DE QUINCEY'S WRITINGS.

BIOGRAPHICAL ESSAYS.

BY

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CONTENTS.

FROM THE AUTHOR, TO THE AMERICAN EDITOR OF HIS WORKS.

THESE papers I am anxious to put into the hands of your house, and, so far as regards the U. S., of *your* house exclusively; not with any view to further emolument, but as an acknowledgment of the services which you have already rendered me; namely, first, in having brought together so widely scattered a collection — a difficulty which in my own hands by too painful an experience I had found from nervous depression to be absolutely insurmountable; secondly, in having made me a participator in the pecuniary profits of the American edition, without solicitation or the shadow of any expectation on my part, without any legal claim that I could plead, or equitable warrant in established usage, solely and merely upon your own spontaneous motion. Some of these new papers, I hope, will not be without their value in the eyes of those who have taken an interest in the original series. But at all events, good or bad, they are now tendered to the appropriation of your individual house, the Messrs. TICKNOR & FIELDS, according to the amplest extent of any power to make such a transfer that I may be found to possess by law or custom in America.

I wish this transfer were likely to be of more value. But the veriest trifle, interpreted by the spirit in which I offer it, may express my sense of the liberality manifested throughout this transaction by your honorable house.

Ever believe me, my dear sir,

Your faithful and obliged,

THOMAS DE QUINCEY.

BIOGRAPHICAL ESSAYS.

SHAKSPEARE.[1]

WILLIAM SHAKSPEARE, the protagonist on the great arena of modern poetry, and the glory of the human intellect, was born at Stratford-upon-Avon, in the county of Warwick, in the year 1564, and upon some day, not precisely ascertained, in the month of April. It is certain that he was baptized on the 25th; and from that fact, combined with some shadow of a tradition, Malone has inferred that he was born on the 23d. There is doubtless, on the one hand, no absolute necessity deducible from law or custom, as either operated in those times, which obliges us to adopt such a conclusion; for children might be baptized, and were baptized, at various distances from their birth: yet, on the other hand, the 23d is as likely to have been the day as any other; and more likely than any earlier day, upon two arguments. First, because there was probably a tradition floating in the seventeenth century, that Shakspeare died upon his birthday: now it is beyond a doubt that he died upon the 23d of April. Secondly, because it is a reasonable presumption, that no parents, living in a simple community, tenderly alive to the pieties of household duty, and in an age still clinging reverentially to the ceremonial ordinances of religion, would much delay the adoption of their child into the great family of Christ. Considering the

extreme frailty of an infant's life during its two earliest years, to delay would often be to disinherit the child of its Christian privileges; privileges not the less eloquent to the feelings from being profoundly mysterious, and, in the English church, forced not only upon the attention, but even upon the eye of the most thoughtless. According to the discipline of the English church, the unbaptized are buried with 'maimed rites,' shorn of their obsequies, and sternly denied that 'sweet and solemn farewell,' by which otherwise the church expresses her final charity with all men; and not only so, but they are even *locally* separated and sequestrated. Ground the most hallowed, and populous with Christian burials of households,

> 'That died in peace with one another,
> Father, sister, son, and brother,'

opens to receive the vilest malefactor; by which the church symbolically expresses her maternal willingness to gather back into her fold those even of her flock who have strayed from her by the most memorable aberrations; and yet, with all this indulgence, she banishes to unhallowed ground the innocent bodies of the unbaptized. To them and to suicides she turns a face of wrath. With this gloomy fact offered to the very external senses, it is difficult to suppose that any parents would risk their own reproaches, by putting the fulfilment of so grave a duty on the hazard of a convulsion fit. The case of royal children is different; their baptisms, it is true, were often delayed for weeks, but the household chaplains of the palace were always at hand, night and day, to baptize them in the very agonies of death.[2] We must presume, therefore, that William Shakspeare was born on some day very little

anterior to that of his baptism: and the more so because the season of the year was lovely and genial, the 23d of April in 1564, corresponding in fact with what we now call the 3d of May, so that, whether the child was to be carried abroad, or the clergyman to be summoned, no hindrance would arise from the weather. One only argument has sometimes struck us for supposing that the 22d might be the day, and not the 23d; which is, that Shakspeare's sole grand-daughter, Lady Barnard, was married on the 22d of April, 1626, ten years exactly from the poet's death; and the reason for choosing this day *might* have had a reference to her illustrious grandfather's birthday, which, there is good reason for thinking, would be celebrated as a festival in the family for generations. Still this choice *may* have been an accident, or governed merely by reason of convenience. And, on the whole, it is as well perhaps to acquiesce in the old belief, that Shakspeare was born and died on the 23d of April. We cannot do wrong if we drink to his memory on both 22d and 23d.

On a first review of the circumstances, we have reason to feel no little perplexity in finding the materials for a life of this transcendent writer so meagre and so few; and amongst them the larger part of doubtful authority. All the energy of curiosity directed upon this subject, through a period of one hundred and fifty years, (for so long it is since Betterton the actor began to make researches,) has availed us little or nothing. Neither the local traditions of his provincial birthplace, though sharing with London through half a century the honor of his familiar presence, nor the recollections of that brilliant literary

circle with whom he lived in the metropolis, have yielded much more than such an outline of his history, as is oftentimes to be gathered from the penurious records of a gravestone. That he lived, and that he died, and that he was 'a little lower than the angels;' — these make up pretty nearly the amount of our undisputed report. It may be doubted, indeed, whether at this day we are as accurately acquainted with the life of Shakspeare as with that of Chaucer, though divided from each other by an interval of two centuries, and (what should have been more effectual towards oblivion) by the wars of the two roses. And yet the traditional memory of a rural and a sylvan region, such as Warwickshire at that time was, is usually exact as well as tenacious; and, with respect to Shakspeare in particular, we may presume it to have been full and circumstantial through the generation succeeding to his own, not only from the curiosity, and perhaps something of a scandalous interest, which would pursue the motions of one living so large a part of his life at a distance from his wife, but also from the final reverence and honor which would settle upon the memory of a poet so preëminently successful; of one who, in a space of five and twenty years, after running a bright career in the capital city of his native land, and challenging notice from the throne, had retired with an ample fortune, created by his personal efforts, and by labors purely intellectual.

How are we to account, then, for that deluge, as if from Lethe which has swept away so entirely the traditional memorials of one so illustrious? Such is the fatality of error which overclouds every question connected with Shakspeare, that two of his principal

critics, Steevens and Malone, have endeavored to solve the difficulty by cutting it with a falsehood. They deny in effect that he *was* illustrious in the century succeeding to his own, however much he has since become so. We shall first produce their statements in their own words, and we shall then briefly review them.

Steevens delivers *his* opinion in the following terms: 'How little Shakspeare was once read, may be understood from Tate, who in his dedication to the altered play of King Lear, speaks of the original as an obscure piece, recommended to his notice by a friend: and the author of the Tatler, having occasion to quote a few lines out of Macbeth, was content to receive them from Davenant's alteration of that celebrated drama, in which almost every original beauty is either awkwardly disguised or arbitrarily omitted.' Another critic, who cites this passage from Steevens, pursues the hypothesis as follows: 'In fifty years after his death, Dryden mentions that he was then become *a little obsolete.* In the beginning of the last century, Lord Shaftesbury complains of his *rude unpolished style, and his antiquated phrase and wit.* . It is certain that, for nearly a hundred years after his death, partly owing to the immediate revolution and rebellion, and partly to the licentious taste encouraged in Charles II.'s time, and perhaps partly to the incorrect state of his works, he was ALMOST ENTIRELY NEGLECTED.' This critic then goes on to quote with approbation the opinion of Malone, — 'that if he had been read, admired, studied, and imitated, in the same degree as he is now, the enthusiasm of some one or other of his admirers in the last age would have induced him to

make some inquiries concerning the history of his theatrical career, and the anecdotes of his private life.' After which this enlightened writer re-affirms and clenches the judgment he has quoted, by saying, —'His admirers, however, *if he had admirers in that age*, possessed no portion of such enthusiasm.'

It may, perhaps, be an instructive lesson to young readers, if we now show them, by a short sifting of these confident dogmatists, how easy it is for a careless or a half-read man to circulate the most absolute falsehoods under the semblance of truth; falsehoods which impose upon himself as much as they do upon others. We believe that not one word or illustration is uttered in the sentences cited from these three critics, which is not *virtually* in the very teeth of the truth.

To begin with Mr. Nahum Tate. This poor grub of literature, if he did really speak of Lear as 'an *obscure* piece, recommended to his notice by a friend,' of which we must be allowed to doubt, was then uttering a conscious falsehood. It happens that Lear was one of the few Shakspearian dramas which had kept the stage unaltered. But it is easy to see a mercenary motive in such an artifice as this. Mr. Nahum Tate is not of a class of whom it can be safe to say that they are 'well known:' they and their desperate tricks are essentially obscure, and good reason he has to exult in the felicity of such obscurity; for else this same vilest of travesties, Mr. Nahum's Lear, would consecrate his name to everlasting scorn. For himself, he belonged to the age of Dryden rather than of Pope: he 'flourished,' if we can use such a phrase of one who was always withering, about the era of the Revolution; and his Lear, we believe, was arranged in the year

1682. But the family to which he belongs is abundantly recorded in the Dunciad, and his own name will be found amongst its catalogues of heroes.

With respect to *the author of the Tatler*, a very different explanation is requisite. Steevens means the reader to understand Addison; but it does not follow that the particular paper in question was from his pen. Nothing, however, could be more natural than to quote from the common form of the play as then in possession of the stage. It was *there*, beyond a doubt, that a fine gentleman living upon town, and not professing any deep scholastic knowledge of literature, (a light in which we are always to regard the writers of the Spectator, Guardian, &c.,) would be likely to have learned anything he quoted from Macbeth. This we say generally of the writers in those periodical papers; but, with reference to Addison in particular, it is time to correct the popular notion of his literary character, or at least to mark it by severer lines of distinction. It is already pretty well known, that Addison had no very intimate acquaintance with the literature of his own country. It is known, also, that he did not think such an acquaintance any ways essential to the character of an elegant scholar and *littérateur*. Quite enough he found it, and more than enough for the time he had to spare, if he could maintain a tolerable familiarity with the foremost Latin poets, and a very slender one indeed with the Grecian. *How* slender, we can see in his 'Travels.' Of modern authors, none as yet had been published with notes, commentaries, or critical collations of the text; and, accordingly, Addison looked upon all of them, except those few who professed themselves followers in the

retinue and equipage of the ancients, as creatures of a lower race. Boileau, as a mere imitator and propagator of Horace, he read, and probably little else amongst the French classics. Hence it arose that he took upon himself to speak sneeringly of Tasso. To this, which was a bold act for his timid mind, he was emboldened by the countenance of Boileau. Of the elder Italian authors, such as Ariosto, and, *à fortiori*, Dante, he knew absolutely nothing. Passing to our own literature, it is certain that Addison was profoundly ignorant of Chaucer and Spenser. Milton only, — and why? simply because he was a brilliant scholar, and stands like a bridge between the Christian literature and the Pagan, — Addison had read and esteemed. There was also in the very constitution of Milton's mind, in the majestic regularity and planetary solemnity of its *epic* movements, something which he could understand and appreciate. As to the meteoric and incalculable eccentricities of the *dramatic* mind, as it displayed itself in the heroic age of our drama, amongst the Titans of 1590–1630, they confounded and overwhelmed him.

In particular with regard to Shakspeare, we shall now proclaim a discovery which we made some twenty years ago. We, like others, from seeing frequent references to Shakspeare in the Spectator, had acquiesced in the common belief, that although Addison was no doubt profoundly unlearned in Shakspeare's language, and thoroughly unable to do him justice, (and this we might well assume, since his great rival, Pope, who had expressly studied Shakspeare, was, after all, so memorably deficient in the appropriate knowledge,) — yet, that of course he had a vague popular knowl-

edge of the mighty poet's cardinal dramas. Accident only led us into a discovery of our mistake. Twice or thrice we had observed, that if Shakspeare were quoted, that paper turned out not to be Addison's; and at length, by express examination, we ascertained the curious fact, that Addison has never in one instance quoted or made any reference to Shakspeare. But was this, as Steevens most disingenuously pretends, to be taken as an exponent of the public feeling towards Shakspeare? Was Addison's neglect representative of a general neglect? If so, whence came Rowe's edition, Pope's, Theobald's, Sir Thomas Hanmer's, Bishop Warburton's, all upon the heels of one another? With such facts staring him in the face, how shameless must be that critic who could, in support of such a thesis, refer to '*the author of the Tatler*,' contemporary with all these editors. The truth is, Addison was well aware of Shakspeare's hold on the popular mind; too well aware of it. The feeble constitution of the poetic faculty, as existing in himself, forbade his sympathizing with Shakspeare; the proportions were too colossal for his delicate vision; and yet, as one who sought popularity himself, he durst not shock what perhaps he viewed as a national prejudice. Those who have happened, like ourselves, to see the effect of passionate music and 'deep-inwoven harmonics' upon the feeling of an idiot,[3] may conceive what we mean. Such music does not utterly revolt the idiot; on the contrary, it has a strange but a horrid fascination for him; it alarms, irritates, disturbs, makes him profoundly unhappy; and chiefly by unlocking imperfect glimpses of thoughts and slumbering instincts, which it is for his peace to have entirely obscured, because for him

they can be revealed only partially, and with the sad effect of throwing a baleful gleam upon his blighted condition. Do we mean, then, to compare Addison with an idiot? Not generally, by any means. Nobody can more sincerely admire him where he was a man of real genius, viz., in his delineations of character and manners, or in the exquisite delicacies of his humor. But assuredly Addison, as a poet, was amongst the sons of the feeble; and between the authors of Cato and of King Lear there was a gulf never to be bridged over.[4]

But Dryden, we are told, pronounced Shakspeare already in *his* day '*a little obsolete.*' Here now we have wilful, deliberate falsehood. *Obsolete*, in Dryden's meaning, does not imply that he was so with regard to his popularity, (the question then at issue,) but with regard to his diction and choice of words. To cite Dryden as a witness for any purpose against Shakspeare, — Dryden, who of all men had the most ransacked wit and exhausted language in celebrating the supremacy of Shakspeare's genius, does indeed require as much shamelessness in feeling as mendacity in principle.

But then Lord Shaftesbury, who may be taken as half way between Dryden and Pope, (Dryden died in 1700, Pope was then twelve years old, and Lord S. wrote chiefly, we believe, between 1700 and 1710,) 'complains,' it seems, 'of his rude unpolished style, and his antiquated phrase and wit.' What if he does? Let the whole truth be told, and then we shall see how much stress is to be laid upon such a judgment. The second Lord Shaftesbury, the author of the Characteristics, was the grandson of that famous political agitator,

the Chancellor Shaftesbury, who passed his whole life in storms of his own creation. The second Lord Shaftesbury was a man of crazy constitution, querulous from ill health, and had received an eccentric education from his eccentric grandfather. He was practised daily in *talking* Latin, to which afterwards he added a competent study of the Greek; and finally he became unusually learned for his rank, but the most absolute and undistinguished pedant that perhaps literature has to show. He sneers continually at the regular built academic pedant; but he himself, though no academic, was essentially the very impersonation of pedantry. No thought however beautiful, no image however magnificent, could conciliate his praise as long as it was clothed in English; but present him with the most trivial commonplaces in Greek, and he unaffectedly fancied them divine; mistaking the pleasurable sense of his own power in a difficult and rare accomplishment for some peculiar force or beauty in the passage. Such was the outline of his literary taste. And was it upon Shakspeare only, or upon him chiefly, that he lavished his pedantry? Far from it. He attacked Milton with no less fervor; he attacked Dryden with a thousand times more. Jeremy Taylor he quoted only to ridicule; and even Locke, the confidential friend of his grandfather, he never alludes to without a sneer. As to Shakspeare, so far from Lord Shaftesbury's censures arguing his deficient reputation, the very fact of his noticing him at all proves his enormous popularity; for upon system he noticed those only who ruled the public taste. The insipidity of his objections to Shakspeare may be judged from this, that he comments in a spirit of absolute puerility upon the name

Desdemona, as though intentionally formed from the Greek word for *superstition*. In fact, he had evidently read little beyond the list of names in Shakspeare; yet there is proof enough that the irresistible beauty of what little he *had* read was too much for all his pedantry, and startled him exceedingly; for ever afterwards he speaks of Shakspeare as one who, with a little aid from Grecian sources, really had something great and promising about him. As to modern authors, neither this Lord Shaftesbury nor Addison read any thing for the latter years of their lives but Bayle's Dictionary. And most of the little scintillations of erudition, which may be found in the notes to the Characteristics, and in the Essays of Addison, are derived, almost without exception, and uniformly without acknowledgment, from Bayle.[5]

Finally, with regard to the sweeping assertion, that for nearly a hundred years after his death Shakspeare was almost entirely neglected,' we shall meet this scandalous falsehood, by a rapid view of his fortunes during the century in question. The tradition has always been, that Shakspeare was honored by the especial notice of Queen Elizabeth, as well as by that of James I. At one time we were disposed to question the truth of this tradition; but that was for want of having read attentively the lines of Ben Jonson to the memory of Shakspeare, those generous lines which have so absurdly been taxed with faint praise. Jonson could make no mistake on this point; he, as one of Shakspeare's familiar companions, must have witnessed at the very time, and accompanied with friendly sympathy, every motion of royal favor towards Shakspeare. Now he, in words which leave no room for doubt, exclaims,

'Sweet swan of Avon, what a sight it were
To see thee in our waters yet appear;
And make those flights upon the banks of Thames,
That so did take Eliza and our James.'

These princes, then, *were* taken, were fascinated, with some of Shakspeare's dramas. In Elizabeth the approbation would probably be sincere. In James we can readily suppose it to have been assumed; for he was a pedant in a different sense from Lord Shaftesbury; not from undervaluing modern poetry, but from caring little or nothing for any poetry, although he wrote about its mechanic rules. Still the royal *imprimatur* would be influential and serviceable no less when offered hypocritically than in full sincerity. Next let us consider at the very moment of Shakspeare's death, who were the leaders of the British youth, the *principes juventutis*, in the two fields, equally important to a great poet's fame, of rank and of genius. The Prince of Wales and John Milton; the first being then about sixteen years old, the other about eight. Now these two great powers, as we may call them, these presiding stars over all that was English in thought and action, were both impassioned admirers of Shakspeare. Each of them counts for many thousands. The Prince of Wales[6] had learned to appreciate Shakspeare, not originally from reading him, but from witnessing the court representations of his plays at Whitehall. Afterwards we know that he made Shakspeare his closet companion, for he was reproached with doing so by Milton. And we know also, from the just criticism pronounced upon the character and diction of Caliban by one of Charles's confidential counsellors, Lord Falkland, that the king's

admiration of Shakspeare had impressed a determination upon the court reading. As to Milton, by double prejudices, puritanical and classical, his mind had been preoccupied against the full impressions of Shakspeare. And we know that there is such a thing as keeping the sympathies of love and admiration in a dormant state, or state of abeyance; an effort of self-conquest realized in more cases than one by the ancient fathers, both Greek and Latin, with regard to the profane classics. Intellectually they admired, and would not belie their admiration; but they did not give their hearts cordially, they did not abandon themselves to their natural impulses. They averted their eyes and weaned their attention from the dazzling object. Such, probably, was Milton's state of feeling towards Shakspeare after 1642, when the theatres were suppressed, and the fanatical fervor in its noontide heat. Yet even then he did not belie his reverence intellectually for Shakspeare: and in his younger days we know that he had spoken more enthusiastically of Shakspeare, than he ever did again of any uninspired author. Not only did he address a sonnet to his memory, in which he declares that kings would wish to die, if by dying they could obtain such a monument in the hearts of men; but he also speaks of him in his *Il Penseroso*, as the tutelary genius of the English stage. In this transmission of the torch (λαμπαδοφορια) Dryden succeeds to Milton; he was born nearly thirty years later; about thirty years they were contemporaries; and by thirty years, or nearly, Dryden survived his great leader. Dryden, in fact, lived out the seventeenth century. And we have now arrived within nine years of the era, when the critical editions started in hot succession to

one another. The names we have mentioned were the great influential names of the century. But of inferior homage there was no end. How came Betterton the actor, how came Davenant, how came Rowe, or Pope, by their intense (if not always sound) admiration for Shakspeare, unless they had found it fuming upwards like incense to the pagan deities in ancient times, from altars erected at every turning upon all the paths of men?

But it is objected that inferior dramatists were sometimes preferred to Shakspeare; and again that vile travesties of Shakspeare were preferred to the authentic dramas. As to the first argument, let it be remembered, that if the saints in the chapel are always in the same honor, because *there* men are simply discharging a duty, which once due will be due forever; the saints of the theatre, on the other hand, must bend to the local genius, and to the very reasons for having a theatre at all. Men go thither for amusement. This is the paramount purpose, and even acknowledged merit or absolute superiority must give way to it. Does a man at Paris expect to see Molière reproduced in proportion to his admitted precedency in the French drama? On the contrary, that very precedency argues such a familiarization with his works, that those who are in quest of relation will reasonably prefer any recent drama to that which, having lost all its novelty, has lost much of its excitement. We speak of ordinary minds; but in cases of *public* entertainments, deriving part of their power from scenery and stage pomp, novelty is for all minds an essential condition of attraction. Moreover, in some departments of the comic, Beaumont and Fletcher, when writing in com-

bination, really had a freedom and breadth of manner which excels the comedy of Shakspeare. As to the altered Shakspeare as taking precedency of the genuine Shakspeare, no argument can be so frivolous. The public were never allowed a choice; the great majority of an audience even now cannot be expected to carry the real Shakspeare in their mind, so as to pursue a comparison between that and the alteration. Their comparisons must be exclusively amongst what they have opportunities of seeing; that is, between the various pieces presented to them by the managers of theatres. Further than this, it is impossible for them to extend their office of judging and collating; and the degenerate taste which substituted the caprices of Davenant, the rants of Dryden, or the filth of Tate, for the jewelry of Shakspeare, cannot with any justice be charged upon the public, not one in a thousand of whom was furnished with any means of comparing, but exclusively upon those (viz., theatrical managers,) who had the very amplest. Yet even in excuse for *them* much may be said. The very length of some plays compelled them to make alterations. The best of Shakspeare's dramas, King Lear, is the least fitted for representation; and even for the vilest alteration, it ought in candor to be considered that possession is nine points of the law. He who would not have introduced, was often obliged to retain.

Finally, it is urged that the small number of editions through which Shakspeare passed in the seventeenth century, furnishes a separate argument, and a conclusive one against his popularity. We answer, that, considering the bulk of his plays collectively, the editions were *not* few. Compared with any known

case, the copies sold of Shakspeare were quite as many as could be expected under the circumstances. Ten or fifteen times as much consideration went to the purchase of one great folio like Shakspeare, as would attend the purchase of a little volume like Waller or Donne. Without reviews, or newspapers, or advertisements, to diffuse the knowledge of books, the progress of literature was necessarily slow, and its expansion narrow. But this is a topic which has already been treated unfairly, not with regard to Shakspeare only, but to Milton, as well as many others. The truth is, we have not facts enough to guide us; for the number of editions often tells nothing accurately as to the number of copies. With respect to Shakspeare it is certain, that, had his masterpieces been gathered into small volumes, Shakspeare would have had a most extensive sale. As it was, there can be no doubt, that from his own generation, throughout the seventeenth century, and until the eighteenth began to accommodate, not any greater popularity in *him*, but a greater taste for reading in the public, his fame never ceased to be viewed as a national trophy of honor; and the most illustrious men of the seventeenth century were no whit less fervent in their admiration than those of the eighteenth and the nineteenth, either as respected its strength and sincerity, or as respected its open profession.[7]

It is therefore a false notion, that the general sympathy with the merits of Shakspeare ever beat with a languid or intermitting pulse. Undoubtedly, in times when the functions of critical journals and of newspapers were not at hand to diffuse or to strengthen the impressions which emanated from the capital, all opin-

ions must have travelled slowly into the provinces. But even then, whilst the perfect organs of communication were wanting, indirect substitutes were supplied by the necessities of the times, or by the instincts of political zeal. Two channels especially lay open between the great central organ of the national mind, and the remotest provinces. Parliaments were occasionally summoned, (for the judges' circuits were too brief to produce much effect,) and during their longest suspensions, the nobility, with large retinues, continually resorted to the court. But an intercourse more constant and more comprehensive was maintained through the agency of the two universities. Already, in the time of James I., the growing importance of the gentry, and the consequent birth of a new interest in political questions, had begun to express itself at Oxford, and still more so at Cambridge. Academic persons stationed themselves as sentinels at London, for the purpose of watching the court and the course of public affairs. These persons wrote letters, like those of the celebrated Joseph Mede, which we find in Ellis's Historical Collections, reporting to their fellow-collegians all the novelties of public life as they arose, or personally carried down such reports, and thus conducted the general feelings at the centre into lesser centres, from which again they were diffused into the ten thousand parishes of England; for, (with a very few exceptions in favor of poor benefices, Welsh or Cumbrian,) every parish priest must unavoidably have spent his three years at one or other of the English universities. And by this mode of diffusion it is, that we can explain the strength with which Shakspeare's thoughts and diction impressed themselves from a very

early period upon the national literature, and even more generally upon the national thinking and conversation.[8]

The question, therefore, revolves upon us in threefold difficulty — How, having stepped thus prematurely into this inheritance of fame, leaping, as it were, thus abruptly into the favor alike of princes and the enemies of princes, had it become possible that in his native place, (honored still more in the final testimonies of his preference when founding a family mansion,) such a man's history, and the personal recollections which cling so affectionately to the great intellectual potentates who have recommended themselves by gracious manners, could so soon and so utterly have been obliterated?

Malone, with childish irreflection, ascribes the loss of such memorials to the want of enthusiasm in his admirers. Local researches into private history had not then commenced. Such a taste, often petty enough in its management, was the growth of after ages. Else how came Spenser's life and fortunes to be so utterly overwhelmed in oblivion? No poet of a high order could be more popular.

The answer we believe to be this: Twenty-six years after Shakspeare's death commenced the great parliamentary war. This it was, and the local feuds arising to divide family from family, brother from brother, upon which we must charge the extinction of traditions and memorials, doubtless abundant up to that era. The parliamentary contest, it will be said, did not last above three years; the king's standard having been first raised at Nottingham in August, 1642, and the battle of Naseby (which terminated the open warfare)

having been fought in June, 1645. Or even if we extend its duration to the surrender of the last garrison, that war terminated in the spring of 1646. And the brief explosions of insurrection or of Scottish invasion, which occurred on subsequent occasions, were all locally confined, and none came near to Warwickshire, except the battle of Worcester, more than five years after. This is true; but a short war will do much to efface recent and merely personal memorials. And the following circumstances of the war were even more important than the general fact.

First of all, the very mansion founded by Shakspeare became the military head-quarters for the queen, in 1644, when marching from the eastern coast of England to join the king in Oxford; and one such special visitation would be likely to do more serious mischief in the way of extinction, than many years of general warfare. Secondly, as a fact, perhaps, equally important, Birmingham, the chief town of Warwickshire, and the adjacent district, the seat of our hardware manufactures, was the very focus of disaffection towards the royal cause. Not only, therefore, would this whole region suffer more from internal and spontaneous agitation, but it would be the more frequently traversed vindictively from without, and harassed by flying parties from Oxford, or others of the king's garrisons. Thirdly, even apart from the political aspects of Warwickshire, this county happens to be the central one of England, as regards the roads between the north and south; and Birmingham has long been the great central axis,[9] in which all the radii from the four angles of England proper meet and intersect. Mere accident, therefore, of local position, much more

when united with that avowed inveteracy of malignant feeling, which was bitter enough to rouse a re-action of bitterness in the mind of Lord Clarendon, would go far to account for the wreck of many memorials relating to Shakspeare, as well as for the subversion of that quiet and security for humble life, in which the traditional memory finds its best *nidus*. Thus we obtain one solution, and perhaps the main one, of the otherwise mysterious oblivion which had swept away all traces of the mighty poet, by the time when those quiet days revolved upon England, in which again the solitary agent of learned research might roam in security from house to house, gleaning those personal remembrances which, even in the fury of civil strife, might long have lingered by the chimney corner. But the fierce furnace of war had probably, by its *local* ravages, scorched this field of natural tradition, and thinned the gleaner's inheritance by three parts out of four. This, we repeat, may be one part of the solution to this difficult problem.

And if another is still demanded, possibly it may be found in the fact, hostile to the perfect consecration of Shakspeare's memory, that, after all, he was a player. Many a coarse-minded country gentleman, or village pastor, who would have held his town glorified by the distinction of having sent forth a great judge or an eminent bishop, might disdain to cherish the personal recollections which surrounded one whom custom regarded as little above a mountebank, and the illiberal law as a vagabond. The same degrading appreciation attached both to the actor in plays and to their author. The contemptuous appellation of 'play-book,' served as readily to degrade the mighty volume which con-

tained Lear and Hamlet, as that of 'play-actor,' or 'player-man,' has always served with the illiberal or the fanatical to dishonor the persons of Roscius or of Garrick, of Talma or of Siddons. Nobody, indeed, was better aware of this than the noble-minded Shakspeare; and feelingly he has breathed forth in his sonnets this conscious oppression under which he lay of public opinion, unfavorable by a double title to his own pretensions; for, being both dramatic author and dramatic performer, he found himself heir to a twofold opprobrium, and at an era of English society when the weight of that opprobrium was heaviest. In reality, there was at this period a collision of forces acting in opposite directions upon the estimation of the stage and scenical art, and therefore of all the ministers in its equipage. Puritanism frowned upon these pursuits, as ruinous to public morals; on the other hand, loyalty could not but tolerate what was patronized by the sovereign; and it happened that Elizabeth, James, and Charles I., were all alike lovers and promoters of theatrical amusements, which were indeed more indispensable to the relief of court ceremony, and the monotony of aulic pomp, than in any other region of life. This royal support, and the consciousness that any brilliant success in these arts implied an unusual share of natural endowments, did something in mitigation of a scorn which must else have been intolerable to all generous natures.

But whatever prejudice might thus operate against the perfect sanctity of Shakspeare's posthumous reputation, it is certain that the splendor of his worldly success must have done much to obliterate that effect; his admirable colloquial talents a good deal, and his

gracious affability still more. The wonder, therefore, will still remain, that Betterton, in less than a century from his death, should have been able to glean so little. And for the solution of this wonder, we must throw ourselves chiefly upon the explanations we have made as to the parliamentary war, and the local ravages of its progress in the very district, of the very town, and the very house.

If further arguments are still wanted to explain this mysterious abolition, we may refer the reader to the following succession of disastrous events, by which it should seem that a perfect malice of misfortune pursued the vestiges of the mighty poet's steps. In 1613, the Globe theatre, with which he had been so long connected, was burned to the ground. Soon afterwards a great fire occurred in Stratford; and next, (without counting upon the fire of London; just fifty years after his death, which, however, would consume many an important record from periods far more remote,) the house of Ben Jonson, in which probably, as Mr. Campbell suggests, might be parts of his correspondence, was also burned. Finally, there was an old tradition that Lady Barnard, the sole grand-daughter of Shakspeare, had carried off many of his papers from Stratford, and these papers have never since been traced.

In many of the elder lives it has been asserted, that John Shakspeare, the father of the poet, was a butcher, and in others that he was a woolstapler. It is now settled beyond dispute that he was a glover. This was his professed occupation in Stratford, though it is certain that, with this leading trade, from which he took his denomination, he combined some collateral pur-

suits; and it is possible enough that, as openings offered, he may have meddled with many. In that age, in a provincial town, nothing like the exquisite subdivision of labor was attempted which we now see realized in the great cities of Christendom. And one trade is often found to play into another with so much reciprocal advantage, that even in our own days we do not much wonder at an enterprising man, in country places, who combines several in his own person. Accordingly, John Shakspeare is known to have united with his town calling the rural and miscellaneous occupations of a farmer.

Meantime his avowed business stood upon a very different footing from the same trade as it is exercised in modern times. Gloves were in that age an article of dress more costly by much, and more elaborately decorated, than in our own. They were a customary present from some cities to the judges of assize, and to other official persons; a custom of ancient standing, and in some places, we believe, still subsisting; and in such cases it is reasonable to suppose that the gloves must originally have been more valuable than the trivial modern article of the same name. So also, perhaps, in their origin, of the gloves given at funerals. In reality, whenever the simplicity of an age makes it difficult to renew the parts of a wardrobe, except in capital towns of difficult access, prudence suggests that such wares should be manufactured of more durable materials; and, being so, they become obviously susceptible of more lavish ornament. But it will not follow, from this essential difference in the gloves of Shakspeare's age, that the glover's occupation was more lucrative. Doubtless he sold more costly gloves,

and upon each pair had a larger profit, but for that very reason he sold fewer. Two or three gentlemen 'of worship' in the neighborhood might occasionally require a pair of gloves, but it is very doubtful whether any inhabitant of Stratford would ever call for so mere a luxury.

The practical result, at all events, of John Shakspeare's various pursuits, does not appear permanently to have met the demands of his establishment, and in his maturer years there are indications still surviving that he was under a cloud of embarrassment. He certainly lost at one time his social position in the town of Stratford; but there is a strong presumption, in *our* construction of the case, that he finally retrieved it; and for this retrieval of a station, which he had forfeited by personal misfortunes or neglect, he was altogether indebted to the filial piety of his immortal son.

Meantime the earlier years of the elder Shakspeare wore the aspect of rising prosperity, however unsound might be the basis on which it rested. There can be little doubt that William Shakspeare, from his birth up to his tenth or perhaps his eleventh year, lived in careless plenty, and saw nothing in his father's house but that style of liberal housekeeping, which has ever distinguished the upper yeomanry and the rural gentry of England. Probable enough it is, that the resources for meeting this liberality were not strictly commensurate with the family income, but were sometimes allowed to entrench, by means of loans or mortgages, upon capital funds. The stress upon the family finances was perhaps at times severe; and that it was borne at all, must be imputed to the large and even splendid

portion which John Shakspeare received with his wife.

This lady, for such she really was in an eminent sense, by birth as well as by connections, bore the beautiful name of Mary Arden, a name derived from the ancient forest district [10] of the country; and doubtless she merits a more elaborate notice than our slender materials will furnish. To have been *the mother of Shakspeare*, — how august a title to the reverence of infinite generations and of centuries beyond the vision of prophecy. A plausible hypothesis has been started in modern times, that the facial structure, and that the intellectual conformation, may be deduced more frequently from the corresponding characteristics in the mother than in the father. It is certain that no very great man has ever existed, but that his greatness has been rehearsed and predicted in one or other of his parents. And it cannot be denied that in the most eminent men, where we have had the means of pursuing the investigation, the mother has more frequently been repeated and reproduced than the father. We have known cases where the mother has furnished all the intellect, and the father all the moral sensibility, upon which assumption, the wonder ceases that Cicero, Lord Chesterfield, and other brilliant men, who took the utmost pains with their sons, should have failed so conspicuously; for possibly the mothers had been women of excessive and even exemplary stupidity. In the case of Shakspeare, each parent, if we had any means of recovering their characteristics, could not fail to furnish a study of the most profound interest; and with regard to his mother in particular, if the modern hypothesis be true, and if we are indeed to deduce

from *her* the stupendous intellect of her son, in that case she must have been a benefactress to her husband's family, beyond the promises of fairy land or the dreams of romance; for it is certain that to her chiefly this family was also indebted for their worldly comfort.

Mary Arden was the youngest daughter and the heiress of Robert Arden, of Wilmecote, Esq., in the county of Warwick. The family of Arden was even then of great antiquity. About one century and a quarter before the birth of William Shakspeare, a person bearing the same name as his maternal grandfather had been returned by the commissioners in their list of the Warwickshire gentry; he was there styled Robert Arden, Esq., of Bromich. This was in 1433, or the 12th year of Henry VI. In Henry VII.'s reign, the Arden's received a grant of lands from the crown; and in 1568, four years after the birth of William Shakspeare, Edward Arden, of the same family, was sheriff of the county. Mary Arden was, therefore, a young lady of excellent descent and connections, and an heiress of considerable wealth. She brought to her husband, as her marriage portion, the landed estate of Asbies, which, upon any just valuation, must be considered as a handsome dowry for a woman of her station. As this point has been contested, and as it goes a great way towards determining the exact social position of the poet's parents, let us be excused for sifting it a little more narrowly than might else seem warranted by the proportions of our present life. Every question which it can be reasonable to raise at all, it must be reasonable to treat with at least so much of minute research, as may justify the conclusions which it is made to support.

The estate of Asbies contained fifty acres of arable land, six of meadow, and a right of commonage. What may we assume to have been the value of its fee-simple? Malone, who allows the total fortune of Mary Arden to have been £110 13*s.* 4*d.*, is sure that the value of Asbies could not have been more than one hundred pounds. But why? Because, says he, the 'average' rent of land at that time was no more than three shillings per acre. This we deny; but upon that assumption, the total yearly rent of fifty-six acres would be exactly eight guineas.[11] And therefore, in assigning the value of Asbies at one hundred pounds, it appears that Malone must have estimated the land at no more than twelve years' purchase, which would carry the value to £100 16*s.* 'Even at this estimate,' as the latest annotator[12] on this subject *justly* observes, 'Mary Arden's portion was a larger one than was usually given to a landed gentleman's daughter.' But this writer objects to Malone's principle of valuation. 'We find,' says he, 'that John Shakspeare also farmed the meadow of Tugton, containing sixteen acres, at the rate of eleven shillings per acre. Now what proof has Mr. Malone adduced, that the acres of Asbies were not as valuable as those of Tugton? And if they were so, the former estate must have been worth between three and four hundred pounds.' In the main drift of his objections we concur with Mr. Campbell. But as they are liable to some criticism, let us clear the ground of all plausible cavils, and then see what will be the result. Malone, had he been alive, would probably have answered that Tugton was a farm especially privileged by nature; and that if any man contended for so unusual a rent as eleven

shillings an acre for land not known to him, the *onus probandi* would lie upon *him*. Be it so; eleven shillings is certainly above the ordinary level of rent, but three shillings is below it. We contend, that for tolerably good land, situated advantageously, that is, with a ready access to good markets and good fairs, such as those of Coventry, Birmingham, Gloucester, Worcester, Shrewsbury, &c., one noble might be assumed as the annual rent; and that in such situations twenty years' purchase was not a valuation, even in Elizabeth's reign, very unusual. Let us, however, assume the rent at only five shillings, and land at sixteen years' purchase. Upon this basis, the rent would be £14, and the value of the fee-simple £224. Now, if it were required to equate that sum with its present value, a very operose [13] calculation might be requisite. But contenting ourselves with the gross method of making such equations between 1560 and the current century, that is, multiplying by five, we shall find the capital value of the estate to be eleven hundred and twenty pounds, whilst the annual rent would be exactly seventy. But if the estate had been sold, and the purchase-money lent upon mortgage, (the only safe mode of investing money at that time,) the annual interest would have reached £28, equal to £140 of modern money; for mortgages in Elizabeth's age readily produced ten per cent.

A woman who should bring at this day an annual income of £140 to a provincial tradesman, living in a sort of *rus in urbe*, according to the simple fashions of rustic life, would assuredly be considered as an excellent match. And there can be little doubt that Mary Arden's dowry it was which, for some ten or a dozen

years succeeding to his marriage, raised her husband to so much social consideration in Stratford. In 1550 John Shakspeare is supposed to have first settled in Stratford, having migrated from some other part of Warwickshire. In 1557 he married Mary Arden; in 1565, the year subsequent to the birth of his son William, his third child, he was elected one of the aldermen; and in the year 1568 he became first magistrate of the town, by the title of high bailiff. This year we may assume to have been that in which the prosperity of this family reached its zenith; for in this year it was, over and above the presumptions furnished by his civic honors, that he obtained a grant of arms from Clarencieux of the Heralds' College. On this occasion he declared himself worth five hundred pounds derived from his ancestors. And we really cannot understand the right by which critics, living nearly three centuries from his time, undertake to know his affairs better than himself, and to tax him with either inaccuracy or falsehood. No man would be at leisure to court heraldic honors, when he knew himself to be embarrassed, or apprehended that he soon might be so. A man whose anxieties had been fixed at all upon his daily livelihood would, by this chase after the aërial honors of heraldry, have made himself a butt for ridicule, such as no fortitude could enable him to sustain.

In 1568, therefore, when his son William would be moving through his fifth year, John Shakspeare, (now honored by the designation of *Master*,) would be found at times in the society of the neighboring gentry. Ten years in advance of this period he was already in difficulties. But there is no proof that these difficulties

had then reached a point of degradation, or of memorable distress. The sole positive indications of his decaying condition are, that in 1578 he received an exemption from the small weekly assessment levied upon the aldermen of Stratford for the relief of the poor; and that in the following year, 1579, he is found enrolled amongst the defaulters in the payment of taxes. The latter fact undoubtedly goes to prove that, like every man who is falling back in the world, he was occasionally in arrears. Paying taxes is not like the honors awarded or the possessions regulated by the Clarencieux; no man is ambitious of precedency there; and if a laggard pace in that duty is to be received as evidence of pauperism, nine tenths of the English people might occasionally be classed as paupers. With respect to his liberation from the weekly assessment, that may bear a construction different from the one which it has received. This payment, which could never have been regarded as a burden, not amounting to five pounds annually of our present money, may have been held up as an exponent of wealth and consideration; and John Shakspeare may have been required to resign it as an honorable distinction, not suitable to the circumstances of an embarrassed man. Finally, the fact of his being indebted to Robert Sadler, a baker, in the sum of five pounds, and his being under the necessity of bringing a friend as security for the payment, proves nothing at all. There is not a town in Europe, in which opulent men cannot be found that are backward in the payment of their debts. And the probability is, that Master Sadler acted like most people who, when they suppose a man to be going down in the world, feel their

respect for him sensibly decaying, and think it wise to trample him under foot, provided only in that act of trampling they can squeeze out of him their own individual debt. Like that terrific chorus in Spohr's oratorio of St. Paul, '*Stone him to death*,' is the cry of the selfish and the illiberal amongst creditors, alike towards the just and the unjust amongst debtors.

It was the wise and beautiful prayer of Agar, 'Give me neither poverty nor riches;' and, doubtless, for quiet, for peace, and the *latentis semita vitæ*, that is the happiest dispensation. But, perhaps, with a view to a school of discipline and of moral fortitude, it might be a more salutary prayer, 'Give me riches *and* poverty, and afterwards neither.' For the transitorial state between riches and poverty will teach a lesson both as to the baseness and the goodness of human nature, and will impress that lesson with a searching force, such as no borrowed experience ever can approach. Most probable it is that Shakspeare drew some of his powerful scenes in the Timon of Athens, those which exhibit the vileness of ingratitude and the impassioned frenzy of misanthropy, from his personal recollections connected with the case of his own father. Possibly, though a cloud of two hundred and seventy years now veils it, this very Master Sadler, who was so urgent for his five pounds, and who so little apprehended that he should be called over the coals for it in the Encyclopædia Britannica, may have sate for the portrait of that Lucullus who says of Timon:

'Alas, good lord! a noble gentleman 'tis, if he would not keep so good a house. Many a time and often I have dined with him, and told him on't; and come again to supper to him, of purpose to have him spend less; and yet he

would embrace no counsel, take no warning by my coming. Every man has his fault, and honesty is his; I have told him on't; but could never get him from it.'

For certain years, perhaps, John Shakspeare moved on in darkness and sorrow:

> 'His familiars from his buried fortunes
> Slunk all away; left their false vows with him,
> Like empty purses pick'd; and his poor self,
> A dedicated beggar to the air,
> With his disease of all shunn'd poverty,
> Walk'd, like contempt, alone.'

We, however, at this day, are chiefly interested in the case as it bears upon the education and youthful happiness of the poet. Now if we suppose that from 1568, the high noon of the family prosperity, to 1578, the first year of their mature embarrassments, one half the interval was passed in stationary sunshine, and the latter half in the gradual twilight of declension, it will follow that the young William had completed his tenth year before he heard the first signals of distress; and for so long a period his education would probably be conducted on as liberal a scale as the resources of Stratford would allow. Through this earliest section of his life he would undoubtedly rank as a gentleman's son, possibly as the leader of his class, in Stratford. But what rank he held through the next ten years, or, more generally, what was the standing in society of Shakspeare until he had created a new station for himself by his own exertions in the metropolis, is a question yet unsettled, but which has been debated as keenly as if it had some great dependencies. Upon this we shall observe, that could we by possibility be called to settle beforehand what rank were best for

favoring the development of intellectual powers, the question might wear a face of deep practical importance; but when the question is simply as to a matter of fact, what *was* the rank held by a man whose intellectual development has long ago been completed, this becomes a mere question of curiosity. The tree has fallen; it is confessedly the noblest of all the forest; and we must therefore conclude that the soil in which it flourished was either the best possible, or, if not so, that anything bad in its properties had been disarmed and neutralized by the vital forces of the plant, or by the benignity of nature. If any future Shakspeare were likely to arise, it might be a problem of great interest to agitate, whether the condition of a poor man or of a gentleman were best fitted to nurse and stimulate his faculties. But for the actual Shakspeare, since what he was he was, and since nothing greater can be imagined, it is now become a matter of little moment whether his course lay for fifteen or twenty years through the humilities of absolute poverty, or through the chequered paths of gentry lying in the shade. Whatever *was*, must, in this case at least, have been the best, since it terminated in producing Shakspeare; and thus far we must all be optimists.

