their birth, like philosophers and scholars; we must have seen of them more than their externals. He who, whilst continuing a poet, becomes a naturalist and geologist, who has followed in the fissures of the rocks the tortuous waters slowly distilled, and driven at length by their own weight to the light, may ask himself, as the Greeks did formerly, when they saw them roll and sparkle in their emerald tints, what they might be thinking, whether they thought. What a strange life is theirs, alternately at rest and in violence! How far removed from ours! With what effort must we tear ourselves from our old and complicated passions, to comprehend the divine youth and simplicity of a being enfranchised from reflection and form! How difficult is such a work for a modern man! Shelley, Keats approached it,—thanks to the nervous delicacy of their overflowing imagination; but how partial still was this approach! And how we feel, on reading them, that they would have needed the aid of public culture, and the aptitude of national genius, which Goethe possessed! That which the whole of civilization has alone developed in the Englishman, is energetic will and practical faculties. Here man has braced himself up in his efforts, become concentrated in resistance, fond of action, and hence shut out from pure speculation, from wavering sympathy, and from disinterested art. In him metaphysical liberty has perished under utilitarian pre-occupation, and pantheistic reverie under moral prejudices. How would he frame to bend his imagination so as to pursue the numberless and fugitive outlines of existences, especially of vague existences? How would he frame to leave his relig-

ion so as to reproduce indifferently the powers of indifferent nature? And who is further from flexibility and indifference than he? The flowing water, which in Goethe takes the mould of all the contours of the earth, and which we perceive in the sinuous and luminous distance beneath the golden mist which it exhales, was in Byron suddenly struck into a mass of ice, and makes but a rigid block of crystal. Here, as elsewhere, there is but one character, the same as before. Men, gods, nature, all the changing and multiplex world of Goethe, has vanished. The poet alone subsists, as expressed in his character. Inevitably imprisoned within himself, he could see nothing but himself; if he must come to other existences, it is that they may reply to him; and through this pretended epic he persisted in his eternal monologue.

But again, how all these powers, assembled in a single being, make him great! Into what mediocrity and platitude sinks the *Faust* of Goethe, compared to *Manfred*! As soon as we cease to see humanity in this *Faust*, what does he become? Is he a hero? A sad hero, who has no other task but to speak, to fear, to study the shades of his sensations, and to walk about! His worst action is to seduce a grisette, and to go and dance by night in bad company—two exploits which many a German student has accomplished. His wilfulness is whims, his ideas are longings and dreams. A poet's soul in a scholar's head, both unfit for action, and according ill together; discord within, and weakness without; in short, character is wanting; it is the German character. By the side of Goethe's *Faust* what a man is *Manfred*! He is a man; there is no finer word, or one which could depict him better. He will not, at the sight of a spirit, "quake like a crawling, cowering, timorous worm." He will not regret that "he has neither land, nor pence, nor worldly honors, nor influence." He will not let himself be duped by the devil like a schoolboy, or go and amuse himself like a cockney with the phantasmagoria of the Brocken. He has lived like a feudal chief, not like a scholar who has taken his degree; he has fought, mastered others; he knows how to master himself. If he is forced into magic arts, it is not from an alchemist's curiosity, but from a spirit of revolt:

"From my youth upwards,  
My spirit walk'd not with the souls of men,

Nor look'd upon the earth with human eyes ;  
 The thirst of their ambition was not mine,  
 The aim of their existence was not mine ;  
 My joys, my griefs, my passions, and my powers  
 Made me a stranger ; though I wore the form,  
 I had no sympathy with breathing flesh. . . .  
 My joy was in the Wilderness, to breathe  
 The difficult air of the iced mountain's top,  
 Where the birds dare not build, nor insect's wing  
 Flit o'er the herbless granite, or to plunge  
 Into the torrent, and to roll along  
 On the swift whirl of the new breaking wave. . . .  
 To follow through the night the moving moon,  
 The stars and their development ; or catch  
 The dazzling lightnings till my eyes grew dim ;  
 Or to look, list'ning, on the scatter'd leaves,  
 While Autumn winds were at their evening song.  
 These were my pastimes, and to be alone ;  
 For if the beings, of whom I was one,—  
 Hating to be so,—cross'd me in my path,  
 I felt myself degraded back to them,  
 And was all clay again. . . . \*  
 I could not tame my nature down ; for he  
 Must serve who fain would sway—and soothe—and suc—  
 And watch all time—and pry into all place—  
 And be a living lie—who would become  
 A mighty thing amongst the mean, and such  
 The mass are ; I disdain'd to mingle with  
 A herd, though to be leader—and of wolves. . . . †

He lives alone, and he cannot live alone. The deep source of love, cut off from its natural issues, then overflows and lays waste the heart which refused to expand. He has loved, too well, too near to him, his sister it may be ; she has died of it, and impotent remorse has come to fill the soul which no human occupation could satisfy :

“ . . . My solitude is solitude no more,  
 But peopled with the Furies ;—I have gnash'd  
 My teeth in darkness till returning morn,  
 Then cursed myself till sunset ;—I have pray'd  
 For madness as a blessing—'tis denied me.  
 I have affronted death—but in the war  
 Of elements the waters shrunk from me,

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\* Byron's Works, xi. ; *Manfred*, ii. 2, 32.

† *Ibid.* ; *Manfred*, ii. 1. 56

And fatal things pass'd harmless—the cold hand  
 Of an all-pitiless demon held me back,  
 Back by a single hair, which would not break.  
 In fantasy, imagination, all  
 The affluence of my soul. . . . I plunged deep,  
 But, like an ebbing wave, it dashed me back  
 Into the gulf of my unfathom'd thought. . . .  
 I dwell in my despair,  
 And live, and live for ever.”\*

Let him see her once more : to this sole and all-powerful desire flow all the energies of his soul. He calls her up in the midst of spirits ; she appears, but answers not. He prays to her—with what cries, what grievous cries of deep anguish ! How he loves ! With what yearning and effort all his downtrodden and outcrushed tenderness gushes out and escapes at the sight of those well-beloved eyes, which he sees for the last time ! With what enthusiasm his convulsive arms are stretched towards that frail form which, shuddering, has quitted the tomb !—towards those cheeks in which the blood, forcibly recalled, plants “a strange hectic—like the unnatural red which Autumn plants upon the perish'd leaf.”

“. . . Hear me, hear me—  
 Astarte ! my beloved ! speak to me :  
 I have so much endured—so much endure—  
 Look on me ! the grave hath not changed thee more  
 Than I am changed for thee. Thou lovedst me  
 Too much, as I loved thee : we were not made  
 To torture thus each other, though it were  
 The deadliest sin to love as we have loved.  
 Say that thou loath'st me not—that I do bear  
 This punishment for both—that thou wilt be  
 One of the blessed—and that I shall die ;  
 For hitherto all hateful things conspire  
 To bind me in existence—in a life  
 Which makes me shrink from immortality—  
 A future like the past. I cannot rest.  
 I know not what I ask, nor what I seek :  
 I feel but what thou art—and what I am ;  
 And I would hear yet once before I perish  
 The voice which was my music—Speak to me !  
 For I have call'd on thee in the still night,  
 Startled the slumbering birds from the hush'd boughs,

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\* Byron's Works, xi. ; *Manfred*, ii. 2. 35.

And woke the mountain wolves, and made the caves  
 Acquainted with thy vainly echoed name,  
 Which answer'd me—many things answer'd me—  
 Spirits and men—but thou wert silent all. . . .  
 Speak to me ! I have wander'd o'er the earth,  
 And never found thy likeness—Speak to me !  
 Look on the fiends around—they feel for me :  
 I fear them not, and feel for thee alone—  
 Speak to me ! though it be in wrath ;—but say—  
 I reckon not what—but let me hear thee once—  
 This once—once more !”\*

She speaks. What a sad and doubtful reply ! and convulsions spread through Manfred's limbs when she disappears. But an instant after the spirit sees that

“ . . . He mastereth himself, and makes  
 His torture tributary to his will.  
 Had he been of us, he would have made  
 An awful spirit.”†

Will is the unshaken basis of this soul. He did not bend before the chief of the spirits ; he stood firm and calm before the infernal throne, under the rage of all the demons who would tear him to pieces : now that he dies, and they assail him, he still strives and conquers :

“ . . . Thou hast no power upon me, *that* I feel ;  
 Thou never shalt possess me, *that* I know ;  
 What I have done is done ; I bear within  
 A torture which could nothing gain from thine :  
 The mind which is immortal makes itself  
 Requit for its good or evil thoughts—  
 Is its own origin of ill and end—  
 And its own place and time—its innate sense,  
 When stripp'd of this mortality, derives  
 No color from the fleeting things without ;  
 But is absorb'd in sufferance or in joy,  
 Born from the knowledge of its own desert.  
*Thou* didst not tempt me, and thou couldst not tempt me ;  
 I have not been thy dupe, nor am thy prey—  
 But was my own destroyer, and will be  
 My own hereafter.—Back, ye baffled fiends !  
 The hand of death is on me—but not yours !”‡

This “ I,” the invincible I, who suffices to himself, whom noth-

\* Byron's Works, xi. ; *Manfred*, ii. 4. 47.

† *Ibid.* ii. 4-49.

‡ *Ibid.* iii. 4. 70.

ing can hold, demons nor men, the sole author of his own good and ill, a sort of suffering or fallen god, but god always, even in its torn flesh, through the mire and bruises of all his destinies,—such is the hero and the work of this mind, and of the men of his race. If Goethe was the poet of the *universe*, Byron was the poet of the *individual*; and if in one the German genius found its interpreter, the English genius found its interpreter in the other.

We can well imagine that Englishmen clamored, and repudiated the monster. Southey, poet-laureate, said of him, in a fine biblical style, that he savored of Moloch and Belial—most of all, of Satan; and, with the generosity of a fellow-literary man, called the attention of Government to him. Opinion backed the press. Several times, in Italy, Lord Byron saw gentlemen leave a drawing-room with their wives, when he was announced. Owing to his title and celebrity, the scandal which he caused was more prominent than any other: he was a public sinner.

