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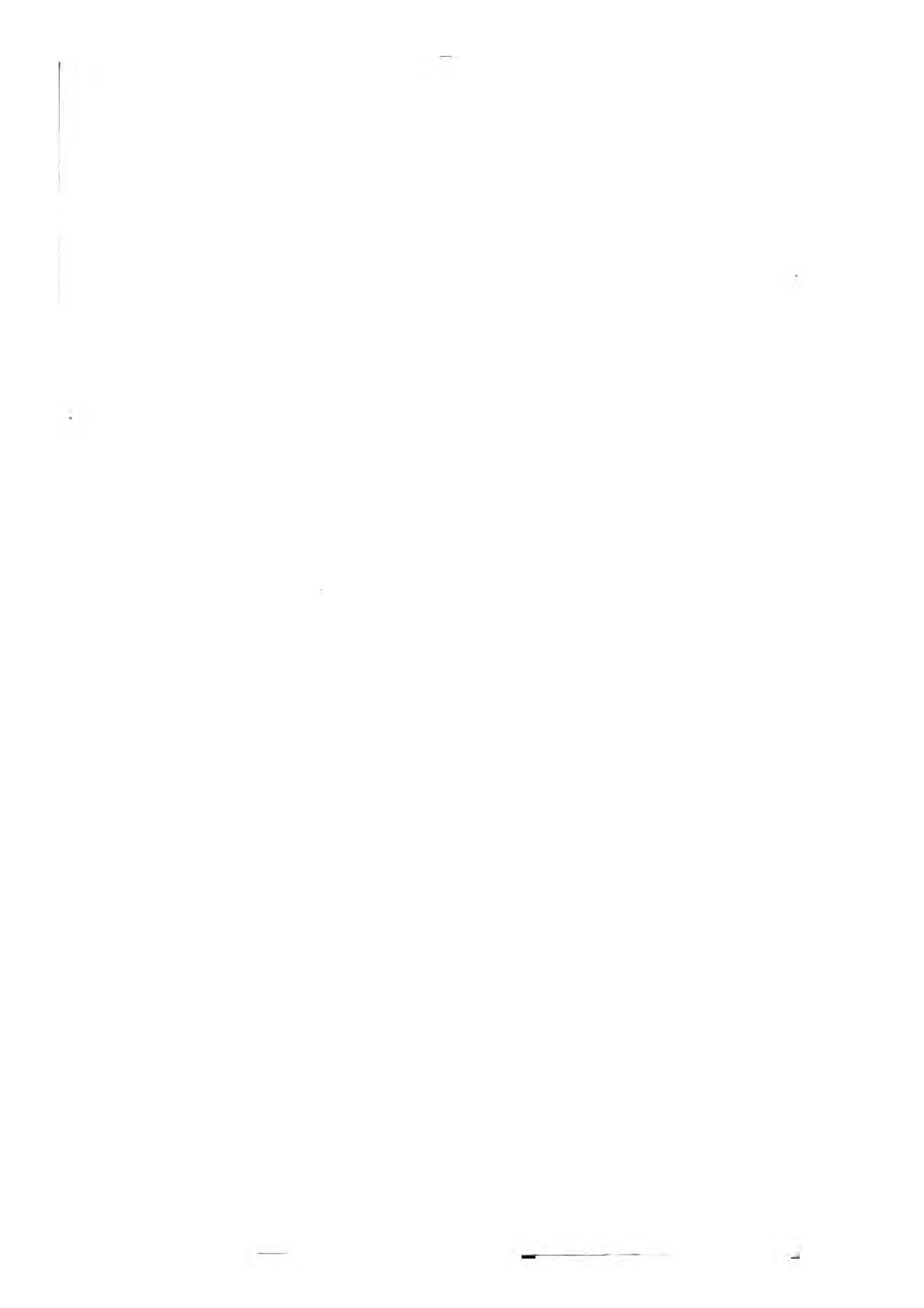
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THE ROUND TABLE.

NORTHCOTE'S CONVERSATIONS

CHARACTERISTICS.

BY

WILLIAM HAZLITT

EDITED BY

W. CAREW HAZLITT.

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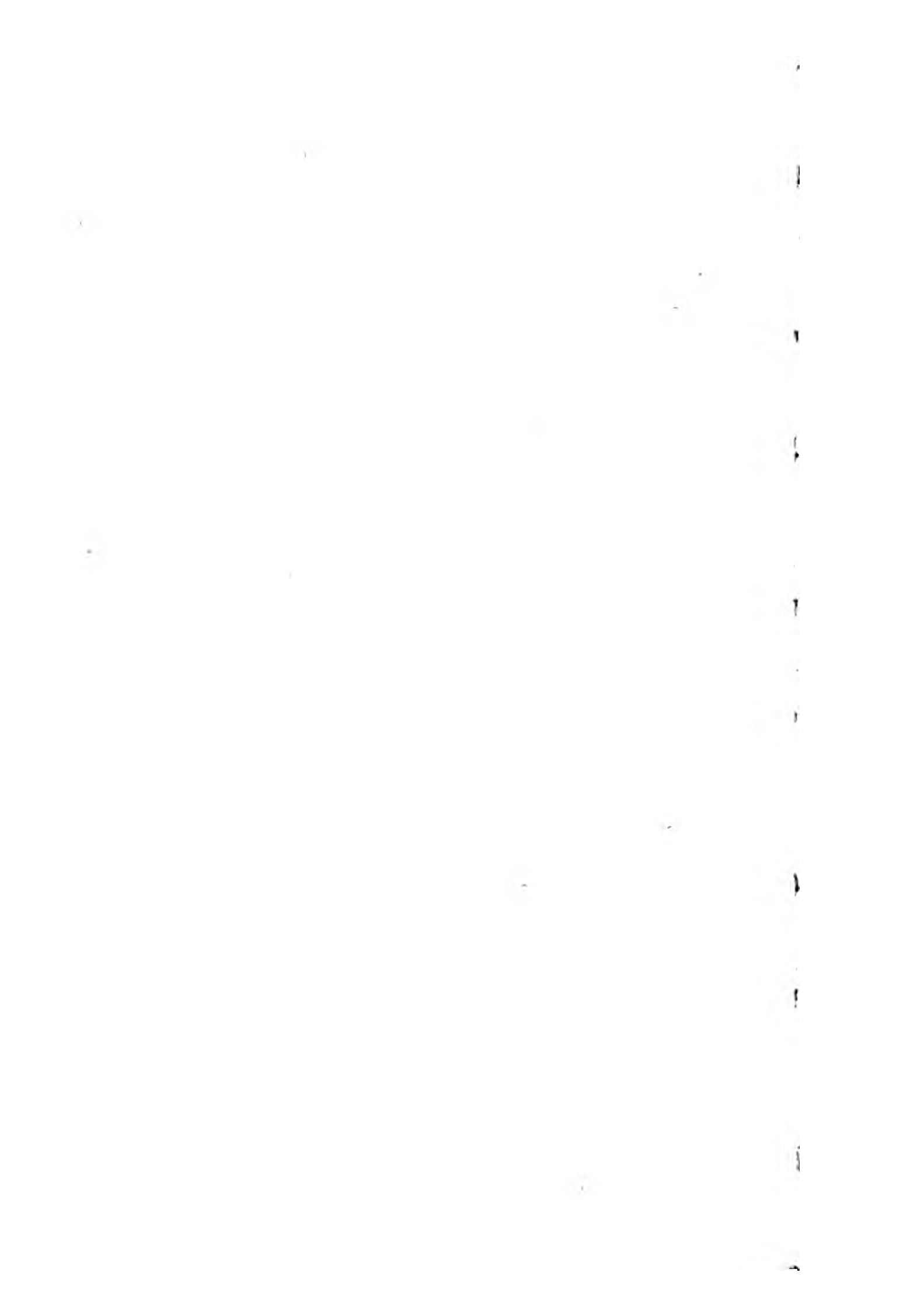
THE ROUND TABLE:

A COLLECTION OF

**ESSAYS ON LITERATURE, MEN, AND
MANNERS.**

BY

WILLIAM HAZLITT.



ADVERTISEMENT TO THE EDITION
OF 1817

THE following work falls somewhat short of its title and original intention. It was proposed by my friend Mr. Hunt to publish a series of papers in the 'Examiner,' in the manner of the early periodical essayists, the 'Spectator' and 'Tatler.' These papers were to be contributed by various persons on a variety of subjects; and Mr. Hunt, as the editor, was to take the characteristic or dramatic part of the work upon himself. I undertook to furnish occasional essays and criticisms; one or two other friends promised their assistance; but the essence of the work was to be miscellaneous. The next thing was to fix upon a title for it. After much doubtful consultation, that of 'THE ROUND TABLE' was agreed upon as most descriptive of its nature and design. But our plan had been no sooner arranged and entered upon than Bonaparte landed at Frejus, *et voilà la Table Ronde dissoute*. Our little congress was broken up as well as the great one; politics called off the attention of the editor from the belles lettres, and the task of continuing the work fell chiefly upon the person who was least able to give life and spirit to the original design. A want of variety in the subjects and mode of treating them is perhaps the least disadvantage resulting

vi *Advertisement to the present Edition.*

from this circumstance. All the papers in the two volumes here offered to the public were written by myself and Mr. Hunt, except a letter communicated by a friend in the sixteenth number. Out of the fifty-two numbers twelve are Mr. Hunt's, with the signatures L. H. or H. T. For all the rest I am answerable.

W. HAZLITT.¹

January 5, 1817.

¹ In 'A Letter to William Gifford, Esq., from William Hazlitt, Esq., 1819,' there is a vindication of this book from Gifford's malignant and absurd aspersions. This letter was reprinted in 1820: but as both editions are very rare I reproduced the matter relating to 'THE ROUND TABLE' in the 'Memoirs of W. H.,' 1867, vol. i. p. 246-50.—ED.

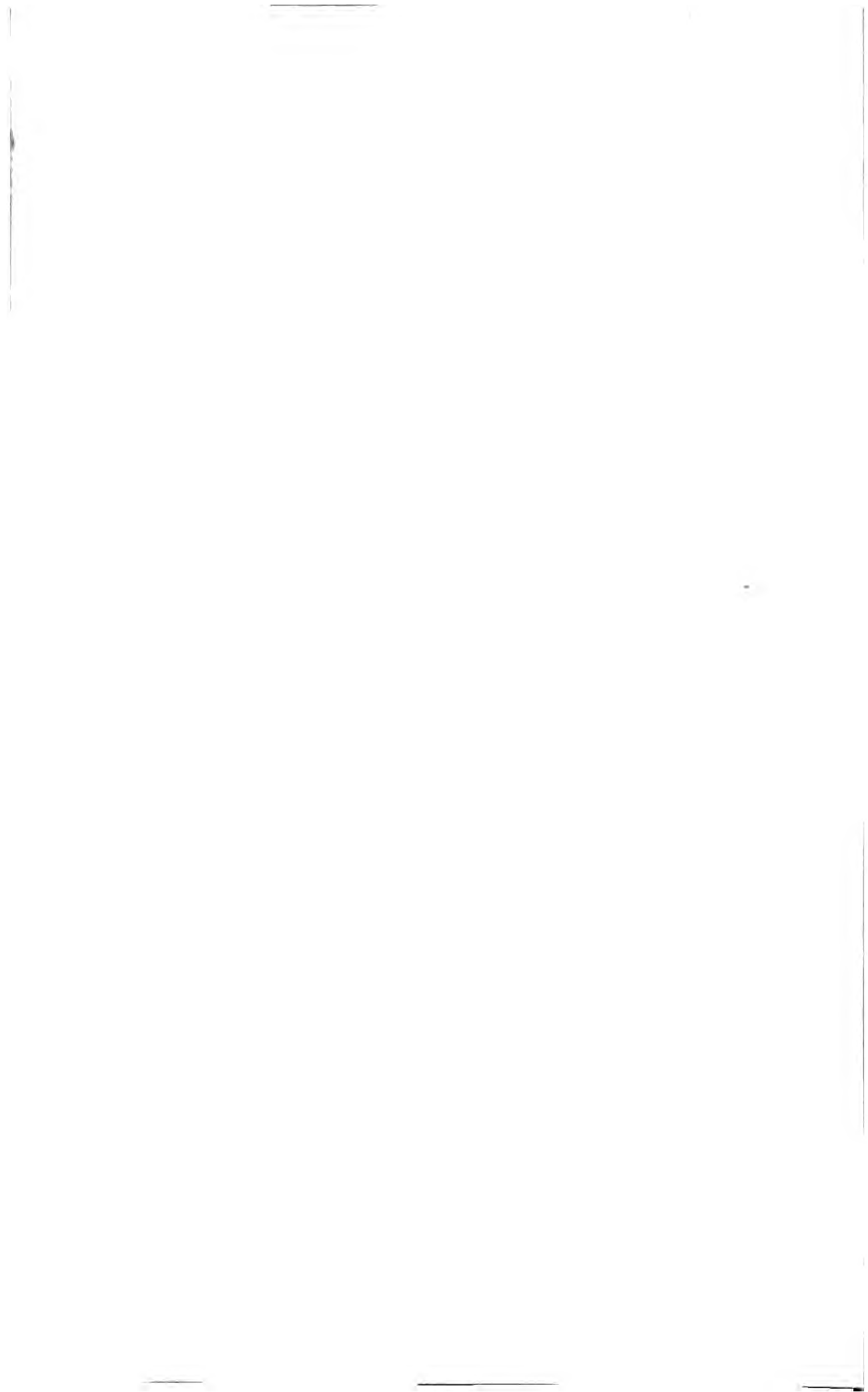
ADVERTISEMENT TO THE PRESENT
EDITION.

THE principal portion of the contents of 'THE ROUND TABLE' originally appeared in the columns of the 'Examiner' newspaper; but the work, as printed in 1817, comprised articles not contributed to that periodical, and, on the other hand, excluded matter which had formed part of the series, as published in the 'Examiner.'¹ The two authors principally concerned had doubtless their reasons for this re-arrangement and substitution, and it has been decided that in the present case there shall be no departure from their plan beyond the apparently obvious step of withdrawing from the book those few Essays which were not written by Mr. Hazlitt, and which, therefore, could scarcely with much propriety be admitted into a collected edition of his works. In every other respect the edition of 'THE ROUND TABLE' now offered to the public is a faithful reproduction of that in two volumes duodecimo, 1817.

W. C. H.

Kensington, May, 1871.

¹ See Mr. Ireland's interesting monograph, 'List of the Writings of William Hazlitt and Leigh Hunt,' 1868, p. 50.



THE ROUND TABLE.

No. I.

On the Love of Life.

IT is our intention, in the course of these papers, occasionally to expose certain vulgar errors, which have crept into our reasonings on men and manners. Perhaps one of the most interesting of these is that which relates to the source of our general attachment to life. We are not going to enter into the question, whether life is, on the whole, to be regarded as a blessing, though we are by no means inclined to adopt the opinion of that sage who thought "that the best thing that could have happened to a man was never to have been born, and the next best to have died the moment after he came into existence." The common argument, however, which is made use of to prove the value of life, from the strong desire which almost every one feels for its continuance, appears to be altogether inconclusive. The wise and the foolish, the weak and the strong, the lame and the blind, the prisoner and the free, the prosperous and the wretched, the beggar and the king, the rich and the poor, the young and the old, from the little child who tries to leap over his own shadow to the old man who stumbles blindfold on his grave—all feel this desire in common. Our notions with respect to the importance

of life, and our attachment to it, depend on a principle which has very little to do with its happiness or its misery.

The love of life is, in general, the effect, not of our enjoyments, but of our passions. We are not attached to it so much for its own sake, or as it is connected with happiness, as because it is necessary to action. Without life there can be no action—no objects of pursuit—no restless desires—no tormenting passions. Hence it is that we fondly cling to it—that we dread its termination as the close, not of enjoyment, but of hope. The proof that our attachment to life is not absolutely owing to the immediate satisfaction we find in it is, that those persons are commonly found most loth to part with it who have the least enjoyment of it, and who have the greatest difficulties to struggle with, as losing gamesters are the most desperate. And further, there are not many persons who, with all their pretended love of life, would not, if it had been in their power, have melted down the longest life to a few hours. “The schoolboy,” says Addison, “counts the time till the return of the holidays; the minor longs to be of age; the lover is impatient till he is married.” “Hope and fantastic expectations spend much of our lives; and while with passion we look for a coronation, or the death of an enemy, or a day of joy, passing from fancy to possession without any intermediate notices, we throw away a precious year.”—(Jeremy Taylor.) We would willingly, and without remorse, sacrifice not only the present moment, but all the interval (no matter how long) that separates us from any favourite object. We chiefly look upon life, then, as the means to an end. Its common enjoyments and its daily evils are alike disregarded for any idle purpose we have in view. It should seem as if there were a few green sunny spots in the desert of life, to which we are always hastening forward; we eye

them wistfully in the distance, and care not what perils or suffering we endure, so that we arrive at them at last. However weary we may be of the same stale round—however sick of the past—however hopeless of the future—the mind still revolts at the thought of death, because the fancied possibility of good, which always remains with life, gathers strength as it is about to be torn from us for ever, and the dullest scene looks bright compared with the darkness of the grave. Our reluctance to part with existence evidently does not depend on the calm and even current of our lives, but on the force and impulse of the passions. Hence that indifference to death which has been sometimes remarked in people who lead a solitary and peaceful life in remote and barren districts. The pulse of life in them does not beat strong enough to occasion any violent revulsion of the frame when it ceases. He who treads the green mountain turf, or he who sleeps beneath it, enjoys an almost equal quiet. The death of those persons has always been accounted happy who had attained their utmost wishes, who had nothing left to regret or desire. Our repugnance to death increases in proportion to our consciousness of having lived in vain—to the violence of our efforts, and the keenness of our disappointments—and to our earnest desire to find in the future, if possible, a rich amends for the past. We may be said to nurse our existence with the greatest tenderness, according to the pain it has cost us; and feel at every step of our varying progress the truth of that line of the poet—

“An ounce of sweet is worth a pound of sour.”

The love of life is in fact the sum of all our passions and of all our enjoyments; but these are by no means the same thing, for the vehemence of our passion is irritated not less by disappointment than by the prospect of success. Nothing seems to be a match for this

general tenaciousness of existence, but such an extremity either of bodily or mental suffering as destroys at once the power both of habit and imagination. In short, the question whether life is accompanied with a greater quantity of pleasure or pain, may be fairly set aside as frivolous, and of no practical utility; for our attachment to life depends on our interest in it, and it cannot be denied that we have more interest in this moving busy scene, agitated with a thousand hopes and fears, and checkered with every diversity of joy and sorrow, than in a dreary blank. To be something is better than to be nothing, because we can feel no interest in *nothing*. Passion, imagination, selfwill, the sense of power, the very consciousness of our existence, bind us to life, and hold us fast in its chains, as by a magic spell, in spite of every other consideration. Nothing can be more philosophical than the reasoning which Milton puts into the mouth of the fallen angel :

“ And that must end us, that must be our cure—
To be no more. Sad cure! For who would lose,
Though full of pain, this intellectual being,
Those thoughts that wander through eternity,
To perish rather, swallow'd up and lost
In the wide womb of uncreated night,
Devoid of sense and motion?”

Nearly the same account may be given in answer to the question which has been asked, *Why so few tyrants kill themselves?* In the first place, they are never satisfied with the mischief they have done, and cannot quit their hold of power after all sense of pleasure is fled. Besides, they absurdly argue from the means of happiness placed within their reach to the end itself; and, dazzled by the pomp and pageantry of a throne, cannot relinquish the persuasion that they *ought* to be happier than other men. The prejudice of opinion, which attaches us to life, is in them stronger than in others,

and incorrigible to experience. The great are life's fools—dupes of the splendid shadows that surround them, and wedded to the very mockeries of opinion.

Whatever is our situation or pursuit in life, the result will be much the same. The strength of the passion seldom corresponds to the pleasure we find in its indulgence. The miser "robs himself to increase his store;" the ambitious man toils up a slippery precipice only to be tumbled headlong from its height; the lover is infatuated with the charms of his mistress, exactly in proportion to the mortifications he has received from her. Even those who succeed in nothing—who, as it has been emphatically expressed,

"Are made desperate by too quick a sense
Of constant infelicity; cut off
From peace like exiles, on some barren rock,
Their life's sad prison, with no more of ease
Than sentinels between two armies set"—

are yet as unwilling as others to give over the unprofitable strife: their harassed feverish existence refuses rest, and frets the languor of exhausted hope into the torture of unavailing regret. The exile, who has been unexpectedly restored to his country and to liberty, often finds his courage fail with the accomplishment of all his wishes, and the struggle of life and hope ceases at the same instant.

We once more repeat, that we do not, in the foregoing remarks, mean to enter into a comparative estimate of the value of human life, but merely to show that the strength of our attachment to it is a very fallacious test of its happiness.

No. II.

On Classical Education.

THE study of the Classics is less to be regarded as an exercise of the intellect than as "a discipline of humanity." The peculiar advantage of this mode of education consists not so much in strengthening the understanding, as in softening and refining the taste. It gives men liberal views: it accustoms the mind to take an interest in things foreign to itself; to love virtue for its own sake; to prefer fame to life, and glory to riches; and to fix our thoughts on the remote and permanent, instead of narrow and fleeting objects. It teaches us to believe that there is something really great and excellent in the world, surviving all the shocks of accident and fluctuations of opinion, and raises us above that low and servile fear which bows only to present power and upstart authority. Rome and Athens filled a place in the history of mankind which can never be occupied again. They were two cities set on a hill, which could not be hid; all eyes have seen them, and their light shines like a mighty sea-mark into the abyss of time.

" Still green with bays each ancient altar stands,
Above the reach of sacrilegious hands;
Secure from flames, from envy's fiercer rage,
Destructive war, and all-involving age.
Hail, bards triumphant, born in happier days,
Immortal heirs of universal praise!
Whose honours with increase of ages grow,
As streams roll down, enlarging as they flow!"

It is this feeling, more than anything else, which produces a marked difference between the study of the ancient and modern languages, and which, from the weight and importance of the consequences attached to the former, stamps every word with a monumental

firmness. By conversing with the *mighty dead*, we imbibe sentiment with knowledge; we become strongly attached to those who can no longer either hurt or serve us, except through the influence which they exert over the mind; we feel the presence of that power which gives immortality to human thoughts and actions, and catch the flame of enthusiasm from all nations and ages.

It is hard to find, in minds otherwise formed, either a real love of excellence, or a belief that any excellence exists superior to their own. Everything is brought down to the vulgar level of their own ideas and pursuits. Persons without education certainly do not want either acuteness or strength of mind in what concerns themselves, or in things immediately within their observation. But they have no power of abstraction, no general standard of taste or scale of opinion. They see their objects always near, and never in the horizon. Hence arises that egotism which has been remarked as the characteristic of self-taught men, and which degenerates into obstinate prejudice or petulant fickleness of opinion, according to the natural sluggishness or activity of their minds. For they either become blindly bigoted to the first opinions they have struck out for themselves, and inaccessible to conviction; or else (the dupes of their own vanity and shrewdness) are everlasting converts to every crude suggestion that presents itself, and the last opinion is always the true one. Each successive discovery flashes upon them with equal light and evidence, and every new fact overturns their whole system. It is among this class of persons, whose ideas never extend beyond the feeling of the moment, that we find partisans, who are very honest men, with a total want of principle, and who unite the most hardened effrontery and intolerance of opinion to endless inconsistency and self-contradiction.

A celebrated political writer of the present day, who

is a great enemy to classical education, is a remarkable instance both of what can and what cannot be done without it.

It has been attempted of late to set up a distinction between the education of *words* and the education of *things*, and to give the preference in all cases to the latter. But, in the first place, the knowledge of things, or of the realities of life, is not easily to be taught except by things themselves, and, even if it were, is not so absolutely indispensable as it has been supposed. "The world is too much with us, early and late;" and the fine dream of our youth is best prolonged among the visionary objects of antiquity. We owe many of our most amiable delusions, and some of our superiority over the grossness of mere physical existence, to the strength of our associations with words. Language, if it throws a veil over our ideas, adds a softness and refinement to them, like that which the atmosphere gives to naked objects. There can be no true elegance without taste in style. In the next place, we mean absolutely to deny the application of the principle of utility to the present question. By an obvious transposition of ideas, some persons have confounded a knowledge of useful things with useful knowledge. Knowledge is only useful in itself, as it exercises or gives pleasure to the mind: the only knowledge that is of use, in a practical sense, is professional knowledge. But knowledge, considered as a branch of general education, can be of use only to the mind of the person acquiring it. If the knowledge of language produces pedants, the other kind of knowledge (which is proposed to be substituted for it) can only produce quacks. There is no question but that the knowledge of astronomy, of chemistry, and of agriculture, is highly useful to the world, and absolutely necessary to be acquired by persons carrying on certain professions; but the practical utility of a knowledge of these subjects

ends there. For example, it is of the utmost importance to the navigator to know exactly in what degree of longitude and latitude such a rock lies; but to us, sitting here about our Round Table, it is not of the smallest consequence whatever, whether the map-maker has placed it an inch to the right or to the left—we are in no danger of running against it. So the art of making shoes is a highly useful art, and very proper to be known and practised by somebody: that is, by the shoemaker. But to pretend that every one else should be thoroughly acquainted with the whole process of this ingenious handicraft, as one branch of useful knowledge, would be preposterous. It is sometimes asked, What is the use of poetry? and we have heard the argument carried on almost like a parody on Falstaff's reasoning about honour: "Can it set a leg?—No. Or an arm?—No. Or take away the grief of a wound?—No. Poetry hath no skill in surgery then?—No." It is likely that the most enthusiastic lover of poetry would so far agree to the truth of this statement, that if he had just broken a leg he would send for a surgeon, instead of a volume of poems from a library. But "they that are whole need not a physician." The reasoning would be well-founded if we lived in an hospital, and not in the world.

No. III.

On the 'Tatler.'

OF all the periodical Essayists (our ingenious predecessors), the 'Tatler' has always appeared to us the most accomplished and agreeable. Montaigne, who was the father of this kind of personal authorship among the moderns, in which the reader is admitted behind the curtain, and sits down with the writer in his gown and

slippers, was a most magnanimous and undisguised egotist; but Isaac Bickerstaff, Esq., was the more disinterested gossip of the two. The French author is contented to describe the peculiarities of his own mind and person, which he does with a most copious and unsparing hand. The English journalist, goodnatureedly, lets you into the secret both of his own affairs and those of his neighbours. A young lady, on the other side of Temple Bar, cannot be seen at her glass for half a day together, but Mr. Bickerstaff takes due notice of it; and he has the first intelligence of the symptoms of the *belle* passion appearing in any young gentleman at the west end of the town. The departures and arrivals of widows with handsome jointures, either to bury their grief in the country, or to procure a second husband in town, are regularly recorded in his pages. He is well acquainted with the celebrated beauties of the last age at the Court of Charles the Second, and the old gentleman often grows romantic in recounting the disastrous strokes which his youth suffered from the glances of their bright eyes and their unaccountable caprices. In particular, he dwells with a secret satisfaction on one of his mistresses who left him for a rival, and whose constant reproach to her husband, on occasion of any quarrel between them, was, "I, that might have married the famous Mr. Bickerstaff, to be treated in this manner!" The club at the *Trumpet* consists of a set of persons as entertaining as himself. The cavalcade of the justice of the peace, the knight of the shire, the country squire, and the young gentleman, his nephew, who waited on him at his chambers in such form and ceremony, seem not to have settled the order of their precedence to this hour; and we should hope the upholsterer and his companions in the Green Park stand as fair a chance for immortality as some modern politicians. Mr. Bickerstaff himself is a gentleman and a scholar, a humourist and a man of the world, with a great

deal of nice easy *naïveté* about him. If he walks out and is caught in a shower of rain, he makes us amends for this unlucky accident by a criticism on the shower in Virgil, and concludes with a burlesque copy of verses on a city shower. He entertains us, when he dines from his own apartment, with a quotation from Plutarch or a moral reflection; from the *Grecian* coffeehouse with politics, and from *Will's* or the *Temple* with the poets and players, the beaux and men of wit and pleasure about town. In reading the pages of the 'Tatler' we seem as if suddenly transported to the age of Queen Anne—of toupees and full-bottomed periwigs. The whole appearance of our dress and manners undergoes a delightful metamorphosis. We are surprised with the rustling of hoops and the glittering of paste buckles. The beaux and belles are of a quite different species; we distinguish the dappers, the smarts, and the pretty fellows, as they pass; we are introduced to Betterton and Mrs. Oldfield behind the scenes—are made familiar with the persons of Mr. Penkethman and Mr. Bullock; we listen to a dispute at a tavern on the merits of the Duke of Marlborough or Marshal Turenne; or are present at the first rehearsal of a play by Vanbrugh, or the reading of a new poem by Mr. Pope. The privilege of thus virtually transporting ourselves to past times is even greater than that of visiting distant places. London a hundred years ago would be better worth seeing than Paris at the present moment.¹

It may be said that all this is to be found, in the same or a greater degree, in the 'Spectator.' We do not think so; or at least, there is in the last work a much greater proportion of commonplace matter. We have always preferred the 'Tatler' to the 'Spectator.' Whether it is owing to our having been earlier or better acquainted with the one than the other, our pleasure in reading the

¹ This was written in 1815.—ED.

two works is not at all in proportion to their comparative reputation. The 'Tatler' contains only half the number of volumes, and we will venture to say, at least an equal quantity of sterling wit and sense. "The first sprightly runnings" are there; it has more of the original spirit, more of the freshness and stamp of nature. The indications of character and strokes of humour are more true and frequent; the reflections that suggest themselves arise more from the occasion, and are less spun out into regular dissertations. They are more like the remarks which occur in sensible conversation, and less like a lecture. Something is left to the understanding of the reader. Steele seems to have gone into his closet only to set down what he observed out-of-doors; Addison seems to have spun out and wire-drawn the hints which he borrowed from Steele, or took from nature, to the utmost. We do not mean to depreciate Addison's talents, but we wish to do justice to Steele, who was, upon the whole, a less artificial and more original writer. The descriptions of Steele resemble loose sketches or fragments of a comedy; those of Addison are ingenious paraphrases on the genuine text. The characters of the club, not only in the 'Tatler' but in the 'Spectator,' were drawn by Steele. That of Sir Roger de Coverley is among them. Addison has gained himself eternal honour by his manner of filling up this last character. Those of Will Wimble and Will Honeycomb are not a whit behind it in delicacy and felicity. Many of the most exquisite pieces in the 'Tatler' are also Addison's—as the Court of Honour, and the Personification of Musical Instruments. We do not know whether the picture of the family of an old acquaintance, in which the children run to let Mr. Bickerstaff in at the door, and the one that loses the race that way turns back to tell the father that he is come, with the nice gradation of incredulity in the little boy, who is got into 'Guy of Warwick' and 'The Seven

Champions,' and who shakes his head at the veracity of 'Æsop's Fables,' is Steele's or Addison's.¹ The account of the two sisters, one of whom held her head up higher than ordinary from having on a pair of flowered garters, and of the married lady who complained to the 'Tatler' of the neglect of her husband, are unquestionably Steele's. If the 'Tatler' is not inferior to the 'Spectator' in manners and character, it is very superior to it in the interest of many of the stories. Several of the incidents related by Steele have never been surpassed in the heartrending pathos of private distress. We might refer to those of the lover and his mistress when the theatre caught fire; of the bridegroom who, by accident, kills his bride on the day of their marriage; the story of Mr. Eustace and his wife, and the fine dream about his own mistress when a youth. What has given its superior popularity to the 'Spectator' is the greater gravity of its pretensions, its moral dissertations and critical reasonings, by which we confess we are less edified than by other things. Systems and opinions change, but nature is always true. It is the extremely moral and didactic tone of the 'Spectator' which makes us apt to think of Addison (according to Mandeville's sarcasm) as "a parson in a tie-wig." Some of the moral essays are, however, exquisitely beautiful and happy. Such are the reflections on Westminster Abbey, on the Royal Exchange, and some very affecting ones on the death of a young lady. These, it must be allowed, are the perfection of elegant sermonising. His

¹ It is Steele's, and the whole paper (No. 95) is in his most delightful manner. The dream about the mistress, however, is given to Addison by the Editors, and the general style of that number is his; though, from the story being related personally of Bickerstaff, who is also represented as having been at that time in the army, we conclude it to have originally come from Steele, perhaps in the course of conversation. The particular incident is much more like a story of his than of Addison's.—H. T. [*Leigh Hunt.*]

critical essays we do not think quite so good. We prefer Steele's occasional selection of beautiful poetical passages, without any affectation of analysing their beauties, to Addison's fine-spun theories. The best criticism in the 'Spectator,' that on the Cartoons of Raphael, is by Steele. We owed this acknowledgment to a writer who has so often put us in good humour with ourselves and everything about us, when few things else could.¹

No. IV.

On Modern Comedy.

THE question which has often been asked, *Why there are so few good modern comedies?* appears in a great measure to answer itself. It is because so many excellent comedies have been written, that there are none written at present. Comedy naturally wears itself out—destroys the very food on which it lives; and by constantly and successfully exposing the follies and weaknesses of mankind to ridicule, in the end leaves itself nothing worth laughing at. It holds the mirror up to nature; and men, seeing their most striking peculiarities and defects pass in gay review before them, learn either to avoid or conceal them. It is not the criticism which the public taste exercises upon the stage, but the criticism which the stage exercises upon public manners, that is fatal to comedy, by rendering the subject-matter of it tame, correct, and spiritless. We are drilled into a sort of stupid decorum, and forced to wear the same

¹ We had in our hands the other day an original copy of the 'Tatler,' and a list of the subscribers. It is curious to see some names there which we should hardly think of (that of Sir Isaac Newton is among them), and also to observe the degree of interest excited by those of the different persons, which is not adjusted according to the rules of the Heralds' College.

dull uniform of outward appearance ; and yet it is asked, why the comic muse does not point, as she was wont, at the peculiarities of our gait and gesture, and exhibit the picturesque contrast of our dress and costume, in all that graceful variety in which she delights. The genuine source of comic writing,

“ Where it must live, or have no life at all,”

is undoubtedly to be found in the distinguishing peculiarities of men and manners. Now, this distinction can subsist, so as to be strong, pointed, and general, only while the manners of different classes are formed immediately by their particular circumstances, and the characters of individuals by their natural temperament and situation, without being everlastingly modified and neutralised by intercourse with the world—by knowledge and education. In a certain stage of society, men may be said to vegetate like trees, and to become rooted to the soil in which they grow. They have no idea of anything beyond themselves and their immediate sphere of action ; they are, as it were, circumscribed and defined by their particular circumstances ; they are what their situation makes them, and nothing more. Each is absorbed in his own profession or pursuit, and each in his turn contracts that habitual peculiarity of manners and opinions, which makes him the subject of ridicule to others, and the sport of the comic muse. Thus the physician is nothing but a physician, the lawyer is a mere lawyer, the scholar degenerates into a pedant, the country squire is a different species of being from the fine gentleman, the citizen and the courtier inhabit a different world, and even the affectation of certain characters, in aping the follies or vices of their betters, only serves to show the immeasurable distance which custom or fortune has placed between them. Hence the early comic writers, taking advantage of this mixed and

solid mass of ignorance, folly, pride, and prejudice, made those deep and lasting incisions into it—have given those sharp and nice touches, that bold relief to their characters—have opposed them in every variety of contrast and collision, of conscious self-satisfaction and mutual antipathy, with a power which can only find full scope in the same rich and inexhaustible materials. But in proportion as comic genius succeeds in taking off the mask from ignorance and conceit, as it teaches us to

“See ourselves as others see us;”

in proportion as we are brought out on the stage together, and our prejudices clash one against the other, our sharp angular points wear off; we are no longer rigid in absurdity, passionate in folly, and we prevent the ridicule directed at our habitual foibles by laughing at them ourselves.

If it be said that there is the same fund of absurdity and prejudice in the world as ever—that there are the same unaccountable perversities lurking at the bottom of every breast—I should answer, be it so; but at least we keep our follies to ourselves as much as possible—we palliate, shuffle, and equivocate with them—they sneak into by-corners, and do not, like Chaucer's Canterbury Pilgrims, march along the highroad and form a procession—they do not entrench themselves strongly behind custom and precedent—they are not embodied in professions and ranks in life—they are not organised into a system—they do not openly resort to a standard, but are a sort of straggling nondescripts, that, like Wart, “present no mark to the foeman.” As to the gross and palpable absurdities of modern manners, they are too shallow and barefaced, and those who affect are too little *serious* in them to make them worth the detection of the comic muse. They proceed from an idle impudent affectation of folly in general, in the dashing

bravura style, not from an infatuation with any of its characteristic modes. In short, the proper object of ridicule is egotism; and a man cannot be a very great egotist who every day sees himself represented on the stage. We are deficient in comedy, because we are without characters in real life—as we have no historical pictures, because we have no faces proper for them.

It is, indeed, the evident tendency of all literature to generalise and *dissipate* character, by giving men the same artificial education and the same common stock of ideas; so that we see all objects from the same point of view, and through the same reflected medium. We learn to exist, not in ourselves, but in books; all men become alike mere readers—spectators, not actors in the scene, and lose all proper personal identity. The templar, the wit, the man of pleasure, and the man of fashion, the courtier and the citizen, the knight and the squire, the lover and the miser—Lovelace, Lothario, Will Honeycomb, and Sir Roger de Coverley, Sparkish and Lord Foppington, Western and Tom Jones, My Father and My Uncle Toby, Millamant and Sir Sampson Legend, Don Quixote and Sancho, Gil Blas and Guzman d'Alfarache, Count Fathom and Joseph Surface—have all met, and exchanged commonplaces on the barren plains of the *haute littérature*—toil slowly on to the Temple of Science, seen a long way off upon a level, and end in one dull compound of politics, criticism, chemistry, and metaphysics!

We cannot expect to reconcile opposite things. If, for example, any of us were to put ourselves into the stage-coach from Salisbury to London, it is more than probable we should not meet with the same number of odd accidents, or ludicrous distresses on the road, that befel Parson Adams; but why, if we get into a common vehicle, and submit to the conveniences of modern travelling, should we complain of the want of

adventures? Modern manners may be compared to a modern stage-coach: our limbs may be a little cramped with the confinement, and we may grow drowsy; but we arrive safe, without any very amusing or very sad accident, at our journey's end.

Again, the alterations which have taken place in conversation and dress in the same period have been by no means favourable to comedy. The present prevailing style of conversation is not *personal*, but critical and analytical. It consists almost entirely in the discussion of general topics, in dissertations on philosophy or taste; and Congreve would be able to derive no better hints from the conversations of our toilettes or drawing-rooms for the exquisite raillery or poignant repartee of his dialogues, than from a deliberation of the Royal Society. In the same manner, the extreme simplicity and graceful uniformity of modern dress, however favourable to the arts, has certainly stript comedy of one of its richest ornaments and most expressive symbols. The sweeping pall and buskin and nodding plume were never more serviceable to tragedy, than the enormous hoops and stiff stays worn by the belles of former days were to the intrigues of comedy. They assisted wonderfully in heightening the mysteries of the passion, and adding to the intricacy of the plot. Wycherley and Vanbrugh could not have spared the dresses of Vandyke. These strange fancy-dresses, perverse disguises, and counterfeit shapes, gave an agreeable scope to the imagination. "That sevenfold fence" was a sort of foil to the lusciousness of the dialogue, and a barrier against the sly encroachments of *double entendre*. The greedy eye and bold hand of indiscretion were repressed, which gave a greater licence to the tongue. The senses were not to be gratified in an instant. Love was entangled in the folds of the swelling handkerchief, and the desires might wander for ever round the circumference of a quilted

petticoat, or find a rich lodging in the flowers of a damask stomacher. There was room for years of patient contrivance—for a thousand thoughts, schemes, conjectures, hopes, fears, and wishes. There seemed no end of difficulties and delays; to overcome so many obstacles was the work of ages. A mistress was an angel concealed behind whalebone, flounces, and brocade. What an undertaking, to penetrate through the disguise! What an impulse must it give to the blood, what a keenness to the invention, what a volubility to the tongue! “Mr. Smirk, you are a brisk man,” was then the most significant commendation. But nowadays—a woman can be *but undressed*.