Yet still, it will be urged, the curiosity is not illiberal which would seek to ascertain the precise career through which Shakspeare ran. This we readily concede; and we are anxious ourselves to contribute anything in our power to the settlement of a point so obscure. What we have wished to protest against, is the spirit of partisanship in which this question has too generally been discussed. For, whilst some with a foolish affectation of plebeian sympathies overwhelm us

with the insipid commonplaces about birth and ancient descent, as honors containing nothing meritorious, and rush eagerly into an ostentaticus exhibition of all the circumstances which favor the notion of a humble station and humble connections; others, with equal forgetfulness of true dignity, plead with the intemperance and partiality of a legal advocate for the pretensions of Shakspeare to the hereditary rank of gentleman. Both parties violate the majesty of the subject. When we are seeking for the sources of the Euphrates or the St. Lawrence, we look for no proportions to the mighty volume of waters in that particular summit amongst the chain of mountains which embosoms its earliest fountains, nor are we shocked at the obscurity of these fountains. Pursuing the career of Mahommed, or of any man who has memorably impressed his own mind or agency upon the revolutions of mankind, we feel solicitude about the circumstances which might surround his cradle to be altogether unseasonable and impertinent. Whether he were born in a hovel or a palace, whether he passed his infancy in squalid poverty, or hedged around by the glittering spears of bodyguards, as mere questions of fact may be interesting; but, in the light of either accessories or counter-agencies to the native majesty of the subject, are trivial and below all philosophic valuation. So with regard to the creator of Lear and Hamlet, of Othello and Macbeth; to him from whose golden urns the nations beyond the far Atlantic, the multitude of the isles, and the generations unborn in Australian climes, even to the realms of the rising sun (the ἀνατολαι ἡελιοιο,) must in every age draw perennial streams of intellectual life, we feel that the little accidents of birth and social condition

are so unspeakably below the grandeur of the theme, are so irrelevant and disproportioned to the real interest at issue, so incommensurable with any of its relations, that a biographer of Shakspeare at once denounces himself as below his subject, if he can entertain such a question as seriously affecting the glory of the poet. In some legends of saints, we find that they were born with a lambent circle or golden aureola about their heads. This angelic coronet shed light alike upon the chambers of a cottage or a palace, upon the gloomy limits of a dungeon, or the vast expansion of a cathedral; but the cottage, the palace, the dungeon, the cathedral, were all equally incapable of adding one ray of color or one pencil of light to the supernatural halo.

Having, therefore, thus pointedly guarded ourselves from misconstruction, and consenting to entertain the question as one in which we, the worshippers of Shakspeare, have an interest of curiosity, but in which he, the object of our worship, has no interest of glory, we proceed to state what appears to us the result of the scanty facts surviving when collated with each other.

By his mother's side, Shakspeare was an authentic gentleman. By his father's he would have stood in a more dubious position: but the effect of municipal honors to raise and illustrate an equivocal rank, has always been acknowledged under the popular tendencies of our English political system. From the sort of lead, therefore, which John Shakspeare took at one time amongst his fellow-townsmen, and from his rank of first magistrate, we may presume that, about the year 1568, he had placed himself at the head of the

Stratford community. Afterwards he continued for some years to descend from this altitude; and the question is, at what point this gradual degradation may be supposed to have settled. Now we shall avow it as our opinion, that the composition of society in Stratford was such that, even had the Shakspeare family maintained their superiority, the main body of their daily associates must still have been found amongst persons below the rank of gentry. The poet must inevitably have mixed chiefly with mechanics and humble tradesmen, for such people composed perhaps the total community. But had there even been a gentry in Stratford, since they would have marked the distinctions of their rank chiefly by greater reserve of manners, it is probable that, after all, Shakspeare, with his enormity of delight in exhibitions of human nature, would have mostly cultivated that class of society in which the feelings are more elementary and simple, in which the thoughts speak a plainer language, and in which the restraints of factitious or conventional decorum are exchanged for the restraints of mere sexual decency. It is a noticeable fact to all who have looked upon human life with an eye of strict attention, that the abstract image of womanhood, in its loveliness, its delicacy, and its modesty, nowhere makes itself more impressive or more advantageously felt than in the humblest cottages, because it is there brought into immediate juxtaposition with the grossness of manners, and the careless license of language incident to the fathers and brothers of the house. And this is more especially true in a nation of unaffected sexual gallantry,[14] such as the English and the Gothic races in general; since, under the immunity which their women

enjoy from all servile labors of a coarse or out-of-doors order, by as much lower as they descend in the scale of rank, by so much more do they benefit under the force of contrast with the men of their own level. A young man of that class, however noble in appearance, is somewhat degraded in the eyes of women, by the necessity which his indigence imposes of working under a master; but a beautiful young woman, in the very poorest family, unless she enters upon a life of domestic servitude, (in which case her labors are light, suited to her sex, and withdrawn from the public eye,) so long in fact as she stays under her father's roof, is as perfectly her own mistress and *sui juris* as the daughter of an earl. This personal dignity, brought into stronger relief by the mercenary employments of her male connections, and the feminine gentleness of her voice and manners, exhibited under the same advantages of contrast, oftentimes combine to make a young cottage beauty as fascinating an object as any woman of any station.

Hence we may in part account for the great event of Shakspeare's early manhood, his premature marriage. It has always been known, or at least traditionally received for a fact, that Shakspeare had married whilst yet a boy, and that his wife was unaccountably older than himself. In the very earliest biographical sketch of the poet, compiled by Rowe, from materials collected by Betterton, the actor, it was stated, (and that statement is now ascertained to have been correct,) that he had married Anne Hathaway, 'the daughter of a substantial yeoman.' Further than this nothing was known. But in September, 1836, was published a very remarkable document, which gives the assurance of law to the time and fact of this event, yet still,

unless collated with another record, does nothing to lessen the mystery which had previously surrounded its circumstances. This document consists of two parts; the first, and principal, according to the logic of the case, though second according to the arrangement, being a *license* for the marriage of William Shakspeare with Anne Hathaway, under the condition 'of *once* asking of the bannes of matrimony,' that is, in effect, dispensing with two out of the three customary askings; the second or subordinate part of the document being a *bond* entered into by two sureties, viz.: Fulke Sandells and John Rychardson, both described as *agricolæ* or yeomen, and both marksmen, (that is, incapable of writing, and therefore subscribing by means of *marks*,) for the payment of forty pounds sterling, in the event of Shakspeare, yet a minor, and incapable of binding himself, failing to fulfil the conditions of the license. In the bond, drawn up in Latin, there is no mention of Shakspeare's name; but in the license, which is altogether English, *his* name, of course, stands foremost; and, as it may gratify the reader to see the very words and orthography of the original, we here extract the *operative* part of this document, prefacing only that the license is attached by way of explanation to the bond. 'The condition of this obligation is suche, that if hereafter there shall not appere any lawfull lett or impediment, by reason of any precontract, &c., but that Willm. Shagspere, one thone ptie,' [on the one party,] 'and Anne Hathwey of Stratford, in the diocess of Worcester, maiden, may lawfully solemnize matrimony together; and in the same afterwards remaine and continew like man and wiffe. And, moreover, if the said Willm. Shagspere

do not proceed to solemnization of mariadg with the said Anne Hathwey, without the consent of hir frinds; — then the said obligation ' [viz., to pay forty pounds]* ' to be voyd and of none effect, or els to stand & abide in full force and vertue.'

What are we to think of this document? Trepidation and anxiety are written upon its face. The parties are not to be married by a special license; not even by an ordinary license; in that case no proclamation of banns, no public asking at all, would have been requisite. Economical scruples are consulted; and yet the regular movement of the marriage ' through the bell-ropes ' [15] is disturbed. Economy, which retards the marriage, is here evidently in collision with some opposite principle which precipitates it. How is all this to be explained? Much light is afforded by the date when illustrated by another document. The bond bears date on the 28th day of November, in the 25th year of our lady the queen, that is, in 1582. Now the baptism of Shakspeare's eldest child, Susanna, is registered on the 26th of May in the year following. Suppose, therefore, that his marriage was solemnized on the 1st day of December; it was barely possible that it could be earlier, considering that the sureties, drinking, perhaps, at Worcester throughout the 28th of November, would require the 29th, in so dreary a season, for their return to Stratford; after which some preparation might be requisite to the bride, since the marriage was *not* celebrated at Stratford. Next suppose the birth of Miss Susanna to have occurred, like her father's, two days before her baptism, viz., on the 24th of May. From December the 1st to May the 24th, both days inclusively, are one hundred and

seventy-five days; which, divided by seven, gives precisely twenty-five weeks, that is to say, six months short by one week. Oh, fie, Miss Susanna, you came rather before you were wanted.

Mr. Campbell's comment upon the affair is, that '*if* this was the case,' viz., if the baptism were really solemnized on the 26th of May, 'the poet's first child would *appear* to have been born only six months and eleven days after the bond was entered into.' And he then concludes that, on this assumption, 'Miss Susanna Shakspeare came into the world a little prematurely.' But this is to doubt where there never was any ground for doubting; the baptism was *certainly* on the 26th of May; and, in the next place, the calculation of six months and eleven days is sustained by substituting lunar months for calendar, and then only by supposing the marriage to have been celebrated on the very day of subscribing the bond in Worcester, and the baptism to have been coincident with the birth; of which suppositions the latter is improbable, and the former, considering the situation of Worcester, impossible.

Strange it is, that, whilst all biographers have worked with so much zeal upon the most barren dates or most baseless traditions in the great poet's life, realizing in a manner the chimeras of Laputa, and endeavoring 'to extract sunbeams from cucumbers,' such a story with regard to such an event, no fiction of village scandal, but involved in legal documents, a story so significant and so eloquent to the intelligent, should formerly have been dismissed without notice of any kind, and even now, after the discovery of 1836, with nothing beyond a slight conjectural insinuation.

For our parts, we should have been the last amongst the biographers to unearth any forgotten scandal, or after so vast a lapse of time, and when the grave had shut out all but charitable thoughts, to point any moral censures at a simple case of natural frality, youthful precipitancy of passion, of all trespasses the most venial, where the final intentions are honorable. But in this case there seems to have been something more in motion than passion or the ardor of youth. 'I like not,' says Parson Evans, (alluding to Falstaff in masquerade,) 'I like not when a woman has a great peard; I spy a great peard under her muffler.' Neither do we like the spectacle of a mature young woman, five years past her majority, wearing the semblance of having been led astray by a boy who had still two years and a half to run of his minority. Shakspeare himself, looking back on this part of his youthful history from his maturest years, breathes forth pathetic counsels against the errors into which his own inexperience had been insnared. The disparity of years between himself and his wife he notices in a beautiful scene of the Twelfth Night. The Duke, Orsino, observing the sensibility which the pretended Cesario had betrayed on hearing some touching old snatches of a love strain, swears that his beardless page must have felt the passion of love, which the other admits. Upon this the dialogue proceeds thus:

'*Duke.* What kind of woman is't?
Viola. Of your complexion.
Duke. She is not worth thee then. What years?
Viola. I' faith.
About your years, my lord.
Duke. Too old, by heaven. *Let still the woman take*
An elder than herself: so wears she to him,

So sways she level in her husband's heart.
For, boy, however we do praise ourselves,
Our fancies are more giddy and unfirm,
More longing, wavering, sooner lost and won,
Than women's are.

Viola. I think it well, my lord.

Duke. Then *let thy love be younger than thyself,*
Or thy affection cannot hold the bent;
For women are as roses, whose fair flower,
Being once display'd, doth fall that very hour.'

These counsels were uttered nearly twenty years after the event in his own life, to which they probably look back; for this play is supposed to have been written in Shakspeare's thirty-eighth year. And we may read an earnestness in pressing the point as to the *inverted* disparity of years, which indicates pretty clearly an appeal to the lessons of his personal experience. But his other indiscretion, in having yielded so far to passion and opportunity as to crop by prelibation, and before they were hallowed, those flowers of paradise which belonged to his marriage day; this he adverts to with even more solemnity of sorrow, and with more pointed energy of moral reproof, in the very last drama which is supposed to have proceeded from his pen, and therefore with the force and sanctity of testamentary counsel. The Tempest is all but ascertained to have been composed in 1611, that is, about five years before the poet's death; and indeed could not have been composed much earlier; for the very incident which suggested the basis of the plot, and of the local scene, viz., the shipwreck of Sir George Somers on the Bermudas, (which were in consequence denominated the Somers' Islands,) did not occur until the year 1609. In the opening of the

fourth act, Prospero formally betroths his daughter to Ferdinand; and in doing so he pays the prince a well-merited compliment of having 'worthily purchas'd' this rich jewel, by the patience with which, for her sake, he had supported harsh usage, and other painful circumstances of his trial. But, he adds solemnly,

> 'If thou dost break her virgin knot before
> All sanctimonious ceremonies may
> With full and holy rite be ministered;'

in that case what would follow?

> 'No sweet aspersion shall the heavens let fall,
> To make this contract grow; *but barren hate,*
> *Sour-ey'd disdain and discord, shall bestrew*
> *The union of your bed with weeds so loathly*
> *That you shall hate it both.* Therefore take heed,
> As Hymen's lamps shall light you.'

The young prince assures him in reply, that no strength of opportunity, concurring with the uttermost temptation, not

> 'the murkiest den,
> The most opportune place, the strong'st suggestion
> Our worser genius can ———,'

should ever prevail to lay asleep his jealousy of self-control, so as to take any advantage of Miranda's innocence. And he adds an argument for this abstinence, by way of reminding Prospero, that not honor only, but even prudential care of his own happiness, is interested in the observance of his promise. Any unhallowed anticipation would, as he insinuates,

> 'take away
> The edge of that day's celebration,
> When I shall think, or Phœbus' steeds are founder'd,
> Or night kept chain'd below;'

that is, when even the winged hours would seem to

move too slowly. Even thus Prospero is not quite satisfied. During his subsequent dialogue with Ariel, we are to suppose that Ferdinand, in conversing apart with Miranda, betrays more impassioned ardor than the wise magician altogether approves. The prince's caresses have not been unobserved; and thus Prospero renews his warning:

> 'Look thou be true: do not give dalliance
> Too much the rein: the strongest oaths are straw
> To the fire i' the blood: be more abstemious,
> Or else — good night your vow.'

The royal lover reassures him of his loyalty to his engagements; and again the wise father, so honorably jealous for his daughter, professes himself satisfied with the prince's pledges.

Now in all these emphatic warnings, uttering the language 'of that sad wisdom folly leaves behind,' who can avoid reading, as in subtle hieroglyphics, the secret record of Shakspeare's own nuptial disappointments? We, indeed, that is, universal posterity through every age, have reason to rejoice in these disappointments; for, to them, past all doubt, we are indebted for Shakspeare's subsequent migration to London, and his public occupation, which, giving him a deep pecuniary interest in the productions of his pen, such as no other literary application of his powers could have approached in that day, were eventually the means of drawing forth those divine works which have survived their author for our everlasting benefit.

Our own reading and deciphering of the whole case is as follows. The Shakspeares were a handsome family, both father and sons. This we assume upon the following grounds: First, on the presumption

arising out of John Shakspeare's having won the favor of a young heiress in higher rank than himself; secondly, on the presumption involved in the fact of three amongst his four sons, having gone upon the stage, to which the most obvious (and perhaps in those days a *sine qua non*) recommendation would be a good person and a pleasing countenance; thirdly, on the direct evidence of Aubrey, who assures us that William Shakspeare was a handsome and a well-shaped man; fourthly, on the implicit evidence of the Stratford monument, which exhibits a man of good figure and noble countenance; fifthly, on the confirmation of this evidence by the Chandos portrait, which exhibits noble features, illustrated by the utmost sweetness of expression; sixthly, on the selection of theatrical parts, which it is known that Shakspeare personated, most of them being such as required some dignity of form, viz., kings, the athletic (though aged) follower of an athletic young man, and supernatural beings. On these grounds, direct or circumstantial, we believe ourselves warranted in assuming that William Shakspeare was a handsome and even noble looking boy. Miss Anne Hathaway had herself probably some personal attractions; and, if an indigent girl, who looked for no pecuniary advantages, would probably have been early sought in marriage. But as the daughter of 'a substantial yeoman,' who would expect some fortune in his daughter's suitors, she had, to speak coarsely, a little outlived her market. Time she had none to lose. William Shakspeare pleased her eye; and the gentleness of his nature made him an apt subject for female blandishments, possibly for female arts. Without imputing, however, to this Anne Hathaway any thing

so hateful as a settled plot for insnaring him, it was easy enough for a mature woman, armed with such inevitable advantages of experience and of self-possession, to draw onward a blushing novice; and, without directly creating opportunities, to place him in the way of turning to account such as naturally offered. Young boys are generally flattered by the condescending notice of grown-up women; and perhaps Shakspeare's own lines upon a similar situation, to a young boy adorned with the same natural gifts as himself, may give us the key to the result:

> 'Gentle thou art, and therefore to be won;
> Beauteous thou art, therefore to be assail'd;
> And, when a woman woes, what woman's son
> Will sourly leave her till he have prevail'd?'

Once, indeed, entangled in such a pursuit, any person of manly feeling would be sensible that he had no retreat; *that* would be — to insult a woman, grievously to wound her sexual pride, and to insure her lasting scorn and hatred. These were consequences which the gentle-minded Shakspeare could not face. He pursued his good fortunes, half perhaps in heedlessness, half in desperation, until he was roused by the clamorous displeasure of her family upon first discovering the situation of their kinswoman. For such a situation there could be but one atonement, and that was hurried forward by both parties: whilst, out of delicacy towards the bride the wedding was not celebrated in Stratford, (where the register contains no notice of such an event); nor, as Malone imagined, in Weston-upon-Avon, that being in the diocese of Gloucester; but in some parish, as yet undiscovered, in the diocese of Worcester.

But now arose a serious question as to the future maintenance of the young people. John Shakspeare was depressed in his circumstances, and he had other children besides William, viz., three sons and a daughter. The elder lives have represented him as burdened with ten; but this was an error, arising out of the confusion between John Shakspeare the glover, and John Shakspeare a shoemaker. This error has been thus far of use, that, by exposing the fact of two John Shakspeares (not kinsmen) residing in Stratford-upon-Avon, it has satisfactorily proved the name to be amongst those which are locally indigenous to Warwickshire. Meantime it is now ascertained that John Shakspeare the glover had only eight children, viz., four daughters and four sons. The order of their succession was this: Joan, Margaret, WILLIAM, Gilbert, a second Joan, Anne, Richard, and Edmund. Three of the daughters, viz., the two eldest of the family, Joan and Margaret, together with Anne, died in childhood. All the rest attained mature ages, and of these William was the eldest. This might give him some advantage in his father's regard; but in a question of pecuniary provision, precedency amongst the children of an insolvent is nearly nominal. For the present John Shakspeare could do little for his son; and, under these circumstances, perhaps the father of Anne Hathaway would come forward to assist the new-married couple. This condition of dependency would furnish matter for painful feelings and irritating words. The youthful husband, whose mind would be expanding as rapidly as the leaves and blossoms of spring-time in polar latitudes, would soon come to appreciate the sort of wiles by which he had been caught. The female

mind is quick, and almost gifted with the power of witchcraft, to decipher what is passing in the thoughts of familiar companions. Silent and forbearing as William Shakspeare might be, Anne, his staid wife, would read his secret reproaches; ill would she dissemble her wrath, and the less so from the consciousness of having deserved them. It is no uncommon case for women to feel anger in connection with one subject, and to express it in connection with another; which other, perhaps, (except as a serviceable mask,) would have been a matter of indifference to their feelings. Anne would, therefore, reply to those inevitable reproaches which her own sense must presume to be lurking in her husband's heart, by others equally stinging, on his inability to support his family, and on his obligations to her father's purse. Shakspeare, we may be sure, would be ruminating every hour on the means of his deliverance from so painful a dependency; and at length, after four years' conjugal discord, he would resolve upon that plan of solitary emigration to the metropolis, which, at the same time that it released him from the humiliation of domestic feuds, succeeded so splendidly for his worldly prosperity, and with a train of consequences so vast for all future ages.

Such, we are persuaded, was the real course of Shakspeare's transition from school-boy pursuits to his public career. And upon the known temperament of Shakspeare, his genial disposition to enjoy life without disturbing his enjoyment by fretting anxieties, we build the conclusion, that had his friends furnished him with ampler funds, and had his marriage been well assorted or happy, we — the world of posterity — should have

lost the whole benefit and delight which we have since reaped from his matchless faculties. The motives which drove him *from* Stratford are clear enough; but what motives determined his course *to* London, and especially to the stage, still remains to be explained Stratford-upon-Avon, lying in the high road from London through Oxford to Birmingham, (or more generally to the north,) had been continually visited by some of the best comedians during Shakspeare's childhood. One or two of the most respectable metropolitan actors were natives of Stratford. These would be well known to the elder Shakspeare. But, apart from that accident, it is notorious that mere legal necessity and usage would compel all companies of actors, upon coming into any town, to seek, in the first place, from the chief magistrate, a license for opening a theatre, and next, over and above this public sanction, to seek his personal favor and patronage. As an alderman, therefore, but still more whilst clothed with the official powers of chief magistrate, the poet's father would have opportunities of doing essential services to many persons connectod with the London stage. The conversation of comedians acquainted with books, fresh from the keen and sparkling circles of the metropolis, and filled with racy anecdotes of the court, as well as of public life generally, could not but have been fascinating, by comparison with the stagnant society of Stratford. Hospitalities on a liberal scale would be offered to these men. Not impossibly this fact might be one principal key to those dilapidations which the family estate had suffered. These actors, on *their* part, would retain a grateful sense of the kindness they had received, and would seek to repay it to John Shak-

speare, now that he was depressed in his fortunes, as opportunities might offer. His oldest son, growing up a handsome young man, and beyond all doubt from his earliest days of most splendid colloquial powers, (for assuredly of *him* it may be taken for granted,

'Nec licuit populis parvum te, Nile, videre,)

would be often reproached in a friendly way for burying himself in a country life. These overtures, prompted alike by gratitude to the father, and a real selfish interest in the talents of his son, would at length take a definite shape; and upon some clear understanding as to the terms of such an arrangement, William Shakspeare would at length, (about 1586, according to the received account, that is, in the fifth year of his married life, and the twenty-third or twenty-fourth of his age,) unaccompanied by wife or children, translate himself to London. Later than 1586 it could not well be, for already in 1589 it has been recently ascertained that he held a share in the property of a leading theatre.

We must here stop to notice, and the reader will allow us to notice with summary indignation, the slanderous and idle tale which represents Shakspeare as having fled to London in the character of a criminal, from the persecutions of Sir Thomas Lucy of Charlecot. This tale has long been propagated under two separate impulses. Chiefly, perhaps, under the vulgar love of pointed and glaring contrasts; the splendor of the man was in this instance brought into a sort of epigrammatic antithesis with the humility of his fortunes; secondly, under a baser impulse, the malicious pleasure of seeing a great man degraded. Accord-

ingly, as in the case of Milton,[16] it has been affirmed that Shakspeare had suffered corporal chastisement, in fact, (we abhor to utter such words,) that he had been judicially whipt. Now, first of all, let us mark the inconsistency of this tale. The poet was whipped, that is, he was punished most disproportionately, and yet he fled to avoid punishment. Next, we are informed that his offence was deer-stealing, and from the park of Sir Thomas Lucy. And it has been well ascertained that Sir Thomas had no deer, and had no park. Moreover, deer-stealing was regarded by our ancestors exactly as poaching is regarded by us. Deer ran wild in all the great forests; and no offence was looked upon as so venial, none so compatible with a noble Robin-Hood style of character, as this very trespass upon what were regarded as *feræ naturæ*, and not at all as domestic property. But had it been otherwise, a trespass was not punishable with whipping; nor had Sir Thomas Lucy the power to irritate a whole community, like Stratford-upon-Avon, by branding with permanent disgrace a young man so closely connected with three at least of the best families in the neighborhood. Besides, had Shakspeare suffered any dishonor of that kind, the scandal would infallibly have pursued him at his very heels to London; and in that case Greene, who has left on record, in a posthumous work of 1592, his malicious feelings towards Shakspeare, could not have failed to notice it. For, be it remembered, that a judicial flagellation contains a twofold ignominy. Flagellation is ignominious in its own nature, even though unjustly inflicted, and by a ruffian; secondly, any judicial punishment is ignominious, even though not wearing a shade of personal degradation.

Now a judicial flagellation includes both features of dishonor. And is it to be imagined that an enemy, searching with the diligence of malice for matter against Shakspeare, should have failed, six years after the event, to hear of that very memorable disgrace which had exiled him from Stratford, and was the very occasion of his first resorting to London; or that a leading company of players in the metropolis, *one of whom*, and a chief one, *was his own townsman*, should cheerfully adopt into their society, as an honored partner, a young man yet flagrant from the lash of the executioner or the beadle?

This tale is fabulous, and rotten to its core; yet even this does less dishonor to Shakspeare's memory than the sequel attached to it. A sort of scurrilous rondeau, consisting of nine lines, so loathsome in its brutal stupidity, and so vulgar in its expression, that we shall not pollute our pages by transcribing it, has been imputed to Shakspeare ever since the days of the credulous Rowe. The total point of this idiot's drivel consists in calling Sir Thomas 'an asse;' and well it justifies the poet's own remark, 'Let there be gall enough in thy ink, no matter though thou write with a goose-pen.' Our own belief is, that these lines were a production of Charles II.'s reign, and applied to a Sir Thomas Lucy, not very far removed, if at all, from the age of him who first picked up the precious filth. The phrase 'parliament *member*,' we believe to be quite unknown in the colloquial use of Queen Elizabeth's reign.

'But, that we may rid ourselves once and for ever of this outrageous calumny upon Shakspeare's memory, we shall pursue the story to its final stage. Even

Malone has been thoughtless enough to accredit this closing chapter, which contains, in fact, such a superfetation of folly as the annals of human dulness do not exceed. Let us recapitulate the points of the story. A baronet, who has no deer and no park, is supposed to persecute a poet for stealing these aerial deer out of this aerial park, both lying in *nephelococcygia*. The poet sleeps upon this wrong for eighteen years; but at length, hearing that his persecutor is dead and buried, he conceives bloody thoughts of revenge. And this revenge he purposes to execute by picking a hole in his dead enemy's coat-of-arms. Is this coat-of-arms, then, Sir Thomas Lucy's? Why, no; Malone admits that it is not. For the poet, suddenly recollecting that this ridicule would settle upon the son of his enemy, selects another coat-of-arms, with which his dead enemy never had any connection, and he spends his thunder and lightning upon this irrelevant object; and, after all, the ridicule itself lies in a Welshman's mispronouncing one single heraldic term — a Welshman who mispronounces all words. The last act of the poet's malice recalls to us a sort of jest-book story of an Irishman, the vulgarity of which the reader will pardon in consideration of its relevancy. The Irishman having lost a pair of silk stockings, mentions to a friend that he has taken steps for recovering them by an advertisement, offering a reward to the finder. His friend objects that the costs of advertising, and the reward, would eat out the full value of the silk stockings. But to this the Irishman replies, with a knowing air, that he is not so green as to have overlooked *that;* and that, to keep down the reward, he had advertised the stockings as worsted. Not at all less flagrant is the

bull ascribed to Shakspeare, when he is made to punish a dead man by personalities meant for his exclusive ear, through his coat-of-arms, but at the same time, with the express purpose of blunting and defeating the edge of his own scurrility, is made to substitute for the real arms some others which had no more relation to the dead enemy than they had to the poet himself. This is the very sublime of folly, beyond which human dotage cannot advance.

It is painful, indeed, and dishonorable to human nature, that whenever men of vulgar habits and of poor education wish to impress us with a feeling of respect for a man's talent, they are sure to cite, by way of evidence, some gross instance of malignity. Power, in their minds, is best illustrated by malice or by the infliction of pain. To this unwelcome fact we have some evidence in the wretched tale which we have just dismissed; and there is another of the same description to be found in all lives of Shakspeare, which we will expose to the contempt of the reader whilst we are in this field of discussion, that we may not afterwards have to resume so disgusting a subject.

This poet, who was a model of gracious benignity in his manners, and of whom, amidst our general ignorance, thus much is perfectly established, that the term *gentle* was almost as generally and by prescriptive right associated with his name as the affix of *venerable* with Bede, or *judicious* with Hooker, is alleged to have insulted a friend by an imaginary epitaph beginning '*Ten in the Hundred*,' and supposing him to be damned, yet without wit enough (which surely the Stratford bellman could have furnished) for devising any, even fanciful, reason for such a supposi-

tion; upon which the comment of some foolish critic is, 'The *sharpness of the satire* is said to have stung the man so much that he never forgave it.' We have heard of the sting in the tail atoning for the brainless head; but in this doggerel the tail is surely as stingless as the head is brainless. For, 1*st*, *Ten in the hundred* could be no reproach in Shakspeare's time, any more than to call a man *Three-and-a-half-per-cent.* in this present year, 1838; except, indeed, amongst those foolish persons who built their morality upon the Jewish ceremonial law. Shakspeare himself took ten per cent. 2*dly*. It happens that John Combe, so far from being the object of the poet's scurrility, or viewing the poet as an object of implacable resentment, was a Stratford friend; that one of his family was affectionately remembered in Shakspeare's will by the bequest of his sword; and that John Combe himself recorded his perfect charity with Shakspeare by leaving him a legacy of £5 sterling. And in this lies the key to the whole story. For, 3*dly*, The four lines were written and printed before Shakspeare was born. The name Combe is a common one; and some stupid fellow, who had seen the name in Shakspeare's will, and happened also to have seen the lines in a collection of epigrams, chose to connect the cases by attributing an identity to the two John Combe's, though at war with chronology.

Finally, there is another specimen of doggerel attributed to Shakspeare, which is not equally unworthy of him, because not equally malignant, but otherwise equally below his intellect, no less than his scholarship; we mean the inscription on his gravestone. This, as a sort of *siste viator* appeal to future sextons,

is worthy of the grave-digger or the parish-clerk, who was probably its author. Or it may have been an antique formula, like the vulgar record of ownership in books: —

> 'Anthony Timothy Dolthead's book,
> God give him grace therein to look.'

Thus far the matter is of little importance; and it might have been supposed that malignity itself could hardly have imputed such trash to Shakspeare. But when we find, even in this short compass, scarcely wider than the posy of a ring, room found for traducing the poet's memory, it becomes important to say, that the leading sentiment, the horror expressed at any disturbance offered to his bones, is not one to which Shakspeare could have attached the slightest weight; far less could have outraged the sanctities of place and subject, by affixing to any sentiment whatever (and, according to the fiction of the case, his farewell sentiment) the sanction of a curse.

Filial veneration and piety towards the memory of this great man, have led us into a digression that might have been unseasonable in any cause less weighty than one, having for its object to deliver his honored name from a load of the most brutal malignity. Never more, we hope and venture to believe, will any thoughtless biographer impute to Shakspeare the asinine doggerel with which the uncritical blundering of his earliest biographer has caused his name to be dishonored. We now resume the thread of our biography. The stream of history is centuries in working itself clear of any calumny with which it has once been polluted.

Most readers will be aware of an old story, according to which Shakspeare gained his livelihood for some time after coming to London by holding the horses of those who rode to the play. This legend is as idle as any one of those which we have just exposed. No custom ever existed of riding on horseback to the play. Gentlemen, who rode valuable horses, would assuredly not expose them systematically to the injury of standing exposed to cold for two or even four hours; and persons of inferior rank would not ride on horseback in the town. Besides, had such a custom ever existed, stables (or sheds at least) would soon have arisen to meet the public wants; and in some of the dramatic sketches of the day, which noticed every fashion as it arose, this would not have been overlooked. The story is traced originally to Sir William Davenant. Betterton the actor, who professed to have received it from him, passed it onwards to Rowe, he to Pope, Pope to Bishop Newton, the editor of Milton, and Newton to Dr. Johnson. This pedigree of the fable, however, adds nothing to its credit, and multiplies the chances of some mistake. Another fable, not much less absurd, represents Shakspeare as having from the very first been borne upon the establishment of the theatre, and so far contradicts the other fable, but originally in the very humble character of *call-boy* or deputy prompter, whose business it was to summon each performer according to his order of coming upon the stage. This story, however, quite as much as the other, is irreconcilable with the discovery recently made by Mr. Collier, that in 1589 Shakspeare was a shareholder in the important property of a principal London theatre. It seems destined that all the un-

doubted facts of Shakspeare's life should come to us through the channel of legal documents, which are better evidence even than imperial medals; whilst, on the other hand, all the fabulous anecdotes not having an attorney's seal to them, seem to have been the fictions of the wonder maker. The plain presumption from the record of Shakspeare's situation in 1589, coupled with the fact that his first arrival in London was possibly not until 1587, but according to the earliest account not before 1586, a space of time which leaves but little room for any remarkable changes of situation, seems to be, that, either in requital of services done to the players by the poet's family, or in consideration of money advanced by his father-in-law, or on account of Shakspeare's personal accomplishments as an actor, and as an adapter of dramatic works to the stage; for one of these reasons, or for all of them united, William Shakspeare, about the 23d year of his age, was adopted into the partnership of a respectable histrionic company, possessing a first-rate theatre in the metropolis. If 1586 were the year in which he came up to London, it seems probable enough that his immediate motive to that step was the increasing distress of his father; for in that year John Shakspeare resigned the office of alderman. There is, however, a bare possibility that Shakspeare might have gone to London about the time when he completed his twenty-first year, that is, in the spring of 1585, but not earlier. Nearly two years after the birth of his eldest daughter Susanna, his wife lay in for a second and a *last* time; but she then brought her husband twins, a son and a daughter. These children were baptized in February of the year 1585; so that Shakspeare's

whole family of three children were born and baptized two months before he completed his majority. The twins were baptized by the names of Hamnet and Judith, those being the names of two amongst their sponsors, viz., Mr. Sadler and his wife. Hamnet, which is a remarkable name in itself, becomes still more so from its resemblance to the immortal name of Hamlet[17] the Dane; it was, however, the real baptismal name of Mr. Sadler, a friend of Shakspeare's, about fourteen years older than himself. Shakspeare's son must then have been most interesting to his heart, both as a twin child and as his only boy. He died in 1596, when he was about eleven years old. Both daughters survived their father; both married; both left issue, and thus gave a chance for continuing the succession from the great poet. But all the four grandchildren died without offspring.

Of Shakspeare personally, at least of Shakspeare the man, as distinguished from the author, there remains little more to record. Already in 1592, Greene, in his posthumous Groat's-worth of Wit, had expressed the earliest vocation of Shakspeare in the following sentence: 'There is an upstart crow, beautified with our feathers; in his own conceit the only *Shakscene* in a country!' This alludes to Shakspeare's office of recasting, and even recomposing, dramatic works, so as to fit them for representation; and Master Greene, it is probable, had suffered in his self-estimation, or in his purse, by the alterations in some piece of his own, which the duty of Shakspeare to the general interest of the theatre had obliged him to make. In 1591 it has been supposed that Shakspeare wrote his first drama, the Two Gentlemen of Verona; the

least characteristically marked of all his plays, and, with the exception of Love's Labor's Lost, the least interesting.

From this year, 1591, to that of 1611, are just twenty years, within which space lie the whole dramatic creations of Shakspeare, averaging nearly one for every six months. In 1611 was written the Tempest, which is supposed to have been the last of all Shakspeare's works. Even on that account, as Mr. Campbell feelingly observes, it has 'a sort of sacredness;' and it is a most remarkable fact, and one calculated to make a man superstitious, that in this play the great enchanter Prospero, in whom, '*as if conscious*,' says Mr. Campbell, '*that this would be his last work*, the poet has been *inspired to typify himself as* a wise, potent, and *benevolent magician*,' of whom, indeed, as of Shakspeare himself, it may be said, that 'within that circle' (the circle of his own art) 'none durst tread but he,' solemnly and forever renounces his mysterious functions, symbolically breaks his enchanter's wand, and declares that he will bury his books, his science, and his secrets,

> 'Deeper than did ever plummet sound.'

Nay, it is even ominous, that in this play, and from the voice of Prospero, issues that magnificent prophecy of the total destruction which should one day swallow up

> 'The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
> Yea all which it inherit.'

And this prophecy is followed immediately by a most profound ejaculation, gathering into one pathetic abstraction the total philosophy of life:

'We are such stuff
As dreams are made of; and our little life
Is rounded by a sleep;'

that is, in effect, our life is a little tract of feverish vigils, surrounded and islanded by a shoreless ocean of sleep — sleep before birth, sleep after death.

These remarkable passages were probably not undesigned; but if we suppose them to have been thrown off without conscious notice of their tendencies, then, according to the superstition of the ancient Grecians, they would have been regarded as prefiguring words, prompted by the secret genius that accompanies every man, such as insure along with them their own accomplishment. With or without intention, however, it is believed that Shakspeare wrote nothing more after this exquisite romantic drama. With respect to the remainder of his personal history, Dr. Drake and others have supposed, that during the twenty years from 1591 to 1611, he visited Stratford often, and latterly once a year.

In 1589 he had possessed some share in a theatre; in 1596 he had a considerable share. Through Lord Southampton, as a surviving friend of Lord Essex, who was viewed as the martyr to his Scottish politics, there can be no doubt that Shakspeare had acquired the favor of James I.; and accordingly, on the 29th of May, 1603, about two months after the king's accession to the throne of England, a patent was granted to the company of players who possessed the Globe theatre; in which patent Shakspeare's name stands second. This patent raised the company to the rank of his majesty's servants, whereas previously they are supposed to have been simply the servants of the Lord

Chamberlain. Perhaps it was in grateful acknowledgment of this royal favor that Shakspeare afterwards, in 1606, paid that sublime compliment to the house of Stuart, which is involved in the vision shown to Macbeth. This vision is managed with exquisite skill. It was impossible to display the whole series of princes from Macbeth to James I.; but he beholds the posterity of Banquo, one 'gold-bound brow' succeeding to another, until he comes to an eighth apparition of a Scottish king,

> 'Who bears a glass
> Which shows him many more; and some he sees
> Who *twofold* balls and *treble* sceptres carry;'

thus bringing down without tedium the long succession to the very person of James I., by the symbolic image of the two crowns united on one head.

About the beginning of the century Shakspeare had become rich enough to purchase the best house in Stratford, called *The Great House*, which name he altered to *New Place;* and in 1602 he bought one hundred and seven acres adjacent to this house for a sum (£320) corresponding to about 1500 guineas of modern money. Malone thinks that he purchased the house as early as 1597; and it is certain that about that time he was able to assist his father in obtaining a renewed grant of arms from the Herald's College, and therefore, of course, to re-establish his father's fortunes. Ten years of a well-directed industry, viz., from 1591 to 1601, and the prosperity of the theatre in which he was a proprietor, had raised him to affluence; and after another ten years, improved with the same success, he was able to retire with an income of £300, or (according to the customary computations) in

modern money of £1500, per annum. Shakspeare was in fact the first man of letters, Pope the second, and Sir Walter Scott the third, who, in Great Britain, has ever realized a large fortune by literature; or in Christendom, if we except Voltaire, and two dubious cases in Italy. The four or five latter years of his life Shakspeare passed in dignified ease, in profound meditation, we may be sure, and in universal respect, at his native town of Stratford; and there he died, on the 23d of April, 1616.[18]

His daughter Susanna had been married on the 5th of June of the year 1607, to Dr. John Hall,[19] a physician in Stratford. The doctor died in November, 1635, aged sixty; his wife, at the age of sixty-six, on July 11, 1640. They had one child, a daughter, named Elizabeth, born in 1608, married April 22, 1626, to Thomas Nash, Esq., left a widow in 1647, and subsequently remarried to Sir John Barnard; but this Lady Barnard, the sole grand-daughter of the poet, had no children by either marriage. The other daughter, Judith, on February 10, 1616, (about ten weeks before her father's death,) married Mr. Thomas Quiney of Stratford, by whom she had three sons, Shakspeare, Richard, and Thomas. Judith was about thirty-one years old at the time of her marriage; and living just forty-six years afterwards, she died in February, 1662, at the age of seventy-seven. Her three sons died without issue; and thus, in the direct lineal descent, it is certain that no representative has survived of this transcendent poet, the most august amongst created intellects.

After this review of Shakspeare's life, it becomes our duty to take a summary survey of his works, of

his intellectual powers, and of his station in literature, a station which is now irrevocably settled, not so much (which happens in other cases) by a vast overbalance of favorable suffrages as by acclamation; not so much by the *voices* of those who admire him up to the verge of idolatry, as by the *acts* of those who everywhere seek for his works among the primal necessities of life, demand them, and crave them as they do their daily bread; not so much by eulogy openly proclaiming itself, as by the silent homage recorded in the endless multiplication of what he has bequeathed us; not so much by his own compatriots, who, with regard to almost every other author,[20] compose the total amount of his *effective* audience, as by the unanimous 'all hail!' of intellectual Christendom; finally, not by the hasty partisanship of his own generation, nor by the biassed judgment of an age trained in the same modes of feeling and of thinking with himself, — but by the solemn award of generation succeeding to generation, of one age correcting the obliquities or peculiarities of another; by the verdict of two hundred and thirty years, which have now elapsed since the very *latest* of his creations, or of two hundred and forty-seven years if we date from the earliest; a verdict which has been continually revived and re-opened, probed, searched, vexed by criticism in every spirit, from the most genial and intelligent, down to the most malignant and scurrilously hostile which feeble heads and great ignorance could suggest when coöperating with impure hearts and narrow sensibilities; a verdict, in short, sustained and countersigned by a longer series of writers, many of them eminent for wit or learning, than were ever before congregated upon any inquest

relating to any author, be he who he might, ancient [21] or modern, Pagan or Christian. It was a most witty saying with respect to a piratical and knavish publisher, who made a trade of insulting the memories of deceased authors by forged writings, that he was 'among the new terrors of death.' But in the gravest sense it may be affirmed of Shakspeare, that he is among the modern luxuries of life; that life, in fact, is a new thing, and one more to be coveted, since Shakspeare has extended the domains of human consciousness, and pushed its dark frontiers into regions not so much as dimly descried or even suspected before his time, far less illuminated (as now they are) by beauty and tropical luxuriance of life. For instance, — a single instance, indeed one which in itself is a world of new revelation, — the possible beauty of the female character had not been seen as in a dream before Shakspeare called into perfect life the radiant shapes of Desdemona, of Imogene, of Hermione, of Perdita, of Ophelia, of Miranda, and many others. The Una of Spenser, earlier by ten or fifteen years than most of these, was an idealized portrait of female innocence and virgin purity, but too shadowy and unreal for a dramatic reality. And as to the Grecian classics, let not the reader imagine for an instant that any prototype in this field of Shakspearian power can be looked for there. The *Antigone* and the *Electra* of the tragic poets are the two leading female characters that classical antiquity offers to our respect, but assuredly not to our impassioned love, as disciplined and exalted in the school of Shakspeare. They challenge our admiration, severe, and even stern, as impersonations of filial duty, cleaving to the steps of a desolate and afflicted old

man; or of sisterly affection, maintaining the rights of a brother under circumstances of peril, of desertion, and consequently of perfect self-reliance. Iphigenia, again, though not dramatically coming before us in her own person, but according to the beautiful report of a spectator, presents us with a fine statuesque model of heroic fortitude, and of one whose young heart, even in the very agonies of her cruel immolation, refused to forget, by a single indecorous gesture, or so much as a moment's neglect of her own princely descent, and that she herself was 'a lady in the land.' These are fine marble groups, but they are not the warm breathing realities of Shakspeare; there is 'no speculation' in their cold marble eyes; the breath of life is not in their nostrils; the fine pulses of womanly sensibilities are not throbbing in their bosoms. And besides this immeasurable difference between the cold moony reflexes of life, as exhibited by the power of Grecian art, and the true sunny life of Shakspeare, it must be observed that the Antigones, &c. of the antique put forward but one single trait of character, like the aloe with its single blossom. This solitary feature is presented to us as an abstraction, and as an insulated quality; whereas in Shakspeare all is presented in the *concrete;* that is to say, not brought forward in relief, as by some effort of an anatomical artist; but embodied and imbedded, so to speak, as by the force of a creative nature, in the complex system of a human life; a life in which all the elements move and play simultaneously, and with something more than mere simultaneity or co-existence, acting and re-acting each upon the other, nay, even acting by each other and through each other. In Shakspeare's characters is felt

for ever a real *organic* life, where each is for the whole and in the whole, and where the whole is for each and in each. They only are real incarnations.