Thereupon he went in search of a hero, and did not find one, which, in this age of heroes, is “an uncommon want.” For lack of a better he chose “our ancient friend Don Juan,”—a scandalous choice: what an outcry the English moralists will make! But, to cap the horror, this Don Juan is not wicked, selfish, odious, like his fellows; he does not seduce, he is no corrupter. When the occasion rises, he lets himself drift; he has a heart and senses, and, under a beautiful sun, all this feels itself drawn out: at sixteen a youth cannot help himself, nor at twenty, nor perhaps at thirty. Lay it to the charge of human nature, my dear novelists; it is not I who made it as it is. If you will grumble, address yourselves higher: here we are painters, not makers of human puppets, and we do not answer for the structure of our dancing-dolls. Look, then, at our Juan as he goes along; he goes about in many places, and in all he is young; we will not strike him with thunder, therefore; that fashion is past: the green devils and their capers only come on the stage in the last act of Mozart. And, moreover, Juan is so amiable! After all, what has he done that others don't do? If he has been a lover of Catherine II., he only followed the lead of the diplomatic corps and the whole Russian army. Let him sow his wild oats; the good grain will spring up in its time.



Once in England, he will behave himself decently. I confess that he may even there, when provoked, go to a gleaning in the conjugal gardens of the aristocracy ; but in the end he will settle, go and pronounce moral speeches in Parliament, become a member of the Society for the Suppression of Vice. If you wish absolutely to have him punished, we will make him end in hell, or in an unhappy marriage, not knowing which would be the severest. The Spanish tradition says hell ; but it probably is only an allegory of the other state. \*

At all events, married or damned, the good folk at the end of the piece will have the pleasure of knowing that he is burning all alive.

To write so, to live so, a man must be great, but he must also become deranged. There is a derangement of heart and mind in the style of *Don Juan*, as in Swift. When a man jests amidst his tears, it is because he has a poisoned imagination. This kind of laughter is a spasm, and you see in one man a hardening of the heart, or madness ; in another, excitement or disgust. Byron was exhausted, at least the poet was exhausted in him. The last cantos of *Don Juan* drag : the gayety became forced, the escapades became digressions ; the reader began to be bored. A new kind of poetry, which he had attempted, had given way in his hands : in the drama he only attained to powerful declamation, his characters had no life ; when he forsook poetry, poetry forsook him ; he went to Greece in search of action, and only found death.

§ 55.—So lived and so ended this unhappy great man ; the malady of the age had no more distinguished prey. Around him, like a hecatomb, lie the rest, wounded also by the greatness of their faculties and their immoderate desires,—some extinguished in stupor or drunkenness, others worn out by pleasure or work ; these driven to madness or suicide ; those beaten down by impotence, or lying on a sick-bed ; all agitated by their acute or aching nerves ; the strongest carrying their bleeding wound to old age, the happiest having suffered as much as the rest, and preserving their scars, though healed. The concert of their lamentations has filled their age, and we have stood around them, hearing in our hearts the low echo of their

\* Byron's Works, v. 127 ; Letter to Mr. Murray, Ravenna, Feb. 16, 1821.

cries. We were sad like them, and like them inclined to revolt. The institution of democracy excited our ambitions without satisfying them; the proclamation of philosophy kindled our curiosity without contenting it. In this wide-open career, the plebeian suffered for his mediocrity, and the sceptic for his doubt. The plebeian, like the sceptic, attacked by a precocious melancholy, and withered by a premature experience, delivered his sympathies and his conduct to the poets, who declared happiness impossible, truth unattainable, society ill-arranged, man abortive or marred. From this unison of voices an idea sprang, the centre of the literature, the arts, the religion of the age,—that there is, namely, a monstrous disproportion between the different parts of our social structure, and that human destiny is vitiated by this disagreement.

What advice have they given us for its remedy? They were great; were they wise? "Let deep and strong sensations rain upon you; if your machine breaks, so much the worse!" "Cultivate your garden, bury yourself in a little circle, re-enter the flock, be a beast of burden." "Turn believer again, take holy water, abandon your mind to dogmas, and your conduct to handbooks." "Make your way; aspire to power, honors, wealth." Such are the various replies of artists and citizens, Christians, and men of the world. Are they replies? And what do they propose but to satiate one's self, to become beasts, to turn out of the way, to forget? There is another and a deeper answer, which Goethe was the first to give, which we begin to conceive, in which issue all the labor and experience of the age, and which may perhaps be the subject-matter of future literature: "Try to understand yourself, and things in general." A strange reply, seeming barely new, whose scope we shall only hereafter discover. For a long time yet men will feel their sympathies thrill at the sound of the sobs of their great poets. For a long time they will rage against a destiny which opens to their aspirations the career of limitless space, to shatter them, within two steps of the goal, against a wretched post which they had not seen. For a long time they will bear like fetters the necessities which they must embrace as laws. Our generation, like the preceding, has been tainted by the malady of the age, and will never more than half be quit of it. We shall arrive at truth, not at calm. All we can heal at pres-

ent is our intellect ; we have no hold upon our sentiments. But we have a right to conceive for others the hopes which we no longer entertain for ourselves, and to prepare for our descendants the happiness which we shall never enjoy. Brought up in a more wholesome air, they mayhap will have a wholesomer heart. The reformation of ideas ends by reforming the rest, and the light of the mind produces serenity of heart. Hitherto, in our judgments on men, we have taken for our masters the oracles and poets, and like them we have received for certain truths the noble dreams of our imagination and the imperious suggestions of our heart. We have bound ourselves to the partiality of religious divinations, and the inexactness of literary divinations, and we have shaped our doctrines by our instincts and our vexations. Science at last approaches, and approaches man ; it has gone beyond the visible and palpable world of stars, stones, plants, amongst which man disdainfully confined her. It reaches the heart, provided with exact and penetrating implements, whose justness has been proved, and their reach measured by three hundred years of experience. Thought, with its development and rank, its structure and relations, its deep material roots, its infinite growth through history, its lofty bloom at the summit of things, becomes the object of science,—an object which, sixty years ago, it foresaw in Germany, and which, slowly and surely probed, by the same methods as the physical world, will be transformed before our eyes, as the physical world has been transformed. It is already being transformed, and we have left behind us the point of view of Byron and our poets. No, man is not an abortion or a monster ; no, the business of poetry is not to revolt or defame him. He is in his place, and completes a chain. Let us watch him grow and increase, and we shall cease to rail at or curse him. He, like everything else, is a product, and as such it is right he should be what he is. His innate imperfection is in order, like the constant abortion of a stamen in a plant, like the fundamental irregularity of four facets in a crystal. What we took for a deformity, is a form ; what seemed to us the contradiction, is the accomplishment of a law. Human reason and virtue have as their elements animal instincts and images, as living forms have for theirs physical laws, as organic matters have for theirs mineral substances. What wonder if virtue or rea-

son, like living form or organic matter, sometimes fails or decomposes, since like them, and like every superior and complex existence, they have for support and control inferior and simple forces, which, according to circumstances, now maintain it by their harmony, now mar it by their discord? What wonder if the elements of existence, like those of quantity, receive, from their very nature, the irresistible laws which constrain and reduce them to a certain species and order of formation? Who will rise up against geometry? Who, especially, will rise up against a living geometry? Who will not, on the other hand, feel moved with admiration at the sight of those grand powers which, situated at the heart of things, incessantly urge the blood through the limbs of the old world, disperse the showers in the infinite network of arteries, and spread over the whole surface the eternal flower of youth and beauty? Who, in short, will not feel himself ennobled, when he finds that this pile of laws results in a regular series of forms, that matter has thought for its goal, and that this ideal from which, through so many errors, all the aspirations of men depend, is also the centre whereto converge, through so many obstacles, all the forces of the universe? In this employment of science, and in this conception of things, there is a new art, a new morality, a new polity, a new religion, and it is in the present time our task to discover them.

THE END.





# A CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

OF THE PRINCIPAL AUTHORS AND WORKS IN ENGLISH

LITERATURE—FROM CÆDMON TO BYRON.

|          |                                       |  |   |
|----------|---------------------------------------|--|---|
| SAXONS.  | 449                                   | [Settlement of Saxons in England.]   | [Battle of Châlons. 451.]                 |
|          | 547                                   |  |   |
|          | 675                                   | Cædmon's <i>Paraphrase</i> .   |   |
|          | 700                                   | Adhelm. <i>Praise of Virginity</i> .   |   |
|          | 731                                   | Beda (679-735). <i>Ecclesiastical History</i> .                                  | [Arab conquest of Spain, 711.]            |
|          | 850                                   |  |   |
|          | 854                                   | John Scotus Erigena. <i>Div. of Nature</i> .                                     | [Charlemagne emperor, 800.]               |
|          | 875                                   | King Alfred (reigned 871-901).<br><i>Translations of Boethius, Orosius, etc.</i> |   |
|          | 910                                   | Asser. <i>Life of Alfred</i> .   | [Settlement of Normans in Neustria, 911.] |
| 937      | <i>Poem on Battle of Brunanburh</i> . |  |   |
| 975      | Ælfric. <i>Homilies</i> .             |  |   |
| NORMANS. | 1083                                  | Marianus Scotus. <i>History</i> .  |   |
|          | 1100                                  | Ordericus Vitalis (1075-1142). <i>Eccles. Hist. of England and Normandy</i> .    | <i>Chanson de Roland</i> , circ. 1070.    |
|          |                                       | William of Malmesbury (1095-1142?). <i>History of Kings of England</i> .         | Villehardouin, 1160-1213.                 |
|          | 1140                                  | Geoffrey of Monmouth. <i>History of the Britons</i> .                            | Hartman von der Aue, 1169-1211.           |
|          | 1155                                  | Wace (d. 1184?). <i>Brut</i> .   |   |
|          | 1170                                  | Wace. <i>Roman de Rou</i> .  |   |
|          | 1165                                  | Walter Map (1143-1205?).<br><i>Golias, Lancelot, etc.</i>                        |   |
|          | 1180                                  |  |   |