The same account might be extended to tragedy. Aristotle has long since said, that tragedy purifies the mind by terror and pity—that is, substitutes an artificial and intellectual interest for real passion. Tragedy, like comedy, must therefore defeat itself; for its patterns must be drawn from the living models within the breast, from feeling, or from observation; and the materials of tragedy cannot be found among a people who are the habitual spectators of tragedy, whose interests and passions are not their own, but ideal, remote, sentimental, and abstracted. It is for this reason chiefly, we conceive, that the highest efforts of the tragic muse are in general the earliest; where the strong impulses of nature are not lost in the refinements and glosses of art; where the writers themselves, and those whom they saw about them, had “warm hearts of flesh and blood beating in their bosoms, and were not embowelled of their natural entrails, and stuffed with paltry blurred sheets of paper.” Shakspeare, with all his genius, could not have written as he did, if he had lived in the present times. Nature would not have presented itself to him in the same freshness and vigour; he must have seen it through all the refractions of successive dullness, and

de fallere in ista...

his powers would have languished in the dense atmosphere of logic and criticism. "Men's minds," he somewhere says, "are parcel of their fortunes;" and his age was necessary to him. It was this which enabled him to grapple at once with Nature, and which stamped his characters with her image and superscription.

No. V.

*On Mr. Kean's Iago.*¹

WE certainly think Mr. Kean's performance of the part of Iago one of the most extraordinary exhibitions on the stage. There is no one within our remembrance who has so completely foiled the critics as this celebrated actor. One sagacious person imagines that he must perform a part in a certain manner; another virtuoso chalks out a different path for him; and when the time comes, he does the whole off in a way that neither of them had the least conception of, and which both of them are therefore very ready to condemn as entirely wrong. It was ever the trick of genius to be thus. We confess that Mr. Kean has thrown us out more than once. For instance, we are very much inclined to adopt the opinion of a contemporary critic, that his Richard is not gay enough, and that his Iago is not grave enough. This he may perhaps conceive to be the mere caprice of idle criticism; but we will try to give our reasons, and shall leave them to Mr. Kean's better judgment. It is to be remembered, then, that Richard was a princely villain, borne along in a sort of triumphal car of royal state, buoyed up with the hopes and privileges of his birth, reposing even on the sanctity of

¹ Compare 'A View of the English Stage,' 1818, edit. 1821, p. 76. This criticism originally appeared in the *Examiner* newspaper, July 23, 1814. The text of 1817 presents occasional variations.—Ed.

religion, trampling on his devoted victims without remorse, and who looked out and laughed from the high watchtower of his confidence and his expectations on the desolation and misery he had caused around him. He held on his way, unquestioned, "hedged in with the divinity of kings," amenable to no tribunal, and abusing his power *in contempt of mankind*. But as for Iago, we conceive differently of him. He had not the same natural advantages. He was a mere adventurer in mischief—a painstaking plodding knave, without patent or pedigree, who was obliged to work his uphill way by wit, not by will, and to be the founder of his own fortune. He was, if we may be allowed a vulgar allusion, a sort of prototype of modern Jacobinism, who thought that talents ought to decide the place—a man of "morbid sensibility" (in the fashionable phrase), full of distrust, of hatred, of anxious and corroding thoughts, and who, though he might assume a temporary superiority over others by superior adroitness, and pride himself in his skill, could not be supposed to assume it as a matter of course, as if he had been entitled to it from his birth. We do not here mean to enter into the characters of the two men, but something must be allowed to the difference of their situations. There might be the same insensibility in both as to the end in view, but there could not well be the same security as to the success of the means. Iago had to pass through a different ordeal: he had no appliances and means to boot—no royal road to the completion of his tragedy. His pretensions were not backed by authority; they were not baptized at the font; they were not holy-water-proof. He had the whole to answer for in his own person, and could not shift the responsibility to the heads of others. Mr. Kean's Richard was therefore, we think, deficient in something of that regal jollity and reeling triumph of success which the part would bear; but this we can

easily account for, because it is the traditional common place idea of the character, that he is to "play the dog—to bite and snarl." The extreme unconcern and laboured levity of his Iago, on the contrary, is a refinement and original device of the actor's own mind, and therefore deserves consideration. The character of Iago, in fact, belongs to a class of characters common to Shakespeare, and at the same time peculiar to him—namely, that of great intellectual activity, accompanied with a total want of moral principle, and therefore displaying itself at the constant expense of others, making use of reason as a pander to will, employing its ingenuity and its resources to palliate its own crimes and aggravate the faults of others, and seeking to confound the practical distinctions of right and wrong by referring them to some overstrained standard of speculative refinement.

* Some persons, more nice than wise, have thought the whole of the character of Iago unnatural. Shakspeare, who was quite as good a philosopher as he was a poet, thought otherwise. He knew that the love of power, which is another name for the love of mischief, was natural to man. He would know this as well or better than if it had been demonstrated to him by a logical diagram, merely from seeing children paddle in the dirt, or kill flies for sport. We might ask those who think the character of Iago not natural, why they go to see it performed, but from the interest it excites, the sharper edge which it sets on their curiosity and imagination? Why do we go to see tragedies in general, why do we always read the accounts in the newspapers of dreadful fires and shocking murders, but for the same reason? Why do so many persons frequent executions and trials, or why do the lower classes almost universally take delight in barbarous sports and cruelty to animals, but because there is a natural tendency in the mind to strong excitement, a desire to have its faculties roused

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and stimulated to the utmost? Whenever this principle is not under the restraint of humanity or the sense of moral obligation, there are no excesses to which it will not of itself give rise, without the assistance of any other motive, either of passion or self-interest. Iago is only an extreme instance of the kind—that is, of diseased intellectual activity, with an almost perfect indifference to moral good or evil, or rather with a preference for the latter, because it falls more in with his favourite propensity, gives greater zest to his thoughts, and scope to his actions. Be it observed, too (for the sake of those who are for squaring all human actions by the maxims of Rochefoucault), that he is quite or nearly as indifferent to his own fate as to that of others; that he runs all risks for a trifling and doubtful advantage; and is himself the dupe and victim of his ruling passion—an incorrigible love of mischief, an insatiable craving after action of the most difficult and dangerous kind. Our "ancient" is a philosopher, who fancies that a lie that kills has more point in it than an alliteration or an antithesis; who thinks a fatal experiment on the peace of a family a better thing than watching the palpitations in the heart of a flea in an air-pump; who plots the ruin of his friends as an exercise for his understanding, and stabs men in the dark to prevent ennui. Now this, though it be sport, yet it is dreadful sport. There is no room for trifling and indifference, nor scarcely for the appearance of it; the very object of his whole plot is to keep his faculties stretched on the rack, in a state of watch and ward, in a sort of breathless suspense, without a moment's interval of repose. He has a desperate stake to play for, like a man who fences with poisoned weapons, and has business enough on his hands to call for the whole stock of his sober circumspection, his dark duplicity, and insidious gravity. He resembles a man who sits down to play at chess for the sake of the diffi-

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culty and complication of the game, and who immediately becomes absorbed in it. His amusements, if they are amusements, are severe and saturnine—even his wit blisters. His gaiety arises from the success of his treachery; his ease from the sense of the torture he has inflicted on others. Even, if other circumstances permitted it, the part he has to play with Othello requires that he should assume the most serious concern, and something of the plausibility of a confessor. “His cue is villainous melancholy, with a sigh like Tom o’ Bedlam.” He is repeatedly called “honest Iago,” which looks as if there were something suspicious in his appearance, which admitted a different construction. The tone which he adopts in the scenes with Roderigo, Desdemona, and Cassio, is only a relaxation from the more arduous business of the play. Yet there is in all his conversation an inveterate misanthropy, a licentious keenness of perception, which is always sagacious of evil, and snuffs up the tainted scent of its quarry with rancorous delight. An exuberance of spleen is the essence of the character. The view which we have here taken of the subject (if at all correct) will not therefore justify the extreme alteration which Mr. Kean has introduced into the part. Actors in general have been struck only with the wickedness of the character, and have exhibited an assassin going to the place of execution. Mr. Kean has abstracted the wit of the character, makes Iago appear throughout an excellent good fellow and lively bottle-companion. But though we do not wish him to be represented as a monster or fiend, we see no reason why he should instantly be converted into a pattern of comic gaiety and good-humour. The light which illumines the character should rather resemble the flashes of lightning in the murky sky, which make the darkness more terrible. Mr. Kean’s Iago is, we suspect, too much in the sun. His manner of acting

the part would have suited better with the character of Edmund in 'King Lear,' who, though in other respects much the same, has a spice of gallantry in his constitution, and has the favour and countenance of the ladies, which always gives a man the smug appearance of a bridegroom.

No. VI.

On the Love of the Country.

TO THE EDITOR OF 'THE ROUND TABLE.'

SIR,—I do not know that any one has ever explained satisfactorily the true source of our attachment to natural objects, or of that soothing emotion which the sight of the country hardly ever fails to infuse into the mind. Some persons have ascribed this feeling to the natural beauty of the objects themselves; others to the freedom from care, the silence and tranquillity, which scenes of retirement afford; others to the healthy and innocent employments of a country life; others to the simplicity of country manners, and others to different causes; but none to the right one. All these causes may, I believe, have a share in producing this feeling; but there is another more general principle, which has been left untouched, and which I shall here explain, endeavouring to be as little sentimental as the subject will admit.

Rousseau, in his 'Confessions'—the most valuable of all his works—relates that, when he took possession of his room at Annecy, at the house of his beloved mistress and friend, he found that he could see "a little spot of green" from his window, which endeared his situation the more to him, because, he says, it was the first time he had had this object constantly before him since he left Boissy, the place where he was at school when a

child.¹ Some such feeling as that here described will be found lurking at the bottom of all our attachments of this sort. Were it not for the recollections habitually associated with them, natural objects could not interest the mind in the manner they do. No doubt the sky is beautiful; the clouds sail majestically along its bosom; the sun is cheering; there is something exquisitely graceful in the manner in which a plant or tree puts forth its branches; the motion with which they bend and tremble in the evening breeze is soft and lovely; there is music in the babbling of a brook; the view from the top of a mountain is full of grandeur; nor can we behold the ocean with indifference. Or, as the minstrel sweetly sings—

“ Oh, how can'st thou renounce the boundless store
Of charms which Nature to her vot'ry yields?
The warbling woodland, the resounding shore,
The pomp of groves, and garbure of fields;
All that the genial ray of morning gilds,
And all that echoes to the song of even;
All that the mountain's sheltering bosom shields,
And all the dread magnificence of heaven—
Oh, how can'st thou renounce, and hope to be forgiven !”

It is not, however, the beautiful and magnificent alone that we admire in Nature; the most insignificant and the rudest objects are often found connected with the strongest emotions; we become attached to the most common and familiar images, as to the face of a friend whom we have long known, and from whom we have received many benefits. It is because natural objects have been associated with the sports of our childhood, with air and exercise, with our feelings in solitude, when the mind takes the strongest hold of things, and clings with the fondest interest to whatever strikes its attention; with

¹ Pope also declares that he had a particular regard for an old post which stood in the courtyard before the house where he was brought up.

change of place, the pursuit of new scenes, and thoughts of distant friends: it is because they have surrounded us in almost all situations, in joy and in sorrow, in pleasure and in pain—because they have been one chief source and nourishment of our feelings, and a part of our being, that we love them as we do ourselves.

There is, generally speaking, the same foundation for our love of Nature as for all our habitual attachments, namely, association of ideas. But this is not all. That which distinguishes this attachment from others is the transferable nature of our feelings with respect to physical objects, the associations connected with any one object extending to the whole class. My having been attached to any particular person does not make me feel the same attachment to the next person I may chance to meet; but if I have once associated strong feelings of delight with the objects of natural scenery, the tie becomes indissoluble, and I shall ever after feel the same attachment to other objects of the same sort. I remember, when I was abroad, the trees and grass and wet leaves rustling in the walks of the Tuileries seemed to be as much English, to be as much the same trees and grass that I had always been used to, as the sun shining over my head was the same sun which I saw in England; the faces only were foreign to me. Whence comes this difference? It arises from our always imperceptibly connecting the idea of the individual with man, and only the idea of the class with natural objects. In the one case, the external appearance or physical structure is the least thing to be attended to; in the other, it is everything. The springs that move the human form, and make it friendly or adverse to me, lie hid within it. There is an infinity of motives, passions, and ideas contained in that narrow compass, of which I know nothing, and in which I have no share. Each individual is a world to himself,

governed by a thousand contradictory and wayward impulses. I can, therefore, make no inference from one individual to another; nor can my habitual sentiments, with respect to any individual, extend beyond himself to others. But it is otherwise with respect to Nature. There is neither hypocrisy, caprice, nor mental reservation in her favours. Our intercourse with her is not liable to accident or change, interruption or disappointment. She smiles on us still the same. Thus, to give an obvious instance, if I have once enjoyed the cool shade of a tree, and been lulled into a deep repose by the sound of a brook running at its feet, I am sure that wherever I can find a tree and a brook I can enjoy the pleasure again. Hence, when I imagine these objects, I can easily form a mystic personification of the friendly power that inhabits them, dryad or naiad, offering its cool fountain or its tempting shade. Hence the origin of the Grecian mythology. All objects of the same kind being the same, not only in their appearance but in their practical uses, we habitually confound them together under the same general idea; and whatever fondness we may have conceived for one is immediately placed to the common account. The most opposite kinds and remote trains of feeling gradually go to enrich the same sentiment; and in our love of Nature there is all the force of individual attachment combined with the most airy abstraction. It is this circumstance which gives that refinement, expansion, and wild interest to feelings of this sort, when strongly excited, which every one must have experienced who is a true lover of Nature. The sight of the setting sun does not affect me so much from the beauty of the object itself, from the glory kindled through the glowing skies, the rich broken columns of light, or the dying streaks of day, as that it indistinctly recalls to me numberless thoughts and feelings with which, through many a year and season, I have watched

his bright descent in the warm summer evenings, or beheld him struggling to cast a "farewell sweet" through the thick clouds of winter. I love to see the trees first covered with leaves in the spring, the primroses peeping out from some sheltered bank, and the innocent lambs running races on the soft green turf; because at that birth-time of Nature I have always felt sweet hopes and happy wishes—which have not been fulfilled! The dry reeds rustling on the side of a stream—the woods swept by the loud blast—the dark massy foliage of autumn—the gray trunks and naked branches of the trees in winter—the sequestered copse and wide extended heath—the warm sunny showers and December snows—have all charms for me; there is no object, however trifling or rude, that has not, in some mood or other, found the way to my heart; and I might say, in the words of the poet:

"To me the meanest flower that blows can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears."

Thus Nature is a kind of universal home, and every object it presents to us an old acquaintance with unaltered looks:

——— "Nature did ne'er betray
The heart that lov'd her, but through all the years
Of this our life, it is her privilege
To lead from joy to joy."

For there is that consent and mutual harmony among all her works—one undivided spirit pervading them throughout—that, if we have once knit ourselves in hearty fellowship to any of them, they will never afterwards appear as strangers to us, but, whichever way we turn, we shall find a secret power to have gone out before us, moulding them into such shapes as fancy loves, informing them with life and sympathy, bidding them put on their festive looks and gayest attire at our approach, and to pour all their sweets and choicest treasures at our

feet. For him, then, who has well acquainted himself with Nature's works, she wears always one face, and speaks the same well-known language, striking on the heart, amidst unquiet thoughts and the tumult of the world, like the music of one's native tongue heard in some far-off country.

We do not connect the same feelings with the works of Art as with those of Nature, because we refer them to man, and associate with them the separate interests and passions which we know belong to those who are the authors or possessors of them. Nevertheless, there are some such objects, as a cottage or a village church, which excite in us the same sensations as the sight of Nature, and which are, indeed, almost always included in descriptions of natural scenery.

“ Or from the mountain's sides
View wilds and swelling floods,
And hamlets brown, and dim-discover'd spires,
And hear their simple bell.”

Which is in part, no doubt, because they are surrounded with natural objects, and, in a populous country, inseparable from them; and also because the human interest they excite relates to manners and feelings which are simple, common, such as all can enter into, and which, therefore, always produce a pleasing effect upon the mind.

No. VII.

*On Posthumous Fame.—Whether Shakspeare was influenced
by a Love of it?*

It has been much disputed whether Shakspeare was actuated by the love of fame, though the question has been thought by others not to admit of any doubt, on the ground that it was impossible for any man of great genius to be without this feeling. It was supposed

that immortality, which was the natural inheritance of men of powerful genius, must be ever present to their minds, as the reward, the object, and the animating spring of all their efforts. This conclusion does not appear to be well-founded, and that for the following reasons.

First, the love of fame is the offspring of taste rather than of genius. The love of fame implies a knowledge of its existence. The men of the greatest genius, whether poets or philosophers, who lived in the first ages of society, only just emerging from the gloom of ignorance and barbarism, could not be supposed to have much idea of those long trails of lasting glory which they were to leave behind them, and of which there were as yet no examples. But after such men, inspired by the love of truth and nature, have struck out those lights which become the gaze and admiration of after-times—when those who succeed in distant generations read with wondering rapture the works which the bards and sages of antiquity have bequeathed to them—when they contemplate the imperishable power of intellect which survives the stroke of death and the revolutions of empire—it is then that the passion for fame becomes an habitual feeling in the mind, and that men naturally wish to excite the same sentiments of admiration in others which they themselves have felt, and to transmit their names with the same honours to posterity. It is from the fond enthusiastic veneration with which we recall the names of the celebrated men of past times, and the idolatrous worship we pay to their memories, that we learn what a delicious thing fame is, and would willingly make any efforts or sacrifices to be thought of in the same way. It is in the true spirit of this feeling that a modern writer exclaims—

“Blessings be with them, and eternal praise,
The poets—who on earth have made us heirs
Of truth and pure delight in deathless lays!
Oh! might my name be number'd among theirs,
Then gladly would I end my mortal days!”

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* The love of fame is a species of emulation; or, in other words, the love of admiration is in proportion to the admiration with which the works of the highest genius have inspired us, to the delight we have received from their habitual contemplation, and to our participation in the general enthusiasm with which they have been regarded by mankind. Thus there is little of this feeling discoverable in the Greek writers, whose ideas of posthumous fame seem to have been confined to the glory of heroic actions; whereas the Roman poets and orators, stimulated by the reputation which their predecessors had acquired, and having those exquisite models constantly before their eyes, are full of it. So Milton, whose capacious mind was imbued with the rich stores of sacred and of classic lore, to whom learning opened her inmost page, and whose eye seemed to be ever bent back to the great models of antiquity, was, it is evident, deeply impressed with a feeling of lofty emulation, and a strong desire to produce some work of lasting and equal reputation:

— “Nor sometimes forget
 Those other two, equall'd with me in fate,
 So were I equall'd with them in renown,
 Blind Thamyris and blind Mæonides,
 And Tiresias and Phineus, prophets old.”¹

Spenser, who was a man of learning, had a high opinion of the regard due to “famous poets’ wit;” and Bacon, whose vanity is as well known as his excessive adulation of that of others, asks, in a tone of proud exultation, “Have not the poems of Homer lasted five-and-twenty hundred years, and not a syllable of them is lost?” Chaucer seems to have derived his notions of fame more immediately from the reputation acquired by the Italian poets, his contemporaries, which had at that time spread

¹ See also the passage in his prose works relating to the first design of ‘Paradise Lost.’

itself over Europe; while the latter, who were the first to unlock the springs of ancient learning, and who slaked their thirst of knowledge at that pure fountain-head, would naturally imbibe the same feeling from its highest source. Thus, Dante has conveyed the finest image that can perhaps be conceived of the power of this principle over the human mind, when he describes the heroes and celebrated men of antiquity as "serene and smiling," though in the shades of death,

— "Because on earth their names
In Fame's eternal volume shine for aye."

But it is not so in Shakspeare. There is scarcely the slightest trace of any such feeling in his writings, nor any appearance of anxiety for their fate, or of a desire to perfect them or make them worthy of that immortality to which they were destined. And this indifference may be accounted for from the very circumstance, that he was almost entirely a man of genius, or that in him this faculty bore sway over every other; he was either not intimately conversant with the productions of the great writers who had gone before him, or at least was not much indebted to them; he revelled in the world of observation and of fancy; and perhaps his mind was of too prolific and active a kind to dwell with intense and continued interest on the images of beauty or of grandeur presented to it by the genius of others. He seemed scarcely to have an individual existence of his own, but to borrow that of others at will, and to pass successively through "every variety of untried being"—to be now Hamlet, now Othello, now Lear, now Falstaff, now Ariel. In the mingled interests and feelings belonging to this wide range of imaginary reality, in the tumult and rapid transitions of this waking dream, the author could not easily find time to think of himself, nor wish to embody that personal identity in idle reputation after death, of which he was so little tenacious while living.

To feel a strong desire that others should think highly of us, it is, in general, necessary that we should think highly of ourselves. There is something of egotism, and even pedantry, in this sentiment; and there is no author who was so little tinctured with these as Shakspeare. The passion for fame, like other passions, requires an exclusive and exaggerated admiration of its object, and attaches more consequence to literary attainments and pursuits than they really possess. Shakspeare had looked too much abroad into the world, and his views of things were of too universal and comprehensive a cast, not to have taught him to estimate the importance of posthumous fame according to its true value and relative proportions. Though he might have some conception of his future fame, he could not but feel the contrast between that and his actual situation; and, indeed, he complains bitterly of the latter in one of his sonnets.¹ He would perhaps think, that to be the idol of posterity when we are no more, was hardly a full compensation for being the object of the glance and scorn of fools while we are living; and that, in truth, this universal fame so much vaunted was a vague phantom of blind enthusiasm; for what is the amount even of Shakspeare's fame? That in that very country which boasts his genius and his birth, perhaps not one person in ten has ever heard of his name or read a syllable of his writings!

¹ "Oh! for my sake do you with Fortune chide,
The guilty goddess of my harmless deeds,
That did not better for my life provide
Than public means which public manners breeds.
Thence comes it that my name receives a brand,
And almost thence my nature is subdued
To what it works in, like the dyer's hand."

At another time, we find him "desiring this man's art, and that man's scope:" so little was Shakspeare, as far as we can learn, enamoured of himself!

We will add another observation in connection with this subject, which is, that men of the greatest genius produce their works with too much facility—and, as it were, spontaneously—to require the love of fame as a stimulus to their exertions, or to make them seem deserving of the admiration of mankind as their reward. It is, indeed, one characteristic mark of the highest class of excellence to appear to come naturally from the mind of the author, without consciousness or effort. The work seems like inspiration—to be the gift of some god or of the muse. But it is the sense of difficulty which enhances the admiration of power, both in ourselves and in others. Hence it is that there is nothing so remote from vanity as true genius. It is almost as natural for those who are endowed with the highest powers of the human mind to produce the miracles of art as for other men to breathe or move. Correggio, who is said to have produced some of his divinest works almost without having seen a picture, probably did not know that he had done anything extraordinary.

No. VII.

*On Hogarth's 'Marriage à la mode.'*¹

THE superiority of the pictures of Hogarth, which we have seen in the late collection at the British Institution, to the common prints is confined chiefly to the 'Marriage à la mode.' We shall attempt to illustrate a few of their most striking excellences, more particularly with reference to the expression of character. Their merits are indeed so prominent, and have been so often discussed, that it may be thought difficult to point

¹ This Essay, in two parts, is reprinted at the end of 'A Sketch of the Principal Picture Galleries,' &c. (1824).—Ed.

out any new beauties; but they contain so much truth of nature, they present the objects to the eye under so many aspects and bearings, admit of so many constructions, and are so pregnant with meaning, that the subject is in a manner inexhaustible.

Boccaccio, the most refined and sentimental of all the novel-writers, has been stigmatised as a mere inventor of licentious tales, because readers in general have only seized on those things in his works which were suited to their own taste, and have reflected their own grossness back upon the writer. So it has happened that the majority of critics having been most struck with the strong and decided expression in Hogarth, the extreme delicacy and subtle gradations of character in his pictures have almost entirely escaped them. In the first picture of the 'Marriage à la mode' the three figures of the young nobleman, his intended bride, and her innamorato the lawyer, show how much Hogarth excelled in the power of giving soft and effeminate expression. They have, however, been less noticed than the other figures, which tell a plainer story and convey a more palpable moral. Nothing can be more finely managed than the differences of character in these delicate personages. The beau sits smiling at the looking-glass, with a reflected simper of self-admiration and a languishing inclination of the head, while the rest of his body is perked up on his high heels with a certain air of tip-toe elevation. He is the Narcissus of the reign of George II., whose powdered peruke, ruffles, gold lace, and patches, divide his self-love unequally with his own person—the true Sir Plume of his day:

"Of amber-lidded snuffbox justly vain,
And the nice conduct of a clouded cane."

There is the same felicity in the figure and attitude of the bride courted by the lawyer. There is the utmost flexibility and yielding softness in her whole person, a

listless languor and tremulous suspense in the expression of her face. It is the precise look and air which Pope has given to his favourite, Belinda, just at the moment of the 'Rape of the Lock.' The heightened glow, the forward intelligence, and loosened soul of love in the same face, in the assignation scene before the masquerade, form a fine and instructive contrast to the delicacy, timidity, and coy reluctance expressed in the first. The lawyer in both pictures is much the same—perhaps too much so; though even this unmoved, unaltered appearance may be designed as characteristic. In both cases he has "a person and a smooth dispose, framed to make woman false." He is full of that easy good-humour and easy good opinion of himself with which the sex are delighted. There is not a sharp angle in his face to obstruct his success or give a hint of doubt or difficulty. His whole aspect is round and rosy, lively and unmeaning, happy without the least expense of thought, careless and inviting, and conveys a perfect idea of the uninterrupted glide and pleasing murmur of the soft periods that flow from his tongue.

The expression of the bride in the morning scene is the most highly seasoned, and at the same time the most vulgar in the series. The figure, face, and attitude of the husband are inimitable. Hogarth has with great skill contrasted the pale countenance of the husband with the yellow-whitish colour of the marble chimney-piece behind him in such a manner as to preserve the fleshy tone of the former. The airy splendour of the view of the inner room in this picture is probably not exceeded by any of the productions of the Flemish School.

The young girl in the third picture, who is represented as the victim of fashionable profligacy, is unquestionably one of the artist's *chefs-d'œuvre*. The exquisite delicacy of the painting is only surpassed by

the felicity and subtlety of the conception. Nothing can be more striking than the contrast between the extreme softness of her person and the hardened indifference of her character. The vacant stillness, the docility to vice, the premature suppression of youthful sensibility, the doll-like mechanism of the whole figure, which seems to have no other feeling but a sickly sense of pain—show the deepest insight into human nature, and into the effects of those refinements in depravity by which it has been goodnatureedly asserted that “vice loses half its evil in losing all its grossness.” The story of this picture is in some parts very obscure and enigmatical. It is certain that the nobleman is not looking straight forward to the quack, whom he seems to have been threatening with his cane, but that his eyes are turned up with an ironical leer of triumph to the procuress. The commanding attitude and size of this woman—the swelling circumference of her dress, spread out like a turkey-cock’s feathers—the fierce, ungovernable, inveterate malignity of her countenance, which hardly needs the comment of the clasp-knife to explain her purpose—are all admirable in themselves, and still more so as they are opposed to the mute insensibility, the elegant negligence of the dress, and the childish figure of the girl who is supposed to be her *protégée*. As for the quack, there can be no doubt entertained about him. His face seems as if it were composed of salve, and his features exhibit all the chaos and confusion of the most gross, ignorant, and impudent empiricism.

The gradations of ridiculous affectation in the music scene are finely imagined and preserved. The preposterous, overstrained admiration of the lady of quality; the sentimental, insipid, patient delight of the man with his hair in papers and sipping his tea; the pert, smirking, conceited, half-distorted approbation of the figure next to him; the transition to the total insensibility of

the round face in profile, and then to the wonder of the negro boy at the rapture of his mistress, form a perfect whole. The sanguine complexion and flame-coloured hair of the female virtuoso throw an additional light on the character. This is lost in the print. The continuing the red colour of the hair into the back of the chair has been pointed out as one of those instances of alliteration in colouring of which these pictures are everywhere full. The gross bloated appearance of the Italian singer is well relieved by the hard features of the instrumental performer behind him, which might be carved of wood. The negro boy holding the chocolate, both in expression, colour, and execution, is a masterpiece. The gay lively derision of the other negro boy, playing with the Actæon, is an ingenious contrast to the profound amazement of the first. Some account has already been given of the two lovers in this picture. It is curious to observe the infinite activity of mind which the artist displays on every occasion. An instance occurs in the present picture. He has so contrived the papers in the hair of the bride as to make them look almost like a wreath of half-blown flowers, while those which he has placed on the head of the musical amateur very much resemble a *cheval de frise* of horns, which adorn and fortify the lacklustre expression and mild resignation of the face beneath.

The night scene is inferior to the rest of the series. The attitude of the husband, who is just killed, is one in which it would be impossible for him to stand or even to fall. It resembles the loose pasteboard figures they make for children. The characters in the last picture, in which the wife dies, are all masterly. We would particularly refer to the captious, petulant self-sufficiency of the apothecary, whose face and figure are constructed on exact physiognomical principles, and to the fine example of passive obedience and non-resistance

in the servant, whom he is taking to task, and whose coat of green-and-yellow livery is as long and melancholy as his face. The disconsolate look, the haggard eyes, the open mouth, the comb sticking in the hair, the broken gapped teeth, which, as it were, hitch in an answer—everything about him denotes the utmost perplexity and dismay. The harmony and gradations of colour in this picture are uniformly preserved with the greatest nicety, and are well worthy the attention of the artist.

No. IX.

The Subject continued.

It has been observed that Hogarth's pictures are exceedingly unlike any other representations of the same kind of subjects—that they form a class, and have a character peculiar to themselves. It may be worth while to consider in what this general distinction consists.

In the first place, they are, in the strictest sense, *historical* pictures; and if what Fielding says be true, that his novel of 'Tom Jones' ought to be regarded as an epic prose poem, because it contained a regular development of fable, manners, character, and passion, the compositions of Hogarth will, in like manner, be found to have a higher claim to the title of epic pictures than many which have of late arrogated that denomination to themselves. When we say that Hogarth treated his subjects historically, we mean that his works represent the manners and humours of mankind in action, and their characters by varied expression. Everything in his pictures has life and motion in it. Not only does the business of the scene never stand still, but every feature and muscle is put into full play; the exact feeling of the moment is brought out and carried to its

utmost height, and then instantly seized and stamped on the canvas for ever. The expression is always taken *en passant*, in a state of progress or change, and, as it were, at the salient point. Besides the excellence of each individual face, the reflection of the expression from face to face, the contrast and struggle of particular motives and feelings in the different actors in the scene—as of anger, contempt, laughter, compassion—are conveyed in the happiest and most lively manner. His figures are not like the background on which they are painted: even the pictures on the wall have a peculiar look of their own. Again, with the rapidity, variety, and scope of history, Hogarth's heads have all the reality and correctness of portraits. He gives the extremes of character and expression, but he gives them with perfect truth and accuracy. This is, in fact, what distinguishes his compositions from all others of the same kind, that they are equally remote from caricature, and from mere still life. It of course happens in subjects from common life, that the painter can procure real models, and he can get them to sit as long as he pleases. Hence, in general, those attitudes and expressions have been chosen which could be assumed the longest, and in imitating which the artist, by taking pains and time, might produce almost as complete fac-similes as he could of a flower or a flower-pot, of a damask curtain or a china vase. The copy was as perfect and as uninteresting in the one case as in the other. On the contrary, subjects of drollery and ridicule, affording frequent examples of strange deformity and peculiarity of features, these have been eagerly seized by another class of artists, who, without subjecting themselves to the laborious drudgery of the Dutch School and their imitators, have produced our popular caricatures, by rudely copying or exaggerating the casual irregularities of the human countenance. Hogarth has equally avoided the

faults of both these styles—the insipid tameness of the one, and the gross vulgarity of the other—so as to give to the productions of his pencil equal solidity and effect. For his faces go to the very verge of caricature, and yet never (we believe in any single instance) go beyond it: they take the very widest latitude, and yet we always see the links which bind them to nature: they bear all the marks and carry all the conviction of reality with them, as if we had seen the actual faces for the first time, from the precision, consistency, and good sense with which the whole and every part is made out. They exhibit the most uncommon features with the most uncommon expressions, but which are yet as familiar and intelligible as possible, because with all the boldness they have all the truth of nature. Hogarth has left behind him as many of these memorable faces, in their memorable moments, as perhaps most of us remember in the course of our lives, and has thus doubled the quantity of our observation.

We have, in a former paper, attempted to point out the fund of observation, physical and moral, contained in one set of these pictures, the 'Marriage à la mode.' The rest would furnish as many topics to descant upon, were the patience of the reader as inexhaustible as the painter's invention. But as this is not the case, we shall content ourselves with barely referring to some of those figures in the other pictures which appear the most striking, and which we see not only while we are looking at them, but which we have before us at all other times. For instance, who having seen can easily forget that exquisite frost-piece of religion and morality, the antiquated prude in the morning scene? or that striking commentary on the *good old times*, the little wretched appendage of a footboy, who crawls half famished and half frozen behind her? The French man and woman in the 'Noon' are the perfection of flighty

affectation and studied grimace ; the amiable *fraternisation* of the two old women saluting each other is not enough to be admired ; and in the little master, in the same national group, we see the early promise and personification of that eternal principle of wondrous self-complacency, proof against all circumstances, and which makes the French the only people who are vain even of being cuckolded and being conquered. Or shall we prefer to this the outrageous distress and unmitigated terrors of the boy, who has dropped his dish of meat, and who seems red all over with shame and vexation, and bursting with the noise he makes ? Or what can be better than the good housewifery of the girl underneath, who is devouring the lucky fragments ?—or than the plump, ripe, florid, luscious look of the servant-wench, embraced by a greasy rascal of an Othello, with her pie-dish tottering like her virtue, and with the most precious part of its contents running over ? Just—no, not quite—as good is the joke of the woman overhead, who, having quarrelled with her husband, is throwing their Sunday's dinner out of the window, to complete this chapter of accidents of baked-dishes. The husband in the evening scene is certainly as meek as any recorded in history ; but we cannot say that we admire this picture, or the night scene after it. But then, in the 'Taste in High Life,' there is that inimitable pair, differing only in sex, congratulating and delighting one another by "all the mutually reflected charities" of folly and affectation—with the young lady coloured like a rose, dandling her little, black, pug-faced, white-teethed, chuckling favourite, and with the portrait of Monsieur Des Noyers in the background, dancing in a grand ballet, surrounded by butterflies. And again, in 'The Election Dinner,' is the immortal cobbler, surrounded by his peers, who, "frequent and full"—

"In loud recess and brawling conclave sit"—

the Jew in the second picture, a very Jew in grain—innumerable fine sketches of heads in the 'Polling for Votes,' of which the nobleman overlooking the caricaturist is the best; and then the irresistible tumultuous display of broad humour in the 'Chairing the Member,' which is, perhaps, of all Hogarth's pictures, the most full of laughable incidents and situations—the yellow, rusty-faced thresher, with his swinging flail, breaking the head of one of the chairmen, and his redoubted antagonist, the sailor, with his oak-stick, and stumping wooden leg, a supplemental cudgel—the persevering ecstasy of the hobbling blind fiddler, who, in the fray, appears to have been trod upon by the artificial excrescence of the honest tar—Monsieur the monkey, with piteous aspect, speculating the impending disaster of the triumphant candidate, and his brother, Bruin, appropriating the paunch—the precipitous flight of the pigs, souse over head into the water, the fine lady fainting, with vermilion lips, and the two chimney-sweepers, satirical young rogues! We had almost forgot 'The Politician,' who is burning a hole through his hat with a candle in reading the newspaper; and the chickens, in the 'March to Finchley,' wandering in search of their lost dam, which is found in the pocket of the sergeant. Of the pictures in the 'Rake's Progress' in this collection we shall not here say anything, because we think them, on the whole, inferior to the prints, and because they have already been criticised by a writer, to whom we could add nothing, in a paper which ought to be read by every lover of Hogarth and of English genius.¹

¹ See an 'Essay on the Genius of Hogarth,' by C. Lamb, published in a periodical work called the 'Reflector.' [It is strange that this admirable article should have been omitted in both series of 'Elia,' 1823 and 1833; it was not republished till 1838.—Ed.]

No. X.

On Milton's 'Lycidas.'

“ At last he rose, and twitch'd his mantle blue :
To-morrow to fresh woods and pastures new.”

OF all Milton's smaller poems, 'Lycidas' is the greatest favourite with us. We cannot agree to the charge which Dr. Johnson has brought against it, of pedantry and want of feeling. It is the fine emanation of classical sentiment in a youthful scholar—"most musical, most melancholy." A certain tender gloom overspreads it, a wayward abstraction, a forgetfulness of his subject in the serious reflections that arise out of it. The gusts of passion come and go like the sounds of music borne on the wind. The loss of the friend whose death he laments seems to have recalled, with double force, the reality of those speculations which they had indulged together; we are transported to classic ground, and a mysterious strain steals responsive on the ear while we listen to the poet :

“ With eager thought warbling his Doric lay.”

We shall proceed to give a few passages at length in support of our opinion. The first we shall quote is as remarkable for the truth and sweetness of the natural descriptions as for the characteristic elegance of the allusions :—

“ Together both, ere the high lawns appear'd
Under the opening eyelids of the morn,
We drove afield; and both together heard
What time the gray-fly winds her sultry horn,
Battening our flocks with the fresh dews of night
Oft till the star that rose at evening bright
Towards heaven's descent had sloped his westering wheel.
Meanwhile the rural ditties were not mute,
Temper'd to the oaten flute :
Rough satyrs danced, and fauns with cloven heel

From the glad sound would not be absent long,
 And old Dametas loved to hear our song.
 But oh the heavy change, now thou art gone!
 Now thou art gone, and never must return!
 Thee, shepherd, thee the woods and desert caves
 With wild thyme and the gadding vine o'ergrown,
 And all their echoes, mourn.
 The willows and the hazel copses green
 Shall now no more be seen
 Fanning their joyous leaves to thy soft lays.
 As killing as the canker to the rose,
 Or taint-worm to the weanling herds that graze,
 Or frost to flowers that their gay wardrobe wear,
 When first the white-thorn blows;
 Such, Lycidas, thy loss to shepherd's ear!"

After the fine apostrophe on Fame which Phœbus is invoked to utter, the poet proceeds:—

"Oh fountain Arethuse, and thou honour'd flood,
 Smooth-sliding Mincius, crown'd with vocal reeds,
 That strain I heard was of a higher mood;
 But now my oat proceeds,
 And listens to the herald of the sea
 That came in Neptune's plea.
 He ask'd the waves, and ask'd the felon winds,
 What hard mishap hath doom'd this gentle swain?
 And question'd every gust of rugged wings
 That blows from off each beaked promontory.
 They knew not of his story:
 And sage Hippotades their answer brings,
 That not a blast was from his dungeon stray'd,
 The air was calm, and on the level brine
 Sleek Panope with all her sisters play'd."