The Greek poets could not exhibit any approximations to *female* character, without violating the truth of Grecian life, and shocking the feelings of the audience. The drama with the Greeks, as with us, though much less than with us, was a picture of human life; and that which could not occur in life could not wisely be exhibited on the stage. Now, in ancient Greece, women were secluded from the society of men. The conventual sequestration of the γυναικωνῖτις, or female apartment[22] of the house, and the Mahommedan consecration of its threshold against the ingress of males, had been transplanted from Asia into Greece thousands of years perhaps before either convents or Mahommed existed. Thus barred from all open social intercourse, women could not develope or express any character by word or action. Even to *have* a character, violated, to a Grecian mind, the ideal portrait of feminine excellence; whence, perhaps, partly the too generic, too little individualized, style of Grecian beauty. But prominently to *express* a character was impossible under the common tenor of Grecian life, unless when high tragical catastrophes transcended the decorums of that tenor, or for a brief interval raised the curtain which veiled it. Hence the subordinate part which women play upon the Greek stage in all but some half-dozen cases. In the paramount tragedy on that stage, the model tragedy, the *Œdipus Tyrannus* of Sophocles, there is virtually no woman at all; for Jocasta is a party to the story merely as the dead Laius or the self-murdered Sphinx was a party, viz., by her contribu-

tions to the fatalities of the event, not by anything she does or says spontaneously. In fact, the Greek poet, if a wise poet, could not address himself genially to a task in which he must begin by shocking the sensibilities of his countrymen. And hence followed, not only the dearth of female characters in the Grecian drama, but also a second result still more favorable to the sense of a new power evolved by Shakspeare. Whenever the common law of Grecian life did give way, it was, as we have observed, to the suspending force of some great convulsion or tragical catastrophe. This for a moment (like an earthquake in a nunnery) would set at liberty even the timid, fluttering Grecian women, those doves of the dove-cot, and would call some of them into action. But which? Precisely those of energetic and masculine minds; the timid and feminine would but shrink the more from public gaze and from tumult. Thus it happened, that such female characters as *were* exhibited in Greece, could not but be the harsh and the severe. If a gentle Ismene appeared for a moment in contest with some energetic sister Antigone, (and, chiefly, perhaps, by way of drawing out the fiercer character of that sister,) she was soon dismissed as unfit for scenical effect. So that not only were female characters few, but, moreover, of these few the majority were but repetitions of masculine qualities in female persons. Female agency being seldom summoned on the stage, except when it had received a sort of special dispensation from its sexual character, by some terrific convulsions of the house or the city, naturally it assumed the style of action suited to these circumstances. And hence it arose, that not woman as she differed from man, but woman

as she resembled man — woman, in short, seen under circumstances so dreadful as to abolish the effect of sexual distinction, was the woman of the Greek tragedy.[23] And hence generally arose for Shakspeare the wider field, and the more astonishing by its perfect novelty, when he first introduced female characters, not as mere varieties or echoes of masculine characters, a Medea or Clytemnestra, or a vindictive Hecuba, the mere tigress of the tragic tiger, but female characters that had the appropriate beauty of female nature; woman no longer grand, terrific, and repulsive, but woman 'after her kind' — the other hemisphere of the dramatic world; woman, running through the vast gamut of womanly loveliness; woman, as emancipated, exalted, ennobled, under a new law of Christian morality; woman, the sister and coequal of man, no longer his slave, his prisoner, and sometimes his rebel.

It is a far cry to Loch Awe;' and from the Athenian stage to the stage of Shakspeare, it may be said, is a prodigious interval. True; but prodigious as it is, there is really nothing between them. The Roman stage, at least the tragic stage, as is well known, was put out, as by an extinguisher, by the cruel amphitheatre, just as a candle is made pale and ridiculous by daylight. Those who were fresh from the real murders of the bloody amphitheatre regarded with contempt the mimic murders of the stage. Stimulation too coarse and too intense had its usual effect in making the sensibilities callous. Christian emperors arose at length, who abolished the amphitheatre in its bloodier features. But by that time the genius of the tragic muse had long slept the sleep of death. And that muse had no resurrection until the age of Shak-

speare. So that, notwithstanding a gulf of nineteen centuries and upwards separates Shakspeare from Euripides, the last of the surviving Greek tragedians, the one is still the nearest successor of the other, just as Connaught and the islands in Clew Bay are next neighbors to America, although three thousand watery columns, each of a cubic mile in dimensions, divide them from each other.

A second reason, which lends an emphasis of novelty and effective power to Shakspeare's female world, is a peculiar fact of contrast which exists between that and his corresponding world of men. Let us explain. The purpose and the intention of the Grecian stage was not primarily to develope human *character*, whether in men or in women: human *fates* were its object; great tragic situations under the mighty control of a vast cloudy destiny, dimly descried at intervals, and brooding over human life by mysterious agencies, and for mysterious ends. Man, no longer the representative of an august *will*, man, the passion-puppet of fate, could not with any effect display what we call a character, which is a distinction between man and man, emanating originally from the will, and expressing its determinations, moving under the large variety of human impulses. The will is the central pivot of character; and this was obliterated, thwarted, cancelled by the dark fatalism which brooded over the Grecian stage. That explanation will sufficiently clear up the reason why marked or complex variety of character was slighted by the great principles of the Greek tragedy. And every scholar who has studied that grand drama of Greece with feeling, — that drama, so magnificent, so regal, so stately, — and who has

thoughtfully investigated its principles, and its difference from the English drama, will acknowledge that powerful and elaborate character, character, for instance, that could employ the fiftieth part of that profound analysis which has been applied to Hamlet, to Falstaff, to Lear, to Othello, and applied by Mrs. Jamieson so admirably to the full development of the Shakspearian heroines, would have been as much wasted, nay, would have been defeated, and interrupted the blind agencies of fate, just in the same way as it would injure the shadowy grandeur of a ghost to individualize it too much. Milton's angels are slightly touched, superficially touched, with differences of character; but they are such differences, so simple and general, as are just sufficient to rescue them from the reproach applied to Virgil's '*fortemque Gyan, fortemque Cloanthem;*' just sufficient to make them knowable apart. Pliny speaks of painters who painted in one or two colors; and, as respects the angelic characters, Milton does so; he is *monochromatic*. So, and for reasons resting upon the same ultimate philosophy, were the mighty architects of the Greek tragedy. They also were monochromatic; they also, as to the characters of their persons, painted in one color. And so far there might have been the same novelty in Shakpeare's men as in his women. There *might* have been; but the reason why there is *not* must be sought in the fact, that History, the muse of History, had there even been no such muse as Melpomene, would have forced us into an acquaintance with human character. History, as the representative of actual life, of real man, gives us powerful delineations of character in its chief agents, that is, in men; and therefore it

is that Shakspeare, the absolute creator of female character, was but the mightiest of all painters with regard to male character. Take a single instance. The Antony of Shakspeare, immortal for its execution, is found, after all, as regards the primary conception, in history. Shakspeare's delineation is but the expansion of the germ already preëxisting, by way of scattered fragments, in Cicero's Philippics, in Cicero's Letters, in Appian, &c. But Cleopatra, equally fine, is a pure creation of art. The situation and the scenic circumstances belong to history, but the character belongs to Shakspeare.

In the great world, therefore, of woman, as the interpreter of the shifting phases and the lunar varieties of that mighty changeable planet, that lovely satellite of man, Shakspeare stands not the first only, not the original only, but is yet the sole authentic oracle of truth. Woman, therefore, the beauty of the female mind, *this* is one great field of his power. The supernatural world, the world of apparitions, *that* is another. For reasons which it would be easy to give, reasons emanating from the gross mythology of the ancients, no Grecian,[24] no Roman, could have conceived a ghost. That shadowy conception, the protesting apparition, the awful projection of the human conscience, belongs to the Christian mind. And in all Christendom, who, let us ask, who, who but Shakspeare has found the power for effectually working this mysterious mode of being? In summoning back to earth 'the majesty of buried Denmark,' how like an awful necromancer does Shakspeare appear! All the pomps and grandeurs which religion, which the grave, which the popular superstition had gathered about the subject

of apparitions, are here converted to his purpose, and bend to one awful effect. The wormy grave brought into antagonism with the scenting of the early dawn; the trumpet of resurrection suggested, and again as an antagonist idea to the crowing of the cock, (a bird ennobled in the Christian mythus by the part he is made to play at the Crucifixion;) its starting 'as a guilty thing' placed in opposition to its majestic expression of offended dignity when struck at by the partisans of the sentinels; its awful allusions to the secrets of its prison-house; its ubiquity, contrasted with its local presence; its aerial substance, yet clothed in palpable armor; the heart-shaking solemnity of its language, and the appropriate scenery of its haunt, viz., the ramparts of a capital fortress, with no witnesses but a few gentlemen mounting guard at the dead of night, — what a mist, what a *mirage* of vapor, is here accumulated, through which the dreadful being in the centre looms upon us in far larger proportions, than could have happened had it been insulated and left naked of this circumstantial pomp! In the *Tempest*, again, what new modes of life, preternatural, yet far as the poles from the spiritualities of religion! Ariel in antithesis to Caliban! What is most ethereal to what is most animal! A phantom of air, an abstraction of the dawn and of vesper sun-lights, a bodiless sylph on the one hand; on the other a gross carnal monster, like the Miltonic Asmodai, 'the fleshliest incubus' among the fiends, and yet so far ennobled into interest by his intellectual power, and by the grandeur of misanthropy![25] In the *Midsummer-Night's Dream*, again, we have the old traditional fairy, a lovely mode of preternatural life, remodified

by Shakspeare's eternal talisman. Oberon and Titania remind us at first glance of Ariel. They approach, but how far they recede. They are like — 'like, but, oh, how different!' And in no other exhibition of this dreamy population of the moonlight forests and forest-lawns, are the circumstantial proprieties of fairy life so exquisitely imagined, sustained, or expressed. The dialogue between Oberon and Titania is, of itself and taken separately from its connection, one of the most delightful poetic scenes that literature affords. The witches in Macbeth are another variety of supernatural life, in which Shakspeare's power to enchant and to disenchant are alike portentous. The circumstances of the blasted heath, the army at a distance, the withered attire of the mysterious hags, and the choral litanies of their fiendish Sabbath, are as finely imagined in their kind as those which herald and which surround the ghost in Hamlet. There we see the *positive* of Shakspeare's superior power. But now turn and look to the *negative*. At a time when the trials of witches, the royal book on demonology, and popular superstition (all so far useful, as they prepared a basis of undoubting faith for the poet's serious use of such agencies) had degraded and polluted the ideas of these mysterious beings by many mean associations, Shakspeare does not fear to employ them in high tragedy, (a tragedy moreover which, though not the very greatest of his efforts as an intellectual whole, nor as a struggle of passion, is *among* the greatest in any view, and positively *the* greatest for scenical grandeur, and in that respect makes the nearest approach of all English tragedies to the Grecian model;) he does not fear to introduce, for the same appalling effect

as that for which Æschylus introduced the Eumenides, a triad of old women, concerning whom an English wit has remarked this grotesque peculiarity in the popular creed of that day, — that although potent over winds and storms, in league with powers of darkness, they yet stood in awe of the constable, — yet relying on his own supreme power to disenchant as well as to enchant, to create and to uncreate, he mixes these women and their dark machineries with the power of armies, with the agencies of kings, and the fortunes of martial kingdoms. Such was the sovereignty of this poet, so mighty its compass!

A third fund of Shakspeare's peculiar power lies in his teeming fertility of fine thoughts and sentiments. From his works alone might be gathered a golden bead-roll of thoughts the deepest, subtilest, most pathetic, and yet most catholic and universally intelligible; the most characteristic, also, and appropriate to the particular person, the situation, and the case, yet, at the same time, applicable to the circumstances of every human being, under all the accidents of life, and all vicissitudes of fortune. But this subject offers so vast a field of observation, it being so eminently the prerogative of Shakspeare to have thought more finely and more extensively than all other poets combined, that we cannot wrong the dignity of such a theme by doing more, in our narrow limits, than simply noticing it as one of the emblazonries upon Shakspeare's shield.

Fourthly, we shall indicate (and, as in the last case, *barely* indicate, without attempting in so vast a field to offer any inadequate illustrations) one mode of Shakspeare's dramatic excellence, which hitherto has not

attracted any special or separate notice. We allude to the forms of life, and natural human passion, as apparent in the structure of his dialogue. Among the many defects and infirmities of the French and of the Italian drama, indeed, we may say of the Greek, the dialogue proceeds always by independent speeches, replying indeed to each other, but never modified in its several openings by the momentary effect of its several terminal forms immediately preceding. Now, in Shakspeare, who first set an example of that most important innovation, in all his impassioned dialogues, each reply or rejoinder seems the mere rebound of the previous speech. Every form of natural interruption, breaking through the restraints of ceremony under the impulses of tempestuous passion; every form of hasty interrogative, ardent reiteration when a question has been evaded; every form of scornful repetition of the hostile words; every impatient continuation of the hostile statement; in short, all modes and formulæ by which anger, hurry, fretfulness, scorn, impatience, or excitement under any movement whatever, can disturb or modify or dislocate the formal bookish style of commencement, — these are as rife in Shakspeare's dialogue as in life itself; and how much vivacity, how profound a verisimilitude, they add to the scenic effect as an imitation of human passion and real life, we need not say. A volume might be written, illustrating the vast varieties of Shakspeare's art and power in this one field of improvement; another volume might be dedicated to the exposure of the lifeless and unnatural result from the opposite practice in the foreign stages of France and Italy. And we may truly say, that were Shakspeare distinguished from them by this

single feature of nature and propriety, he would on that account alone have merited a great immortality."

The dramatic works of Shakspeare generally acknowledged to be genuine consist of thirty-five pieces. The following is the chronological order in which they are supposed to have been written, according to Mr. Malone, as given in his second edition of Shakspeare, and by Mr. George Chalmers in his Supplemental Apology for the Believers in the Shakspeare Papers:

	Chalmers.	Malone.
1. The Comedy of Errors,	1591	1592
2. Love's Labor's Lost,	1592	1594
3. Romeo and Juliet,	1592	1596
4. Henry VI., the First Part,	1593	1589
5. Henry VI., the Second Part,	1595	1591
6. Henry VI., the Third Part,	1595	1591
7. The Two Gentlemen of Verona,	1595	1591
8. Richard III.,	1596	1593
9. Richard II.,	1596	1593
10. The Merry Wives of Windsor,	1596	1601
11. Henry IV., the First Part,	1597	1597
12. Henry IV., the Second Part,	1597	1599
13. Henry V.,	1597	1599
14. Merchant of Venice,	1597	1594
15. Hamlet,	1598	1600
16. King John,	1598	1596
17. A Midsummer-Night's Dream,	1598	1594
18. The Taming of the Shrew,	1599	1596
19. All's Well that Ends Well,	1599	1606
20. Much Ado about Nothing,	1599	1600
21. As You Like It,	1602	1599

	Chalmers.	Malone.
22. Troilus and Cressida,	1610	1602
23. Timon of Athens,	1611	1610
24. The Winter's Tale,	1601	1611
25. Measure for Measure,	1604	1603
26. King Lear,	1605	1605
27. Cymbeline,	1606	1609
28. Macbeth,	1606	1606
29. Julius Cæsar,	1607	1607
30. Antony and Cleopatra,	1608	1608
31. Coriolanus,	1609	1610
32. The Tempest,	1613	1611
33. The Twelfth Night,	1613	1607
34. Henry VIII.,	1613	1603
35. Othello,	1614	1604

Pericles and Titus Andronicus, although inserted in all the late editions of Shakspeare's Plays, are omitted in the above list, both by Malone and Chalmers, as not being Shakspeare's.

The first edition of the Works was published in 1623, in a folio volume entitled Mr. William Shakspeare's Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies. The second edition was published in 1632, the third in 1664, and the fourth in 1685, all in folio; but the edition of 1623 is considered the most authentic. Rowe published an edition in seven vols. 8vo, in 1709. Editions were published by Pope, in six vols. 4to, in 1725; by Warburton, in eight vols. 8vo, in 1747; by Dr. Johnson, in eight vols. 8vo, in 1765; by Stevens, in four vols. 8vo, in 1766; by Malone, in ten vols. 8vo, in 1789; by Alexander Chalmers, in nine vols. 8vo, in 1811; by Johnson and Steevens, revised by Isaac Reed, in twenty-one vols. 8vo, in 1813; and the Plays

and Poems, with notes by Malone, were edited by James Boswell, and published in twenty-one vols. 8vo, in 1821. Besides these, numerous editions have been published from time to time.

NOTES.

Note 1. Page 9.

Mr. Campbell, the latest editor of Shakspeare's dramatic works, observes that 'the poet's name has been variously written Shaxpeare, Shackspeare, Shakspeare, and Shakspere:' to which varieties might be added Shagspere, from the Worcester Marriage License, published in 1836. But the fact is, that by combining with all the differences in spelling the first syllable, all those in spelling the second, more than twenty-five distinct varieties of the name may be expanded, (like an algebraic series,) for the choice of the curious in mis-spelling. Above all things, those varieties which arise from the intercalation of the middle *e*, (that is, the *e* immediately before the final syllable *spear*,) can never be overlooked by those who remember, at the opening of the Dunciad, the note upon this very question about the orthography of Shakspeare's name, as also upon the other great question about the title of the immortal Satire, Whether it ought not to have been the Dunceiade, seeing that Dunce, its great author and progenitor, cannot possibly dispense with the letter *e*. Meantime we must remark, that the first three of Mr. Campbell's variations are mere caprices of the press; as is Shagspere; or, more probably, this last euphonious variety arose out of the gross clownish pronunciation of the two hiccuping '*marksmen*' who rode over to Worcester for the license; and one cannot forbear laughing at the bishop's secretary for having been so misled by two varlets, professedly incapable of signing their own names. The same drunken villains had cut down the bride's name *Hathaway* into *Hathwey*. Finally, to treat the matter with seriousness, Sir Frederick Madden has shown, in his recent letter to the Society of Antiquaries, that the poet himself in all probability wrote the name uniformly

Shakspere. Orthography, both of proper names, of appellatives, and of words universally, was very unsettled up to a period long subsequent to that of Shakspeare. Still it must usually have happened that names written variously and laxly by others, would be written uniformly by the owners; especially by those owners who had occasion to sign their names frequently, and by literary people, whose attention was often, as well as consciously, directed to the proprieties of spelling. *Shakspeare* is now too familiar to the eye for any alteration to be attempted; but it is pretty certain that Sir Frederick Madden is right in stating the poet's own signature to have been uniformly *Shakspere.* It is so written twice in the course of his will, and it is so written on a blank leaf of Florio's English translation of Montaigne's Essays; a book recently discovered, and sold, on account of its autograph, for a hundred guineas.

NOTE 2. Page 10.

But, as a proof that, even in the case of royal christenings, it was not thought pious to 'tempt God,' as it were by delay, Edward VI., the only son of Henry VIII., was born on the 12th day of October, in the year 1537. And there was a delay on account of the sponsors, since the birth was not in London. Yet how little that delay was made, may be seen by this fact: The birth took place in the dead of the night, the day was Friday; and yet, in spite of all delay, the christening was most pompously celebrated on the succeeding Monday. And Prince Arthur, the elder brother of Henry VIII., was christened on the very next Sunday succeeding to his birth, notwithstanding an inevitable delay, occasioned by the distance of Lord Oxford, his godfather, and the excessive rains, which prevented the earl being reached by couriers, or himself reaching Winchester, without extraordinary exertions.

NOTE 3. Page 17.

A great modern poet refers to this very case of music entering 'the mouldy chambers of the dull idiot's brain;' but in support of what seems to us a baseless hypothesis.

NOTE 4. Page 18.

Probably Addison's fear of the national feeling was a good deal

strengthened by his awe of Milton and of Dryden, both of whom had expressed a homage towards Shakspeare which language cannot transcend. Amongst his political friends also were many intense admirers of Shakspeare.

NOTE 5. Page 20.

He who is weak enough to kick and spurn his own native literature, even if it were done with more knowledge than is shown by Lord Shaftesbury, will usually be kicked and spurned in his turn; and accordingly it has often been remarked that the Characteristics are unjustly neglected in our days. For Lord Shafesbury, with all his pedantry, was a man of great talents. Leibnitz had the sagacity to see this through the mists of a translation.

NOTE 6. Page 21.

Perhaps the most bitter political enemy of Charles I. will have the candor to allow that, for a prince of those times, he was truly and eminently accomplished. His knowledge of the arts was considerable; and, as a patron of art, he stands foremost amongst all British sovereigns to this hour. He said truly of himself, and wisely as to the principle, that he understood English law as well as a gentleman ought to understand it; meaning that an attorney's minute knowledge of forms and technical niceties was illiberal. Speaking of him as an author, we must remember that the *Eikon Basilike* is still unappropriated; that question is still open. But supposing the king's claim negatived, still, in his controversy with Henderson, in his negotiations at the Isle of Wight and elsewhere, he discovered a power of argument, a learning and a strength of memory, which are truly admirable; whilst the whole of his accomplishments are recommended by a modesty and a humility as rare as they are unaffected.

NOTE 7. Page 25.

The necessity of compression obliges us to omit many arguments and references by which we could demonstrate the fact, that Shakspeare's reputation was always in a progressive state; allowing only for the interruption of about seventeen years, which this poet, in common with all others, sustained, not so much from the state of war, (which did not fully occupy four of those years,) as

from the triumph of a gloomy fanaticism. Deduct the twenty-three years of the seventeenth century, which had elapsed before the first folio appeared, to this space add seventeen years of fanatical madness, during fourteen of which *all* dramatic entertainments were suppressed, the remainder is sixty years. And surely the sale of four editions of a vast folio in that space of time was an expression of an abiding interest. *No other poet, except Spenser, continued to sell throughout the century.* Besides, in arguing the case of a *dramatic* poet, we must bear in mind, that although readers of learned books might be diffused over the face of the land, and readers of poetry would be chiefly concentrated in the metropolis; and such persons would have no need to buy what they heard at the theatres. But then comes the question, whether Shakspeare kept possession of the theatres. And we are really humiliated by the gross want of sense which has been shown, by Malone chiefly, but also by many others, in discussing this question. From the Restoration to 1682, says Malone, no more than four plays of Shakspeare's were performed by a principal company in London. 'Such was the lamentable taste of those times, that the plays of Fletcher, Jonson, and Shirley, were much oftener exhibited than those of our author.' What cant is this! If that taste were 'lamentable,' what are we to think of our own times, when plays a thousand times below those of Fletcher, or even of Shirley, continually displace Shakspeare? Shakspeare would himself have exulted in finding that he gave way only to dramatists so excellent. And, as we have before observed, both then and now, it is the very familiarity with Shakspeare, which often banishes him from audiences honestly in quest of relaxation and amusement. Novelty is the very soul of such relaxation; but in our closets, when we are *not* unbending, when our minds are in a state of tension from intellectual cravings, then it is that we resort to Shakspeare: and oftentimes those who honor him most, like ourselves, are the most impatient of seeing his divine scenes disfigured by unequal representation, (good, perhaps, in a single personation, bad in all the rest;) or to hear his divine thoughts mangled in the recitation; or, (which is worst of all,) to hear them dishonored and defeated by imperfect apprehension in the audience, or by defective sympathy. Meantime, if one theatre played only four of Shakspeare's dramas, another played at least seven. But

the grossest fault of Malone is, in fancying the numerous alterations so many insults to Shakspeare, whereas they expressed as much homage to his memory as if the unaltered dramas had been retained. The substance *was* retained. The changes were merely concessions to the changing views of scenical propriety; sometimes, no doubt, made with a simple view to the revolution effected by Davenant at the Restoration, in bringing *scenes* (in the painter's sense) upon the stage; sometimes also with a view to the altered fashions of the audience during the suspensions of the action, or perhaps to the introduction of *after-pieces*, by which, of course, the time was abridged for the main performance. A volume might be written upon this subject. Meantime let us never be told, that a poet was losing, or had lost his ground, who found in his lowest depression, amongst his almost idolatrous supporters, a great king distracted by civil wars, a mighty republican poet distracted by puritanical fanaticism, the greatest successor by far of that great poet, a papist and a bigoted royalist, and finally, the leading actor of the century, who gave and reflected the ruling impulses of his age.

Note 8. Page 27.

One of the profoundest tests by which we can measure the congeniality of an author with the national genius and temper, is the degree in which his thoughts or his phrases interweave themselves with our daily conversation, and pass into the currency of the language. *Few French authors, if any, have imparted one phrase to the colloquial idiom*; with respect to Shakspeare, a large dictionary might be made of such phrases as 'win golden opinions,' 'in my mind's eye,' 'patience on a monument,' 'o'erstep the modesty of nature,' 'more honor'd in the breach than in the observance,' 'palmy state,' 'my poverty and not my will consents,' and so forth, without end. This reinforcement of the general language, by aids from the mintage of Shakspeare, had already commenced in the seventeenth century.

Note 9. Page 28.

In fact, by way of representing to himself the system or scheme of the English roads, the reader has only to imagine one great letter X, or a St. Andrew's cross, laid down from north to south,

and decussating at Birmingham. Even Coventry, which makes a slight variation for one or two roads, and so far disturbs this decussation, by shifting it eastwards, is still in Warwickshire.

NOTE 10. Page 34.

And probably so called by some remote ancestor who had emigrated from the forest of Ardennes, in the Netherlands, and *now* forever memorable to English ears from its proximity to Waterloo.

NOTE 11. Page 36.

Let not the reader impute to us the gross anachronism of making an estimate for Shakspeare's days in a coin which did not exist until a century, within a couple of years, after Shakspeare's birth, and did not settle to the value of twenty-one shillings until a century after his death. The nerve of such an anachronism would lie in putting the estimate into a mouth of that age. And this is precisely the blunder into which the foolish forger of Vortigern, &c., has fallen. He does not indeed directly mention guineas; but indirectly and virtually he does, by repeatedly giving us accounts imputed to Shakspearian contemporaries, in which the sum total amounts to £5 5*s.*; or to £26 5*s.*; or, again, to £17 17*s.* 6*d.* A man is careful to subscribe £14 14*s.*, and so forth. But how could such amounts have arisen unless under a secret reference to guineas, which were not in existence until Charles II.'s reign; and, moreover, to guineas at their final settlement by law into twenty-one shillings each, which did not take place until George I.'s reign?

NOTE 12. Page 36.

Thomas Campbell, the poet, in his eloquent Remarks on the Life and Writings of William Shakspeare, prefixed to a popular edition of the poet's dramatic works. London, 1838.

NOTE 13. Page 37.

After all the assistance given to such equations between different times or different places by Sir George Shuckborough's tables, and other similar investigations, it is still a very difficult problem, complex, and, after all, merely tentative in the results, to assign the true value in such cases; not only for the obvious

reason, that the powers of money have varied in different directions with regard to different objects, and in different degrees where the direction has on the whole continued the same, but because the very objects to be taken into computation are so indeterminate, and vary so much, not only as regards century and century, kingdom and kingdom, but also, even in the same century and the same kingdom, as regards rank and rank. That which is a mere necessary to one, is a luxurious superfluity to another. And, in order to ascertain these differences, it is an indispensable qualification to have studied the habits and customs of the several classes concerned, together with the variations of those habits and customs.

Note 14. Page 45.

Never was the *esse quam videri* in any point more strongly discriminated than in this very point of gallantry to the female sex, as between England and France. In France, the verbal homage to woman is so excessive as to betray its real purpose, viz., that it is a mask for secret contempt. In England, little is *said;* but, in the meantime, we allow our sovereign ruler to be a woman; which in France is impossible. Even that fact is of some importance, but less so than what follows. In every country whatsoever, if any principle has a deep root in the moral feelings of the people, we may rely upon its showing itself, by a thousand evidences amongst the very lowest ranks, and in their daily intercourse, and their *undress* manners. Now in England there is, and always has been, a manly feeling, most widely diffused, of unwillingness to see labors of a coarse order, or requiring muscular exertions, thrown upon women. Pauperism, amongst other evil effects, has sometimes locally disturbed this predominating sentiment of Englishmen; but never at any time with such depth as to kill the root of the old hereditary manliness. Sometimes at this day, a gentleman, either from carelessness, or from overruling force of convenience, or from real defect of gallantry, will allow a female servant to carry his portmanteau for him; though, after all, that spectacle is a rare one. And everywhere women of all ages engage in the pleasant, nay elegant, labors of the hay-field; but in Great Britain women are never suffered to mow, which is a most athletic and exhausting labor,

nor to load a cart, nor to drive a plough or hold it. In France, on the other hand, before the Revolution, (at which period the pseudo-homage, the lip-honor, was far more ostentatiously professed towards the female sex than at present,) a Frenchman of credit, and vouching for his statement by the whole weight of his name and personal responsibility, (M. Simond, now an American citizen,) records the following abominable scene as one of no uncommon occurrence. A woman was in some provinces yoked side by side with an ass to the plough or the harrow; and M. Simond protests that it excited no horror to see the driver distributing his lashes impartially between the woman and her brute yoke-fellow. So much for the wordy pomps of French gallantry. In England, we trust, and we believe, that any man caught in such a situation, and in such an abuse of his power, (supposing the case otherwise a possible one,) would be killed on the spot.

Note 15. Page 48.

Amongst the people of humble rank in England, who only were ever asked in church, until the new-fangled systems of marriage came up within the last ten or fifteen years, during the currency of the three Sundays on which the banns were proclaimed by the clergyman from the reading desk, the young couple elect were said jocosely to be 'hanging in the bell-ropes;' alluding perhaps to the joyous peal contingent on the final completion of the marriage.

Note 16. Page 60.

In a little memoir of Milton, which the author of this article drew up some years ago for a public society, and which is printed in an abridged shape, he took occasion to remark, that Dr. Johnson, who was meanly anxious to revive this slander against Milton, as well as some others, had supposed Milton himself to have this flagellation in his mind, and indirectly to confess it, in one of his Latin poems, where, speaking of Cambridge, and declaring that he has no longer any pleasure in the thoughts of revisiting that university, he says,

> 'Nec duri libet usque minas preferre magistri,
> Cæteraque ingenio non subeunda meo.'

This last line the malicious critic would translate — 'And other things insufferable to a man of my temper.' But, as we then observed, *ingenium* is properly expressive of the *intellectual* constitution, whilst it is the *moral* constitution that suffers degradation from personal chastisement — the sense of honor, of personal dignity, of justice, &c. *Indoles* is the proper term for this latter idea; and in using the word *ingenium*, there cannot be a doubt that Milton alluded to the dry scholastic disputations, which were shocking and odious to his fine poetical genius. If, therefore, the vile story is still to be kept up in order to dishonor a great man, at any rate let it not in future be pretended that any countenance to such a slander can be drawn from the confessions of the poet himself.

Note 17. Page 68.

And singular enough it is, as well as interesting, that Shakspeare had so entirely superseded to his own ear and memory the name Hamnet by the dramatic name of Hamlet, that in writing his will, he actually misspells the name of his friend Sadler, and calls him Hamlet. His son, however, who should have familiarized the true name to his ear, had then been dead for twenty years.

Note 18. Page 72.

'I have heard that Mr. Shakspeare was a natural wit, without any art at all. Hee frequented the plays all his younger time, but in his elder days lived at Startford, and supplied the stage with two plays every year, and for itt had an allowance so large, that he spent at the rate of £1,000 a year, as I have heard. Shakespeare, Drayton, and Ben Jonson, had a merie meeting, and it seems drank too hard, for Shakespear died of a feavour there contracted.' (Diary of the Rev. John Ward, A. M., Vicar of Stratford-upon-Avon, extending from 1648 to 1679, p. 183. Lond. 1839, 8vo.)

Note 19. Page 72.

It is naturally to be supposed that Dr. Hall would attend the funeral of his father-in-law; and the discovery of this gentlelical diary promised some gratification to our curiosity

as to the cause of Shakspeare's death. Unfortunately, it does not commence until the year 1617.

NOTE 20. Page 73.

An exception ought perhaps to be made for Sir Walter Scott and for Cervantes; but with regard to all other writers, Dante, suppose, or Ariosto amongst Italians, Camoens amongst those of Portugal, Schiller amongst Germans, however ably they may have been naturalized in foreign languages, as all of those here mentioned (excepting only Ariosto) have in one part of their works been most powerfully naturalized in English, it still remains true, (and the very sale of the books is proof sufficient,) that an alien author never does take root in the general sympathies out of his own country; he takes his station in libraries, he is read by the man of learned leisure, he is known and valued by the refined and the elegant, but he is not (what Shakspeare is for Germany and America) in any proper sense a *popular* favorite.

NOTE 21. Page 74.

It will occur to many readers, that perhaps Homer may furnish the sole exception to this sweeping assertion. Any *but* Homer is clearly and ludicrously below the level of the competition; but even Homer, 'with his tail on,' (as the Scottish Highlanders say of their chieftains when belted by their ceremonial retinues,) musters nothing like the force which *already* follows Shakspeare; and be it remembered, that Homer sleeps and has long slept as a subject of criticism or commentary, while in Germany as well as England, and *now even in France*, the gathering of wits to the vast equipage of Shakspeare is advancing in an accelerated ratio. There is, in fact, a great delusion current upon this subject. Innumerable references to Homer, and brief critical remarks on this or that pretension of Homer, this or that scene, this or that passage, lie scattered over literature ancient and modern; but the express works dedicated to the separate service of Homer are, after all, not many. In Greek we have only the large Commentary of Eustathius, and the Scholia of Didymus, &c.; in French little or nothing before the prose translation of the seventeenth century, which Pope esteemed 'elegant,' and the skirmishings of Madame Dacier, La Motte, &c.; in English, be-

sides the various translations and their prefaces, (which, by the way, began as early as 1555,) nothing of much importance until the elaborate preface of Pope to the Iliad, and his elaborate postscript to the Odyssey — nothing certainly before that, and very little indeed since that, except Wood's Essay on the Life and Genius of Homer. On the other hand, of the books written in illustration or investigation of Shakspeare, a very considerable library might be formed in England, and another in Germany.

Note 22. Page 76.

Apartment is here used, as the reader will observe, in its true and continental acceptation, as a division or *compartment* of a house including many rooms; a suite of chambers, but a suite which is partitioned off, (as in palaces,) not a single chamber; a sense so commonly and so erroneously given to this word in England.

Note 23. Page 78.

And hence, by parity of reason, under the opposite circumstances, under the circumstances which, instead of abolishing, most emphatically drew forth the sexual distinctions, viz., in the *comic* aspects of social intercourse, the reason that we see no women on the Greek stage; the Greek Comedy, unless when it affects the extravagant fun of farce, rejects women.

Note 24. Page 81.

It may be thought, however, by some readers, that Æschylus, in his fine phantom of Darius, has approached the English ghost. As a foreign ghost we would wish (and we are sure that our excellent readers would wish) to show every courtesy and attention to this apparition of Darius. It has the advantage of being royal, an advantage which it shares with the ghost of the royal Dane. Yet how different, how removed by a total world, from that or any of Shakspeare's ghosts! Take that of Banquo, for instance. How shadowy, how unreal, yet how real! Darius is a mere state ghost — a diplomatic ghost. But Banquo — he exists only for Macbeth; the guests do not see him, yet how solemn, how real, how heart-searching he is.

Note 25. Page 82.

Caliban has not yet been thoroughly fathomed. For all Shakspeare's great creations are like works of nature, subjects of inexhaustible study. It was this character of whom Charles I. and some of his ministers expressed such fervent admiration; and, among other circumstances, most justly they admired the new language almost with which he is endowed, for the purpose of expressing his fiendish and yet carnal thoughts of hatred to his master. Caliban is evidently not meant for scorn, but for abomination mixed with fear and partial respect. He is purposely brought into contrast with the drunken Trinculo and Stephano, with an advantageous result. He is much more intellectual than either, uses a more elevated language, not disfigured by vulgarisms, and is not liable to the low passion for plunder as they are. He is mortal, doubtless, as his 'dam' (for Shakspeare will not call her mother) Sycorax. But he inherits from her such qualities of power as a witch could be supposed to bequeath. He trembles indeed before Prospero; but that is, as we are to understand, through the moral superiority of Prospero in Christian wisdom; for when he finds himself in the presence of dissolute and unprincipled men, he rises at once into the dignity of intellectual power.

POPE

ALEXANDER POPE, the most brilliant of all wits who have at any period applied themselves to the poetic treatment of human manners, to the selecting from the play of human character what is picturesque, or the arresting what is fugitive, was born in the city of London on the 21st[1] day of May, in the memorable year 1688; about six months, therefore, before the landing of the Prince of Orange, and the opening of the great revolution which gave the final ratification to all previous revolutions of that tempestuous century. By the 'city' of London the reader is to understand us as speaking with technical accuracy of that district, which lies within the ancient walls and the jurisdiction of the lord mayor. The parents of Pope, there is good reason to think, were of 'gentle blood,' which is the expression of the poet himself when describing them in verse. His mother was so undoubtedly; and her illustrious son, in speaking of her to Lord Harvey, at a time when any exaggeration was open to an easy refutation, and writing in a spirit most likely to provoke it, does not scruple to say, with a tone of dignified haughtiness not unbecoming the situation of a filial champion on behalf of an insulted mother, that by birth and descent she was not below that young lady, (one of the two beautiful Miss Lepels,) whom his

lordship had selected from all the choir of court beauties as the future mother of his children. Of Pope's extraction and immediate lineage for a space of two generations we know enough. Beyond that we know little. Of this little a part is dubious; and what we are disposed to receive as *not* dubious, rests chiefly on his own authority. In the prologue to his Satires, having occasion to notice the lampooners of the times, who had represented his father as 'a mechanic, a hatter, a farmer, nay a bankrupt,' he feels himself called upon to state the truth about his parents; and naturally much more so at a time when the low scurrilities of these obscure libellers had been adopted, accredited, and diffused by persons so distinguished in all points of personal accomplishment and rank as Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and Lord Harvey: '*hard as thy heart*,' was one of the lines in their joint pasquinade, '*hard as thy heart, and as thy birth obscure*.' Accordingly he makes the following formal statement: 'Mr. Pope's father was of a gentleman's family in Oxfordshire, the head of which was the Earl of Downe. His mother was the daughter of William Turner, Esq., of York. She had three brothers, one of whom was killed; another died in the service of King Charles [meaning Charles I.]; the eldest, following his fortunes, and becoming a general officer in Spain, left *her* what estate remained after the sequestrations and forfeitures of her family.' The sequestrations here spoken of were those inflicted by the commissioners for the parliament; and usually they levied a fifth, or even two fifths, according to the apparent delinquency of the parties. But in such cases two great differences arose in the treatment of

the royalists; first, that the report was colored according to the interest which a man possessed, or other private means for biassing the commissioners; secondly, that often, when money could not be raised on mortgage to meet the sequestration, it became neccessary to sell a family estate suddenly, and therefore in those times at great loss; so that a nominal fifth might be depressed by favor to a tenth, or raised by the necessity of selling to a half. And hence might arise the small dowry of Mrs. Pope, notwithstanding the family estate in Yorkshire had centred in her person. But, by the way, we see from the fact of the eldest brother having sought service in Spain, that Mrs. Pope was a Papist; not, like her husband, by conversion, but by hereditary faith. This account, as publicly thrown out in the way of challenge by Pope, was, however, sneered at by a certain Mr. Pottinger of those days, who, together with his absurd name, has been safely transmitted to posterity in connection with this single feat of having contradicted Alexander Pope. We read in a diary published by the Microcosm, '*Met a large hat, with a man under it.*' And so, here, we cannot so properly say that Mr. Pottinger brings down the contradiction to our times, as that the contradiction brings down Mr. Pottinger. 'Cousin Pope,' said Pottinger, 'had made himself out a fine pedigree, but he wondered where he got it.' And he then goes on to plead in abatement of Pope's pretensions, 'that an old maiden aunt, equally related,' (that is, standing in the same relation to himself and to the poet,) 'a great genealogist, who was always talking of her family, never mentioned this circumstance.' And again we are told, from another quarter, that the Earl of Guildford, after ex-

press investigation of this matter, 'was sure that,' amongst the descendants of the Earls of Downe, 'there was none of the name of Pope.' How it was that Lord Guildford came to have any connection with the affair, is not stated by the biographers of Pope; but we have ascertained that, by marriage with a female descendant from the Earls of Downe, he had come into possession of their English estates.

Finally, though it is rather for the honor of the Earls of Downe than of Pope to make out the connection, we must observe that Lord Guildford's testimony, *if ever given at all*, is simply negative; he had found no proofs of the connection, but he had not found any proofs to destroy it; whilst, on the other hand, it ought to be mentioned, though unaccountably overlooked, by all previous biographers, that one of Pope's anonymous enemies, who hated him personally, but was apparently master of his family history, and too honorable to belie his own convictions, expressly affirms of his own authority, and without reference to any claim put forward by Pope, that he was descended from a junior branch of the Downe family. Which testimony has a double value; first as corroborating the probability of Pope's statement viewed in the light of a fact; and, secondly, as corroborating that same statement viewed in the light of a current story, true or false, and not as a disingenuous fiction put forward by Pope to confute Lord Harvey.

It is probable to us, that the Popes, who had been originally transplanted from England to Ireland, had in the person of some cadet been re-transplanted to England; and that having in that way been disconnected from all personal recognition, and all local memorials

of the capital house, by this sort of *postliminium*, the junior branch had ceased to cherish the honor of a descent which had now divided from all direct advantage. At all events, the researches of Pope's biographers have not been able to trace him farther back in the paternal line than to his grandfather; and he (which is odd enough, considering the popery of his descendants) was a clergyman of the established church in Hampshire. This grandfather had two sons. Of the eldest nothing is recorded beyond the three facts, that he went to Oxford, that he died there, and that he spent the family estate.[2] The younger son, whose name was Alexander, had been sent when young, in some commercial character, to Lisbon;[3] and there it was, in that centre of bigotry, that he became a sincere and most disinterested Catholic. He returned to England; married a Catholic young widow; and became the father of a second Alexander Pope, *ultra Sauromatas notus et Antipodes.*

By his own account to Spence, Pope learned 'very early to read;' and writing he taught himself 'by copying from printed books;' all which seems to argue, that as an only child, with an indolent father and a most indulgent mother, he was not molested with much schooling in his infancy. Only one adventure is recorded of his childhood, viz., that he was attacked by a cow, thrown down, and wounded in the throat.

Pope escaped this disagreeable kind of vaccination without serious injury, and was not farther tormented by cows or schoolmasters until he was about eight years old, when the family priest, that is, we presume, the confessor of his parents, taught him, agreeably to the Jesuit system, the rudiments of Greek and Latin

concurrently. This priest was named Banister; and his name is frequently employed, together with other fictitious names, by way of signature to the notes in the Dunciad, an artifice which was adopted for the sake of giving a characteristic variety to the notes, according to the tone required for the illustration of the text. From his tuition Pope was at length dismissed to a Catholic school at Twyford, near Winchester. The selection of a school in this neighborhood, though certainly the choice of a Catholic family was much limited, points apparently to the old Hampshire connection of his father. Here an incident occurred which most powerfully illustrates the original and constitutional determination to satire of this irritable poet. He knew himself so accurately, that in after times, half by way of boast, half of confession, he says,

> 'But touch me, and no Minister so sore:
> Whoe'er offends, at some unlucky time
> Slides into verse and hitches in a rhyme,
> Sacred to ridicule his whole life long,
> And the sad burthen of some merry song.'

Already, it seems, in childhood he had the same irresistible instinct, victorious over the strongest sense of personal danger. He wrote a bitter satire upon the presiding pedagogue, was brutally punished for this youthful indiscretion, and indignantly removed by his parents from the school. Mr. Roscoe speaks of Pope's personal experience as necessarily unfavorable to public schools; but in reality he knew nothing of public schools. All the establishments for Papists were narrow, and suited to their political depression; and his parents were too sincerely anxious for their son's religious principles to risk the contagion of Protestant association by sending him elsewhere.

From the scene[4] of his disgrace and illiberal punishment, he passed, according to the received accounts, under the tuition of several other masters in rapid succession. But it is the less necessary to trouble the reader with their names, as Pope himself assures us, that he learned nothing from any of them. To Banister he had been indebted for such trivial elements of a schoolboy's learning as he possessed at all, excepting those which he had taught himself. And upon himself it was, and his own admirable faculties, that he was now finally thrown for the rest of his education, at an age so immature that many boys are then first entering their academic career. Pope is supposed to have been scarcely twelve years old when he assumed the office of self-tuition, and bade farewell for ever to schools and tutors.

Such a phenomenon is at any rate striking. It is the more so, under the circumstances which attended the plan, and under the results which justified its execution. It seems, as regards the plan, hardly less strange that prudent parents should have acquiesced in a scheme of so much peril to his intellectual interests, than that the son, as regards the execution, should have justified their confidence by his final success. More especially this confidence surprises us in the father. A doating mother might shut her eyes to all remote evils in the present gratification to her affections; but Pope's father was a man of sense and principle; he must have weighed the risks besetting a boy left to his own intellectual guidance; and to these risks he would allow the more weight from his own conscious defect of scholarship and inability to guide or even to accompany his son's studies. He could

neither direct the proper choice of studies; nor in any one study, taken separately, could he suggest the proper choice of books.

The case we apprehend to have been this. Alexander Pope, the elder, was a man of philosophical desires and unambitious character. Quiet and seclusion and innocence of life, — these were what he affected for himself; and that which had been found available for his own happiness, he might reasonably wish for his son. The two hinges upon which his plans may be supposed to have turned, were, first, the political degradation of his sect; and, secondly, the fact that his son was an only child. Had he been a Protestant, or had he, though a Papist, been burthened with a large family of children, he would doubtless have pursued a different course. But to him, and, as he sincerely hoped, to his son, the strife after civil honors was sternly barred. Apostasy only could lay it open. And, as the sentiments of honor and duty in this point fell in with the vices of his temperament, high principle concurring with his constitutional love of ease, we need not wonder that he should early retire from commerce with a very moderate competence, or that he should suppose the same fortune sufficient for one who was to stand in the same position. This son was from his birth deformed. That made it probable that he might not marry. If he should, and happened to have children, a small family would find an adequate provision in the patrimonial funds; and a large one at the worst could only throw him upon the same commercial exertions to which he had been obliged himself. The Roman Catholics, indeed, were just then situated as our modern Quakers are. Law to the one, as conscience

to the other, closed all modes of active employment except that of commercial industry. Either his son, therefore, would be a rustic recluse, or, like himself, he would be a merchant.