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|-------------|------|---|--|----------------------|
| NORMANS.    | 1185 | Glanville. <i>De Legibus Regni Anglie.</i>                                  | Wolfram von Eschenbach, 1200-1280.<br>Spanish poem, <i>The Cid</i> , circ. 1200. |                      |
|             | 1205 | Layamon's <i>Brut.</i>  |  |                      |
|             | 1147 | Giraldus Cambrensis.  |  |                      |
|             | 1215 |   |  |                      |
|             | 1211 | Gervase of Tilbury (1180-1225?). <i>Otia Imperialia.</i>                    |  |                      |
|             | 1205 | Nicholas of Guildford. <i>Owl and Nightingale.</i>                          |  |                      |
|             | 1215 |   |  |                      |
|             | 1175 | Robert Grosseteste.   |  |                      |
|             | 1253 | Roger of Wendover (1177?-1237). <i>Flores Historiarum.</i>                  |  |                      |
|             | 1230 |   |  |                      |
| EDWARD I.   | 1265 | Michael Scot (1222?-1291). <i>Mensa Philosophica.</i>                       | Dante, 1265-1321.  |                      |
|             | 1268 | Roger Bacon (1214-1292). <i>Opus Majus.</i>                                 |  |                      |
|             | 1273 | Matthew Paris (1220-1277?). <i>Historia Major.</i>                          |  |                      |
|             |      |   |  |                      |
| 1272        | 1290 | <i>Romance of Havelok.</i>  |  |                      |
| 1300        | 1295 | Robert of Gloucester. <i>Chronicle.</i>                                     |  |                      |
|             |      | Peter Langtoft. <i>French Metrical Chronicle of England.</i>                |  |                      |
| EDW. II.    |      |   |  |                      |
| EDWARD III. | 1327 | 1340  | Richard of Hampole (1292?-1340). <i>Ayenbite of Inwit.</i>                       | Petrarch, 1304-1374. |
|             | 1346 | Geoffrey Chaucer (1338-1400). <i>Court of Love.</i>                         |  |                      |
|             | 1348 | Chaucer's <i>Romaunt of the Rose, Troilus and Cresseide, House of Fame.</i> | Boccaccio, 1313-1375.  |                      |
|             | 1378 |   |  |                      |
|             | 1360 | Robert (?) Langlande (1326-1370?). <i>Vision of Piers Plowman.</i>          | Froissart, 1337-1410?  |                      |
|             | 1377 | John Barbour (1324?-1390). <i>Bruce.</i>                                    |  |                      |



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| 1377<br>R'D II.             | 1382<br>1400<br>1393<br>1399         | Chaucer's <i>Legende of Good Women, The Flower and the Leaf, Canterbury Tales.</i><br>John Gower (1327?-1408).<br><i>Confessio Amantis.</i>   | <i>Amadis de Gaula,</i><br>circ. 1390.                                     |
| 1399<br>HENRY IV.           |                                      |   |  |
| 1413<br>HENRY V.            | 1416<br>circ.                        | Thomas Occleve (1371-1455?).<br><i>De Regimine Principum.</i>   |  |
| 1422<br>HENRY VI.           | 1422<br>1505<br>1432<br>1450<br>1452 | <i>The Paston Letters.</i><br>John Lydgate (1369-1462).<br><i>Falls of Princes, Story of Thebes, Troy Book.</i><br>Juliana Berners (1405-1466).<br><i>Arts of Hawking and Hunting.</i>  | John Gutenberg,<br>1401-1470.<br><br>John Fust, 1403-<br>1473.             |
| 1461<br>EDWARD IV.          | 1463-9<br>1476<br>1473-8             | Sir John Fortescue (1395-1483). <i>De Laudibus Legum Angliæ.</i><br>Sir Thomas Mallory (1432-1476). <i>History of King Arthur.</i><br>William Caxton (1412-1492).<br>His press set up.<br>Fortescue's <i>Absolute and Limited Monarchy.</i> | Pulci (1432-1473), <i>Morgante Maggiore.</i><br><br>Columbus, 1436-1506.   |
| 1483<br>EDW. V.<br>R'D III. |                                      |   |  |
| 1485<br>HENRY VII.          | 1494-8<br>1502<br>1506               | John Skelton (1460-1528). <i>The Bowge of Court.</i><br>William Dunbar (1465-1530).<br><i>The Thistle and the Rose.</i><br>Stephen Hawes (1483-1514).<br><i>Pastime of Pleasure.</i>  | Bojardo (1434-1493). <i>Orlando Innamorato.</i><br><br>Erasmus, 1467-1536. |

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|-------------|--|--|--|
| HENRY VIII. | 1509   | Gavin Douglas (1474-1521).<br><i>Translation of the Æneid</i><br>[printed in 1553].  | Martin Luther,<br>1483-1546.   |
|             | 1512   | Sir Thomas More (1478-1535).<br><i>Utopia.</i>   | Raphael, 1483-<br>1520.  |
|             | 1516   |  |  |
|             | 1524   | John Bouchier, Lord Berners<br>(1474-1532). <i>Translation of</i><br><i>Froissart.</i>   | Ariosto (1474-<br>1533), <i>Orlando</i><br><i>Furioso</i> , 1516.    |
|             | 1526   | William Tyndale (1477-1535).<br><i>Translation of the New Testa-</i><br><i>ment.</i>   |  |
|             | 1528   | Sir Thomas Wyatt (1503-1542).<br><i>Poems.</i>   | Rabelais (1495-<br>1553), <i>Gargan-</i><br><i>tua</i> , etc., 1532. |
|             | 1542   |  |  |
|             | 1543   | John Fox (1517-1587). <i>Trans-</i><br><i>lation of the Bible.</i>   |  |
|             | 1534   | Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey<br>(1515-1547). <i>Songs and Son-</i><br><i>nets.</i>   |  |
|             | 1547   |  |  |
|             | 1533   | John Heywood (1506-1565?).<br><i>Play of Love, Interludes, Spi-</i><br><i>der and Fly.</i>                                       |  |
| 1558        |  |  |  |
| 1545        | Roger Ascham (1515-1568).<br><i>Toxophilus.</i>  |  |  |
| 1518        | Sir David Lindsay (1492-1557).<br>Various works. | Michael Angelo,<br>1474-1564.  |  |
| 1554        |  |  |  |
| EDW. VI.    | 1547   | Thomas Sternhold (1496-1549)<br>and John Hopkins (1504-<br>1551). <i>Psalms of David</i> ,<br>translated [completed in<br>1563]. |  |
|             | 1549   |  |  |
| MARY I.     | 1553   |  |  |
| ELIZABETH.  | 1558   | John Knox (1505-1572). <i>Mon-</i><br><i>strous Regiment of Women.</i>   | Calvin, 1509-<br>1564.   |
|             |  | 1559   | John Fox (1517-1587). <i>Mar-</i><br><i>tyrology.</i>                |
|             | 1562   | John Jewell (1522-1571). <i>Apo-</i><br><i>logia.</i>  | Camoens, 1524-<br>1579.  |
|             | 1571   | Ascham's <i>Schoolmaster.</i>  |  |



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|------------|--------|---|--|
| ELIZABETH. | 1558   | <p>Skakespeare's <i>Love's Labour's Lost</i>, <i>K. Henry IV.</i>, pt. I.<br/> George Peele (1558-1598).<br/> <i>David and Bethsabe</i>.<br/> Shakespeare's <i>Passionate Pilgrim</i>.<br/> Ben Jonson (1574-1637). <i>Every Man out of his Humour</i>.<br/> Thomas Heywood (1580-1653).<br/> <i>Edward IV</i>.<br/> Lyly's <i>Maid's Metamorphosis</i>.<br/> Shakespeare's <i>K. Henry IV.</i>, pt. II., <i>K. Henry V.</i>, <i>Merchant of Venice</i>, <i>Midsummer Night's Dream</i>, <i>Much Ado About Nothing</i>, <i>Titus Andronicus</i>.<br/> Lyly's <i>Love's Metamorphosis</i>.<br/> Greene's <i>Penelope's Web</i>.<br/> Ben Jonson's <i>Cynthia's Revels</i>.<br/> <i>Every Man in his Humour</i>.<br/> Shakespeare's <i>Merry Wives of Windsor</i>, <i>Hamlet</i>.</p> | <p>Cervantes, 1547-1616. <i>Don Quijote</i>, pt. I., 1606; pt. II., 1616.<br/><br/> Malherbe, 1555-1628.</p> |
|            | 1603   |   |  |
|            | 1604   |   |  |
|            | 1605   |   |  |
|            | 1606   |   |  |
|            | 1607   |   |  |
| JAMES I.   | 1608-9 | <p>King James's <i>Counterblast to Tobacco</i>.<br/> Marlowe's <i>Faustus</i>.<br/> Bacon's <i>Advancement of Learning</i>.<br/> Marston's <i>Sophonisba</i>.<br/> Ben Jonson's <i>Sejanus</i>.<br/> John Ford (1586-1639). <i>Fame's Memorial</i>.<br/> Francis Beaumont (1586-1616) and John Fletcher (1576-1625). <i>The Woman Hater</i>.<br/> Shakespeare's <i>King Lear</i>, <i>Sonnets</i>, <i>Troilus and Cressida</i>, <i>Pericles</i>.<br/> Bacon's <i>Wisdom of the Ancients</i>.<br/> George Chapman (1557-1634).<br/> <i>Translation of the Iliad</i>.<br/> Ben Jonson's <i>Catiline</i>, <i>The Alchemist</i>.<br/> Marston's <i>Insatiate Countess</i>.<br/> Michael Drayton (1563-1631).<br/> <i>Polyolbion</i>.</p>   | <p>Gongora, 1561-1627.<br/><br/> Lope de Vega, 1562-1635.</p>  |
|            | 1611   |   |  |
|            | 1612   |   |  |
|            | 1613   |   |  |