If this is art, it is perfect art; nor do we wish for anything better. The measure of the verse, the very sound of the names, would almost produce the effect here described. To ask the poet not to make use of such allusions as these, is to ask the painter not to dip in the colours of the rainbow, if he could. In fact, it is the common cant of criticism to consider every allusion to the classics, and particularly in a mind like Milton's, as

pedantry and affectation. Habit is a second nature; and, in this sense, the pedantry (if it is to be called so) of the scholastic enthusiast, who is constantly referring to images of which his mind is full, is as graceful as it is natural. It is not affectation in him to recur to ideas and modes of expression with which he has the strongest associations, and in which he takes the greatest delight. Milton was as conversant with the world of genius before him as with the world of nature about him; the fables of the ancient mythology were as familiar to him as his dreams. To be a pedant is to see neither the beauties of nature nor of art. Milton saw both; and he made use of the one only to adorn and give new interest to the other. He was a passionate admirer of nature; and, in a single couplet of his, describing the moon—

“Like one that had been led astray
Through the heaven's wide pathless way”—

there is more intense observation, and intense feeling of nature (as if he had gazed himself blind in looking at her), than in twenty volumes of descriptive poetry. But he added to his own observation of nature the splendid fictions of ancient genius, enshrined her in the mysteries of ancient religion, and celebrated her with the pomp of ancient names:

“Next Camus, reverend sire, went footing slow,
His mantle hairy and his bonnet sedge,
Inwrought with figures dim, and on the edge
Like to that sanguine flower inscrib'd with woe.
Oh! who hath reft (quoth he) my dearest pledge?
Last came, and last did go,
The pilot of the Galilean lake.”

There is a wonderful correspondence in the rhythm of these lines to the idea which they convey. This passage, which alludes to the clerical character of 'Lycidas,' has been found fault with, as combining the truths of the Christian religion with the fictions of the heathen

mythology. We conceive there is very little foundation for this objection, either in reason or good taste. We will not go so far as to defend Camoens, who in his 'Lusiad' makes Jupiter send Mercury with a dream to propagate the Catholic religion; nor do we know that it is generally proper to introduce the two things in the same poem, though we see no objection to it here; but of this we are quite sure, that there is no inconsistency or natural repugnance between this poetical and religious faith in the same mind. To the understanding the belief of the one is incompatible with that of the other; but in the imagination they not only may but do constantly coexist. We will venture to go further, and maintain that every classical scholar, however orthodox a Christian he may be, is an honest heathen at heart. This requires explanation. Whoever, then, attaches a reality to any idea beyond the mere name, has, to a certain extent (though not an abstract), an habitual and practical belief in it. Now, to any one familiar with the names of the personages of the heathen mythology, they convey a positive identity beyond the mere name. We refer them to something out of ourselves. It is only by an effort of abstraction that we divest ourselves of the idea of their reality; all our involuntary prejudices are on their side. This is enough for the poet. They impose on the imagination by all the attractions of beauty and grandeur. They come down to us in sculpture and in song. We have the same associations with them as if they had really been; for the belief of the fiction in ancient times has produced all the same effects as the reality could have done. It was a reality to the minds of the ancient Greeks and Romans, and through them it is reflected to us. And, as we shape towers and men and armed steeds out of the broken clouds that glitter in the distant horizon, so, throned above the ruins of the ancient world, Jupiter still nods sublime on the top

of blue Olympus, Hercules leans upon his club, Apollo has not laid aside his bow nor Neptune his trident, the sea-gods ride upon the sounding waves, the long procession of heroes and demigods passes in endless review before us, and still we hear

—— “ The Muses in a ring
Aye round about Jove's altar sing :
Have sight of Proteus coming from the sea,
And hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn.”

If all these mighty fictions had really existed, they could have done no more for us! We shall only give one other passage from 'Lycidas'; but we flatter ourselves that it will be a treat to our readers, if they are not already familiar with it. It is the passage which contains that exquisite description of the flowers :

“ Return, Alpheus; the dread voice is past
That shrunk thy streams. Return, Sicilian Muse,
And call the vales, and bid them hither cast
Their bells and flow'rets of a thousand hues.
Ye valleys low, where the mild whispers use
Of shades and wanton winds and gushing brooks,
On whose fresh lap the swart star sparely looks,
Throw hither all your quaint enamell'd eyes,
That on the green turf suck the honied showers,
And purple all the ground with vernal flowers ;
Bring the rathe primrose that forsaken dies,
The tufted crow-toe, and pale jessamine,
The white pink, and the pansy freak'd with jet,
The glowing violet,
The musk-rose, and the well-attired woodbine,
With cowslips wan, that hang the pensive head,
And every flower that sad embroidery wears ;
Bid Amaranthus all his beauty shed,
And daffadillies fill their cups with tears,
To strew the laureat hearse where Lycid lies.
For so to interpose a little ease
Let our frail thoughts dally with false surmise.
Ah me! Whilst thee the shores and sounding seas

Waft far away, where'er thy bones are hurl'd,
 Whether beyond the stormy Hebrides,
 Where thou perhaps under the whelming tide
 Visit'st the bottom of the monstrous world ;
 Or whether thou, to our moist vows denied,
 Sleep'st by the fable of Bellerus old,
 Where the great vision of the guarded mount
 Looks towards Namancos and Bayona's hold,
 Look homeward, angel, now, and melt with ruth,
 And, O ye Dolphins, waft the hapless youth."

Dr. Johnson is very much offended at the introduction of these dolphins; and indeed, if he had had to guide them through the waves, he would have made much the same figure as his old friend Dr. Burney does, swimming in the Thames with his wig on, with the water-nymphs, in the picture by Barry at the Adelphi.

There is a description of flowers in the 'Winter's Tale,' which we shall give as a parallel to Milton's. We shall leave it to the reader to decide which is the finest, for we dare not give the preference. Perdita says :

——— " Here's flowers for you,
 Hot lavender, mints, savoury, marjoram,
 The marygold, that goes to bed wi' the sun
 And with him rises weeping : these are flowers
 Of middle summer, and I think they're given
 To men of middle age. Ye're very welcome.
 " *Camillo.* I should leave grazing, were I of your flock,
 And only live by gazing.
 " *Perdita.* Out, alas !
 You'd be so lean, that blasts of January
 Would blow you through and through. Now, my fair'st friend,
 I would I had some flowers o' the spring, that might
 Become your time of day O Proserpina,
 For the flowers now, that, frightened, you let fall
 From Dis's waggon ! Daffodils,
 That come before the swallow dares, and take
 The winds of March with beauty : violets, dim,
 But sweeter than the lids of Juno's eyes
 Or Cytherea's breath ; pale primroses,

That die unmarried, ere they can behold
Bright Phœbus in his strength, a malady
Most incident to maids ; bold oxlips and
The crown imperial ; lilies of all kinds,
The flower-de-luce being one. Oh, these I lack
To make you garlands of, and, my sweet friend,
To strew him o'er and o'er."¹

Dr. Johnson's general remark, that Milton's genius had not room to show itself in his smaller pieces, is not well-founded. Not to mention 'Lycidas,' the 'Allegro,' and 'Penseroso,' it proceeds on a false estimate of the merits of his great work, which is not more distinguished by strength and sublimity than by tenderness and beauty. The last were as essential qualities of Milton's mind as the first. The battle of the angels, which has been commonly considered as the best part of the 'Paradise Lost,' is the worst.

No. XI.

On Milton's Versification.

MILTON's works are a perpetual invocation to the Muses—a hymn to Fame. His religious zeal infused its character into his imagination ; and he devotes himself with the same sense of duty to the cultivation of his genius, as he did to the exercise of virtue or the good of his country. He does not write from casual impulse, but after a severe examination of his own strength, and with a determination to leave nothing undone which it is in his power to do. He always labours, and he almost always succeeds. He strives to say the finest things in the world, and he does say them. He adorns and dignifies his subject to the utmost. He surrounds it with all the possible associations of beauty or grandeur,

¹ Act iv. sc. 3, Dyce's 2nd edit. 1868, vol. iii. pp. 469-70.

whether moral, or physical, or intellectual. He refines on his descriptions of beauty, till the sense almost aches at them, and raises his images of terror to a gigantic elevation, that "makes Ossa like a wart." He has a high standard, with which he is constantly comparing himself, and nothing short of which can satisfy him :

—— "Sad task, yet argument
Not less but more heroic than the wrath
Of stern Achilles on his foe pursued,
If answerable stile I can obtain.
—— Unless an age too late, or cold
Climate, or years, damp my intended wing."

Milton has borrowed more than any other writer; yet he is perfectly distinct from every other writer. The power of his mind is stamped on every line. He is a writer of *centos*, and yet in originality only inferior to Homer. The quantity of art shows the strength of his genius; so much art would have overloaded any other writer. Milton's learning has all the effect of intuition. He describes objects of which he had only read in books with the vividness of actual observation. His imagination has the force of nature. He makes words tell as pictures :

"Him followed Rimmon, whose delightful seat
Was fair Damascus, on the fertile banks
Of Abana and Pharpar, *lucid streams.*"

And again :

"As when a vulture on Imaus bred,
Whose snowy ridge the roving Tartar bounds,
Dislodging from a region scarce of prey
To gorge the flesh of lambs or yearning kids
On hills where flocks are fed, *flies towards the springs
Of Ganges or Hydaspes, Indian streams ;
But in his way lights on the barren plains
Of Sericana, where Chinese drive
With sails and wind their cany waggons light.*"

Such passages may be considered as demonstrations of

history. Instances might be multiplied without end. There is also a decided tone in his descriptions, an eloquent dogmatism, as if the poet spoke from thorough conviction, which Milton probably derived from his spirit of partisanship, or else his spirit of partisanship from the natural firmness and vehemence of his mind. In this Milton resembles Dante (the only one of the moderns with whom he has anything in common); and it is remarkable that Dante, as well as Milton, was a political partisan. That approximation to the severity of impassioned prose which has been made an objection to Milton's poetry, is one of its chief excellences. It has been suggested, that the vividness with which he describes visible objects might be owing to their having acquired a greater strength in his mind after the privation of sight; but we find the same palpableness and solidity in the descriptions which occur in his early poems. There is, indeed, the same depth of impression in his descriptions of the objects of the other senses. Milton had as much of what is meant by *gusto* as any poet. He forms the most intense conceptions of things, and then embodies them by a single stroke of his pen. Force of style is perhaps his first excellence. Hence he stimulates us most in the reading, and less afterwards.

It has been said that Milton's ideas were musical rather than picturesque, but this observation is not true, in the sense in which it was meant. The ear, indeed, predominates over the eye, because it is more immediately affected, and because the language of music blends more immediately with, and forms a more natural accompaniment to, the variable and indefinite associations of ideas conveyed by words. But where the associations of the imagination are not the principal thing, the individual object is given by Milton with equal force and beauty. The strongest and best proof of this, as a characteristic power of his mind, is that the persons of

Adam and Eve, of Satan, &c., are always accompanied in our imagination with the grandeur of the naked figure; they convey to us the ideas of sculpture. As an instance, take the following :

——— “ He soon
 Saw within ken a glorious Angel stand,
 The same whom John saw also in the sun :
 His back was turned, but not his brightness hid ;
 Of beaming sunny rays a golden tiar
 Circled his head, nor less his locks behind
 Illustrious on his shoulders fledged with wings
 Lay waving round ; on some great charge employ'd
 He seem'd, or fix'd in cogitation deep.
 Glad was the spirit impure, as now in hope
 To find who might direct his wand'ring flight
 To Paradise, the happy seat of man,
 His journey's end, and our beginning woe.
 But first he casts to change his proper shape,
 Which else might work him danger or delay :
 And now a stripling cherub he appears.
 Not of the prime, yet such as in his face
 Youth smiled celestial, and to every limb
 Suitable grace diffus'd, so well he feign'd :
 Under a coronet his flowing hair
 In curls on either cheek play'd ; wings he wore
 Of many a colour'd plume sprinkled with gold,
 His habit fit for speed succinct, and held
 Before his decent steps a silver wand.”

The figures introduced here have all the elegance and precision of a Greek statue.

Milton's blank verse is the only blank verse in the language (except Shakspeare's) which is readable. Dr. Johnson, who had modelled his ideas of versification on the regular sing-song of Pope, condemns the 'Paradise Lost' as harsh and unequal. We shall not pretend to say that this is not sometimes the case; for where a degree of excellence beyond the mechanical rules of art is attempted the poet must sometimes fail. But we imagine that there are more perfect examples in Milton

of musical expression, or of an adaptation of the sound and movement of the verse to the meaning of the passage, than in all our other writers, whether of rhyme or blank verse, put together (with the exception already mentioned). Spenser is the most harmonious of our poets, and Dryden is the most sounding and varied of our rhymists. But in neither is there anything like the same ear for music, the same power of approximating the varieties of poetical to those of musical rhythm, as there is in our great epic poet. The sound of his lines is moulded into the expression of the sentiment, almost of the very image. They rise or fall, pause or hurry rapidly on, with exquisite art, but without the least trick or affectation, as the occasion seems to require.

The following are some of the finest instances:—

——— “ His hand was known
In Heaven by many a tower'd structure high;
Nor was his name unheard or unador'd
In ancient Greece; and in the Ausonian land
Men called him Mulciber: and how he fell
From Heav'n, they fabled, thrown by angry Jove
Sheer o'er the crystal battlements; from morn
To noon he fell, from noon to dewy eve,
A summer's day; and with the setting sun
Dropt from the zenith like a falling star
On Lemnos, the Ægean isle: this they relate,
Erring.”

——— “ But chief the spacious hall
Thick swarm'd, both on the ground and in the air,
Brush'd with the hiss of rustling wings. As bees
In springtime, when the sun with Taurus rides,
Pour forth their populous youth about the hive
In clusters; they among fresh dews and flow'rs
Fly to and fro; or on the smoothed plank,
The suburb of their straw-built citadel,
New rubb'd with balm, expatiate and confer
Their state affairs. So thick the airy crowd
Swarm'd and were straiten'd; till, the signal giv'n,
Behold a wonder! They but now who seem'd
In bigness to surpass earth's giant sons,

Now less than smallest dwarfs, in narrow room
 Throng numberless, like that Pygmean race
 Beyond the Indian mount, or fairy elves,
 Whose midnight revels by a forest side
 Or fountain some belated peasant sees,
 Or dreams he sees, while overhead the moon
 Sits arbitress, and nearer to the earth
 Wheels her pale course : they on their mirth and dance
 Intent, with jocund music charm his ear ;
 At once with joy and fear his heart rebounds."

We can only give another instance ; though we have some difficulty in leaving off. "What a pity," said an ingenious person of our acquaintance, "that Milton had not the pleasure of reading 'Paradise Lost'!"—

"Round he surveys (and well might, where he stood
 So high above the circling canopy
 Of night's extended shade), from eastern point
 Of Libra to the fleecy star that bears
 Andromeda far off Atlantic seas
 Beyond th' horizon : then from pole to pole
 He views in breadth, and without longer pause
 Down right into the world's first region throws
 His flight precipitant, and winds with ease
 Through the pure marble air his oblique way
 Amongst innumerable stars, that shone
 Stars distant, but nigh hand seem'd other worlds ;
 Or other worlds they seem'd or happy isles," &c.

The verse, in this exquisitely modulated passage, floats up and down as if it had itself wings. Milton has himself given us the theory of his versification—

"In many a winding bout
 Of linked sweetness long drawn out."

Dr. Johnson and Pope would have converted his vaulting Pegasus into a rocking-horse. Read any other blank verse but Milton's—Thomson's, Young's, Cowper's, Wordsworth's—and it will be found, from the want of

the same insight into "the hidden soul of harmony," to be mere lumbering prose.¹

No. XII.

On Manner.

It was the opinion of Lord Chesterfield, that *manner* is of more importance than *matter*. This opinion seems at least to be warranted by the practice of the world; nor do we think it so entirely without foundation as some

¹ The following appears in the edition of 1817 as a sort of annex to the present article:—

To the President of 'The Round Table.'

SIR,—It is somewhat remarkable, that in Pope's 'Essay on Criticism' (not a very long poem) there are no less than half a score couplets rhyming to the word *sense*:

- "But of the two, less dangerous is the offence
To tire our patience than mislead our sense."—*lines* 3, 4.
- "In search of wit these lose their common sense,
And then turn critics in their own defence."—*l.* 28, 29.
- "Pride, where wit fails, steps in to our defence,
And fills up all the mighty void of sense."—*l.* 209-10.
- "Some by old words to fame have made pretence,
Ancients in phrase, mere moderns in their sense."—*l.* 324-5.
- "'Tis not enough no harshness gives offence;
The sound must seem an echo to the sense."—*l.* 364-5.
- "At every trifle scorn to take offence
That always shows great pride or little sense."—*l.* 386-7.
- "Be silent always, when you doubt your sense,
And speak, though sure, with seeming diffidence."—*l.* 366-7.
- "Be niggards of advice on no pretence,
For the worst avarice is that of sense."—*l.* 578-9.
- "Strain out the last dull dropping of their sense,
And rhyme with all the rage of impotence."—*l.* 608-9.
- "Horace still charms with graceful negligence,
And without method talks us into sense."—*l.* 653-4.

I am, Sir, your humble servant,

A SMALL CRITIC.

persons of more solid than showy pretensions would make us believe. In the remarks which we are going to make, we can scarcely hope to have any party very warmly on our side ; for the most superficial coxcomb would be thought to owe his success to sterling merit.

What any person says or does is one thing ; the mode in which he says or does it is another. The last of these is what we understand by *manner*. In other words, manner is the involuntary or incidental expression given to our thoughts and sentiments by looks, tones, and gestures. Now, we are inclined in many cases to prefer this latter mode of judging of what passes in the mind to more positive and formal proof, were it for no other reason than that it is involuntary. "Look," says Lord Chesterfield, "in the face of the person to whom you are speaking, if you wish to know his real sentiments ; for he can command his words more easily than his countenance." We may perform certain actions from design, or repeat certain professions by rote : the manner of doing either will in general be the best test of our sincerity. The mode of conferring a favour is often thought of more value than the favour itself. The actual obligation may spring from a variety of questionable motives—vanity, affectation, or interest ; the cordiality with which the person from whom you have received it asks you how you do, or shakes you by the hand, does not admit of misinterpretation. The manner of doing anything is that which marks the degree and force of our internal impressions ; it emanates most directly from our immediate or habitual feelings ; it is that which stamps its life and character on any action ; the rest may be performed by an automaton. What is it that makes the difference between the best and the worst actor, but the manner of going through the same part ? The one has a perfect idea of the degree and force with which certain feelings operate in nature, and the other

has no idea at all of the workings of passion. There would be no difference between the worst actor in the world and the best, placed in real circumstances, and under the influence of real passion. A writer may express the thoughts he has borrowed from another, but not with the same force, unless he enters into the true spirit of them. Otherwise he will resemble a person reading what he does not understand, whom you immediately detect by his wrong emphasis. His illustrations will be literally exact, but misplaced and awkward; he will not gradually warm with his subject, nor feel the force of what he says, nor produce the same effect on his readers. An author's style is not less a criterion of his understanding than his sentiments. The same story told by two different persons shall, from the difference of the manner, either set the table in a roar or not relax a feature in the whole company. We sometimes complain (perhaps rather unfairly) that particular persons possess more vivacity than wit. But we ought to take into the account, that their very vivacity arises from their enjoying the joke; and their humouring a story by drollery of gesture or archness of look shows only that they are acquainted with the different ways in which the sense of the ludicrous expresses itself. It is not the mere dry jest, but the relish which the person himself has of it, with which we sympathise. For in all that tends to pleasure and excitement, the capacity for enjoyment is the principal point. One of the most pleasant and least tiresome persons of our acquaintance is a humourist, who has three or four quaint witticisms and proverbial phrases, which he always repeats over and over; but he does this with just the same vivacity and freshness as ever, so that you feel the same amusement with less effort than if he had startled his hearers with a succession of original conceits. Another friend of ours, who never fails to give vent to one or two real

jeux d'esprit every time you meet him, from the pain with which he is delivered of them, and the uneasiness he seems to suffer all the rest of the time, makes a much more interesting than comfortable companion. If you see a person in pain for himself, it naturally puts you in pain for him. The art of pleasing consists in being pleased. To be amiable is to be satisfied with one's self and others. Good-humour is essential to pleantry. It is this circumstance, among others, that renders the wit of Rabelais so much more delightful than that of Swift, who, with all his satire, is "as dry as the remainder biscuit after a voyage." In society, good-temper and animal spirits are nearly everything. They are of more importance than sallies of wit, or refinements of understanding. They give a general tone of cheerfulness and satisfaction to the company. The French have the advantage over us in external manners. They breathe a lighter air, and have a brisker circulation of the blood. They receive and communicate their impressions more freely. The interchange of ideas costs them less. Their constitutional gaiety is a kind of natural intoxication, which does not require any other stimulus. The English are not so well off in this respect; and Falstaff's commendation on sack was evidently intended for his countrymen—whose "learning is often a mere hoard of gold kept by a devil, till wine commences it, and sets it in act and use."¹ More undertakings fail for want of spirit than for want of sense. Confidence gives a fool the advantage over a wise man. In general, a strong passion for any object will ensure

¹ "A good sherris-sack hath a twofold operation in it. It ascends me into the brain, dries me there all the foolish, dull, and crudy vapours which environ it; and makes it apprehensive, quick, forgetive, full of nimble, fiery, and delectable shapes, which, delivered over to the tongue (the voice), which is the birth, become excellent wit," &c.—*Second Part of Henry IV.*, iv. 3 [edit. Dyce, 1868, vol. iv. p. 375].

success, for the desire of the end will point out the means. We apprehend that people usually complain, without reason, of not succeeding in various pursuits according to their deserts. Such persons, we will grant, may have great merit in all other respects; but in that in which they fail, it will almost invariably hold true, that they do not deserve to succeed. For instance, a person who has spent his life in thinking will acquire a habit of reflection; but he will neither become a dancer nor a singer, rich nor beautiful. In like manner, if any one complains of not succeeding in affairs of gallantry, we will venture to say it is because he is not gallant. He has mistaken his talent—that's all. If any person of exquisite sensibility makes love awkwardly, it is because he does not feel it as he should. One of these disappointed sentimentalists may very probably feel it upon reflection, may brood over it till he has worked himself up to a pitch of frenzy, and write his mistress the finest love-letters in the world, in her absence; but, be assured, he does not feel an atom of this passion in her presence. If, in paying her a compliment, he frowns with more than usual severity, or, in presenting her with a bunch of flowers, seems as if he was going to turn his back upon her, he can only expect to be laughed at for his pains; nor can he plead an excess of feeling as an excuse for want of common sense. She may say: "It is not with me you are in love, but with the ridiculous chimeras of your own brain. You are thinking of Sophia Western, or some other heroine, and not of me. Go and make love to your romances."

Lord Chesterfield's character of the Duke of Marlborough is a good illustration of his general theory. He says: "Of all the men I ever knew in my life (and I knew him extremely well), the late Duke of Marlborough possessed the graces in the highest degree, not to say engrossed them; for I will venture (contrary to

the custom of profound historians, who always assign deep causes for great events) to ascribe the better half of the Duke of Marlborough's greatness and riches to those graces. He was eminently illiterate; wrote bad English, and spelt it worse. He had no share of what is commonly called parts—that is, no brightness, nothing shining, in his genius. He had most undoubtedly an excellent good plain understanding with sound judgment. But these alone would probably have raised him but something higher than they found him, which was, page to King James II.'s Queen. There the Graces protected and promoted him; for while he was ensign of the Guards, the Duchess of Cleveland, then favourite mistress of Charles II., struck by these very graces, gave him £5000, with which he immediately bought an annuity of £500 a year, which was the foundation of his subsequent fortune. His figure was beautiful, but his manner was irresistible by either man or woman. It was by this engaging, graceful manner that he was enabled, during all his wars, to connect the various and jarring Powers of the Grand Alliance, and to carry them on to the main object of the war, notwithstanding their private and separate views, jealousies, and wrongheadedness. Whatever court he went to (and he was often obliged to go himself to some resty and refractory ones), he has constantly prevailed, and brought them into his measures."¹

Grace in women has more effect than beauty. We sometimes see a certain fine self-possession, an habitual voluptuousness of character, which reposes on its own sensations and derives pleasure from all around it, that is more irresistible than any other attractions. There

¹ We have an instance in our own times of a man, equally devoid of understanding and principle, but who manages the House of Commons by his *manner* alone. [Meaning Lord Castlereagh.—MS. note in a copy of edit. 1817.]

is an air of languid enjoyment in such persons, "in their eyes, in their arms, and their hands, and their faces," which robs us of ourselves, and draws us by a secret sympathy towards them. Their minds are a shrine where pleasure reposes. Their smiles diffuse a sensation like the breath of spring. Petrarch's description of Laura answers exactly to this character, which is indeed the Italian character. Titian's portraits are full of it; they seem sustained by sentiment, or as if the persons whom he painted sat to music. There is one in the Louvre (or there was) which had the most of this expression we ever remember. It did not look downward; "it looked forward, beyond this world." It was a look that never passed away, but remained unalterable as the deep sentiment which gave birth to it. It is the same constitutional character (together with infinite activity of mind) which has enabled the greatest man in modern history to bear his reverses of fortune with gay magnanimity, and to submit to the loss of the empire of the world with as little discomposure as if he had been playing a game at chess.

Grace has been defined as the outward expression of the inward harmony of the soul. Foreigners have more of this than the English—particularly the people of the southern and eastern countries. Their motions appear (like the expression of their countenances) to have a more immediate communication with their feelings. The inhabitants of the northern climates, compared with these children of the sun, are like hard inanimate machines, with difficulty set in motion. A strolling gipsy will offer to tell your fortune with a grace and an insinuation of address that would be admired in a court.¹ The Hindoos that we see about the streets are

¹ Mr. Wordsworth, who has written a sonnet to the King on the good that he has done in the last fifty years, has made an attack on a set of gipsies for having done nothing in four-and-twenty hours:

another example of this. They are a different race of people from ourselves. They wander about in a luxurious dream. They are like part of a glittering procession—like revellers in some gay carnival. Their life is a dance, a measure; they hardly seem to tread the earth, but are borne along in some more genial element, and bask in the radiance of brighter suns. We may understand this difference of climate by recollecting the difference of our own sensations at different times, in the fine glow of summer or when we are pinched and dried up by a north-east wind. Even the foolish Chinese,

“The stars had gone their rounds, but they had not stirred from their place.” And why should they, if they were comfortable where they were? We did not expect this turn from Mr. Wordsworth, whom we had considered as the prince of poetical idlers, and patron of the philosophy of indolence, who formerly insisted on our spending our time “in a wise passiveness.” Mr. W. will excuse us if we are not converts to his recantation of his original doctrine; for he who changes his opinion loses his authority. We did not look for this Sunday-school philosophy from him. What had he himself been doing in these four-and-twenty hours? Had he been admiring a flower, or writing a sonnet? We hate the doctrine of utility, even in a philosopher, and much more in a poet; for the only real utility is that which leads to enjoyment, and the end is, in all cases, better than the means. A friend of ours from the North of England proposed to make Stonehenge of some use, by building houses with it. Mr. W.’s quarrel with the Gipsies is an improvement on this extravagance, for the Gipsies are the only living monuments of the first ages of society. They are an everlasting source of thought and reflection on the advantages and disadvantages of the progress of civilisation; they are a better answer to the cotton manufactories than Mr. W. has given in the ‘Excursion.’ “They are a grotesque ornament to the civil order.” We should be sorry to part with Mr. Wordsworth’s poetry, because it amuses and interests us: we should be still sorrier to part with the tents of our old friends, the Bohemian philosophers, because they amuse and interest us more. If any one goes a journey, the principal event in it is his meeting with a party of gipsies. The pleasantest trait in the character of Sir Roger de Coverley, is his interview with the gipsy fortune-teller. This is enough.

who go about twirling their fans and their windmills, show the same delight in them as the children they collect around them. The people of the East make it their business to sit and think and do nothing. They indulge in endless reverie, for the incapacity of enjoyment does not impose on them the necessity of action. There is a striking example of this passion for castle-building in the story of the glass-man in the Arabian Nights.

After all, we would not be understood to say that manner is everything. Nor would we put Euclid or Sir Isaac Newton on a level with the first *petit-maitre* we might happen to meet. We consider Æsop's Fables to have been a greater work of genius than Fontaine's translation of them; though we doubt whether we should not prefer Fontaine, for his style only, to Gay, who has shown a great deal of original invention. The elegant manners of people of fashion have been objected to us to show the frivolity of external accomplishments, and the facility with which they are acquired. As to the last point, we demur. There is no class of people who lead so laborious a life, or who take more pains to cultivate their minds as well as persons, than people of fashion. A young lady of quality, who has to devote so many hours a day to music, so many to dancing, so many to drawing, so many to French, Italian, &c., certainly does not pass her time in idleness; and these accomplishments are afterwards called into action by every kind of external or mental stimulus, by the excitements of pleasure, vanity, and interest. A ministerial or opposition lord goes through more drudgery than half a dozen literary hacks; nor does a reviewer by profession read half the same number of productions as a modern fine lady is obliged to labour through. We confess, however, we are not competent judges of the degree of elegance or refinement implied in the general tone of fashionable

manners. The successful experiment made by Peregrine Pickle, in introducing his strolling mistress into genteel company, does not redound greatly to their credit. In point of elegance of external appearance, we see no difference between women of fashion and women of a different character who dress in the same style.

No. XIII.

On the Tendency of Sects.

THERE is a natural tendency in sects to narrow the mind.

The extreme stress laid upon differences of minor importance, to the neglect of more general truths and broader views of things, gives an inverted bias to the understanding; and this bias is continually increased by the eagerness of controversy, and captious hostility to the prevailing system. A party-feeling of this kind once formed will insensibly communicate itself to other topics; and will be too apt to lead its votaries to a contempt for the opinions of others, a jealousy of every difference of sentiment, and a disposition to arrogate all sound principle as well as understanding to themselves and those who think with them. We can readily conceive how such persons, from fixing too high a value on the practical pledge which they have given of the independence and sincerity of their opinions, come at last to entertain a suspicion of every one else as acting under the shackles of prejudice or the mask of hypocrisy. All those who have not given in their unqualified protests against received doctrines and established authority, are supposed to labour under an acknowledged incapacity to form a rational determination on any subject whatever. Any argument, not having the presumption of singularity in its favour, is immediately set aside as

nugatory. There is, however, no prejudice so strong as that which arises from a fancied exemption from all prejudice. For this last implies not only the practical conviction that it is right, but the theoretical assumption that it cannot be wrong. From considering all objections as in this manner "null and void," the mind becomes so thoroughly satisfied with its own conclusions as to render any further examination of them superfluous, and confounds its exclusive pretensions to reason with the absolute possession of it. Those who, from their professing to submit everything to the test of reason, have acquired the name of Rational Dissenters, have their weak sides as well as other people; nor do we know of any class of disputants more disposed to take their opinions for granted than those who call themselves Freethinkers. A long habit of objecting to everything establishes a monopoly in the right of contradiction—a prescriptive title to the privilege of starting doubts and difficulties in the common belief, without being liable to have our own called in question. There cannot be a more infallible way to prove that we must be in the right, than by maintaining roundly that every one else is in the wrong. Not only the opposition of sects to one another, but their unanimity among themselves, strengthens their confidence in their peculiar notions. They feel themselves invulnerable behind the double fence of sympathy with themselves and antipathy to the rest of the world. Backed by the zealous support of their followers, they become equally intolerant with respect to the opinions of others and tenacious of their own. They fortify themselves within the narrow circle of their newfangled prejudices; the whole exercise of their right of private judgment is after a time reduced to the repetition of a set of watchwords, which have been adopted as the shibboleth of the party; and their extremest points of faith pass as current as the bead-roll

and legends of the Catholics, or St. Athanasius' Creed and the Thirty-nine Articles. We certainly are not going to recommend the establishment of articles of faith, or implicit assent to them, as favourable to the progress of philosophy; but neither has the spirit of opposition to them this tendency, as far as relates to its immediate effects, however useful it may be in its remote consequences. The spirit of controversy substitutes the irritation of personal feeling for the independent exertion of the understanding; and when this irritation ceases, the mind flags for want of a sufficient stimulus to urge it on. It discharges all its energy with its spleen. Besides, this perpetual cavilling with the opinions of others, detecting petty flaws in their arguments, calling them to a literal account for their absurdities, and squaring their doctrines by a pragmatistical standard of our own, is necessarily adverse to any great enlargement of mind or original freedom of thought.¹ The constant attention bestowed on a few contested points, by at once flattering our pride, our prejudices, and our indolence, supersedes more general inquiries; and the bigoted controversialist, by dint of repeating a certain formula of belief, shall not only convince himself that all those who differ from him are undoubtedly wrong on that point, but that their knowledge on all others must be comparatively slight and superficial. We have known some very worthy and well-informed Biblical critics, who, by

¹ The Dissenters in this country (if we except the founders of sects, who fall under a class by themselves) have produced only two remarkable men, Priestley and Jonathan Edwards. The work of the latter on the Will is written with as much power of logic, and more in the true spirit of philosophy, than any other metaphysical work in the language. His object throughout is not to perplex the question, but to satisfy his own mind and the reader's. In general, the principle of Dissent arises more from want of sympathy and imagination, than from strength of reason. The spirit of contradiction is not the spirit of philosophy.

virtue of having discovered that one was not three, or that the same body could not be in two places at once, would be disposed to treat the whole Council of Trent, with Father Paul at their head, with very little deference, and to consider Leo X., with all his court, as no better than drivellers. Such persons will hint to you, as an additional proof of his genius, that Milton was a Non-conformist, and will excuse the faults of 'Paradise Lost,' as Dr. Johnson magnified them, because the author was a Republican. By the all-sufficiency of their merits in believing certain truths which have been "hid from ages," they are elevated, in their own imagination, to a higher sphere of intellect, and are released from the necessity of pursuing the more ordinary tracks of inquiry. Their faculties are imprisoned in a few favourite dogmas, and they cannot break through the trammels of a sect. Hence we may remark a hardness and setness in the ideas of those who have been brought up in this way, an aversion to those finer and more delicate operations of the intellect, of taste, and genius, which require greater flexibility and variety of thought, and do not afford the same opportunity for dogmatical assertion and controversial cabal. The distaste of the Puritans, Quakers, &c. to pictures, music, poetry, and the fine arts in general, may be traced to this source as much as to their affected disdain of them, as not sufficiently spiritual and remote from the gross impurity of sense.¹

We learn from the interest we take in things, and according to the number of things in which we take an interest. Our ignorance of the real value of different

¹ The modern Quakers come as near the mark in these cases as they can. They do not go to plays, but they are great attenders of spouting-clubs and lectures. They do not frequent concerts, but run after pictures. We do not know exactly how they stand with respect to the circulating libraries. A Quaker poet would be a literary phenomenon. [A phenomenon witnessed, however, in Bernard Barton only a few years after the writing of this paper.]

objects and pursuits will in general keep pace with our contempt for them. To set out with denying common sense to every one else is not the way to be wise ourselves; nor shall we be likely to learn much if we suppose that no one can teach us anything worth knowing. Again, a contempt for the habits and manners of the world is as prejudicial as a contempt for its opinions. A puritanical abhorrence of everything that does not fall in with our immediate prejudices and customs must effectually cut us off, not only from a knowledge of the world and of human nature, but of good and evil, of vice and virtue—at least, if we can credit the assertion of Plato (which, to some degree, we do), that the knowledge of everything implies the knowledge of its opposite. “There is some soul of goodness in things evil.” A most respectable sect among ourselves (we mean the Quakers) have carried this system of negative qualities nearly to perfection. They labour diligently, and with great success, to exclude all ideas from their minds which they might have in common with others. On the principle that “evil communications corrupt good manners,” they retain a virgin purity of understanding and laudable ignorance of all liberal arts and sciences; they take every precaution, and keep up a perpetual quarantine against the infection of other people’s vices—or virtues; they pass through the world like figures cut out of pasteboard or wood, turning neither to the right nor the left; and their minds are no more affected by the example of the follies, the pursuits, the pleasures, or the passions of mankind, than the clothes which they wear. Their ideas want *airing*; they are the worse for not being used; for fear of soiling them they keep them folded up and laid by in a sort of mental clothes-press through the whole of their lives. They take their notions on trust from one generation to another—like the scanty cut of their coats—and are so wrapped up in these traditional

maxims, and so pin their faith on them, that one of the most intelligent of this class of people, not long ago, assured us that "war was a thing that was going quite out of fashion." This abstract sort of existence may have its advantages, but it takes away all the ordinary sources of a moral imagination, as well as strength of intellect. Interest is the only link that connects them with the world. We can understand the high enthusiasm and religious devotion of monks and anchorites, who gave up the world and its pleasures to dedicate themselves to a sublime contemplation of a future state; but the sect of the Quakers, who have transplanted the maxims of the desert into manufacturing towns and populous cities—who have converted the solitary cells of the religious orders into counting-houses, their beads into ledgers, and keep a regular 'debtor and creditor' account between this world and the next—puzzle us mightily. The Dissenter is not vain, but conceited—that is, he makes up by his own good opinion for the want of the cordial admiration of others; but this often stands their self-love in so good stead that they need not envy their dignified opponents who repose on lawn sleeves and ermine. The unmerited obloquy and dislike to which they are exposed has made them cold and reserved in their intercourse with society. The same cause will account for the dryness and general homeliness of their style. They labour under a sense of the want of public sympathy. They pursue truth, for its own sake, into its private recesses and obscure corners. They have to dig their way along a narrow underground passage. It is not their object to shine; they have none of the usual incentives of vanity—light, airy, and ostentatious. Archbishopal sees and mitres do not glitter in their distant horizon. They are not wafted on the wings of fancy, fanned by the breath of popular applause. The voice of the world, the tide of opinion, is

not with them. They do not, therefore, aim at *éclat*—at outward pomp and show. They have a plain ground to work upon, and they do not attempt to embellish it with idle ornaments. It would be in vain to strew the flowers of poetry round the borders of the Unitarian controversy.

There is one quality common to all sectaries, and that is, a principle of strong fidelity. They are the safest partisans and the steadiest friends. Indeed, they are almost the only people who have any idea of an abstract attachment, either to a cause or to individuals, from a sense of duty, independently of prosperous or adverse circumstances, and in spite of opposition.¹

No. XIV.

On 'John Bunclé.'²

JOHN BUNCLE is the English Rabelais. This is an author with whom, perhaps, many of our readers are not acquainted, and whom we therefore wish to introduce to their notice. As most of our countrymen delight in English generals and in English admirals, in English courtiers and in English kings, so our great delight is in English authors.

The soul of Francis Rabelais passed into John Amory, the author of 'The Life and Adventures of John Bunclé.' Both were physicians, and enemies of too much gravity.

¹ We have made the above observations, not as theological partisans, but as natural historians. We shall some time or other give the reverse of the picture; for there are vices inherent in establishments and their thorough-paced adherents, which well deserve to be distinctly pointed out.

² An edition of Amory's work appeared in 1825, 3 vols. 12mo., of which the writer of this paper was accredited with the editorship. See, however, 'Memoirs of W. H.,' 1867, vol. ii. p. 195.—Ed.

Their great business was to enjoy life. Rabelais indulges his spirit of sensuality in wine, in dried neats-tongues, in Bologna sausages, in botargos. John Bunclé shows the same symptoms of inordinate satisfaction in tea and bread-and-butter. While Rabelais roared with Friar John and the monks, John Bunclé gossiped with the ladies, and with equal and uncontrolled gaiety. These two authors possessed all the insolence of health, so that their works give a fillip to the constitution; but they carried off the exuberance of their natural spirits in different ways. The title of one of Rabelais' chapters (and the contents answer to the title) is, "How they chirped over their cups." The title of a corresponding chapter in '*John Bunclé*' would run thus: "The author is invited to spend the evening with the divine Miss Hawkins, and goes accordingly; with the delightful conversation that ensued." Natural philosophers are said to extract sunbeams from ice; our author has performed the same feat upon the cold quaint subtleties of theology. His constitutional alacrity overcomes every obstacle. He converts the thorns and briars of controversial divinity into a bed of roses. He leads the most refined and virtuous of their sex through the mazes of inextricable problems with the air of a man walking a minuet in a drawing-room; mixes up in the most natural and careless manner the academy of compliments with the rudiments of algebra; or passes with rapturous indifference from the First of St. John and a disquisition on the Logos to the no less metaphysical doctrines of the principle of self-preservation or the continuation of the species. '*John Bunclé*' is certainly one of the most singular productions in the language, and herein lies its peculiarity. It is a Unitarian romance, and one in which the soul and body are equally attended to. The hero is a great philosopher, mathematician, anatomist, chemist, philologist, and divine, with a good appetite, the best

spirits, and an amorous constitution, who sets out on a series of strange adventures to propagate his philosophy, his divinity, and his species, and meets with a constant succession of accomplished females, adorned with equal beauty, wit, and virtue, who are always ready to discuss all kinds of theoretical and practical points with him. His angels—and all his women are angels—have all taken their degrees in more than one science; love is natural to them. He is sure to find

“A mistress and a saint in every grove.”