With such prospects, what need of an elaborate education? And where was such an education to be sought? At the petty establishments of the suffering Catholics, the instruction, as he had found experimentally, was poor. At the great national establishments his son would be a degraded person; one who was permanently repelled from every arena of honor, and sometimes, as in cases of public danger, was banished from the capital, deprived of his house, left defenceless against common ruffians, and rendered liable to the control of every village magistrate. To one in these circumstances solitude was the wisest position, and the best qualification, for that was an education that would furnish aids to solitary thought. No need for brilliant accomplishments to him who must never display them; forensic arts, pulpit erudition, senatorial eloquence, academical accomplishments — these would be lost to one against whom the courts, the pulpit, the senate, the universities, were closed. Nay, by possibility worse than lost; they might prove so many snares or positive bribes to apostasy. Plain English, therefore, and the high thinking of his compatriot authors, might prove the best position for the mind of an English Papist destined to seclusion.

Such are the considerations under which we read and interpret the conduct of Pope's parents; and they lead us to regard as wise and conscientious a scheme which, under ordinary circumstances, would have been pitiably foolish. And be it remembered, that to these

considerations, derived exclusively from the civil circumstances of the family, were superadded others derived from the astonishing prematurity of the individual. That boy who could write at twelve years of age the beautiful and touching stanzas on Solitude, might well be trusted with the superintendence of his own studies. And the stripling of sixteen, who could so far transcend in good sense the accomplished statesmen or men of the world with whom he afterwards corresponded, might challenge confidence for such a choice of books as would best promote the development of his own faculties.

In reality, one so finely endowed as Alexander Pope, could not easily lose his way in the most extensive or ill-digested library. And though he tells Atterbury, that at one time he abused his opportunities by reading controversial divinity, we may be sure that his own native activities, and the elasticity of his mind, would speedily recoil into a just equilibrium of study, under wider and happier opportunities. Reading, indeed, for a person like Pope, is rather valuable as a means of exciting his own energies and of feeding his own sensibilities, than for any direct acquisitions of knowledge, or for any trains of systematic research. All men are destined to devour much rubbish between the cradle and the grave; and doubtless the man who is wisest in the choice of his books, will have read many a page before he dies, that a thoughtful review would pronounce worthless. This is the fate of all men. But the reading of Pope, as a general result or measure of his judicious choice, is best justified in his writings. They show him well furnished with whatsoever he wanted for matter or for embellishment, for

argument or illustration, for example and model, or for direct and explicit imitation.

Possibly, as we have already suggested, within the range of English literature Pope might have found all that he wanted. But variety the widest has its uses; and, for the extension of his influence with the polished classes amongst whom he lived, he did wisely to add other languages; and a question has thus arisen with regard to the extent of Pope's attainments as a self-taught linguist. A man, or even a boy, of great originality, may happen to succeed best, in working his own native mines of thought, by his unassisted energies. Here it is granted that a tutor, a guide, or even a companion, may be dispensed with, and even beneficially. But in the case of foreign languages, in attaining this machinery of literature, though anomalies even here do arise, and men there are, like Joseph Scaliger, who form ther own dictionaries and grammars in the mere process of reading an unknown language, by far the major part of students will lose their time by rejecting the aid of tutors. As there has been much difference of opinion with regard to Pope's skill in languages, we shall briefly collate and bring into one focus the stray notices.

As to the French, Voltaire, who knew Pope personally, declared that he 'could hardly *read* it, and spoke not one syllable of the language.' But perhaps Voltaire might dislike Pope? On the contrary, he was acquainted with his works, and admired them to the very level of their merits. Speaking of him *after death* to Frederick of Prussia, he prefers him to Horace and Boileau, asserting that, by comparison with *them*,

'Pope *approfondit* ce qu'ils ont *effleuré*.
D'un esprit plus hardi, d'un pas plus assuré,
Il porta le flambeau dans l'abîme de l'être;
Et l'homme *avec lui seul* apprit à se connître.
L'art quelquefois frivole, et quelquefois divine,
L'art des vers est dans Pope utile au genre humain.'

This is not a wise account of Pope, for it does not abstract the characteristic feature of his power; but it is a very kind one. And of course Voltaire could not have meant any unkindness in denying his knowledge of French. But he was certainly wrong. Pope, in *his* presence, would decline to speak or to read a language of which the pronunciation was confessedly beyond him. Or, if he did, the impression left would be still worse. In fact, no man ever will pronounce or talk a language which he does not use, for some part of every day, in the real intercourse of life. But that Pope read French of an ordinary cast with fluency enough, is evident from the extensive use which he made of Madame Dacier's labors on the Illiad, and still more of La Valterie's prose translation of the Iliad. Already in the year 1718, and long before his personal knowledge of Voltaire, Pope had shown his accurate acquaintance with some voluminous French authors, in a way which, we suspect, was equally surprising and offensive to his noble correspondent. The Duke of Buckingham[5] had addressed to Pope a letter, containing some account of the controversy about Homer, which had then been recently carried on in France between La Motte and Madame Dacier. This account was delivered with an air of teaching, which was very little in harmony with its excessive shallowness. Pope, who sustained the part of pupil in this interlude, re-

plied in a manner that exhibited a knowledge of the parties concerned in the controversy much superior to that of the duke. In particular, he characterized the excellent notes upon Horace of M. Dacier, the husband, in very just terms, as distinguished from those of his conceited and half-learned wife; and the whole reply of Pope seems very much as though he had been playing off a mystification on his grace. Undoubtedly the pompous duke felt that he had caught a Tartar. Now, M. Dacier's Horace, which, with the text, fills nine volumes, Pope could not have read *except* in French; for they are not even yet translated into English. Besides, Pope read critically the French translations of his own Essay on Man, Essay on Criticism, Rape of the Lock, &c. He spoke of them as a critic; and it was at no time a fault of Pope's to make false pretensions. All readers of Pope's Satires must also recollect numerous proofs, that he had read Boileau with so much feeling of his peculiar merit, that he has appropriated and naturalized in English some of his best passages. Voltaire was, therefore, certainly wrong.

Of Italian literature, meantime, Pope knew little or nothing; and simply because he knew nothing of the language. Tasso, indeed, he admired; and, which is singular, more than Ariosto. But we believe that he had read him only in English; and it is certain that he could not take up an Italian author, either in prose or verse, for the unaffected amusement of his leisure.

Greek, we all know, has been denied to Pope, ever since he translated Homer, and chiefly in consequence of that translation. This seems at first sight unfair,

because criticism has not succeeded in fixing upon Pope any errors of ignorance. His deviations from Homer were uniformly the result of imperfect sympathy with the naked simplicity of the antique, and therefore wilful deviations, not (like those of his more pretending competitors, Addison and Tickell) pure blunders of misapprehension. But yet it is not inconsistent with this concession to Pope's merits, that we must avow our belief in his thorough ignorance of Greek when he first commenced his task. And to us it seems astonishing that nobody should have adverted to that fact as a sufficient solution, and in fact the only plausible solution, of Pope's excessive depression of spirits in the earliest stage of his labors. This depression, after he had once pledged himself to his subscribers for the fulfilment of his task, arose from, and could have arisen from nothing else than, his conscious ignorance of Greek in connection with the solemn responsibilities he had assumed in the face of a great nation. Nay, even countries as presumptuously disdainful of tramontane literature as Italy took an interest in this memorable undertaking. Bishop Berkeley found Salvini reading it at Florence; and Madame Dacier even, who read little but Greek, and certainly no English until then, condescended to study it. Pope's dejection therefore, or rather agitation (for it impressed by sympathy a tumultuous character upon his dreams, which lasted for years after the cause had ceased to operate) was perfectly natural under the explanation we have given, but not otherwise. And how did he surmount this unhappy self-distrust? Paradoxical as it may sound, we will venture to say, that, with the innumerable aids for interpreting Homer

which even then existed, a man sufficiently acquainted with Latin might make a translation even critically exact. This Pope was not long in discovering. Other alleviations of his labor concurred, and in a ratio daily increasing.

The same formulæ were continually recurring, such as,

'*But him answering, thus addressed the swift-footed Achilles;*'

Or,

'*But him sternly beholding, thus spoke Agamemnon the king of men.*'

Then, again, universally the Homeric Greek, from many causes, is easy; and especially from these two: 1*st*, The simplicity of the thought, which never gathers into those perplexed knots of rhetorical condensation, which we find in the dramatic poets of a higher civilization. 2*dly*, From the constant bounds set to the expansion of the thought by the form of the metre; an advantage of verse which makes the poets so much easier to a beginner in the German language than the illimitable weavers of prose. The line or the stanza reins up the poet tightly to his theme, and will not suffer him to expatiate. Gradually, therefore, Pope came to read the Homeric Greek, but never accurately; nor did he ever read Eustathius without aid from Latin. As to any knowledge of the Attic Greek, of the Greek of the dramatists, the Greek of Plato, the Greek of Demosthenes, Pope neither had it nor affected to have it. Indeed it was no foible of Pope's, as we will repeat, to make claims which he had not, or even to dwell ostentatiously upon those which he had. And with respect to Greek in particular, there is a manuscript letter in existence from Pope to a Mr.

Bridges at Falham, which, speaking of the original Homer, distinctly records the knowledge which he had of his own imperfectness in the language.' Chapman, a most spirited translator of Homer, probably had no very critical skill in Greek; and Hobbes was, beyond all question, as poor a Grecian as he was a doggerel translator; yet in this letter Pope professes his willing submission to the 'authority' of Chapman and Hobbes, as superior to his own.

Finally, in *Latin*, Pope was a 'considerable proficient,' even by the cautious testimony of Dr. Johnson; and in this language only the doctor was an accomplished critic. If Pope had really the proficiency here ascribed to him, he must have had it already in his boyish years; for the translation from Statius, which is the principal monument of his skill, was executed *before* he was fourteen. We have taken the trouble to throw a hasty glance over it; and whilst we readily admit the extraordinary talent which it shows, as do all the juvenile essays of Pope, we cannot allow that it argues any accurate skill in Latin. The word Maleă; as we have seen noticed by some editor, he makes Malēa; which in itself, as the name was not of common occurrence, would not have been an error worth noticing; but taken in connection with the certainty that Pope had the original line before him —

'Arripit ex templo Maleæ de valle resurgens,'

when not merely the scanning theoretically, but the whole rhythmus practically, to the most obtuse ear, would be annihilated by Pope's false quantity, is a blunder which serves to show his utter ignorance of prosody. But, even as a version of the sense, with

every allowance for a poet's license of compression and expansion, Pope's translation is defective, and argues an occasional inability to construe the text. For instance, at the council summoned by Jupiter, it is said that he at his first entrance seats himself upon his starry throne, but not so the inferior gods;

> 'Nec protinus ausi
> Cœlicolæ, veniam donec pater ipse sedendi
> Tranquilla jubet esse manu.'

In which passage there is a slight obscurity, from the ellipsis of the word *sedere*, or *sese locare;* but the meaning is evidently that the other gods did not presume to sit down *protinus*, that is, in immediate succession to Jupiter, and interpreting his example as a tacit license to do so, until, by a gentle wave of his hand, the supreme father signifies his express permission to take their seats. But Pope, manifestly unable to extract any sense from the passage, translates thus:

> 'At Jove's assent the deities around
> In solemn state the consistory *crown'd;*'

where at once the whole picturesque solemnity of the celestial ritual melts into the vaguest generalities. Again, at v. 178, *ruptæque vices* is translated, '*and all the ties of nature broke;*' but by *vices* is indicated the alternate reign of the two brothers, as ratified by mutual oaths, and subsequently violated by Eteocles. Other mistakes might be cited, which seem to prove that Pope, like most self-taught linguists, was a very imperfect one.[6] Pope, in short, never rose to such a point in classical literature as to read either Greek or Latin authors without effort, and for his private amusement.

The result, therefore, of Pope's self-tuition appears to us, considered in the light of an attempt to acquire certain accomplishments of knowledge, a most complete failure. As a linguist, he read no language with ease; none with pleasure to himself; and none with so much accuracy as could have carried him through the most popular author with a general independence of interpreters. But, considered with a view to his particular faculties and slumbering originality of power which required perhaps the stimlation of accident to arouse them effectually, we are very much disposed to think that the very failure of his education as an artificial training was a great advantage finally for inclining his mind to throw itself, by way of indemnification, upon its native powers. Had he attained, as with better tuition he would have attained, distinguished excellence as a scholar, or as a student of science, the chances are many that he would have settled down into such studies as thousands could pursue not less successfully than he; whilst as it was, the very dissatisfaction which he could not but feel with his slender attainments, must have given him a strong motive for cultivating those impulses of original power which he felt continually stirring within him, and which were vivified into trials of competition as often as any distinguished excellence was introduced to his knowledge.

Pope's father, at the time of his birth, lived in Lombard Street;[7] a street still familiar to the public eye, from its adjacency to some of the chief metropolitan establishments, and to the English ear possessing a degree of historical importance; first, as the residence of those Lombards, or Milanese, who affiliated our

infant commerce to the matron splendors of the Adriatic and the Mediterranean; next, as the central resort of those jewellers, or 'goldsmiths,' as they were styled, who performed all the functions of modern bankers from the period of the parliamentary war to the rise of the Bank of England, that is, for six years after the birth of Pope; and, lastly, as the seat, until lately, of that vast Post-Office, through which, for so long a period, has passed the correspondence of all nations and languages, upon a scale unknown to any other country. In this street Alexander Pope the elder had a house, and a warehouse, we presume annexed, in which he conducted the wholesale business of a linen merchant. As soon as he had made a moderate fortune he retired from business, first to Kensington, and afterwards to Binfield, in Windsor Forest. The period of this migration is not assigned by any writer. It is probable that a prudent man would not adopt it with any prospect of having more children. But this chance might be considered as already extinguished at the birth of Pope; for though his father had then only attained his forty-fourth year, Mrs. Pope had completed her forty-eighth. It is probable, from the interval of seven days which is said to have elapsed between Pope's punishment and his removal from the school, that his parents were then living at such a distance from him as to prevent his ready communication with them, else we may be sure that Mrs. Pope would have flown on the wings of love and wrath to the rescue of her darling. Supposing, therefore, as we *do* suppose, that Mr. Bromley's school in London was the scene of his disgrace, it would appear on this argument that his parents were then living in Windsor Forest.

And this hypothesis falls in with another anecdote in Pope's life, which we know partly upon his own authority. He tells Wycherley that he had seen Dryden, and barely seen him. *Virgilium vidi tantum.* This is presumed to have been in Will's Coffee-house, whither any person in search of Dryden would of course resort; and it must have been before Pope was twelve years old, for Dryden died in 1700. Now there is a letter of Sir Charles Wogen's, stating that he first took Pope to Will's; and his words are, 'from our forest.' Consequently, at that period, when he had not completed his twelfth year, Pope was already living in the forest.

From this period, and so long as the genial spirits of youth lasted, Pope's life must have been one dream of pleasure. He tells Lord Harvey that his mother did not spoil him; but that was no doubt because there was no room for wilfulness or waywardness on either side, when all was one placid scene of parental obedience and gentle filial authority. We feel persuaded that, if not in words, in spirit and inclination, they would, in any notes they might have occasion to write, subscribe themselves 'Your dutiful parents.' And of what consequence in whose hands were the reins which were never needed? Every reader must be pleased to know that these idolizing parents lived to see their son at the very summit of his public elevation; even his father lived two years and a half after the publication of his Homer had commenced, and when his fortune was made; and his mother lived for nearly eighteen years more. What a felicity for her, how rare and how perfect to find that he, who to her maternal eyes was naturally the most perfect of human

beings, and the idol of her heart, had already been the idol of the nation before he had completed his youth. She had also another blessing not always commanded by the most devoted love; many sons there are who think it essential to manliness that they should treat their mother's doating anxiety with levity or even ridicule. But Pope, who was the model of a good son, never swerved in words, manners, or conduct, from the most respectful tenderness, or intermitted the piety of his attentions. And so far did he carry this regard for his mother's comfort, that, well knowing how she lived upon his presence or by his image, he denied himself for many years all excursions which could not be fully accomplished within the revolution of a week. And to this cause, combined with the excessive length of his mother's life, must be ascribed the fact that Pope never went abroad; not to Italy with Thomson or with Berkeley, or any of his diplomatic friends; not to Ireland, where his presence would have been hailed as a national honor; not even to France, on a visit to his admiring and admired friend Lord Bolingbroke. For as to the fear of sea-sickness, *that* did not arise until a late period of his life; and at any period would not have operated to prevent his crossing from Dover to Calais. It is possible that, in his earlier and more sanguine years, all the perfection of his filial love may not have availed to prevent him from now and then breathing a secret murmur at confinement so constant. But it is certain that, long before he passed the meridian of his life, Pope had come to view this confinement with far other thoughts. Experience had then taught him that to no man is the privilege granted of possessing more than one or two friends who are such in extrem-

ity. By that time he had come to view his mother's death with fear and anguish. She, he knew by many a sign, would have been happy to lay down her life for his sake; but for others, even those who were the most friendly and the most constant in their attentions, he felt but too certainly that his death, or his heavy affliction, might cost them a few sighs, but would not materially disturb their peace of mind. 'It is but in a very narrow circle,' says he, in a confidential letter, 'that friendship walks in this world, and I care not to tread out of it more than I needs must; knowing well it is but to two or three, (if quite so many,) that any man's welfare or memory can be of consequence.' After such acknowledgments, we are not surprised to find him writing thus of his mother, and his fearful struggles to fight off the shock of his mother's death, at a time when it was rapidly approaching. After having said of a friend's death, 'The subject is beyond writing upon, beyond cure or ease by reason or reflection, beyond all but one thought, that it is the will of God,' he goes on thus, 'So will the death of my mother be, which now I tremble at, now resign to, now bring close to me, now set farther off; every day alters, turns me about, confuses my whole frame of mind.' There is no pleasure, he adds, which the world can give, 'equivalent to countervail either the death of one I have so long lived with, or of one I have so long lived for.' How will he comfort himself after her death? 'I have nothing left but to turn my thoughts to one comfort, the last we usually think of, though the only one we should in wisdom depend upon. I sit in her room, and she is always present before me but when I sleep. I wonder I am so well. I have shed many tears; but now I weep at nothing.'

A man, therefore, happier than Pope in his domestic relations cannot easily have lived. It is true these relations were circumscribed; had they been wider, they could not have been so happy. But Pope was equally fortunate in his social relations. What, indeed, most of all surprises us, is the courteous, flattering, and even brilliant reception which Pope found from his earliest boyhood amongst the most accomplished men of the world. Wits, courtiers, statesmen, grandees the most dignified, and men of fashion the most brilliant, all alike treated him not only with pointed kindness, but with a respect that seemed to acknowledge him as their intellectual superior. Without rank, high birth, fortune, without even a literary name, and in defiance of a deformed person, Pope, whilst yet only sixteen years of age, was caressed, and even honored; and all this with no one recommendation but simply the knowledge of his dedication to letters, and the premature expectations which he raised of future excellence. Sir William Trumbull, a veteran statesman, who had held the highest stations, both diplomatic and ministerial, made him his daily companion. Wycherley, the old *roué* of the town, a second-rate wit, but not the less jealous on that account, showed the utmost deference to one whom, as a man of fashion, he must have regarded with contempt, and between whom and himself there were nearly 'fifty good years of fair and foul weather.' Cromwell,[8] a fox-hunting country gentleman, but uniting with that character the pretensions of a wit, and affecting also the reputation of a rake, cultivated his regard with zeal and conscious inferiority. Nay, which never in any other instance happened to the most fortunate poet, his very inaugural

essays in verse were treated, not as prelusive efforts of auspicious promise, but as finished works of art, entitled to take their station amongst the literature of the land; and in the most worthless of all his poems, Walsh, an established authority, and whom Dryden pronounced the ablest critic of the age, found proofs of equality with Virgil.

The literary correspondence with these gentlemen is interesting, as a model of what once passed for fine letter-writing. Every nerve was strained to outdo each other in carving all thoughts into a filagree work of rhetoric; and the amœbæan contest was like that between two village cocks from neighboring farms endeavoring to overthrow each other. To us, in this age of purer and more masculine taste, the whole scene takes the ludicrous air of old and young fops dancing a minuet with each other, practising the most elaborate grimaces, sinkings and risings the most awful, bows the most overshadowing, until plain walking, running, or the motions of natural dancing, are thought too insipid for endurance. In this instance the taste had perhaps really been borrowed from France, though often enough we impute to France what is the native growth of all minds placed in similar circumstances. Madame de Sevigné's Letters were really models of grace. But Balzac, whose letters, however, are not without interest, had in some measure formed himself upon the truly magnificent rhetoric of Pliny and Seneca. Pope and his correspondents, meantime, degraded the dignity of rhetoric by applying it to trivial commonplaces of compliment; whereas Seneca applied it to the grandest themes which life or contemplation can supply. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu,

on first coming amongst the wits of the day, naturally adopted their style. She found this sort of *euphuism* established; and it was not for a very young woman to oppose it. But her masculine understanding and powerful good sense, shaken free, besides, from all local follies by travels and extensive commerce with the world, first threw off these glittering chains of affectation. Dean Swift, by the very constitution of his mind, plain, sinewy, nervous, and courting only the strength that allies itself with homeliness, was always indisposed to this mode of correspondence. And, finally, Pope himself, as his earlier friends died off, and his own understanding acquired strength, laid it aside altogether. One reason doubtless was, that he found it too fatiguing; since in this way of letter-writing he was put to as much expense of wit in amusing an individual correspondent, as would for an equal extent have sufficed to delight the whole world. A funambulist may harass his muscles and risk his neck on the tight-rope, but hardly to entertain his own family. Pope, however, had another reason for declining this showy system of fencing; and strange it is that he had not discovered this reason from the very first. As life advanced, it happened unavoidably that real business advanced; the careless condition of youth prompted no topics, or at least prescribed none, but such as were agreeable to the taste, and allowed of an ornamental coloring. But when downright business occurred, exchequer bills to be sold, meetings to be arranged, negotiations confided, difficulties to be explained, here and there by possibility a jest or two might be scattered, a witty illusion thrown in, or a sentiment interwoven; but for the main body of the case, it neither

could receive any ornamental treatment, nor if, by any effort of ingenuity, it *had*, could it look otherwise than silly and unreasonable :

'Ornari res ipsa negat, contenta doceri.'

Pope's idleness, therefore, on the one hand, concurring with good sense and the necessities of business on the other, drove him to quit his gay rhetoric in letter-writing. But there are passages surviving in his correspondence which indicate, that, after all, had leisure and the coarse perplexities of life permitted it, he still looked with partiality upon his youthful style, and cherished it as a first love. But in this harsh world, as the course of true love, so that of rhetoric, never did run smooth ; and thus it happened that, with a lingering farewell, he felt himself forced to bid it adieu. Strange that any man should think his own sincere and confidential overflowings of thought and feeling upon books, men, and public affairs, less valuable in a literary view than the legerdemain of throwing up bubbles into the air for the sake of watching their prismatic hues, like an Indian juggler with his cups and balls. We of this age, who have formed our notions of epistolary excellence from the chastity of Gray's, the brilliancy of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's during her later life, and the mingled good sense and fine feelings of Cowper's, value only those letters of Pope which he himself thought of inferior value. And even with regard to these, we may say that there is a great mistake made ; the best of those later letters between Pope and Swift, &c., are not in themselves at all superior to the letters of sensible and accomplished women, such as leave every town in the island by

every post. Their chief interest is a derivative one; we are pleased with any letter, good or bad, which relates to men of such eminent talent; and sometimes the subjects discussed have a separate interest for themselves. But as to the quality of the discussion, apart from the person discussing and the thing discussed, so trivial is the value of these letters in a large proportion, that we cannot but wonder at the preposterous value which was set upon them by the writers.[9] Pope especially ought not to have his ethereal works loaded by the mass of trivial prose which is usually attached to them.

This correspondence, meantime, with the wits of the time, though one mode by which, in the absence of reviews, the reputation of an author was spread, did not perhaps serve the interests of Pope so effectually as the poems which in this way he circulated in those classes of English society whose favor he chiefly courted. One of his friends, the truly kind and accomplished Sir William Trumbull, served him in that way, and perhaps in another eventually even more important. The library of Pope's father was composed exclusively of polemical divinity, a proof, by the way, that he was not a blind convert to the Roman Catholic faith; or, if he was so originally, had reviewed the grounds of it, and adhered to it after strenuous study. In this dearth of books at his own home, and until he was able to influence his father in buying more extensively, Pope had benefited by the loans of his friends; amongst whom it is probable that Sir William, as one of the best scholars of the whole, might assist him most. He certainly offered him the most touching compliment, as it was also the wisest and most paternal

counsel, when he besought him as one *goddess-born*, to quit the convivial society of deep drinkers:

'Heu, fuge nate dea, teque his, ait, eripe malis.'

With these aids from friends of rank, and his way thus laid open to public favor, in the year 1709 Pope first came forward upon the stage of literature. The same year which terminated his legal minority introduced him to the public. *Miscellanies* in those days were almost periodical repositories of fugitive verse. Tonson happened at this time to be publishing one of some extent, the sixth volume of which offered a sort of ambush to the young aspirant of Windsor Forest, from which he might watch the public feeling. The volume was opened by Mr. Ambrose Philips, in the character of pastoral poet; and in the same character, but stationed at the end of the volume, and thus covered by his bucolic leader, as a soldier to the rear by the file in advance, appeared Pope; so that he might win a little public notice, without too much seeming to challenge it. This half-clandestine emersion upon the stage of authorship, and his furtive position, are both mentioned by Pope as accidents, but as accidents in which he rejoiced, and not improbably accidents which Tonson had arranged with a view to his satisfaction.

It must appear strange that Pope at twenty-one should choose to come forward for the first time with a work composed at sixteen. A difference of five years at that stage of life is of more effect than of twenty at a later; and his own expanding judgment could hardly fail to inform him, that his Pastorals were by far the worst of his works. In reality, let us not deny, that had Pope never written any thing else, his name would

not have been known as a name even of promise, but would probably have been redeemed from oblivion by some satirist or writer of a Dunciad. Were a man to meet with such a nondescript monster as the following, viz., '*Love out of Mount Ætna by Whirlwind*,' he would suppose himself reading the Racing Calendar. Yet this hybrid creature is one of the many zoölogical monsters to whom the Pastorals introduce us:

> 'I know thee, love! on foreign mountains bred,
> Wolves gave thee suck, and savage tigers fed.
> Thou wert from Ætna's burning entrails torn,
> Got by fierce whirlwinds, and in thunder born.'

But the very names 'Damon' and 'Strephon,' 'Phillis' and 'Delia,' are rank with childishness. Arcadian life is, at the best, a feeble conception, and rests upon the false principle of crowding together all the luscious sweets of rural life, undignified by the danger which attends pastoral life in our climate, and unrelieved by shades, either moral or physical. And the Arcadia of Pope's age was the spurious Arcadia of the opera theatre, and, what is worse, of the French opera.

The hostilities which followed between these rival wooers of the pastoral muse are well known. Pope, irritated at what he conceived the partiality shown to Philips in the Guardian, pursued the review ironically; and, whilst affecting to load his antagonist with praises, draws into pointed relief some of his most flagrant faults. The result, however, we cannot believe. That all the wits, except Addison, were duped by the irony, is quite impossible. Could any man of sense mistake for praise the remark, that Philips had imitated '*every* line of Strada;' that he had introduced wolves into England, and proved himself the first of gardeners by

making his flowers 'blow all in the same season.' Or, suppose those passages unnoticed, could the broda sneer escape him, where Pope taxes the other writer (viz., himself) with having deviated 'into downright poetry;' or the outrageous ridicule of Philips's style, as setting up for the ideal type of the pastoral style, the quotation from Gay, beginning,

> 'Rager, go vetch the kee, or else the zun
> Will quite bego before ch' 'avs half a don!'

Philips is said to have resented this treatment by threats of personal chastisement to Pope, and even hanging up a rod at Button's coffee-house. We may be certain that Philips never disgraced himself by such ignoble conduct. If the public indeed were universally duped by the paper, what motive had Philips for resentment? Or, in any case, what plea had he for attacking Pope, who had not come forward as the author of the essay? But, from Pope's confidential account of the matter, we know that Philips saw him daily, and never offered him 'any indecorum;' though, for some cause or other, Pope pursued Philips with virulence through life.

In the year 1711, Pope published his Essay on Criticism, which some people have very unreasonably fancied his best performance; and in the same year his Rape of the Lock, the most exquisite monument of playful fancy that universal literature offers. It wanted, however, as yet, the principle of its vitality, in wanting the machinery of sylphs and gnomes, with which addition it was first published in 1714.

In the year 1712, Pope appeared again before the public as the author of the Temple of Fame, and the Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady. Much

speculation has arisen on the question concerning the name of this lady, and the more interesting question concerning the nature of the persecutions and misfortunes which she suffered. Pope appears purposely to decline answering the questions of his friends upon that point; at least the questions have reached us, and the answers have not. Joseph Warton supposed himself to have ascertained four facts about her: that her name was Wainsbury; that she was deformed in person; that she retired into a convent from some circumstances connected with an attachment to a young man of inferior rank; and that she killed herself, not by a sword, as the poet insinuates, but by a halter. As to the latter statement, it may very possibly be true; such a change would be a very slight exercise of the poet's privileges. As to the rest, there are scarcely grounds enough for an opinion. Pope certainly speaks of her under the name of Mrs. (*i. e.* Miss) W——, which at least argues a poetical exaggeration in describing her as a being 'that once had *titles*, honor, wealth, and fame;' and he may as much have exaggerated her pretensions to beauty. It is indeed noticeable, that he speaks simply of her *decent* limbs, which, in any English use of the word, does not imply much enthusiasm of praise. She appears to have been the niece of a Lady A——; and Mr. Craggs, afterwards secretary of state, wrote to Lady A—— on her behalf, and otherwise took an interest in her fate. As to her being a relative of the Duke of Buckingham's, that rests upon a mere conjectural interpretation applied to a letter of that nobleman's. But all things about this unhappy lady are as yet enveloped in mystery. And not the least part of the

mystery is a letter of Pope's to a Mr. C——, bearing date 1732, that is, just twenty years after the publication of the poem, in which Pope, in a manly tone, justifies himself for his estrangement, and presses against his unknown correspondent the very blame which he had applied generally to the kinsman of the poor victim in 1712. Now, unless, there is some mistake in the date, how are we to explain this gentleman's long lethargy, and his sudden sensibility to Pope's anathema, with which the world has resounded for twenty years?

Pope had now established his reputation with the public as the legitimate successor and heir to the poetical supremacy of Dryden. His Rape of the Lock was unrivalled in ancient or modern literature, and the time had now arrived when, instead of seeking to extend his fame, he might count upon a pretty general support in applying what he had already established to the promotion of his own interest. Accordingly, in the autumn of 1713, he formed a final resolution of undertaking a new translation of the Iliad. It must be observed, that already in 1709, concurrently with his Pastorals, he had published specimens of such a translation; and these had been communicated to his friends some time before. In particular, Sir William Trumbull, on the 9th of April, 1708, urged upon Pope a complete translation of both Iliad and Odyssey. Defective skill in the Greek language, exaggeration of the difficulties, and the timidity of a writer as yet unknown, and not quite twenty years old, restrained Pope for five years and more. What he had practised as a sort of *bravura*, for a single effort of display, he recoiled from as a

daily task to be pursued through much toil, and a considerable section of his life. However, he dallied with the purpose, starting difficulties in the temper of one who wishes to hear them undervalued; until at length Sir Richard Steele determined him to the undertaking, a fact overlooked by the biographer, but which is ascertained by Ayre's account of that interview between Pope and Addison, probably in 1716, which sealed the rupture between them. In the autumn of 1713, he made his design known amongst his friends. Accordingly, on the 21st of October, we have Lord Lansdown's letter, expressing his great pleasure at the communication; on the 26th we have Addison's letter encouraging him to the task; and in November of the same year occurs the amusing scene so graphically described by Bishop Kennet, when Dean Swift presided in the conversation, and, amongst other indications of his conscious authority, 'instructed a young nobleman, that the best poet in England was Mr. Pope, who had *begun* a translation of Homer into English verse, for which he must have them all subscribe; for,' says he, '*the author shall not begin to print until I have a thousand guineas for him.*'

If this were the extent of what Swift anticipated from the work, he fell miserably below the result. But, perhaps, he spoke only of a cautionary *arrha* or earnest. As this was unquestionably the greatest literary labor, as to profit, ever executed, not excepting the most lucrative of Sir Walter Scott's, if due allowance be made for the altered value of money, and if we consider the Odyssey as forming part of the labor, it may be right to state the particulars of Pope's contract with Lintot.

The number of subscribers to the Iliad was 574, and the number of copies subscribed for was 654. The work was to be printed in six quarto volumes; and the subscription was a guinea a volume. Consequently by the subscription Pope obtained six times 654 guineas, or £4218 6*s*., (for the guinea then passed for 21*s*. 6*d*.); and for the copyright of each volume Lintot offered £200, consequently £1200 for the whole six; so that from the Iliad the profit exactly amounted to £5310 16*s*. Of the Odyssey, 574 copies were subscribed for. It was to be printed in five quarto volumes, and the subscription was a guinea a volume. Consequently by the subscription Pope obtained five times 574 guineas, or £3085 5*s*.; and for the copyright Lintot offered £600. The total sum received, therefore, by Pope, on account of the Odyssey, was £3685 5*s*. But in this instance he had two coadjutors, Broome and Fenton; between them they translated twelve books, leaving twelve to Pope. The notes also were compiled by Broome; but the postscript to the notes was written by Pope. Fenton received £300, Broome £500. Such at least is Warton's account, and more probable than that of Ruffhead, who not only varies the proportions, but increases the whole sum given to the assistants by £100. Thus far we had followed the guidance of mere probabilities, as they lie upon the face of the transaction. But we have since detected a written statement of Pope's, unaccountably overlooked by the biographers, and serving of itself to show how negligently they have read the works of their illustrious subject. The statement is entitled to the fullest attention and confidence, not being a hasty or casual notice of the transaction, but pointedly shaped

to meet a calumnious rumor against Pope in his character of paymaster; as if he who had found so much liberality from publishers in his own person, were niggardly or unjust as soon as he assumed those relations to others. Broome, it was alleged, had expressed himself dissatisfied with Pope's remuneration. Perhaps he had. For he would be likely to frame his estimate for his own services from the scale of Pope's reputed gains; and those gains would, at any rate, be enormously exaggerated, as uniformly happens where there is a basis of the marvellous to begin with. And, secondly, it would be natural enough to assume the previous result from the Iliad as a fair standard for computation; but in this, as we know, all parties found themselves disappointed, and Broome had the less right to murmur at this, since the agreement with himself as chief journeyman in the job was one main cause of the disappointment. There was also another reason why Broome should be less satisfied than Fenton. Verse for verse, any one thousand lines of a translation so purely mechanical might stand against any other thousand; and so far the equation of claims was easy. A book-keeper, with a pen behind his ear, and Cocker's Golden Rule open before him, could do full justice to Mr. Broome *as a poet* every Saturday night. But Broome had a separate account current for pure prose against Pope. One he had in conjunction with Fenton for verses delivered on the premises at so much per hundred, on which there could be no demur, except as to the allowance for tare and tret as a discount in favor of Pope. But the prose account, the account for notes, requiring very various degrees of reading and research, allowed of no such easy

equation. *There* it was, we conceive, that Broome's discontent arose. Pope, however, declares that he had given him £500, thus confirming the proportions of Warton against Ruffhead, (that is, in effect, Warburton,) and some other advantages which were not in money, nor deductions at all from his own money profits, but which may have been worth so much money to Broome, as to give some colorable truth to Ruffhead's allegation of an additional £100. In direct money, it remains certain that Fenton had three, and Broome five hundred pounds. It follows, therefore, that for the Iliad and Odyssey jointly he received a sum of £8996 1*s*., and paid for assistance £800, which leaves to himself a clear sum of £8196 1*s*. And, in fact, his profits ought to be calculated without deduction, since it was his own choice, from indolence, to purchase assistance.

The Iliad was commenced about October, 1713. In the summer of the following year he was so far advanced as to begin making arrangements with Lintot for the printing; and the first two books, in manuscript, were put into the hands of Lord Halifax. In June, 1715, between the 10th and 28th, the subscribers received their copies of the first volume; and in July Lintot began to publish that volume generally. Some readers will inquire, who paid for the printing and paper, &c.? All this expense fell upon Lintot, for whom Pope was superfluously anxious. The sagacious bookseller understood what he was about; and, when a pirated edition was published in Holland, he counteracted the injury by printing a cheap edition, of which 7500 copies were sold in a few weeks; an extraordinary proof of the extended interest in literature. The

second, third, and fourth volumes of the Iliad, each containing, like the first, four books, were published successively in 1716, 1717, 1718; and in 1720, Pope completed the work by publishing the fifth volume, containing five books, and the sixth, containing the last three, with the requisite supplementary apparatus.

The Odyssey was commenced in 1723, (not 1722, as Mr. Roscoe virtually asserts at p. 259,) and the publication of it was finished in 1725. The sale, however, was much inferior to that of the Iliad; for which more reasons than one might be assigned. But there can be no doubt that Pope himself depreciated the work, by his undignified arrangements for working by subordinate hands. Such a process may answer in sculpture, because there a quantity of rough-hewing occurs, which can no more be improved by committing it to a Phidias, than a common shop-bill could be improved in its arithmetic by Sir Isaac Newton. But in literature such arrangements are degrading; and above all, in a work which was but too much exposed already to the presumption of being a mere effort of mechanic skill, or (as Curll said to the House of Lords) '*a knack;*' it was deliberately helping forward that idea to let off parts of the labor. Only think of Milton letting off by contract to the lowest offer, and to be delivered by such a day, (for which good security to be found,) six books of Paradise Lost. It is true the great dramatic authors were often *collaborateurs* but their case was essentially different. The loss, however, fell not upon Pope, but upon Lintot, who, on this occasion, was out of temper, and talked rather broadly of prosecution. But that was out of the question. Pope had acted indiscreetly, but nothing could

be alleged against his honor; for he had expressly warned the public, that he did not, as in the other case, profess *to translate*, but to *undertake*[10] *a translation* of the Odyssey. Lintot, however, was no loser, absolutely, though he might be so in relation to his expectations; on the contrary, he grew rich, bought land, and became sheriff of the county in which his estates lay.

We have pursued the Homeric labors uninterruptedly from their commencement in 1713, till their final termination in 1725, a period of twelve years or nearly; because this was the task to which Pope owed the dignity, if not the comforts of his life, since it was this which enabled him to decline a pension from all administrations, and even from his friend Craggs, the secretary, to decline the express offer of £300 per annum. Indeed Pope is always proud to own his obligations to Homer. In the interval, however, between the Iliad and the Odyssey, Pope listened to proposals made by Jacob Tonson, that he should revise an edition of Shakspeare. For this, which was in fact the first attempt at establishing the text of the mighty poet, Pope obtained but little money, and still less reputation. He received, according to tradition, only £217 12*s*. for his trouble of collation, which must have been considerable, and some other trifling editorial labor. And the opinion of all judges, from the first so unfavorable as to have depreciated the money-value of the book enormously perhaps from a prepossession of the public mind against the fitness of Pope for executing the dull labors of revision, has ever since pronounced this work the very worst edition in existence. For the edition we have little to plead; but for

the editor it is but just to make three apologies. In the *first* place, he wrote a brilliant preface, which, although (like other works of the same class) too much occupied in displaying his own ability, and too often, for the sake of an effective antithesis, doing deep injustice to Shakspeare, yet undoubtedly, as a whole, extended his fame, by giving the sanction and countersign of a great wit to the national admiration. *Secondly*, as Dr. Johnson admits, Pope's failure pointed out the right road to his successors. *Thirdly*, even in this failure it is but fair to say, that in a graduated scale of merit, as distributed amongst the long succession of editors through that century, Pope holds a rank proportionable to his age. For the year 1720, he is no otherwise below Theobald, Hanmer, Capell, Warburton, or even Johnson, than as they are successively below each other, and all of them as to accuracy below Steevens, as he again was below Malone and Reed.

The gains from Shakspeare would hardly counterbalance the loss which Pope sustained this year from the South Sea Bubble. One thing, by the way, is still unaccountably neglected by writers on this question. How it was that the great Mississippi Bubble, during the Orleans regency in Paris, should have happened to coincide with that of London. If this were accident, how marvellous that the same insanity should possess the two great capitals of Christendom in the same year! If, again, it were not accident, but due to some common cause, why is not that cause explained? Pope to his nearest friends never stated the amount of his loss. The biographers report that at one time his stock was worth from twenty to thirty thousand pounds

But that was quite impossible. It is true, that as the stock rose at one time a thousand per cent., this would not imply on Pope's part an original purchase beyond twenty-five hundred pounds or thereabouts. But Pope has furnished an argument against *that*, which we shall improve. He quotes more than once, as applicable to his own case, the old proverbial riddle of Hesiod, πλεον ἡμισυ παντος, *the half is more than the whole.* What did he mean by that? We understand it thus: That between the selling and buying, the variations had been such as to sink his shares to one half of the price they had once reached, but, even at that depreciation, to leave him richer on selling out than he had been at first. But the half of £25,000 would be a far larger sum than Pope could have ventured to risk upon a fund confessedly liable to daily fluctuation. £3000 would be the utmost he could risk; in which case the half of £25,000 would have left him so very much richer, that he would have proclaimed his good fortune as an evidence of his skill and prudence. Yet, on the contrary, he wished his friends to understand at times that he had lost. But his friends forgot to ask one important question: Was the word *loss* to be understood in relation to the imaginary and nominal wealth which he once possessed, or in relation to the absolute sum invested in the South Sea fund? The truth is, Pope practised on this, as on other occasions, a little finessing, which is the chief foible in his character. His object was, that, according to circumstances, he might vindicate his own freedom from the common mania, in case his enemies should take that handle for attacking him; or might have it in his power to plead poverty, and to account for it, in case he should ever

accept that pension which had been so often tendered but never sternly rejected.

In 1723 Pope lost one of his dearest friends, Bishop Atterbury, by banishment; a sentence most justly incurred, and mercifully mitigated by the hostile Whig government. On the bishop's trial a circumstance occurred to Pope which flagrantly corroborated his own belief in his natural disqualification for public life. He was summoned as an evidence on his friend's behalf. He had but a dozen words to say, simply explaining the general tenor of his lordship's behavior at Bromley, and yet, under this trivial task, though supported by the enthusiasm of his friendship, he broke down. Lord Bolingbroke, returning from exile, met the bishop at the sea-side; upon which it was wittily remarked that they were 'exchanged.' Lord Bolingbroke supplied to Pope the place, or perhaps more than supplied the place, of the friend he had lost; for Bolingbroke was a free-thinker, and so far more entertaining to Pope, even whilst partially dissenting, than Atterbury, whose clerical profession laid him under restraints of decorum, and latterly, there is reason to think, of conscience.

In 1725, on closing the Odyssey, Pope announces his intention to Swift of quitting the labors of a translator, and thenceforwards applying himself to original composition. This resolution led to the Essay on Man, which appeared soon afterwards; and, with the exception of two labors, which occupied Pope in the interval between 1726 and 1729, the rest of his life may properly be described as dedicated to the further extension of that Essay. The two works which he interposed were a collection of the fugitive papers, whether

prose or verse, which he and Dean Swift had scattered amongst their friends at different periods of life. The avowed motive for this publication, and, in fact, the secret motive, as disclosed in Pope's confidential letters, was to make it impossible thenceforwards for piratical publishers like Curll. Both Pope and Swift dreaded the malice of Curll in case they should die before him. It was one of Curll's regular artifices to publish a heap of trash on the death of any eminent man, under the title of his Remains; and in allusion to that practice, it was that Arbuthnot most wittily called Curll 'one of the new terrors of death.' By publishing *all*, Pope would have disarmed Curll beforehand; and *that* was in fact the purpose; and that plea only could be offered by two grave authors, one forty, the other sixty years old, for reprinting *jeux d'esprit*, that never had any other apology than the youth of their authors. Yet, strange to say, after all, some were omitted; and the omission of one opened the door to Curll as well as that of a score. Let Curll have once inserted the narrow end of the wedge, he would soon have driven it home.

This Miscellany, however, in three volumes, (published in 1727, but afterwards increased by a fourth in 1732,) though in itself a trifling work, had one vast consequence. It drew after it swarms of libels and lampoons, levelled almost exclusively at Pope, although the cipher of the joint authors stood entwined upon the title-page. These libels in *their* turn produced a second reaction; and, by stimulating Pope to effectual anger, eventually drew forth, for the everlasting admiration of posterity, the very greatest of Pope's works; a monument of satirical power the greatest which man

has produced, not excepting the MacFleckno of Dryden, namely, the immortal Dunciad.

In October of the year 1727, this poem, in its original form, was completed. Many editions, not spurious altogether, nor surreptitious, but with some connivance, not yet explained, from Pope, were printed in Dublin and in London. But the first quarto and acknowledged edition was published in London early in '1728–9,' as the editors choose to write it, that is, (without perplexing the reader,) in 1729. On March 12th of which year it was presented by the prime minister, Sir Robert Walpole, to the king and queen at St. James's.