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|----------|----------|---|---------------------|------|--|--|
| JAMES I. | 1603     | Thomas Middleton (1574-circ. 1630). <i>Triumphs of Truth</i> .<br>Sir Walter Raleigh (1552-1618). <i>History of the World</i> .<br>Chapman's <i>Translation of the Odyssey</i> .<br>Beaumont and Fletcher's <i>Scornful Lady</i> .<br>Heywood's <i>Woman Killed with Kindness</i> .<br>Chapman's <i>Translation of Hesiod's Georgics</i> .<br>Thomas Dekker (1574-1641). <i>The Owl's Almanac</i> .<br>Chapman's <i>Two Wise Men and all the Rest Fools</i> .<br>Beaumont and Fletcher's <i>King and no King, Maid's Tragedy</i> .<br>Bacon's <i>Novum Organum</i> .<br>Ben Jonson's <i>Masque of Augurs</i> .<br>Beaumont and Fletcher's <i>Thierry and Theodoret, Faithful Shepherdess</i> .<br>Robert Burton (1576-1640). <i>Anatomy of Melancholy</i> .<br>Shakespeare's <i>Othello</i> .<br>Philip Massinger (1584-1640). <i>The Virgin Martyr</i> .<br>Massinger's <i>Duke of Milan</i> .<br>John Webster (1580-1654). <i>Duchess of Malfi</i> .<br>Bacon's <i>History of King Henry VII</i> . First Folio of Shakespeare's Plays.<br>Edward, Lord Herbert of Cherbury (1580-1648). <i>De Veritate</i> .<br>Purchas <i>his Pilgrimes</i> .<br>Ben Jonson's <i>Fortunate Isles</i> . | Grotius, 1583-1645. |      |  |  |
|          | 1614     |   |                     |      |  |  |
|          | 1615     |   |                     |      |  |  |
|          | 1616     |   |                     |      |  |  |
|          | 1617     |   |                     |      |  |  |
|          | 1618     |   |                     |      |  |  |
|          | 1619     |   |                     |      |  |  |
|          | 1620     |   |                     |      |  |  |
|          | 1621     |   |                     |      |  |  |
|          | 1622     |   |                     |      |  |  |
|          | 1623     |   |                     |      |  |  |
|          | 1624     |   |                     |      |  |  |
|          | CHAS. I. |   |                     | 1625 | Chapman's <i>Crowne of Homer's Works</i> .                       |  |
|          |          |   |                     | 1627 | Sir Henry Spelman (1562-1642). <i>Glossarium Archæologicum</i> . |  |

|            |      |  |   |                               |
|------------|------|--|---|-------------------------------|
| CHARLES I. | 1625 | 1627   | Bacon's <i>Sylva Sylvarum</i> .                                     | Descartes, 1596-1650.         |
|            |      | 1628   | William Harvey (1578-1659).<br><i>De Motu Cordis et Sanguinis</i> . |                               |
|            |      | 1629   | Owen Feltham's <i>Resolves</i> .                                    |                               |
|            |      | 1630   | Ford's <i>Lover's Melancholy</i> .                                  |                               |
|            |      |  | Ben Jonson's <i>New Inn</i> .                                       |                               |
|            |      |  | George Herbert (1593-1633).<br><i>The Temple</i> .                  |                               |
|            |      | 1631   | Shakespeare's <i>Taming of the Shrew</i> .                          |                               |
|            |      |  | Chapman's <i>Cæsar and Pompey</i> .                                 |                               |
|            |      |  | John Selden (1584-1654). <i>Titles of Honour</i> .                  |                               |
|            |      | 1632   | Massinger's <i>Fatal Dowry, Maid of Honour</i> .                    |                               |
|            |      |  | John Donne (1573-1631).<br><i>Poems</i> .                           | Pascal, 1623-1662.            |
|            |      | 1633   | Ford's <i>Broken Heart, Love's Sacrifice</i> .                      |                               |
|            |      |  | Marlowe's <i>Few of Malta</i> .                                     |                               |
|            |      |  | Ford's <i>Perkin Warbeck</i> .                                      |                               |
|            |      |  | John Milton (1608-1674).<br><i>Comus</i> .                          |                               |
|            |      | 1634   | Massinger's <i>New Way to Pay Old Debts</i> .                       |                               |
|            |      |  | James Shirley (1594-1666).<br><i>Witty Fair One</i> .               |                               |
|            |      | 1635   | Francis Quarles (1592-1644).<br><i>Emblems</i> .                    |                               |
|            |      |  | Bacon's <i>New Atlantis</i> .                                       |                               |
|            |      |  | Dekker's <i>Wonder of a Kingdom</i> .                               | French Academy founded, 1636. |
|            | 1636 | Massinger's <i>Great Duke of Florence</i> .                                  |   |                               |
|            |      | William Prynne (1600-1699).<br><i>God's Judgment upon Sabbath-breakers</i> . |   |                               |
|            | 1637 | Abraham Cowley (1618-1667).<br><i>Love's Riddle</i> .                        |   |                               |
|            |      | John Wilkins (1614-1672).<br><i>World in the Moon</i> .                      |   |                               |
|            | 1638 | William Chillingworth (1602-1644). <i>Religion of Protestants</i> .          |   |                               |
|            |      | Milton's <i>Lycidas</i> .  |   |                               |
|            |      | Shirley's <i>Duke's Mistress</i> . 1639,<br><i>Maid's Revenge</i> .          |   |                               |

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| CHARLES I. | 1625 | Thomas Fuller (1608-1661).<br><i>History of the Holy War.</i>   |
|            | 1639 | Massinger's <i>Unnatural Combat</i> .<br>Ford's <i>Ladies' Trial</i> .  |
|            | 1640 | Thomas Carew (1589-1639).<br><i>Poems.</i>  |
|            | 1641 | George Wither (1588-1667).<br><i>Hallelujah.</i>  |
|            | 1642 | Milton's <i>Apology for Smectym-<br/>nuus.</i>  |
|            | 1642 | Fuller's <i>Holy and Profane State</i> .<br>Sir Thomas Browne (1605-<br>1683). <i>Religio Medici</i> .                                  |
|            | 1643 | Sir John Denham (1615-1668).<br><i>Cooper's Hill.</i>   |
|            | 1643 | Milton's <i>Doctrine and Discipline<br/>of Divorce</i> . 1644, <i>Areopagitica</i> .  |
|            | 1644 | Shirley's <i>Constant Maid</i> .<br>Selden's <i>Mare Clausum</i> .  |
|            | 1645 | Sir Kenelm Digby (1603-<br>1665). <i>On the Nature of<br/>Bodies and of Man's Soul</i> .<br>Edmund Waller (1605-1687).<br><i>Poems.</i> |
|            | 1645 | Milton's <i>Poems, both English<br/>and Latin.</i>  |
|            | 1646 | Quarles's <i>Midnight Meditations</i> .<br>James Howell's <i>Epistolæ Ho-<br/>Elianae</i> .   |
|            | 1646 | Sir John Suckling (1609-1641).<br><i>Fragmenta Aurea.</i>   |
|            | 1646 | Sir Thomas Browne on <i>Vulgar<br/>Errors</i> .<br>Shirley's <i>Triumph of Beauty</i> .   |
|            | 1647 | Jeremy Taylor (1613-1667).<br><i>Liberty of Prophesying</i> .<br>Henry More (1614-1687).<br><i>Philosophical Poems.</i>                 |
|            | 1647 | Lord Herbert. <i>De Vita Hu-<br/>mana.</i>  |
|            | 1648 | Milton's <i>Treatise of Magistracy</i> .<br>Robert Herrick (1591-1674).<br><i>Hesperides.</i>   |
|            | 1649 | John Taylor (1580-1654).<br><i>World turned upside down.</i><br><i>Icon Basiliké.</i>   |





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| CHARLES II. | 1660  | }  | 1663 | Dryden's <i>Wild Gallant, Rival Ladies.</i>  |  |
|             |   |  | 1664 | Sir George Etherege (1636-1688). <i>Love in a Tub.</i>                             |  |
|             |   |  | 1665 | Edward Stillingfleet (1635-1699). <i>Grounds of the Protestant Religion.</i>       |  |
|             |   |  |      | Bunyan's <i>Holy City.</i> [ <i>Trumpet.</i> Wither's <i>Echoes from the Sixth</i> |  |
|             |   |  | 1666 | Joseph Glanvil (1636-1680). <i>Sepsis Scientifica, Witches and Witchcraft.</i>     |  |
|             |   |  |      | Milton's <i>Paradise Lost.</i>   |  |
|             |   |  | 1667 | Dryden's <i>Indian Emperor—Secret Love,</i> 1668.                                  |  |
|             |   |  |      | Dryden's <i>Essay on Dramatic Poetry.</i>  |  |
|             |   |  | 1668 | Robert Boyle (1628-1691). <i>Sceptical Chymist.</i>                                |  |
|             |   |  |      | Etherege's <i>She Would if She Could.</i>  |  |
|             |   |  |      | Wilkins's <i>Essay towards a Real Character.</i>                                   |  |
|             |   |  |      | Dryden's <i>Tempest.</i>   |  |
|             |   |  | 1670 | Milton's <i>History of Britain.</i>  |  |
|             |   |  |      | Thomas Shadwell (1640-1692). <i>Sullen Lovers.</i>                                 |  |
|             |   |  | 1671 | Mrs. Aphra Behn (1642-1689). <i>Forced Marriage, Amorous Prince.</i>               |  |
|             |   |  |      | William Wycherley (1640-1715). <i>Love in a Wood.</i>                              |  |
|             |   |  |      | Milton's <i>Paradise Regained</i> and <i>Samson Agonistes.</i>                     |  |
|             |   |  | 1672 | Dryden's <i>Mock Astrologer.</i>   |  |
|             |   |  |      | John Tillotson (1630-1694). <i>Sermons,</i> 1671-1694.                             |  |
|             |   |  |      | George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham (1628-1684). <i>The Rehearsal.</i>             |  |
|             | Dryden's <i>Conquest of Granada</i> and <i>Tyrannic Love.</i> |  |      |  |  |
|             | 1673  | Aphra Behn's <i>Dutch Lover.</i>                       |      |  |  |
|             |   | Dryden's <i>Marriage à la Mode</i> and <i>Amboyna.</i> |      |  |  |

Spinoza, 1632-1677.

La Fontaine, 1621-1695.

Racine, 1639-1699.