Pleasure and business, wisdom and mirth, take their turns with the most agreeable regularity: *A joci ad seria, in seriis vicissim ad jocos transire*. After a chapter of calculations in fluxions, or on the descent of tongues, the lady and gentleman fall from Platonics to hoydening, in a manner as truly edifying as anything in the scenes of Vanbrugh or Sir George Etherege. No writer ever understood so well the art of relief. The effect is like travelling in Scotland, and coming all of a sudden to a spot of habitable ground. His mode of making love is admirable. He takes it quite easily, and never thinks of a refusal. His success gives him confidence, and his confidence gives him success. For example: in the midst of one of his rambles in the mountains of Cumberland he unexpectedly comes to an elegant country-seat, where, walking on the lawn with a book in her hand, he sees a most enchanting creature, the owner of the mansion. Our hero is on fire, leaps the ha-ha which separates them, presents himself before the lady with an easy but respectful air, begs to know the subject of her meditation; they enter into conversation, mutual explanations take place, a declaration of love is made, and the wedding-day is fixed for the following Tuesday. Our author now leads a life of perfect happiness with his beautiful Miss Noel, in a charming solitude, for a

few weeks, till, on his return from one of his rambles in the mountains, he finds her a corpse. He "*sits with his eyes shut for seven days,*" absorbed in silent grief; he then bids adieu to melancholy reflections—not being one of that sect of philosophers who think that "man was made to mourn"—takes horse, and sets out for the nearest watering-place. As he alights at the first inn on the road, a lady dressed in a rich green riding-habit steps out of a coach; John Bunce hands her into the inn, they drink tea together, they converse, they find an exact harmony of sentiment, a declaration of love follows as a matter of course, and that day week they are married. Death, however, contrives to keep up the ball for him; he marries seven wives in succession, and buries them all. In short, John Bunce's gravity sat upon him with the happiest indifference possible. He danced the Hays with religion and morality with the ease of a man of fashion and of pleasure. He was determined to see fair-play between grace and nature—between his immortal and his mortal part; and, in case of any difficulty, upon the principle of "first come first served," made sure of the present hour. We sometimes suspect him of a little hypocrisy, but upon a closer inspection it appears to be only an affectation of hypocrisy. His fine constitution comes to his relief, and floats him over the shoals and quicksands that lie in his way, "most dolphin-like." You see him, from mere happiness of nature, chuckling with inward satisfaction in the midst of his periodical penances, his grave grimaces, his death's-heads and *memento moris* :

——— "And there the antic sits
Mocking his state, and grinning at his pomp."

As men make use of olives to give a relish to their wine, so John Bunce made use of philosophy to give a relish to life. He stops in a ball-room at Harrogate to

moralise on the small number of faces that appeared there out of those he remembered some years before ; all were gone whom he saw at a still more distant period ; but this casts no damper on his spirits, and he only dances the longer and better for it. He suffers nothing unpleasant to remain long upon his mind. He gives, in one place, a miserable description of two emaciated valetudinarians whom he met at an inn, supping a little mutton-broth with difficulty ; but he immediately contrasts himself with them in fine relief. " While I beheld things with astonishment, the servant," he says, " brought in dinner—a pound of rump-steaks and a quart of green peas, two cuts of bread, a tankard of strong beer, and a pint of port-wine ; *with a fine appetite I soon despatched my mess, and over my wine, to help digestion, began to sing the following lines.*" The astonishment of the two strangers was now as great as his own had been.

We wish to enable our readers to judge for themselves of the style of our whimsical moralist, but are at a loss what to choose—whether his account of his man O'Fin, or of his friend Tom Fleming, or of his being chased over the mountains by robbers, " whisking before them like the wind away," as if it were high sport ; or his address to the sun, which is an admirable piece of serious eloquence ; or his character of six Irish gentlemen—Mr. Gollogher, Mr. Gallaspy, Mr. Dunkley, Mr. Makins, Mr. Monaghan, and Mr. O'Keefe—the last " descended from the Irish kings, and first-cousin to the great O'Keefe, who was buried not long ago in Westminster Abbey." He professes to give an account of these Irish gentlemen, " for the honour of Ireland, and as they were curiosities of humankind." Curiosities, indeed, but not so great as their historian !—

" Mr. Makins was the only one of the set who was not tall and handsome. He was a very low thin man, not four feet high, and had but one eye, with which he

squinted most shockingly. But as he was matchless on the fiddle, sang well, and chatted agreeably, he was a favourite with the ladies. They preferred ugly Makins (as he was called) to many very handsome men. He was a Unitarian."

"Mr. Monaghan was an honest and charming fellow. This gentleman and Mr. Dunkley married ladies they fell in love with at Harrogate Wells; Dunkley had the fair Alcmena, Miss Cox of Northumberland; and Monaghan, Antiope with haughty charms, Miss Pearson of Cumberland. They lived very happy many years, and their children, I hear, are settled in Ireland!"¹

Gentle reader, here is the character of Mr. Gallaspy:

"Gallaspy was the tallest and strongest man I have ever seen, well-made, and very handsome: had wit and abilities, sang well, and talked with great sweetness and fluency, but was so extremely wicked that it were better for him if he had been a natural fool. By his vast strength and activity, his riches and eloquence, few things could withstand him. He was the most profane swearer I have known; fought everything, whored everything, and drank seven-in-hand—that is, seven glasses so placed between the fingers of his right hand that, in drinking, the liquor fell into the next glasses, and thereby he drank out of the first glass seven glasses at once. This was a common thing, I find from a book in my possession, in the reign of Charles II., in the madness that followed the restoration of that profligate and worthless prince.¹ But this gentleman was the only man I ever saw who could or would attempt to do it; and he made but one gulp of whatever he drank. He did not swallow a fluid like other people, but if it was a quart, poured it in as from pitcher to pitcher. When he smoked tobacco, he always blew two pipes at

¹ Is all this a rhodomontade, or literal matter of fact, not credible in these degenerate days?

once, one at each corner of his mouth, and threw the smoke out at both his nostrils. He had killed two men in duels before I left Ireland, and would have been hanged, but that it was his good fortune to be tried before a judge who never let any man suffer for killing another in this manner. (This was the late Sir John St. Leger.) He debauched all the women he could, and many whom he could not corrupt" The rest of this passage would, we fear, be too rich for the 'Round Table,' as we cannot insert it, in the manner of Mr. Bunclé, in a sandwich of theology. Suffice it to say, that the candour is greater than the candour of Voltaire's 'Candide,' and the modesty equal to Colley Cibber's.

To his friend Mr. Gollogher he consecrates the following irresistible *petit souvenir* :—

"He might, if he had pleased, have married any one of the most illustrious and richest women in the kingdom; but he had an aversion to matrimony, and could not bear the thoughts of a wife. Love and a bottle were his taste. He was, however, the most honourable of men in his amours, and never abandoned any woman in distress, as too many men of fortune do when they have gratified desire. All the distressed were ever sharers in Mr. Gollogher's fine estate, and especially the girls he had taken to his breast. He provided happily for them all, and left nineteen daughters he had by several women a thousand pounds each. This was acting with a temper worthy of a man; and to the memory of the benevolent Tom Gollogher I devote this memorandum."

Lest our readers should form rather a coarse idea of our author from the foregoing passages, we will conclude with another list of friends in a different style :—

"The Conniving-house (as the gentlemen of Trinity called it in my time, and long after) was a little public-house, kept by Jack Macklean, about a quarter of a mile beyond Ringsend, on the top of the beach, within

a few yards of the sea. Here we used to have the finest fish at all times; and, in the season, green peas, and all the most excellent vegetables. The ale here was always extraordinary, and everything the best; which, with its delightful situation, rendered it a delightful place of a summer's evening. Many a delightful evening have I passed in this pretty thatched house with the famous Larry Grogan, who played on the bagpipes extremely well; dear Jack Lattin, matchless on the fiddle, and the most agreeable of companions; that ever-charming young fellow, Jack Wall, the most worthy, the most ingenious, the most engaging of men, the son of Counsellor Maurice Wall; and many other delightful fellows, who went in the days of their youth to the shades of eternity. When I think of them and their evening songs—'We will go to Johnny Macklean's, to try if his ale be good or no,' &c.—and that years and infirmities begin to oppress me—what is life?"

We have another English author, very different from the last-mentioned one, but equal in *naïveté*, and in the perfect display of personal character; we mean Izaak Walton, who wrote the 'Complete Angler.' That well-known work has an extreme simplicity, and an extreme interest, arising out of its very simplicity. In the description of a fishing-tackle you perceive the piety and humanity of the author's mind. This is the best pastoral in the language, not excepting Pope's or Philips's. We doubt whether Sannazarius' 'Piscatory Eclogues' are equal to the scenes described by Walton on the banks of the River Lea. He gives the feeling of the open air. We walk with him along the dusty roadside, or repose on the banks of the river under a shady tree, and in watching for the finny prey imbibe what he beautifully calls "the patience and simplicity of poor honest fishermen." We accompany them to their inn at night, and partake of their simple but delicious fare, while Maud,

the pretty milkmaid, at her mother's desire, sings the classical ditties of Sir Walter Raleigh. Good cheer is not neglected in this work, any more than in 'John Bunce,' or any other history which sets a proper value on the good things of life. The prints in the 'Complete Angler' give an additional reality and interest to the scenes it describes. While Tottenham Cross shall stand, and longer, thy work, amiable and happy old man, shall last!¹

No. XV.

On the Causes of Methodism.

THE first Methodist on record was David. He was the first eminent person we read of who made a regular compromise between religion and morality, between faith and good works. After any trifling peccadillo in point of conduct—as a murder, adultery, perjury, or the like—he ascended with his harp into some high tower of his palace; and having chaunted, in a solemn strain of poetical inspiration, the praises of piety and virtue, made his peace with heaven and his own conscience. This extraordinary genius, in the midst of his personal errors, retained the same lofty abstract enthusiasm for the favourite objects of his contemplation; the character of the poet and the prophet remained unimpaired by the vices of the man—

“Pure in the last recesses of the mind;”

and the best test of the soundness of his principles and the elevation of his sentiments is, that they were proof

¹ One of the most interesting traits of the amiable simplicity of Walton is the circumstance of his friendship for Cotton, one of the “swash-bucklers” of the age. Dr. Johnson said there were only three works which the reader was sorry to come to the end of—'Don Quixote,' 'Robinson Crusoe,' and the 'Pilgrim's Progress.' Perhaps Walton's 'Angler' might be added to the number.

against his practice. The Gnostics afterwards maintained that it was no matter what a man's actions were, so that his understanding was not debauched by them—so that his opinions continued uncontaminated, and *his heart*, as the phrase is, *right towards God*. Strictly speaking, this sect (whatever name it might go by) is as old as human nature itself; for it has existed ever since there was a contradiction between the passions and the understanding—between what we are and what we desire to be. The principle of Methodism is nearly allied to hypocrisy, and almost unavoidably slides into it; yet it is not the same thing; for we can hardly call any one a hypocrite, however much at variance his professions and his actions, who really wishes to be what he would be thought.

The Jewish bard, whom we have placed at the head of this class of devotees, was of a sanguine and robust temperament. Whether he chose “to sinner it or saint it,” he did both most royally, with a fullness of gusto, and carried off his penances and his *faux pas* in a style of oriental grandeur. This is by no means the character of his followers among ourselves, who are a most pitiful set. They may rather be considered as a collection of religious invalids—as the refuse of all that is weak and unsound in body and mind. To speak of them as they deserve, they are not well in the flesh, and therefore they take refuge in the spirit; they are not comfortable here, and they seek for the life to come; they are deficient in steadiness of moral principle, and they trust to grace to make up the deficiency; they are dull and gross in apprehension, and therefore they are glad to substitute faith for reason, and to plunge in the dark, under the supposed sanction of superior wisdom, into every species of mystery and jargon. This is the history of Methodism, which may be defined to be religion with its slobbering-bib and go-cart. It is a bastard kind of

Popery, stripped of its painted pomp and outward ornaments, and reduced to a state of pauperism. "The whole need not a physician." Popery owes its success to its constant appeal to the senses and to the weaknesses of mankind. The Church of England deprives the Methodists of the pride and pomp of the Romish Church; but it has left open to them the appeal to the indolence, the ignorance, and the vices of the people; and the secret of the success of the Catholic faith and Evangelical preaching is the same—both are a religion by proxy. What the one did by auricular confession, absolution, penance, pictures, and crucifixes, the other does, even more compendiously, by grace, election, faith without works, and words without meaning.

In the first place, the same reason makes a man a religious enthusiast that makes a man an enthusiast in any other way—an uncomfortable mind in an uncomfortable body. Poets, authors, and artists in general, have been ridiculed for a pining, puritanical, poverty-struck appearance, which has been attributed to their real poverty. But it would perhaps be nearer the truth to say, that their being poets, artists, &c., has been owing to their original poverty of spirit and weakness of constitution. As a general rule, those who are dissatisfied with themselves will seek to go out of themselves into an ideal world. Persons in strong health and spirits, who take plenty of air and exercise, who are "in favour with their stars," and have a thorough relish of the good things of this life, seldom devote themselves in despair to religion or the Muses. Sedentary, nervous, hypochondriacal people, on the contrary, are forced, for want of an appetite for the real and substantial, to look out for a more airy food and speculative comforts. "Conceit in weakest bodies strongest works." A journeyman sign-painter, whose lungs have imbibed too great a quantity of the effluvia of white-lead, will be seized with

a fantastic passion for the stage ; and Mawworm, tired of standing behind his counter, was eager to mount a tub, mistaking the suppression of his animal spirits for the communication of the Holy Ghost!¹ If you live near a chapel or tabernacle in London, you may almost always tell, from physiognomical signs, which of the passengers will turn the corner to go there. We were once staying in a remote place in the country, where a chapel of this sort had been erected by the force of missionary zeal, and one morning we perceived a long procession of people coming from the next town to the consecration of this same chapel. Never was there such a set of scare-crows! Melancholy tailors, consumptive hairdressers, squinting cobblers, women with child or in the ague, made up the forlorn hope of the pious cavalcade. The pastor of this half-starved flock, we confess, came riding after, with a more goodly aspect, as if he had "with sound of bell been knolled to church, and sat at good men's feasts." He had in truth lately married a thriving widow, and been pampered with hot suppers to strengthen the flesh and the spirit. We have seen several of these "round fat oily men of God,"

" 'That shone all glittering with ungodly dew.' "

They grow sleek and corpulent by getting into better pasture, but they do not appear healthy. They retain the original sin of their constitution, an atrabilious taint in their complexion, and do not put a right-down, hearty, honest, good-looking face upon the matter, like the regular clergy.

Again, Methodism, by its leading doctrines, has a peculiar charm for all those who have an equal facility

¹ Oxberry's manner of acting this character is a very edifying comment on the text : he flings his arms about, like those of a figure pulled by strings, and seems actuated by a pure spirit of infatuation, as if one blast of folly had taken possession of his whole frame,

" And filled up all the mighty void of sense."

in sinning and repenting—in whom the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak—who have neither fortitude to withstand temptation, nor to silence the admonitions of conscience—who like the theory of religion better than the practice, and who are willing to indulge in all the raptures of speculative devotion without being tied down to the dull literal performance of its duties. There is a general propensity in the human mind (even in the most vicious) to pay virtue a distant homage; and this desire is only checked by the fear of condemning ourselves by our own acknowledgments. What an admirable expedient, then, in “that burning and shining light,” Whitfield, and his associates, to make this very disposition to admire and extol the highest patterns of goodness a substitute for, instead of an obligation to, the practice of virtue, to allow us to be quit for “the vice that most easily besets us,” by canting lamentations over the depravity of human nature, and loud hosannahs to the Son of David! How comfortably this doctrine must sit on all those who are loth to give up old habits of vice, or are just tasting the sweets of new ones!—on the withered hag who looks back on a life of dissipation, or the young devotee who looks forward to a life of pleasure; the knavish tradesman retiring from business or entering on it; the battered rake; the sneaking politician, who trims between his place and his conscience, wriggling between heaven and earth, a miserable two-legged creature, with sanctified face and fawning gestures; the maudlin sentimentalist, the religious prostitute, the disinterested poet laureate, the humane war-contractor, or the Society for the Suppression of Vice! This scheme happily turns morality into a sinecure, takes all the practical drudgery and trouble off your hands, “and sweet religion makes a rhapsody of words.” Its proselytes besiege the gates of heaven, like sturdy beggars about the doors of the great, lie and bask in the

sunshine of Divine grace, sigh and groan and bawl out for mercy, expose their sores and blotches to excite commiseration, and cover the deformities of their nature with a garb of borrowed righteousness!

The jargon and nonsense which are so studiously inculcated in the system are another powerful recommendation of it to the vulgar. It does not impose any tax upon the understanding. Its essence is, to be unintelligible. It is *carte blanche* for ignorance and folly. Those, "numbers without number," who are either unable or unwilling to think connectedly or rationally on any subject, are at once released from every obligation of the kind, by being told that faith and reason are opposed to one another, and the greater the impossibility the greater the merit of the faith. A set of phrases which, without conveying any distinct idea, excite our wonder, our fear, our curiosity and desires, which let loose the imagination of the gaping multitude, and confound and baffle common sense, are the common stock-in-trade of the conventicle. They never stop for the distinctions of the understanding, and have thus got the start of other sects, who are so hemmed in with the necessity of giving reasons for their opinions that they cannot get on at all. "Vital Christianity" is no other than an attempt to lower all religion to the level of the capacities of the lowest of the people. One of their favourite places of worship combines the noise and turbulence of a drunken brawl at an alehouse with the indecencies of a bagnio. They strive to gain a vertigo by abandoning their reason, and give themselves up to the intoxications of a distempered zeal that,

"Dissolves them into ecstasies,
And brings all heaven before their eyes."

Religion, without superstition, will not answer the purposes of fanaticism, and we may safely say that

almost every sect of Christianity is a perversion of its essence, to accommodate it to the prejudices of the world. The Methodists have greased the boots of the Presbyterians, and they have done well. While the latter are weighing their doubts and scruples to the division of a hair, and shivering on the narrow brink that divides philosophy from religion, the former plunge without remorse into hell-flames, soar on the wings of Divine love, are carried away with the motions of the Spirit, are lost in the abyss of unfathomable mysteries—election, reprobation, predestination—and revel in a sea of boundless nonsense. It is a gulf that swallows up everything. The cold, the calculating, and the dry, are not to the taste of the many; religion is an anticipation of the preternatural world, and it in general requires preternatural excitements to keep it alive. If it takes a definite consistent form it loses its interest; to produce its effect it must come in the shape of an apparition. Our quacks treat grown people as the nurses do children—terrify them with what they have no idea of, or take them to a puppet-show.

No. XVI.

*On the 'Midsummer Night's Dream.'*¹

BOTTOM the weaver is a character that has not had justice done him. He is the most romantic of mechanics. And what a list of companions he has—Quince the carpenter, Snug the joiner, Flute the bellows-mender, Snout the tinker, Starveling the tailor! And then again, what a group of fairy attendants: Puck, Peas-blossom, Cobweb, Moth, and Mustardseed! It has been observed

¹ This Essay appeared likewise in 'Characters of Shakespear's Plays,' 1817, pp. 126-34; but the present text contains matter not in the other, and *vice versá*.—ED.

that Shakspeare's characters are constructed upon deep physiological principles; and there is something in this play which looks very like it. Bottom the weaver, who takes the lead of

"This crew of patches, rude mechanicals,
That work for bread upon Athenian stalls,"

follows a sedentary trade, and he is accordingly represented as conceited, serious, and fantastical. He is ready to undertake anything and everything, as if it was as much a matter of course as the motion of his loom and shuttle. He is for playing the tyrant, the lover, the lady, the lion. "He will roar that it shall do any man's heart good to hear him;" and this being objected to as improper, he still has a resource in his good opinion of himself, and "will roar you an 'twere any nightingale." Snug the joiner is the moral man of the piece, who proceeds by measurement and discretion in all things. You see him with his rule and compasses in his hand: "Have you the lion's part written? Pray you, if it be, give it me, for I am slow of study." "You may do it extempore," says Quince, "for it is nothing but roaring." Starveling the tailor keeps the peace, and objects to the lion and the drawn sword: "I believe we must leave the killing out, when all's done." Starveling, however, does not start the objections himself, but seconds them when made by others, as if he had not spirit to express his fears without encouragement. It is too much to suppose all this intentional, but it very luckily falls out so. Nature includes all that is implied in the most subtle and analytical distinctions, and the same distinctions will be found in Shakspeare. Bottom, who is not only chief actor, but stage-manager for the occasion, has a device to obviate the danger of frightening the ladies: "Write me a prologue, and let the prologue seem to say, we will do him no harm with our

swords; and that Pyramus is not killed indeed; and, for better assurance, tell them that I, Pyramus, am not Pyramus, but Bottom the weaver: this will put them out of fear." Bottom seems to have understood the subject of dramatic illusion at least as well as any modern essayist. If our holiday mechanic rules the roast among his fellows, he is no less at home in his new character of an ass, "with amiable cheeks and fair large ears." He instinctively acquires a most learned taste, and grows fastidious in the choice of dried peas and bottled hay. He is quite familiar with his new attendants, and assigns them their parts with all due gravity: "Monsieur Cobweb, good monsieur, get your weapons in your hand, and kill me a red-hipped humblebee on the top of a thistle, and, good monsieur, bring me the honey-bag." What an exact knowledge is shown here of natural history!

Puck, or Robin Goodfellow, is the leader of the fairy band. He is the Ariel of the 'Midsummer Night's Dream,' and yet as unlike as can be to the Ariel in the 'Tempest.' No other poet could have made two such different characters out of the same fanciful materials and situations. Ariel is a minister of retribution, who is touched with a sense of pity at the woes he inflicts. Puck is a madcap sprite, full of wantonness and mischief, who laughs at those whom he misleads—"Lord, what fools these mortals be!" Ariel cleaves the air, and executes his mission with the zeal of a winged messenger: Puck is borne along on his fairy errand, like the light and glittering gossamer before the breeze. He is, indeed, a most epicurean little gentleman, dealing in quaint devices and faring in dainty delights. Prospero and his world of spirits are a set of moralists; but with Oberon and his fairies we are launched at once into the empire of the butterflies. How beautifully is this race of beings contrasted with the men and women actors in the scene, by a single epithet which Titania gives to the

latter, "the human mortals!" It is astonishing that Shakspeare should be considered, not only by foreigners, but by many of our own critics, as a gloomy and heavy writer, who painted nothing but "Gorgons and Hydras and Chimeras dire." His subtlety exceeds that of all other dramatic writers, insomuch that a celebrated person of the present day said, that he regarded him rather as a metaphysician than a poet. His delicacy and sportive gaiety are infinite. In the 'Midsummer Night's Dream' alone, we should imagine, there is more sweetness and beauty of description than in the whole range of French poetry put together. What we mean is this, that we will produce out of that single play ten passages, to which we do not think any ten passages in the works of the French poets can be opposed, displaying equal fancy and imagery. Shall we mention the remonstrance of Helena to Hermia, or Titania's description of her fairy train, or her disputes with Oberon about the Indian boy, or Puck's account of himself and his employments, or the Fairy Queen's exhortation to the elves to pay due attendance upon her favourite Bottom,¹ or Hippolyta's description of a chase, or Theseus' answer? The two last are as heroical and spirited as the others are full of luscious tenderness. The reading of this play is like

¹ The following lines are remarkable for a certain cloying sweetness in the repetition of the rhymes :

"Titania. Be kind and courteous to this gentleman ;
Hop in his walks, and gambol in his eyes ;
Feed him with apricocks and dewberries,
With purple grapes, green figs, and mulberries ;
The honey-bags steal from the humblebees,
And for night tapers crop their waxen thighs,
And light them at the fiery glowworm's eyes,
To have my love to bed, and to arise ;
And pluck the wings from painted butterflies,
To fan the moonbeams from his sleeping eyes :
Nod to him, elves, and do him courtesies."—[Act iii. sc. 2,

Dyce's edit., 1868, vol. ii. p. 290.]

wandering in a grove by moonlight; the descriptions breathe a sweetness like odours thrown from beds of flowers.

* Shakspeare is almost the only poet of whom it may be said, that

“Age cannot wither, nor custom stale,
His infinite variety.”

His nice touches of individual character, and marking of its different gradations, have been often admired; but the instances have not been exhausted, because they are inexhaustible. We will mention two which occur to us. One is where Christopher Sly expresses his approbation of the play, by saying, “’Tis a good piece of work, would ’twere done,” as if he were thinking of his Saturday night’s job. Again, there cannot well be a finer gradation of character than that in Henry IV., between Falstaff and Shallow, and Shallow and Silence. It seems difficult to fall lower than the squire; but this fool, great as he is, finds an admirer and humble foil in his cousin Silence. Vain of his acquaintance with Sir John, who makes a butt of him, he exclaims, “Would, Cousin Silence, that thou hadst seen that which this Knight and I have seen!” “Aye, Master Shallow, we have heard the chimes at midnight,” says Sir John. The true spirit of humanity, the thorough knowledge of the stuff we are made of, the practical wisdom with the seeming fooleries, in the whole of this exquisite scene, and afterwards in the dialogue on the death of old Double, have no parallel anywhere else.

It has been suggested to us, that the ‘Midsummer Night’s Dream’ would do admirably to get up as a Christmas after-piece; and our prompter proposes that Mr. Kean should play the part of Bottom, as worthy of his great talents. He might offer to play the lady like any of our actresses that he pleased, the lover or the tyrant like any of our actors that he pleased, and the

lion like "the most fearful wild-fowl living." The carpenter, the tailor, and joiner would hit the galleries; the young ladies in love would interest the side-boxes; and Robin Goodfellow and his companions excite a lively fellow-feeling in the children from school. There would be two courts: an empire within an empire; the Athenian and the Fairy King and Queen, with their attendants, and with all their finery. What an opportunity for processions, for the sound of trumpets, and glittering of spears! What a fluttering of urchins' painted wings! What a delightful profusion of gauze clouds, and airy spirits floating on them! It would be a complete English fairy-tale.

Fantasy

No. XVII.

On the Beggar's Opera.

WE have begun this Essay on a very coarse sheet of damaged foolscap, and we find that we are going to write it, whether for the sake of contrast, or from having a very fine pen, in a remarkably nice hand. Something of a similar process seems to have taken place in Gay's mind when he composed his 'Beggar's Opera.' He chose a very unpromising ground to work upon, and he has prided himself in adorning it with all the graces, the precision and brilliancy of style. It is a vulgar error to call this a vulgar play. So far from it, that we do not scruple to declare our opinion that it is one of the most refined productions in the language. The elegance of the composition is in exact proportion to the coarseness of the materials; by "happy alchemy of mind," the author has extracted an essence of refinement from the dregs of human life, and turns its very dross into gold. The scenes, characters, and incidents are, in themselves, of the lowest and most disgusting kind: but, by the

sentiments and reflections which are put into the mouths of highwaymen, turnkeys, their mistresses, wives, or daughters, he has converted this motley group into a set of fine gentlemen and ladies, satirists and philosophers. He has also effected this transformation without once violating probability or "o'erstepping the modesty of nature." In fact Gay has turned the tables on the critics; and by the assumed licence of the mock-heroic style, has enabled himself to *do justice to nature*—that is, to give all the force, truth, and locality of real feeling to the thoughts and expressions, without being called to the bar of false taste and affected delicacy. The extreme beauty and feeling of the song, 'Woman is like the fair flower in its lustre,' is only equalled by its characteristic propriety and *naïveté*. It may be said that this is taken from Tibullus; but there is nothing about Covent Garden in Tibullus. Polly describes her lover going to the gallows with the same touching simplicity, and with all the natural fondness of a young girl in her circumstances, who sees in his approaching catastrophe nothing but the misfortunes and the personal accomplishments of the object of her affections: "I see him sweeter than the nosegay in his hand; the admiring crowd lament that so lovely a youth should come to an untimely end. Even butchers weep, and Jack Ketch refuses his fee rather than consent to tie the fatal knot." The preservation of the character and costume is complete. It has been said by a great authority, "There is some soul of goodness in things evil," and the 'Beggar's Opera' is a goodnatured but instructive comment on this text. The poet has thrown all the gaiety and sunshine of the imagination, all the intoxication of pleasure and the vanity of despair, round the shortlived existence of his heroes; while Peachum and Lockitt are seen in the background, parcelling out their months and weeks between them. The general view exhibited of human

not a pande to the
upper class.

On the 'Beggar's Opera.'

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life is of the most masterly and abstracted kind. The author has, with great felicity, brought out the good qualities and interesting emotions almost inseparable from the lowest conditions; and with the same penetrating glance has detected the disguises which rank and circumstances lend to exalted vice. Every line in this sterling comedy sparkles with wit, and is fraught with the keenest sarcasm. The very wit, however, takes off from the offensiveness of the satire; and we have seen great statesmen, very great statesmen, heartily enjoying the joke, laughing most immoderately at the compliments paid to them as not much worse than pickpockets and cut-throats in a different line of life, and pleased, as it were, to see themselves humanised by some sort of fellowship with their kind. Indeed, it may be said that the moral of the piece is to show the *vulgarity* of vice; and that the same violations of integrity and decorum, the same habitual sophistry in palliating their want of principle, are common to the great and powerful with the lowest and most contemptible of the species. What can be more convincing than the arguments used by these would-be politicians to show that in hypocrisy, selfishness, and treachery, they do not come up to many of their betters? The exclamation of Mrs. Peachum, when her daughter marries Macheath, "Hussy, hussy! you will be as illused and as much neglected as if you had married a lord," is worth all Miss Hannah More's laboured invectives on the laxity of the manners of high life!¹

¹ The late ingenious Baron Grimm, of acute critical memory, was up to the merit of the 'Beggar's Opera.' In his correspondence he says: "If it be true that the nearer a writer is to Nature the more certain he is of pleasing, it must be allowed that the English, in their dramatic pieces, have greatly the advantage over us. There reigns in them an inestimable tone of nature, which the timidity of our taste has banished from French pieces. M. Patu has just published, in two volumes, a *selection of smaller dramatic pieces, trans-*

No. XVIII.

On Patriotism.—A Fragment.

PATRIOTISM, in modern times and in great States, is and must be the creature of reason and reflection, rather than the offspring of physical or local attachment. "Our country" is a complex, abstract existence, recognised only by the understanding. It is an immense riddle, containing numberless modifications of reason and prejudice, of thought and passion. Patriotism is not, in a strict or exclusive sense, a natural or personal affection, but a law of our rational and moral nature, strengthened and determined by particular circumstances and associations,

lated from the English, which will eminently support what I have advanced. The principal one among this selection is the celebrated 'Beggar's Opera' of Gay, which has had such an amazing run in England. We are here in the very worst company imaginable; the dramatis personæ are robbers, pickpockets, gaolers, prostitutes, and the like; yet we are highly amused and in no haste to quit them. And why? Because there is nothing in the world more original or more natural. There is no occasion to compare our most celebrated comic operas with this, to see how far we are removed from truth and nature; and this is the reason that, notwithstanding our wit, we are almost always flat and insipid. Two faults are generally committed by our writers, which they seem incapable of avoiding: they think they have done wonders if they have only faithfully copied the dictionaries of the personages they bring upon the stage, forgetting that the great art is to choose the moments of character and passion in those who are to speak, since it is those moments alone that render them interesting. For want of this discrimination, the piece necessarily sinks into insipidity and monotony. Why do almost all M. Vade's pieces fatigue the audience to death? Because all his characters speak the same language—because each is a perfect resemblance of the other. Instead of this, in the 'Beggar's Opera,' among eight or ten girls of the town, each has her separate character, her peculiar traits, her peculiar modes of expression, which give her a marked distinction from her companions."—Vol. i. p. 185.

but not born of them nor wholly nourished by them. It is not possible that we should have an individual attachment to sixteen millions of men any more than to sixty millions. We cannot be *habitually* attached to places we never saw and people we never heard of. Is not the name of Englishman a general term as well as that of man? How many varieties does it not combine within it? Are the opposite extremities of the globe our native place because they are a part of that geographical and political denomination 'our country'? Does natural affection expand in circles of latitude and longitude? What personal or instinctive sympathy has the English peasant with the African slave-driver or East Indian nabob? Some of our wretched bunglers in metaphysics would fain persuade us to discard all general humanity and all sense of abstract justice, as a violation of natural affection, and yet do not see that the love of our country itself is in the list of our general affections. The common notions of patriotism are transmitted down to us from the savage tribes, where the fate and condition of all was the same, or from the States of Greece and Rome, where the country of the citizen was the town in which he was born. Where this is no longer the case—where our country is no longer contained within the narrow circle of the same walls—where we can no longer behold its glimmering horizon from the top of our native mountains—beyond these limits it is not a natural but an artificial idea, and our love of it either a deliberate dictate of reason or a cant term. It was said by an acute observer and eloquent writer (Rousseau) that the love of mankind was nothing but the love of justice; the same might be said with considerable truth of the love of our country. It is little more than another name for the love of liberty, of independence, of peace, and social happiness. We do not say that other indirect and collateral circumstances

do not go to the superstructure of this sentiment (as language,¹ literature, manners, national customs), but this is the broad and firm basis.

No. XIX.

On Beauty.

It is about sixty years ago that Sir Joshua Reynolds, in three papers which he wrote in the 'Idler,' advanced the notion—which has prevailed very much ever since—that Beauty was entirely dependent on custom, or on the conformity of objects to a given standard. Now we could never persuade ourselves that custom, or the association of ideas, though a very powerful, was the only principle of the preference which the mind gives to certain objects over others. Novelty is surely one source of pleasure; otherwise we cannot account for the well-known epigram, beginning—

“Two happy things in marriage are allowed,” &c.

Nor can we help thinking that, besides custom, or the conformity of certain objects to others of the same general class, there is also a certain conformity of objects to themselves—a symmetry of parts, a principle of proportion, gradation, harmony—call it what you will—which makes certain things naturally pleasing or beautiful, and the want of it the contrary.

We will not pretend to define what Beauty is, after so many learned authors have failed; but we shall attempt to give some examples of what constitutes it—to show that it is in some way inherent in the object, and that if custom is a second nature, there is another nature which

¹ He who speaks two languages has no country. The French, when they made their language the common language of the Courts of Europe, gained more than by all their subsequent conquests.

ranks before it. Indeed, the idea that all pleasure and pain depend on the association of ideas is manifestly absurd; there must be something in itself pleasurable or painful before it could become possible for the feelings of pleasure or pain to be transferred by association from one object to another.

Regular features are generally accounted handsome; but regular features are those the outlines of which answer most nearly to each other, or undergo the fewest abrupt changes. We shall attempt to explain this idea by a reference to the Greek and African face, the first of which is beautiful because it is made up of lines corresponding with or melting into each other; the last is not so, because it is made up almost entirely of contradictory lines and sharp angular projections.

The general principle of the difference between the two heads is this: the forehead of the Greek is square and upright, and, as it were, overhangs the rest of the face, except the nose, which is a continuation of it almost in an even line. In the Negro or African the tip of the nose is the most projecting part of the face; and from that point the features retreat back, both upwards towards the forehead and downwards to the chin. This last form is an approximation to the shape of the head of the animal, as the former bears the strongest stamp of humanity.

The Grecian nose is regular, the African irregular; in other words, the Grecian nose seen in profile forms nearly a straight line with the forehead, and falls into the upper lip by two curves, which balance one another; seen in front, the two sides are nearly parallel to each other, and the nostrils and lower part form regular curves answering to one another and to the contours of the mouth. On the contrary, the African pug-nose is more "like an ace of clubs." Whichever way you look

at it, it presents the appearance of a triangle. It is narrow and drawn to a point at top, broad and flat at bottom. The point is peaked, and recedes abruptly to the level of the forehead or the mouth, and the nostrils are as if they were drawn up with hooks towards each other. All the lines cross each other at sharp angles. The forehead of the Greeks is flat and square till it is rounded at the temples; the African forehead, like the ape's, falls back towards the top and spreads out at the sides, so as to form an angle with the cheek-bones. The eyebrows of the Greeks are either straight, so as to sustain the lower part of the tablet of the forehead, or gently arched, so as to form the outer circle of the curves of the eyelids. The form of the eyes gives all the appearance of orbs—full, swelling, and involved within each other. The African eyes are flat, narrow at the corners, in the shape of a tortoise; and the eyebrows fly off slantwise to the sides of the forehead. The idea of the superiority of the Greek face in this respect is admirably expressed in Spenser's description of Belphœbe:

“Her ivory forehead, full of bounty brave,
 Like a broad table did itself dispread,
 For love therein his triumphs to engrave,
 And write the battles of his great godhead.
 * * * * * *
 Upon her eyelids many graces sat
 Under the shadow of her even brows.”

The head of the girl in the ‘*Transfiguration*’—which Raphael took from the ‘*Niobe*’—has the same correspondence and exquisite involution of the outline of the forehead, the eyebrows, and the eyes (circle within circle) which we here speak of. Every part of that delightful head is blended together, and every sharp projection moulded and softened down with the feeling of a sculptor, or as if nothing should be left to offend

the *touch* as well as eye. Again, the Greek mouth is small, and little wider than the lower part of the nose; the lips form waving lines, nearly answering to each other. The African mouth is twice as wide as the nose, projects in front, and falls back towards the ears; is sharp and triangular, and consists of one protruding and one distended lip. The chin of the Greek face is round and indented, curled in, forming a fine oval with the outline of the cheeks, which resemble the two halves of a plane, parallel with the forehead, and rounded off like it. The Negro chin falls inwards like a dewlap, is nearly bisected in the middle, flat at bottom, and joined abruptly to the rest of the face, the whole contour of which is made up of jagged cross-grained lines. The African physiognomy appears, indeed, splitting in pieces—starting out in every oblique direction, and marked by the most sudden and violent changes throughout. The whole of the Grecian face blends with itself in a state of the utmost harmony and repose.¹ There is a harmony of expression as well as a symmetry of form. We sometimes see a face melting into beauty by the force of sentiment—an eye that, in its liquid mazes, for ever expanding and for ever retiring within itself, draws the soul after it and tempts the rash beholder to his fate. This is, perhaps, what Werter meant when he says of Charlotte, “Her full dark eyes are ever before me, like a sea—like a precipice.” The historical in expression is the consistent and harmonious—whatever in thought or feeling communicates the same movement, whether

¹ There is, however, in the African physiognomy a grandeur and a force arising from this uniform character of violence and abruptness. It is consistent with itself throughout. Entire deformity can only be found where the features have not only no symmetry or softness in themselves, but have no connection with one another, presenting every variety of wretchedness and a jumble of all sorts of defects, such as we see in Hogarth or in the streets of London: for instance, a large bottle-nose, with a small mouth twisted awry.

voluptuous or impassioned, to all the parts of the face, the mouth, the eyes, the forehead, and shows that they are all actuated by the same spirit. For this reason it has been observed that all intellectual and impassioned faces are historical—the heads of philosophers, poets, lovers, and madmen.