Like a hornet, who is said to leave his sting in the wound, and afterwards to languish away, Pope felt so greatly exhausted by the efforts connected with the Dunciad, (which are far greater, in fact, than all his Homeric labors put together,) that he prepared his friends to expect for the future only an indolent companion and a hermit. Events rapidly succeeded which tended to strengthen the impression he had conceived of his own decay, and certainly to increase his disgust with the world. In 1732 died his friend Atterbury; and on December the 7th of the same year Gay, the most unpretending of all the wits whom he knew, and the one with whom he had at one time been domesticated, expired, after an illness of three days, which Dr. Arbuthnot declares to have been 'the most precipitate' he ever knew. But in fact Gay had long been decaying from the ignoble vice of too much and too luxurious eating. Six months after this loss, which greatly affected Pope, came the last deadly wound which this life could inflict, in the death of his mother.

She had for some time been in her dotage, and recognized no face but that of her son, so that her death was not unexpected; but that circumstance did not soften the blow of separation to Pope. She died on the 7th of June, 1733, being then ninety-three years old. Three days after, writing to Richardson, the painter, for the purpose of urging him to come down and take her portrait before the coffin was closed, he says, 'I thank God, her death was as easy as her life was innocent; and as it cost her not a groan, nor even a sigh, there is yet upon her countenance such an expression of tranquillity,' that 'it would afford the finest image of a saint expired that ever painting drew. Adieu, may you die as happily.' The funeral took place on the 11th; Pope then quitted the house, unable to support the silence of her chamber, and did not return for months, nor in fact ever reconciled himself to the sight of her vacant apartment.

Swift also he had virtually lost for ever. In April, 1727, this unhappy man had visited Pope for the last time. During this visit occurred the death of George I. Great expectations arose from that event amongst the Tories, in which, of course, Swift shared. It was reckoned upon as a thing of course that Walpole would be dismissed. But this bright gleam of hope proved as treacherous as all before; and the anguish of this final disappointment perhaps it was which brought on a violent attack of Swift's constitutional malady. On the last of August he quitted Pope's house abruptly, concealed himself in London, and finally quitted it, as stealthily as he had before quitted Twickenham, for Ireland, never more to return. He left a most affectionate letter for Pope; but his afflic-

tion and his gloomy anticipations of insanity, were too oppressive to allow of his seeking a personal interview.

Pope might now describe himself pretty nearly as *ultimus suorum;* and if he would have friends in future, he must seek them, as he complains bitterly, almost amongst strangers and another generation. This sense of desolation may account for the acrimony which too much disfigures his writings henceforward. Between 1732 and 1740, he was chiefly engaged in satires, which uniformly speak a high moral tone in the midst of personal invective; or in poems directly philosophical, which almost as uniformly speak the bitter tone of satire in the midst of dispassionate ethics. His Essay on Man was but one link in a general course which he had projected of moral philosophy, here and there pursuing his themes into the fields of metaphysics, but no farther in either field of morals or metaphysics than he could make compatible with a poetical treatment. These works, however, naturally entangled him in feuds of various complexions with people of very various pretensions; and to admirers of Pope so fervent as we profess ourselves, it is painful to acknowledge that the dignity of his latter years, and the becoming tranquillity of increasing age, are sadly disturbed by the petulance and the tone of irritation which, alike to those in the wrong and in the right, inevitably besiege all personal disputes. He was agitated, besides, by a piratical publication of his correspondence. This emanated, of course, from the den of Curll, the universal robber and '*blatant beast*' of those days; and, besides the injury offered to his feelings by exposing some youthful sallies which he wished to have suppressed, it drew upon him a far

more disgraceful imputation, most assuredly unfounded, but accredited by Dr. Johnson, and consequently in full currency to this day, of having acted collusively with Curll, or at least through Curll, for the publication of what he wished the world to see, but could not else have devised any decent pretext for exhibiting. The disturbance of his mind on this occasion led to a circular request, dispersed among his friends, that they would return his letters. All complied except Swift. He only delayed, and in fact shuffled. But it is easy to read in his evasions, and Pope, in spite of his vexation, read the same tale, viz., that, in consequence of his recurring attacks and increasing misery, he was himself the victim of artifices amongst those who surrounded him. What Pope apprehended happened. The letters were all published in Dublin and in London, the originals being then only returned when they had done their work of exposure.

Such a tenor of life, so constantly fretted by petty wrongs, or by leaden insults, to which only the celebrity of their object lent force or wings, allowed little opportunity to Pope for recalling his powers from angry themes, and converging them upon others of more catholic philosophy. To the last he continued to conceal vipers beneath his flowers; or rather, speaking proportionately to the case, he continued to sheath amongst the gleaming but innocuous lightnings of his departing splendors, the thunderbolts which blasted for ever. His last appearance was his greatest. In 1742 he published the fourth book of the Dunciad; to which it has with much reason been objected, that it stands in no obvious relation to the other three, but which, taken as a separate whole, is by far the most brilliant and the

weightiest of his works. Pope was aware of the *hiatus* between this last book and the rest, on which account he sometimes called it the greater Dunciad; and it would have been easy for him, with a shallow Warburtonian ingenuity to invent links that might have satisfied a mere *verbal* sense of connection. But he disdained this puerile expedient. The fact was, and could not be disguised from any penetrating eye, that the poem was not a pursuit of the former subjects; it had arisen spontaneously at various times, by looking at the same general theme of dulness, (which, in Pope's sense, includes all aberrations of the intellect, nay, even any defective equilibrium amongst the faculties,) under a different angle of observation, and from a different centre. In this closing book, not only bad authors, as in the other three, but all abuses of science or antiquarian knowledge, or connoisseurship in the arts, are attacked. Virtuosi, medalists, butterfly-hunters, florists, erring metaphysicians, &c., are all pierced through and through as with the shafts of Apollo. But the imperfect plan of the work as to its internal economy, no less than its exterior relations, is evident in many places; and in particular the whole catastrophe of the poem, if it can be so called, is linked to the rest by a most insufficient incident. To give a closing grandeur to his work, Pope had conceived the idea of representing the earth as lying universally under the incubation of one mighty spirit of dulness; a sort of millennium, as we may call it, for ignorance, error, and stupidity. This would take leave of the reader with effect; but how was it to be introduced? at what era? under what exciting cause? As to the eras, Pope could not settle that; unless it

were a *future* era, the description of it could not be delivered as a prophecy; and, not being prophetic, it would want much of its grandeur. Yet *as* a part of futurity, how is it connected with our present times? Do they and their pursuits lead to it as a possibility, or as a contingency upon certain habits which we have it in our power to eradicate, (in which case this vision of dulness has a *practical* warning,) or is it a mere necessity, one amongst the many changes attached to the cycles of human destiny, or which chance brings round with the revolutions of its wheel? All this Pope could not determine; but the exciting cause he *has* determined, and it is preposterously below the effect. The goddess of dulness yawns; and her yawn, which, after all, should rather express the fact and state of universal dulness than its cause, produces a change over all nations tantamount to a long eclipse. Meantime, with all its defects of plan, the poem, as to execution, is superior to all which Pope has done; the composition is much superior to that of the Essay on Man, and more profoundly poetic. The parodies drawn from Milton, as also in the former books, have a beauty and effect which cannot be expressed; and if a young lady wished to cull for her album a passage from all Pope's writings, which, without a trace of irritation or acrimony, should yet present an exquisite gem of independent beauty, she could not find another passage equal to the little story of the florist and the butterfly-hunter. They plead their cause separately before the throne of dulness; the florist telling how he had reared a superb carnation, which, in honor of the queen, he called Caroline, when his enemy, pursuing a butterfly which settled on the carnation, in securing his

own object, had destroyed that of the plaintiff. The defendant replies with equal beauty; and it may certainly be affirmed, that, for brilliancy of coloring and the art of poetical narration, the tale is not surpassed by any in the language.

This was the last effort of Pope worthy of separate notice. He was now decaying rapidly, and sensible of his own decay. His complaint was a dropsy of the chest, and he knew it to be incurable. Under these circumstances, his behavior was admirably philosophical. He employed himself in revising and burnishing all his later works, as those upon which he wisely relied for his reputation with future generations. In this task he was assisted by Dr. Warburton, a new literary friend, who had introduced himself to the favorable notice of Pope about four years before, by a defence of the Essay on Man, which Crousaz had attacked, but in general indirectly and ineffectually, by attacking it through the blunders of a very faulty translation. This poem, however, still labors, to religious readers, under two capital defects. If man, according to Pope, is now so admirably placed in the universal system of things, that evil only could result from any change, then it seems to follow, either that a fall of man is inadmissible; or at least, that, by placing him in his true centre, it had been a blessing universally. The other objection lies in this, that if all is right already, and in this earthly station, then one argument for a future state, as the scene in which evil is to be redressed, seems weakened or undermined.

As the weakness of Pope increased, his nearest friends, Lord Bolingbroke, and a few others, gathered

around him. The last scenes were passed almost with ease and tranquillity. He dined in company two days before he died; and on the very day preceding his death he took an airing on Blackheath. A few mornings before he died, he was found very early in his library writing on the immortality of the soul. This was an effort of delirium; and he suffered otherwise from this affection of the brain, and from inability to think in his closing hours. But his humanity and goodness, it was remarked, had survived his intellectual faculties. He died on the 30th of May, 1744; and so quietly, that the attendants could not distinguish the exact moment of his dissolution.

We had prepared an account of Pope's quarrels, in which we had shown that, generally, he was not the aggressor; and often was atrociously ill used before he retorted. This service to Pope's memory we had judged important, because it is upon these quarrels chiefly that the erroneous opinion has built itself of Pope's fretfulness and irritability. And this unamiable feature of his nature, together with a proneness to petty manœuvring, are the main foibles that malice has been able to charge upon Pope's moral character. Yet, with no better foundation for their malignity than these doubtful propensities, of which the first perhaps was a constitutional defect, a defect of his temperament rather than his will, and the second has been much exaggerated, many writers have taken upon themselves to treat Pope as a man, if not absolutely unprincipled and without moral sensibility, yet as mean, little-minded, indirect, splenetic, vindictive, and morose. Now the difference between ourselves and these writers is fundamental. They fancy that in

Pope's character a basis of ignoble qualities was here and there slightly relieved by a few shining spots; we, on the contrary, believe that in Pope lay a disposition radically noble and generous, clouded and overshadowed by superficial foibles, or, to adopt the distinction of Shakspeare, they see nothing but 'dust a little gilt,' and we 'gold a little dusted.' A very rapid glance we will throw over the general outline of his character.

As a friend, it is noticed emphatically by Martha Blount and other contemporaries, who must have had the best means of judging, that no man was so warm-hearted, or so much sacrificed himself for others, as Pope; and in fact many of his quarrels grew out of this trait in his character. For once that he levelled his spear in his own quarrel, at least twice he did so on behalf of his insulted parents or his friends. Pope was also noticeable for the duration of his friendships; [11] some dropped him, but he never any throughout his life. And let it be remembered, that amongst Pope's friends were the men of most eminent talents in those days; so that envy at least, or jealousy of rival power, was assuredly no foible of his. In that respect how different from Addison, whose petty manœuvring against Pope proceeded entirely from malignant jealousy. That Addison was more in the wrong even than has generally been supposed, and Pope more thoroughly innocent as well as more generous, we have the means at a proper opportunity of showing decisively. As a son, we need not insist on Pope's preëminent goodness. Dean Swift, who had lived for months together at Twickenham, declares that he had not only never witnessed, but had never heard

of anything like it. As a Christian, Pope appears in a truly estimable light. He found himself a Roman Catholic by accident of birth; so was his mother; but his father was so upon personal conviction and conversion, yet not without extensive study of the questions at issue. It would have laid open the road to preferment, and preferment was otherwise abundantly before him, if Pope would have gone over to the Protestant faith. And in his conscience he found no obstacle to that change; he was a philosophical Christian, intolerant of nothing but intolerance, a bigot only against bigots. But he remained true to his baptismal profession, partly on a general principle of honor in adhering to a distressed and dishonored party, but chiefly out of reverence and affection to his mother. In his relation to women, Pope was amiable and gentlemanly; and accordingly was the object of affectionate regard and admiration to many of the most accomplished in that sex. This we mention especially, because we would wish to express our full assent to the manly scorn with which Mr. Roscoe repels the libellous insinuations against Pope and Miss Martha Blount. A more innocent connection we do not believe ever existed. As an author, Warburton has recorded that no man ever displayed more candor or more docility to criticisms offered in a friendly spirit. Finally, we sum up all in saying, that Pope retained to the last a true and diffusive benignity; that this was the quality which survived all others, notwithstanding the bitter trial which his benignity must have stood through life, and the excitement to a spiteful reaction of feeling which was continually pressed upon him by the scorn and

insult. which his deformity drew upon him from the unworthy.

But the moral character of Pope is of secondary interest. We are concerned with it only as connected with his great intellectual power. There are three errors which seem current upon this subject. *First*, that Pope drew his impulses from French literature; *secondly*, that he was a poet of inferior rank; *thirdly*, that his merit lies in superior 'correctness.' With respect to the first notion, it has prevailed by turns in every literature. One stage of society, in every nation, brings men of impassioned minds to the contemplation of manners, and of the social affections of man as exhibited in manners. With this propensity coöperates, no doubt, some degree of despondency when looking at the great models of the literature who have usually preoccupied the grander passions, and displayed their movements in the earlier periods of literature. Now it happens that the French, from an extraordinary defect in the higher qualities of passion, have attracted the notice of foreign nations chiefly to that field of their literature, in which the taste and the unimpassioned understanding preside. But in all nations such literature is a natural growth of the mind, and would arise equally if the French literature had never existed. The wits of Queen Anne's reign, or even of Charles II.'s, were not French by their taste or their imitation. Butler and Dryden were surely not French; and of Milton we need not speak; as little was Pope French, either by his institution or by his models. Boileau he certainly admired too much; and, for the sake of a poor parallelism with a passage about Greece in Horace, he has falsified history in the most

ludicrous manner, without a shadow of countenance from facts, in order to make our that we, like the Romans, received laws of taste from those whom we had conquered. But these are insulated cases and accidents, not to insist on his known and most profound admiration, often expressed, for both Chaucer, and Shakspeare, and Milton. Secondly, that Pope is to be classed as an inferior poet, has arisen purely from a confusion between the departments of poetry which he cultivated and the merit of his culture. The first place must undoubtedly be given for ever, — it cannot be refused, — to the impassioned movements of the tragic, and to the majestic movements of the epic muse. We cannot alter the relations of things out of favor to an individual. But in his own department, whether higher or lower, that man is supreme who has not yet been surpassed; and such a man is Pope. As to the final notion, first started by Walsh, and propagated by Warton, it is the most absurd of all the three; it is not from superior correctness that Pope is esteemed more correct, but because the compass and sweep of his performances lies more within the range of ordinary judgments. Many questions that have been raised upon Milton or Shakspeare, questions relating to so subtile a subject as the flux and reflux of human passion, lie far above the region of ordinary capacities; and the indeterminateness or even carelessness of the judgment is transferred by a common confusion to its objects. But waiving this, let us ask, what is meant by 'correctness?' Correctness in what? In developing the thought? In connecting it, or effecting the transitions? In the use of words? In the grammar? In the metre? Under every one of these limitations

of the idea, we maintain that Pope is *not* distinguished by correctness; nay, that, as compared with Shakspeare, he is eminently incorrect. Produce us from any drama of Shakspeare one of those leading passages that all men have by heart, and show us any eminent defect in the very sinews of the thought. It is impossible; defects there may be, but they will always be found irrelevant to the main central thought, or to its expression. Now turn to Pope; the first striking passage which offers itself to our memory, is the famous character of Addison, ending thus:

> 'Who would not laugh, if such a man there be,
> Who but must weep, if Atticus were he?'

Why must we laugh? Because we find a grotesque assembly of noble and ignoble qualities. Very well; but why then must we weep? Because this assemblage is found actually existing in an eminent man of genius. Well, that is a good reason for weeping; we weep for the degradation of human nature. But then revolves the question, why must we laugh? Because, if the belonging to a man of genius were a sufficient reason for weeping, so much we know from the very first. The very first line says, 'Peace to all such. But were there one whose fires *true genius kindles* and fair fame inspires?' Thus falls to the ground the whole antithesis of this famous character. We are to change our mood from laughter to tears upon a sudden discovery that the character belonged to a man of genius; and this we had already known from the beginning. Match us this prodigious oversight in Shakspeare. Again, take the Essay on Criticism. It is a collection of independent maxims, tied together

into a fasciculus by the printer, but having no natural order or logical dependency; generally so vague as to mean nothing. Like the general rules of justice, &c. in ethics, to which every man assents; but when the question comes about any practical case, *is* it just? the opinions fly asunder far as the poles. And, what is remarkable, many of the rules are violated by no man so often as by Pope, and by Pope nowhere so often as in this very poem. As a single instance, he proscribes monosyllabic lines; and in no English poem of any pretensions are there so many lines of that class as in this. We have counted above a score, and the last line of all is monosyllabic.

Not, therefore, for superior correctness, but for qualities the very same as belong to his most distinguished brethren, is Pope to be considered a great poet; for impassioned thinking, powerful description, pathetic reflection, brilliant narration. His characteristic difference is simply that he carried these powers into a different field, and moved chiefly amongst the social paths of men, and viewed their characters as operating through their manners. And our obligations to him arise chiefly on this ground, that having already, in the persons of earlier poets, carried off the palm in all the grander trials of intellectual strength, for the majesty of the epopee and the impassioned vehemence of the tragic drama, to Pope we owe it that we can now claim an equal preëminence in the sportive and aerial graces of the mock heroic and satiric muse; that in the Dunciad we possess a peculiar form of satire, in which (according to a plan unattempted by any other nation) we see alternately her festive smile and her gloomiest scowl; that the grave good sense of

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

NOTES.

Note 1. Page 101.

Dr. Johnson, however, and Joseph Warton, for reasons not stated, have placed his birth on the 22d. To this statement, as opposed to that which comes from the personal friends of Pope, little attention is due. Ruffhead and Spence, upon such questions, must always be of higher authority than Johnson and Warton, and *a fortiori* than Bowles. But it ought not to be concealed, though hitherto unnoticed by any person, that some doubt after all remains whether *any* of the biographers is right. An anonymous writer, contemporary with Pope, and evidently familiar with his personal history, declares that he was born on the 8th of June; and he connects it with an event that, having a public and a partisan interest, (the birth of that Prince of Wales, who was known twenty-seven years afterwards as the Pretender,) would serve to check his own recollections, and give them a collateral voucher. It is true he wrote for an ill-natured purpose; but no purpose whatever could have been promoted by falsifying this particular date. What is still more noticeable, however, Pope himself puts a most emphatic negative upon all these statements. In a pathetic letter to a friend, when his attention could not have been wandering, for he is expressly insisting upon a sentiment which will find an echo in many a human heart, viz., that a birthday, though from habit usually celebrated as a festal day, too often is secretly a memorial of disappointment, and an anniversary of sorrowful meaning, he speaks of the very day on which he is then writing as his own birthday; and indeed what else could give any propriety to the passage? Now the date of this letter is January 1, 1733. Surely Pope knew his own birthday better than those who have adopted a random rumor without investigation

But, whilst we are upon this subject, we must caution the readers of Pope against too much reliance upon the chronological accuracy of his editors. *All* are scandalously careless; and generally they are faithless. Many allusions are left unnoticed, which a very little research would have illustrated; many facts are omitted, even yet recoverable, which are essential to the just appreciation of Pope's satirical blows; and dates are constantly misstated. Mr. Roscoe is the most careful of Pope's editors; but even he is often wrong. For instance, he has taken the trouble to write a note upon Pope's humorous report to Lord Burlington of his Oxford journey on horseback with Lintot; and this note involves a sheer impossibility. The letter is undated, except as to the month; and Mr. Roscoe directs the reader to supply 1714 as the true date, which is a gross anachronism. For a ludicrous anecdote is there put into Linton's mouth, representing some angry critic, who had been turning over Pope's Homer, with frequent *pshaws*, as having been propitiated, by Mr. Lintot's dinner, into a gentler feeling towards Pope, and, finally, by the mere effect of good cheer, without an effort on the publisher's part, as coming to a confession, that what he ate and what he had been reading were equally excellent. But in the year 1714, *no part* of Pope's Homer was printed; June, 1715, was the month in which even the subscribers first received the four earliest books of the Iliad; and the public generally not until July. This we notice by way of specimen; in itself, or as an error of mere negligence, it would be of little importance; but it is a case to which Mr. Roscoe has expressly applied his own conjectural skill, and solicited the attention of his reader. We may judge, therefore, of his accuracy in other cases which he did not think worthy of examination.

There is another instance, presenting itself in every page, of ignorance concurring with laziness, on the part of all Pope's editors, and with the effect not so properly of misleading as of perplexing the general reader. Until Lord Macclesfield's bill for altering the style in the very middle of the eighteenth century, six years, therefore, after the death of Pope, there was a custom, arising from the collision between the civil and ecclesiastical year, of dating the whole period that lies between December 31st and March 25th, (both days *exclusively*,) as belonging indifferently to the past or the current year. This peculiarity had nothing to

do with the old and new style, but was, we believe, redressed by the same act of Parliament. Now in Pope's time it was absolutely necessary that a man should use this double date, because else he was liable to be seriously misunderstood. For instance, it was then always said that Charles I. had suffered on the 30th of January, $164\frac{8}{9}$; and why? Because, had the historian fixed the date to what it really was, 1649, in that case all those (a very numerous class) who supposed the year 1649 to commence on Ladyday, or March 25, would have understood him to mean that this event happened in what we *now* call 1650, for not until 1650 was there any January which *they* would have acknowledged as belonging to 1649, since *they* added to the year 1648 all the days from January 1 to March 24. On the other hand, if he had said simply that Charles suffered in 1648, he would have been truly understood by the class we have just mentioned; but by another class, who began the year from the 1st of January, he would have been understood to mean what we *now* mean by the year 1648. There would have been a sheer difference, not of one, as the reader might think at first sight, but of *two* entire years in the chronology of the two parties; which difference, and all possibility of doubt, is met and remedied by the fractional date $\frac{1648}{1649}$; for that date says in effect it was 1648 to you who do not open the new year till Ladyday; it was 1649 to you who open it from January 1. Thus much to explain the real sense of the case; and it follows from this explanation, that no part of the year ever *can* have the fractional or double date except the interval from January 1 to March 24 inclusively. And hence arises a practical influence, viz., that the very same reason, and no other, which formerly enjoined the use of the compound or fractional date, viz., the prevention of a capital ambiguity or dilemma, now enjoins its omission. For in our day, when the double opening of the year is abolished, what sense is there in perplexing a reader by using a fraction which offers him a choice without directing him how to choose? In fact, it is the *denominator* of the fraction, if one may so style the lower figure, which expresses to a modern eye the true year. Yet the editors of Pope, as well as many other writers, have confused their readers by this double date; and why? Simply because they were confused themselves. Many errors in literature of large extent have arisen from this

confusion. Thus it was said properly enough in the contemporary accounts, for instance, in Lord Monmouth's Memoirs, that Queen Elizabeth died on the last day of the year 1602, for she died on the 24th of March; and by a careful writer this event would have been dated as March 24, $\frac{1602}{1603}$. But many writers, misled by the phrase above cited, have asserted that James I. was proclaimed on the 1st of January, 1603. Heber, Bishop of Calcutta, again, has ruined the entire chronology of the Life of Jeremy Taylor, and unconsciously vitiated the facts, by not understanding this fractional date. Mr. Roscoe even too often leaves his readers to collect the true year as they can. Thus, *e. g.* at p. 509, of his Life, he quotes from Pope's letter to Warburton, in great vexation for the surreptitious publication of his letters in Ireland, under date of February 4, $174\frac{0}{1}$. But why not have printed it intelligibly as 1741? Incidents there are in most men's lives, which are susceptible of a totally different moral value, according as they are dated in one year or another. That might be a kind and honorable liberality in 1740, which would be a fraud upon creditors in 1741. Exile to a distance of ten miles from London in January, 1744, might argue, that a man was a turbulent citizen, and suspected of treason; whilst the same exile in January, 1745, would simply argue that, as a Papist, he had been included amongst his whole body in a general measure of precaution to meet the public dangers of that year. This explanation we have thought it right to make, both for its extensive application to *all* editions of Pope, and on account of the serious blunders which have arisen from the case when ill understood; and because, in a work upon education, written jointly by Messrs. Lant Carpenter and Shephard, though generally men of ability and learning, this whole point is erroneously explained.

NOTE 2. Page 105.

It is apparently with allusion to this part of the history, which he would often have heard from the lips of his own father, that Pope glances at his uncle's memory somewhat disrespectfully in his prose letter to Lord Harvey.

NOTE 3. Page 105.

Some accounts, however, say to Flanders, in which case,

perhaps, Antwerp or Brussels would have the honor of his conversion.

NOTE 4. Page 107.

This, however, was not Twyford, according to an anonymous pamphleteer of the times, but a Catholic seminary in Devonshire Street, that is, in the Bloomsbury district of London; and the same author asserts, that the scene of his disgrace, as indeed seems probable beforehand, was not the first, but the last of his arenas as a schoolboy. Which indeed was first, and which last, is very unimportant; but with a view to another point, which is not without interest, namely, as to the motive of Pope for so bitter a lampoon as we must suppose it to have been, as well as with regard to the topics which he used to season it, this anonymous letter throws the only light which has been offered; and strange it is, that no biographer of Pope should have hunted upon the traces indicated by him. Any solution of Pope's virulence, and of the master's bitter retaliation, even *as* a solution, is so far entitled to attention; apart from which the mere straightforwardness of this man's story, and its minute circumstantiality, weigh greatly in its favor. To our thinking, he unfolds the whole affair in the simple explanation, nowhere else to be found, that the master of the school, the mean avenger of a childish insult by a bestial punishment, was a Mr. Bromley, one of James II.'s Popish apostates; whilst the particular statements which he makes with respect to himself and the young Duke of Norfolk of 1700, as two schoolfellows of Pope at that time and place, together with his voluntary promise to come forward in person, and verify his account if it should happen to be challenged, — are all, we repeat, so many presumptions in favor of his veracity. 'Mr. Alexander Pope,' says he, 'before he had been four months at this school, or was able to construe Tully's Offices, employed his muse in satirizing his master. It was a libel of at least one hundred verses, which (a fellow-student having given information of it) was found in his pocket; and the young satirist was soundly whipped, and kept a prisoner to his room for seven days; whereupon his father fetched him away, and I have been told he never went to school more.' This Bromley, it has been ascertained, was the son of a country gentleman in Worcestershire, and must have had

considerable prospects at one time, since it appears that he had been a gentleman-commoner at Christ's Church, Oxford There is an error in the punctuation of the letter we have just quoted, which affects the sense in a way very important to the question before us. Bromley is described as 'one of King James's converts in Oxford, some years *after* that prince's abdication;' but, if this were really so, he must have been a conscientious convert. The latter clause should be connected with what follows: '*Some years after that prince's abdication he kept a little seminary;*' that is, when his mercenary views in quitting his religion were effectually defeated, when the Boyne had sealed his despair, he humbled himself into a petty schoolmaster. These facts are interesting, because they suggest at once the motive for the merciless punishment inflicted upon Pope. His own father was a Papist like Bromley, but a sincere and honest Papist, who had borne double taxes, legal stigmas, and public hatred for conscience' sake. His contempt was habitually pointed at those who tampered with religion for interested purposes. His son inherited these upright feelings. And we may easily guess what would be the bitter sting of any satire he would write on Bromley. Such a topic was too true to be forgiven, and too keenly barbed by Bromley's conscience. By the way, this writer, like ourselves, reads in this juvenile adventure a prefiguration of Pope's satirical destiny.

Note 5. Page 112.

That is, Sheffield, and, legally speaking, of Buckingham*shire*. For he would not take the title of Buckingham, under a fear that there was lurking somewhere or other a claim to that title amongst the connections of the Villiers family. He was a pompous grandee, who lived in uneasy splendor, and, as a writer, most extravagantly overrated; accordingly, he is now forgotten. Such was his vanity and his ridiculous mania for allying himself with royalty, that he first of all had the presumption to court the Princess (afterwards Queen) Anne. Being rejected, he then offered himself to the illegitimate daughter of James II., by the daughter of Sir Charles Sedley. She was as ostentatious as himself, and accepted him.

NOTE 6. Page 117.

Meantime, the felicities of this translation are at times perfectly astonishing; and it would be scarcely possible to express more nervously or amply the words,

> ——— '*jurisque secundi*
> *Ambitus impatiens*, er summo dulcius unum
> Stare loco,' ———————

than this child of fourteen has done in the following couplet, which, most judiciously, by reversing the two clauses, gains the power of fusing them into connection :

> 'And impotent desire to reign alone,
> *That scorns the dull reversion of a throne.*'

But the passage for which beyond all others we must make room, is a series of eight lines, corresponding to six in the original; and this for two reasons : First, Because Dr. Joseph Warton has deliberately asserted, that in our whole literature, 'we have scarcely eight more beautiful lines than these;' and though few readers will subscribe to so sweeping a judgment, yet certainly these must be wonderful lines for a boy, which could challenge such commendation from an experienced *polyhistor* of infinite reading. Secondly, Because the lines contain a night-scene. Now it must be well known to many readers, that the famous night-scene in the Iliad, so familiar to every schoolboy, has been made the subject, for the last thirty years, of severe, and in many respects, of just criticisms. This description will therefore have a double interest by comparison; whilst, whatever may be thought of either taken separately for itself, considered as a translation, this which we now quote is as true to Statius as the other is undoubtedly faithless to Homer :

> '*Jamque per emeriti surgens confinia Phœbi*
> *Titanis, late mundo subvecta silenti*
> *Rorifera gelidum tenuaverat aera biga.*
> *Jam pecudes volucresque tacent : jam somnus avaris*
> *Inserpit curis, pronusque per aera nutat,*
> *Grata laboratæ referens oblivia vitæ.*'
>
> Theb. i. 336–341.

'T was now the time when Phœbus yields to night,
And rising Cynthia sheds her silver light;
Wide o'er the world in solemn pomp she drew
Her airy chariot hung with pearly dew.
All birds and beasts lie hush'd. Sleep steals away
The wild desires of men and toils of day;
And brings, descending through the silent air,
A sweet forgetfulness of human care'

NOTE 7. Page 118.

One writer of that age says, in Cheapside; but probably this difference arose from contemplating Lombard Street as a prolongation of Cheapside.

NOTE 8. Page 123.

Dr. Johnson said, that all he could discover about Mr. Cromwell, was the fact of his going a hunting in a tie-wig; but Gay has added another fact to Dr. Johnson's by calling him, 'honest *hatless* Cromwell with red breeches' This epithet has puzzled the commentators; but its import is obvious enough. Cromwell, as we learn from more than one person, was anxious to be considered a fine gentleman, and devoted to women. Now it was long the custom in that age for such persons, when walking with ladies, to carry their hats in their hand. Louis XV. used to ride by the side of Madame de Pompadour hat in hand.

NOTE 9. Page 127.

It is strange enough to find, not only that Pope had so frequently kept rough copies of his own letters, and that he thought so well of them as to repeat the same letter to different persons, as in the case of the two lovers killed by lightning, or even to two sisters, Martha and Therese Blount, (who were sure to communicate their letters,) and that even Swift had retained copies of *his*.

NOTE 10. Page 138.

The word *undertake* had not yet lost the meaning of Shakspeare's age, in which it was understood to describe those cases where, the labor being of a miscellaneous kind, some person in

chief offered to overlook and conduct the whole, whether with or without personal labor. The modern *undertaker*, limited to the care of funerals, was then but one of numerous cases to which the term was applied.

NOTE 11. Page 151.

We may illustrate this feature in the behavior of Pope to Savage. When all else forsook him, when all beside pleaded the insults of Savage for withdrawing their subscriptions, Pope sent his in advance. And when Savage had insulted *him* also, arrogantly commanding him never 'to presume to interfere or meddle in his affairs,' dignity and self-respect made Pope obedient to these orders, except when there was an occasion of serving Savage. On his second visit to Bristol, (when he returned from Glamorganshire,) Savage had been thrown into the jail of the city. One person only interested himself for this hopeless profligate, and was causing an inquiry to be made about his debts at the time Savage died. So much Dr. Johnson admits; but he *forgets* to mention the name of this long-suffering friend. *It was Pope.* Meantime, let us not be supposed to believe the lying legend of Savage; he was doubtless no son of Lady Macclesfield's, but an impostor, who would not be sent to the tread-mill.

CHARLES LAMB.

It sounds paradoxical, but is not so in a bad sense, to say that in every literature of large compass some authors will be found to rest much of the interest which surrounds them on their essential *non*-popularity. They are good for the very reason that they are not in conformity to the current taste. They interest because to the world they are *not* interesting. They attract by means of their repulsion. Not as though it could separately furnish a reason for loving a book, that the majority of men had found it repulsive. *Primâ facie*, it must suggest some presumption *against* a book, that it has failed to gain public attention. To have roused hostility indeed, to have kindled a feud against its own principles or its temper, may happen to be a good sign. *That* argues power. Hatred may be promising. The deepest revolutions of mind sometimes begin in hatred. But simply to have left a reader unimpressed, is in itself a neutral result, from which the inference is doubtful. Yet even *that*, even simple failure to impress, may happen at times to be a result from positive powers in a writer, from special originalities, such as rarely reflect themselves in the mirror of the ordinary understanding. It seems little to be perceived, how much the great scriptural[1] idea

of the *worldly* and the *unworldly* is found to emerge in literature as well as in life. In reality the very same combinations of moral qualities, infinitely varied, which compose the harsh physiognomy of what we call worldliness in the living groups of life, must unavoidably present themselves in books. A library divides into sections of worldly and unworldly, even as a crowd of men divides into that same majority and minority. The world has an instinct for recognizing its own; and recoils from certain qualities when exemplified in books, with the same disgust or defective sympathy as would have governed it in real life. From qualities for instance of childlike simplicity, of shy profundity, or of inspired self-communion, the world does and must turn away its face towards grosser, bolder, more determined, or more intelligible expressions of character and intellect; and not otherwise in literature, nor at all less in literature, than it does in the realities of life.

Charles Lamb, if any ever *was*, is amongst the class here contemplated; he, if ever any *has*, ranks amongst writers whose works are destined to be for ever unpopular, and yet for ever interesting; interesting, moreover, by means of those very qualities which guarantee their non-popularity. The same qualities which will be found forbidding to the worldly and the thoughtless, which will be found insipid to many even amongst robust and powerful minds, are exactly those which will continue to command a select audience in every generation. The prose essays, under the signature of *Elia*, form the most delightful section amongst Lamb's works. They traverse a peculiar field of observation, sequestered from general interest; and they are composed in a spirit too delicate and unobtrusive to catch the ear of

the noisy crowd, clamoring for strong sensations. But this retiring delicacy itself, the pensiveness chequered by gleams of the fanciful, and the humor that is touched with cross-lights of pathos, together with the picturesque quaintness of the objects casually described, whether men, or things, or usages, and, in the rear of all this, the constant recurrence to ancient recollections and to decaying forms of household life, as things retiring before the tumult of new and revolutionary generations; these traits in combination communicate to the papers a grace and strength of originality which nothing in any literature approaches, whether for degree or kind of excellence, except the most felicitous papers of Addison, such as those on Sir Roger de Coverley, and some others in the same vein of composition. They resemble Addison's papers also in the diction, which is natural and idiomatic, even to carelessness. They are equally faithful to the truth of nature; and in this only they differ remarkably — that the sketches of *Elia* reflect the stamp and impress of the writer's own character, whereas in all those of Addison the personal peculiarities of the delineator (though known to the reader from the beginning through the account of the club) are nearly quiescent. Now and then they are recalled into a momentary notice, but they do not act, or at all modify his pictures of Sir Roger or Will Wimble. *They* are slightly and amiably eccentric; but the Spectator himself, in describing them, takes the station of an ordinary observer.

Everywhere, indeed, in the writings of Lamb, and not merely in his *Elia*, the character of the writer coöperates in an undercurrent to the effect of the thing written. To understand in the fullest sense either the

gayety or the tenderness of a particular passage, you must have some insight into the peculiar bias of the writer's mind, whether native and original, or impressed gradually by the accidents of situation; whether simply developed out of predispositions by the action of life, or violently scorched into the constitution by some fierce fever of calamity. There is in modern literature a whole class of writers, though not a large one, standing within the same category; some marked originality of character in the writer becomes a coëfficient with what he says to a common result; you must sympathize with this *personality* in the author before you can appreciate the most significant parts of his views. In most books the writer figures as a mere abstraction, without sex or age or local station, whom the reader banishes from his thoughts. What is written seems to proceed from a blank intellect, not from a man clothed with fleshly peculiarities and differences. These peculiarities and differences neither do, nor (generally speaking) *could* intermingle with the texture of the thoughts so as to modify their force or their direction. In such books, and they form the vast majority, there is nothing to be found or to be looked for beyond the direct objective. (*Sit venia verbo!*) But, in a small section of books, the objective in the thought becomes confluent with the subjective in the thinker — the two forces unite for a joint product; and fully to enjoy the product, or fully to apprehend either element, both must be known. It is singular, and worth inquiring into, for the reason that the Greek and Roman literature had no such books. Timon of Athens, or Diogenes, one may conceive qualified for this mode of authorship, had journalism existed to rouse them in those days; their

'articles' would no doubt have been fearfully caustic. But, as *they* failed to produce anything, and Lucian in an after age is scarcely characteristic enough for the purpose, perhaps we may pronounce Rabelais and Montaigne the earliest of writers in the class described. In the century following *theirs*, came Sir Thomas Browne, and immediately after *him* La Fontaine. Then come Swift, Sterne, with others less distinguished; in Germany, Hippel, the friend of Kant, Harmann, the obscure; and the greatest of the whole body — John Paul Fr. Richter. In *him*, from the strength and determinateness of his nature as well as from the great extent of his writing, the philosophy of this interaction between the author as a human agency and his theme as an intellectual reägency, might best be studied. From *him* might be derived the largest number of cases illustrating boldly his absorption of the universal into the concrete — of the pure intellect into the human nature of the author. But nowhere could illustrations be found more interesting — shy, delicate, evanescent — shy as lightning, delicate and evanescent as the colored pencillings on a frosty night from the northern lights, than in the better parts of Lamb.

To appreciate Lamb, therefore, it is requisite that his character and temperament should be understood in their coyest and most wayward features. A capital defect it would be if these could not be gathered silently from Lamb's works themselves. It would be a fatal mode of dependency upon an alien and separable accident if they needed an external commentary. But they do *not*. The syllables lurk up and down the writings of Lamb which decipher his eccentric nature. His character lies there dispersed in anagram; and to

any attentive reader the regathering and restoration of the total word from its scattered parts is inevitable without an effort. Still it is always a satisfaction in knowing a result, to know also its *why* and *how;* and in so far as every character is likely to be modified by the particular experience, sad or joyous, through which the life has travelled, it is a good contribution towards the knowledge of that resulting character as a whole to have a sketch of that particular experience. What trials did it impose? What energies did it task? What temptations did it unfold? These calls upon the moral powers, which, in music so stormy, many a life is doomed to hear, how were they faced? The character in a capital degree moulds oftentimes the life, but the life *always* in a subordinate degree moulds the character. And the character being in this case of Lamb so much of a key to the writings, it becomes important that the life should be traced, however briefly, as a key to the character.

That is *one* reason for detaining the reader with some slight record of Lamb's career. Such a record by preference and of right belongs to a case where the intellectual display, which is the sole ground of any public interest at all in the man, has been intensely modified by the *humanities* and moral *personalities* distinguishing the subject. We read a Physiology, and need no information as to the life and conversation of its author; a meditative poem becomes far better understood by the light of such information; but a work of genial and at the same time eccentric sentiment, wandering upon untrodden paths, is barely intelligible without it. There is a good reason for arresting judgment on the writer, that the court may receive evidence

on the life of the man. But there is another reason, and, in any other place, a better; which reason lies in the extraordinary value of the life considered separately for itself. Logically, it is not allowable to say that *here;* and considering the principal purpose of this paper, any possible *independent* value of the life must rank as a better reason for reporting it. Since, in a case where the original object is professedly to estimate the writings of a man, whatever promises to further that object must, merely by that tendency, have, in relation to that place, a momentary advantage which it would lose if valued upon a more abstract scale. Liberated from this casual office of throwing light upon a book — raised to its grander station of a solemn deposition to the moral capacities of man in conflict with calamity — viewed as a return made into the chanceries of heaven — upon an issue directed from that court to try the amount of power lodged in a poor desolate pair of human creatures for facing the very anarchy of storms — this obscure life of the two Lambs, brother and sister, (for the two lives were one life,) rises into a grandeur that is not paralleled once in a generation.

Rich, indeed, in moral instruction was the life of Charles Lamb; and perhaps in one chief result it offers to the thoughtful observer a lesson of consolation that is awful, and of hope that ought to be immortal, viz., in the record which it furnishes, that by meekness of submission, and by earnest conflict with evil, in the spirit of cheerfulness it is possible ultimately to disarm or to blunt the very heaviest of curses — even the curse of lunacy. Had it been whispered, in hours of infancy, to Lamb, by the angel who stood by his

cradle — 'Thou, and the sister that walks by ten years before thee, shall be through life, each to each, the solitary fountain of comfort; and except it be from this fountain of mutual love, except it be as brother and sister, ye shall not taste the cup of peace on earth!' — here, if there was sorrow in reversion, there was also consolation.

But what funeral swamps would have instantly ingulfed this consolation, had some meddling fiend prolonged the revelation, and, holding up the curtain from the sad feature a little longer, had said scornfully — 'Peace on earth! Peace for you two, Charles and Mary Lamb! What peace is possible under the curse which even now is gathering against your heads? Is there peace on earth for the lunatic — peace for the parenticide — peace for the girl that, without warning, and without time granted for a penitential cry to Heaven, sends her mother to the last audit? And then, without treachery, speaking bare truth, this prophet of woe might have added — 'Thou, also, thyself, Charles Lamb, thou in thy proper person, shalt enter the skirts of this dreadful hail-storm; even thou shalt taste the secrets of lunacy, and enter as a captive its house of bondage; whilst over thy sister the accursed scorpion shall hang suspended through life, like death hanging over the beds of hospitals, striking at times, but more often threatening to strike: or withdrawing its instant menaces only to lay bare her mind more bitterly to the persecutions of a haunted memory!' Considering the nature of the calamity, in the first place; considering, in the second place, its lifelong duration; and, in the last place, considering the quality of the resistance by which it was met, and

under what circumstances of humble resources in money or friends — we have come to the deliberate judgment, that the whole range of history scarcely presents a more affecting spectacle of perpetual sorrow, humiliation, or conflict, and that was supported to the end, (that is, through forty years,) with more resignation, or with more absolute victory.

Charles Lamb was born in February of the year 1775. His immediate descent was humble; for his father, though on one particular occasion civilly described as a 'scrivener,' was in reality a domestic servant to Mr. Salt — a bencher (and therefore a barrister of some standing) in the Inner Temple. John Lamb the father belonged by birth to Lincoln; from which city, being transferred to London whilst yet a boy, he entered the service of Mr. Salt without delay; and apparently from this period throughout his life continued in this good man's household to support the honorable relation of a Roman client to his *patronus*, much more than that of a mercenary servant to a transient and capricious master. The terms on which he seems to live with the family of the Lambs, argue a kindness and a liberality of nature on both sides. John Lamb recommended himself as an attendant by the versatility of his accomplishments; and Mr. Salt, being a widower without children, which means in effect an old bachelor, naturally valued that encyclopædic range of dexterity which made his house independent of external aid for every mode of service. To kill one's own mutton is but an operose way of arriving at a dinner, and often a more costly way; whereas to combine one's own carpenter, locksmith, hair-dresser, groom, &c., all in one man's person, — to have a

Robinson Crusoe, up to all emergencies of life, always in waiting, — is a luxury of the highest class for one who values his ease.

A consultation is held more freely with a man familiar to one's eye, and more profitably with a man aware of one's peculiar habits. And another advantage from such an arrangement is, that one gets any little alteration or repair executed on the spot. To hear is to obey, and by an inversion of Pope's rule —

'One always *is*, and never *to be*, blest.'

People of one sole accomplishment, like the *homo unius libri*, are usually within that narrow circle disagreeably perfect, and therefore apt to be arrogant. People who can do all things, usually do every one of them ill; and living in a constant effort to deny this too palpable fact they become irritably vain. But Mr. Lamb the elder seems to have been bent on perfection. He did all things; he did them all well; and yet was neither gloomily arrogant nor testily vain. And being conscious apparently that all mechanic excellences tend to illiberal results, unless counteracted by perpetual sacrifices to the muses, he went so far as to cultivate poetry; he even printed his poems, and were we possessed of a copy, (which we are *not*, nor probably is the Vatican,) it would give us pleasure at this point to digress for a moment, and to cut them up, purely on considerations of respect to the author's memory. It is hardly to be supposed that they did not really merit castigation; and we should best show the sincerity of our respect for Mr. Lamb, senior, in all those cases where we *could* conscientiously profess respect, by an unlimited application of the knout in the cases where we could *not*.