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| 1660 |  | Bunyan's <i>Confession of my Faith.</i>  |                     |
| 1673 |  | Sir William Davenant (1605-1668). <i>Works.</i>  |                     |
| 1674 |  | William Penn (1644-1718). <i>The Christian Quaker.</i>   |                     |
| 1675 |  | Wycherley's <i>Country Wife.</i><br>Thomas Otway (1651-1684). <i>Alcibiades.</i>   |                     |
| 1676 |  | Dryden's <i>Aurungzebe.</i><br>Etherege's <i>Man of Mode.</i><br>Wycherley's <i>Plain Dealer.</i>  |                     |
| 1677 |  | Sir Charles Sedley (1639-1701). <i>Antony and Cleopatra.</i><br>Andrew Marvell (1620-1678). <i>Account of the Growth of Popery.</i>  | Bossuet, 1627-1704. |
| 1678 |  | Ralph Cudworth (1617-1688). <i>True Intellectual System of the Universe.</i><br>Bunyan's <i>Pilgrim's Progress</i> , part I.<br>Dryden's <i>All for Love.</i><br>Butler's <i>Hudibras</i> , part III.<br>Otway's <i>Don Carlos.</i><br>Gilbert Burnet (1642-1715). <i>History of the Reformation in England</i> , 1679-1715. | Boileau, 1636-1711. |
| 1679 |  | Dryden's <i>Troilus and Cressida.</i><br>John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester (1647-1680). <i>Poems.</i>   |                     |
| 1680 |  | Thomas Sydenham (1624-1689). <i>On Epidemic Diseases.</i><br>Otway's <i>Orphan and Caius Marius.</i>   |                     |
| 1681 |  | Dryden's <i>Absalom and Achitophel</i> , and <i>Spanish Friar.</i><br>Bunyan's <i>Holy War.</i>  |                     |
| 1682 |  | Shadwell's <i>Lancashire Witches.</i><br>Otway's <i>Soldier's Fortune</i> and <i>Venice Preserved.</i>   |                     |
| 1683 |  | Isaac Barrow (1630-1677). <i>Works</i> , collected by Tillotson.   |                     |
| 1684 |  | Bunyan's <i>Pilgrim's Progress</i> , part II.  |                     |

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| 1685   | JAMES II.  | 1686                             | John Ray (1628-1705). <i>Historia Plantarum.</i>                                   | Bayle, 1647-1706.   |
|  |  |                                  | Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1727). <i>Philosophiæ Naturalis Principia Mathematica.</i>  |                     |
|  |  | 1687                             | Charles Montague, Earl of Halifax (1661-1715). <i>Country Mouse and City Mouse</i> |                     |
|  |  |                                  | Dryden's <i>Hind and Panther</i> and <i>Saint Cecilia's Day.</i>                   |                     |
| 1688   |  | Bunyan's <i>Barren Fig-tree.</i> |  |                     |
| 1688   | WILLIAM III. AND MARY II.                                    | 1689                             | John Locke (1632-1704). <i>On Toleration, Essay on Human Understanding.</i>        | Fénélon, 1651-1715. |
|  |  |                                  | 1690   |                     |
|  |  | 1691                             | Anthony Wood (1632-1695). <i>Athene Oxonienses.</i>                                |                     |
|  |  |                                  | Dryden's <i>King Arthur.</i>   |                     |
|  |  |                                  | Baxter's <i>Certainty of the World of Spirits.</i>                                 |                     |
|  |  | 1692                             | Robert South (1633-1716). <i>Sermons.</i>  |                     |
|  |  |                                  | Dryden's <i>Cleomenes.</i>   |                     |
|  |  |                                  | Sir William Temple (1628-1698). <i>Essay on Ancient and Modern Learning.</i>       |                     |
|  |  | 1693                             | William Congreve (1670-1729). <i>Old Bachelor.</i>                                 |                     |
|  |  |                                  | Locke <i>On Education.</i>   |                     |
|  |  |                                  | Thomas Southerne (1659-1746). <i>Fatal Marriage.</i>                               |                     |
|  |  | 1694                             | Dryden's <i>Love Triumphant.</i>   |                     |
|  |  |                                  | Congreve's <i>Double Dealer, Love for Love,</i> 1695.                              |                     |
|  |  |                                  | John Denis (1657-1734). <i>Court of Death.</i>                                     |                     |
|  |  | 1695                             | Locke's <i>Reasonableness of Christianity.</i>                                     |                     |
| Colley Cibber (1671-1757). <i>Love's Last Shift.</i> |  |                                  |  |                     |
| 1696   | William Whiston (1667-1752). <i>New Theory of the Earth.</i> |                                  |  |                     |

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| WILLIAM III. AND MARY II. | 1688  | Humphrey Prideaux (1648-1724). <i>Life of Mahomet</i> .<br>Algernon Sidney (1617-1683).<br><i>Discourses concerning Government</i> .  |  |                      |
|                           | 1697  | Sir John Vanbrugh (1666-1726). <i>Relapse</i> .<br>Congreve's <i>Mourning Bride</i> .<br>Dryden's <i>Translation of Virgil and Alexander's Feast</i> .<br>Cibber's <i>Woman's Wit</i> . |  |                      |
|                           |       | 1698  | Richard Bentley (1662-1742).<br><i>Dissertation on Phalaris</i> .<br>Jeremy Collier (1650-1726).<br><i>Profaneness of the English Stage</i> .<br>Vanbrugh's <i>Provoked Wife</i> .<br>George Farquhar (1678-1707).<br><i>Love and a Bottle</i> . |                      |
|                           | 1699  |   | Cibber's <i>Love makes a Man</i> .<br>Dryden's <i>Fables</i> .   |                      |
|                           | 1700  | Congreve's <i>Way of the World</i> .<br>Farquhar's <i>Constant Couple</i> and<br><i>Sir Harry Wildair</i> .   | Vico, 1668-1744.   |                      |
|                           |       | 1701  | Richard Steele (1672-1729).<br><i>Christian Hero</i> .   |                      |
|                           | 1702  | Nicholas Rowe (1674-1718).<br><i>Tamerlane</i> .<br>Vanbrugh's <i>False Friend</i> .  |  |                      |
|                           |       | 1702  | Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon (1608-1674). <i>History of the Great Rebellion, 1702-1704</i> .<br>Milton's <i>De Doctrina Christiana</i> .   |                      |
|                           | ANNE. | 1703  | Samuel Pepys (1632-1703).<br>His <i>Diary</i> , from 1659-1669, first published 1825.  | Leibnitz, 1646-1716. |
|                           |       |   | John Evelyn (1620-1706).<br>His <i>Diary</i> , from 1641-1706, first published 1818.   |                      |
| 1704                      |       | Thomas Rymer (1638-1713).<br><i>Fœdera</i> , 20 vols., folio, 1704-1735.  |  |                      |

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| ANNE.   | 1702  | Joseph Addison (1672-1719).<br><i>The Campaign.</i>                                 | Fontenelle, 1657-1757. |
|   | 1704  | Jonathan Swift (1667-1745).<br><i>Tale of a Tub and Battle of the Books.</i>        |                        |
|   |   | Wycherley's <i>Poems.</i>   | Lesage, 1668-1747.     |
|   |   | Cibber's <i>Careless Husband.</i>   |                        |
|   | Newton's <i>Opticks.</i>  |   |                        |
|   | 1706  | Addison's <i>Rosamond.</i>  |                        |
|   |   | Vanbrugh's <i>Country House.</i>  |                        |
|   | 1707  | Farquhar's <i>Beaux' Stratagem.</i>   |                        |
|   |   | Isaac Watts (1674-1748).<br><i>Hymns.</i>   |                        |
|   | 1708  | Rowe's <i>Royal Convert.</i>  |                        |
|   |   | Cibber's <i>Rival Fools.</i>  |                        |
|   | 1709  | George Berkeley (1684-1753).<br><i>Theory of Vision.</i>                            |                        |
|   |   | Matthew Prior (1664-1718).<br><i>Poems.</i>   |                        |
|   | 1710  | Berkeley's <i>Principles of Human Knowledge.</i>                                    |                        |
|   |   | Anthony Ashley Cooper, Earl of Shaftesbury (1671-1713).<br><i>Characteristicks.</i> |                        |
|   | 1711  | Alexander Pope (1688-1744).<br><i>Essay on Criticism and Rape of the Lock.</i>      |                        |
|   |   | { Steele and Addison, " <i>Tatler</i> ," 1708-10; " <i>Spectator</i> ," 1710-12.    |                        |
|   | 1712  | John Gay (1688-1732). <i>Trivia.</i>  |                        |
|   |   | Berkeley's <i>Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous.</i>                            |                        |
|   | 1713  | Thomas Tickell (1686-1740).<br><i>The Prospect of Peace.</i>                        |                        |
| Pope's <i>Windsor Forest.</i>                   |   |   |                        |
| Addison's <i>Cato.</i>                          |   |   |                        |
| Steele's <i>Guardian</i> and <i>Englishman.</i> |   |   |                        |
| 1714  | Gay's <i>Shepherd's Week.</i>   |   |                        |
|   | Bernard Mandeville (1670-1734). <i>Fable of the Bees</i> [finished 1723]. |   |                        |