Motion is beautiful as it implies either continuity or gradual change. The motion of a hawk is beautiful, either returning in endless circles with suspended wings, or darting right forward in one level line upon its prey. We have, when boys, often watched the glittering down of the thistle, at first scarcely rising above the ground, and then, mingling with the gale, borne into the upper sky with varying fantastic motion. How delightful! how beautiful! All motion is beautiful that is not contradictory to itself—that is free from sudden jerks and shocks—that is either sustained by the same impulse, or gradually reconciles different impulses together. Swans resting on the calm bosom of a lake, in which their image is reflected, or moved up and down with the heaving of the waves—though by this the double image is disturbed—are equally beautiful. Homer describes Mercury as flinging himself from the top of Olympus and skimming the surface of the ocean. This is lost in Pope's translation, who suspends him on the incumbent air. The beauty of the original image consists in the idea which it conveys of smooth uninterrupted speed—of the evasion of every let or obstacle to the progress of the god.¹ Awkwardness is occasioned

¹ The following version, communicated by a classical friend, is exact and elegant:—

“He said; and strait the herald Argicide
 Beneath his feet his winged sandals tied,
 Immortal, golden, that his flight could bear
 O'er seas and lands, like waftage of the air.
 His rod too, that can close the eyes of men
 In balmy sleep, and open them again,

by a difficulty in moving, or by disjointed movements that distract the attention and defeat each other. Grace is the absence of everything that indicates pain or difficulty, hesitation or incongruity. The only graceful dancer we ever saw was Deshayes the Frenchman. He came on bounding like a stag. It was not necessary to have seen good dancing before to know that this was really fine. Whoever has seen the sea in motion, the branches of a tree waving in the air, would instantly perceive the resemblance. Flexibility and grace are to be found in nature as well as at the opera. Mr. Burke, in his 'Essay on the Sublime and Beautiful,' has very admirably described the bosom of a beautiful woman, almost entirely with reference to the ideas of motion. Those outlines are beautiful which describe pleasant

He took, and holding it in hand, went flying,
Till, from Pieria's top the sea descrying,
Down to it sheer he dropp'd, and scour'd away
Like the wild gull, that, fishing o'er the bay,
Flaps on, with pinions dipping in the brine—
So went on the far sea the shape divine."

Odyssey, book v.

"——— That was Arion crown'd:—
So went he playing on the wat'ry plain."

Faerie Queen.

There is a striking description in Mr. Burke's 'Reflections' of the late Queen of France, whose charms had left their poison in the heart of this Irish orator and patriot, and set the world in a ferment sixteen years afterwards: "And surely never lighted on this orb, which she hardly seemed to touch, a more delightful vision." The idea is in 'Don Quixote,' where the Duenna speaks of the air with which the Duchess "treads, or rather seems to disdain, the ground she walks on." We have heard the same account of the gracefulness of Marie Antoinette from an artist who saw her at Versailles much about the same time that Mr. Burke did. He stood in one corner of a little antechamber, and as the doors were narrow she was obliged to pass sideways with her hoop. She glided by him in an instant, as if borne on a cloud.

motions. A fine use is made of this principle by one of the Apocryphal writers in describing the form of the rainbow: "He hath set His bow in the heavens, and His hands have bended it." Harmony in colour has not been denied to be a natural property of objects, consisting in the gradations of intermediate colours. The principle appears to be here the same as in some of the former instances. The effect of colour in Titian's 'Bath of Diana,' at the Marquis of Stafford's,¹ is perhaps the finest in the world, made up of the richest contrasts, blended together by the most masterly gradations. Harmony of sound depends apparently on the same principle as harmony of colour. Rhyme depends on the pleasure derived from a recurrence of similar sounds, as symmetry of features does on the correspondence of the different outlines. The prose style of Dr. Johnson originated in the same principle. Its secret consisted in rhyming on the sense, and balancing one half of the sentence uniformly and systematically against the other. The Hebrew poetry was constructed in the same manner.

No. XX.

On Imitation.

OBJECTS in themselves disagreeable or indifferent often please in the imitation. A brick floor, a pewter plate, an ugly cur barking, a Dutch boor smoking or playing at skittles, the inside of a shambles, a fishmonger's or a greengrocer's stall, have been made very interesting as pictures by the fidelity, skill, and spirit with which they have been copied. One source of the pleasure thus received is undoubtedly the surprise or feeling of admira-

¹ Now the Bridgewater Gallery, the property of the Earls of Ellesmere.—ED.

tion occasioned by the unexpected coincidence between the imitation and the object. The deception, however, not only pleases at first sight, or from mere novelty, but it continues to please upon further acquaintance, and in proportion to the insight we acquire into the distinctions of nature and of art. By far the most numerous class of connoisseurs are the admirers of pictures of *still life*, which have nothing but the elaborateness of the execution to recommend them. One chief reason, it should seem, then, why imitation pleases is, because, by exciting curiosity and inviting a comparison between the object and the representation, it opens a new field of inquiry, and leads the attention to a variety of details and distinctions not perceived before. This latter source of the pleasure derived from imitation has never been properly insisted on.

The anatomist is delighted with a coloured plate conveying the exact appearance of the progress of certain diseases, or of the internal parts and dissections of the human body. We have known a Jennerian professor as much enraptured with a delineation of the different stages of vaccination as a florist with a bed of tulips or an auctioneer with a collection of Indian shells. But in this case we find that not only the imitation pleases; the objects themselves give as much pleasure to the professional inquirer as they would pain to the uninitiated. The learned amateur is struck with the beauty of the coats of the stomach laid bare, or contemplates with eager curiosity the transverse section of the brain divided on the new Spurzheim principles. It is here, then, the number of the parts—their distinctions, connections, structure, uses—in short, an entire new set of ideas, which occupies the mind of the student, and overcomes the sense of pain and repugnance which is the only feeling that the sight of a dead and mangled body presents to ordinary men. It is the same in art as

in science. The painter of still life, as it is called, takes the same pleasure in the object as the spectator does in the imitation, because by habit he is led to perceive all those distinctions in nature to which other persons never pay any attention till they are pointed out to them in the picture. The vulgar only see nature as it is reflected to them from art; the painter sees the picture in nature before he transfers it to the canvas. He refines, he analyses, he remarks fifty things which escape common eyes; and this affords a distinct source of reflection and amusement to him, independently of the beauty or grandeur of the objects themselves, or of their connection with other impressions besides those of sight. The charm of the fine arts, then, does not consist in anything peculiar to imitation, even where only imitation is concerned, since *there*, where art exists in the highest perfection—namely, in the mind of the artist—the object excites the same or greater pleasure before the imitation exists. Imitation renders an object, displeasing in itself, a source of pleasure, not by repetition of the same idea, but by suggesting new ideas—by detecting new properties and endless shades of difference, just as a close and continued contemplation of the object itself would do. Art shows us nature divested of the medium of our prejudices. It divides and decomposes objects into a thousand curious parts, which may be full of variety, beauty, and delicacy in themselves, though the object to which they belong may be disagreeable in its general appearance or by association with other ideas. A painted marigold is inferior to a painted rose only in form and colour; it loses nothing in point of smell. Yellow hair is perfectly beautiful in a picture. To a person lying with his face close to the ground in a summer's day the blades of speargrass will appear like tall forest trees shooting up into the sky; as an insect seen through a microscope is magnified into

an elephant. Art is the microscope of the mind, which sharpens the wit as the other does the sight, and converts every object into a little universe in itself.¹ Art may be said to draw aside the veil from nature. To those who are perfectly unskilled in the practice—unimbued with the principles of art—most objects present only a confused mass. The pursuit of art is liable to be carried to a contrary excess, as where it produces a rage for the *picturesque*. You cannot go a step with a person of this class but he stops you to point out some choice bit of landscape or fancied improvement, and teazes you almost to death with the frequency and insignificance of his discoveries.

It is a common opinion (which may be worth noticing here) that the study of physiognomy has a tendency to make people satirical, and the knowledge of art to make them fastidious in their taste. Knowledge may, indeed, afford a handle to ill-nature, but it takes away the principal temptation to its exercise by supplying the mind with better resources against *ennui*. Idiots are always mischievous; and the most superficial persons are the most disposed to find fault, because they understand the fewest things. The English are more apt than any other nation to treat foreigners with contempt, because they seldom see anything but their own dress and manners; and it is only in petty provincial towns that you meet with persons who pride themselves on being satirical. In every country-place in England there are one or two

¹ In a fruit or flower-piece by Vanhuysum, the minutest details acquire a certain grace and beauty from the delicacy with which they are finished. The eye dwells with a giddy delight on the liquid drops of dew, on the gauze wings of an insect, on the hair and feathers of a bird's nest, the streaked and speckled egg-shells, the fine legs of the little travelling caterpillar. Who will suppose that the painter had not the same pleasure in detecting these nice distinctions in nature, that the critic has in tracing them in the picture?

persons of this description, who keep the whole neighbourhood in terror. It is not to be denied that the study of the *ideal* in art, if separated from the study of nature, may have the effect above stated—of producing dissatisfaction and contempt for everything but itself, as all affectation must; but to the genuine artist, truth, nature, beauty, are almost different names for the same thing.

Imitation interests, then, by exciting a more intense perception of truth, and calling out the powers of observation and comparison; wherever this effect takes place the interest follows of course, with or without the imitation, whether the object is real or artificial. The gardener delights in the streaks of a tulip, or “pansy freak’d with jet;” the mineralogist in the varieties of certain strata, because he understands them. Knowledge is pleasure as well as power. A work of art has in this respect no advantage over a work of nature, except inasmuch as it furnishes an additional stimulus to curiosity. Again, natural objects please in proportion as they are uncommon, by fixing the attention more steadily on their beauties or differences. The same principle of the effect of novelty in exciting the attention may account, perhaps, for the extraordinary discoveries and lies told by travellers, who, opening their eyes for the first time in foreign parts, are startled at every object they meet.

Why the excitement of intellectual activity pleases, is not here the question; but that it does so is a general and acknowledged law of the human mind. We grow attached to the mathematics only from finding out their truth; and their utility chiefly consists (at present) in the contemplative pleasure they afford to the student. Lines, points, angles, squares, and circles are not interesting in themselves; they become so by the power of mind exerted in comprehending their properties and relations. People dispute for ever about Hogarth. The

question has not, in one respect, been fairly stated. The merit of his pictures does not so much depend on the nature of the subject as on the knowledge displayed of it, on the number of ideas they excite, on the fund of thought and observation contained in them. They are to be looked on as works of science; they gratify our love of truth; they fill up the void of the mind; they are a series of plates of natural history, and also of that most interesting part of natural history, the history of man.

The superiority of high art over the common or mechanical consists in combining truth of imitation with beauty and grandeur of subject. The historical painter is superior to the flower-painter, because he combines or ought to combine human interests and passions with the same power of imitating external nature; or, indeed, with greater, for the greatest difficulty of imitation is the power of imitating expression. The difficulty of copying increases with our knowledge of the object, and that again with the interest we take in it. The same argument might be applied to show that the poet and painter of imagination are superior to the mere philosopher or man of science, because they exercise the powers of reason and intellect combined with nature and passion. They treat of the highest categories of the human soul, pleasure and pain.

From the foregoing train of reasoning, we may easily account for the too great tendency of art to run into pedantry and affectation. There is "a pleasure in art which none but artists feel." They see beauty where others see nothing of the sort—in wrinkles, deformity, and old age. They see it in Titian's 'Schoolmaster' as well as in Raphael's 'Galatea'; in the dark shadows of Rembrandt as well as in the splendid colours of Rubens; in an angel's or in a butterfly's wings. They see with different eyes from the multitude. But true genius, though it

has new sources of pleasure opened to it, does not lose its sympathy with humanity. It combines truth of imitation with effect, the parts with the whole, the means with the end. The mechanic artist sees only that which nobody else sees, and is conversant only with the technical language and difficulties of his art. A painter, if shown a picture, will generally dwell upon the academic skill displayed in it, and the knowledge of the received rules of composition. A musician, if asked to play a tune, will select that which is the most difficult and the least intelligible. The poet will be struck with the harmony of versification or the elaborateness of the arrangement in a composition. The conceits in Shakspeare were his greatest delight; and improving upon this perverse method of judging, the German writers Goethe and Schiller look upon 'Werter' and 'The Robbers' as the worst of all their works because they are the most popular. Some artists among ourselves have carried the same principle to a singular excess.¹ If professors themselves are liable to this kind of pedantry, connoisseurs and dilettanti, who have less sensibility and more affectation, are almost wholly swayed by it. They see nothing in a picture but the execution. They are proud of their knowledge in proportion as it is a secret. The worst judges of

¹ We here allude particularly to Turner, the ablest landscape painter now living (1817), whose pictures are, however, too much abstractions of aerial perspective, and representations, not so properly of the objects of nature, as of the medium through which they are seen. They are the triumph of the knowledge of the artist, and of the power of the pencil over the barrenness of the subject. They are pictures of the elements of air, earth, and water. The artist delights to go back to the first chaos of the world, or to that state of things when the waters were separated from the dry land, and light from darkness, but as yet no living thing nor tree bearing fruit was seen upon the face of the earth. All is "without form and void." Some one said of his landscapes that they were *pictures of nothing, and very like.*

pictures in the United Kingdom are, first, picture-dealers; next, perhaps, the Directors of the British Institution; and after them, in all probability, the Members of the Royal Academy.

No. XXI.

On Gusto.

Gusto in art is power or passion defining any object. It is not so difficult to explain this term in what relates to expression (of which it may be said to be the highest degree) as in what relates to things without expression, to the natural appearances of objects, as mere colour or form. In one sense, however, there is hardly any object entirely devoid of expression, without some character of power belonging to it, some precise association with pleasure or pain; and it is in giving this truth of character from the truth of feeling, whether in the highest or the lowest degree, but always in the highest degree of which the subject is capable, that gusto consists.

There is a gusto in the colouring of Titian. Not only do his heads seem to think; his bodies seem to feel. This is what the Italians mean by the *morbidezza* of his flesh-colour. It seems sensitive and alive all over; not merely to have the look and texture of flesh, but the feeling in itself. For example, the limbs of his female figures have a luxurious softness and delicacy, which appears conscious of the pleasure of the beholder. As the objects themselves in nature would produce an impression on the sense, distinct from every other object, and having something divine in it, which the heart owns and the imagination consecrates, the objects in the picture preserve the same impression absolute, un-

impaired, stamped with all the truth of passion, the pride of the eye, and the charm of beauty. Rubens makes his flesh-colour like flowers; Albano's is like ivory; Titian's is like flesh, and like nothing else. It is as different from that of other painters as the skin is from a piece of white or red drapery thrown over it. The blood circulates here and there, the blue veins just appear; the rest is distinguished throughout only by that sort of tingling sensation to the eye which the body feels within itself. This is gusto. Vandyke's flesh-colour, though it has great truth and purity, wants gusto. It has not the internal character, the living principle in it. It is a smooth surface, not a warm moving mass. It is painted without passion, with indifference. The hand only has been concerned. The impression slides off from the eye, and does not, like the tones of Titian's pencil, leave a sting behind it in the mind of the spectator. The eye does not acquire a taste or appetite for what it sees. In a word, gusto in painting is where the impression made on one sense excites by affinity those of another.

Michael Angelo's forms are full of gusto. They everywhere obtrude the sense of power upon the eye. His limbs convey an idea of muscular strength, of moral grandeur, and even of intellectual dignity; they are firm, commanding, broad and massy, capable of executing with ease the determined purposes of the will. His faces have no other expression than his figures, conscious power and capacity. They appear only to think what they shall do, and to know that they can do it. This is what is meant by saying that his style is hard and masculine. It is the reverse of Correggio's, which is effeminate. That is, the gusto of Michael Angelo consists in expressing energy of will without proportionable sensibility: Correggio's in expressing exquisite sensibility without energy of will. In Correggio's

faces as well as figures we see neither bones nor muscles, but then what a soul is there, full of sweetness and of grace—pure, playful, soft, angelical! There is sentiment enough in a hand painted by Correggio to set up a school of history painters. Whenever we look at the hands of Correggio's women, or of Raphael's, we always wish to touch them.

Again, Titian's landscapes have a prodigious gusto, both in the colouring and forms. We shall never forget one that we saw many years ago in the Orleans Gallery of Actæon hunting. It had a brown, mellow, autumnal look. The sky was of the colour of stone. The winds seemed to sing through the rustling branches of the trees, and already you might hear the twanging of bows resound through the tangled mazes of the wood. Mr. West we understand has this landscape. He will know if this description of it is just. The landscape background of the 'St. Peter Martyr' is another well-known instance of the power of this great painter to give a romantic interest and an appropriate character to the objects of his pencil, where every circumstance adds to the effect of the scene—the bold trunks of the tall forest trees, the trailing ground-plants, with that tall convent spire rising in the distance, amidst the blue sapphire mountains and the golden sky.

Rubens has a great deal of gusto in his fauns and satyrs, and in all that expresses motion, but in nothing else. Rembrandt has it in everything; everything in his pictures has a tangible character. If he puts a diamond in the ear of a burgomaster's wife it is of the first water; and his furs and stuffs are proof against a Russian winter. Raphael's gusto was only in expression; he had no idea of the character of anything but the human form. The dryness and poverty of his style in other respects is a phenomenon in the art. His trees are like sprigs of grass stuck in a book of botanical

specimens. Was it that Raphael never had time to go beyond the walls of Rome?—that he was always in the streets, at church, or in the bath? He was not one of the Society of Arcadians.¹

Claude's landscapes, perfect as they are, want gusto. This is not easy to explain. They are perfect abstractions of the visible images of things; they speak the visible language of nature truly. They resemble a mirror or a microscope. To the eye only they are more perfect than any other landscapes that ever were or will be painted; they give more of nature as cognisable by one sense alone; but they lay an equal stress on all visible impressions. They do not interpret one sense by another; they do not distinguish the character of different objects as we are taught, and can only be taught, to distinguish them—by their effect on the different senses; that is, his eye wanted imagination, it did not strongly sympathise with his other faculties. He saw the atmosphere, but he did not feel it. He painted the trunk of a tree or a rock in the foreground as smooth—with as complete an abstraction of the gross tangible impression—as any other part of the picture. His trees are perfectly beautiful, but quite immovable; they have a look of enchantment. In short, his landscapes are unequalled imitations of nature, released from its subjection to the elements, as if all objects were become a delightful fairy vision, and the eye had rarefied and refined away the other senses.

The gusto in the Greek statues is of a very singular

¹ Raphael not only could not paint a landscape; he could not paint people in a landscape. He could not have painted the heads or the figures, or even the dresses, of the 'St. Peter Martyr.' His figures have always an *in-door* look, that is, a set, determined, voluntary, dramatic character, arising from their own passions, or a watchfulness of those of others, and want that wild uncertainty of expression which is connected with the accidents of nature and the changes of the elements. He has nothing *romantic* about him.

kind. The sense of perfect form nearly occupies the whole mind, and hardly suffers it to dwell on any other feeling. It seems enough for them *to be*, without acting or suffering. Their forms are ideal, spiritual; their beauty is power. By their beauty they are raised above the frailties of pain or passion; by their beauty they are deified.

The infinite quantity of dramatic invention in Shakespeare takes from his gusto. The power he delights to show is not intense, but discursive. He never insists on anything as much as he might, except a quibble. Milton has great gusto; he repeats his blows twice—grapples with and exhausts his subject. His imagination has a double relish of its objects—an inveterate attachment to the things he describes and to the words describing them :

——— “Or where Chineses drive
With sails and wind their *cany* waggons *light*.”

* * * * *

“Wild above rule or art, *enormous* bliss.”

There is a gusto in Pope's compliments, in Dryden's satires, and Prior's tales; and among prose writers Boccaccio and Rabelais had the most of it. We will only mention one other work which appears to us to be full of gusto, and that is the 'Beggar's Opera.' If it is not, we are altogether mistaken in our notions on this delicate subject.

No. XXII.

*On Pedantry.*¹

THE power of attaching an interest to the most trifling or painful pursuits, in which our whole attention and faculties are engaged, is one of the greatest happinesses

¹ See 'Memoirs of W. H.,' 1867, vol. i. p. 249.—Ed.

of our nature. The common soldier mounts the breach with joy; the miser deliberately starves himself to death; the mathematician sets about extracting the cube-root with a feeling of enthusiasm; and the lawyer sheds tears of admiration over 'Coke upon Littleton.' It is the same through human life. He who is not in some measure a pedant, though he may be a wise, cannot be a very happy man.

The chief charm of reading the old novels is from the picture they give of the egotism of the characters, the importance of each individual to himself, and his fancied superiority over every one else. We like, for instance, the pedantry of Parson Adams, who thought a schoolmaster the greatest character in the world, and that he was the greatest schoolmaster in it. We do not see any equivalent for the satisfaction which this conviction must have afforded him in the most nicely-graduated scale of talents and accomplishments to which he was an utter stranger. When the old-fashioned Scotch pedagogue turns Roderick Random round and round, and surveys him from head to foot with such infinite surprise and laughter, at the same time breaking out himself into gestures and exclamations still more uncouth and ridiculous, who would wish to have deprived him of this burst of extravagant self-complacency? When our follies afford equal delight to ourselves and those about us, what is there to be desired more? We cannot discover the vast advantage of "seeing ourselves as others see us." It is better to have a contempt for any one than for ourselves.

One of the most constant butts of ridicule, both in the old comedies and novels, is the professional jargon of the medical tribe; yet it cannot be denied that this jargon, however affected it may seem, is the natural language of apothecaries and physicians—the mother-tongue of pharmacy. It is that by which their know-

ledge first comes to them—that with which they have the most obstinate associations—that in which they can express themselves the most readily and with the best effect upon their hearers; and though there may be some assumption of superiority in all this, yet it is only by an effort of circumlocution that they could condescend to explain themselves in ordinary language. Besides, there is a delicacy at bottom, as it is the only language in which a nauseous medicine can be decorously administered, or a limb taken off with the proper degree of secrecy. If the most blundering coxcombs affect this language most, what does it signify, while they retain the same dignified notions of themselves and their art, and are equally happy in their knowledge or their ignorance? The ignorant and pretending physician is a capital character in Molière; and indeed throughout his whole plays the great source of the comic interest is in the fantastic exaggeration of blind self-love, in letting loose the habitual peculiarities of each individual from all restraint of conscious observation or self-knowledge, in giving way to that specific levity of impulse which mounts at once to the height of absurdity, in spite of the obstacles that surround it, as a fluid in a barometer rises according to the pressure of the external air. His characters are almost always pedantic, and yet the most unconscious of all others. Take, for example, those two worthy gentlemen, Monsieur Jourdain and Monsieur Pourceaugnac.¹

¹ A good-natured man will always have a smack of pedantry about him. A lawyer, who talks about law, *certioraris*, *noli prosecute*, and silk gowns, though he may be a blockhead, is by no means dangerous. It is a very bad sign (unless where it arises from singular modesty) when you cannot tell a man's profession from his conversation. Such persons either feel no interest in what concerns them most, or do not express what they feel. "Not to admire anything" is a very unsafe rule. A London apprentice who did not admire the Lord Mayor's coach would stand a good chance of being

Learning and pedantry were formerly synonymous; and it was well when they were so. Can there be a higher satisfaction than for a man to understand Greek, and to believe that there is nothing else worth understanding? Learning is the knowledge of that which is not generally known. What an ease and a dignity in pretensions founded on the ignorance of others! What a pleasure in wondering! What a pride in being wondered at! In the library of the family where we were brought up stood the 'Fratres Poloni;'¹ and we can never forget or describe the feeling with which not only their appearance, but the names of the authors on the outside, inspired us. Pripscovius, we remember, was one of the easiest to pronounce. The gravity of the contents seemed in proportion to the weight of the volumes; the importance of the subjects increased with our ignorance of them. The trivialness of the remarks—if ever we looked into them—the repetitions, the monotony, only gave a greater solemnity to the whole, as the slowness and minuteness of the evidence adds to the impressiveness of a judicial proceeding. We knew that the authors had devoted their whole lives to the production of these works, carefully abstaining from the introduction of anything amusing or lively or interesting. In ten folio volumes there was not one sally of wit, one striking reflection. What, then, must have been their sense of the importance of the subject—the profound stores of knowledge which they had to communicate! "From all this world's encumbrance they did

hanged. We know but one person absurd enough to have formed his whole character on the above maxim of Horace, and who affects a superiority over others from an uncommon degree of natural and artificial stupidity.

¹ See the full title of this work in 'Memoirs of William Hazlitt,' 1867, vol. i. p. 33, *note*. The writer here refers to his father's house at Wem, in Shropshire.—ED.

themselves assoil." Such was the notion we then had of this learned lumber; yet we would rather have this feeling again for one half-hour than be possessed of all the acuteness of Bayle or the wit of Voltaire.

It may be considered as a sign of the decay of piety and learning in modern times that our divines no longer introduce texts of the original Scriptures into their sermons. The very sound of the original Greek or Hebrew would impress the hearer with a more lively faith in the sacred writers than any translation, however literal or correct. It may be even doubted whether the translation of the Scriptures into the vulgar tongue was any advantage to the people. The mystery in which particular points of faith were left involved gave an awe and sacredness to religious opinions; the general purport of the truths and promises of Revelation was made known by other means; and nothing beyond this general and implicit conviction can be obtained where all is undefined and infinite.

Again, it may be questioned whether, in matters of mere human reasoning, much has been gained by the disuse of the learned languages. Sir Isaac Newton wrote in Latin; and it is perhaps one of Bacon's fopperies that he translated his works into English. If certain follies have been exposed by being stripped of their formal disguise, others have had a greater chance of succeeding by being presented in a more pleasing and popular shape. This has been remarkably the case in France (the least pedantic country in the world), where the women mingle with everything, even with metaphysics, and where all philosophy is reduced to a set of phrases for the toilet. When books are written in the prevailing language of the country every one becomes a critic who can read. An author is no longer tried by his peers. A species of universal suffrage is introduced in letters, which is only applicable to politics.

The good old Latin style of our forefathers, if it concealed the dullness of the writer, at least was a barrier against the impertinence, flippancy, and ignorance of the reader. However, the immediate transition from the pedantic to the popular style in literature was a change that must have been very delightful at the time. Our illustrious predecessors the 'Tatler' and 'Spectator' were very happily off in this respect. They wore the public favour in its newest gloss, before it had become tarnished and common—before familiarity had bred contempt. It was the honeymoon of authorship. Their essays were among the first instances in this country of learning sacrificing to the graces, and of a mutual understanding and good-humoured equality between the writer and the reader. This new style of composition, to use the phraseology of Mr. Burke, "mitigated authors into companions, and compelled wisdom to submit to the soft collar of social esteem." The original papers of the 'Tatler,' printed on a half-sheet of common foolscap, were regularly served up at breakfast-time with the silver teakettle and thin slices of bread-and-butter; and what the ingenious Mr. Bickerstaff wrote overnight in his easy-chair, he might flatter himself would be read the next morning with elegant applause by the fair, the witty, the learned, and the great, in all parts of this kingdom in which civilisation had made any considerable advances. The perfection of letters is when the highest ambition of the writer is to please his readers, and the greatest pride of the reader is to understand his author. The satisfaction on both sides ceases when the town becomes a club of authors, when each man stands with his manuscript in his hand waiting for his turn of applause, and when the claims on our admiration are so many, that, like those of common beggars, to prevent imposition they can only be answered with general neglect. Our self-love would be

quite bankrupt if critics by profession did not come forward as beadles to keep off the crowd, and to relieve us from the importunity of these innumerable candidates for fame, by pointing out their faults and passing over their beauties. In the more auspicious period just alluded to an author was regarded by the better sort as a man of genius, and by the vulgar as a kind of prodigy; insomuch that the 'Spectator' was obliged to shorten his residence at his friend Sir Roger de Coverley's, from his being taken for a conjuror. Every state of society has its advantages and disadvantages. An author is at present in no danger of being taken for a conjuror!

No. XXIII.

The same Subject continued.

LIFE is the art of being well deceived; and in order that the deception may succeed it must be habitual and uninterrupted. A constant examination of the value of our opinions and enjoyments compared with those of others may lessen our prejudices, but will leave nothing for our affections to rest upon. A multiplicity of objects unsettles the mind, and destroys not only all enthusiasm, but all sincerity of attachment, all constancy of pursuit; as persons accustomed to an itinerant mode of life never feel themselves at home in any place. It is by means of habit that our intellectual employments mix like our food with the circulation of the blood, and go on like any other part of the animal functions. To take away the force of habit and prejudice entirely is to strike at the root of our personal existence. The bookworm, buried in the depth of his researches, may well say to the obtrusive shifting realities of the world, "Leave me to my repose!" We have seen an instance of a poetical enthusiast, who would have passed his life very

comfortably in the contemplation of *his own idea*, if he had not been disturbed in his reverie by the reviewers; and for our own part, we think we could pass our lives very learnedly and classically in one of the quadrangles at Oxford, without any idea at all, vegetating merely on the air of the place. Chaucer has drawn a beautiful picture of a true scholar in his 'Clerk of Oxenford':

"A clerk ther was of Oxenford also
 That unto logik hadde longe i-go.
 Al so lene was his hors as is a rake,
 And he was not right fat, I undertake,
 But loked holwe, and therto soburly.
 Ful thredbare was his overest courtepy,
 For he hadde nought geten him yit a benefice,
 Ne was not worthy to haven an office;
 For him was lever have at his beddes heed
 Twenty bookes, clothed in blak and reed,
 Of Aristotil and of his philosophie,
 Then robus riche, or fithul, or sawtrie.
 But al though he were a philosopre
 Yet hadde he but litul gold in cofre,
 But al that he might of his frendes hente,
 On bookes and his lernyng he it spente,
 And besily gan for the soules pray
 Of hem that gaf him wherwith to scolay.
 Of studie tooke he moste cure and heede.
 Not oo word spak he more than was neede;
 Al that he spak it was of heye prudence,
 And schort, and quyk, and ful of gret sentence.
 Sownyng in moral manere was his speche,
 And gladly wolde he lerne and gladly teche."¹

If letters have profited little by throwing down the barrier between learned prejudice and ignorant presumption, the arts have profited still less by the universal diffusion of accomplishment and pretension. An artist is no longer looked upon as anything who is not at the same time "chemist, statesman, fiddler, and

¹ Prologue to the 'Canterbury Tales.' Works, edit. Bell, vol. i. pp. 90, 91.

buffoon." It is expected of him that he should move gracefully, and he has never learned to dance; that he should converse on all subjects, and he understands but one; that he should be read in different languages, and he only knows his own. Yet there is one language, the language of Nature, in which it is enough for him to be able to read, to find everlasting employment and solace to his thoughts—

"Tongues in the trees, books in the running brooks,
Sermons in stones, and good in everything."

He will find no end of his labours or of his triumphs there; yet still feel all his strength not more than equal to the task he has begun—his whole life too short for art. Rubens complained, that just as he was beginning to understand his profession he was forced to quit it. It was a saying of Michael Angelo that "painting was jealous and required the whole man to herself." Is it to be supposed that Rembrandt did not find sufficient resources against the spleen in the little cell, where mystery and silence hung upon his pencil, or the noontide ray penetrated the solemn gloom around him, without the aid of modern newspapers, novels, and reviews? Was he not more wisely employed, while devoted solely to his art—married to that immortal bride? We do not imagine Sir Joshua Reynolds was much happier for having written his lectures, nor for the learned society he kept, friendship apart; and learned society is not necessary to friendship. He was evidently, as far as conversation was concerned, little at his ease in it; and he was always glad, as he himself said, after he had been entertained at the houses of the great, to get back to his painting-room again. Any one settled pursuit, together with the ordinary alternations of leisure, exercise, and amusement, and the natural feelings and relations of society, is quite enough to take

up the whole of our thoughts, time, and affections ; and anything beyond this will, generally speaking, only tend to dissipate and distract the mind. There is no end of accomplishments, of the prospect of new acquisitions of taste or skill, or of the uneasiness arising from the want of them, if we once indulge in this idle habit of vanity and affectation. The mind is never satisfied with what it is, but is always looking out for fanciful perfections which it can neither attain nor practise. Our failure in any one object is fatal to our enjoyment of all the rest ; and the chances of disappointment multiply with the number of our pursuits. In catching at the shadow we lose the substance. No man can thoroughly master more than one art or science. The world has never seen a perfect painter. What would it have availed for Raphael to have aimed at Titian's colouring, or for Titian to have imitated Raphael's drawing, but to have diverted each from the true bent of his natural genius, and to have made each sensible of his own deficiencies, without any probability of supplying them ? Pedantry in art, in learning, in everything, is the setting an extraordinary value on that which we can do, and that which we understand best, and that which it is our business to do and understand. Where is the harm of this ? To possess or even understand all kinds of excellence equally, is impossible ; and to pretend to admire that to which we are indifferent as much as that which is of the greatest use and which gives the greatest pleasure to us, is not liberality, but affectation. Is an artist, for instance, to be required to feel the same admiration for the works of Handel as for those of Raphael ? If he is sincere, he cannot ; and a man, to be free from pedantry, must either be a coxcomb or a hypocrite. Vestris was so far in the right, in saying that Voltaire and he were the two greatest men in Europe. Voltaire was so in the public opinion, and he

was so in his own. Authors and literary people have been unjustly accused for arrogating an exclusive preference to letters over arts. They are justified in doing this, because words are the most natural and universal language, and because they have the sympathy of the world with them. Poets, for the same reason, have a right to be the vainest of authors. The prejudice attached to established reputation is, in like manner, perfectly well-founded, because that which has longest excited our admiration and the admiration of mankind is most entitled to admiration, on the score of habit, sympathy, and deference to public opinion. There is a sentiment attached to classical reputation which cannot belong to new works of genius till they become old in their turn.

There appears to be a natural division of labour in the ornamental as well as the mechanical arts of human life. We do not see why a nobleman should wish to shine as a poet, any more than to be dubbed a knight or to be created Lord Mayor of London. If he succeeds he gains nothing; and then if he is damned what a ridiculous figure he makes! The great, instead of rivaling them, should keep authors, as they formerly kept fools—a practice in itself highly laudable, and the disuse of which might be referred to as the first symptom of the degeneracy of modern times and dissolution of the principles of social order. But of all the instances of a profession now unjustly obsolete, commend us to the alchemist. We see him sitting fortified in his prejudices, with his furnace, his diagrams, and his alembics; smiling at disappointments as proofs of the sublimity of his art and the earnest of his future success; wondering at his own knowledge and the incredulity of others; fed with hope to the last gasp, and having all the pleasures without the pain of madness. What is there in the discoveries of modern chemistry equal to the very names of the *ELIXIR VITÆ* and the *AURUM POTABILE*!

In Froissart's 'Chronicles' there is an account of a reverend monk who had been a robber in the early part of his life, and who, when he grew old, used feelingly to lament that he had ever changed his profession. He said, "it was a goodly sight to sally out from his castle, and to see a troop of jolly friars coming riding that way, with their mules well laden with viands and rich stores, to advance towards them, to attack and overthrow them, returning to the castle with a noble booty." He preferred this mode of life to counting his beads and chaunting his vespers, and repented that he had ever been prevailed on to relinquish so laudable a calling. In this confession of remorse we may be sure that there was no hypocrisy.

The difference in the character of the gentlemen of the present age and those of the old school has been often insisted on. The character of a gentleman is a *relative term*, which can hardly subsist where there is no marked distinction of persons. The diffusion of knowledge, of artificial and intellectual equality, tends to level this distinction, and to confound that nice perception and high sense of honour which arises from conspicuousness of situation and a perpetual attention to personal propriety and the claims of personal respect. The age of chivalry is gone with the improvements in the art of war which superseded the exercise of personal courage; and the character of a gentleman must disappear with those general refinements in manners, which render the advantages of rank and situation accessible almost to every one. The bagwig and sword naturally followed the fate of the helmet and the spear, when these outward insignia no longer implied acknowledged superiority, and were a distinction without a difference.

The spirit of chivalrous and romantic love proceeded on the same exclusive principle. It was an enthusiastic

adoration, an idolatrous worship, paid to sex and beauty. This, even in its blindest excess, was better than the cold indifference and prostituted gallantry of this philosophic age. The extreme tendency of civilisation is to dissipate all intellectual energy and dissolve all moral principle. We are sometimes inclined to regret the innovations on the Catholic religion. It was a noble charter for ignorance, dullness, and prejudice of all kinds (perhaps, after all, "the sovereign'st things on earth"), and put an effectual stop to the vanity and restlessness of opinion. "It wrapt the human understanding all round like a blanket." Since the Reformation, altars unsprinkled by holy oil are no longer sacred, and thrones unsupported by divine right have become uneasy and insecure.

No. XXIV.

On the Character of Rousseau.

MADAME DE STAEL, in her 'Letters on the Writings and Character of Rousseau,' gives it as her opinion "that the imagination was the first faculty of his mind, and that this faculty even absorbed all the others."¹ And she further adds, "Rousseau had great strength of reason on abstract questions, or with respect to objects which have no reality but in the mind."² Both these opinions are radically wrong. Neither imagination nor reason can properly be said to have been the original predominant faculty of his mind. The strength both of imagination and reason which he possessed was borrowed from the

¹ "Je crois que l'imagination étoit la première de ses facultés, et qu'elle absorboit même toutes les autres."—P. 80.

² "Il avoit une grande puissance de raison sur les matières abstraites, sur les objets qui n'ont de réalité que dans la pensée," &c.—P. 81.

excess of another faculty; and the weakness and poverty of reason and imagination which are to be found in his works may be traced to the same source—namely, that these faculties in him were artificial, secondary, and dependent, operating by a power not theirs, but lent to them. The only quality which he possessed in an eminent degree, which alone raised him above ordinary men, and which gave to his writings and opinions an influence greater, perhaps, than has been exerted by any individual in modern times, was extreme sensibility, or an acute and even morbid feeling of all that related to his own impressions, to the objects and events of his life.

He had the most intense consciousness of his own existence. No object that had once made an impression on him was ever after effaced. Every feeling in his mind became a passion. His craving after excitement was an appetite and a disease. His interest in his own thoughts and feelings was always wound up to the highest pitch, and hence the enthusiasm which he excited in others. He owed the power which he exercised over the opinions of all Europe, by which he created numberless disciples, and overturned established systems, to the tyranny which his feelings in the first instance exercised over himself. The dazzling blaze of his reputation was kindled by the same fire that fed upon his vitals.¹

His ideas differed from those of other men only in their force and intensity. His genius was the effect of his temperament. He created nothing, he demonstrated nothing, by a pure effort of the understanding. His fictitious characters are modifications of his own being,

¹ He did more towards the French Revolution than any other man. Voltaire, by his wit and penetration, had rendered superstition contemptible and tyranny odious; but it was Rousseau who brought the feeling of irreconcilable enmity to rank and privileges, *above humanity*, home to the bosom of every man—identified it with all the pride of intellect and with the deepest yearnings of the human heart.

reflections and shadows of himself. His speculations are the obvious exaggerations of a mind giving a loose to its habitual impulses, and moulding all nature to its own purposes. Hence his enthusiasm and his eloquence, bearing down all opposition. Hence the warmth and the luxuriance as well as the sameness of his descriptions. Hence the frequent verboseness of his style; for passion lends force and reality to language, and makes words supply the place of imagination. Hence the tenaciousness of his logic, the acuteness of his observations, the refinement and the inconsistency of his reasoning. Hence his keen penetration, and his strange want of comprehension of mind; for the same intense feeling which enabled him to discern the first principles of things, and seize some one view of a subject in all its ramifications, prevented him from admitting the operation of other causes which interfered with his favourite purpose, and involved him in endless wilful contradictions. Hence his excessive egotism, which filled all objects with himself, and would have occupied the universe with his smallest interest. Hence his jealousy and suspicion of others; for no attention, no respect or sympathy, could come up to the extravagant claims of his self-love. Hence his dissatisfaction with himself and with all around him; for nothing could satisfy his ardent longings after good, his restless appetite of being. Hence his feelings, overstrained and exhausted, recoiled upon themselves, and produced his love of silence and repose, his feverish aspirations after the quiet and solitude of nature. Hence in part also his quarrel with the artificial institutions and distinctions of society, which opposed so many barriers to the unrestrained indulgence of his will, and allured his imagination to scenes of pastoral simplicity or of savage life, where the passions were either not excited or left to follow their own impulse—where the petty vexations and irritating disappointments of common life had no place—and where the tormenting

pursuits of arts and sciences were lost in pure animal enjoyment or indolent repose. Thus he describes the first savage wandering for ever under the shade of magnificent forests or by the side of mighty rivers, smit with the unquenchable love of nature!