The whole family of the Lambs seems to have won from Mr. Salt the consideration which is granted to humble friends; and from acquaintances nearer to their own standing, to have won a tenderness of esteem such as is granted to decayed gentry. Yet naturally, the social rank of the parents, as people still living, must have operated disadvantageously for the children. It is hard, even for the practised philosopher to distinguish aristocratic graces of manner, and capacities of delicate feeling, in people whose very hearth and dress bear witness to the servile humility of their station. Yet such distinctions as wild gifts of nature, timidly and half-unconsciously asserted themselves in the unpretending Lambs. Already in *their* favor there existed a silent privilege analogous to the famous one of Lord Kinsale. He, by special grant from the crown, is allowed, when standing before the king, to forget that he is not himself a king; the bearer of that peerage, through all generations, has the privilege of wearing his hat in the royal presence. By a general though tacit concession of the same nature, the rising generation of the Lambs, John and Charles, the two sons, and Mary Lamb, the only daughter, were permitted to forget that their grandmother had been a housekeeper for sixty years, and that their father had worn a livery. Charles Lamb, individually was so entirely humble, and so careless of social distinctions, that he has taken pleasure in recurring to these very facts in the family records amongst the most genial of his Elia recollections. He only continued to remember, without shame, and with a peculiar tenderness, these badges of plebeian rank, when everybody else, amongst the few survivors that could have known of their existence, had long dismissed them from their thoughts.

Probably through Mr. Salt's interest, Charles Lamb, in the autumn of 1782, when he wanted something more than four months of completing his eighth year, received a presentation to the magnificent school of Christ's Hospital. The late Dr. Arnold, when contrasting the school of his own boyish experience, Winchester, with Rugby, the school confided to his management, found nothing so much to regret in the circumstances of the latter as its forlorn condition with respect to historical traditions. Wherever these were wanting, and supposing the school of sufficient magnitude, it occurred to Dr. Arnold that something of a compensatory effect for impressing the imagination might be obtained by connecting the school with the nation through the link of annual prizes issuing from the exchequer. An official basis of national patronage might prove a substitute for an antiquarian or ancestral basis. Happily for the great educational foundations of London, none of them is in the naked condition of Rugby. Westminster, St. Paul's, Merchant Tailors,' the Charter-house, &c., are all crowned with historical recollections; and Christ's Hospital, besides the original honors of its foundation, so fitted to a consecrated place in a youthful imagination — an asylum for boy-students, provided by a boy-king — innocent, religious, prematurely wise, and prematurely called away from earth — has also a mode of perpetual connection with the state. It enjoys, therefore, *both* of Dr. Arnold's advantages. Indeed, all the great foundation schools of London, bearing in their very codes of organization the impress of a double function — viz., the conservation of sound learning and of pure religion — wear something of a monastic or cloisteral

character in their aspect and usages, which is peculiarly impressive, and even pathetic, amidst the uproars of a capital the most colossal and tumultuous upon earth.

Here Lamb remained until his fifteenth year, which year threw him on the world, and brought him alongside the golden dawn of the French Revolution. Here he learned a little elementary Greek, and of Latin more than a little; for the Latin notes to Mr. Cary (of Dante celebrity) though brief, are sufficient to reveal a true sense of what is graceful and idiomatic in Latinity. *We* say this, who have studied that subject more than most men. It is not that Lamb would have found it an easy task to compose a long paper in Latin — nobody *can* find it easy to *do* what he has no motive for habitually practising; but a single sentence of Latin wearing the secret countersign of the 'sweet Roman hand,' ascertains sufficiently that, in reading Latin classics, a man feels and comprehends their peculiar force or beauty. That is enough. It is requisite to a man's expansion of mind that he should make acquaintance with a literature so radically differing from all modern literature as is the Latin. It is *not* requisite that he should practise Latin composition. Here, therefore, Lamb obtained in sufficient perfection one priceless accomplishment, which even singly throws a graceful air of liberality over all the rest of a man's attainments: having rarely any pecuniary value, it challenges the more attention to its intellectual value. Here also Lamb commenced the friendships of his life; and, of all which he formed he lost none. Here it was, as the consummation and crown of his advantages from the time-honored hospital, that he came to know 'Poor S. T. C.'[2] *τον θαυμασιωτατον.*

Until 1796, it is probable that he lost sight of Coleridge, who was then occupied with Cambridge, having been transferred thither as a 'Grecian' from the house of Christ Church. The year 1795, was a year of change and fearful calamity for Charles Lamb. On that year revolved the wheels of his after-life. During the three years succeeding to his school days, he had held a clerkship in the South Sea House. In 1795, he was transferred to the India House. As a junior clerk, he could not receive more than a slender salary; but even this was important to the support of his parents and sister. They lived together in lodgings near Holborn; and in the spring of 1796, Miss Lamb, (having previously shown signs of lunacy at intervals,) in a sudden paroxysm of her disease, seized a knife from the dinner table, and stabbed her mother, who died upon the spot. A coroner's inquest easily ascertained the nature of a case which was transparent in all its circumstances, and never for a moment indecisive as regarded the medical symptoms. The poor young lady was transferred to the establishment for lunatics at Hoxton. She soon recovered, we believe; but her relapses were as sudden as her recoveries, and she continued through life to revisit, for periods of uncertain seclusion, this house of woe. This calamity of his fireside, followed soon after by the death of his father, who had for some time been in a state of imbecility, determined the future destiny of Lamb. Apprehending, with the perfect grief of perfect love, that his sister's fate was sealed for life — viewing her as his own greatest benefactress, which she really *had* been through her advantage by ten years of age — yielding with impassioned readiness to the depth of his fraternal affec-

tion, what at any rate he would have yielded to the sanctities of duty as interpreted by his own conscience — he resolved for ever to resign all thoughts of marriage with a young lady whom he loved, for ever to abandon all ambitious prospects that might have tempted him into uncertainties, humbly to content himself with the *certainties* of his Indian clerkship, to dedicate himself for the future to the care of his desolate and prostrate sister, and to leave the rest to God. These sacrifices he made in no hurry or tumult, but deliberately, and in religious tranquillity. These sacrifices were accepted in heaven — and even on this earth they *had* their reward. She, for whom he gave up all, in turn gave up all for *him*. She devoted herself to his comfort. Many times she returned to the lunatic establishment, but many times she was restored to illuminate the household for *him;* and of the happiness which for forty years and more he had, no hour seemed true that was not derived from *her*. Henceforward, therefore, until he was emancipated by the noble generosity of the East India Directors, Lamb's time for nine-and-twenty years, was given to the India House.

'*O fortunati nimium, sua si bona nôrint,*' is applicable to more people than '*agricolæ.*' Clerks of the India House are as blind to their own advantages as the blindest of ploughmen. Lamb was summoned, it is true, through the larger and more genial section of his life, to the drudgery of a copying clerk — making confidential entries into mighty folios, on the subject of calicoes and muslins. By this means, whether he would or not, he became gradually the author of a great 'serial' work, in a frightful number of volumes,

on as dry a department of literature as the children of the great desert could have suggested. Nobody, he must have felt, was ever likely to study this great work of his, not even Dr. Dryasdust. He had written in vain, which is not pleasant to know. There would be no second edition called for by a discerning public in Leadenhall Street; not a chance of *that*. And consequently the *opera omnia* of Lamb, drawn up in a hideous battalion, at the cost of labor so enormous, would be known only to certain families of spiders in one generation, and of rats in the next. Such a labor of Sisyphus, — the rolling up a ponderous stone to the summit of a hill only that it might roll back again by the gravitation of its own dulness, — seems a bad employment for a man of genius in his meridian energies. And yet, perhaps not. Perhaps the collective wisdom of Europe could not have devised for Lamb a more favorable condition of toil than this very India House clerkship. His works (his Leadenhall Street works) were certainly not read; popular they *could* not be, for they were not read by anybody; but then, to balance *that*, they were not reviewed. His folios were of that order, which (in Cowper's words,) 'not even critics criticize.' *Is that* nothing? Is it no happiness to escape the hands of scoundrel reviewers? Many of us escape being *read;* the worshipful reviewer does not find time to read a line of us; but we do not for that reason escape being criticized, 'shown up,' and martyred. The list of *errata* again, committed by Lamb, was probably of a magnitude to alarm any possible compositor; and yet these *errata* will never be known to mankind. They are dead and buried. They have been cut off prematurely; and for any effect upon

their generation, might as well never have existed. Then the returns, in a pecuniary sense, from these folios — how important were *they!* It is not common, certainly, to write folios; but neither is it common to draw a steady income of from 300*l.* to 400*l.* per annum from volumes of any size. This will be admitted; but would it not have been better to draw the income without the toil? Doubtless it would always be more agreeable to have the rose without the thorn. But in the case before us, taken with all its circumstances, we deny that the toil is truly typified as a thorn; so far from being a thorn in Lamb's daily life, on the contrary, it was a second rose ingrafted upon the original rose of the income, that he had to earn it by a moderate but continued exertion. Holidays, in a national establishment so great as the India House, and in our too fervid period, naturally could not be frequent; yet all great English corporations are gracious masters, and indulgences of this nature could be obtained on a special application. Not to count upon these accidents of favor, we find that the regular toil of those in Lamb's situation, began at ten in the morning and ended as the clock struck four in the afternoon. Six hours composed the daily contribution of labor, that is precisely one fourth part of the total day. Only that, as Sunday was exempted, the rigorous expression of the quota was one fourth of six-sevenths, which makes six twenty-eighths and not six twenty-fourths of the total time. Less toil than this would hardly have availed to deepen the sense of value in that large part of the time still remaining disposable. Had there been any resumption whatever of labor in the evening, though but for half an hour, that one en-

croachment upon the broad continuous area of the eighteen free hours would have killed the tranquillity of the whole day, by *sowing* it (so to speak) with intermitting anxieties — anxieties that, like tides, would still be rising and falling. Whereas now, at the early hour of four, when daylight is yet lingering in the air, even at the dead of winter, in the latitude of London, and when the *enjoying* section of the day is barely commencing, everything is left which a man would care to retain. A mere *dilettante* or amateur student, having no mercenary interest concerned, would, upon a refinement of luxury — would, upon choice, give up so so much time to study, were it only to sharpen the value of what remained for pleasure. And thus the only difference between the scheme of the India House distributing his time for Lamb, and the scheme of a wise voluptuary distributing his time for himself, lay, not in the *amount* of time deducted from enjoyment, but in the particular mode of appropriating that deduction. An *intellectual* appropriation of the time, though casually fatiguing, must have pleasures of its own; pleasures denied to a task so mechanic and so monotonous as that of reiterating endless records of sales or consignments not *essentially* varying from each other. True; it is pleasanter to pursue an intellectual study than to make entries in a ledger. But even an intellectual toil is toil; few people can support it for more than six hours in a day. And the only question, therefore, after all, is, at what period of the day a man would prefer taking this pleasure of study. Now, upon that point, as regards the case of Lamb, there is no opening for doubt. He, amongst his *Popular Fallacies*, admirably illustrates

the necessity of evening and artificial lights to the prosperity of studies. After exposing, with the perfection of fun, the savage unsociality of those elder ancestors who lived (if life it was) before lamp-light was invented, showing that 'jokes came in with candles,' since 'what repartees *could* have passed' when people were 'grumbling at one another in the dark,' and 'when you must have felt about for a smile, and handled a neighbor's cheek to be sure that he understood it?' — he goes on to say, 'This accounts for the seriousness of the elder poetry,' viz., because they had no candle-light. Even eating he objects to as a very imperfect thing in the dark; you are not convinced that a dish tastes as it should do by the promise of its name, if you dine in the twilight without candles. Seeing is believing. 'The senses absolutely give and take reciprocally.' The sight guarantees the taste. For instance, 'Can you tell pork from veal in the dark, or distinguish Sherries from pure Malaga?' To all enjoyments whatsoever candles are indispensable as an adjunct; but, as to *reading*, 'there is,' says Lamb, 'absolutely no such thing but by a candle. We have tried the affectation of a book at noon-day in gardens, but it was labor thrown away. It is a mockery, all that is reported of the influential Phœbus. No true poem ever owed its birth to the sun's light. The mild internal light, that reveals the fine shapings of poetry, like fires on the domestic hearth, goes out in the sunshine. Milton's morning hymn in Paradise, we would hold a good wager, was penned at midnight; and Taylor's rich description of a sunrise smells decidedly of the taper.' This view of evening and candle-light as involved in literature may seem no more than a pleas-

ant extravaganza; and no doubt it is in the nature of such gayeties to travel a little into exaggeration, but substantially it is certain that Lamb's feelings pointed habitually in the direction here indicated. His literary studies, whether taking the color of tasks or diversions, courted the aid of evening, which, by means of physical weariness, produces a more luxurious state of repose than belongs to the labor hours of day, and courted the aid of lamp-light, which, as Lord Bacon remarked, gives a gorgeousness to human pomps and pleasures, such as would be vainly sought from the homeliness of daylight. The hours, therefore, which were withdrawn from his own control by the India House, happened to be exactly that part of the day which Lamb least valued, and could least have turned to account.

The account given of Lamb's friends, of those whom he endeavored to love because he admired them, or to esteem intellectually because he loved them personally, is too much colored for general acquiescence by Sergeant Talfourd's own early prepossessions. It is natural that an intellectual man like the Sergeant, personally made known in youth to people, whom from childhood he had regarded as powers in the ideal world, and in some instances as representing the eternities of human speculation, since their names had perhaps dawned upon his mind in concurrence with the very earliest suggestion of topics which they had treated, should overrate their intrinsic grandeur. Hazlitt accordingly is styled 'The great thinker.' But had he been such potentially, there was an absolute bar to his achievement of that station in act and consummation. No man *can* be a great thinker in our days upon large

and elaborate questions without being also a great student. To think profoundly, it is indispensable that a man should have read down to his own starting point, and have read as a collating student to the particular stage at which he himself takes up the subject. At this moment, for instance, how could geology be treated otherwise than childishly by one who should rely upon the encyclopædias of 1800? or comparative physiology by the most ingenious of men unacquainted with Marshall Hall, and with the apocalyptic glimpses of secrets unfolding under the hands of Professor Owen? In such a condition of undisciplined thinking, the ablest man thinks to no purpose. He lingers upon parts of the inquiry that have lost the importance which once they had, under imperfect charts of the subject; he wastes his strength upon problems that have become obsolete; he loses his way in paths that are not in the line of direction upon which the improved speculation is moving; or he gives narrow conjectural solutions of difficulties that have long since received sure and comprehensive ones. It is as if a man should in these days attempt to colonize, and yet, through inertia or through ignorance, should leave behind him all modern resources of chemistry, of chemical agriculture, or of steam-power. Hazlitt had read nothing. Unacquainted with Grecian philosophy, with Scholastic philosophy, and with the recomposition of these philosophies in the looms of Germany during the last sixty and odd years, trusting merely to the unrestrained instincts of keen mother-wit — whence should Hazlitt have had the materials for great thinking? It is through the collation of many abortive voyages to polar regions that a man gains his first chance of entering the polar

basin, or of running ahead on a true line of approach to it. The very reason for Hazlitt's defect in eloquence as a lecturer, is sufficient also as a reason why he could not have been a comprehensive thinker. 'He was not eloquent,' says the Sergeant, 'in the true sense of the term.' But why? Because it seems 'his thoughts were too weighty to be moved along by the shallow stream of feeling which an evening's excitement can rouse,' — an explanation which leaves us in doubt whether Hazlitt forfeited his chance of eloquence by accommodating himself to this evening's excitement, or by gloomily resisting it. Our own explanation is different; Hazlitt was not eloquent, because he was discontinuous. No man can be eloquent whose thoughts are abrupt, insulated, capricious, and (to borrow an impressive word from Coleridge) non-sequacious. Eloquence resides not in separate or fractional ideas, but in the relations of manifold ideas, and in the mode of their evolution from each other. It is not indeed enough that the ideas should be many, and their relations coherent; the main condition lies in the *key* of the evolution, in the *law* of the succession. The elements are nothing without the atmosphere that moulds, and the dynamic forces that combine. Now Hazlitt's brilliancy is seen chiefly in separate splinterings of phrase or image which throw upon the eye a vitreous scintillation for a moment, but spread no deep suffusions of color, and distribute no masses of mighty shadow. A flash, a solitary flash, and all is gone. Rhetoric, according to its quality, stands in many degrees of relation to the permanences of truth; and all rhetoric, like all flesh, is partly unreal, and the glory of both is fleeting. Even the mighty rhetoric

of Sir Thomas Browne, or Jeremy Taylor, to whom only it has been granted to open the trumpet-stop on that great organ of passion, oftentimes leaves behind it the sense of sadness which belongs to beautiful apparitions starting out of darkness upon the morbid eye, only to be reclaimed by darkness in the instant of their birth, or which belongs to pageantries in the clouds. But if all rhetoric is a mode of pyrotechny, and all pyrotechnics are by necessity fugacious, yet even in these frail pomps, there are many degrees of frailty. Some fireworks require an hour's duration for the expansion of their glory; others, as if formed from fulminating powder, expire in the very act of birth. Precisely on that scale of duration and of power stand the glitterings of rhetoric that are not worked into the texture, but washed on from the outside. Hazlitt's thoughts were of the same fractured and discontinuous order as his illustrative images — seldom or never self-diffusive; and *that* is a sufficient argument that he had never cultivated philosophic thinking.

Not, however, to conceal any part of the truth, we are bound to acknowledge that Lamb thought otherwise on this point, manifesting what seemed to us an extravagant admiration of Hazlitt, and perhaps even in part for that very glitter which we are denouncing — at least he did so in conversation with ourselves. But, on the other hand, as this conversation travelled a little into the tone of a disputation, and *our* frost on this point might seem to justify some undue fervor by way of balance, it is very possible that Lamb did not speak his absolute and most dispassionate judgment. And yet again, if he *did*, may we, with all reverence for Lamb's exquisite genius have permission to say — that his own

constitution of intellect sinned by this very habit of discontinuity. It was a habit of mind not unlikely to be cherished by his habits of life. Amongst these habits was the excess of his social kindness. He scorned so much to deny his company and his redundant hospitality to any man who manifested a wish for either by calling upon him, that he almost seemed to think it a criminality in himself if, by accident, he really *was* from home on your visit, rather than by possibility a negligence in you, that had not forewarned him of your intention. All his life, from this and other causes, he must have read in the spirit of one liable to sudden interruption; like a dragoon, in fact, reading with one foot in the stirrup, when expecting momentarily a summons to mount for action. In such situations, reading by snatches, and by intervals of precarious leisure, people form the habit of seeking and unduly valuing condensations of the meaning, where in reality the truth suffers by this short-hand exhibition, or else they demand too vivid illustrations of the meaning. Lord Chesterfield himself, so brilliant a man by nature, already therefore making a morbid estimate of brilliancy, and so hurried throughout his life as a public man, read under this double coercion for craving instantaneous effects. At one period, his only time for reading was in the morning, whilst under the hands of his hair-dresser; compelled to take the hastiest of flying shots at his author, naturally he demanded a very conspicuous mark to fire at. But the author could not, in so brief a space, be always sure to crowd any very prominent objects on the eye, unless by being audaciously oracular and peremptory as regarded the sentiment, or flashy in excess as regarded its expression.

'Come now, my friend,' was Lord Chesterfield's morning adjuration to his author; 'come now, cut it short — don't prose — don't hum and haw.' The author had doubtless no ambition to enter his name on the honorable and ancient roll of gentleman prosers; probably he conceived himself not at all tainted with the asthmatic infirmity of humming and hawing; but as to 'cutting it short,' how could he be sure of meeting his lordship's expectations in that point, unless by dismissing the limitations that might be requisite to fit the idea for use, or the adjuncts that might be requisite to integrate its truth, or the final consequences that might involve some deep *arrière pensée*, which, coming last in the succession, might oftentimes be calculated to lie deepest on the mind. To be lawfully and usefully brilliant after this rapid fashion, a man must come forward as a refresher of old truths, where *his* suppressions are supplied by the reader's memory; not as an expounder of new truths, where oftentimes a dislocated fraction of the true is more dangerous than the false itself.

To read therefore habitually, by hurried instalments, has this bad tendency — that it is likely to found a taste for modes of composition too artificially irritating, and to disturb the equilibrium of the judgment in relation to the colorings of style. Lamb, however, whose constitution of mind was even ideally sound in reference to the natural, the simple, the genuine, might seem of all men least liable to a taint in this direction. And undoubtedly he *was* so, as regarded those modes of beauty which nature had specially qualified him for apprehending. Else, and in relation to other modes of beauty, where his sense of the true, and of its dis-

tinction from the spurious, had been an acquired sense, it is impossible for us to hide from ourselves — that not through habits only, nct through stress of injurious accidents only, but by original structure and tempera ment of mind, Lamb had a bias towards those very defects on which rested the startling characteristics of style which we have been noticing. He himself, we fear, not bribed by indulgent feelings to another, not moved by friendship, but by native tendency, shrank from the continuous, from the sustained, from the elaborate.

The elaborate, indeed, without which much truth and beauty must perish in germ, was by name the object of his invectives. The instances are many, in his own beautiful essays, where he literally collapses, literally sinks away from openings suddenly offering themselves to flights of pathos or solemnity in direct prosecution of his own theme. On any such summons where an ascending impulse, and an untired pinion were required, he *refuses* himself (to use military language) invariably. The least observing reader of *Elia* cannot have failed to nótice that the most felicitous passages always accomplish their circuit in a few sentences. The gyration within which the sentiment wheels, no matter of what kind it may be, is always the shortest possible. It does not prolong itself, and it does not repeat itself. But in fact, other features in Lamb's mind would have argued this feature by analogy, had we by accident been left unaware of it directly. It is not by chance, or without a deep ground in his nature, *common* to all his qualities, both affirmative and negative, that Lamb had an insensibility to music more absolute that can have been often shared by any human creature, or

perhaps than was ever before acknowledged so candidly. The sense of music, — as a pleasurable sense, or as any sense at all other than of certain unmeaning and impertinent differences in respect to high and low, sharp or flat, — was utterly obliterated as with a sponge by nature herself from Lamb's organization. It was a corollary, from the same large *substratum* in his nature, that Lamb had no sense of the rhythmical in prose compositions. Rhythmus, or pomp of cadence, or sonorous ascent of clauses, in the structure of sentences, were effects of art as much thrown away upon *him* as the voice of the charmer upon the deaf adder. We ourselves, occupying the very station of polar opposition to that of Lamb, being as morbidly, perhaps, in the one excess as he in the other, naturally detected this omission in Lamb's nature at an early stage of our acquaintance. Not the fabled Regulus with his eyelids torn away, and his uncurtained eye-balls exposed to the noon-tide glare of a Carthaginian sun, could have shrieked with more anguish of recoil from torture than we from certain sentences and periods in which Lamb perceived no fault at all. *Pomp*, in our apprehension, was an idea of two categories; the *pompous* might be spurious, but it might also be genuine. It is well to love the simple — *we* love it; nor is there any opposition at all between *that* and the very glory of pomp. But, as we once put the case to Lamb, if, as a musician, as the leader of a mighty orchestra, you had this theme offered to you — 'Belshazzar the king gave a great feast to a thousand of his lords' — or this, 'And on a certain day, Marcus Cicero stood up, and in a set speech rendered solemn thanks to Caius Cæsar for Quintus Ligarius pardoned, and for Marcus Marcellus

restored' — surely no man would deny that, in such a case, simplicity, though in a passive sense not lawfully absent, must stand aside as totally insufficient for the *positive* part. Simplicity might guide, even here, but could not furnish the power; a rudder it might be, but not an oar or a sail. This, Lamb was ready to allow; as an intellectual *quiddity*, he recognized pomp in the character of a privileged thing; he was obliged to do so; for take away from great ceremonial festivals, such as the solemn rendering of thanks, the celebration of national anniversaries, the commemoration of public benefactors, &c., the element of pomp, and you take away their very meaning and life; but, whilst allowing a place for it in the rubric of the logician, it is certain that, *sensuously*, Lamb would not have sympathized with it, nor have *felt* its justification in any concrete instance. We find a difficulty in pursuing this subject, without greatly exceeding our limits. We pause, therefore, and add only this one suggestion as partly explanatory of the case. Lamb had the dramatic intellect and taste, perhaps, in perfection; of the Epic, he had none at all. Here, as happens sometimes to men of genius preternaturally endowed in one direction, he might be considered as almost starved. A favorite of nature, so eminent in some directions, by what right could he complain that her bounties were not indiscriminate? From this defect in his nature it arose, that, except by culture and by reflection, Lamb had no genial appreciation of Milton. The solemn planetary wheelings of the Paradise Lost were not to his taste. What he *did* comprehend, were the motions like those of lightning, the fierce angular coruscations of that wild agency which comes forward so vividly in the sudden

περιπέτεια, in the revolutionary catastrophe, and in the tumultuous conflicts, through persons or through situations, of the tragic drama.

There is another vice in Mr. Hazlitt's mode of composition, viz., the habit of trite quotation, too common to have challenged much notice, were it not for these reasons: 1st, That Sergeant Talfourd speaks of it in equivocal terms, as a fault perhaps, but as a 'felicitous' fault, 'trailing after it a line of golden associations;' 2dly, because the practice involves a dishonesty. On occasion of No. 1, we must profess our belief that a more ample explanation from the Sergeant would have left him in substantial harmony with ourselves. We cannot conceive the author of Ion, and the friend of Wordsworth, seriously to countenance that paralytic 'mouth-diarrhœa,' (to borrow a phrase of Coleridge's) — that *fluxe de bouche* (to borrow an earlier phrase of Archbishop Huet's,) which places the reader at the mercy of a man's tritest remembrances from his most school-boy reading. To have the verbal memory infested with tags of verse and 'cues' of rhyme is in itself an infirmity as vulgar and as morbid as the stable-boy's habit of whistling slang airs upon the mere mechanical excitement of a bar or two whistled by some other blockhead in some other stable. The very stage has grown weary of ridiculing a folly, that having been long since expelled from decent society has taken refuge amongst the most imbecile of authors. Was Mr. Hazlitt then of that class? No; he was a man of great talents, and of capacity for greater things than he ever attempted, though without any pretensions of the philosophic kind ascribed to him by the Sergeant. Meantime the reason for resisting the example and

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

a midnight visit, trails after him perhaps a long roll of gold bullion epaulettes which may look pretty by lamp-light.

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

In the year 1796, the main incident occurring of any importance for English literature was the publication by Southey of an epic poem. This poem, the *Joan of Arc*, was the earliest work of much pretension amongst all that Southey wrote; and by many degrees it was the worst. In the four great narrative poems of his later years, there is a combination of two striking qualities, viz., a peculiar command over the *visually* splendid, connected with a deep-toned grandeur of moral pathos. Especially we find this union in the *Thalaba* and the *Roderick;* but in the *Joan of Arc* we miss it. What splendor there is for the fancy and the eye belongs chiefly to the Vision, contributed by Coleridge, and this was subsequently withdrawn. The fault lay in Southey's political relations at that era;

his sympathy with the French Revolution in its earlier stages had been boundless; in all respects it was a noble sympathy, fading only as the gorgeous coloring faded from the emblazonries of that awful event, drooping only when the promises of that golden dawn sickened under stationary eclipse. In 1796, Southey was yet under the tyranny of his own earliest fascination; in *his* eyes the Revolution had suffered a momentary blight from refluxes of panic; but blight of some kind is incident to every harvest on which human hopes are suspended. Bad auguries were also ascending from the unchaining of martial instincts. But that the Revolution, having ploughed its way through unparalleled storms, was preparing to face other storms, did but quicken the apprehensiveness of his love — did but quicken the duty of giving utterance to this love. Hence came the rapid composition of the poem, which cost less time in writing than in printing. Hence, also, came the choice of his heroine. What he needed in his central character was, a heart with a capacity for the wrath of Hebrew prophets applied to ancient abuses, and for evangelic pity applied to the sufferings of nations. This heart, with this double capacity — where should he seek it? A French heart it must be, or how should it follow with its sympathies a French movement? *There* lay Southey's reason for adopting the Maid of Orleans as the depositary of hopes and aspirations on behalf of France as fervid as his own. In choosing this heroine, so inadequately known at that time, Southey testified at least his own nobility of feeling;[3] but in executing his choice, he and his friends overlooked two faults fatal to his purpose. One was this: sympathy with the French Revolution

meant sympathy with the opening prospects of man — meant sympathy with the Pariah of every clime — with all that suffered social wrong, or saddened in hopeless bondage.

That was the movement at work in the French Revolution. But the movement of Joanna d'Arc took a different direction. In *her* day also, it is true, the human heart had yearned after the same vast enfranchisement for her children of labor as afterwards worked in the great vision of the French Revolution. In *her* days also, and shortly before them, the human hand had sought by bloody acts to realize this dream of the heart. And in her childhood, Joanna had not been insensible to these premature motions upon a path too bloody and too dark to be safe. But this view of human misery had been utterly absorbed to *her* by the special misery then desolating France. The lilies of France had been trampled underfoot by the conquering stranger. Within fifty years, in three pitched battles that resounded to the ends of the earth, the chivalry of France had been exterminated. Her oriflamme had been dragged through the dust. The eldest son of Baptism had been prostrated. The daughter of France had been surrendered on coercion as a bride to her English conqueror. The child of that marriage, so ignominious to the land, was king of France by the consent of Christendom; that child's uncle domineered as regent of France; and that child's armies were in military possession of the land. But were they undisputed masters? No; and *there* precisely lay the sorrow of the time. Under a perfect conquest there would have been repose; whereas the presence of the English armies did but furnish a plea, masking itself in

patriotism, for gatherings everywhere of lawless marauders; of soldiers that had deserted their banners; and of robbers by profession. This was the woe of France more even than the military dishonor. That dishonor had been palliated from the first by the genealogical pretensions of the English royal family to the French throne, and these pretensions were strengthened in the person of the present claimant. But the military desolation of France, this it was that woke the faith of Joanna in her own heavenly mission of deliverance. It was the attitude of her prostrate country, crying night and day for purification from blood, and not from feudal oppression, that swallowed up the thoughts of the impassioned girl. But *that* was not the cry that uttered itself afterwards in the French Revolution. In Joanna's days, the first step towards rest for France was by expulsion of the foreigner. Independence of a foreign yoke, liberation as between people and people, was the one ransom to be paid for French honor and peace. *That* debt settled, there might come a time for thinking of civil liberties. But this time was not within the prospects of the poor sheperdess. The field — the area of her sympathies — never coincided with that of a Revolutionary period. It followed, therefore, that Southey *could* not have raised Joanna (with her condition of feeling) by any management, into the interpreter of his own. *That* was the first error in his poem, and it was irremediable. The second was — and strangely enough this also escaped notice — that the heroine of Southey is made to close her career precisely at the point when its grandeur commences. She believed herself to have a mission for the deliverance of France; and the great instrument which she was

authorized to use towards this end, was the king, Charles VII. Him she was to crown. With this coronation, her triumph, in the plain historical sense, ended. And *there* ends Southey's poem. But exactly at this point, the grander stage of her mission commences, viz., the ransom which she, a solitary girl, paid in her own person for the national deliverance. The grander half of the story was thus sacrificed, as being irrelevant to Southey's political object; and yet, after all, the half which he retained did not at all symbolize that object. It is singular, indeed, to find a long poem, on an ancient subject, adapting itself hieroglyphically to a modern purpose; 2dly, to find it failing of this purpose; and 3dly, if it had *not* failed, so planned that it could have succeeded only by a sacrifice of all that was grandest in the theme.

To these capital oversights, Southey, Coleridge, and Lamb, were all joint parties; the two first as concerned in the composition, the last as a frank though friendly reviewer of it in his private correspondence with Coleridge. It is, however, some palliation of these oversights, and a very singular fact in itself, that neither from English authorities nor from French, though the two nations were equally brought into close connection with the career of that extraordinary girl, could any adequate view be obtained of her character and acts. The *official* records of her trial, apart from which nothing can be depended upon, were first in the course of publication from the Paris press during the currency of last year. First in 1847, about four hundred and sixteen years after her ashes had been dispersed to the winds, could it be seen distinctly

through the clouds of fierce partisanships and national prejudices, what had been the frenzy of the persecution against her, and the utter desolation of her position; what had been the grandeur of her conscientious existence.

Anxious that our readers should see Lamb from as many angles as possible, we have obtained from an old friend of his a memorial — slight, but such as the circumstances allowed — of an evening spent with Charles and Mary Lamb, in the winter of 1821–22. The record is of the most unambitious character; it pretends to nothing as the reader will see, not so much as to a pun, which it really required some singularity of luck to have missed from Charles Lamb, who often continued to fire puns, as minute guns, all through the evening. But the more unpretending this record is, the more appropriate it becomes by that very fact to the memory of *him* who, amongst all authors, was the humblest and least pretending. We have often thought that the famous epitaph written for his grave by Piron, the cynical author of *La Métromanie*, might have come from Lamb, were it not for one objection; Lamb's benign heart would have recoiled from a sarcasm, however effective, inscribed upon a grave-stone; or from a jest, however playful, that tended to a vindictive sneer amongst his own farewell words. We once translated this Piron epitaph into a kind of rambling Drayton couplet; and the only point needing explanation is, that, from the accident of scientific men, fellows of the Royal Society being usually very solemn men, with an extra chance, therefore, for being dull men in conversation, naturally it arose that some wit amongst our great-grandfathers

translated F. R. S. into a short-hand expression for a Fellow Remarkably Stupid; to which version of the three letters our English epitaph alludes. The French original of Piron is this:

'Ci git Piron; qui ne fut rien;
Pas méme académicien.'

The bitter arrow of the second line was feathered to hit the French Académie, who had declined to elect him a member. Our translation is this:

'Here lies Piron; who was — nothing; or, if *that* could be, was less:
How! — nothing? Yes, nothing; not so much as F. R. S.'

But now to our friend's memorandum:

"October 6, 1848.

"My dear X. — You ask me for some memorial, however trivial, of any dinner party, supper party, water party, no matter what, that I can circumstantially recall to recollection, by any features whatever, puns or repartees, wisdom or wit, connecting it with Charles Lamb. I grieve to say that my meetings of *any* sort with Lamb were few, though spread through a score of years. That sounds odd for one that loved Lamb so entirely, and so much venerated his character. But the reason was, that I so seldom visited London, and Lamb so seldom quitted it. Somewhere about 1810 and 1812 I must have met Lamb repeatedly at the *Courier Office* in the Strand; that is, at Coleridge's, to whom, as an intimate friend, Mr. Stuart (a proprietor of the paper) gave up for a time the use of some rooms in the office. Thither, in the London season, (May especially and June,) resorted Lamb, Godwin, Sir H. Davy, and, once or twice, Wordsworth, who visited Sir George Beaumont's Leicestershire residence

of Coleorton early in the spring, and then travelled up to Grosvenor Square with Sir George and Lady Beaumont: '*spectatum veniens, veniens spectetur ut ipse.*'

But in these miscellaneous gatherings, Lamb said little except when an opening arose for a pun. And how effectual that sort of small shot was from *him*, I need not say to anybody who remembers his infirmity of stammering, and his dexterous management of it for purposes of light and shade. He was often able to train the roll of stammers in settling upon the words immediately preceding the effective one; by which means the key-note of the jest or sarcasm, benefiting by the sudden liberation of his embargoed voice, was delivered with the force of a pistol shot. That stammer was worth an annuity to him as an ally of his wit. Firing under cover of that advantage, he did triple execution; for, in the first place, the distressing sympathy of the hearers with *his* distress of utterance won for him unavoidably the silence of deep attention; and then, whilst he had us all hoaxed into this attitude of mute suspense by an appearance of distress that he perhaps did not really feel, down came a plunging shot into the very thick of us, with ten times the effect it would else have had. If his stammering, however, often did him true 'yeoman's service,' sometimes it led him into scrapes. Coleridge told me of a ludicrous embarrassment which it caused him at Hastings. Lamb had been medically advised to a course of sea-bathing; and accordingly at the door of his bathing machine, whilst he stood shivering with cold, two stout fellows laid hold of him, one at each shoulder, like heraldic supporters: they waited for the word of command

from their principal, who began the following oration to them: 'Hear me, men! Take notice of this — I am to be dipped.' What more he would have said is unknown to land or sea or bathing machines; for having reached the word dipped, he commenced such a rolling fire of Di — di — di — di, that when at length he descended *à plomb* upon the full word *dipped*, the two men, rather tired of the long suspense, became satisfied that they had reached what lawyers call the 'operative clause' of the sentence; and both exclaiming at once, 'Oh yes, Sir, we're quite aware of *that*,' down they plunged him into the sea. On emerging, Lamb sobbed so much from the cold, that he found no voice suitable to his indignation; from necessity he seemed tranquil; and again addressing the men, who stood respectfully listening, he began thus: 'Men! is it possible to obtain your attention?' 'Oh surely, Sir, by all means.' 'Then listen: once more I tell you, I am to be di — di — di —' — and then, with a burst of indignation, 'dipped, I tell you,' —— 'Oh decidedly, Sir,' rejoined the men, 'decidedly,' and down the stammerer went for the second time. Petrified with cold and wrath, once more Lamb made a feeble attempt at explanation — 'Grant me pa — pa — patience; is it mum — um — murder you me — me — mean? Again and a — ga — ga — gain, I tell you, I'm to be di — di — di — dipped,' now speaking furiously, with the voice of an injured man. 'Oh yes, Sir,' the men replied, 'we know that, we fully understood it,' and for the third time down went Lamb into the sea. 'Oh limbs of Satan!' he said, on coming up for the third time, 'it's now too late; I tell you that I am — no, that I *was* — to be di — di — di — dipped only *once*.'

Since the rencontres with Lamb at Coleridge's, I had met him once or twice at literary dinner parties. One of these occurred at the house of Messrs. Taylor & Hessey, the publishers. I myself was suffering too much from illness at the time to take any pleasure in what passed, or to notice it with any vigilance of attention. Lamb, I remember, as usual, was full of gayety; and as usual he rose too rapidly to the zenith of his gayety; for he shot upwards like a rocket, and, as usual, people said he was 'tipsy.' To me Lamb never seemed intoxicated, but at most aerially elevated. He never talked nonsense, which is a great point gained; nor polemically, which is a greater; for it is a dreadful thing to find a drunken man bent upon converting oneself; nor sentimentally, which is greatest of all. You can stand a man's fraternizing with you; or if he swears an eternal friendship only once in an hour, you do not think of calling the police; but once in every three minutes is too much. Lamb did none of these things; he was always rational, quiet, and gentlemanly in his habits. Nothing memorable, I am sure, passed upon this occasion, which was in November, of 1821; and yet the dinner was memorable by means of one fact not discovered until many years later. Amongst the company of all literary men, sate a murderer, and a murderer of a freezing class; cool, calculating, wholesale in his operations, and moving all along under the advantages of unsuspecting domestic confidence and domestic opportunities. This was Mr. Wainwright, who was subsequently brought to trial, but not for any of his murders, and transported for life. The story has been told by Sergeant Talfourd, in the second volume of these 'Final Memoirs,' and pre-

viously by Sir Edward B. Lytton. Both have been much blamed for the use made of this extraordinary case; but we know not why. In itself it is a most remarkable case, for more reasons than one. It is remarkable for the apalling revelation which it makes of power spread through the hands of people not liable to suspicion, for purposes the most dreadful. It is remarkable also by the contrast which existed in this case between the murderer's appearance, and the terrific purposes with which he was always dallying. He was a contributor to a journal in which I also had written several papers. This formed a shadowy link between us; and, ill as I was, I looked more attentively at *him* than at anybody else. Yet there were several men of wit and genius present, amongst whom Lamb (as I have said), and Thomas Hood, Hamilton Reynolds, and Allan Cunningham. But *them* I already knew, whereas Mr. W. I now saw for the first time and the last. What interested me about *him* was this, the papers which had been pointed out to me as his, (signed *Janus Weathercock*, *Vinkbooms*, &c.) were written in a spirit of coxcombry that did not so much disgust as amuse. The writer could not conceal the ostentatious pleasure which he took in the luxurious fittings up of his rooms, in the fancied splendor of his *bijouterie*, &c. Yet it was easy for a man of any experience to read two facts in all this idle *étalage;* one being, that his finery was but of a second-rate order; the other, that he was a *parvenu*, not at home even amongst his second-rate splendor. So far there was nothing to distinguish Mr. W——'s papers from the papers of other triflers. But in this point there *was*, viz., that in his judgments upon the great Italian

masters of painting, Da Vinci, Titian, &c., there seemed a tone of sincerity and of native sensibility, as in one who spoke from himself, and was not merely a copier from books. This it was that interested me; as also his reviews of the chief Italian engravers, Morghen, Volpato, &c.; not for the manner, which overflowed with levities and impertinence, but for the substance of his judgments in those cases where I happened to have had an opportunity of judging for myself. Here arose also a claim upon Lamb's attention; for Lamb and his sister had a deep feeling for what was excellent in painting. Accordingly Lamb paid him a great deal of attention, and continued to speak of him for years with an interest that seemed disproportioned to his pretensions. This might be owing in part to an indirect compliment paid to Miss Lamb in one of W —— 's papers; else his appearance would rather have repelled Lamb; it was commonplace, and better suited to express the dandyism which overspread the surface of his manner, than the unaffected sensibility which apparently lay in his nature. Dandy or not, however, this man, on account of the schism in his papers, so much amiable puppyism on one side, so much deep feeling on the other, (feeling, applied to some of the grandest objects that earth has to show,) did really move a trifle of interest in me, on a day when I hated the face of man and woman. Yet again, if I had known this man for the murderer that even then he was, what sudden loss of interest, what sudden growth of another interest, would have changed the face of that party! Trivial creature, that didst carry thy dreadful eye kindling with perpetual treasons! Dreadful creature, that didst carry thy trivial

eye, mantling with eternal levity, over the sleeping surfaces of confiding household life — oh, what a revolution for man wouldst thou have accomplished had thy deep wickedness prospered! What *was* that wickedness? In a few words I will say.

At this time (October 1848) the whole British island is appalled by a new chapter in the history of poisoning. Locusta in ancient Rome, Madame Brinvilliers in Paris, were people of original genius: not in any new artifice of toxicology, not in the mere management of poisons, was the audacity of their genius displayed. No; but in profiting by domestic openings for murder, unsuspected through their very atrocity. Such an opening was made some years ago by those who saw the possibility of founding purses for parents upon the murder of their children. This was done upon a larger scale than had been suspected, and upon a plausible pretence. To bury a corpse is costly; but of a hundred children only a few, in the ordinary course of mortality, will die within a given time. Five shillings a-piece will produce £25 annually, and *that* will bury a considerable number. On this principle arose Infant Burial Societies. For a few shillings annually, a parent could secure a funeral for every child. If the child died, a few guineas fell due to the parent, and the funeral was accomplished without cost of *his*. But on this arose the suggestion — Why not execute an insurance of this nature twenty times over? One single insurance pays for the funeral — the other nineteen are so much clear gain, a *lucro ponatur*, for the parents. Yes; but on the supposition that the child died! twenty are no better than one, unless they are gathered into the garner. Now, if the child died

naturally, all was right; but how, if the child did *not* die? Why, clearly this, — the child that *can* die, and won't die, may be made to die. There are many ways of doing that; and it is shocking to know, that, according to recent discoveries, poison is comparatively a very merciful mode of murder. Six years ago a dreadful communication was made to the public by a medical man, viz., that three thousand children were annually burned to death under circumstances showing too clearly that they had been left by their mothers with the means and the temptations to set themselves on fire in her absence. But more shocking, because more lingering, are the deaths by artificial appliances of wet, cold, hunger, bad diet, and disturbed sleep, to the frail constitutions of children. By that machinery it is, and not by poison, that the majority qualify themselves for claiming the funeral allowances. Here, however, there occur to any man, on reflection, two eventual restraints on the extension of this domestic curse: — 1st, as there is no pretext for wanting more than one funeral on account of one child, any insurances beyond one are in themselves a ground of suspicion. Now, if any plan were devised for securing the *publication* of such insurances, the suspicions would travel as fast as the grounds for them. 2dly, it occurs, that eventually the evil checks itself, since a society established on the ordinary rates of mortality would be ruined when a murderous stimulation was applied to that rate too extensively. Still it is certain that, for a season, this atrocity *has* prospered in manufacturing districts for some years, and more recently, as judicial investigations have shown, in one agricultural district of Essex. Now, Mr. W. ——'s scheme

of murder was, in its outline, the very same, but not applied to the narrow purpose of obtaining burials from a public fund. He persuaded, for instance, two beautiful young ladies, visitors in his family, to insure their lives for a short period of two years. This insurance was repeated in several different offices, until a sum of £18,000 had been secured in the event of their deaths within the two years. Mr. W—— took care that they *should* die, and very suddenly, within that period; and then, having previously secured from his victims an assignment to himself of this claim, he endeavored to make this assignment available. But the offices, which had vainly endeavored to extract from the young ladies any satisfactory account of the reasons for this limited insurance, had their suspicions at last strongly roused. One office had recently experienced a case of the same nature, in which also the young lady had been poisoned by the man in whose behalf she had effected the insurance; all the offices declined to pay; actions at law arose; in the course of the investigation which followed, Mr. W.'s character was fully exposed. Finally, in the midst of the embarrassments which ensued, he committed forgery, and was transported.