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| GEORGE I. | 1714       | { Pope's <i>Temple of Fame</i> and<br><i>Translation of the Iliad</i> , vol.<br>I. [finished 1720].<br>Addison's <i>Freeholder</i> .<br>Cibber's <i>Non-juror</i> .<br>Samuel Clarke (1675-1729).<br><i>Letters to Leibnitz</i> .<br>Daniel Defoe (1663-1731).<br><i>Robinson Crusoe</i> and <i>Captain</i><br><i>Singleton</i> .<br>Swift's <i>Art of Punning</i> .<br>Watts's <i>Psalms and Hymns</i> .<br>Richard Savage (1698-1743).<br><i>Love in a Veil</i> .<br>Defoe's <i>Duncan Campbell</i> and<br><i>Moll Flanders</i> .<br>Allan Ramsay (1685-1759).<br><i>Poems</i> , vol. I. [vol. II. 1728].<br>Thomas Parnell (1679-1717).<br><i>Poems</i> .<br>Steele's <i>Conscious Lovers</i> .<br>Defoe's <i>Memoirs of the Plague</i> .<br>Burnet's <i>History of his Own</i><br><i>Time</i> [finished 1733].<br>Savage's <i>Sir Thomas Overbury</i> .<br>Swift's <i>Drapier's Letters</i> .<br>Ambrose Philips (1671-1749).<br><i>Three Tragedies</i> .<br>Gay's <i>Fables</i> .<br>Pope's <i>Translation of the Ody-</i><br><i>sey</i> .<br>Swift's <i>Gulliver's Travels</i> and<br><i>Cadenus and Vanessa</i> .<br>Gay's <i>Beggar's Opera</i> . |      |   |
|           | 1715       |   |      |   |
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|           | 1727       |   |      |   |
|           |            |   |      | Montesquieu,<br>1689-1755.  |
|           | GEORGE II. |   | 1727 | { Cibber's <i>Rival Queens</i> .<br>Pope's <i>Dunciad</i> .<br>Defoe's <i>Captain Carleton</i> .<br>Savage's <i>Wanderer</i> .<br>Newton's <i>Chronology</i> .<br>George Lillo (1693-1739).<br><i>George Barnwell</i> .<br>James Thomson (1700-1748).<br><i>Sophonisba, The Seasons</i> ,<br>1726-1730. |
| 1728      |            |   |      |   |
| 1729      |            |   |      |   |
| 1730      |            |   |      |   |

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| GEORGE II.                            | 1727  | } | Henry Fielding (1707-1754).<br><i>Tom Thumb.</i>                   |                          |
|                                       | 1731  |   | Berkeley's <i>Alciphron.</i>                                       |                          |
|                                       | 1732  |   | Pope's <i>Essay on Man.</i>  |                          |
|                                       | 1733  |   | Lillo's <i>Christian Hero.</i>                                     |                          |
|                                       | 1734  |   | Swift's <i>Poems.</i>  |                          |
|                                       | 1736  |   | Joseph Butler (1692-1752).<br><i>Analogy of Religion.</i>          | Voltaire, 1694-1778.     |
|                                       | 1737  |   | William Warburton (1698-1778).<br><i>Divine Legation of Moses.</i> | Prevost, 1697-1763.      |
|                                       | 1738  |   | David Hume (1711-1776).<br><i>On Human Nature.</i>                 |                          |
|                                       | 1740  |   | Cibber's <i>Apology.</i>   |                          |
|                                       | 1741  |   | Samuel Richardson (1689-1761).<br><i>Pamela.</i>                   | Metastasio, 1698-1782.   |
|                                       |   |   | Conyers Middleton (1683-1750).<br><i>Life of Cicero.</i>           |                          |
|                                       | 1742  |   | Pope's <i>Martinus Scriblerus.</i>                                 |                          |
|                                       |   |   | David Garrick (1716-1779).<br><i>Lying Valet.</i>                  |                          |
|                                       | 1744  |   | Hume's <i>Essays.</i>  |                          |
|                                       |   |   | William Shenstone (1714-1764).<br><i>The Schoolmistress.</i>       | Vauvenargues, 1715-1747. |
|                                       | 1747  |   | Edward Young (1684-1765).<br><i>Night Thoughts.</i>                |                          |
|                                       |   |   | Fielding's <i>Joseph Andrews.</i>                                  |                          |
|                                       | 1748  |   | Mark Akenside (1721-1769).<br><i>Pleasures of the Imagination.</i> |                          |
|                                       |   |   | William Collins (1720-1756).<br><i>Odes.</i>                       |                          |
|                                       | 1749  |   | Garrick's <i>Miss in her Teens.</i>                                |                          |
|                                       |   |   | Hume's <i>Enquiry concerning Human Understanding.</i>              |                          |
|                                       | 1748  |   | Samuel Johnson (1709-1785).<br><i>Irene.</i>                       |                          |
| Thomson's <i>Castle of Indolence.</i> |   |   |  |                          |
| 1749                                  | Tobias Smollett (1721-1771).<br><i>Roderick Random.</i>   |   |  |                          |
|                                       | Richardson's <i>Clarissa Harlowe.</i>                     |   |  |                          |
| 1749                                  | Fielding's <i>Tom Fones.</i>                              |   |  |                          |
|                                       | Johnson's <i>Vanity of Human Wishes.</i>                  |   |  |                          |
| 1749                                  | David Hartley (1705-1757).<br><i>Observations on Man.</i> |   |  |                          |

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| GEORGE II.  | 1727   | Smollett's <i>Peregrine Pickle</i> .  |                           |
|             | 1751   | Johnson's <i>Rambler</i> , 1750-52.   |                           |
|             |  | Philip Doddridge (1702-1750).<br><i>Rise and Progress of Religion<br/>in the Soul</i> . |                           |
|             | 1572   | Fielding's <i>Amelia</i> .  |                           |
|             |  | James Harris (1709-1781).<br><i>Hermes</i> .  |                           |
|             | 1753   | Smollett's <i>Ferdinand Count<br/>Fathom</i> .  |                           |
|             |  | Hume's <i>Principles of Morals,<br/>History of England</i> [finished<br>1760].          |                           |
|             | 1754   | Bolingbroke's <i>Works</i> , edited<br>by David Mallet.                                 |                           |
|             |  | Fielding's <i>Jonathan Wild</i> .<br>Richardson's <i>Sir Charles Gran-<br/>dison</i> .  |                           |
|             | 1755   | Edmund Burke (1729-1797).<br><i>Essay on the Sublime and<br/>Beautiful</i> .            | Buffon, 1707-<br>1788.    |
|             |  | Johnson's <i>Dictionary</i> .<br>Hume's <i>Natural History of Re-<br/>ligion</i> .      | Condillac, 1715-<br>1780. |
|             | 1756   | John Home (1724-1808).<br><i>Douglas</i> .  |                           |
|             | 1758   | Smollett's <i>History of England</i> .  | Klopstock, 1704-<br>1803. |
|             |  | Adam Smith (1723-1790). <i>The-<br/>ory of Moral Sentiments</i> .                       |                           |
| 1759        | Johnson's <i>Rasselas</i> .  | Diderot, 1712-<br>1784.   |                           |
|             | Laurence Sterne (1713-1768).<br><i>Tristram Shandy</i> [finished<br>1766]. | J. J. Rousseau,<br>1712-1778.   |                           |
| 1760        | William Robertson (1721-<br>1783). <i>History of Scotland</i> .            | D'Alembert,<br>1717-1783.   |                           |
|             | George Colman (1733-1794).<br><i>Polly Honeycombe</i> .                    | Lessing, 1729-<br>1781.   |                           |
| GEORGE III. | 1760   | James Beattie (1735-1803).<br><i>Poems</i> .  |                           |
|             | 1761   | Oliver Goldsmith (1728-1774).<br><i>Citizen of the World</i> .                          |                           |
|             |  | Smollett's <i>Sir Launcelot<br/>Greaves</i> .   |                           |



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| GEORGE III.                          | 1760  | James Macpherson (1738-1796). <i>"Ossian's" Fingal.</i>                         | Marmontel, 1723-1799. |
|                                      | 1762  | Henry Home, Lord Kames (1696-1782). <i>Elements of Criticism.</i>               |                       |
|                                      |   | Thomas Reid (1710-1796). <i>Inquiry into the Human Mind.</i>                    |                       |
|                                      | 1764  | Goldsmith's <i>Traveller.</i>   |                       |
|                                      | 1765  | Thomas Percy (1728-1811). <i>Reliques of Ancient English Poetry.</i>            |                       |
|                                      |   | Horace Walpole (1717-1785). <i>Castle of Otranto.</i>                           |                       |
|                                      | 1766  | Sir James Mackintosh born (d. 1832).  |                       |
|                                      |   | Sir William Blackstone (1723-1780). <i>Commentaries on the Laws of England.</i> | Turgot, 1727-1781.    |
|                                      |   | Goldsmith's <i>Vicar of Wakefield.</i>  |                       |
|                                      | 1767  | Lord Lyttelton (1708-1773). <i>History of Henry II.</i>                         |                       |
|                                      |   | Lady Mary Wortley Montague (1690-1762). <i>Letters, 1762-1767.</i>              |                       |
|                                      | 1768  | Adam Ferguson (1724-1816). <i>History of Civil Society.</i>                     |                       |
|                                      |   | Goldsmith's <i>Good-Natured Man.</i>  | Beccaria, 1738-1793.  |
|                                      |   | Sterne's <i>Sentimental Journey.</i>  |                       |
|                                      | 1769  | Robertson's <i>History of Charles V.</i>  |                       |
|                                      |   | Goldsmith's <i>Roman History.</i>   | Condorcet, 1743-1794. |
|                                      | 1770  | Smollett's <i>Adventures of an Atom.</i>  |                       |
|                                      |   | Sir Philip Francis (1740-1818). <i>Letters of Junius.</i>                       |                       |
| Goldsmith's <i>Deserted Village.</i> |   |   |                       |
| 1771                                 | Henry Mackenzie (1745-1831). <i>The Man of Feeling.</i> |   |                       |
|                                      | Sydney Smith born (d. 1845).                            |   |                       |
|                                      | Garrick's <i>Hamlet</i> and <i>Irish Widow.</i>         |   |                       |
|                                      | Sir William Jones (1746-1794). <i>Persian Grammar.</i>  |   |                       |