The best of all his works is the 'Confessions,' though it is that which has been least read, because it contains the fewest set paradoxes or general opinions. It relates entirely to himself; and no one was ever so much at home on this subject as he was. From the strong hold which they had taken of his mind, he makes us enter into his feelings as if they had been our own, and we seem to remember every incident and circumstance of his life as if it had happened to ourselves. We are never tired of this work, for it everywhere presents us with pictures which we can fancy to be counterparts of our own existence. The passages of this sort are innumerable. There is the interesting account of his childhood, the constraints and thoughtless liberty of which are so well described; of his sitting up all night reading romances with his father, till they were forced to desist by hearing the swallows twittering in their nests; his crossing the Alps, described with all the feelings belonging to it—his pleasure in setting out, his satisfaction in coming to his journey's end, the delight of "coming and going he knew not where;" his arriving at Turin; the figure of Madame Basile, drawn with such inimitable precision and elegance; the delightful adventure of the Château de Toune, where he passed the day with Mademoiselle G**** and Mademoiselle Galley; the story of his Zuletta, the proud, the charming Zuletta, whose last words, "*Va Zanetto, e studia la Matematica,*" were never to be forgotten; his sleeping near Lyons in a niche of the wall, after a fine summer's day, with a nightingale perched above his head; his first meeting with Madame Warens, the pomp of sound with which he has celebrated her name, beginning "Louise Eleonore

de Warens étoit une demoiselle de la Tour de Pil, noble et ancienne famille de Vevai, ville du pays de Vaud" (sounds which we still tremble to repeat); his description of her person, her angelic smile, her mouth of the size of his own; his walking out one day while the bells were chiming to vespers, and anticipating in a sort of waking dream the life he afterwards led with her, in which months and years, and life itself, passed away in undisturbed felicity; the sudden disappointment of his hopes; his transport thirty years after at seeing the same flower which they had brought home together from one of their rambles near Chambery; his thoughts in that long interval of time; his suppers with Grimm and Diderot after he came to Paris; the first idea of his prize dissertation on the savage state; his account of writing the 'New Eloise,' and his attachment to Madame d'Houdetot; his literary projects, his fame, his misfortunes, his unhappy temper; his last solitary retirement in the lake and island of Biemme, with his dog and his boat; his reveries and delicious musings there—all these crowd into our minds with recollections which we do not choose to express. There are no passages in the 'New Eloise' of equal force and beauty with the best descriptions in the 'Confessions,' if we except the excursion on the water, Julia's last letter to St. Preux, and his letter to her, recalling the days of their first loves. We spent two whole years in reading these two works, and (gentle reader, it was when we were young) in shedding tears over them,

—— "As fast as the Arabian trees
Their medicinal gums."

They were the happiest years of our life. We may well say of them, sweet is the dew of their memory, and pleasant the balm of their recollection! There are,

indeed, impressions which neither time nor circumstances can efface.¹

Rousseau, in all his writings, never once lost sight of

¹ We shall here give one passage as an example, which has always appeared to us the very perfection of this kind of personal and local description. It is that where he gives an account of his being one of the choristers at the Cathedral at Chambéry: "On jugera bien que la vie de la maîtrise, toujours chantante et gaie, avec les musiciens et les enfans de chœur, me plaisoit plus que celle du séminaire avec les Pères de S. Lazare. Cependant, cette vie, pour être plus libre, n'en étoit pas moins égale et réglée. J'étois fait pour aimer l'indépendance et pour n'en abuser jamais. Durant six mois entiers, je ne sortis pas une seule fois que pour aller chez Maman ou à l'église, et je n'en fus pas même tenté. Cette intervalle est un de ceux où j'ai vécu dans le plus grand calme, et que je me suis rappelé avec le plus de plaisir. Dans les situations diverses où je me suis trouvé, quelques-uns ont été marqués par un tel sentiment de bien-être, qu'en les remémorant j'en suis affecté comme si j'y étois encore. Non seulement je me rappelle les tems, les lieux, les personnes, mais tous les objets environnans, la température de l'air, son odeur, sa couleur, une certaine impression locale qui ne s'est fait sentir que là, et dont le souvenir vif m'y transporte de nouveau. Par exemple, tout ce qu'on répétoit à la maîtrise, tout ce qu'on chantoit au chœur, tout ce qu'on y faisoit, le bel et noble habit des chanoines, les chasubles des prêtres, les mitres des chantres, la figure des musiciens, un vieux charpentier boiteux qui jouoit de la contrebasse, un petit abbé blondin qui jouoit du violon, le lambeau de soutane qu'après avoir posé son épée M. le Maître endossoit par-dessus son habit laïque, et le beau surplis fin dont il en couvrait les loques pour aller au chœur; l'orgueil avec lequel j'allois, tenant ma petite flûte à bec, m'établir dans l'orchestre, à la tribune, pour un petit bout de récit que M. le Maître avoit fait exprès pour moi; le bon diner que nous attendoit ensuite, le bon appétit qu'on y portoit:--ce concours d'objets vivement retracé m'a cent fois charmé dans ma mémoire, autant et plus que dans la réalité. J'ai gardé toujours une affection tendre pour un certain air du *Conditor alme syderum* qui marche par iambes; parce qu'un dimanche de l'Avent j'entendis de mon lit chanter cette hymne, avant le jour, sur le perron de la cathédrale, selon un rite de cette église là. Mlle. Merceret, femme de chambre de Maman, savoit un peu de musique; je n'oublierai jamais un petit motet *afferte*, que M. le Maître me fit chanter avec elle, et que sa maîtresse écoutait

himself. He was the same individual from first to last. The springs that moved his passions never went down, the pulse that agitated his heart never ceased to beat. It was this strong feeling of interest, accumulating in his mind, which overpowers and absorbs the feelings of his readers. He owed all his power to sentiment. The writer who most nearly resembles him in our own times is the author of the 'Lyrical Ballads.' We see no other difference between them, than that the one wrote in prose and the other in poetry, and that prose is perhaps better adapted to express those local and personal feelings, which are inveterate habits in the mind, than poetry, which embodies its imaginary creations. We conceive that Rousseau's exclamation, "*Ah, voilà de la pervenche!*" comes more home to the mind than Mr. Wordsworth's discovery of the linnet's nest "with five blue eggs," or than his address to the cuckoo, beautiful as we think it is; and we will confidently match the citizen of Geneva's adventures on the Lake of Bièvre against the Cumberland poet's floating dreams on the Lake of Grasmere. Both create an interest out of nothing, or rather out of their own feelings; both weave numberless recollections into one sentiment; both wind their own being round whatever object occurs to them. But Rousseau, as a prose-writer, gives only the habitual and personal impression. Mr. Wordsworth, as a poet, is forced to lend the colours of imagination to impressions which owe all their force to their identity with themselves, and tries to paint what is only to be felt. Rousseau, in a word, interests you in certain objects by interesting you in himself: Mr. Wordsworth would

avec tant de plaisir. Enfin tout, jusqu'à la bonne servante Perrine, qui étoit si bonne fille, et que les enfans de chœur faisoient tant endéver—tout dans les souvenirs de ces tems de bonheur et d'innocence revient souvent me ravir et m'attrister."—*Confessions*, liv. iii. p. 283.

persuade you that the most insignificant objects are interesting in themselves, because he is interested in them. If he had met with Rousseau's favourite periwinkle, he would have *translated* it into the most beautiful of flowers.

This is not imagination, but want of sense. If his jealousy of the sympathy of others makes him avoid what is beautiful and grand in nature, why does he undertake elaborately to describe other objects? *His* nature is a mere Dulcinea del Toboso, and he would make a Vashti of her. Rubens appears to have been as extravagantly attached to his three wives as Raphael was to his Fornarina; but their faces were not so classical. The three greatest egotists that we know of—that is, the three writers who felt their own being most powerfully and exclusively—are Rousseau, Wordsworth, and Benvenuto Cellini. As Swift somewhere says, we defy the world to furnish out a fourth.

No. XXV.

On Different Sorts of Fame.

THERE is a half serious, half ironical argument in Melmoth's 'Fitz-Osborn's Letters,' to show the futility of posthumous fame, which runs thus: "The object of any one who is inspired with this passion is to be remembered by posterity with admiration and delight, as having been possessed of certain powers and excellences which distinguished him above his contemporaries. But posterity, it is said, can know nothing of the individual but from the memory of those qualities which he has left behind him. All that we know of Julius Cæsar, for instance, is that he was the person who performed certain actions, and wrote a book called his 'Commentaries.' When, therefore, we extol Julius

Cæsar for his actions or his writings, what do we say but that the person who performed certain things did perform them; that the author of such a work was the person who wrote it; or, in short, that Julius Cæsar was Julius Cæsar? Now this is a mere truism, and the desire to be the subject of such an identical proposition must therefore be an evident absurdity." The sophism is a tolerably ingenious one, but it is a sophism, nevertheless. It would go equally to prove the nullity, not only of posthumous fame, but of living reputation; for the good or the bad opinion which my next-door neighbour may entertain of me is nothing more than his conviction that such and such a person having certain good or bad qualities is possessed of them; nor is the figure which a lord-mayor elect, a prating demagogue, or a popular preacher, makes in the eyes of the admiring multitude—*himself*, but an image of him reflected in the minds of others, in connection with certain feelings of respect and wonder. In fact, whether the admiration we seek is to last for a day or for eternity, whether we are to have it while living or after we are dead, whether it is to be expressed by our contemporaries or by future generations, the principle of it is the same—*sympathy with the feelings of others*, and the necessary tendency which the idea or consciousness of the approbation of others has to strengthen the suggestions of our self-love.¹ We are all inclined to think well of ourselves, of our sense and capacity in whatever we undertake; but from this very desire to think well of ourselves we are (as *Mrs. Peachum* says) "*bitter bad judges*" of our own pretensions; and when our vanity flatters us most we ought in general to suspect it most. We are, therefore, glad

¹ Burns, when about to sail for America after the first publication of his poems (1786), consoled himself with "the delicious thought of being regarded as a clever fellow, though on the other side of the Atlantic."

to get the good opinion of a friend, but that may be partial; the good word of a stranger is likely to be more sincere, but he may be a blockhead; the multitude will agree with us, if we agree with them; accident, the caprice of fashion, the prejudice of the moment, may give a fleeting reputation. Our only certain appeal, therefore, is to posterity; the voice of fame is alone the voice of truth. In proportion, however, as this award is final and secure, it is remote and uncertain. Voltaire said to some one, who had addressed an Epistle to Posterity, "I am afraid, my friend, this letter will never be delivered according to its direction." It can exist only in imagination; and we can only presume upon our claim to it, as we prefer the hope of lasting fame to everything else. The love of fame is almost another name for the love of excellence; or it is the ambition to attain the highest excellence, sanctioned by the highest authority, that of time. Vanity and the love of fame are quite distinct from each other; for the one is voracious of the most obvious and doubtful applause, whereas the other rejects or overlooks every kind of applause but that which is purified from every mixture of flattery, and identified with truth and nature itself. There is, therefore, something disinterested in this passion, inasmuch as it is abstracted and ideal, and only appeals to opinion as a standard of truth; it is this which "makes ambition virtue." Milton had as fine an idea as any one of true fame; and Dr. Johnson has very beautifully described his patient and confident anticipations of the success of his great poem in the account of 'Paradise Lost.' He has, indeed, done the same thing himself in 'Lycidas':—

"Fame is the spur that the clear spirit doth raise
 (That last infirmity of noble mind)
 To scorn delights, and live laborious days;
 But the fair guerdon when we hope to find,

And think to burst out into sudden blaze,
Comes the blind Fury with th' abhorred shears,
And slits the thin-spun life. But not the praise,
Phœbus replied, and touch'd my trembling ears."

None but those who have sterling pretensions can afford to refer them to time; as persons who live upon their means cannot well go into Chancery. No feeling can be more at variance with the true love of fame than that impatience which we have sometimes witnessed to "pluck its fruits, unripe and crude," before the time, to make a little echo of popularity mimic the voice of fame, and to convert a prize-medal or a newspaper-puff into a passport to immortality.

When we hear any one complaining that he has not the same fame as some poet or painter who lived two hundred years ago, he seems to us to complain that he has not been dead these two hundred years. When his fame has undergone the same ordeal, that is, has lasted as long, it will be as good, if he really deserves it. We think it equally absurd, when we sometimes find people objecting that such an acquaintance of theirs, who has not an idea in his head, should be so much better off in the world than they are. But it is for this very reason; they have preferred the indulgence of their ideas to the pursuit of realities. It is but fair that he who has no ideas should have something in their stead. If he who has devoted his time to the study of beauty, to the pursuit of truth, whose object has been to govern opinion, to form the taste of others, to instruct or to amuse the public, succeeds in this respect, he has no more right to complain that he has not a title or a fortune, than he who has not purchased a ticket, that is, who has taken no means to the end, has a right to complain that he has not a prize in the lottery.

In proportion as men can command the immediate and vulgar applause of others they become indifferent

to that which is remote and difficult of attainment. We take pains only when we are compelled to do it. Little men are remarked to have courage, little women to have wit; and it is seldom that a man of genius is a coxcomb in his dress. Rich men are contented not to be thought wise; and the great often think themselves well off if they can escape being the jest of their acquaintance. Authors were actuated by the desire of the applause of posterity only so long as they were debarred of that of their contemporaries, just as we see the map of the gold-mines of Peru hanging in the room of Hogarth's 'Distressed Poet.' In the midst of the ignorance and prejudices with which they were surrounded, they had a sort of *forlorn hope* in the prospect of immortality. The spirit of universal criticism has superseded the anticipation of posthumous fame, and instead of waiting for the award of distant ages, the poet or prose-writer receives final doom from the next number of the 'Edinburgh' or 'Quarterly Review.' According as the nearness of the applause increases our impatience increases with it. A writer in a weekly journal engages with reluctance in a monthly publication; and again, a contributor to a daily paper sets about his task with greater spirit than either of them. It is like prompt payment; the effort and the applause go together. We, indeed, have known a man of genius and eloquence to whom, from a habit of excessive talking, the certainty of seeing what he wrote in print the next day was too remote a stimulus for his imagination, and who constantly laid aside his pen in the middle of an article, if a friend dropped in, to finish the subject more effectually aloud, so that the approbation of his hearer and the sound of his own voice might be co-instantaneous. Members of Parliament seldom turn authors, except to print their speeches when they have not been distinctly heard or understood; and great orators are generally very

indifferent writers, from want of sufficient inducement to exert themselves, when the immediate effect on others is not perceived, and the irritation of applause or opposition ceases.

There have been in the last century two singular examples of literary reputation: the one of an author without a name, and the other of a name without an author. We mean the author of 'Junius's Letters,' and the translator of the mottoes to the 'Rambler,' whose name was Elphinstone. The 'Rambler' was published in the year 1750, and the name of Elphinstone prefixed to each paper is familiar to every literary reader since that time, though we know nothing more of him. We saw this gentleman, since the commencement of the present century, looking over a clipped hedge in the country, with a broad-flapped hat, a venerable countenance, and his dress cut out with the same formality as his evergreens. His name had not only survived half a century in conjunction with that of Johnson, but he had survived with it, enjoying all the dignity of a classical reputation and the ease of a literary sinecure on the strength of his mottoes. The author of 'Junius's Letters' is, on the contrary, as remarkable an instance of a writer who has arrived at all the public honours of literature without being known by name to a single individual, and who may be said to have realised all the pleasure of posthumous fame while living, without the smallest gratification of personal vanity. An anonymous writer may feel an acute interest in what is said of his productions, and a secret satisfaction in their success, because it is not the effect of personal considerations, as the overhearing any one speak well of us is more agreeable than a direct compliment. But this very satisfaction will tempt him to communicate his secret. This temptation, however, does not extend beyond the circle of his acquaintance. With respect to the public, who know an

author only by his writings, it is of little consequence whether he has a real or a fictitious name or signature, so that they have some clue by which to associate the works with the author. In the case of 'Junius,' therefore, where other personal considerations of interest or connections might immediately counteract and set aside this temptation, the triumph over the mere vanity of authorship might not have cost him so dear as we are at first inclined to imagine. Suppose it to have been the old Marquis of ———. It is quite out of the question that he should keep his places and not keep his secret. If ever the King should die we think it not impossible that the secret may out. Certainly the accouchement of any princess in Europe would not excite an equal interest. "And you then, sir, are the author of 'Junius'!" What a recognition for the public and the author! That between Yorick and the Frenchman was a trifle to it.

We have said that we think the desire to be known by name as an author chiefly has a reference to those to whom we are known personally, and is strongest with regard to those who know most of our persons and least of our capacities. We wish to *subpœna* the public to our characters. Those who, by great services or great meannesses, have attained titles always take them from the place with which they have the earliest associations, and thus strive to throw a veil of importance over the insignificance of their original pretensions or the injustice of fortune. When Lord Nelson was passing over the quay at Yarmouth, to take possession of the ship to which he had been appointed, the people exclaimed, "Why make that little fellow a captain?" He thought of this when he fought the battles of the Nile and Trafalgar. The same sense of personal insignificance which made him great in action made him a fool in love. If Bonaparte had been six inches higher

he never would have gone on that disastrous Russian expedition, nor "with that addition" would he ever have been emperor and king. For our own part, one object which we have in writing these essays is to send them in a volume to a person who took some notice of us when children, and who argued, perhaps, better of us than we deserved. In fact, the opinion of those who know us most, who are a kind of second self in our recollections, is a sort of second conscience; and the approbation of one or two friends is all the immortality we pretend to.

No. XXVI.

Character of John Bull.

IN a late number of a respectable publication there is the following description of the French character:—

"Extremes meet. This is the only way of accounting for that enigma, the French character. It has often been remarked that this ingenious nation exhibits more striking contradictions than any other that ever existed. They are the gayest of the gay, and the gravest of the grave. Their very faces pass at once from an expression of the most lively animation, when they are in conversation or in action, to a melancholy blank. They are the lightest and most volatile, and at the same time the most plodding, mechanical, and laborious people in Europe. They are one moment the slaves of the most contemptible prejudices, and the next launch out into all the extravagance of the most abstract speculations. In matters of taste they are as inexorable as they are lax in questions of morality; they judge of the one by rules, of the other by their inclinations. It seems at times as if nothing could shock them, and yet they are offended at the merest trifles. The smallest things make

the greatest impression on them. From the facility with which they can accommodate themselves to circumstances, they have no fixed principles or real character. They are always that which gives them least pain or costs them least trouble. They easily disentangle their thoughts from whatever causes the slightest uneasiness, and direct their sensibility to flow in any channels they think proper. Their whole existence is more theatrical than real—their sentiments put on or off like the dress of an actor. Words are with them equivalent to things. They say what is agreeable, and believe what they say. Virtue and vice, good and evil, liberty and slavery, are matters almost of indifference. Their natural self-complacency stands them in stead of all other advantages.”

The foregoing account is pretty near the truth—we have nothing to say against it; but we shall here endeavour to do a like piece of justice to our countrymen, who are too apt to mistake the vices of others for so many virtues in themselves.

If a Frenchman is pleased with everything, John Bull is pleased with nothing; and that is a fault. He is, to be sure, fond of having his own way, till you let him have it. He is a very headstrong animal, who mistakes the spirit of contradiction for the love of independence, and proves himself to be in the right by the obstinacy with which he stickles for the wrong. You cannot put him so much out of his way as by agreeing with him. He is never in such good-humour as with what gives him the spleen, and is most satisfied when he is sulky. If you find fault with him he is in a rage; and if you praise him, suspects you have a design upon him. He recommends himself to another by affronting him, and if that will not do, knocks him down to convince him of his sincerity. He gives himself such airs as no mortal ever did, and wonders at the rest of the world for not thinking him the most amiable person

breathing. John means well, too, but he has an odd way of showing it—by a total disregard of other people's feelings and opinions. He is sincere, for he tells you at the first word he does not like you; and never deceives, for he never offers to serve you. A civil answer is too much to expect from him. A word costs him more than a blow. He is silent because he has nothing to say, and he looks stupid because he is so. He has the strangest notions of beauty. The expression he values most in the human countenance is an appearance of roast-beef and plum-pudding; and if he has a red face and round belly thinks himself a great man. He is a little purse-proud, and has a better opinion of himself for having made a full meal. But his greatest delight is in a bugbear; this he must have, be the consequence what it may. Whoever will give him that may lead him by the nose and pick his pocket at the same time. An idiot in a country town, a Presbyterian parson, a dog with a canister tied to his tail, a bull-bait, or a fox-hunt, are irresistible attractions to him. The Pope was formerly his great aversion, and latterly a cap of liberty is a thing he cannot abide. He discarded the Pope and defied the Inquisition; called the French a nation of slaves and beggars, and abused their *Grand Monarque* for a tyrant; cut off one king's head and exiled another; set up a Dutch stadtholder, and elected a Hanoverian elector to be king over him—to show he would have his own way, and to teach the rest of the world what they should do. But since other people took to imitating his example, John has taken it into his head to hinder them; will have a monopoly of rebellion and regicide to himself; has become sworn brother to the Pope, and stands by the Inquisition; restores his old enemies, the Bourbons, and reads a *great moral lesson* to their subjects; persuades himself that the Dutch stadtholder and the Hanoverian elector came to reign over him by divine

right, and does all he can to prove himself a beast to make other people slaves. The truth is, John was always a surly, meddlesome, obstinate fellow, and of late years his *head* has not been quite right. In short, John is a great blockhead and a great bully, and requires (what he has been long labouring for) a hundred years of slavery to bring him to his senses. He will have it that he is a great patriot, for he hates all other countries; that he is wise, for he thinks all other people fools; that he is honest, for he calls all other people whores and rogues. If being in an ill-humour all one's life is the perfection of human nature, then John is very near it. He beats his wife, quarrels with his neighbours, damns his servants, and gets drunk to kill the time and keep up his spirits; and firmly believes himself the only unexceptionable, accomplished, moral, and religious character in Christendom. He boasts of the excellence of the laws and the goodness of his own disposition; and yet there are more people hanged in England than in all Europe besides. He boasts of the modesty of his countrywomen; and yet there are more prostitutes in the streets of London than in all the capitals of Europe put together. He piques himself on his comforts, because he is the most uncomfortable of mortals; and because he has no enjoyment in society seeks it, as he says, at his fireside, where he may be stupid as a matter of course, sullen as a matter of right, and as ridiculous as he chooses without being laughed at. His liberty is the effect of his self-will, his religion owing to the spleen, his temper to the climate. He is an industrious animal, because he has no taste for amusement, and had rather work six days in the week than be idle one. His awkward attempts at gaiety are the jest of other nations. "They" (the English), says Froissart, speaking of the meeting of the Black Prince and the French king, "amused themselves sadly, according to the custom of

their country"—“*se rejoissoient tristement, selon la coutume de leur pays.*” Their patience of labour is confined to what is repugnant and disagreeable in itself—to the drudgery of the mechanic arts—and does not extend to the fine arts; that is, they are indifferent to pain, but insensible to pleasure. They will stand in a trench or march up to a breach, but they cannot bear to dwell long on an agreeable object. They can no more submit to regularity in art than to decency in behaviour. Their pictures are as coarse and slovenly as their address. John boasts of his great men, without much right to do so; not that he has not had them, but because he neither knows nor cares anything about them but to swagger over other nations. That which chiefly hits John’s fancy in Shakspeare is that he was a deer-stealer in his youth; and as for Newton’s discoveries, he hardly knows to this day that the earth is round. John’s oaths, which are quite characteristic, have got him the nickname of ‘Monsieur God-damn-me.’ They are profane; a Frenchman’s indecent. One swears by his vices, the other by their punishment. After all John’s blustering, he is but a dolt. His habitual jealousy of others makes him the inevitable dupe of quacks and impostors of all sorts; he goes all lengths with one party out of spite to another; his zeal is as furious as his antipathies are unfounded; and there is nothing half so absurd or ignorant of its own intentions as an English mob.

No. XXVII.

On Good-nature.

LORD SHAFTESBURY somewhere remarks that a great many people pass for very good-natured persons for no other reason than because they care about nobody but them-

selves; and consequently, as nothing annoys them but what touches their own interest, they never irritate themselves unnecessarily about what does not concern them, and seem to be made of the very milk of human kindness.

Good-nature—or what is often considered as such—is the most selfish of all the virtues; it is, nine times out of ten, mere indolence of disposition. A good-natured man is, generally speaking, one who does not like to be put out of his way; and, as long as he can help it—that is, till the provocation comes home to himself—he will not. He does not create fictitious uneasiness out of the distresses of others; he does not fret and fume and make himself uncomfortable about things he cannot mend, and that no way concern him even if he could; but then there is no one who is more apt to be disconcerted by what puts him to any personal inconvenience, however trifling; who is more tenacious of his selfish indulgences, however unreasonable; or who resents more violently any interruption of his ease and comforts—the very trouble he is put to in resenting it being felt as an aggravation of the injury. A person of this character feels no emotions of anger or detestation if you tell him of the devastation of a province, or the massacre of the inhabitants of a town, or the enslaving of a people; but if his dinner is spoiled by a lump of soot falling down the chimney he is thrown into the utmost confusion, and can hardly recover a decent command of his temper for the whole day. He thinks nothing can go amiss so long as he is at his ease, though a pain in his little finger makes him so peevish and quarrelsome that nobody can come near him. Knavery and injustice in the abstract are things that by no means ruffle his temper or alter the serenity of his countenance, unless he is to be the sufferer by them; nor is he ever betrayed into a passion in answering a sophism,

if he does not think it immediately directed against his own interest.

On the contrary, we sometimes meet with persons who regularly heat themselves in an argument, and get out of humour on every occasion, and make themselves obnoxious to a whole company about nothing. This is not because they are ill-tempered, but because they are in earnest. Good-nature is a hypocrite; it tries to pass off its love of its own ease, and indifference to everything else, for a particular softness and mildness of disposition. All people get in a passion and lose their temper if you offer to strike them or cheat them of their money—that is, if you interfere with that which they are really interested in. Tread on the heel of one of these good-natured persons—who do not care if the whole world is in flames—and see how he will bear it. If the truth were known, the most disagreeable people are the most amiable. They are the only persons who feel an interest in what does not concern them. They have as much regard for others as they have for themselves. They have as many vexations and causes of complaint as there are in the world. They are general righters of wrongs and redressers of grievances. They not only are annoyed by what they can help—by an act of inhumanity done in the next street, or in a neighbouring country by their own countrymen; they not only do not claim any share in the glory, and hate it the more, the more brilliant the success; but a piece of injustice done three thousand years ago touches them to the quick. They have an unfortunate attachment to a set of abstract phrases, such as *liberty, truth, justice, humanity, honour*, which are continually abused by knaves and misunderstood by fools; and they can hardly contain themselves for spleen. They have something to keep them in perpetual hot water. No sooner is one question set at rest than another rises up to

perplex them. They wear themselves to the bone in the affairs of other people, to whom they can do no manner of service, to the neglect of their own business and pleasure. They tease themselves to death about the morality of the Turks or the politics of the French. There are certain words that afflict their ears and things that lacerate their souls, and remain a plague-spot there for ever after. They have a fellow-feeling with all that has been done, said, or thought in the world. They have an interest in all science and in all art. They hate a lie as much as a wrong, for truth is the foundation of all justice. Truth is the first thing in their thoughts, then mankind, then their country, last themselves. They love excellence and bow to fame, which is the shadow of it. Above all, they are anxious to see justice done to the dead, as the best encouragement to the living and the lasting inheritance of future generations. They do not like to see a great principle undermined, or the fall of a great man. They would sooner forgive a blow in the face than a wanton attack on acknowledged reputation. The contempt in which the French hold Shakspeare is a serious evil to them; nor do they think the matter mended when they hear an Englishman, who would be thought a profound one, say that Voltaire was a man without wit. They are vexed to see genius playing at Tom Fool and honesty turned bawd. It gives them a cutting sensation to see a number of things which, as they are unpleasant to see, we shall not here repeat. In short, they have a passion for truth; they feel the same attachment to the idea of what is right that a knave does to his interest, or that a good-natured man does to his ease; and they have as many sources of uneasiness as there are actual or supposed deviations from this standard in the sum of things, or as there is a possibility of folly and mischief in the world.

Principle is a passion for truth—an incorrigible attachment to a general proposition. Good-nature is humanity that costs nothing. No good-natured man was ever a martyr to a cause—in religion or politics. He has no idea of striving against the stream. He may become a good courtier and a loyal subject; and it is hard if he does not, for he has nothing to do in that case but to consult his ease, interest, and outward appearances. The Vicar of Bray was a good-natured man. What a pity he was but a vicar! A good-natured man is utterly unfit for any situation or office in life that requires integrity, fortitude, or generosity—any sacrifice, except of opinion, or any exertion, but to please. A good-natured man will debauch his friend's mistress, if he has an opportunity, and betray his friend sooner than share disgrace or danger with him. He will not forego the smallest gratification to save the whole world. He makes his own convenience the standard of right and wrong. He avoids the feeling of pain in himself, and shuts his eyes to the sufferings of others. He will put a malefactor or an innocent person (no matter which) to the rack, and only laugh at the uncouthness of the gestures, or wonder that he is so unmannerly as to cry out. There is no villainy to which he will not lend a helping hand with great coolness and cordiality, for he sees only the pleasant and profitable side of things. He will assent to a falsehood with a leer of complacency, and applaud any atrocity that comes recommended in the garb of authority. He will betray his country to please a minister, and sign the death-warrant of thousands of wretches, rather than forfeit the congenial smile, the well-known squeeze of the hand. The shrieks of death, the torture of mangled limbs, the last groans of despair, are things that shock his smooth humanity too much ever to make an impression on it; his good-nature sympathises only with the smile, the bow, the gracious

salutation, the fawning answer: vice loses its sting, and corruption its poison, in the oily gentleness of his disposition. He will not hear of anything wrong in Church or State. He will defend every abuse by which anything is to be got, every dirty job, every act of every minister. In an extreme case, a very good-natured man indeed may try to hang twelve honest men than himself to rise at the bar, and forge the seal of the realm to continue his colleagues a week longer in office. He is a slave to the will of others, a coward to their prejudices, a tool of their vices. A good-natured man is no more fit to be trusted in public affairs than a coward or a woman is to lead an army. Spleen is the soul of patriotism and of public good. Lord Castlereagh is a good-natured man, Lord Eldon is a good-natured man, Charles Fox was a good-natured man. The last instance is the most decisive. The definition of a true patriot is *a good hater*.

A king who is a good-natured man is in a fair way of being a great tyrant. A king ought to feel concern for all to whom his power extends; but a good-natured man cares only about himself. If he has a good appetite, eats and sleeps well, nothing in the universe besides can disturb him. The destruction of the lives or liberties of his subjects will not stop him in the least of his caprices, but will concoct well with his bile, and "good digestion wait on appetite, and health on both." He will send out his mandate to kill and destroy with the same indifference or satisfaction that he performs any natural function of his body. The consequences are placed beyond the reach of his imagination, or would not affect him if they were not, for he is a fool and good-natured. A good-natured man hates more than any one else whatever thwarts his will or contradicts his prejudices; and if he has the power to prevent it, depend upon it, he will use it without remorse and without control.

There is a lower species of this character which is what is usually understood by a *well-meaning man*. A well-meaning man is one who often does a great deal of mischief without any kind of malice. He means no one any harm, if it is not for his interest. He is not a knave, nor perfectly honest. He does not easily resign a good place. Mr. Vansittart is a well-meaning man.

The Irish are a good-natured people; they have many virtues, but their virtues are those of the heart, not of the head. In their passions and affections they are sincere, but they are hypocrites in understanding. If they once begin to calculate the consequences, self-interest prevails. An Irishman who trusts to his principles and a Scotchman who yields to his impulses are equally dangerous. The Irish have wit, genius, eloquence, imagination, affections; but they want coherence of understanding, and consequently have no standard of thought or action. Their strength of mind does not keep pace with the warmth of their feelings or the quickness of their conceptions. Their animal spirits run away with them; their reason is a jade. There is something crude, indigested, rash, and discordant in almost all that they do or say. They have no system, no abstract ideas. They are "everything by starts, and nothing long." They are a wild people. They hate whatever imposes a law on their understandings or a yoke on their wills. To betray the principles they are most bound by their own professions, and the expectations of others to maintain, is with them a reclamation of their original rights, and to fly in the face of their benefactors and friends, an assertion of their natural freedom of will. They want consistency and good faith. They unite fierceness with levity. In the midst of their headlong impulses they have an undercurrent of selfishness and cunning, which in the end gets the better of them. Their feelings, when no longer excited by novelty

or opposition, grow cold and stagnant. Their blood, if not heated by passion, turns to poison. They have a rancour in their hatred of any object they have abandoned proportioned to the attachment they have professed to it. Their zeal, converted against itself, is furious. The late Mr. Burke was an instance of an Irish patriot and philosopher. He abused metaphysics because he could make nothing out of them, and turned his back upon liberty when he found he could get nothing more by her.¹—See to the same purpose the winding-up of the character of Judy in Miss Edgeworth's 'Castle Rackrent.'

No. XXVIII.

*On the Character of Milton's Eve.*²

THE difference between the character of Eve in Milton and Shakspeare's female characters is very striking, and

¹ This man (Burke), who was a half poet and a half philosopher, has done more mischief than perhaps any other person in the world. His understanding was not competent to the discovery of any truth, but it was sufficient to palliate a falsehood; his reasons, of little weight in themselves, thrown into the scale of power, were dreadful. Without genius to adorn the beautiful, he had the art to throw a dazzling veil over the deformed and disgusting; and to strew the flowers of imagination over the rotten carcase of corruption, not to prevent, but to communicate the infection. His jealousy of Rousseau was one chief cause of his opposition to the French Revolution. The writings of the one had changed the institutions of a kingdom; while the speeches of the other, with the intrigues of his whole party, had changed nothing but the *turnspit of the king's kitchen*. He would have blotted out the broad pure light of heaven, because it did not first shine in at the little Gothic windows of St. Stephen's Chapel. The genius of Rousseau had levelled the towers of the Bastille with the dust; our zealous reformist, who would rather be doing mischief than nothing, tried, therefore, to patch them up again by calling that loathsome dungeon the "king's castle," and by fulsome adulation of the virtues of a court strumpet. This man—but enough of him here.

² See the *Examiner* newspaper for 1816, pp. 460, 475.—Ed.

it appears to us to be this: Milton describes Eve not only as full of love and tenderness for Adam, but as the constant object of admiration in herself. She is the idol of the poet's imagination, and he paints her whole person with a studied profusion of charms. She is the wife, but she is still as much as ever the mistress of Adam. She is represented, indeed, as devoted to her husband, as twining round him for support "as the vine curls her tendrils," but her own grace and beauty are never lost sight of in the picture of conjugal felicity. Adam's attention and regard are as much turned to her as hers to him; for "in that first garden of their innocence" he had no other objects or pursuits to distract his attention—she was both his business and his pleasure. Shakspeare's females, on the contrary, seem to exist only in their attachment to others. They are pure abstractions of the affections. Their features are not painted, nor the colour of their hair. Their hearts only are laid open. We are acquainted with Imogen, Miranda, Ophelia, or Desdemona, by what they thought and felt, but we cannot tell whether they were black, brown, or fair. But Milton's Eve is all of ivory and gold. Shakspeare seldom tantalises the reader with a luxurious display of the personal charms of his heroines, with a curious inventory of particular beauties, except indirectly and for some other purpose—as where Iachimo describes Imogen asleep, or the old men in the 'Winter's Tale' vie with each other in invidious praise of Perdita. Even in Juliet, the most voluptuous and glowing of the class of characters here spoken of, we are reminded chiefly of circumstances connected with the physiognomy of passion, as in her leaning with her cheek upon her arm, or which only conveys the general impression of enthusiasm made on her lover's brain. One thing may be said, that Shakspeare had not the same opportunities as Milton for his women were clothed, and it cannot be denied

that Milton took Eve at a considerable disadvantage in this respect. He has accordingly described her in all the loveliness of nature, tempting to sight as the fruit of the Hesperides guarded by that dragon old, herself the fairest among the flowers of Paradise!

The figures both of Adam and Eve are very prominent in this poem. As there is little action in it, the interest is constantly kept up by the beauty and grandeur of the images. They are thus introduced :

“ Two of far nobler shape, erect and tall,
 Godlike erect, with native honour clad,
 In naked majesty seemed lords of all.
 And worthy seemed ! for in their looks divine
 The image of their glorious Maker shone :

* * * * *

——— Though both
 Not equal, as their sex not equal seem'd ;
 For contemplation he and valour form'd,
 For softness she and sweet attractive grace ;
 He for God only, she for God in him.
 His fair large front and eye sublime declar'd
 Absolute rule ; and hyacinthine locks
 Round from his parted forelock manly hung
 Clust'ring, but not beneath his shoulders broad ;
 She as a veil down to the slender waist
 Her unadorned golden tresses wore
 Dishevell'd, but in wanton ringlets wav'd
 As the vine curls her tendrils, which implied
 Subjection, but required with gentle sway,
 And by her yielded, by him best receiv'd ;
 Yielded with coy submission, modest pride,
 And sweet reluctant amorous delay.”¹

Eve is not only represented as beautiful, but with conscious beauty. Shakspeare's heroines are almost insensible of their charms, and wound without knowing it. They are not coquets. If the salvation of mankind had depended upon one of them, we don't know but the devil might have been balked. This is but a con-

¹ 'Paradise Lost,' book iv.

jecture! Eve has a great idea of herself, and there is some difficulty in prevailing on her to quit her own image, the first time she discovers its reflection in the water. She gives the following account of herself to Adam :

“ That day I oft remember, when from sleep
I first awak'd, and found myself repos'd
Under a shade on flow'rs, much wond'ring where
And what I was, whence thither brought and how.
Not distant far from thence a murmuring sound
Of waters issued from a cave, and spread
Into a liquid plain, then stood unmov'd
Pure as the expanse of Heav'n ; I thither went
With unexperienc'd thought, and laid me down
On the green bank, to look into the clear
Smooth lake, that to me seem'd another sky.
As I bent down to look, just opposite
A shape within the watery gleam appear'd,
Bending to look on me ; I started back,
It started back ; but pleas'd I soon return'd,
Pleas'd it return'd as soon with answer'ing looks
Of sympathy and love.”¹

The poet afterwards adds :

“ So spake our general mother, and with eyes
Of conjugal attraction unprov'd,
And meek surrender, half-embracing lean'd
On our first father ; half her swelling breast
Naked met his under the flowing gold
Of her loose tresses hid : he, in delight
Both of her beauty and submissive charms,
Smil'd with superior love, as Jupiter
On Juno smiles when he impregns the clouds
That shed May flowers.”²

The same thought is repeated with greater simplicity, and perhaps even beauty, in the beginning of the Fifth Book :

————— “ So much the more
His wonder was to find unawaken'd Eve

¹ *Ut supra.*

² *Ibid.*

With tresses discompos'd and glowing cheek,
 As through unquiet rest. He on his side
 Leaning half-rais'd, with looks of cordial love
 Hung over her enamour'd, and beheld
 Beauty, which whether waking or asleep
 Shot forth peculiar graces; then, with voice
 Mild as when Zephyrus on Flora breathes,
 Her hand soft touching, whisper'd thus: Awake
 My fairest, my espous'd, my latest found,
 Heav'n's last best gift, my ever new delight,
 Awake"

The general style, indeed, in which Eve is addressed by Adam or described by the poet is in the highest strain of compliment:

"When Adam thus to Eve: Fair consort, the hour
 Of night approaches."
 "To whom thus Eve, with perfect beauty adorn'd."
 "To whom our general ancestor replied:
 Daughter of God and Man, accomplish'd Eve."