From this Mr. W——, some few days afterwards, I received an invitation to a dinner party, expressed in terms that were obligingly earnest. He mentioned the names of his principal guests, and amongst them rested most upon those of Lamb and Sir David Wilkie. From an accident I was unable to attend, and greatly regretted it. Sir David one might rarely happen to see, except at a crowded party. But as regarded Lamb, I was sure to see him or to hear of him again

in some way or other within a short time. This opportunity, in fact, offered itself within a month through the kindness of the Lambs themselves. They had heard of my being in solitary lodgings, and insisted on my coming to dine with them, which more than once I did in the winter of 1821–22.

The mere reception by the Lambs was so full of goodness and hospitable feeling, that it kindled animation in the most cheerless or torpid of invalids. I cannot imagine that any *memorabilia* occurred during the visit; but I will use the time that would else be lost upon the settling of that point, in putting down any triviality that occurs to my recollection. Both Lamb and myself had a furious love for nonsense, headlong nonsense. Excepting Professor Wilson, I have known nobody who had the same passion to the same extent. And things of that nature better illustrate the *realities* of Lamb's social life than the gravities, which weighing so sadly on his solitary hours he sought to banish from his moments of relaxation.

There were no strangers; Charles Lamb, his sister, and myself made up the party. Even this was done in kindness. They knew that I should have been oppressed by an effort such as must be made in the society of strangers; and they placed me by their own fireside, where I could say as little or as much as I pleased.

We dined about five o'clock, and it was one of the hospitalities inevitable to the Lambs, that any game which they might receive from rural friends in the course of the week, was reserved for the day of a friend's dining with them.

In regard to wine, Lamb and myself had the same

habit — perhaps it rose to the dignity of a principle — viz., to take a great deal *during* dinner — none *after* it. Consequently, as Miss Lamb (who drank only water) retired almost with the dinner itself, nothing remained for men of our principles, the rigor of which we had illustrated by taking rather too much of old port before the cloth was drawn, except talking; amœbæan colloquy, or, in Dr. Johnson's phrase, a dialogue of 'brisk reciprocation.' But this was impossible; over Lamb, at this period of his life, there passed regularly, after taking wine, a brief eclipse of sleep. It descended upon him as softly as a shadow. In a gross person, laden with superfluous flesh, and sleeping heavily, this would have been disagreeable; but in Lamb, thin even to meagreness, spare and wiry as an Arab of the desert, or as Thomas Aquinas, wasted by scholastic vigils, the affection of sleep seemed rather a network of aërial gossamer than of earthly cobweb — more like a golden haze falling upon him gently from the heavens than a cloud exhaling upwards from the flesh. Motionless in his chair as a bust, breathing so gently as scarcely to seem certainly alive, he presented the image of repose midway between life and death, like the repose of sculpture; and to one who knew his history, a repose affectingly contrasting with the calamities and internal storms of his life. I have heard more persons than I can now distinctly recall, observe of Lamb when sleeping, that his countenance in that state assumed an expression almost seraphic, from its intellectual beauty of outline, its childlike simplicity and its benignity. It could not be called a transfiguration that sleep had worked in his face; for the features wore essentially the same expression when waking; but sleep spiritual-

ized that expression, exalted it, and also harmonized it. Much of the change lay in that last process. The eyes it was that disturbed the unity of effect in Lamb's waking face. They gave a restlessness to the character of his intellect, shifting, like northern lights, through every mode of combination with fantastic playfulness, and sometimes by fiery gleams obliterating for the moment that pure light of benignity which was the predominant reading on his features. Some people have supposed that Lamb had Jewish blood in his veins, which seemed to account for his gleaming eyes. It might be so; but this notion found little confidence in Lamb's own way of treating the gloomy mediæval traditions propagated throughout Europe about the Jews, and their secret enmity to Christian races. Lamb, indeed, might not be more serious than Shakspeare is supposed to have been in his Shylock; yet he spoke at times as from a station of wilful bigotry, and seemed (whether laughingly or not) to sympathize with the barbarous Christian superstitions upon the pretended bloody practices of the Jews, and of the early Jewish physicians. Being himself a Lincoln man, he treated Sir Hugh[4] of Lincoln, the young child that suffered death by secret assassination in the Jewish quarter rather than suppress his daily anthems to the Virgin, as a true historical personage on the rolls of martyrdom: careless that this fable, like that of the apprentice murdered out of jealousy by his master, the architect, had destroyed its own authority by ubiquitous diffusion. All over Europe the same legend of the murdered apprentice and the martyred child reäppears under different names — so that in effect the verification of the tale is none a' all, because it is unanimous; is too narrow,

because it is too impossibly broad. Lamb, however, though it was often hard to say whether he were not secretly laughing, swore to the truth of all these old fables, and treated the liberalities of the present generation on such points as mere fantastic and effeminate affectations, which, no doubt, they often are as regards the sincerity of those who profess them. The bigotry which it pleased his fancy to assume, he used like a sword against the Jew, as the official weapon of the Christian, upon the same principle that a Capulet would have drawn upon a Montague, without conceiving it any duty of *his* to rip up the grounds of so ancient a quarrel; it was a feud handed down to him by his ancestors, and it was *their* business to see that originally it had been an honest feud. I cannot yet believe that Lamb, if seriously aware of any family interconnection with Jewish blood, would, even in jest, have held that one-sided language. More probable it is, that the fiery eye recorded not any alliance with Jewish blood, but that disastrous alliance with insanity which tainted his own life, and laid desolate his sister's.

On awakening from his brief slumber, Lamb sat for some time in profound silence, and then, with the most startling rapidity, sang out — 'Diddle, diddle, dumpkins;' not looking at me, but as if soliloquizing. For five minutes he relapsed into the same deep silence; from which again he started up into the same abrupt utterance of — 'Diddle, diddle, dumpkins.' I could not help laughing aloud at the extreme energy of this sudden communication, contrasted with the deep silence that went before and followed. Lamb smilingly begged to know what I was laughing at, and with a look of as much surprise as if it were I that

had done something unaccountable, and not himself. I told him (as was the truth) that there had suddenly occurred to me the possibility of my being in some future period or other called on to give an account of this very evening before some literary committee. The committee might say to me — (supposing the case that I outlived him) — 'You dined with Mr. Lamb in January, 1822; now, can you remember any remark or memorable observation which that celebrated man made before or after dinner?'

I as *respondent*. 'Oh yes, I can.'

Com. 'What was it?'

Resp. 'Diddle, diddle, dumpkins.'

Com. 'And was this his only observation? Did Mr. Lamb not strengthen this remark by some other of the same nature?'

Resp. 'Yes, he did.'

Com. 'And what was it?'

Resp. 'Diddle, diddle, dumpkins.'

Com. 'What is your secret opinion of Dumpkins? Do you conceive Dumpkins to have been a thing or a person?'

Resp. 'I conceive Dumpkins to have been a person, having the rights of a person.'

Com. 'Capable, for instance, of suing and being sued?'

Resp. 'Yes, capable of both; though I have reason to think there would have been very little use in suing Dumpkins.'

Com. 'How so? Are the committee to understand that you, the respondent, in your own case, have found it a vain speculation, countenanced only by visionary lawyers, to sue Dumpkins?'

Resp. 'No; I never lost a shilling by Dumpkins, the reason for which may be that Dumpkins never owed me a shilling; but from his *prænomen* of "diddle," I apprehend that he was too well acquainted with joint-stock companies!'

Com. 'And your opinion, is, that he may have diddled Mr. Lamb?'

Resp. 'I conceive it to be not unlikely.'

Com. 'And, perhaps, from Mr. Lamb's pathetic reiteration of his name, "Diddle, diddle," you would be disposed to infer that Dumpkins had practised his diddling talents upon Mr. L. more than once?'

Resp. 'I think it probable.'

Lamb laughed and brightened up; tea was announced; Miss Lamb returned. The cloud had passed away from Lamb's spirits, and again he realized the pleasure of evening, which, in *his* apprehension, was so essential to the pleasure of literature.

On the table lay a copy of Wordsworth, in two volumes: it was the edition of Longman, printed about the time of Waterloo. Wordsworth was held in little consideration, I believe, amongst the house of Longman; at any rate, *their* editions of his works were got up in the most slovenly manner. In particular, the table of contents was drawn up like a short-hand bill of parcels. By accident the book lay open at a part of this table, where the sonnet beginning —

'Alas! what boots the long laborious quest' —

had been entered with mercantile speed, as —

'Alas what boots,' ——

'Yes,' said Lamb, reading this entry in a dolorous tone of voice, 'he may well say *that*. I paid Hoby

three guineas for a pair that tore like blotting-paper, when I was leaping a ditch to escape a farmer that pursued me with a pitch-fork for trespassing. But why should W. wear boots in Westmoreland? Pray, advise him to patronize shoes.'

The mercurialities of Lamb were infinite, and always uttered in a spirit of absolute recklessness for the quality or the prosperity of the sally. It seemed to liberate his spirits from some burthen of blackest melancholy which oppressed it, when he had thrown off a jest: he would not stop one instant to improve it; nor did he care the value of a straw whether it were good enough to be remembered, or so mediocre as to extort high moral indignation from a collector who refused to receive into his collection of jests and puns any that were not felicitously good or revoltingly bad.

After tea, Lamb read to me a number of beautiful compositions, which he had himself taken the trouble to copy out into a blank paper folio from unsuccessful authors. Neglected people in every class won the sympathy of Lamb. One of the poems, I remember, was a very beautiful sonnet from a volume recently published by Lord Thurlow — which, and Lamb's just remarks upon it, I could almost repeat *verbatim* at this moment, nearly twenty-seven years later, if your limits would allow me. But these, you tell me, allow of no such thing; at the utmost they allow only twelve lines more. Now all the world knows that the sonnet itself would require fourteen lines; but take fourteen from twelve, and there remains very little, I fear; besides which, I am afraid two of my twelve are already exhausted. This forces me to interrupt my account of

Lamb's reading, by reporting the very accident that *did* interrupt it in fact; since that no less characteristically expressed Lamb's peculiar spirit of kindness, (always quickening itself towards the ill-used or the down-trodden,) than it had previously expressed itself in his choice of obscure readings. Two ladies came in, one of whom at least had sunk in the scale of worldly consideration. They were ladies who would not have found much recreation in literary discussions; elderly, and habitually depressed. On *their* account, Lamb proposed whist, and in that kind effort to amuse *them*, which naturally drew forth some momentary gayeties from himself, but not of a kind to impress themselves on the recollection, the evening terminated."

We have left ourselves no room for a special examination of Lamb's writings, some of which were failures, and some were so memorably beautiful as to be uniques in their class. The character of Lamb it is, and the life-struggle of Lamb, that must fix the attention of many, even amongst those wanting in sensibility to his intellectual merits. This character and this struggle, as we have already observed, impress many traces of themselves upon Lamb's writings. Even in that view, therefore, they have a ministerial value; but separately, for themselves, they have an independent value of the highest order. Upon this point we gladly adopt the eloquent words of Sergeant Talfourd: —

'The sweetness of Lamb's character, breathed through his writings, was felt even by strangers; but its heroic aspect was unguessed even by many of his friends. Let them now consider it, and ask if the annals of self-sacrifice can show anything in human action and endurance more lovely

than its self-devotion exhibits? It was not merely that he saw, through the ensanguined cloud of misfortune which had fallen upon his family, the unstained excellence of his sister, whose madness had caused it: that he was ready to take her to his own home with reverential affection, and cherish her through life; and he gave up, for *her* sake, all meaner and more selfish love, and all the hopes which youth blends with the passion which disturbs and ennobles it; not even that he did all this cheerfully, without pluming himself upon his brotherly nobleness as a virtue, or seeking to repay himself (as some uneasy martyrs do) by small instalments of long repining; but that he carried the spirit of the hour in which he first knew and took his course to his last. So far from thinking that his sacrifice of youth and love to his sister gave him a license to follow his own caprice at the expense of her feelings, even in the lightest matters, he always wrote and spoke of her as his wiser self, his generous benefactress, of whose protecting care he was scarcely worthy.'

It must be remembered, also, which the Sergeant does not overlook, that Lamb's efforts for the becoming support of his sister lasted through a period of forty years. Twelve years before his death, the munificence of the India House, by granting him a liberal retiring allowance, had placed his own support under shelter from accidents of any kind. But this died with himself; and he could not venture to suppose that, in the event of his own death, the India House would grant to his sister the same allowance as by custom is granted to a wife. This they did; but not venturing to calculate upon such nobility of patronage, Lamb had applied himself through life to the saving of a provision for his sister under any accident to himself. And this he did with a persevering prudence, so little known in the literary class, amongst a continued tenor

of generosities, often so princely as to be scarcely known in any class.

Was this man, so memorably good by life-long sacrifice of himself, in any profound sense a Christian? The impression is, that he was *not*. We, from private communications with him, can undertake to say that, according to his knowledge and opportunities for the study of Christianity, he *was*. What has injured Lamb on this point is, that his early opinions (which, however, from the first were united with the deepest piety) are read by the inattentive, as if they had been the opinions of his mature days; secondly, that he had few religious persons amongst his friends, which made him reserved in the expression of his own views; thirdly, that in any case where he altered opinions for the better, the credit of the improvement is assigned to Coleridge. Lamb, for example, beginning life as a Unitarian, in not many years became a Trinitarian. Coleridge passed through the same changes in the same order; and here, at least, Lamb is supposed simply to have obeyed the influence, confessedly great, of Coleridge. This, on our own knowledge of Lamb's views, we pronounce to be an error. And the following extracts from Lamb's letters will show, not only that he was religiously disposed on impulses self-derived, but that, so far from obeying the bias of Coleridge, he ventured, on this one subject, firmly as regarded the matter, though humbly as regarded the manner, affectionately to reprove Coleridge.

In a letter to Coleridge, written in 1797, the year after his first great affliction, he says:

'Coleridge, I have not one truly elevated character among my acquaintance; not one Christian; not one but under-

values Christianity. Singly, what am I to do? Wesley — [have you read his life?] — was he not an elevated character? Wesley has said religion was not a solitary thing. Alas! it is necessarily so with me, or next to solitary. 'Tis true you write to me; but correspondence by letter and personal intimacy are widely different. Do, do write to me; and do some good to my mind — already how much "warped and relaxed" by the world!'

In a letter written about three months previously, he had not scrupled to blame Coleridge at some length for audacities of religious speculation, which seemed to him at war with the simplicities of pure religion. He says:

'Do continue to write to me. I read your letters with my sister, and they give us both abundance of delight. Especially they please us two when you talk in a religious strain. Not but we are offended occasionally with a certain freedom of expression, a certain air of mysticism, more consonant to the conceits of pagan philosophy than consistent with the humility of genuine piety.'

Then, after some instances of what he blames, he says:

'Be not angry with me, Coleridge. I wish not to cavil; I know I cannot instruct you; I only wish to remind you of that humility which best becometh the Christian character. God, in the New Testament, our best guide, is represented to us in the kind, condescending, amiable, familiar light of a parent; and, in my poor mind, 'tis best for us so to consider him as our heavenly Father, and our best friend, without indulging too bold conceptions of his character.'

About a month later, he says:

'Few but laugh at me for reading my Testament. They talk a language I understand not; I conceal sentiments that would be a puzzle to *them*.'

We see by this last quotation *where* it was that Lamb originally sought for consolation. We personally can vouch that, at a maturer period, when he was approaching his fiftieth year, no change had affected his opinions upon that point; and, on the other hand, that no changes had occurred in his needs for consolation, we see, alas! in the records of his life. Whither, indeed, could he fly for comfort, if not to his Bible? And to whom was the Bible an indispensable resource, if not to Lamb? We do not undertake to say, that in his knowledge of Christianity he was everywhere profound or consistent, but he was always earnest in his aspirations after its spiritualities, and had an apprehensive sense of its power.

Charles Lamb is gone; his life was a continued struggle in the service of love the purest, and within a sphere visited by little of contemporary applause. Even his intellectual displays won but a narrow sympathy at any time, and in his earlier period were saluted with positive derision and contumely on the few occasions when they were not oppressed by entire neglect. But slowly all things right themselves. All merit, which is founded in truth, and is strong enough, reaches by sweet exhalations in the end a higher sensory; reaches higher organs of discernment, lodged in a selecter audience. But the original obtuseness or vulgarity of feeling that thwarted Lamb's just estimation in life, will continue to thwart its popular diffusion. There are even some that continue to regard him with the old hostility. And we, therefore, standing by the side of Lamb's grave, seemed to hear, on one side, (but in abated tones,) strains of the ancient malice — 'This man, that thought himself to be some-

body, is dead — is buried — is forgotten!' and, on the other side, seemed to hear ascending, as with the solemnity of an anthem — 'This man, that thought himself to be nobody, is dead — is buried; his life has been searched; and his memory is hallowed for ever!'

NOTES.

Note 1. Page 167.

'*Scriptural*,' we call it, because this element of thought, so indispensable to a profound philosophy of morals, is not simply *more* used in Scripture than elsewhere, but is so exclusively significant or intelligible amidst the correlative ideas of Scripture, as to be absolutely insusceptible of translation into classical Greek or classical Latin. It is disgraceful that more reflection has not been directed to the vast causes and consequences of so pregnant a truth.

Note 2. Page 179.

'*Poor S. T. C.*'—The affecting expression by which Coleridge indicates himself in the few lines written during his last illness for an inscription upon his grave; lines ill constructed in point of diction and compression, but otherwise speaking from the depths of his heart.

Note 3. Page 198.

It is right to remind the reader of this, for a reason applying forcibly to the present moment. Michelet has taxed Englishmen with yielding to national animosities in the case of Joan, having no plea whatever for that insinuation but the single one drawn from Shakspeare's Henry VI. To this the answer is, first, that Shakspeare's share in that trilogy is not nicely ascertained. Secondly, that M. Michelet forgot (or, which is far worse, *not* forgetting it, he dissembled) the fact, that in undertaking a series of dramas upon the basis avowedly of national chronicles, and for the very purpose of profiting by old traditionary recollections connected with ancestral glories, it was mere lunacy to recast the

circumstances at the bidding of antiquarian research, so as entirely to disturb these glories. Besides that, to Shakspeare's age no such spirit of research had blossomed. Writing for the stage, a man would have risked lapidation by uttering a whisper in that direction. And, even if not, what sense could there have been in openly running counter to the very motive that had originally prompted that particular class of chronicle plays? Thirdly, if one Englishman had, in a memorable situation, adopted the popular view of Joan's conduct, (*popular* as much in France as in England;) on the other hand, fifty years before M. Michelet was writing this flagrant injustice, another Englishman (viz., Southey) had, in an epic poem, reversed this misjudgment, and invested the shepherd girl with a glory nowhere else accorded to her, unless indeed by Schiller. Fourthly, we are not entitled to view as an *attack* upon Joanna, what, in the worst construction, is but an unexamining adoption of the contemporary historical accounts. A poet or a dramatist is not responsible for the accuracy of chronicles. But what *is* an attack upon Joan, being briefly the foulest and obscenest attempt ever made to stifle the grandeur of a great human struggle, viz., the French burlesque poem of *La Pucelle* — what memorable man was it that wrote *that*? Was he a Frenchman, or was he not? That M. Michelet should *pretend* to have forgotten this vilest of pasquinades, is more shocking to the general sense of justice than any special untruth as to Shakspeare *can* be to the particular nationality of an Englishman.

NOTE 4. Page 214.

The story which furnishes a basis to the fine ballad in Percy's Reliques, and to the Canterbury Tale of Chaucer's Lady Abbess.

GOETHE.

JOHN WOLFGANG VON GOETHE, a man of commanding influence in the literature of modern Germany throughout the latter half of his long life, and possessing two separate claims upon our notice; one in right of his own unquestionable talents; and another much stronger, though less direct, arising out of his position, and the extravagant partisanship put forward on his behalf for the last forty years. The literary body in all countries, and for reasons which rest upon a sounder basis than that of private jealousies, have always been disposed to a republican simplicity in all that regards the assumption of rank and personal pretensions. *Valeat quantum valere potest*, is the form of license to every man's ambition, coupled with its caution. Let his influence and authority be commensurate with his attested value; and because no man in the present infirmity of human speculation, and the present multiformity of human power can hope for more than a very limited superiority, there is an end at once to all *absolute* dictatorship. The dictatorship in any case could be only *relative*, and in relation to a single department of art or knowledge; and this for a reason stronger even than that already noticed, viz., the vast extent of the field on which the intellect is now summoned to employ itself. That objection, as it applies only to the *degree* of the difficulty, might be met by a corresponding de-

gree of mental energy; such a thing may be supposed, at least. But another difficulty there is of a profounder character which cannot be so easily parried. Those who have reflected at all upon the fine arts, know that power of one kind is often inconsistent, positively incompatible with power of another kind. For example, the *dramatic* mind is incompatible with the *epic*. And though we should consent to suppose that some intellect might arise endowed upon a scale of such angelic comprehensiveness, as to vibrate equally and indifferently towards either pole, still it is next to impossible, in the exercise and culture of the two powers, but some bias must arise which would give that advantage to the one over the other which the right arm has over the left. But the supposition, the very case put, is baseless, and countenanced by no precedent. Yet, under this previous difficulty, and with regard to a literature convulsed, if any ever was, by an almost total anarchy, it is a fact notorious to all who take an interest in Germany and its concerns, that Goethe did in one way or other, through the length and breadth of that vast country, establish a supremacy of influence wholly unexampled; a supremacy indeed perilous in a less honorable man, to those whom he might chance to hate, and with regard to himself thus far unfortunate, that it conferred upon every work proceeding from his pen a sort of papal indulgence, an immunity from criticism, or even from the appeals of good sense, such as it is not wholesome that any man should enjoy. Yet we repeat that German literature was and is in a condition of total anarchy. With this solitary exception, no name, even in the most narrow section of knowledge or of power, has ever been able in that country to

challenge unconditional reverence; whereas, with us and in France, name the science, name the art, and we will name the dominant professor; a difference which partly arises out of the fact that England and France are governed in their opinions by two or three capital cities, whilst Germany looks for its leadership to as many cities as there are *residenzen* and universities. For instance, the little territory with which Goethe was connected presented no less than two such public lights; Wiemar, the *residenz* or privileged abode of the Grand Duke, and Jena, the university founded by that house. Partly, however, this difference may be due to the greater restlessness, and to the greater energy as respects mere speculation, of the German mind. But no matter whence arising, or how interpreted, the fact is what we have described; absolute confusion, the 'anarch old' of Milton, is the one deity whose sceptre is there paramount; and yet *there* it was, in that very realm of chaos, that Goethe built his throne. That he must have looked with trepidation and perplexity upon his wild empire and its 'dark foundations,' may be supposed. The tenure was uncertain to *him* as regarded its duration; to us it is equally uncertain, and in fact mysterious, as regards its origin. Meantime the mere fact, contrasted with the general tendencies of the German literary world, is sufficient to justify a notice, somewhat circumstantial, of the man in whose favor, whether naturally by force of genius, or by accident concurring with intrigue, so unexampled a result was effected.

Goethe was born at noonday on the 28th of August, 1749, in his father's house at Frankfort-on-the-Maine. The circumstances of his birth were thus far remark-

able, that, unless Goethe's vanity deceived him, they led to a happy revolution hitherto retarded by female delicacy falsely directed. From some error of the midwife who attended his mother, the infant Goethe appeared to be still-born. Sons there were as yet none from this marriage; everybody was therefore interested in the child's life; and the panic which arose in consequence, having survived its immediate occasion, was improved into a public resolution, (for which no doubt society stood ready at that moment,) to found some course of public instruction from this time forward for those who undertook professionally the critical duties of accoucheur.

We have noticed the house in which Goethe was born, as well as the city. Both were remarkable, and fitted to leave lasting impressions upon a young person of sensibility. As to the city, its antiquity is not merely venerable, but almost mysterious; towers were at that time to be found in the mouldering lines of its earliest defences, which belonged to the age of Charlemagne, or one still earlier; battlements adapted to a mode of warfare anterior even to that of feudalism or romance. The customs, usages, and local privileges of Frankfort, and the rural districts adjacent, were of a corresponding character. Festivals were annually celebrated at a short distance from the walls, which had descended from a dateless antiquity. Everything which met the eye spoke the language of elder ages; whilst the river on which the place was seated, its great fair, which still held the rank of the greatest in Christendom, and its connection with the throne of Cæsar and his inauguration, by giving to Frankfort an interest and a public character in the eyes of all Germany,

had the effect of countersigning, as it were, by state authority, the importance which she otherwise challenged to her ancestral distinctions. Fit house for such a city, and in due keeping with the general scenery, was that of Goethe's father. It had in fact been composed out of two contiguous houses; that accident had made it spacious and rambling in its plan; whilst a further irregularity had grown out of the original difference in point of level between the corresponding stories of the two houses, making it necessary to connect the rooms of the same *suite* by short flights of steps. Some of these features were no doubt removed by the recast of the house under the name of 'repairs,' (to evade a city by-law,) afterwards executed by his father; but such was the house of Goethe's infancy, and in all other circumstances of style and furnishing equally antique.

The spirit of society in Frankfort, without a court, a university, or a learned body of any extent, or a resident nobility in its neighborhood, could not be expected to display any very high standard of polish. Yet, on the other hand, as an independent city, governed by its own separate laws and tribunals, (that privilege of *autonomy* so dearly valued by ancient Greece,) and possessing besides a resident corps of jurisprudents and of agents in various ranks for managing the interests of the German emperor and other princes, Frankfort had the means within herself of giving a liberal tone to the pursuits of her superior citizens, and of co-operating in no inconsiderable degree with the general movement of the times, political or intellectual. The memoirs of Goethe himself, and in particular the picture there given of his own family, as well as other

contemporary glimpses of German domestic society in those days, are sufficient to show that much knowledge, much true cultivation of mind, much sound refinement of taste, were then distributed through the middle classes of German society; meaning by that very indeterminate expression those classes which for Frankfort composed the aristocracy, viz., all who had daily leisure, and regular funds for employing it to advantage. It is not necessary to add, because that is a fact applicable to all stages of society, that Frankfort presented many and various specimens of original talent, moving upon all directions of human speculation.

Yet, with this general allowance made for the capacities of the place, it is too evident that, for the most part, they lay inert and undeveloped. In many respects Frankfort resembled an English cathedral city, according to the standard of such places seventy years ago, not, that is to say, like Carlisle in this day, where a considerable manufacture exists, but like Chester as it is yet. The chapter of a cathedral, the resident ecclesiastics attached to the duties of so large an establishment, men always well educated, and generally having families, compose the original *nucleus*, around which soon gathers all that part of the local gentry who, for any purpose, whether of education for their children, or of social enjoyment for themselves, seek the advantages of a town. Hither resort all the timid old ladies who wish for conversation, or other forms of social amusement; hither resort the valetudinarians, male or female, by way of commanding superior medical advice at a cost not absolutely ruinous to themselves; and multitudes besides, with narrow incomes, to whom these quiet retreats are so many cities of refuge.

Such, in one view, they really are; and yet in another they have a vicious constitution. Cathedral cities in England, imperial cities without manufactures in Germany, are all in an improgressive condition. The amount of superior families oscillates rather than changes; that is, it fluctuates within fixed limits; and, for all inferior families, being composed either of shopkeepers or of menial servants, they are determined by the number, or, which, on a large average, is the same, by the pecuniary power, of their employers. Hence it arises, that room is made for one man, in whatever line of dependence, only by the death of another; and the constant increments of the population are carried off into other cities. Not less is the difference of such cities as regards the standard of manners. How striking is the soft and urbane tone of the lower orders in a cathedral city, or in a watering-place dependent upon ladies, contrasted with the bold, often insolent demeanor of a self-dependent artisan or mutinous mechanic of Manchester and Glasgow.

Children, however, are interested in the state of society around them, chiefly as it affects their parents. Those of Goethe were respectable, and perhaps tolerably representative of the general condition in their own rank. An English authoress of great talent, in her *Characteristics of Goethe*, has too much countenanced the notion that he owed his intellectual advantages exclusively to his mother. Of this there is no proof. His mother wins more esteem from the reader of this day, because she was a cheerful woman of serene temper, brought into advantageous comparison with a husband much older than herself, whom circumstances had rendered moody, fitful, sometimes capricious, and

confessedly obstinate in that degree which Pope has taught us to think connected with inveterate error:

'Stiff in opinion, always in the wrong,'

unhappily presents an association too often actually occurring in nature, to leave much chance for error in presuming either quality from the other. And, in fact, Goethe's father was so uniformly obstinate in pressing his own views upon all who belonged to him, whenever he did come forward in an attitude of activity, that his family had much reason to be thankful for the rarity of such displays. Fortunately for them, his indolence neutralized his obstinacy. And the worst shape in which his troublesome temper showed itself, was in what concerned the religious reading of the family. Once begun, the worst book as well as the best, the longest no less than the shortest, was to be steadfastly read through to the last word of the last volume; no excess of yawning availed to obtain a reprieve, not, adds his son, though he were himself the leader of the yawners. As an illustration he mentions Bowyer's *History of the Popes;* which awful series of records, the catacombs, as it were, in the palace of history, were actually traversed from one end to the other of the endless *suite* by the unfortunate house of Goethe. Allowing, however, for the father's unamiableness in this one point, upon all intellectual ground both parents seem to have met very much upon a level. Two illustrations may suffice, one of which occurred during the infancy of Goethe. The science of education was at that time making its first rude motions towards an ampler development; and, amongst other reforms then floating in the general mind, was one for eradicating the child-

ish fear of ghosts, &c. The young Goethes, as it happened, slept not in separate beds only, but in separate rooms; and not unfrequently the poor children, under the stinging terrors of their lonely situation, stole away from their 'forms,' to speak in the hunter's phrase, and sought to rejoin each other. But in these attempts they were liable to surprises from the enemy; papa and mamma were both on the alert, and often intercepted the young deserter by a cross march or an ambuscade; in which cases each had a separate policy for enforcing obedience. The father, upon his general system of 'perseverance,' compelled the fugitive back to his quarters, and, in effect, exhorted him to persist in being frightened out of his wits. To his wife's gentle heart that course appeared cruel, and she reclaimed the delinquent by bribes; the peaches which her garden walls produced being the fund from which she chiefly drew her supplies for this branch of the secret service. What were her winter bribes, when the long nights would seem to lie heaviest on the exchequer, is not said. Speaking seriously, no man of sense can suppose that a course of suffering from terrors the most awful, under whatever influence supported, whether under the naked force of compulsion, or of *that* connected with bribes, could have any final effect in mitigating the passion of awe, connected, by our very dreams, with the shadowy and the invisible, or in tranquillizing the infantine imagination.

A second illustration involves a great moral event in the history of Goethe, as it was, in fact, the first occasion of his receiving impressions at war with his religious creed. Piety is so beautiful an ornament of the youthful mind, doubt or distrust so unnatural a

growth from confiding innocence, that an infant free-thinker is heard of not so much with disgust as with perplexity. A sense of the ludicrous is apt to intermingle; and we lose our natural horror of the result in wonder at its origin. Yet in this instance there is no room for doubt; the fact and the occasion are both on record; there can be no question about the date; and, finally, the accuser is no other than the accused. Goethe's own pen it is which proclaims, that already, in the early part of his seventh year, his reliance upon God as a moral governor had suffered a violent shock, was shaken, if not undermined. On the 1st of November, 1755, occurred the great earthquake at Lisbon. Upon a double account, this event occupied the thoughts of all Europe for an unusual term of time; both as an expression upon a larger scale than usual of the mysterious physical agency concerned in earthquakes, and also for the awful human tragedy* which attended either the earthquake itself, or its immediate sequel in the sudden irruption of the Tagus. Sixty thousand persons, victims to the dark power in its first or its second *avatar*, attested the Titanic scale upon which it worked. Here it was that the shallow piety of the Germans found a stumbling-block. Those who have read any circumstantial history of the physical

* Of this no picture can ever hope to rival that hasty one sketched in the letter of the chaplain to the Lisbon factory. The plague of Athens as painted by Thucydides or Lucretius, nay even the fabulous plague of London by De Foe, contain no scenes or situations equal in effect to some in this plain historic statement. Nay, it would perhaps be difficult to produce a passage from Ezekiel, from Æschylus, or from Shakspeare, which would so profoundly startle the sense of sublimity as one or two of his incidents.

signs which preceded this earthquake, are aware that in England and Northern Germany many singular phenomena were observed, more or less manifestly connected with the same dark agency which terminated at Lisbon, and running before this final catastrophe at times so accurately varying with the distances, as to furnish something like a scale for measuring the velocity with which it moved. These German phenomena, circulated rapidly over all Germany by the journals of every class, had seemed to give to the Germans a nearer and more domestic interest in the great event, than belonged to them merely in their universal character of humanity. It is also well known to observers of national characteristics, that amongst the Germans the household charities, the *pieties of the hearth*, as they may be called, exist, if not really in greater strength, yet with much less of the usual balances or restraints. A German father, for example, is like the grandfather of other nations; and thus a piety, which in its own nature scarcely seems liable to excess, takes, in its external aspect, too often an air of effeminate imbecility. These two considerations are necessary to explain the intensity with which this Lisbon tragedy laid hold of the German mind, and chiefly under the one single aspect of its *undistinguishing* fury. Women, children, old men — these, doubtless, had been largely involved in the perishing sixty thousand; and that reflection, it would seem from Goethe's account, had so far embittered the sympathy of the Germans with their distant Portuguese brethren, that, in the Frankfort discussions, sullen murmurs had gradually ripened into bold impeachments of Providence. There can be no gloomier form of infidelity

than that which questions the moral attributes of the Great Being, in whose hands are the final destinies of us all. Such, however, was the form of Goethe's earliest scepticism, such its origin; caught up from the very echoes which rang through the streets of Frankfort when the subject occupied all men's minds. And such, for anything that appears, continued to be its form thenceforwards to the close of his life, if speculations so crude could be said to have any form at all. Many are the analogies, some close ones, between England and Germany with regard to the circle of changes they have run through, political or social, for a century back. The challenges are frequent to a comparison; and sometimes the result would be to the advantage of Germany, more often to ours. But in religious philosophy, which in reality is the true *popular* philosophy, how vast is the superiority on the side of this country. Not a shopkeeper or mechanic, we may venture to say, but would have felt this obvious truth, that surely the Lisbon earthquake yielded no fresh lesson, no peculiar moral, beyond what belonged to every man's experience in every age. A passage in the New Testament about the fall of the tower of Siloam, and the just construction of that event, had already anticipated the difficulty, if such it could be thought. Not to mention, that calamities upon the same scale in the earliest age of Christianity, the fall of the amphitheatre at Fidenæ, or the destruction of Pompeii, had presented the same problem as the Lisbon earthquake. Nay, it is presented daily in the humblest individual case, where wrong is triumphant over right, or innocence confounded with guilt in one common disaster. And that the parents of Goethe

should have authorized his error, if only by their silence, argues a degree of ignorance in them, which could not have co-existed with much superior knowledge in the public mind.

Goethe, in his Memoirs, (Book vi.,) commends his father for the zeal with which he superintended the education of his children. But apparently it was a zeal without knowledge. Many things were taught imperfectly, but all casually, and as chance suggested them. Italian was studied a little, because the elder Goethe had made an Italian tour, and had collected some Italian books, and engravings by Italian masters. Hebrew was studied a little, because Goethe the son had a fancy for it, partly with a view to theology, and partly because there was a Jewish quarter, gloomy and sequestrated, in the city of Frankfort. French offered itself no doubt on many suggestions, but originally on occasion of a French theatre, supported by the staff of the French army when quartered in the same city. Latin was gathered in a random way from a daily sense of its necessity. English upon the temptation of a stranger's advertisement, promising upon moderate terms to teach that language in four weeks; a proof, by the way, that the system of bold innovations in the art of tuition had already commenced. Riding and fencing were also attempted under masters apparently not very highly qualified, and in the same desultory style of application. Dancing was taught to his family, strange as it may seem, by Mr. Goethe himself. There is good reason to believe that not one of all these accomplishments was possessed by Goethe, when ready to visit the university, in a degree which made it practically of any use to him. Drawing and

music were pursued confessedly as amusements; and it would be difficult to mention any attainment whatsoever which Goethe had carried to a point of excellence in the years which he spent under his father's care, unless it were his mastery over the common artifices of metre and the common topics of rhetoric, which fitted him for writing what are called occasional poems and *impromptus*. This talent he possessed in a remarkable degree, and at an early age; but he owed its cultivation entirely to himself.

In a city so orderly as Frankfort, and in a station privileged from all the common hardships of poverty, it can hardly be expected that many incidents should arise, of much separate importance in themselves, to break the monotony of life; and the mind of Goethe was not contemplative enough to create a value for common occurrences through any peculiar impressions which he had derived from them. In the years 1763 and 1764, when he must have been from fourteen to fifteen years old, Goethe witnessed the inauguration and coronation of a king of the Romans, a solemn spectacle connected by prescription with the city of Frankfort. He describes it circumstantially, but with very little feeling, in his Memoirs. Probably the prevailing sentiment, on looking back at least to this transitory splendor of dress, processions, and ceremonial forms, was one of cynical contempt. But this he could not express, as a person closely connected with a German court, and without giving much and various offence. It is with some timidity even that he hazards a criticism upon single parts of the costume adopted by some of the actors in that gorgeous scene. White silk stockings, and pumps of the common form, he

objects to as out of harmony with the antique and heraldic aspects of the general costume, and ventures to suggest either boots or sandals as an improvement. Had Goethe felt himself at liberty from all restraints of private consideration in composing these memoirs, can it be doubted that he would have taken his retrospect of this Frankfort inauguration from a different station; from the station of that stern revolution which, within his own time and partly under his own eyes, had shattered the whole imperial system of thrones, in whose equipage this gay pageant made so principal a figure, had humbled Cæsar himself to the dust, and left him an emperor without an empire? We at least, for our parts, could not read without some emotion one little incident of these gorgeous scenes recorded by Goethe, namely, that when the emperor, on rejoining his wife for a few moments, held up to her notice his own hands and arms arrayed in the antique habiliments of Charlemagne, Maria Theresa — she whose children were summoned to so sad a share in the coming changes — gave way to sudden bursts of loud laughter, audible to the whole populace below her. That laugh, on surveying the departing pomps of Charlemagne, must, in any contemplative ear, have rung with a sound of deep significance, and with something of the same effect which belongs to a figure of death introduced by a painter, as mixing in the festal dances of a bridal assembly.

These pageants of 1763–64 occupy a considerable space in Goethe's Memoirs, and with some *logical* propriety at least, in consideration of their being exclusively attached to Frankfort, and connected by

manifold links of person and office with the privileged character of the city. Perhaps he might feel a sort of narrow local patriotism in recalling these scenes to public notice by description, at a time when they had been irretrievably extinguished as realities. But, after making every allowance for their local value to a Frankfort family, and for their memorable splendor, we may venture to suppose that by far the most impressive remembrances which had gathered about the boyhood of Goethe, were those which pointed to Frederick of Prussia. This singular man, so imbecile as a pretender to philosophy and new lights, so truly heroic under misfortunes, was the first German who created a German interest, and gave a transient unity to the German name, under all its multiplied divisions. Were it only for this conquest of difficulties so peculiar, he would deserve his German designation of Fred. the Unique (*Fritz der einzige*). He had been partially tried and known previously; but it was the Seven Years' War which made him the popular idol. This began in 1756; and to Frankfort, in a very peculiar way, that war brought dissensions and heart-burnings in its train. The imperial connections of the city with many public and private interests, pledged it to the anti-Prussian cause. It happened also that the truly German character of the reigning imperial family, the domestic habits of the empress and her young daughters, and other circumstances, were of a nature to endear the ties of policy; self-interest and affection pointed in the same direction. And yet were all these considerations allowed to melt away before the brilliant qualities of one man, and the romantic enthusiasm kindled by his victories. Frank-

fort was divided within herself; the young and the generous were all dedicated to Frederick. A smaller party, more cautious and prudent, were, for the imperialists. Families were divided upon this question against families, and often against themselves; feuds, begun in private, issued often into public violence; and, according to Goethe's own illustration, the streets were vexed by daily brawls as hot and as personal as of old between the Capulets and Montagues.

These dissensions, however, were pursued with not much personal risk to any of the Goethes, until a French army passed the Rhine as allies of the imperialists. One corps of this force took up their quarters in Frankfort; and the Compte Thorane, who held a high appointment on the staff, settled himself for a long period of time in the spacious mansion of Goethe's father. This officer, whom his place made responsible for the discipline of the army in relation to the citizens, was naturally by temper disposed to moderation and forbearance. He was indeed a favorable specimen of French military officers under the old system; well bred, not arrogant, well informed, and a friend of the fine arts. For painting, in particular, he professed great regard and some knowledge. The Goethes were able to forward his views amongst German artists; whilst, on the other hand, they were pleased to have thus an opportunity of directing his patronage towards some of their own needy connections. In this exchange of good offices, the two parties were for some time able to maintain a fair appearance of reciprocal good-will. This on the comte's side, if not particularly warm, was probably sincere; but in Goethe the father it was a masque for inveterate dislike. A

natural ground of this existed in the original relations between them. Under whatever disguise or pretext, the Frenchman was in fact a military intruder. He occupied the best suite of rooms in the house, used the furniture as his own; and, though upon private motives he abstained from doing all the injury which his situation authorized, (so as in particular to have spread his fine military maps upon the floor, rather than disfigure the decorated walls by nails,) still he claimed credit, if not services of requital, for all such instances of forbearance. Here were grievances enough; but, in addition to those, the comte's official appointments drew upon him a weight of daily business which kept the house in a continual uproar. Farewell to the quiet of a literary amateur, and the orderliness of a German household. Finally, the comte was a Frenchman. These were too many assaults upon one man's patience. It will be readily understood, therefore, how it happened, that, whilst Goethe's gentle minded mother, with her flock of children, continued to be on the best terms with Comte Thorane, the master of the house kept moodily aloof, and retreated from all intercourse.

Goethe, in his own Memoir, enters into large details upon this subject; and from him we shall borrow the *denouement* of the tale. A crisis had for some time been lowering over the French affairs in Frankfort; things seemed ripening for a battle; and at last it came. Flight, siege, bombardment, possibly a storm, all danced before the eyes of the terrified citizens. Fortunately, however, the battle took place at the distance of four or five miles from Frankfort. Monsieur le Comte was absent, of course, on the field of battle.

His unwilling host thought that on such an occasion he also might go out in quality of spectator; and with this purpose he connected another, worthy of a Parson Adams. It is his son who tells the story, whose filial duty was not proof against his sense of the ludicrous. The old gentleman's hatred of the French had by this time brought him over to his son's admiration of the Prussian hero. Not doubting for an instant that victory would follow that standard, he resolved on this day to offer in person his congratulations to the Prussian army, whom he already viewed as his liberator from a domestic nuisance. So purposing, he made his way cautiously to the suburbs; from the suburbs, still listening at each advance, he went forward to the country; totally forgetting, as his son insists, that, however completely beaten, the French army must still occupy some situation or other between himself and his German deliverer. Coming, however, at length to a heath, he found some of those marauders usually to be met with in the rear of armies, prowling about, and at intervals amusing themselves with shooting at a mark. For want of a better, it seemed not improbable that a large German head might answer their purpose. Certain signs admonished him of this, and the old gentleman crept back to Frankfort. Not many hours after came back also the comte, by no means creeping, however; on the contrary, crowing with all his might for a victory which he averred himself to have won. There had in fact been an affair, but on no very great scale, and with no distinguishing results. Some prisoners, however, he brought, together with some wounded; and naturally he expected all well disposed persons to make their compliments of congratulations upon this

triumph. Of this duty poor Mrs. Goethe and her children cheerfully acquitted themselves that same night; and Monsieur le Comte was so well pleased with the sound opinions of the little Goethes, that he sent them in return a collection of sweetmeats and fruits. All promised to go well; intentions, after all, are not acts; and there certainly is not, nor ever was, any treason in taking a morning's walk. But, as ill luck would have it, just as Mr. Goethe was passing the comte's door, out came the comte in person, purely by accident, as we are told; but we suspect that the surly old German, either under his morning hopes or his evening disappointments, had talked with more frankness than prudence. 'Good evening to you, Herr Goethe,' said the comte; 'you are come, I see, to pay your tribute of congratulation. Somewhat of the latest, to be sure; but no matter.' 'By no means,' replied the German: 'by no means; *mit nichten*. Heartily I wished, the whole day long, that you and your cursed gang might all go to the devil together.' Here was plain speaking, at least. The Comte Thorane could no longer complain of dissimulation. His first movement was to order an arrest; and the official interpreter of the French army took to himself the whole credit that he did not carry it into effect. Goethe takes the trouble to report a dialogue, of length and dulness absolutely incredible, between this interpreter and the comte. No such dialogue, we may be assured, ever took place. Goethe may, however, be right in supposing that, amongst a foreign soldiery, irritated by the pointed contrasts between the Frankfort treatment of their own wounded, and of their prisoners, who happened to be in the same circumstances, and

under a military council not held to any rigorous responsibility, his father might have found no very favorable consideration of his case. It is well, therefore, that after some struggle the comte's better nature triumphed. He suffered Mrs. Goethe's merits to outweigh her husband's delinquency; countermanded the order for arrest, and, during the remainder of their connection, kept at such a distance from his moody host as was equally desirable for both. Fortunately that remainder was not very long. Comte Thorane was soon displaced; and the whole army was soon afterwards withdrawn from Frankfort.