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| GEORGE III. | 1760 | 1771  | Smollett's <i>Humphrey Clinker</i> .   |                     |
|             |      | 1772  | Goldsmith's <i>She Stoops to Conquer</i> .   |                     |
|             |      |   | Hannah More (1745-1833).<br><i>Search after Happiness</i> .                                |                     |
|             |      | 1773  | Francis, Lord Jeffrey, born (d. 1829).   |                     |
|             |      |   | Burke's <i>Thoughts on the Present Discontents</i> .                                       | Kant, 1724-1804.    |
|             |      |   | Goldsmith's <i>Animated Nature</i> .   |                     |
|             |      |   | Philip Dormer Stanhope, Earl of Chesterfield (1694-1773).<br><i>Letters to his Son</i> .   |                     |
|             |      | 1774  | James Burnet, Lord Monboddo (1714-1799). <i>Origin of Language</i> .                       | Herder, 1744-1803.  |
|             |      |   | Thomas Warton (1728-1790).<br><i>History of English Poetry</i> [finished 1782].            |                     |
|             |      |   | Lord Kames's <i>Sketches of the History of Man</i> .                                       |                     |
|             |      | 1775  | Johnson's <i>Visit to the Hebrides</i> .   |                     |
|             |      |   | Richard Brinsley Sheridan (1751-1816). <i>The Rivals</i> and <i>The Duenna</i> .           | Wieland, 1733-1813. |
|             |      |   | Adam Smith's <i>Wealth of Nations</i> .  |                     |
|             |      | 1776  | Edward Gibbon (1737-1794).<br><i>Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire</i> [finished 1788]. | Alfieri, 1749-1803. |
|             |      |   | Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832).<br><i>Fragment on Government</i> .                             |                     |
|             |      | Thomas Chatterton (1752-1770). <i>Poems of Rowley</i> .     |  |                     |
|             |      | Sheridan's <i>School for Scandal</i> [acted].               |  |                     |
|             | 1777 | Thomas Paine (1737-1804).<br><i>Common Sense</i> .          |  |                     |
|             |      | Robertson's <i>History of America</i> .                     |  |                     |
|             |      | Joseph Priestley (1733-1804).<br><i>Matter and Spirit</i> . |  |                     |
|             | 1778 | Frances Burney (1752-1840).<br><i>Evelina</i> .             |  |                     |
|             | 1779 | Monboddo's <i>Ancient Metaphysics</i> , 1779-1799.          |  |                     |

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| GEORGE III.  | 1760   | Henry, Lord Brougham, born (d. 1868).   |                                |
|  | 1779   | John, Lord Campbell, born (d. 1861).  |                                |
|  |  | Johnson's <i>Lives of the Poets</i> .   |                                |
|  | 1780   | Hannah Cowley (1744-1809).<br><i>The Belle's Stratagem</i> .  |                                |
|  |  | Erasmus Darwin (1731-1802).<br><i>Botanic Garden</i> .  |                                |
|  | 1781   | Sheridan's <i>Critic</i> .  | Friedrich Schiller, 1759-1805. |
|  |  | William Cowper (1731-1800).<br><i>John Gilpin</i> and <i>Poems</i> .  | <i>Robbers</i> , 1782.         |
|  | 1782   | George Crabbe (1754-1832).<br><i>The Village</i> .  | <i>Don Carlos</i> , 1786.      |
|  |  | Hannah More (1745-1833).<br><i>Sacred Dramas</i> .  | <i>Wallenstein</i> , 1799      |
|  |  | Priestley's <i>History of the Corruptions of Christianity</i> .   | <i>William Tell</i> , 1804.    |
|  | 1783   | Hugh Blair (1718-1800).<br><i>Lectures on Rhetoric</i> .  |                                |
|  |  | Cowper's <i>Task</i> .  |                                |
|  | 1784   | William Julius Mickle (1734-1788). <i>The Prophecy of Queen Emma</i> . His translation of <i>The Lusiad</i> , 1776. |                                |
|  |  | Hannah Cowley's <i>Bold Stroke for a Husband</i> .  |                                |
|  | 1785   | Reid's <i>Essays on Active and Moral Powers</i> .   |                                |
|  |  | Burke's <i>Speech on Nabob of Arcot's Debts</i> .   |                                |
|  |  | James Boswell (1740-1795).<br><i>Tour to the Hebrides</i> .   |                                |
|  | 1786   | Robert Burns (1759-1796).<br><i>Poems</i> .   |                                |
|  |  | William Beckford (1760-1844).<br><i>Vathek</i> .  |                                |
| John Pinkerton (1758-1834).<br><i>Ancient Scottish Poems</i> . |  |   |                                |
| 1788   | Burke's <i>Speech against Warren Hastings</i> .                    |   |                                |
|  | Sir William Hamilton born (d. 1856).                               |   |                                |
| 1789   | Gilbert White (1720-1793).<br><i>Natural History of Selborne</i> . |   |                                |

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| GEORGE III. | 1760   | Burke's <i>Reflections on the Revolution in France</i> .                            |                    |
|             | 1790   | Richard Porson (1759-1808).<br><i>Letters on the Three Heavenly Witnesses</i> .     |                    |
|             |  | Archibald Alison (1757-1839).<br><i>Essay on Taste</i> .                            |                    |
|             |  | Cowper's <i>Translation of the Iliad and Odyssey</i> .                              |                    |
|             |  | Paine's <i>Rights of Man</i> .  |                    |
|             |  | Joseph Ritson (1752-1803).<br><i>Ancient Popular Poetry</i> .                       |                    |
|             |  | Burke, <i>Thoughts on French Affairs</i> .  |                    |
|             |  | Boswell's <i>Life of Johnson</i> .  |                    |
|             | 1791   | Isaac Disraeli (1767-1850).<br><i>Curiosities of Literature</i> [finished 1824].    |                    |
|             |  | Henry Hart Milman born (d. 1867).   |                    |
|             |  | Charles Knight born.  |                    |
|             |  | Michael Faraday born (d. 1867).   |                    |
|             |  | Samuel Rogers (1763-1855).<br><i>Pleasures of Memory</i> .                          |                    |
|             |  | Dugald Stewart (1753-1829).<br><i>Philosophy of the Human Mind</i> [finished 1814]. |                    |
|             |  | Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin (1759-1797). <i>Vindication of the Rights of Woman</i> . |                    |
|             | 1792   | Priestley's <i>Letters to a Young Man</i> .   |                    |
|             |  | Burns's <i>Tam o' Shanter</i> .   |                    |
|             |  | John Keble born (d. 1866).  |                    |
|             |  | William Wordsworth (1770-1850). <i>Descriptive Sketches</i> .                       | Fichte, 1762-1814. |
|             |  | Mickle's <i>Poetical Works</i> .  |                    |
|             | 1793   | Dugald Stewart's <i>Moral Philosophy</i> .  |                    |
|             |  | George Grote born (d. 1871).  |                    |
| 1794        | Thomas Arnold born (d. 1842).                                |   |                    |
|             | Anne Radcliffe (1764-1823).<br><i>Mysteries of Udolpho</i> . |   |                    |

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| GEORGE III. | 1760  | Darwin's <i>Zoonomia</i> [finished 1796].  |  |
|             | 1794  | William Paley (1743-1805).<br><i>Evidences of Christianity.</i>                                |  |
|             |   | Paine's <i>Age of Reason.</i>  |  |
|             | 1795  | Matthew Gregory Lewis (1775-1818). <i>The Monk.</i>  |  |
|             |   | William Roscoe (1753-1831).<br><i>Life of Lorenzo de Medici.</i>                               |  |
|             |   | William Cobbett (1762-1835).<br><i>Life of Thomas Paine.</i>                                   | John Wolfgang von Goethe, 1749-1832.<br><i>Werther</i> , 1774.<br><i>Wilhelm Meister</i> , 1795. |
|             | Burke's <i>Letters on a Regicide Peace.</i>                       |  |  |
|             | Miss Burney's <i>Camilla.</i>                                     |  |  |
|             | 1796  | Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832).<br><i>Translation of Bürger's Leonora and The Wild Huntsman.</i> |  |
|             |   | Robert Southey (1774-1842).<br><i>Joan of Arc.</i>   |  |
|             | 1798  | Thomas Robert Malthus (1766-1834). <i>Principles of Population.</i>                            |  |
|             |   | Scott's <i>Translation of Götz von Berlichingen.</i>   |  |
|             | 1799  | Sheridan's <i>Pizarro.</i>   |  |
|             |   | Thomas Campbell (1777-1844). <i>The Pleasures of Hope.</i>                                     | +  |
|             |   | Thomas Moore (1779-1852).<br><i>Anacreon.</i>  |  |
|             | 1800  | Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834). <i>Translation of Schiller's Wallenstein.</i>             | +  |
|             |   | John Henry Newman born.  | +  |
|             | 1801  | Thomas Babington, Lord Macaulay, born (d. 1859).   | +  |
|             |   | James Hogg (1772-1835).<br><i>Scottish Pastorals.</i>  |  |
|             |   | Maria Edgeworth (1767-1849).<br><i>Moral Tales.</i>  |  |
| 1802        | Scott's <i>Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border</i> [finished 1803]. |  |  |
|             | Southey's <i>Thalaba. Amadis of Gaul</i> , 1803.                  |  |  |
|             | Harriet Martineau born.   |  |  |

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| GEORGE III.                                 | 1760  | Godwin's <i>Life of Chaucer</i> .                                 |  |
|   | 1803  | Jane Porter (1776-1850).  |  |
|   |   | <i>Thaddeus of Warsaw</i> .                                       |  |
|   | 1804  | Philip Henry, Earl Stanhope (Lord Mahon), born.                   |  |
|   |   | Francis William Newman born.                                      |  |
|   |   | Frederick Denison Maurice born (d. 1872).                         |  |
|   |   | Richard Owen born.  |  |
|   |   | Southey's <i>Madoc</i> .  |  |
|   | 1805  | Scott's <i>Lay of the Last Minstrel</i> .                         |  |
|   |   | Roscoe's <i>Life of Leo the Tenth</i> .                           |  |
|   |   | Edward Lytton Bulwer, Lord Lytton, born.                          |  |
|   |   | Elizabeth Inchbald (1753-1821). <i>To Marry or not to Marry</i> . |  |
|   | 1806  | Benjamin Disraeli born.   |  |
|   |   | Charles Lamb (1775-1834). <i>Tales from Shakespeare</i> .         |  |
|   |   | John Stuart Mill born.  |  |
| Scott's <i>Ballads and Lyrical Pieces</i> . |   |   |  |
| Coleridge's <i>Christabel</i> .             |   |   |  |
| Southey's <i>Palmerin of England</i> .      |   |   |  |
| 1807  | Henry Kirke White (1785-1806). <i>Remains</i> , ed. by Southey.   |   |  |
|   | George Gordon, Lord Byron (1788-1824). <i>Hours of Idleness</i> . |   |  |
|   | James Henry Leigh Hunt (1784-1859). <i>Classic Tales</i> .        |   |  |
|   | Hogg's <i>Shepherd's Guide</i> .                                  |   |  |
|   | William Harrison Ainsworth born.                                  |   |  |
|   | Charles Merivale born.  |   |  |
|   | Richard Monckton Milnes, Lord Houghton, born.                     |   |  |
| 1808  | Anna Letitia Barbauld (1743-1825). <i>Lessons for Children</i> .  |   |  |
|   | Hannah More's <i>Cælebs in Search of a Wife</i> .                 |   |  |
|   | Scott's <i>Marmion</i> .  |   |  |
|   |   | Goethe's <i>Faust</i> , pt. I. 1806; (pt. II. 1831).              |  |