Eve is herself so well convinced that these epithets are her due that the idea follows her in her sleep, and she dreams of herself as the paragon of nature, the wonder of the universe:

—— "Methought
 Close at mine ear one call'd me forth to walk,
 With gentle voice, I thought it thine; it said,
 Why sleep'st thou, Eve? Now is the pleasant time,
 The cool, the silent, save where silence yields
 To the night-warbling bird that, now awake,
 Tunes sweetest his love-labour'd song; now reigns
 Full-orb'd the moon, and with more pleasing light
 Shadowy sets off the face of things; in vain,
 If none regard; Heav'n wakes with all his eyes,
 Whom to behold but thee, Nature's desire?
 In whose sight all things joy, with ravishment,
 Attracted by thy beauty, still to gaze."¹

This is the very topic, too, on which the Serpent afterwards enlarges with so much artful insinuation and fatal

¹ *Ut supra*, book v.

confidence of success. "So talked the spirited sly snake." The conclusion of the foregoing scene, in which Eve relates her dream and Adam comforts her, is such an exquisite piece of description, that, though not to our immediate purpose, we cannot refrain from quoting it:

"So cheer'd he his fair spouse, and she was cheer'd ;
But silently a gentle tear let fall
From either eye, and wip'd them with her hair.
Two other precious drops that ready stood,
Each in their crystal sluice, he ere they fell
Kiss'd, as the gracious signs of sweet remorse
And pious awe, that fear'd to have offended."¹

The formal eulogy on Eve which Adam addresses to the Angel, in giving an account of his own creation and hers, is full of elaborate grace:

"Under his forming hands a creature grew,
. so lovely fair,
That what seem'd fair in all the world, seem'd now
Mean, or in her summ'd up, in her contained,
And in her looks, which from that time infus'd
Sweetness into my heart, unfelt before,
And into all things from her air inspir'd
The spirit of love and amorous delight."

That which distinguishes Milton from the other poets, who have pampered the eye and fed the imagination with exuberant descriptions of female beauty, is the moral severity with which he has tempered them. There is not a line in his works which tends to licentiousness, or the impression of which, if it has such a tendency, is not effectually checked by thought and sentiment. The following are two remarkable instances:

—— "In shadier bower,
More secret and sequester'd, though but feign'd,
Pan or Sylvanus never slept, nor Nymph
Nor Faunus haunted. Here in close recess,
With flowers, garlands, and sweet-smelling herbs,

¹ *Ut supra*, book v.

Espos'd Eve deck'd first her nuptial bed,
 And heavenly quires the nymenæan sung,
 What day the genial Angel to our sire
 Brought her, in naked beauty more adorn'd,
 More lovely, than Pandora, whom the Gods
 Endow'd with all their gifts, and O too like
 In sad event, when to th' unwiser son
 Of Japhet brought by Hermes, she ensnar'd
 Mankind by her fair looks, to be aveng'd
 On him who had stole Jove's authentic fire."

The other is a passage of extreme beauty and pathos blended. It is the one in which the Angel is described as the guest of our first ancestors :

——— "Meanwhile at table Eve
 Minister'd naked, and their flowing cups
 With pleasant liquors crown'd : O innocence
 Deserving Paradise ! if ever, then,
 Then had the sons of God excuse to have been
 Enamour'd at that sight ; but in those hearts
 Love unlibidinous reigned, nor jealousy
 Was understood, the injur'd lover's Hell."

The character which a living poet has given of Spenser would be much more true of Milton :

——— "Yet not more sweet
 Than pure was he, and not more pure than wise ;
 High Priest of all the Muses' mysteries."

Spenser, on the contrary, is very apt to pry into mysteries which do not belong to the Muses. Milton's voluptuousness is not lascivious or sensual. He describes beautiful objects for their own sakes. Spenser has an eye to the consequences, and steeps everything in pleasure, often not of the purest kind. The want of passion has been brought as an objection against Milton, and his Adam and Eve have been considered as rather insipid personages, wrapped up in one another, and who excite but little sympathy in any one else. We do not feel this objection ourselves ; we are content to be

spectators in such scenes, without any other excitement. In general the interest in Milton is essentially epic, and not dramatic; and the difference between the epic and the dramatic is this—that in the former the imagination produces the passion, and in the latter the passion produces the imagination. The interest of epic poetry arises from the contemplation of certain objects in themselves grand and beautiful; the interest of dramatic poetry from sympathy with the passions and pursuits of others—that is, from the practical relations of certain persons to certain objects, as depending on accident or will.

The Pyramids of Egypt are epic objects; the imagination of them is necessarily attended with passion; but they have no dramatic interest, till circumstances connect them with some human catastrophe. Now, a poem might be constructed almost entirely of such images, of the highest intellectual passion, with little dramatic interest; and it is in this way that Milton has in a great measure constructed his poem. That is not its fault, but its excellence. The fault is in those who have no idea but of one kind of interest. But this question would lead to a longer discussion than we have room for at present. We shall conclude these extracts from Milton with two passages, which have always appeared to us to be highly affecting and to contain a fine discrimination of character:

“O unexpected stroke, worse than of Death!
Must I thus leave thee, Paradise? thus leave
Thee, native soil, these happy walks and shades
Fit haunt of Gods, where I had hope to spend,
Quiet, though sad, the respite of that day
That must be mortal to us both? O flowers,
That never will in other climate grow,
My early visitation and my last
At even, which I bred up with tender hand
From the first opening bud, and gave ye names—
Who now shall rear ye to the sun, or rank
Your tribes, and water from th’ ambrosial fount?”

Thee, lastly, nuptial bow'r, by me adorn'd
 With what to sight or smell was sweet, from thee
 How shall I part, and whither wander down
 Into a lower world, to this obscure
 And wild? How shall we breathe in other air
 Less pure, accustom'd to immortal fruits?"

This is the lamentation of Eve on being driven out of Paradise. Adam's reflections are in a different strain, and still finer. After expressing his submission to the will of his Maker, he says :

"This most afflicts me, that departing hence
 As from his face I shall be hid, depriv'd
 His blessed countenance; here I could frequent
 With worship place by place where he vouchsaf'd
 Presence divine, and to my sons relate,
 On this mount he appeared, under this tree
 Stood visible, among these pines his voice
 I heard, here with him at this fountain talk'd.
 So many grateful altars I would rear
 Of grassy turf, and pile up every stone
 Of lustre from the brook, in memory
 Or monument to ages, and thereon
 Offer sweet-smelling gums and fruits and flow'rs.
 In yonder nether world where shall I seek
 His bright appearances or foot-step trace?
 For though I fled him angry, yet recall'd
 To life prolong'd and promis'd race, I now
 Gladly behold though but his utmost skirts
 Of glory, and far off his steps adore."

No. XXIX.

*Observations on Mr. Wordsworth's Poem 'The Excursion.'*¹

THE poem of 'The Excursion' resembles that part of the country in which the scene is laid. It has the same vastness and magnificence, with the same nakedness and

¹ See 'Memoirs of W. H.,' 1867, vol. i. p. 208, and my edition of Lamb's 'Works,' 1868, vol. i. p. 259.—Ed.

confusion. It has the same overwhelming, oppressive power. It excites or recalls the same sensations which those who have traversed that wonderful scenery must have felt. We are surrounded with the constant sense and superstitious awe of the collective power of matter, of the gigantic and eternal forms of nature, on which, from the beginning of time, the hand of man has made no impression. Here are no dotted lines, no hedgerow beauties, no box-tree borders, no gravel walks, no square mechanic inclosures; all is left loose and irregular in the rude chaos of aboriginal nature. The boundaries of hill and valley are the poet's only geography, where we wander with him incessantly over deep beds of moss and waving fern, amidst the troops of red-deer and wild animals. Such is the severe simplicity of Mr. Wordsworth's taste, that we doubt whether he would not reject a druidical temple or time-hallowed ruin as too modern and artificial for his purpose. He only familiarises himself or his readers with a stone, covered with lichens, which has slept in the same spot of ground from the creation of the world, or with the rocky fissure between two mountains caused by thunder, or with a cavern scooped out by the sea. His mind is, as it were, coeval with the primary forms of things; his imagination holds immediately from nature, and "owes no allegiance" but "to the elements."

'The Excursion' may be considered as a philosophical pastoral poem—as a scholastic romance. It is less a poem on the country, than on the love of the country. It is not so much a description of natural objects as of the feelings associated with them; not an account of the manners of rural life, but the result of the poet's reflections on it. He does not present the reader with a lively succession of images or incidents, but paints the outgoings of his own heart, the shapings of his own fancy. He may be said to create his own materials; his thoughts

are his real subject. His understanding broods over that which is "without form and void," and "makes it pregnant." He sees all things in himself. He hardly ever avails himself of remarkable objects or situations, but, in general, rejects them as interfering with the workings of his own mind, as disturbing the smooth, deep, majestic current of his own feelings. Thus his descriptions of natural scenery are not brought home distinctly to the naked eye by forms and circumstances, but every object is seen through the medium of innumerable recollections, is clothed with the haze of imagination like a glittering vapour, is obscured with the excess of glory, has the shadowy brightness of a waking dream. The image is lost in the sentiment, as sound in the multiplication of echoes :

"And visions, as prophetic eyes avow,
Hang on each leaf and cling to every bough."

In describing human nature Mr. Wordsworth equally shuns the common vantage-grounds of popular story, of striking incident, or fatal catastrophe, as cheap and vulgar modes of producing an effect. He scans the human race as the naturalist measures the earth's zone, without attending to the picturesque points of view, the abrupt inequalities of surface. He contemplates the passions and habits of men, not in their extremes, but in their first elements; their follies and vices, not at their height, with all their embossed evils upon their heads, but as lurking in embryo—the seeds of the disorder inwoven with our very constitution. He only sympathises with those simple forms of feeling which mingle at once with his own identity, or with the stream of general humanity. To him the great and the small are the same; the near and the remote; what appears, and what only is. The general and the permanent, like the Platonic ideas, are his only realities. All accidental

x varieties and individual contrasts are lost in an endless continuity of feeling, like drops of water in the ocean-stream! An intense intellectual egotism swallows up everything. Even the dialogues introduced in the present volume are soliloquies of the same character, taking different views of the subject. The recluse, the pastor, and the pedlar, are three persons in one poet. We ourselves disapprove of these "interlocutions between Lucius and Caius" as impertinent babbling, where there is no dramatic distinction of character. But the evident scope and tendency of Mr. Wordsworth's mind is the reverse of dramatic. It resists all change of character, all variety of scenery, all the bustle, machinery, and pantomime of the stage or of real life—whatever might relieve, or relax, or change the direction of its own activity, jealous of all competition. The power of his mind preys upon itself. It is as if there were nothing but himself and the universe. He lives in the busy solitude of his own heart; in the deep silence of thought. His imagination lends life and feeling only to "the bare trees and mountains bare," peoples the viewless tracts of air, and converses with the silent clouds!

We could have wished that our author had given to his work the form of a didactic poem altogether, with only occasional digressions or allusions to particular instances. But he has chosen to encumber himself with a load of narrative and description, which sometimes hinders the progress and effect of the general reasoning, and which, instead of being inwoven with the text, would have come in better in plain prose as notes at the end of the volume. Mr. Wordsworth, indeed, says finely, and perhaps as truly as finely :

"Exchange the shepherd's frock of native grey
For robes with regal purple tinged; convert
The crook into a sceptre; give the pomp
Of circumstance; and here the tragic Muse
Shall find apt subjects for her highest art.

Amid the groves, beneath the shadowy hills,
 The generations are prepared ; the pangs,
 The internal pangs, are ready ; the dread strife
 Of poor humanity's afflicted will
 Struggling in vain with ruthless destiny."

But he immediately declines availing himself of these resources of the rustic moralist: for the priest who officiates as "the sad historian of the pensive plain" says in reply:

"Our system is not fashioned to preclude
 That sympathy which you for others ask:
 And I could tell, not travelling for my theme
 Beyond the limits of these humble graves,
 Of strange disasters ; but I pass them by,
 Loth to disturb what Heaven hath hushed to peace."

There is, in fact, in Mr. Wordsworth's mind an evident repugnance to admit anything that tells for itself, without the interpretation of the poet—a fastidious antipathy to immediate effect—a systematic unwillingness to share the palm with his subject. Where, however, he has a subject presented to him, "such as the meeting soul may pierce," and to which he does not grudge to lend the aid of his fine genius, his powers of description and fancy seem to be little inferior to those of his classical predecessor, Akenside. Among several others which we might select we give the following passage, describing the religion of ancient Greece:

"In that fair clime, the lonely herdsman, stretch'd
 On the soft grass through half a summer's day,
 With music lulled his indolent repose ;
 And in some fit of weariness, if he,
 When his own breath was silent, chanced to hear
 A distant strain, far sweeter than the sounds
 Which his poor skill could make, his fancy fetch'd,
 Even from the blazing chariot of the sun,
 A beardless youth, who touched a golden lute,
 And filled the illumined groves with ravishment.
 The nightly hunter, lifting up his eyes
 Towards the crescent moon, with grateful heart

Called on the lovely wanderer who bestowed
That timely light to share his joyous sport :
And hence, a beaming Goddess with her Nymphs
Across the lawn and through the darksome grove
(Nor unaccompanied with tuneful notes
By echo multiplied from rock or cave),
Swept in the storm of chase, as moon and stars
Glance rapidly along the clouded heavens,
When winds are blowing strong. The traveller slaked
His thirst from rill, or gushing fount, and thanked
The Naiad. Sunbeams upon distant hills
Gliding apace, with shadows in their train,
Might, with small help from fancy, be transformed
Into fleet Orcads, sporting visibly.
The zephyrs fanning as they passed their wings,
Lacked not for love fair objects, whom they wooed
With gentle whisper. Withered boughs grotesque,
Stripped of their leaves and twigs by hoary age,
From depth of shaggy covert peeping forth
In the low vale or on steep mountain side,
And sometimes intermixed with stirring horns
Of the live deer, or goat's depending beard ;
These were the lurking satyrs, a wild brood
Of gamesome deities ! or Pan himself,
The simple shepherd's awe-inspiring God."

The foregoing is one of a succession of splendid passages equally enriched with philosophy and poetry, tracing the fictions of Eastern mythology to the immediate intercourse of the imagination with Nature, and to the habitual propensity of the human mind to endow the outward forms of being with life and conscious motion. With this expansive and animating principle, Mr. Wordsworth has forcibly, but somewhat severely, contrasted the cold, narrow, lifeless spirit of modern philosophy :

“ Now shall our great discoverers obtain
From sense and reason less than these obtained,
Though far misled ? Shall men for whom our age
Unbaffled powers of vision hath prepared,
To explore the world without and world within,

Be joyless as the blind? Ambitious souls—
 Whom earth at this late season hath produced
 To regulate the moving spheres, and weigh
 The planets in the hollow of their hand;
 And they who rather dive than soar, whose pains
 Have solved the elements, or analysed
 The thinking principle—shall they in fact
 Prove a degraded race? And what avails
 Renown, if their presumption make them such?
 Inquire of ancient wisdom; go, demand
 Of mighty Nature, if 'twas ever meant
 That we should pry far off, yet be unraised;
 That we should pore, and dwindle as we pore,
 Viewing all objects unremittingly
 In disconnection dead and spiritless;
 And still dividing and dividing still
 Break down all grandeur, still unsatisfied
 With the perverse attempt, while littleness
 May yet become more little; waging thus
 An impious warfare with the very life
 Of our own souls! And if indeed there be
 An all-pervading spirit upon whom
 Our dark foundations rest, could he design
 That this magnificent effect of power,
 The earth we tread, the sky which we behold
 By day, and all the pomp which night reveals,
 That these—and that superior mystery,
 Our vital frame, so fearfully devised,
 And the dread soul within it—should exist
 Only to be examined, pondered, searched,
 Probed, vexed, and criticised—to be prized
 No more than as a mirror that reflects
 To proud Self-love her own intelligence?"

From the chemists and metaphysicians our author turns to the laughing sage of France, Voltaire: "Poor gentleman, it fares no better with him, for he's a wit." We cannot, however, agree with Mr. Wordsworth that 'Candide' is dull. It is, if our author pleases, "the production of a scoffer's pen," but it is anything but dull. It may not be proper in a grave, discreet, orthodox, promising young divine, who studies his opinions

in the contraction or distension of his patron's brow, to allow any merit to a work like 'Candide'; but we conceive that it would have been more manly in Mr. Wordsworth, nor do we think it would have hurt the cause he espouses, if he had blotted out the epithet after it had peevishly escaped him. Whatsoever savours of a little, narrow, inquisitorial spirit does not sit well on a poet and a man of genius. The prejudices of a philosopher are not natural. There is a frankness and sincerity of opinion which is a paramount obligation in all questions of intellect, though it may not govern the decisions of the spiritual courts, who may, however, be safely left to take care of their own interests. There is a plain directness and simplicity of understanding, which is the only security against the evils of levity on the one hand or of hypocrisy on the other. A speculative bigot is a solecism in the intellectual world. We can assure Mr. Wordsworth that we should not have bestowed so much serious consideration on a single voluntary perversion of language, but that our respect for his character makes us jealous of his smallest faults.

With regard to his general philippic against the contractedness and egotism of philosophical pursuits, we only object to its not being carried further. We shall not affirm with Rousseau (his authority would perhaps have little weight with Mr. Wordsworth), "*Tout homme réfléchi est méchant*"; but we conceive that the same reasoning which Mr. Wordsworth applies so eloquently and justly to the natural philosopher and metaphysician may be extended to the moralist, the divine, the politician, the orator, the artist, and even the poet. And why so? Because wherever an intense activity is given to any one faculty, it necessarily prevents the due and natural exercise of others. Hence all those professions or pursuits where the mind is exclusively

occupied with the ideas of things as they exist in the imagination or understanding, as they call for the exercise of intellectual activity, and not as they are connected with practical good or evil, must check the genial expansion of the moral sentiments and social affections—must lead to a cold and dry abstraction, as they are found to suspend the animal functions and relax the bodily frame. Hence the complaint of the want of natural sensibility and constitutional warmth of attachment in those persons who have been devoted to the pursuit of any art or science—of their restless morbidity of temperament and indifference to everything that does not furnish an occasion for the display of their mental superiority and the gratification of their vanity. The philosophical poet himself, perhaps, owes some of his love of nature to the opportunity it affords him of analysing his own feelings and contemplating his own powers—of making every object about him a whole-length mirror to reflect his favourite thoughts, and of looking down on the frailties of others in undisturbed leisure and from a more dignified height.

One of the most interesting parts of this work is that in which the author treats of the French Revolution, and of the feelings connected with it in ingenuous minds in its commencement and its progress. The solitary,¹ who, by domestic calamities and disappointments, had been cut off from society and almost from himself, gives the following account of the manner in which he was roused from his melancholy :

“From that abstraction I was roused—and how?
 Even as a thoughtful shepherd by a flash
 Of lightning, startled in a gloomy cave
 Of these wild hills. For, lo! the dread Bastille,
 With all the chambers in its horrid towers,
 Fell to the ground; by violence o'erthrown

¹ This word is not English.

Of indignation, and with shouts that drowned
The crash it made in falling! From the wreck
A golden palace rose, or seemed to rise,
The appointed seat of equitable law
And mild paternal sway. The potent shock
I felt; the transformation I perceived,
As marvellously seized as in that moment
When, from the blind mist issuing, I beheld
Glory—beyond all glory ever seen,
Dazzling the soul! Meanwhile prophetic harps
In every grove were ringing, 'War shall cease.
Did ye not hear that conquest is abjured?
Bring garlands, bring forth choicest flowers, to deck
The tree of liberty!'—My heart rebounded:
My melancholy voice the chorus joined.
Thus was I reconverted to the world;
Society became my glittering bride,
And airy hopes my children. From the depths
Of natural passion seemingly escaped,
My soul diffused itself in wide embrace
Of Institutions and the forms of things.

——— If with noise

And acclamation, crowds in open air
Expressed the tumult of their minds, my voice
There mingled, heard or not. And in still groves,
Where mild enthusiasts tuned a pensive lay
Of thanks and expectation, in accord
With their belief, I sang Saturnian rule
Returned—a progeny of golden years
Permitted to descend, and bless mankind.

* * * * *

Scorn and contempt forbid me to proceed!
But history, time's slavish scribe, will tell
How rapidly the zealots of the cause
Disbanded—or in hostile ranks appeared:
Some, tired of honest service; these outdone,
Disgusted, therefore, or appalled, by aims
Of fiercer zealots. So confusion reigned,
And the more faithful were compelled to exclaim,
As Brutus did to virtue, 'Liberty,
I worshipped thee, and find thee but a shade!'
SUCH RECONTATION HAD FOR ME NO CHARM,
NOR WOULD I BEND TO IT."

The subject is afterwards resumed, with the same magnanimity and philosophical firmness :

——— “ For that other loss,
 The loss of confidence in social man,
 By the unexpected transports of our age
 Carried so high, that every thought which looked
 Beyond the temporal destiny of the kind
 To many seemed superfluous; as no cause
 For such exalted confidence could e'er
 Exist, so none is now for such despair.
 The two extremes are equally remote
 From truth and reason; do not, then, confound
 One with the other, but reject them both;
 And choose the middle point, whereon to build
 Sound expectations. This doth he advise
 Who shared at first the illusion. At this day,
 When a Tartarian darkness overspreads
 The groaning nations; when the impious rule,
 By will or by established ordinance,
 Their own dire agents, and constrain the good
 To acts which they abhor; though I bewail
 This triumph, yet the pity of my heart
 Prevents me not from owning that the law
 By which mankind now suffers is most just.
 For by superior energies; more strict
 Affiance in each other; faith more firm
 In their unhallowed principles, the bad
 Have fairly earned a victory o'er the weak,
 The vacillating, inconsistent good.”

In the application of these memorable lines we should, perhaps, differ a little from Mr. Wordsworth; nor can we indulge with him in the fond conclusion afterwards hinted at, that one day *our* triumph, the triumph of humanity and liberty, may be complete. For this purpose we think several things necessary which are impossible. It is a consummation which cannot happen till the nature of things is changed, till the many become as united as the *one*, till romantic generosity shall be as common as gross selfishness, till reason shall have

acquired the obstinate blindness of prejudice, till the love of power and of change shall no longer goad man on to restless action—till passion and will, hope and fear, love and hatred, and the objects proper to excite them, that is, alternate good and evil, shall no longer sway the bosoms and businesses of men. All things move, not in progress, but in a ceaseless round; our strength lies in our weakness; our virtues are built on our vices; our faculties are as limited as our being; nor can we lift man above his nature more than above the earth he treads. But though we cannot weave over again the airy unsubstantial dream which reason and experience have dispelled—

“What though the radiance, which was once so bright,
Be now for ever taken from our sight,
Though nothing can bring back the hour
Of glory in the grass, of splendour in the flower?”—

yet we will never cease nor be prevented from returning on the wings of imagination to that bright dream of our youth, that glad dawn of the daystar of liberty, that springtime of the world, in which the hopes and expectations of the human race seemed opening in the same gay career with our own; when France called her children to partake her equal blessings beneath her laughing skies; when the stranger was met in all her villages with dance and festive songs, in celebration of a new and golden era; and when, to the retired and contemplative student, the prospects of human happiness and glory were seen ascending, like the steps of Jacob's ladder, in bright and never-ending succession. The dawn of that day was suddenly overcast; that season of hope is past; it is fled with the other dreams of our youth, which we cannot recall, but has left behind it traces, which are not to be effaced by Birthday and Thanksgiving odes, or the chaunting of *Te Deums* in all the churches of Christendom. To those hopes eternal

regrets are due; to those who maliciously and wilfully blasted them in the fear that they might be accomplished, we feel no less what we owe—hatred and scorn as lasting!

No. XXX.

The same Subject continued.

MR. WORDSWORTH'S writings exhibit all the internal power without the external form of poetry. He has scarcely any of the pomp and decoration and scenic effect of poetry; no gorgeous palaces nor solemn temples awe the imagination; no cities rise "with glistening spires and pinnacles adorned;" we meet with no knights pricked forth on airy steeds; no hairbreadth scapes and perilous accidents by flood or field. Either from the predominant habit of his mind not requiring the stimulus of outward impressions, or from the want of an imagination teeming with various forms, he takes the common everyday events and objects of nature, or rather seeks those that are the most simple and barren of effect; but he adds to them a weight of interest from the resources of his own mind which makes the most insignificant things serious and even formidable. All other interests are absorbed in the deeper interest of his own thoughts, and find the same level. His mind magnifies the littleness of his subject, and raises its meanness; lends it his strength, and clothes it with borrowed grandeur. With him, a molehill covered with wild thyme assumes the importance of "the great vision of the guarded mount;" a puddle is filled with preternatural faces, and agitated with the fiercest storms of passion.

The extreme simplicity which some persons have objected to in Mr. Wordsworth's poetry, is to be found only in the subject and the style: the sentiments are

subtle and profound. In the latter respect, his poetry is as much above the common standard or capacity, as in the other it is below it. His poems bear a distant resemblance to some of Rembrandt's landscapes, who, more than any other painter, created the medium through which he saw nature, and out of the stump of an old tree, a break in the sky, and a bit of water, could produce an effect almost miraculous.

Mr. Wordsworth's poems in general are the history of a refined and contemplative mind, conversant only with itself and nature. An intense feeling of the associations of this kind is the peculiar and characteristic feature of all his productions. He has described the love of nature better than any other poet. This sentiment, inly felt in all its force, and sometimes carried to an excess, is the source both of his strength and of his weakness. However we may sympathise with Mr. Wordsworth in his attachment to groves and fields, we cannot extend the same admiration to their inhabitants, or to the manners of country life in general. We go along with him while he is the subject of his own narrative, but we take leave of him when he makes pedlars and ploughmen his heroes and the interpreters of his sentiments. It is, we think, getting into low company, and company, besides, that we do not like. We take Mr. Wordsworth himself for a great poet, a fine moralist, and a deep philosopher; but if he insists on introducing us to a friend of his, a parish clerk, or the barber of the village, who is as wise as himself, we must be excused if we draw back with some little want of cordial faith. We are satisfied with the friendship which subsisted between Parson Adams and Joseph Andrews. The author himself lets out occasional hints that all is not as it should be amongst these northern Arcadians. Though, in general, he professes to soften the harsher features of rustic vice, he has given us one picture of depraved and

inveterate selfishness, which we apprehend could only be found among the inhabitants of these boasted mountain districts. The account of one of his heroines concludes as follows :

“ A sudden illness seiz'd her in the strength
 Of life's autumnal season. Shall I tell
 How on her bed of death the matron lay,
 To Providence submissive, so she thought ;
 But fretted, vexed, and wrought upon, almost
 To anger, by the malady that griped
 Her prostrate frame with unrelaxing power,
 As the fierce eagle fastens on the lamb ?
 She prayed, she moaned—her husband's sister watched
 Her dreary pillow, waited on her needs ;
 And yet the very sound of that kind foot
 Was anguish to her ears ! ‘ And must she rule
 Sole mistress of this house when I am gone ?
 Sit by my fire—possess what I possessed—
 Tend what I tended—calling it her own !’
 Enough—I fear, too much. Of nobler feeling
 Take this example :—One autumnal evening,
 While she was yet in prime of health and strength.
 I well remember, while I passed her door,
 Musing with loitering step, and upward eye
 Turned tow'rds the planet Jupiter, that hung
 Above the centre of the vale, a voice
 Roused me, her voice ;—it said, ‘ That glorious star
 In its untroubled element will shine
 As now it shines, when we are laid in earth
 And safe from all our sorrows.’ She is safe,
 And her uncharitable acts, I trust,
 And harsh unkindnesses, are all forgiven ;
 Though, in this vale, remembered with deep awe !”

We think it is pushing our love of the admiration of natural objects a good deal too far, to make it a set-off against a story like the preceding.

11 All country people hate each other. They have so little comfort that they envy their neighbours the smallest pleasure or advantage, and nearly grudge themselves the necessaries of life. From not being

accustomed to enjoyment, they become hardened and averse to it—stupid, for want of thought—selfish, for want of society. There is nothing good to be had in the country, or, if there is, they will not let you have it. They had rather injure themselves than oblige any one else. Their common mode of life is a system of wretchedness and self-denial, like what we read of among barbarous tribes. You live out of the world. You cannot get your tea and sugar without sending to the next town for it; you pay double, and have it of the worst quality. The small-beer is sure to be sour—the milk skimmed—the meat bad, or spoiled in the cooking. You cannot do a single thing you like; you cannot walk out or sit at home, or write or read, or think or look as if you did, without being subject to impertinent curiosity. The apothecary annoys you with his complaisance; the parson with his superciliousness. If you are poor, you are despised; if you are rich, you are feared and hated. If you do any one a favour, the whole neighbourhood is up in arms; the clamour is like that of a rookery; and the person himself, it is ten to one, laughs at you for your pains, and takes the first opportunity of showing you that he labours under no uneasy sense of obligation. There is a perpetual round of mischief-making and backbiting for want of any better amusement. There are no shops, no taverns, no theatres, no opera, no concerts, no pictures, no public buildings, no crowded streets, no noise of coaches or of courts of law—neither courtiers nor courtesans, no literary parties, no fashionable routs, no society, no books, or knowledge of books. Vanity and luxury are the civilisers of the world and sweeteners of human life. Without objects either of pleasure or action, it grows harsh and crabbed: the mind becomes stagnant, the affections callous, and the eye dull. Man left to himself soon degenerates into a very disagreeable person. Ignorance is always bad

enough; but rustic ignorance is intolerable. Aristotle has observed, that tragedy purifies the affections by terror and pity. If so, a company of tragedians should be established at the public expense in every village or hundred, as a better mode of education than either Bell's or Lancaster's. The benefits of knowledge are never so well understood as from seeing the effects of ignorance, in their naked undisguised state, upon the common country people. Their selfishness and insensibility are perhaps less owing to the hardships and privations, which make them, like people out at sea in a boat, ready to devour one another, than to their having no idea of anything beyond themselves and their immediate sphere of action. They have no knowledge of, and consequently can take no interest in, anything which is not an object of their senses and of their daily pursuits. They hate all strangers, and have generally a nickname for the inhabitants of the next village. The two young noblemen in 'Guzman d'Alfarache,' who went to visit their mistresses only a league out of Madrid, were set upon by the peasants, who came round them calling out, "A wolf!" Those who have no enlarged or liberal ideas can have no disinterested or generous sentiments. Persons who are in the habit of reading novels and romances are compelled to take a deep interest in, and to have their affections strongly excited by, fictitious characters and imaginary situations; their thoughts and feelings are constantly carried out of themselves, to persons they never saw and things that never existed. History enlarges the mind, by familiarising us with the great vicissitudes of human affairs and the catastrophes of states and kingdoms; the study of morals accustoms us to refer our actions to a general standard of right and wrong; and abstract reasoning, in general, strengthens the love of truth, and produces an inflexibility of principle which cannot stoop to low trick and cunning.

Books, in Bacon's phrase, are "a discipline of humanity." Country people have none of these advantages, nor any others to supply the place of them. Having no circulating libraries to exhaust their love of the marvellous, they amuse themselves with fancying the disasters and disgraces of their particular acquaintance. Having no humpbacked Richard to excite their wonder and abhorrence, they make themselves a bugbear of their own out of the first obnoxious person they can lay their hands on. Not having the fictitious distresses and gigantic crimes of poetry to stimulate their imagination and their passions, they vent their whole stock of spleen, malice, and invention on their friends and next-door neighbours. They get up a little pastoral drama at home, with fancied events, but real characters. All their spare time is spent in manufacturing and propagating the lie for the day, which does its office and expires. The next day is spent in the same manner. It is thus that they embellish the simplicity of rural life! The common people in civilised countries are a kind of domesticated savages. They have not the wild imagination, the passions, the fierce energies, or dreadful vicissitudes of the savage tribes, nor have they the leisure, the indolent enjoyments, and romantic superstitions which belonged to the pastoral life in milder climates and more remote periods of society. They are taken out of a state of nature, without being put in possession of the refinements of art. The customs and institutions of society cramp their imaginations without giving them knowledge. If the inhabitants of the mountainous districts described by Mr. Wordsworth are less gross and sensual than others, they are more selfish. Their egotism becomes more concentrated as they are more insulated, and their purposes more inveterate as they have less competition to struggle with. The weight of matter which surrounds them crushes the finer sympathies. Their minds become hard and cold, like

the rocks which they cultivate. The immensity of their mountains makes the human form appear little and insignificant. Men are seen crawling between heaven and earth, like insects to their graves. Nor do they regard one another more than flies on a wall. Their physiognomy expresses the materialism of their character, which has only one principle—rigid self-will. They move on with their eyes and foreheads fixed, looking neither to the right nor to the left, with a heavy slouch in their gait, and seeming as if nothing would divert them from their path. We do not admire this plodding pertinacity, always directed to the main chance. There is nothing which excites so little sympathy in our minds as exclusive selfishness. If our theory is wrong at least it is taken from pretty close observation, and is we think confirmed by Mr. Wordsworth's own account.

Of the stories contained in the latter part of the volume we like that of the Whig and Jacobite friends, and of the good knight, Sir Alfred Irthing, the best. The last reminded us of a fine sketch of a similar character in the beautiful poem of 'Hart Leap Well.' To conclude: if the skill with which the poet had chosen his materials had been equal to the power which he has undeniably exerted over them—if the objects (whether persons or things) which he makes use of as the vehicle of his sentiments had been such as to convey them in all their depth and force, then the production before us might indeed "have proved a monument," as he himself wishes it, worthy of the author and of his country. Whether, as it is, this very original and powerful performance may not rather remain like one of those stupendous but half-finished structures which have been suffered to moulder into decay, because the cost and labour attending them exceeded their use or beauty, we feel that it would be presumptuous in us to determine.¹

¹ There is a long criticism on the writings of Wordsworth, then in print, in 'Lectures on the English Poets,' 1818, pp. 309-324.—Ed.

No. XXXI.

*Character of the late Mr. Pitt.*¹

THE character of Mr. Pitt was, perhaps, one of the most singular that ever existed. With few talents and fewer virtues, he acquired and preserved, in one of the most trying situations, and in spite of all opposition, the highest reputation for the possession of every moral excellence, and as having carried the attainments of eloquence and wisdom as far as human abilities could go. This he did (strange as it may appear) by a negation (together with the common virtues) of the common vices of human nature, and by the complete negation of every other talent that might interfere with the only ones which he possessed in a supreme degree, and which, indeed, may be made to include the appearance of all others—an artful use of words and a certain dexterity of logical arrangement. In these alone his power consisted; and the defect of all other qualities which usually constitute greatness contributed to the more complete success of these. Having no strong feelings, no distinct perceptions—his mind having no link, as it were, to connect it with the world of external nature—every subject presented to him nothing more than a *tabula rasa*, on which he was at liberty to lay whatever colouring of language he pleased; having no general principles, no comprehensive views of things, no moral habits of thinking, no system of action, there was nothing to hinder him from pursuing any particular purpose by any means that offered; having never any plan, he could not be convicted of inconsistency, and his own pride and obstinacy were the only rules of his conduct. Without

¹ Written in 1806. [It is to be found at p. 27 of a very rare pamphlet by the author, published in the year mentioned, under the title of 'Free Thoughts on Public Affairs,' &c.—ED.]

insight into human nature, without sympathy with the passions of men, or apprehension of their real designs, he seemed perfectly insensible to the consequences of things, and would believe nothing till it actually happened. The fog and haze in which he saw everything communicated itself to others; and the total indistinctness and uncertainty of his own ideas tended to confound the perceptions of his hearers more effectually than the most ingenious misrepresentation could have done. Indeed, in defending his conduct, he never seemed to consider himself as at all responsible for the success of his measures, or to suppose that future events were in our own power; but that, as the best-laid schemes might fail, and there was no providing against all possible contingencies, this was sufficient excuse for our plunging at once into any dangerous or absurd enterprise without the least regard to consequences. His reserved logic confined itself solely to the *possible* and the *impossible*, and he appeared to regard the *probable* and *improbable*, the only foundation of moral prudence or political wisdom, as beneath the notice of a profound statesman; as if the pride of the human intellect were concerned in never entrusting itself with subjects where it may be compelled to acknowledge its weakness. Nothing could ever drive him out of his dull forms and naked generalities; which, as they are susceptible neither of degree nor variation, are therefore equally applicable to every emergency that can happen; and in the most critical aspect of affairs he saw nothing but the same flimsy web of remote possibilities and metaphysical uncertainty. In his mind, the wholesome pulp of practical wisdom and salutary advice was immediately converted into the dry chaff and husks of a miserable logic. From his manner of reasoning, he seemed not to have believed that the truth of his statements depended on the reality of the facts, but that the facts themselves depended on the order in which he arranged them in words; you would not suppose him to

be agitating a serious question, which had real grounds to go upon, but to be declaiming upon an imaginary thesis, proposed as an exercise in the schools. He never set himself to examine the force of the objections that were brought against him, or attempted to defend his measures upon clear solid grounds of his own; but constantly contented himself with first gravely stating the logical form or dilemma to which the question reduced itself; and then, after having declared his opinion, proceeded to amuse his hearers by a series of rhetorical common-places, connected together in grave, sonorous, and elaborately-constructed periods, without ever showing their real application to the subject in dispute. Thus, if any member of the opposition disapproved of any measure, and enforced his objections by pointing out the many evils with which it was fraught, or the difficulties attending its execution, his only answer was, "that it was true there might be inconveniences attending the measure proposed, but we were to remember that every expedient that could be devised might be said to be nothing more than a choice of difficulties, and that all that human prudence could do was to consider on which side the advantages lay; that, for his part, he conceived that the present measure was attended with more advantages and fewer disadvantages than any other that could be adopted; that if we were diverted from our object by every appearance of difficulty the wheels of government would be clogged by endless delays and imaginary grievances; that most of the objections made to the measure appeared to him to be trivial, others of them unfounded and improbable; or that, if a scheme free from all these objections could be proposed, it might, after all, prove inefficient; while, in the meantime, a material object remained unprovided for, or the opportunity of action was lost." This mode of reasoning is admirably described by Hobbes, in speaking of the writings of some of the schoolmen, of whom he says

that "they had learned the trick of imposing what they list upon their readers, and declining the force of true reason by verbal forks, that is, distinctions, which signify nothing, but serve only to astonish the multitude of ignorant men." That what we have here stated comprehends the whole force of his mind, which consisted solely in this evasive dexterity and perplexing formality, assisted by a copiousness of words and commonplace topics, will, we think, be evident to any one who carefully looks over his speeches, undazzled by the reputation or personal influence of the speaker. It will be in vain to look in them for any of the common proofs of human genius or wisdom. He has not left behind him a single memorable saying—not one profound maxim—one solid observation—one forcible description—one beautiful thought—one humorous picture—one affecting sentiment. He has made no addition whatever to the stock of human knowledge. He did not possess any one of those faculties which contribute to the instruction and delight of mankind—depth of understanding, imagination, sensibility, wit, vivacity, clear and solid judgment. But it may be asked, if these qualities are not to be found in him where are we to look for them? and we may be required to point out instances of them. We shall answer then, that he had none of the abstract legislative wisdom, refined sagacity, or rich, impetuous, high-wrought imagination of Burke; the manly eloquence, exact knowledge, vehemence, and natural simplicity of Fox; the ease, brilliancy, and acuteness of Sheridan. It is not merely that he had not all these qualities in the degree that they were severally possessed by his rivals, but he had not any of them in any remarkable degree. His reasoning is a technical arrangement of unmeaning commonplaces, his eloquence rhetorical, his style monotonous and artificial. If he could pretend to any one excellence more than another, it was to taste in composition. There is certainly nothing low, nothing

puerile, nothing far-fetched or abrupt in his speeches; there is a kind of faultless regularity pervading them throughout; but in the confined, formal, passive mode of eloquence which he adopted it seemed rather more difficult to commit errors than to avoid them. A man who is determined never to move out of the beaten road cannot lose his way. However, habit, joined to the peculiar mechanical memory which he possessed, carried this correctness to a degree which, in an extemporaneous speaker, was almost miraculous; he, perhaps, hardly ever uttered a sentence that was not perfectly regular and connected. In this respect he not only had the advantage over his own contemporaries, but perhaps no one that ever lived equalled him in this singular faculty. But for this, he would always have passed for a common man; and to this the constant sameness and, if we may so say, vulgarity of his ideas must have contributed not a little, as there was nothing to distract his mind from this one object of his unintermitted attention, and as, even in his choice of words, he never aimed at anything more than a certain general propriety and stately uniformity of style. His talents were exactly fitted for the situation in which he was placed, where it was his business, not to overcome others, but to avoid being overcome. He was able to baffle opposition, not from strength or firmness, but from the evasive ambiguity and impalpable nature of his resistance, which gave no hold to the rude grasp of his opponents; no force could bind the loose phantom, and his mind (though "not matchless, and his pride humbled by such rebuke") soon rose from defeat unhurt,

"And in its liquid texture, mortal wound
Receiv'd no more than can the fluid air."¹

¹ Here the author, in his own copy of 'Free Thoughts,' now before me, marked the conclusion of the essay on its republication in the 'ROUND TABLE;' but in the pamphlet the description of Pitt's character is continued a little further.—Ed.