In his fifteenth year Goethe was entangled in some connection with young people of inferior rank, amongst whom was Margaret, a young girl about two years older than himself, and the object of his first love. The whole affair, as told by Goethe, is somewhat mysterious. What might be the final views of the elder parties it is difficult to say; but Goethe assures us that they used his services only in writing an occasional epithalamium, the pecuniary acknowledgment for which was spent jovially in a general banquet. The magistrates, however, interfered, and endeavored to extort a confession from Goethe. He, as the son of a respectable family, was to be pardoned; the others to be punished. No confession, however, could be extorted; and for his own part he declares that, beyond the offence of forming a clandestine connection, he had nothing to confess. The affair terminated, as regarded himself, in a severe illness. Of the others we hear no more.

The next event of importance in Goethe's life was his removal to college. His own wishes pointed to

Göttingen, but his father preferred Leipsic. Thither accordingly he went, but he carried his obedience no farther. Declining the study of jurisprudence, he attached himself to general literature. Subsequently he removed to the university of Strasburg; but in neither place could it be said that he pursued any regular course of study. His health suffered at times during this period of his life; at first, from an affection of the chest, caused by an accident on his first journey to Leipsic; the carriage had stuck fast in the muddy roads, and Goethe exerted himself too much in assisting to extricate the wheels. A second illness connected with the digestive organs brought him into considerable danger.

After his return to Frankfort, Goethe commenced his career as an author. In 1773, and the following year, he made his maiden essay in *Goetz of Berlichingen*, a drama, (the translation of which, remarkably enough, was destined to be the literary *coup d'essai* of Sir Walter Scott,) and in the far-famed *Werther*. The first of these was pirated; and in consequence the author found some difficulty in paying for the paper of the genuine edition, which part of the expense, by his contract with the publisher, fell upon himself. The general and early popularity of the second work is well known. Yet, except in so far as it might spread his name abroad, it cannot be supposed to have had much influence in attracting that potent patronage which now began to determine the course of his future life. So much we collect from the account which Goethe himself has left us of this affair in its earliest stages.

I was sitting alone in my room,' says he, 'at my father's house in Frankfort, when a gentleman entered,

whom at first I took for Frederick Jacobi, but soon discovered by the dubious light to be a stranger. He had a military air; and announcing himself by the name of Von Knebel, gave me to understand in a short explanation, that being in the Prussian service, he had connected himself, during a long residence at Berlin and Potsdam, with the literati of those places; but that at present he held the appointment from the court of Weimar of travelling tutor to the Prince Constantine. This I heard with pleasure; for many of our friends had brought us the most interesting accounts from Weimar, in particular that the Duchess Amelia, mother of the young grand duke and his brother, summoned to her assistance in educating her sons the most distinguished men in Germany; and that the university of Jena coöperated powerfully in all her liberal plans. I was aware also that Wieland was in high favor; and that the German Mercury (a literary journal of eminence) was itself highly creditable to the city of Jena, from which it issued. A beautiful and well-conducted theatre had besides, as I knew, been lately established at Weimar. This, it was true, had been destroyed; but that event, under common circumstances so likely to be fatal as respected the present, had served only to call forth the general expression of confidence in the young prince as a restorer and upholder of all great interests, and true to his purposes under any calamity.' Thinking thus, and thus prepossessed in favor of Weimar, it was natural that Goethe should be eager to see the prince. Nothing was easier. It happened that he and his brother Constantine were at this moment in Frankfort, and Von Knebel willingly offered to present Goethe. No sooner said than done; they repaired to

the hotel, where they found the illustrious travellers, with Count Goertz, the tutor of the elder.

Upon this occasion an accident, rather than any previous reputation of Goethe, was probably the determining occasion which led to his favor with the future sovereign of Weimar. A new book lay upon the table; that none of the strangers had read it, Goethe inferred from observing that the leaves were as yet uncut. It was a work of Moser, (*Patriotische Phantasien;*) and, being political rather than literary in its topics, it presented to Goethe, previously acquainted with its outline, an opportunity for conversing with the prince upon subjects nearest to his heart, and of showing that he was not himself a mere studious recluse. The opportunity was not lost; the prince and his tutor were much interested, and perhaps a little surprised. Such subjects have the further advantage, according to Goethe's own illustration, that, like the Arabian thousand and one nights, as conducted by Sultana Scheherezade, 'never ending, still beginning,' they rarely come to any absolute close, but so interweave one into another, as still to leave behind a large arrear of interest. In order to pursue the conversation, Goethe was invited to meet them soon after at Mentz. He kept the appointment punctually; made himself even more agreeable; and finally received a formal invitation to enter the service of this excellent prince, who was now beginning to collect around him all those persons who have since made Weimar so distinguished a name in connection with the German literature. With some opposition from his father, who held up the rupture between Voltaire and Frederick of Prussia as a precedent applying to all possible connections of princes and literati,

Goethe accepted the invitation; and henceforwards, for upwards of fifty-five years, his fortunes were bound up with the ducal house of Weimar.

The noble part which that house played in the great modern drama of German politics is well known, and would have been better known had its power been greater. But the moral value of its sacrifices and its risk is not the less. Had greater potentates shown equal firmness, Germany would not have been laid at the feet of Napoleon. In 1806, the Grand Duke was aware of the peril which awaited the allies of Prussia; but neither his heart nor his conscience would allow of his deserting a friend in whose army he held a principal command. The decisive battle took place in his own territory, and not far from his own palace and city of Weimar. Personally he was with the Prussian army; but his excellent consort stayed in the palace to encourage her subjects, and as far as possible to conciliate the enemy by her presence. The fortune of that great day, the 14th of October, 1806, was decided early; and the awful event was announced by a hot retreat and a murderous pursuit through the streets of the town. In the evening Napoleon arrived in person; and now came the trying moment. 'The duchess,' says an Englishman well acquainted with Weimar and its court, 'placed herself on the top of the staircase to greet him with the formality of a courtly reception. Napoleon started when he beheld her: *Qui êtes vous?* he exclaimed with characteristic abruptness. *Je suis la Duchesse de Weimar. Je vous plains*, he retorted fiercely, *J'écraserai votre mari;* he then added, 'I shall dine in my apartment,' and rushed by her. The night was spent on the part of the soldiery in all the

horrid excesses of rapine. In the morning the duchess sent to inquire concerning the health of his majesty the emperor, and to solicit an audience. He, who had now benefited by his dreams, or by his reflections, returned a gracious answer, and invited himself to breakfast with her in her apartment.' In the conversation which ensued, Napoleon asked her if her husband were mad; upon which she justified the duke by appealing to his own magnanimity, asking in her turn if his majesty would have approved of his deserting the king of Prussia at the moment when he was attacked by so potent a monarch as himself. The rest of the conversation was in the same spirit, uniting with a sufficient concession to the circumstances of the moment a dignified vindication of a high-minded policy. Napoleon was deeply impressed with respect for her, and loudly expressed it. For her sake, indeed, he even affected to pardon her husband, thus making a merit with her of the necessity which he felt, from other motives, for showing forbearance towards a family so nearly allied to that of St. Petersburg. In 1813 the Grand Duke was found at his post in that great gathering of the nations which took place on the stupendous fields of Leipsic, and was complimented by the allied sovereigns as one of the most faithful amongst the faithful to the great cause, yet undecided, of national independence.

With respect to Goethe, as a councillor so near the duke's person, it may be supposed that his presence was never wanting where it promised to be useful. In the earlier campaigns of the duke, Goethe was his companion; but in the final contest with Napoleon he was unequal to the fatigues of such a post. In all the functions of peace, however, he continued to be a useful

servant to the last, though long released from all official duties. Each had indeed most honorably earned the gratitude of the other. Goethe had surrendered the flower of his years and the best energies of his mind to the service of his serene master. On the other hand, that master had to him been at once his Augustus and his Mæcenas; such is his own expression. Under him he had founded a family, raised an estate, obtained titles and decorations from various courts; and in the very vigor of his life he had been allowed to retire, with all the honors of long service, to the sanctuary of his own study, and to the cultivation of his leisure, as the very highest mode in which he could further the public interest.

The life of Goethe was so quiet and so uniform after the year 1775, when he may first be said to have entered into active life, by taking service with the Duke of Weimar, that a biographer will find hardly any event to notice, except two journeys to Italy, and one campaign in 1792, until he draws near the close of his long career. It cannot interest an English reader to see the dates of his successive appointments. It is enough to know that they soon raised him to as high a station as was consistent with literary leisure; and that he had from the beginning enjoyed the unlimited confidence of his sovereign. Nothing remained, in fact, for the subject to desire which the prince had not previously volunteered. In 1825 they were able to look back upon a course of uninterrupted friendship, maintained through good and evil fortunes, unexampled in their agitation and interest for fifty years. The duke commemorated this remarkable event by a jubilee, and by a medal in honor of Goethe. Full of years and honor, this emi-

nent man might now begin to think of his departure. However, his serenity continued unbroken nearly for two years more, when his illustrious patron died. That shock was the first which put his fortitude to trial. In 1830 others followed; the duchess who had won so much admiration from Napoleon died; then followed his own son; and there remained little now to connect his wishes with the earth. The family of his patron he had lived to see flourishing in his descendants to the fourth generation. His own grandchildren were prosperous and happy. His intellectual labors were now accomplished. All that remained to wish for was a gentle dismission. This he found in the spring of 1832. After a six days' illness, which caused him no apparent suffering, on the morning of the 22d of March he breathed away as if into a gentle sleep, surrounded by his daughter-in-law and her children. Never was a death more in harmony with the life it closed; both had the same character of deep and absolute serenity.

Such is the outline of Goethe's life, traced through its principal events. But as the events, after all, borrow their interest mainly from the consideration allowed to Goethe as an author, and as a model in the German literature, — *that* being the centre about which all secondary feelings of interest in the man must finally revolve, — it thus becomes a duty to throw a glance over his principal works. Dismissing his songs, to which has been ascribed by some critics a very high value for their variety and their lyrical enthusiasm; dismissing also a large volume of short miscellaneous poems; suited to the occasional circumstances in which they arose; we may throw the capital works of Goethe into two classes, philosophic novels and dramas. The

novels, which we call *philosophic* by way of expressing their main characteristic in being written to serve a preconceived purpose, or to embody some peculiar views of life, or some aspects of philosophic truth, are three, viz., the *Werther's Leiden;* secondly, the *Wilhelm Meister;* and, lastly, the *Wahloer-wandschaften.* The first two exist in English translations; and though the *Werther* had the disadvantage of coming to us through a French version, already, perhaps, somewhat colored and distorted to meet the Parisian standards of sentiment, yet, as respects Goethe and his reputation amongst us, this wrong has been redressed, or compensated at least, by the good fortune of his *Wilhelm Meister*, in falling into the hands of a translator whose original genius qualified him for sympathizing even to excess with any real merits in that work. This novel is in its own nature and purpose sufficiently obscure; and the commentaries which have been written upon it by the Humboldts, Schlegels, &c., make the enigma still more enigmatical. We shall not venture abroad upon an ocean of discussion so truly dark, and at the same time so illimitable. Whether it be qualified to excite any deep and *sincere* feeling of one kind or another in the German mind, — in a mind trained under German discipline, — this we will consent to waive as a question not immediately interesting to ourselves. Enough that it has not gained, and will not gain, any attention in this country; and this not only because it is thoroughly deficient in all points of attraction to readers formed upon our English literature, but because in some capital circumstances it is absolutely repulsive. We do not wish to offend the admirers of Goethe; but the simplicity of truth will not

allow us to conceal, that in various points of description or illustration, and sometimes in the very outline of the story, the *Wilhelm Meister* is at open war, not with decorum and good taste merely, but with moral purity and the dignity of human nature. As a novelist, Goethe and his reputation are problems, and likely to continue such, to the countrymen of Mrs. Inchbald, Miss Harriet Lee, Miss Edgeworth, and Sir Walter Scott. To the dramatic works of Goethe we are disposed to pay more homage; but neither in the absolute amount of our homage at all professing to approach his public admirers, nor to distribute the proportions of this homage amongst his several performances according to the graduations of *their* scale. The *Iphigenie* is built upon the old subject of Iphigenia in Tauris, as treated by Euripides and other Grecian dramatists; and, if we are to believe a Schlegel, it is in beauty and effect a mere echo or reverberation from the finest strains of the old Grecian music. That it is somewhat nearer to the Greek model than a play after the fashion of Racine, we grant. Setting aside such faithful transcripts from the antique as the Samson Agonistes, we might consent to view Goethe as that one amongst the moderns who had made the closest approximation to the Greek stage. *Proximus*, we might say, with Quintilian, but with him we must add, '*sed longo intervallo;*' and if in the second rank, yet nearer to the third than to the first. Two other dramas, the *Clavigo* and the *Egmont*, fall below the *Iphigenie* by the very character of their pretensions; the first as too openly renouncing the grandeurs of the ideal; the second as confessedly violating the historic truth of character, without temptation to do so, and

without any consequent indemnification. The *Tasso* has been supposed to realize an Italian beauty of genial warmth and of sunny repose; but from the common defect of German criticism — the absence of all sufficient illustrations — it is as difficult to understand the true nature and constituents of the supposed Italian standard set up for the regulation of our judgments, as it is to measure the degree of approach made to that standard in this particular work. *Eugenie* is celebrated for the artificial burnish of the style, but otherwise has been little relished. It has the beauty of marble sculpture, say the critics of Goethe, but also the coldness. We are not often disposed to quarrel with these critics as *below* the truth in their praises; in this instance we are. The *Eugenie* is a fragment, or (as Goethe himself called it in conversation) a *torso*, being only the first drama in a trilogy or series of three dramas, each having a separate plot, whilst all are parts of a more general and comprehensive plan. It may be charged with languor in the movement of the action, and with excess of illustration. Thus, *e. g.* the grief of the prince for the supposed death of his daughter, is the monotonous topic which occupies one entire act. But the situations, though not those of *scenical* distress, are so far from being unexciting, that, on the contrary, they are too powerfully afflicting.

The lustre of all these performances, however, is eclipsed by the unrivalled celebrity amongst German critics of the *Faust*. Upon this it is better to say nothing than too little. How trifling an advance has been made towards clearing the ground for any sane criticism, may be understood from this fact, that as yet no two people have agreed about the meaning of

any separate scene, or about the drift of the whole. Neither is this explained by saying, that until lately the *Faust* was a fragment; for no additional light has dawned upon the main question since the publication of the latter part.

One work there is of Goethe's which falls into neither of the classes here noticed; we mean the *Hermann and Dorothea*, a narrative poem, in hexameter verse. This appears to have given more pleasure to readers not critical, than any other work of its author; and it is remarkable that it traverses humbler ground, as respects both it subject, its characters, and its scenery. From this, and other indications of the same kind, we are disposed to infer that Goethe mistook his destination; that his aspiring nature misled him; and that his success would have been greater had he confined himself to the *real* in domestic life, without raising his eyes to the *ideal*.

We must also mention, that Goethe threw out some novel speculations in physical science, and particularly in physiology, in the doctrine of colors, and in comparative anatomy, which have divided the opinions of critics even more than any of those questions which have arisen upon points more directly connected with his avowed character of poet.

It now remains to say a few words by way of summing up his pretensions as a man, and his intellectual power in the age to which he belonged. His rank and value as a moral being are so plain as to be legible to him who runs. Everybody must feel that his temperament and constitutional tendency was of that happy quality, the animal so nicely balanced with the intellectual, that with any ordinary measure of propriety

he could not be otherwise than a good man, He speaks himself of his own 'virtue,' *sans phrase;* and we tax him with no vanity in doing so. As a young man even at the universities, which at that time were barbarously sensual in Germany, he was (or so much we collect from his own Memoirs) eminently capable of self-restraint. He preserves a tone of gravity, of sincerity, of respect for female dignity, which we never find associated with the levity and recklessness of vice. We feel throughout, the presence of one who, in respecting others, respects himself; and the cheerfulness of the presiding tone persuades us at once that the narrator is in a healthy moral condition, fears no ill, and is conscious of having meditated none. Yet at the same time we cannot disguise from ourselves, that the moral temperament of Goethe was one which demanded prosperity. Had he been called to face great afflictions, singular temptations, or a billowy and agitated course of life, our belief is that his nature would have been found unequal to the strife; he would have repeated the mixed and moody character of his father. Sunny prosperity was essential to his nature; his virtues were adapted to that condition. And happily that was his fate. He had no personal misfortunes; his path was joyous in this life; and even the reflex sorrow from the calamities of his friends did not press too heavily on his sympathies; none of these were in excess either as to degree or duration.

In this estimate of Goethe as a moral being, few people will differ with us, unless it were the religious bigot. And to him we must concede thus much, that Goethe was not that religious creature which by nature he was intended to become. This is to be regretted.

Goethe was naturally pious and reverential towards higher natures; and it was in the mere levity or wantonness of youthful power, partly also through that early false bias growing out of the Lisbon earthquake, that he falsified his original destination. Do we mean, then, that a childish error could permanently master his understanding? Not so; *that* would have been corrected with his growing strength. But having once arisen, it must for a long time have moulded his feelings; *until* corrected, it must have impressed a corresponding false bias upon his practical way of viewing things; and that sort of false bias, once established, might long survive a mere error of the understanding. One thing is undeniable, — Goethe had so far corrupted and clouded his natural mind, that he did not look up to God, or the system of things beyond the grave, with the interest of reverence and awe, but with the interest of curiosity.

Goethe, however, in a moral estimate, will be viewed pretty uniformly. But Goethe intellectually, Goethe as a power acting upon the age in which he lived, that is another question. Let us put a case; suppose that Goethe's death had occurred fifty years ago, that is, in the year 1785, what would have been the general impression? Would Europe have felt a shock? Would Europe have been sensible even of the event? Not at all; it would have been obscurely noticed in the newspapers of Germany, as the death of a novelist who had produced some effect about ten years before. In 1832, it was announced by the post-horns of all Europe as the death of him who had written the *Wilhelm Meister*, the *Iphigenie*, and the *Faust*, and who had been enthroned by some of his admirers on the same seat

with Homer and Shakspeare, as composing what they termed the *trinity of men of genius*. And yet it is a fact, that, in the opinion of some amongst the acknowledged leaders of our own literature for the last twenty-five years, the *Werther* was superior to all which followed it, and for mere power was the paramount work of Goethe. For ourselves, we must acknowledge our assent upon the whole to this verdict; and at the same time we will avow our belief that the reputation of Goethe must decline for the next generation or two, until it reaches its just level. Three causes, we are persuaded, have concurred to push it so far beyond the proportion of real and genuine interest attached to his works, for in Germany his works are little read, and in this country not at all. *First*, his extraordinary age; for the last twenty years Goethe had been the patriarch of the German literature. *Secondly*, the splendor of his official rank at the court of Weimar; he was the minister and private friend of the patriot sovereign amongst the princes of Germany. *Thirdly*, the quantity of enigmatical and unintelligible writing which he has designedly thrown into his latter works, by way of keeping up a system of discussion and strife upon his own meaning amongst the critics of his country. These disputes, had his meaning been of any value in his own eyes, he would naturally have settled by a few authoritative words from himself; but it was his policy to keep alive the feud in a case where it was of importance that his name should continue to agitate the world, but of none at all that he should be rightly interpreted.

SCHILLER.

JOHN CHRISTOPHER FREDERICK VON SCHILLER was born at Marbach, a small town in the duchy of Würtemberg, on the 10th day of November, 1759. It will aid the reader in synchronizing the periods of this great man's life with the corresponding events throughout Christendom, if we direct his attention to the fact, that Schiller's birth nearly coincided in point of time with that of Robert Burns, and that it preceded that of Napoleon by about ten years.

The position of Schiller is remarkable. In the land of his birth, by those who undervalue him the most, he is ranked as the second name in German literature; everywhere else he is ranked as the first. For us, who are aliens to Germany, Schiller is the representative of the German intellect in its highest form; and to him, at all events, whether first or second, it is certainly due, that the German intellect has become a known power, and a power of growing magnitude, for the great commonwealth of Christendom. Luther and Kepler, potent intellects as they were, did not make themselves known as Germans. The revolutionary vigor of the one, the starry lustre of the other, blended with the convulsions of reformation, or with the aurora of ascending science, in too kindly and genial a tone to

call off the attention from the work which they performed, from the service which they promoted, to the circumstances of their personal position. Their country, their birth, their abode, even their separate existence, was merged in the mighty cause to which they lent their coöperation. And thus at the beginning of the sixteenth century, thus at the beginning of the seventeenth, did the Titan sons of Germany defeat their own private pretensions by the very grandeur of their merits. Their interest as patriots was lost and confounded in their paramount interest as cosmopolites. What they did for man and for human dignity eclipsed what they had designed for Germany. After them there was a long interlunar period of darkness for the land of the Rhine and the Danube. The German energy, too spasmodically excited, suffered a collapse. Throughout the whole of the seventeenth century, but one vigorous mind arose for permanent effects in literature. This was Optiz, a poet who deserves even yet to be read with attention, but who is no more worthy to be classed as the Dryden, whom his too partial countrymen have styled him, than the Germany of the Thirty Years' War of taking rank by the side of civilized and cultured England during the Cromwellian era, or Klopstock of sitting on the same throne with Milton. Leibnitz was the one sole potentate in the fields of intellect whom the Germany of this century produced; and he, like Luther and Kepler, impresses us rather as a European than as a German mind, partly perhaps from his having pursued his self-development in foreign lands, partly from his large circle of foreign connections, but most or all from his having written chiefly in French or in Latin.

Passing onwards to the eighteenth century, we find, through its earlier half, an absolute wilderness, unreclaimed and without promise of natural vegetation, as the barren arena on which the few insipid writers of Germany paraded. The torpor of academic dulness domineered over the length and breadth of the land. And as these academic bodies were universally found harnessed in the equipage of petty courts, it followed that the lethargies of pedantic dulness were uniformly deepened by the lethargies of aulic and ceremonial dulness; so that, if the reader represents to himself the very abstract of birthday odes, sycophantish dedications, and court sermons, he will have some adequate idea of the sterility and the mechanical formality which at that era spread the sleep of death over German literature. Literature, the very word literature, points the laughter of scorn to what passed under that name during the period of Gottsched. That such a man indeed as this Gottsched, equal at the best to the composition of a Latin grammar or a school arithmetic, should for a moment have presided over the German muses, stands out as in itself a brief and significant memorial, too certain for contradiction, and yet almost too gross for belief, of the apoplectic sleep under which the mind of central Europe at that era lay oppressed. The rust of disuse had corroded the very principles of activity. And, as if the double night of academic dulness, combined with the dulness of court inanities, had not been sufficient for the stifling of all native energies, the feebleness of French models (and of these moreover naturalized through still feebler imitations) had become the law and standard for all attempts at original composition. The darkness of

night, it is usually said, grows deeper as it approaches the dawn; and the very enormity of that prostration under which the German intellect at this time groaned, was the most certain pledge to any observing eye of that intense re-action soon to stir and kindle among the smouldering activities of this spell-bound people. This re-action, however, was not abrupt and theatrical. It moved through slow stages and by equable gradations. It might be said to commence from the middle of the eighteenth century, that is, about nine years before the birth of Schiller; but a progress of forty years had not carried it so towards its meridian altitude, as that the sympathetic shock from the French Revolution was by one fraction more rude and shattering than the public torpor still demanded. There is a memorable correspondency throughout all members of Protestant Christendom in whatsoever relates to literature and intellectual advance. However imperfect the organization which binds them together, it was sufficient even in these elder times to transmit reciprocally from one to every other, so much of that illumination which could be gathered into books, that no Christian state could be much in advance of another, supposing that Popery opposed no barriers to free communication, unless only in those points which depended upon local gifts of nature, upon the genius of a particular people, or upon the excellence of its institutions. These advantages were incommunicable, let the freedom of intercourse have been what it might. England could not send off by posts or by heralds her iron and coals; she could not send the indomitable energy of her population; she could not send the absolute security of property; she could not send the good faith

of her parliaments. These were gifts indigenous to herself, either through the temperament of her people, or through the original endowments of her soil. But her condition of moral sentiment, her high-toned civic elevation, her atmosphere of political feeling and popular boldness, much of these she could and did transmit, by the radiation of the press, to the very extremities of the German empire. Not only were our books translated, but it is notorious to those acquainted with German novels, or other pictures of German society, that as early as the Seven Years' War, (1756–1763,) in fact from the very era when Cave and Dr. Johnson first made the parliamentary debates accessible to the English themselves, most of the German journals repeated, and sent forward as by telegraph, those senatorial displays to every village throughout Germany. From the polar latitudes to the Mediterranean, from the mouths of the Rhine to the Euxine, there was no other exhibition of free deliberative eloquence in any popular assembly. And the *Luise* of Voss alone, a metrical idyl not less valued for its truth of portraiture than our own Vicar of Wakefield, will show, that the most sequestered clergyman of a rural parish did not think his breakfast equipage complete without the latest report from the great senate that sat in London. Hence we need not be astonished that German and English literature were found by the French Revolution in pretty nearly the same condition of semi-vigilance and imperfect animation. That mighty event reached us both, reached us all, we may say, (speaking of Protestant states,) at the same moment, by the same tremendous galvanism. The snake, the intellectual snake, that lay in ambush

among all nations, roused itself, sloughed itself, renewed its youth, in all of them at the same period. A new world opened upon us all; new revolutions of thought arose; new and nobler activities were born; 'and other palms were won.'

But by and through Schiller it was, as its main organ, that this great revolutionary impulse expressed itself. Already, as we have said, not less than forty years before the earthquake by which France exploded and projected the scoria of her huge crater over all Christian lands, a stirring had commenced among the dry bones of intellectual Germany; and symptoms arose that the breath of life would soon disturb, by nobler agitations than by petty personal quarrels, the deathlike repose even of the German universities. Precisely in those bodies, however, it was, in those as connected with tyrannical governments, each academic body being shackled to its own petty centre of local despotism, that the old spells remained unlinked; and to them, equally remarkable as firm trustees of truth, and as obstinate depositories of darkness or of superannuated prejudice, we must ascribe the slowness of the German movement on the path of re-ascent. Meantime the earliest torch-bearer to the murky literature of this great land, this crystallization of political states, was Bodmer. This man had no demoniac genius, such as the service required; but he had some taste, and, what was better, he had some sensibility. He lived among the Alps; and his reading lay among the alpine sublimities of Milton and Shakspeare. Through his very eyes he imbibed a daily scorn of Gottsched and his monstrous compound of German coarseness, with French sensual levity. He could not look at his

native Alps, but he saw in them, and their austere grandeurs or their dread realities, a spiritual reproach to the hollowness and falsehood of that dull imposture, which Gottsched offered by way of substitute for nature. He was taught by the Alps to crave for something nobler and deeper. Bodmer, though far below such a function, rose by favor of circumstances into an apostle or missionary of truth for Germany. He translated passages of English literature. He inoculated with his own sympathies the more fervent mind of the youthful Klopstock, who visited him in Switzerland. And it soon became evident, that Germany was not dead, but sleeping; and once again, legibly for any eye, the pulses of life began to play freely through the vast organization of central Europe.

Klopstock, however, though a fervid, a religious, and, for that reason, an anti-Gallican mind, was himself an abortion. Such, at least, is our own opinion of this poet. He was the child and creature of enthusiasm, but of enthusiasm not allied with a masculine intellect, or any organ for that capacious vision, and meditative range, which his subjects demanded. He was essentially thoughtless, betrays everywhere a most effeminate quality of sensibility, and is the sport of that pseudo-enthusiasm, and baseless rapture, which we see so often allied with the excitement of strong liquors. In taste, or the sense of proportions and congruencies, or the harmonious adaptations, he is perhaps the most defective writer extant.

But if no patriarch of German literature, in the sense of having shaped the moulds in which it was to flow, in the sense of having disciplined its taste, or excited its rivalship, by classical models of excellence, or raised a

finished standard of style, perhaps we must concede that, on a minor scale, Klopstock did something of that service in every one of these departments. His works were at least Miltonic in their choice of subjects, if ludicrously non-Miltonic in their treatment of those subjects. And whether due to him or not, it is undeniable that in his time the mother-tongue of Germany revived from the most absolute degradation on record, to its ancient purity. In the time of Gottsched, the authors of Germany wrote a macaronic jargon, in which French and Latin made up a considerable proportion of every sentence: nay, it happened often that foreign words were inflected with German forms; and the whole result was such as to remind the reader of the medical examination in the *Malade Imaginaire* of Molière:

'Quid poetea est à faire?
Saignare
Baignare
Ensuita purgare,' &c.

Now, is it not reasonable to ascribe some share in the restoration of good to Klopstock, both because his own writings exhibit nothing of this most abject euphuism, (a euphuism expressing itself not in fantastic refinements on the staple of the language, but altogether in rejecting it for foreign words and idioms,) and because he wrote expressly on the subject of style and composition?

Wieland, meantime, if not enjoying so intense an acceptation as Klopstock, had a more extensive one; and it is in vain to deny him the praise of a festive, brilliant, and most versatile wit. The Schlegels showed the haughty malignity of their ungenerous natures, in

depreciating Wieland, at a time when old age had laid a freezing hand upon the energy which he would once have put forth in defending himself. He was the Voltaire of Germany, and very much more than the Voltaire; for his romantic and legendary poems are above the level of Voltaire. But, on the other hand, he was a Voltaire in sensual impurity. To work, to carry on a plot, to affect his readers by voluptuous impressions, — these were the unworthy aims of Wieland; and though a good-natured critic would not refuse to make some allowance for a youthful poet's aberrations in this respect, yet the indulgence cannot extend itself to mature years. An old man corrupting his readers, attempting to corrupt them, or relying for his effect upon corruptions already effected, in the purity of their affections, is a hideous object; and that must be a precarious influence indeed which depends for its durability upon the licentiousness of men. Wieland, therefore, except in parts, will not last as a national idol; but such he was nevertheless for a time.

Bürger wrote too little of any expansive compass to give the measure of his powers, or to found national impression; Lichtenberg, though a very gracious observer, never rose into what can be called a *power*, he did not modify his age; yet these were both men of extraordinary talent, and Bürger a man of undoubted genius. On the other hand, Lessing was merely a man of talent, but of talent in the highest degree adapted to popularity. His very defects, and the shallowness of his philosophy, promoted his popularity; and by comparison with the French critics on the dramatic or scenical proprieties he is ever profound. His plummet, if not suited to the soundless depths of

Shakspeare, was able ten times over to fathom the little rivulets of Parisian philosophy. This he did effectually, and thus unconsciously levelled the path for Shakspeare, and for that supreme dominion which he has since held over the German stage, by crushing with his sarcastic shrewdness the pretensions of all who stood in the way. At that time, and even yet, the functions of a literary man were very important in Germany; the popular mind and the popular instinct pointed one way, those of the little courts another. Multitudes of little German states (many of which were absorbed since 1816 by the process of *mediatizing*) made it their ambition to play at keeping mimic armies in their pay, and to ape the greater military sovereigns, by encouraging French literature only, and the French language at their courts. It was this latter propensity which had generated the anomalous macaronic dialect, of which we have already spoken as a characteristic circumstance in the social features of literary Germany during the first half of the eighteenth century. Nowhere else, within the records of human follies do we find a corresponding case, in which the government and the patrician orders in the state, taking for granted, and absolutely postulating the utter worthlessness for intellectual aims of those in and by whom they maintained their own grandeur and independence, undisguisedly and even professedly sought to ally themselves with a foreign literature, foreign literati, and a foreign language. In this unexampled display of scorn for native resources, and the consequent collision between the two principles of action, all depended upon the people themselves. For a time the wicked and most profligate contempt of the local governments for that

native merit which it was their duty to evoke and to cherish, naturally enough produced its own justification. Like Jews or slaves, whom all the world have agreed to hold contemptible, the German literati found it hard to make head against so obstinate a prejudgment; and too often they became all that they were presumed to be. *Sint Mœcenates, non deerunt, Flacce, Marones.* And the converse too often holds good — that when all who should have smiled scowl upon a man, he turns out the abject thing they have predicted. Where Frenchified Fredericks sit upon German thrones, it should not surprise us to see a crop of Gottscheds arise as the best fruitage of the land. But when there is any latent nobility in the popular mind, such scorn, by its very extremity, will call forth its own counteraction. It was perhaps good for Germany that a prince so eminent in one aspect as *Fritz der einziger*,* should put on record so emphatically his intense conviction, that no good thing could arise out of Germany. This creed was expressed by the quality of the French minds which he attracted to his court. The very refuse and dregs of the Parisian coteries satisfied his hunger for French garbage: the very offal of their shambles met the demand of his palate; even a Maupertuis, so long as he could produce a French baptismal certificate, was good enough to manufacture into the president of a Berlin academy. Such scorn challenged a re-action; the contest lay between the thrones of Germany and the popular intellect, and the final result was inevitable.

* '*Freddy the unique*;' which is the name by which the Prussians expressed their admiration of the martial and indomitable, though somewhat fantastic, king.'

Once aware that they were insulted, once enlightened to the full consciousness of the scorn which trampled on them as intellectual and predestined Heliots, even the mild-tempered Germans became fierce, and now began to aspire, not merely under the ordinary instincts of personal ambition, but with a vindictive feeling, and as conscious agents of retribution. It became a pleasure with the German author, that the very same works which elevated himself, wreaked his nation upon their princes, and poured retorted scorn upon their most ungenerous and unparental sovereigns. Already, in the reign of the martial Frederick, the men who put most weight of authority into his contempt of Germans, — Euler, the matchless Euler, Lambert, and Immanuel Kant, — had vindicated the preëminence of German mathematics. Already, in 1755, had the same Immanuel Kant, whilst yet a probationer for the chair of logic in a Prussian university, sketched the outline of that philosophy which has secured the admiration, though not the assent, of all men known and proved to have understood it, of all men able to state its doctrines in terms admissible by its disciples. Already, and even previously, had Haller, who wrote in German, placed himself at the head of the current physiology. And in the fields of science or of philosophy, the victory was already decided for the German intellect in competition with the French.

But the fields of literature were still comparatively barren. Klopstock was at least an anomaly; Lessing did not present himself in the impassioned walks of literature; Herder was viewed too much in the exclusive and professional light of a clergyman; and, with the exception of John Paul Richter, a man of

most original genius, but quite unfitted for general popularity, no commanding mind arose in Germany with powers for levying homage from foreign nations, until the appearance, as a great scenical poet, of Frederick Schiller.

The father of this great poet was Caspar Schiller, an officer in the military service of the Duke of Würtemberg. He had previously served as a surgeon in the Bavarian army; but on his final return to his native country of Würtemberg, and to the service of his native prince, he laid aside his medical character for ever, and obtained a commission as ensign and adjutant. In 1763, the Peace of Paris threw him out of his military employment, with the nominal rank of captain. But, having conciliated the duke's favor, he was still borne on the books of the ducal establishment; and, as a planner of ornamental gardens, or in some other civil capacity, he continued to serve his serene highness for the rest of his life.

The parents of Schiller were both pious, upright persons, with that loyal fidelity to duty, and that humble simplicity of demeanor towards their superiors, which is so often found among the unpretending natives of Germany. It is probable, however, that Schiller owed to his mother exclusively the preternatural endowments of his intellect. She was of humble origin, the daughter of a baker, and not so fortunate as to have received much education. But she was apparently rich in gifts of the heart and the understanding. She read poetry with delight; and through the profound filial love with which she had inspired her son, she found it easy to communicate her own literary tastes. Her husband was not illiterate, and

had in mature life so laudably applied himself to the improvement of his own defective knowledge, that at length he thought himself capable of appearing before the public as an author. His book related simply to the subjects of his professional experience as a horticulturist, and was entitled *Die Baumzucht, im Grossen* (On the management of Forests). Some merit we must suppose it to have had, since the public called for a second edition of it long after his own death, and even after that of his illustrious son. And although he was a plain man, of no pretensions, and possibly even of slow faculties, he has left behind him a prayer, in which there is one petition of sublime and pathetic piety, worthy to be remembered by the side of Agar's wise prayer against almost the equal temptations of poverty and riches. At the birth of his son, he had been reflecting with sorrowful anxiety, not unmingled with self-reproach, on his own many disqualifications for conducting the education of the child. But at length, reading in his own manifold imperfections but so many reiterations of the necessity that he should rely upon God's bounty, converting his very defects into so many arguments of hope and confidence in Heaven, he prayed thus: 'Oh God, that knowest my poverty in good gifts for my son's inheritance, graciously permit that, even as the want of bread became to thy son's hunger-stricken flock in the wilderness the pledge of overflowing abundance, so likewise my darkness may, in its sad extremity, carry with it the measure of thy unfathomable light; and because I, thy worm, cannot give to my son the least of blessings, do thou give the greatest; because in my hands there is not any thing, do thou from thine pour out all things;

and that temple of a new-born spirit, which I cannot adorn even with earthly ornaments of dust and ashes, do thou irradiate with the celestial adornment of thy presence, and finally with that peace that passeth all understanding.'

Reared at the feet of parents so pious and affectionate, Schiller would doubtless pass a happy childhood; and probably to this utter tranquillity of his earlier years, to his seclusion from all that could create pain, or even anxiety, we must ascribe the unusual dearth of anecdotes from this period of his life; a dearth which has tempted some of his biographers into improving and embellishing some puerile stories, which a man of sense will inevitably reject as too trivial for his gravity or too fantastical for his faith. That nation is happy, according to a common adage, which furnishes little business to the historian; for such a vacuity in facts argues a condition of perfect peace and silent prosperity. That childhood is happy, or may generally be presumed such, which has furnished few records of external experience, little that has appeared in doing or in suffering to the eyes of companions; for the child who has been made happy by early thoughtfulness, and by infantine struggles with the great ideas of his origin and his destination, (ideas which settle with a deep, dove-like brooding upon the mind of childhood, more than of mature life, vexed with inroads from the noisy world,) will not manifest the workings of his spirit by much of external activity. The *fallentis semita vitæ*, that path of noiseless life, which eludes and deceives the conscious notice both of its subject and of all around him, opens equally to the man and to the child; and the happiest of all child-

hoods will have been that of which the happiness has survived and expressed itself, not in distinct records, but in deep affection, in abiding love, and the hauntings of meditative power.

Such a childhood, in the bosom of maternal tenderness, was probably passed by Schiller; and his first awaking to the world of strife and perplexity happened in his fourteenth year. Up to that period his life had been vagrant, agreeably to the shifting necessities of the ducal service, and his education desultory and domestic. But in the year 1773 he was solemnly entered as a member of a new academical institution, founded by the reigning duke, and recently translated to his little capital of Stutgard. This change took place at the special request of the duke, who, under the mask of patronage, took upon himself the severe control of the whole simple family. The parents were probably both too humble and dutiful in spirit towards one whom they regarded in the double light of sovereign lord and of personal benefactor, ever to murmur at the ducal behests, far less to resist them. The duke was for them an earthly providence; and they resigned themselves, together with their child, to the disposal of him who dispensed their earthly blessings, not less meekly than of Him whose vicegerent they presumed him to be. In such a frame of mind, requests are but another name for commands; and thus it happened that a second change arose upon the first, even more determinately fatal to the young Schiller's happiness. Hitherto he had cherished a day-dream pointing to the pastoral office in some rural district, as that which would harmonize best with his intellectual purposes, with his love of quiet, and by means of its preparatory require-

ments, best also with his own peculiar choice of studies. But this scheme he now felt himself compelled to sacrifice; and the two evils which fell upon him concurrently in his new situation, were, first, the formal military discipline and monotonous routine of duty; secondly, the uncongenial direction of the studies, which were shaped entirely to the attainment of legal knowledge, and the narrow service of the local tribunals. So illiberal and so exclusive a system of education was revolting to the expansive mind of Schiller; and the military bondage under which this system was enforced, shocked the aspiring nobility of his moral nature, not less than the technical narrowness of the studies shocked his understanding. In point of expense, the whole establishment cost nothing at all to those parents who were privileged servants of the duke; in this number were the parents of Schiller, and that single consideration weighed too powerfully upon his filial piety to allow of his openly murmuring at his lot; while on *their* part the parents were equally shy of encouraging a disgust which too obviously tended to defeat the promises of ducal favor. This system of monotonous confinement was therefore carried to its completion, and the murmurs of the young Schiller were either dutifully suppressed, or found vent only in secret letters to a friend. In one point only Schiller was able to improve his condition; jointly with the juristic department, was another for training young aspirants to the medical profession. To this, as promising a more enlarged scheme of study, Schiller by permission transferred himself in 1775. But whatever relief he might find in the nature of his new

studies, he found none at all in the system of personal discipline which prevailed.

Under the oppression of this detested system, and by pure re-action against its wearing persecutions, we learn from Schiller himself, that in his nineteenth year he undertook the earliest of his surviving plays, the Robbers, beyond doubt the most tempestuous, the most volcanic, we might say, of all juvenile creations anywhere recorded. He himself calls it 'a monster,' and a monster it is; but a monster which has never failed to convulse the heart of young readers with the temperament of intellectual enthusiasm and sensibility. True it is, and nobody was more aware of that fact than Schiller himself in after years, the characters of the three Moors, father and sons, are mere impossibilities; and some readers, in whom the judicious acquaintance with human life in its realities has outrun the sensibilities, are so much shocked by these hypernatural phenomena, that they are incapable of enjoying the terrific sublimities which on that basis of the visionary do really exist. A poet, perhaps Schiller might have alleged, is entitled to assume hypothetically so much in the previous positions or circumstances of his agents as is requisite to the basis from which he starts. It is undeniable that Shakspeare and others have availed themselves of this principle, and with memorable success. Shakspeare, for instance, *postulates* his witches, his Caliban, his Ariel: grant, he virtually says, such modes of spiritual existence or of spiritual relations as a possibility: do not expect me to demonstrate this, and upon that single concession I will rear a superstructure that shall be self-consistent; every-

thing shall be *internally* coherent and reconciled, whatever be its *external* relations as to our human experience. But this species of assumption, on the largest scale, is more within the limits of credibility and plausible verisimilitude when applied to modes of existence, which, after all, are in such total darkness to us, (the limits of the possible being so undefined and shadowy as to what can or cannot exist,) than the very slightest liberties taken with human character, or with those principles of action, motives, and feelings, upon which men would move under given circumstances, or with the modes of action which in common prudence they would be likely to adopt. The truth is, that, as a coherent work of art, the Robbers is indefensible; but, however monstrous it may be pronounced, it possesses a power to agitate and convulse, which will always obliterate its great faults to the young, and to all whose judgment is not too much developed. And the best apology for Schiller is found in his own words, in recording the circumstances and causes under which this anomalous production arose. 'To escape,' says he, 'from the formalities of a discipline which was odious to my heart, I sought a retreat in the world of ideas and shadowy possibilities, while as yet I knew nothing at all of that human world from which I was harshly secluded by iron bars. Of men, the actual men in this world below, I knew absolutely nothing at the time when I composed my Robbers. Four hundred human beings, it is true, were my fellow-prisoners in this abode; but they were mere tautologies and reiterations of the self-same mechanic creature, and like so many plaster-casts

from the same original statue. Thus situated, of necessity I failed. In making the attempt, my chisel brought out a monster, of which [and that was fortunate] the world had no type or resemblance to show.'

Meantime this demoniac drama produced very opposite results to Schiller's reputation. Among the young men of Germany it was received with an enthusiasm absolutely unparalleled, though it is perfectly untrue that it excited some persons of rank and splendid expectations (as a current fable asserted) to imitate Charles Moor in becoming robbers. On the other hand, the play was of too powerful a cast not in any case to have alarmed his serenity the Duke of Würtemberg; for it argued a most revolutionary mind, and the utmost audacity of self-will. But besides this general ground of censure, there arose a special one, in a quarter so remote, that this one fact may serve to evidence the extent as well as intensity of the impression made. The territory of the Grisons had been called by Spiegelberg, one of the robbers, 'The Thief's Athens.' Upon this the magistrates of that country presented a complaint to the duke; and his highness having cited Schiller to his presence, and severely reprimanded him, issued a decree that this dangerous young student should henceforth confine himself to his medical studies.

The persecution which followed exhibits such extraordinary exertions of despotism, even for that land of irresponsible power, that we must presume the duke to have relied more upon the hold which he had upon Schiller through his affection for parents so absolutely dependent on his highness's power, than upon any

laws, good or bad, which he could have pleaded as his warrant. Germany, however, thought otherwise of the new tragedy than the serene critic of Würtemberg: it was performed with vast applause at the neighboring city of Mannheim; and thither, under a most excusable interest in his own play, the young poet clandestinely went. On his return he was placed under arrest. And soon afterwards, being now thoroughly disgusted, and, with some reason, alarmed by the tyranny of the duke, Schiller finally eloped to Mannheim, availing himself of the confusion created in Stutgard by the visit of a foreign prince.

At Mannheim he lived in the house of Dalberg, a man of some rank and of sounding titles, but in Mannheim known chiefly as the literary manager (or what is called director) of the theatre. This connection aided in determining the subsequent direction of Schiller's talents; and his Fiesco, his Intrigue and Love, his Don Carlos, and his Maria Stuart, followed within a short period of years. None of these are so far free from the faults of the Robbers as to merit a separate notice; for with less power, they are almost equally licentious. Finally, however, he brought out his Wallenstein, an immortal drama, and, beyond all competition, the nearest in point of excellence to the dramas of Shakspeare. The position of the characters of Max Piccolomini and the Princess Thekla is the finest instance of what, in a critical sense, is called *relief*, that literature offers. Young, innocent, unfortunate, among a camp of ambitious, guilty, and blood-stained men, they offer a depth and solemnity of impression which is equally required by way of contrast and of final repose.