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| GEORGE III. | 1760 | 1808 | Coleridge's <i>Sibylline Leaves</i> .<br>Alfred Tennyson born.  | + |
|             |      | 1809 | Coleridge's <i>The Friend</i> .<br>Byron's <i>English Bards and Scotch Reviewers</i> .  |   |
|             |      |      | Elizabeth Barrett Browning born (d. 1861).<br>William Ewart Gladstone born.<br>Charles James Lever born.  |   |
|             |      | 1810 | Campbell's <i>Gertrude of Wyoming</i> .<br>Jane Porter's <i>Scottish Chiefs</i> .<br>Thomas Adolphus Trollope born.   |   |
|             |      |      | Dugald Stewart's <i>Philosophical Essays</i> .<br>Hogg's <i>Forest Minstrel</i> .<br>Scott's <i>Lady of the Lake</i> .<br>Southey's <i>Curse of Kehama</i> and <i>History of Brazil</i> . | + |
|             |      |      | Crabbe's <i>Borough</i> .<br>Scott's <i>Vision of Don Roderick</i> .<br>Jane Austen (1775-1817).<br><i>Sense and Sensibility</i> .  |   |
|             |      | 1811 | William Makepeace Thackeray born (d. 1863).<br>Maria Edgeworth's <i>Tales of Fashionable Life</i> .   | + |
|             |      |      | Disraeli's <i>Calamities of Authors</i> .<br>Joanna Baillie (1762-1847).<br><i>Plays on the Passions</i> .  |   |
|             |      | 1812 | Robert Browning born.<br>Byron's <i>Childe Harold</i> [finished 1818].  | ↓ |
|             |      |      | Jane Austen's <i>Pride and Prejudice</i> .<br>Charles Dickens born (d. 1870).<br>Crabbe's <i>Tales in Verse</i> .   |   |
|             |      |      | Coleridge's <i>Remorse</i> .<br>Southey's <i>Life of Nelson</i> .<br>Scott's <i>Bridal of Triermain</i> and <i>Rokeby</i> .   |   |
|             |      | 1813 | Byron's <i>Giaour</i> and <i>Bride of Abydos</i> .<br>Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822). <i>Queen Mab</i> .  | + |

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| GEORGE III.  | 1760 | }  | Charles Reade born.  | Chateaubriand,<br>1768--1848. |
|  | 1813 |  | John William Colenso born.   |                               |
|  | 1814 | }  | Disraeli's <i>Quarrels of Authors</i> .  |                               |
|  |      |  | Byron's <i>Corsair</i> and <i>Lara</i> .   |                               |
|  |      |  | Jane Austen's <i>Mansfield Park</i> .  |                               |
|  | 1815 | }  | Scott's <i>Lord of the Isles</i> , <i>Waverley</i> and <i>Border Antiquities</i> . |                               |
|  |      |  | Southey's <i>Roderick</i> .  |                               |
|  |      |  | Wordsworth's <i>Excursion</i> .  |                               |
|  | 1816 | }  | Scott's <i>Guy Mannering</i> and <i>Paul's Letters</i> .                           |                               |
|  |      |  | Byron's <i>Hebrew Melodies</i> .   |                               |
|  |      |  | Philip James Bailey born.  |                               |
|  |      |  | Charlotte Brontë born (d. 1855).   |                               |
|  |      |  | Anthony Trollope born.   |                               |
|  |      |  | Thomas Love Peacock (1785--1867). <i>Headlong Hall</i> .                           |                               |
|  |      |  | Leigh Hunt's <i>Story of Rimini</i> .  |                               |
| Shelley's <i>Alastor</i> .                                       |      |  |  |                               |
| Byron's <i>Siege of Corinth</i> and <i>Prisoner of Chillon</i> . |      |  |  |                               |
| Jane Austen's <i>Emma</i> .                                      |      |  |  |                               |
| 1817   | }    | Scott's <i>Antiquary</i> , <i>Black Dwarf</i> , <i>Old Mortality</i> . |  |                               |
|  |      | Coleridge's <i>Biographia Literaria</i> .                              |  |                               |
|  |      | Southey's <i>King Arthur</i> .   |  |                               |
|  |      | Scott's <i>Harold the Dauntless</i> .                                  |  |                               |
|  |      | Byron's <i>Manfred</i> and <i>Lament of Tasso</i> .                    |  |                               |
| 1818   | }    | Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley (1797--1851). <i>Frankenstein</i> .        |  |                               |
|  |      | George Henry Lewes born.   |  |                               |
|  |      | Moore's <i>Lalla Rookh</i> .   |  |                               |
|  |      | William Hazlitt (1778--1830). <i>The Round Table</i> .                 |  |                               |
|  |      | Benjamin Jowett born.  |  |                               |
| 1818   | }    | Hazlitt's <i>Characters of Shakespeare</i> .                           |  |                               |
|  |      | Henry Hallam (1778--1859). <i>Europe During the Middle Ages</i> .      |  |                               |
|  |      | James Mill (1773--1836). <i>History of British India</i> .             |  |                               |



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| 1760 |   | James Anthony Froude born.<br>Peacock's <i>Nightmare Abbey</i> .<br>Scott's <i>Heart of Mid-Lothian</i> ,<br><i>Bride of Lammermoor</i> , <i>Legend of Montrose</i> and <i>Rob Roy</i> .  |                       |
| 1818 | GEORGE III.   | Jane Austen's <i>Northanger Abbey</i> and <i>Persuasion</i> .<br>Lucy Aikin (1781-1862). <i>Memoirs of the Court of Queen Elizabeth</i> .<br>John Keats (1796-1821). <i>Endymion</i> .  |                       |
| 1819 |   | Shelley's <i>Revolt of Islam</i> .<br>Crabbe's <i>Tales of the Hall</i> .<br>Wordsworth's <i>Peter Bell</i> .<br>Byron's <i>Mazeppa</i> and <i>Don Juan</i> [finished 1823].<br>Shelley's <i>Rosalind and Helen</i> and <i>The Cenci</i> .<br>Hogg's <i>Jacobite Relics</i> . | Hegel, 1770-1831.     |
| 1820 | GEORGE IV.  | Keats's <i>Lamia</i> , <i>Isabella</i> and <i>The Eve of St. Agnes</i> .<br>Scott's <i>Ivanhoe</i> , <i>Monastery</i> and <i>Abbot</i> .<br>Southey's <i>Life of Wesley</i> . <i>Vision of Judgment</i> , 1821.   | Schelling, 1775-1854. |
| 1820 |   | Scott's <i>Kenilworth</i> .<br>Herbert Spencer born.<br>Byron's <i>Marino Faliero</i> , <i>Prophecy of Dante</i> , <i>Sardanapalus</i> , <i>The Two Foscari</i> and <i>Cain</i> .   | Tegnér, 1782-1846.    |
| 1821 | Shelley's <i>Prometheus Unbound</i> and <i>Adonais</i> .<br>Marian Evans ("George Eliot") born.<br>Thomas Brown (1778-1820). <i>Philosophy of the Human Mind</i> .<br>Moore's <i>Irish Melodies</i> . | Béranger, 1780-1857.  |                       |
| 1822 | James Mill's <i>Elements of Political Economy</i> .<br>James Montgomery (1771-1854). <i>Songs of Zion</i> .   | Rückert, 1789-1860.   |                       |

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| GEORGE IV. | 1820   | John Wilson (1785-1854).<br><i>Lights and Shadows of Scottish Life.</i> |                       |
|            | 1822   | Rogers's <i>Italy.</i>  |                       |
|            |  | Matthew Arnold born.  |                       |
|            |  | Lucy Aikin's <i>Memoirs of the Court of James I.</i>                    | Uhland; 1787-1862.    |
|            |  | Byron's <i>Vision of Judgment and Heaven and Earth.</i>                 |                       |
|            |  | Henry Thomas Buckle born (d. 1862).                                     |                       |
|            |  | Scott's <i>Fortunes of Nigel, Halidon Hill</i> and <i>The Pirate.</i>   |                       |
|            |  | Southey's <i>History of the Peninsular War</i> [finished 1832].         |                       |
|            | 1823   | Scott's <i>Peveril of the Peak</i> and <i>Quentin Durward.</i>          |                       |
|            |  | Edward Augustus Freeman born.   |                       |
|            |  | John Gibson Lockhart (1794-1854). <i>Ancient Spanish Ballads.</i>       | Villemain, 1790-1870. |
|            |  | Douglas Jerrold (1803-1857).<br><i>The Smoked Miser.</i>                |                       |
|            |  | Moore's <i>Loves of the Angels.</i>                                     |                       |
|            |  | John Wilson's <i>Trials of Margaret Lindsay.</i>                        |                       |
|            |  | Charles Lamb's <i>Essays of Elia.</i>                                   |                       |
| 1824       | Felicia Hemans (1794-1835).<br><i>Vespers of Palermo.</i>                    | Musset, 1810-1857.  |                       |
|            | William Hazlitt's <i>Table Talk.</i>   |   |                       |
|            | Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832).<br><i>Book of Fallacies.</i>                     | Heinrich Heine, 1800-1856.  |                       |
|            | Reginald Heber (1783-1825).<br><i>Life of Jeremy Taylor.</i>                 |   |                       |
|            | Thomas Carlyle (b. 1795).<br><i>Translation of Goethe's Wilhelm Meister.</i> | Sainte-Beuve, 1804-1869.  |                       |
|            | Scott's <i>Saint Ronan's Well</i> and <i>Red Gauntlet.</i>                   |   |                       |

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