No. XXXII.

On Religious Hypocrisy.

RELIGION either makes men wise and virtuous, or it makes them set up false pretences to both. In the latter case, it makes them hypocrites to themselves as well as others. Religion is, in the grosser minds, an enemy to self-knowledge. The consciousness of the presence of an all-powerful Being, who is both the witness and judge of every thought, word, and action, where it does not produce its proper effect, forces the religious man to practise every mode of deceit upon himself with respect to his real character and motives; for it is only by being wilfully blind to his own faults that he can suppose they will escape the eye of Omniscience. Consequently, the whole business of a religious man's life, if it does not conform to the strict line of his duty, may be said to be to gloss over his errors to himself, and to invent a thousand shifts and palliations in order to hoodwink the Almighty. Where he is sensible of his own delinquency he knows that it cannot escape the penetration of his invisible Judge; and the distant penalty annexed to every offence, though not sufficient to make him desist from the commission of it, will not suffer him to rest easy till he has made some compromise with his own conscience as to his motives for committing it. As far as relates to this world, a cunning knave may take a pride in the imposition he practises upon others; and instead of striving to conceal his true character from himself, may chuckle with inward satisfaction at the folly of those who are not wise enough to detect it. "But 'tis not so above." This shallow skin-deep hypocrisy will not serve the turn of the religious devotee, who is "compelled to give in evidence, against himself," and who must first become the dupe of his own impos

ture before he can flatter himself with the hope of concealment, as children hide their eyes with their hands, and fancy that no one can see them. Religious people often pray very heartily for the forgiveness of a "multitude of trespasses and sins," as a mark of humility, but we never knew them admit any one fault in particular, or acknowledge themselves in the wrong in any instance whatever. The natural jealousy of self-love is in them heightened by the fear of damnation, and they plead *Not Guilty* to every charge brought against them with all the conscious terrors of a criminal at the bar. It is for this reason that the greatest hypocrites in the world are religious hypocrites.

This quality, as it has been sometimes found united with the clerical character, is known by the name of "priestcraft." The ministers of religion are perhaps more liable to this vice than any other class of people. They are obliged to assume a greater degree of sanctity, though they have it not, and to screw themselves up to an unnatural pitch of severity and self-denial. They must keep a constant guard over themselves, have an eye always to their own persons, never relax in their gravity, nor give the least scope to their inclinations. A single slip, if discovered, may be fatal to them. Their influence and superiority depend on their pretensions to virtue and piety; and they are tempted to draw liberally on the funds of credulity and ignorance allotted for their convenient support. All this cannot be very friendly to downright simplicity of character. Besides, they are so accustomed to inveigh against the vices of others that they naturally forget that they have any of their own to correct. They see vice as an object always out of themselves, with which they have no other concern than to denounce and stigmatise it. They are only reminded of it *in the third person*. They as naturally associate sin and its consequences with their flocks as

a pedagogue associates a false concord and flogging with his scholars. If we may so express it, they serve as conductors to the lightning of Divine indignation, and have only to point the thunders of the law at others. They identify themselves with that perfect system of faith and morals of which they are the professed teachers, and regard any imputation on their conduct as an indirect attack on the function to which they belong, or as compromising the authority under which they act. It is only the head of the Popish church who assumes the title of 'God's Vicegerent upon Earth;' but the feeling is nearly common to all the oracular interpreters of the will of Heaven—from the successor of St. Peter down to the simple unassuming Quaker, who, disclaiming the imposing authority of title and office, yet fancies himself the immediate organ of a preternatural impulse, and affects to speak only as the Spirit moves him.

There is another way in which the formal profession of religion aids hypocrisy: by erecting a secret tribunal, to which those who affect a more than ordinary share of it can (in case of need) appeal from the judgments of men. The religious impostor reduced to his last shift, and having no other way left to avoid the most "open and apparent shame," rejects the fallible decisions of the world, and thanks God that there is one who knows the heart. He is amenable to a higher jurisdiction and while all is well with Heaven he can pity the errors and smile at the malice of his enemies. Whatever cuts men off from their dependence on common opinion or obvious appearances must open a door to evasion and cunning, by setting up a standard of right and wrong in every one's own breast, of the truth of which nobody can judge but the person himself. There are some fine instances in the old plays and novels (the best commentaries on human nature) of the effect of this principle

in giving the last finishing to the character of duplicity. Miss Harris, in Fielding's 'Amelia,' is one of the most striking. Molière's Tartuffe is another instance of the facility with which religion may be perverted to the purposes of the most flagrant hypocrisy. It is an impenetrable fastness, to which this worthy person, like so many others, retires without the fear of pursuit. It is an additional disguise, in which he wraps himself up like a cloak. It is a stalking-horse, which is ready on all occasions—an invisible conscience, which goes about with him—his good genius, that becomes surety for him in all difficulties—swears to the purity of his motives—extricates him out of the most desperate circumstances—baffles detection, and furnishes a plea to which there is no answer.

The same sort of reasoning will account for the old remark, that persons who are stigmatised as nonconformists to the established religion, Jews, Presbyterians, &c., are more disposed to this vice than their neighbours. They are inured to the contempt of the world and steeled against its prejudices; and the same indifference which fortifies them against the unjust censures of mankind may be converted, as occasion requires, into a screen for the most pitiful conduct. They have no cordial sympathy with others, and therefore no sincerity in their intercourse with them. It is the necessity of concealment, in the first instance, that produces, and is in some measure an excuse for, the habit of hypocrisy.

Hypocrisy, as it is connected with cowardice, seems to imply weakness of body or want of spirit. The impudence and insensibility which belong to it ought to suppose robustness of constitution. There is certainly a very successful and formidable class of sturdy, jolly, able-bodied hypocrites, the Friar Johns of the profession. Raphael has represented Elymas the sorcerer

with a hard iron visage and large uncouth figure, made up of bones and muscles; as one not troubled with weak nerves or idle scruples—as one who repelled all sympathy with others—who was not to be jostled out of his course by their censures or suspicions, and who could break with ease through the cobweb snares which he had laid for the credulity of others, without being once entangled in his own delusions. His outward form betrays the hard, unimagi-native, self-willed understanding of the sorcerer.

No. XXXIII.

On the Literary Character.

THE following remarks are prefixed to the account of Baron Grimm's Correspondence in a late number of a celebrated journal:—

“There is nothing more exactly painted in these graphical volumes than the character of M. Grimm himself; and the beauty of it is that as there is nothing either natural or peculiar about it, it may stand for the character of all the wits and philosophers he frequented. He had more wit, perhaps, and more sound sense and information, than the greatest part of the society in which he lived; but the leading traits belong to the whole class, and to all classes, indeed, in similar situations, in every part of the world. Whenever there is a very large assemblage of persons who have no other occupation but to amuse themselves, there will infallibly be generated acuteness of intellect, refinement of manners, and good taste in conversation; and with the same certainty, all profound thought and all serious affection will be discarded from their society.

“The multitude of persons and things that force themselves on the attention in such a scene, and the rapidity

with which they succeed each other and pass away, prevent any one from making a deep or permanent impression ; and the mind, having never been tasked to any course of application, and long habituated to this lively succession and variety of objects, comes at last to require the excitement of perpetual change, and to find a multiplicity of friends as indispensable as a multiplicity of amusements. Thus the characteristics of large and polished society come almost inevitably to be wit and heartlessness—acuteness and perpetual derision. The same impatience of uniformity and passion for variety which give so much grace to their conversation, by excluding all tediousness and pertinacious wrangling, make them incapable of dwelling for many minutes on the feelings and concerns of any one individual ; while the constant pursuit of little gratifications and the weak dread of all uneasy sensations render them equally averse from serious sympathy and deep thought.

“The whole style and tone of this publication affords the most striking illustration of these general remarks. From one end of it to the other, it is a display of the most complete heartlessness and the most uninterrupted levity. It chronicles the deaths of half the author’s acquaintance and makes jests upon them all ; and is much more serious in discussing the merits of an opera dancer than in considering the evidence for the being of a God or the first foundations of morality. Nothing indeed can be more just or conclusive than the remark that is forced from M. Grimm himself, upon the utter carelessness, and instant oblivion, that followed the death of one of the most distinguished, active, and amiable members of his coterie : ‘Tant il est vrai que ce que nous appellons *la société* est ce qu’il y a de plus léger, plus ingrat, et de plus frivole au monde !’ ”

These remarks, though shrewd and sensible in themselves, apply rather to the character of M. Grimm and

his friends as men of the world, after their initiation into the refined society of Paris and the great world, than as mere men of letters. There is, however, a character which every man of letters has before he comes into society, and which he carries into the world with him, which we shall here attempt to describe.

The weaknesses and vices that arise from a constant intercourse with books are in certain respects the same with those which arise from daily intercourse with the world; yet each has a character and operation of its own, which may either counteract or aggravate the tendency of the other. The same dissipation of mind, the same listlessness, languor, and indifference, may be produced by both, but they are produced in different ways and exhibit very different appearances. The defects of the literary character proceed, not from frivolity and voluptuous indolence, but from the overstrained exertion of the faculties, from abstraction and refinement. A man without talents or education might mingle in the same society, might give in to all the gaiety and foppery of the age, might see the same "multiplicity of persons and things," but would not become a wit and a philosopher for all that. As far as the change of actual objects, the real variety and dissipation goes, there is no difference between M. Grimm and a courtier of Francis I.—between the consummate philosopher and the giddy girl—between Paris amidst the barbaric refinements of the middle of the eighteenth century and any other metropolis at any other period. It is in the *ideal* change of objects, in the *intellectual* dissipation of literature and of literary society, that we are to seek for the difference. The very same languor and listlessness which, in fashionable life, are owing to the rapid "succession of persons and things," may be found, and even in a more intense degree, in the most recluse student, who has no knowledge whatever of the great world, who has never been

present at the sallies of a *petit souper*, or complimented a lady on presenting her with a bouquet. It is the province of literature to anticipate the dissipation of real objects, and to increase it. It creates a fictitious restlessness and craving after variety by creating a fictitious world around us, and by hurrying us not only through all the mimic scenes of life, but by plunging us into the endless labyrinths of imagination. Thus the common indifference produced by the distraction of successive amusements is superseded by a general indifference to surrounding objects, to real persons and things, occasioned by the disparity between the world of our imagination and that without us. The scenes of real life are not got up in the same style of magnificence; they want dramatic illusion and effect. The high-wrought feelings require all the concomitant and romantic circumstances which fancy can bring together to satisfy them, and cannot find them in any given object. M. Grimm was not, by his own account, *born a lover*; but even supposing him to have been, in gallantry of temper, a very Amadis, would it have been necessary that the enthusiasm of a philosopher and a man of genius should have run the gauntlet of all the *bonnes fortunes* of Paris to evaporate into insensibility and indifference? Would not a Clarissa, a new Eloise, a Cassandra, or a Berenice, have produced the same mortifying effects on a person of his great critical acumen and vertu? Where, oh where, would he find the rocks of Meillerie in the precincts of the Palais Royal, or on what lips would Julia's kisses grow? Who, after wandering with Angelica, or having seen the heavenly face of Una, might not meet with impunity a whole circle of literary ladies? Cowley's mistresses reigned by turns in the poet's fancy, and the beauties of King Charles II. perplex the eye in the preference of their charms as much now as they ever did. One trifling coquette only drives out another; but Raphael's

Galatea kills the whole race of pertness and vulgarity at once. After ranging in dizzy mazes through the regions of imaginary beauty, the mind sinks down, breathless and exhausted, on the earth. In common minds, indifference is produced by mixing with the world. Authors and artists bring it into the world with them. The disappointment of the ideal enthusiast is indeed greatest at first, and he grows reconciled to his situation by degrees; whereas the mere man of the world becomes more dissatisfied and fastidious and more of a misanthrope the longer he lives.

It is much the same in friendships founded on literary motives. Literary men are not attached to the persons of their friends, but to their minds. They look upon them in the same light as on the books in their library, and read them till they are tired. In casual acquaintances friendship grows out of habit. Mutual kindnesses beget mutual attachment; and numberless little local occurrences in the course of a long intimacy furnish agreeable topics of recollection, and are almost the only sources of conversation among such persons. They have an immediate pleasure in each other's company. But in literature nothing of this kind takes place. Petty and local circumstances are beneath the dignity of philosophy. Nothing will go down but wit or wisdom. The mind is kept in a perpetual state of violent exertion and expectation, and as there cannot always be a fresh supply of stimulus to excite it, as the same remarks or the same *bon mots* come to be often repeated, or others so like them that we can easily anticipate the effect and are no longer surprised into admiration, we begin to relax in the frequency of our visits and the heartiness of our welcome. When we are tired of a book we can lay it down, but we cannot so easily put our friends on the shelf when we grow weary of their society. The necessity of keeping up appearances, therefore, adds to

the dissatisfaction on both sides, and at length irritates indifference into contempt.

By the help of arts and science, everything finds an ideal level. Ideas assume the place of realities, and realities sink into nothing. Actual events and objects produce little or no effect on the mind, when it has been long accustomed to draw its strongest interest from constant contemplation. It is necessary that it should, as it were, recollect itself—that it should call out its internal resources and refine upon its own feelings—place the object at a distance and embellish it at pleasure. By degrees all things are made to serve as hints, and occasions for the exercise of intellectual activity. It was on this principle that the sentimental Frenchman left his mistress, in order that he might think of her. Cicero ceased to mourn for the loss of his daughter, when he recollected how fine an opportunity it would afford him to write an eulogy to her memory; and Mr. Shandy lamented over the death of Master Bobby much in the same manner. The insensibility of authors, &c., to domestic and private calamities has been often carried to a ludicrous excess, but it is less than it appears to be. The genius of philosophy is not yet *quite* understood. For instance, the man who might seem at the moment undisturbed by the death of a wife or mistress, would perhaps never walk out on a fine evening as long as he lived without recollecting her; and a disappointment in love that “heaves no sigh and sheds no tear,” may penetrate to the heart and remain fixed there ever after. *Hæret lateri lethalis arundo.* The blow is felt only by reflection, the rebound is fatal. Our feelings become more ideal; the impression of the moment is less violent, but the effect is more general and permanent. Those whom we love best take nearly the same rank in our estimation as the heroine of a favourite novel! Indeed, after all, compared with the genuine

feelings of nature, "clad in flesh and blood," with real passions and affections, conversant about real objects, the life of a mere man of letters and sentiment appears to be at best but a living death—a dim twilight existence: a sort of wandering about in an Elysian Fields of our own making; a refined, spiritual, disembodied state, like that of the ghosts of Homer's heroes, who, we are told, would gladly have exchanged situations with the meanest peasant upon earth!¹

The moral character of men of letters depends very much upon the same principles. All actions are seen through that general medium which reduces them to individual insignificance. Nothing fills or engrosses the mind—nothing seems of sufficient importance to interfere with our present inclination. Prejudices, as well as attachments, lose their hold upon us, and we palter with our duties as we please. Moral obligations, by being perpetually refined upon and discussed, lose their force and efficacy, become mere dry distinctions of the understanding—

"Play round the head, but never reach the heart.

Opposite reasons and consequences balance one another, while appetite and interest turn the scale. Hence the severe sarcasm of Rousseau, "*Tout homme réfléchi est méchant.*" In fact, it must be confessed, that as all things produce their extremes, so excessive refinement tends to produce equal grossness. The tenuity of our intellectual desires leaves a void in the mind which requires to be filled up by coarser gratification, and that of the senses is always at hand. They alone

¹ Plato's cave, in which he supposes a man to be shut up all his life with his back to the light, and to see nothing of the figures of men or other objects that pass by but their shadows on the opposite wall of his cell, so that when he is let out and sees the real figures he is only dazzled and confounded by them, seems an ingenious satire on the life of a bookworm.

always retain their strength. There is not a greater mistake than the common supposition, that intellectual pleasures are capable of endless repetition and physical ones not so. The one, indeed, may be spread out over a greater surface, they may be dwelt upon and kept in mind at will, and for that very reason they wear out, and pall by comparison, and require perpetual variety. Whereas the physical gratification only occupies us at the moment, is, as it were, absorbed in itself, and forgotten as soon as it is over, and when it returns is *as good as new*. No one could ever read the same book for any length of time without being tired of it, but a man is never tired of his meals, however little variety his table may have to boast. This reasoning is equally true of all persons who have given much of their time to study and abstracted speculations. Grossness and sensuality have been marked with no less triumph in the religious devotee than in the professed philosopher. The perfect joys of heaven do not satisfy the cravings of nature; and the good canon in 'Gil Blas' might be opposed with effect to some of the portraits in M. Grimm's 'Correspondence.'

No. XXXIV.

On Commonplace Critics.

"Nor can I think what thoughts they can conceive."

WE have already given some account of commonplace people; we shall in this number attempt a description of another class of the community, who may be called (by way of distinction) commonplace critics. The former are a set of people who have no opinions of their own, and do not pretend to have any; the latter are a set of people who have no opinions of their own, but

who affect to have one upon every subject you can mention. The former are a very honest good sort of people, who are contented to pass for what they are; the latter are a very pragmatistical, troublesome sort of people, who would pass for what they are not, and try to put off their commonplace notions in all companies and on all subjects as something of their own. They are of both species, the grave and the gay; and it is hard to say which is the most tiresome.

A commonplace critic has something to say upon every occasion, and he always tells you either what is not true, or what you knew before, or what is not worth knowing. He is a person who thinks by proxy and talks by rote. He differs with you, not because he thinks you are in the wrong, but because he thinks somebody else will think so. Nay, it would be well if he stopped here; but he will undertake to misrepresent you by anticipation lest others should misunderstand you, and will set you right, not only in opinions which you have, but in those which you may be supposed to have. Thus, if you say that Bottom the weaver is a character that has not had justice done to it, he shakes his head, is afraid you will be thought extravagant, and wonders you should think the 'Midsummer Night's Dream' the finest of all Shakspeare's plays. He judges of matters of taste and reasoning, as he does of dress and fashion, by the prevailing tone of good company; and you would as soon persuade him to give up any sentiment that is current there as to wear the hind part of his coat before. By the best company, of which he is perpetually talking, he means persons who live on their own estates and other people's ideas. By the opinion of the world, to which he pays and expects you to pay great deference, he means that of a little circle of his own, where he hears and is heard. Again, *good sense* is a phrase constantly in his mouth, by which he

does not mean his own sense or that of anybody else, but the opinions of a number of persons who have agreed to take their opinions on trust from others. If any one observes that there is something better than common sense, viz. *uncommon* sense, he thinks this a bad joke. If you object to the opinions of the majority, as often arising from ignorance or prejudice, he appeals from them to the sensible and well-informed; and if you say there may be other persons as sensible and well-informed as himself and his friends, he smiles at your presumption. If you attempt to prove anything to him, it is in vain, for he is not thinking of what you say, but of what will be thought of it. The stronger your reasons the more incorrigible he thinks you; and he looks upon any attempt to expose his gratuitous assumptions as the wandering of a disordered imagination. His notions are, like plaster figures cast in a mould, as brittle as they are hollow; but they will break before you can make them give way. In fact he is the representative of a large part of the community—the shallow, the vain, and the indolent—of those who have time to talk and are not bound to think; and he considers any deviation from the select forms of commonplace, or the accredited language of conventional impertinence, as compromising the authority under which he acts in his diplomatic capacity. It is wonderful how this class of people agree with one another; how they herd together in all their opinions; what a tact they have for folly; what an instinct for absurdity; what a sympathy in sentiment; how they find one another out by infallible signs, like Freemasons! The secret of this unanimity and strict accord is, that not any one of them ever admits any opinion that can cost the least effort of mind in arriving at, or of courage in declaring it. Folly is as consistent with itself as wisdom; there is a certain level of thought and sentiment which the weakest minds,

as well as the strongest, find out as best adapted to them; and you as regularly come to the same conclusions by looking no farther than the surface, as if you dug to the centre of the earth! You know beforehand what a critic of this class will say on almost every subject the first time he sees you, the next time, the time after that, and so on to the end of the chapter. The following list of his opinions may be relied on:—It is pretty certain that before you have been in the room with him ten minutes he will give you to understand that Shakspeare was a great but irregular genius. Again, he thinks it a question whether any one of his plays, if brought out now for the first time, would succeed. He thinks that ‘Macbeth’ would be the most likely, from the music which has been since introduced into it. He has some doubts as to the superiority of the French school over us in tragedy, and observes that Hume and Adam Smith were both of that opinion. He thinks Milton’s pedantry a great blemish in his writings, and that ‘Paradise Lost’ has many prosaic passages in it. He conceives that genius does not always imply taste, and that wit and judgment are very different faculties. He considers Dr. Johnson as a great critic and moralist, and that his Dictionary was a work of prodigious erudition and vast industry, but that some of the anecdotes of him in ‘Boswell’ are trifling. He conceives that Mr. Locke was a very original and profound thinker. He thinks Gibbon’s style vigorous but florid. He wonders that the author of ‘Junius’ was never found out. He thinks Pope’s translation of the ‘Iliad’ an improvement on the simplicity of the original, which was necessary to fit it to the taste of modern readers. He thinks there is a great deal of grossness in the old comedies; and that there has been a great improvement in the morals of the higher classes since the reign of Charles II. He thinks the reign of Queen

Anne the golden period of our literature, but that, upon the whole, we have no English writer equal to Voltaire. He speaks of Boccaccio as a very licentious writer, and thinks the wit in Rabelais quite extravagant, though he never read either of them. He cannot get through Spenser's 'Fairy Queen,' and pronounces all allegorical poetry tedious. He prefers Smollett to Fielding, and discovers more knowledge of the world in 'Gil Blas' than in 'Don Quixote.' Richardson he thinks very minute and tedious. He thinks the French Revolution has done a great deal of harm to the cause of liberty; and blames Buonaparte for being so ambitious. He reads the 'Edinburgh' and 'Quarterly' Reviews, and thinks as they do. He is shy of having an opinion on a new actor or a new singer, for the public do not always agree with the newspapers. He thinks that the moderns have great advantages over the ancients in many respects. He thinks Jeremy Bentham a greater man than Aristotle. He can see no reason why artists of the present day should not paint as well as Raphael or Titian. For instance, he thinks there is something very elegant and classical in Mr. Westall's drawings. He has no doubt that Sir Joshua Reynolds' Lectures were written by Burke. He considers Horne Tooke's account of the conjunction *That* very ingenious, and holds that no writer can be called elegant who uses the present for the subjunctive mood, who says *If it is* for *If it be*. He thinks Hogarth a great master of low comic humour, and Cobbett a coarse vulgar writer. He often talks of men of liberal education, and men without education, as if that made much difference. He judges of people by their pretensions; and pays attention to their opinions according to their dress and rank in life. If he meets with a fool he does not find him out; and if he meets with any one wiser than himself he does not know what to make of him. He thinks that manners

are of great consequence to the common intercourse of life. He thinks it difficult to prove the existence of any such thing as original genius, or to fix a general standard of taste. He does not think it possible to define what wit is. In religion his opinions are liberal. He considers all enthusiasm as a degree of madness particularly to be guarded against by young minds; and believes that truth lies in the middle, between the extremes of right and wrong. He thinks that the object of poetry is to please; and that astronomy is a very pleasing and useful study. He thinks all this and a great deal more, that amounts to nothing. We wonder we have remembered one half of it—

“For true no-meaning puzzles more than wit.”

Though he has an aversion to all new ideas, he likes all new plans and matters of fact: the new Schools for All, the Penitentiary, the new Bedlam, the new steamboats, the gaslights, the new patent blacking—everything of that sort but the Bible Society. The Society for the Suppression of Vice he thinks a great nuisance, as every honest man must.

In a word, a commonplace critic is the pedant of polite conversation. He refers to the opinion of Lord M. or Lady G. with the same air of significance that the learned pedant does to the authority of Cicero or Virgil; retails the wisdom of the day, as the anecdote-monger does the wit; and carries about with him the sentiments of people of a certain respectability in life, as the dancing-master does their air or their valets their clothes.

No. XXXV.

On the 'Catalogue Raisonné' of the British Institution.

THE 'Catalogue Raisonné' of the pictures lately exhibited at the British Institution is worthy of notice, both as it is understood to be a declaration of the views of the Royal Academy, and as it contains some erroneous notions with respect to art prevalent in this country. It sets out with the following passages:—

“The first resolution ever framed by the noblemen and gentlemen who met to establish the British Institution, consists of the following sentence, viz. :

“ ‘The *object* of the establishment is to facilitate, by a public exhibition, the *sale* of the productions of *British* artists.’

“Now, if the Directors had not felt quite certain as to the result of the present exhibition (of the Flemish School)—if they had not perfectly satisfied themselves that, instead of affording any even the least means of promoting *unfair and invidious comparisons*, it would produce *abundant matter for exultation to the living artist*, can we possibly imagine they, the foster-parents of British Art, would ever have suffered such a display to have taken place? Certainly not. If they had not foreseen and fully provided against *all such injurious results*, by the deep and masterly manœuvre alluded to in our former remarks, is it conceivable that the Directors would have acted in a way so counter, so diametrically in opposition, to this their fundamental and leading principle? No, No! It is a position which all sense of respect for their consistency will not suffer us to admit, which all feelings of respect for their views forbid us to allow.

“Is it at all to be wondered at that, in an exhibition such as this, where nothing *like a patriotic desire* to uphold the arts of their country can possibly have place in the

minds of the Directors, we should attribute to them the desire of *holding up the old masters to derision*, inasmuch as good policy would allow? Is it to be wondered at that, when the Directors have the threefold prospect, by so doing, of estranging the silly and ignorant collector from his false and senseless infatuation for the *Black Masters*, of turning his *unjust preference* from Foreign to British Art, and, by affording the living painters a just encouragement, teach them to feel that becoming confidence in their powers which an acknowledgment of their merits entitles them to—is it to be wondered at, we say, that a little duplicity should have been practised upon this occasion, that some of our ill-advised collectors and second-rate picture amateurs should have been singled out as sheep for the sacrifice, and *thus ingeniously* made to pay unwilling homage to the *talents of their countrymen*, through that very medium by which they had previously been induced to *depreciate them?*—“If, in our wish to please the Directors, we should, without mercy, damn all that deserves damning, and effectually hide our admiration for those pieces and passages which are truly entitled to admiration, it must be placed entirely to that *patriotic sympathy* which we feel in common with the Directors, of holding up to the public, as the first and great object, THE PATRONAGE OF MODERN ART.”

Once more :

“Who does not perceive (except those whose eyes are not made for seeing more than they are told by others) that Vandyke's portraits, by the brilliant colour of the velvet hangings, are made to look as if they had been newly fetched home from the clearstarcher with a double portion of blue in their ruffs? Who does not see that the angelic females in Rubens' pictures (particularly in that of 'The Brazen Serpent') labour under a fit of the bile twice as severe as they would do if they were not

suffering on red velvet? Who does not see, from the same cause, that the landscapes by the same master are converted into *brown studies*, and that Rembrandt's ladies and gentlemen of fashion look as if they had been on duty for the whole of last week in the Prince Regent's new sewer? *And who, that has any penetration, that has any gratitude, does not see, in seeing all this, the anxious and benevolent solicitude of the Directors to keep the old masters under?"*

So, then, this writer would think it a matter of lively gratitude, and of exultation in the breasts of living artists, if the Directors, "in their anxious and benevolent desire to keep the old masters under," had contrived to make Vandyke's pictures look like starch and blue; if they had converted Rubens' pictures into brown studies, or a fit of the bile; or had dragged Rembrandt's through the Prince Regent's new sewer. It would have been a great gain, a great triumph to the Academy and to the art, to have nothing left of all the pleasure or admiration which those painters had hitherto imparted to the world, to find all the excellences which their works had been supposed to possess, and all respect for them in the minds of the public, destroyed, and converted into sudden loathing and disgust. This is, according to the catalogue writer and his friends, a consummation devoutly to be wished, for themselves and for the art. All that is taken from the old masters is so much added to the moderns; the marring of art is the making of the Academy. This is the kind of patronage and promotion of the fine arts on which he insists, as necessary to keep up the reputation of living artists, and to ensure the sale of their works. There is nothing then in common between the merits of the old masters and the doubtful claims of the new; *those* are not "the scale by which we can ascend to the love" of these. The excellences of the latter are of their own making and of their own seeing; we must take their own word for them; and not only so, but we must

sacrifice all established principles and all established reputation to their upstart pretensions, because, if the old pictures are not totally worthless, their own can be good for nothing. The only chance, therefore, for the moderns, if the catalogue writer is to be believed, is to decry all the *chefs-d'œuvre* of the art, and to hold up all the great names in it to derision. If the public once get to relish the style of the old masters they will no longer tolerate theirs. But so long as the old masters can be *kept under*, the coloured caricatures of the moderns, like Mrs. Peachum's coloured handkerchiefs, "will be of sure sale at their warehouse at Redriff." The catalogue writer thinks it necessary, in order to raise the art in this country, to depreciate all art in all other times and countries. He thinks that the way to excite an enthusiastic admiration of genius in the public is by setting the example of a vulgar and malignant hatred of it in himself. He thinks to inspire a lofty spirit of emulation in the rising generation by shutting his eyes to the excellences of all the finest models, or, by pouring out upon them the overflowing of his gall and envy, to disfigure them in the eyes of others; so that they may see nothing in Raphael, in Titian, in Rubens, in Rembrandt, in Vandyke, in Claude Lorraine, in Leonardo da Vinci, but the low wit and dirty imagination of a paltry scribbler, and come away from the greatest monuments of human capacity without one feeling of excellence in art, or of beauty or grandeur in nature. Nay, he would persuade us that this is a great public and private benefit—viz., that there is no such thing as excellence, as genius, as true fame, except what he and his anonymous associates arrogate to themselves, with all the profit and credit of this degradation of genius, this ruin of art, this obloquy and contempt heaped on great and unrivalled reputation. He thinks it a likely mode of producing confidence in the existence and value of art, to prove

that there never was any such thing till the last annual exhibition of the Royal Academy. He would encourage a disinterested love of art and a liberal patronage of it in the great and opulent by showing that the living artists have no regard, but the most sovereign and reckless contempt for it, except as it can be made a temporary stalking-horse to their pride and avarice. The writer may have a *patriotic sympathy* with the sale of modern works of art, but we do not see what sympathy there can be between the buyers and sellers of these works, except in the love of the art itself. When we find that these patriotic persons would destroy the art itself to promote the sale of their pictures, we know what to say to them. We are obliged to the zeal of our critic for having set this matter in so clear a light. The public will feel little sympathy with a body of artists who disclaim all sympathy with all other artists. They will doubt their pretensions to genius who have no feeling of respect for it in others; they will consider them as bastards, not children of the art, who would destroy their parent. The public will hardly consent, when the proposition is put to them in this tangible shape, to give up the cause of liberal art and of every liberal sentiment connected with it, and enter, with their eyes open, into a pettifogging cabal to keep the old masters under, or hold their names up to derision "as good sport," merely to gratify the selfish importunity of a gang of sturdy beggars, who demand public encouragement and support with a claim of settlement in one hand and a forged certificate of merit in the other. They can only deserve well of the public by deserving well of the art. Have we taken these men from the plough, from the counter, from the shop-board, from the tap-room and the stable-door, to raise them to fortune, to rank, and distinction in life, for the sake of art, to give them a chance of doing something in art like what had been

done before them, of promoting and refining the public taste, of setting before them the great models of art, and by a pure love of truth and beauty, and by patient and disinterested aspirations after it, of rising to the highest excellence, and of making themselves "a name great above all names;" and do they now turn round upon us, and because they have neglected these high objects of their true calling for pitiful cabals and filling their pockets, insist that we shall league with them in crushing the progress of art and the respect attached to all its great efforts? There is no other country in the world in which such a piece of impudent quackery could be put forward with impunity, and still less in which it could be put forward in the garb of patriotism. This is the effect of our gross island manners. The catalogue writer carries his bear-garden notions of this virtue into the fine arts, and would set about destroying Dutch or Italian pictures as he would Dutch shipping or Italian liberty. He goes up to the Rembrandts with the same swaggering Jack-tar airs as he would to a battery of nine-pounders, and snaps his fingers at Raphael as he would at the French. Yet he talks big about the Elgin Marbles, because Mr. Payne Knight has made a slip on that subject; though, to be consistent, he ought to be for pounding them in a mortar, should get his friend the incendiary to set fire to the room building for them at the British Museum, or should get Mr. Soane to build it. Patriotism and the fine arts have nothing to do with one another—because patriotism relates to exclusive advantages, and the advantages of the fine arts are not exclusive, but communicable. The physical property of one country cannot be shared without loss by another: the physical force of one country may destroy that of another. These, therefore, are objects of national jealousy and fear of encroachment: for the interests or rights of different countries may be compromised in

them. But it is not so in the fine arts, which depend upon taste and knowledge. We do not consume the works of art as articles of food, of clothing, or fuel; but we brood over their *idea*, which is accessible to all, and may be multiplied without end, "with riches fineless." Patriotism is "beastly; subtle as the fox for prey; like warlike as the wolf for what it eats;" but art is ideal, and therefore liberal. The knowledge or perfection of art in one age or country is the cause of its existence or perfection in another. Art is the cause of art in other men. Works of genius done by a Dutchman are the cause of genius in an Englishman—are the cause of taste in an Englishman. The patronage of foreign art is, not to prevent, but to promote, art in England. It does not prevent, but promote, taste in England. Art subsists by communication, not by exclusion. The light of art, like that of nature, shines on all alike; and its benefit, like that of the sun, is in being seen and felt. The spirit of art is not the spirit of trade; it is not a question between the grower or consumer of some perishable and personal commodity: but it is a question between human genius and human taste; how much the one can produce for the benefit of mankind, and how much the other can enjoy. It is "the link of peaceful commerce 'twixt dividable shores." To take from it this character is to take from it its best privilege, its humanity. Would any one, except our catalogue virtuoso, think of destroying or concealing the monuments of art in past ages, as inconsistent with the progress of taste and civilisation in the present? Would any one find fault with the introduction of the works of Raphael into this country, as if their being done by an Italian confined the benefit to a foreign country, when all the benefit, all the great and lasting benefit (except the purchase-money, the lasting burden of the catalogue and the great test of the value of art, in the opinion of

the writer), is instantly communicated to all eyes that behold and all hearts that can feel them? It is many years ago since we first saw the prints of the Cartoons hung round the parlour of a little inn on the great north road. We were then very young, and had not been initiated into the principles of taste and refinement of the 'Catalogue Raisonné.' We had heard of the fame of the Cartoons, but this was the first time that we had ever been admitted face to face into the presence of those divine works. "How were we then uplifted!" Prophets and Apostles stood before us, and the Saviour of the Christian world, with his attributes of faith and power; miracles were working on the walls; the hand of Raphael was there, and as his pencil traced the lines we saw godlike spirits and lofty shapes descend and walk visibly the earth, but as if their thoughts still lifted them above the earth. There was that figure of St. Paul, pointing with noble fervour to "temples not made with hands, eternal in the heavens;" and that finer one of Christ in the boat, whose whole figure seems sustained by meekness and love; and that of the same person, surrounded by the disciples, like a flock of sheep listening to the music of some divine shepherd. We knew not how to enough to admire them. If from this transport and delight there arose in our breasts a wish, a deep aspiration of mingled hope and fear, to be able one day to do something like them, that hope has long since vanished; but not with it the love of art, nor delight in works of art, nor admiration of the genius which produces them, nor respect for fame which rewards and crowns them! Did we suspect that in this feeling of enthusiasm for the works of Raphael we were deficient in patriotic sympathy, or that, in spreading it as far as we could, we did an injury to our country or to living art? The very feeling showed that there was no such distinction in art, that her benefits were common, that the power

of genius, like the spirit of the world, is everywhere alike present. And would the harpies of criticism try to extinguish this common benefit to their country from a pretended exclusive attachment to their countrymen? Would they rob their country of Raphael to set up the credit of their professional little-goes and E. O. tables—"cutpurses of the art, that from the shelf the precious diadem stole, and put it in their pockets"? Tired of exposing such folly, we walked out the other day, and saw a bright cloud resting on the bosom of the blue expanse, which reminded us of what we had seen in some picture in the Louvre. We were suddenly roused from our reverie by recollecting that till we had answered this catchpenny publication we had no right, without being liable to a charge of disaffection to our country or treachery to the art, to look at nature, or to think of anything like it in art, not of British growth and manufacture!

No. XXXVI.

The same Subject continued.

THE catalogue writer nicknames the Flemish painters "the Black Masters." Either this means that the works of Rubens and Vandyke were originally black pictures—that is, deeply shadowed, like those of Rembrandt, which is false, there being no painter who used so little shadow as Vandyke or so much colour as Rubens; or it must mean that their pictures have turned darker with time—that is, that the art itself is a black art. Is this a triumph for the Academy? Is the defect and decay of art a subject of exultation to the national genius? Then there is no hope (in this country at least) "that a great man's memory may outlive him half a year." Do they calculate that the decomposition and

gradual disappearance of the standard works of art will quicken the demand and facilitate the sale of modern pictures? Have they no hope of immortality themselves, that they are glad to see the inevitable dissolution of all that has long flourished in splendour and in honour? They are pleased to find, that at the end of near two hundred years the pictures of Vandyke and Rubens have suffered half as much from time as those of their late president have done in thirty or forty, or their own in the last ten or twelve years. So that the glory of painting is, that it does not last for ever; it is this which puts the ancients and the moderns on a level. They hail with undisguised satisfaction the approaches of the slow mouldering hand of time in those works which have lasted longest, not anticipating the premature fate of their own. Such is their shortsighted ambition! A picture is with them like the frame it is in, *as good as new*; and the best picture, that which was last painted. They make the weak side of art the test of its excellence; and though a modern picture of two years' standing is hardly fit to be seen, from the general ignorance of the painter in the mechanical as well as other parts of the art, yet they are sure at any time to get the start of Rubens or Vandyke, by painting a picture against the day of exhibition. We even question whether they would wish to make their own pictures last if they could, and whether they would not destroy their own works as well as those of others (like chalk figures on the floors) to have new ones bespoke the next day. The Flemish pictures then, except those of Rembrandt, were not originally black; they have not faded in proportion to the length of time they have been painted. All that comes then of the nickname in the catalogue is, that the pictures of the old masters have lasted longer than those of the present members of the Royal Academy, and that the latter, it is to be pre-

sumed, do not wish their works to last so long, lest they should be called the "Black Masters." With respect to Rembrandt, this epitaph may be literally true. But, we would ask, whether the style of *chiaroscuro*, in which Rembrandt painted, is not one fine view of nature and of art?—whether any other painter carried it to the same height of perfection as he did?—whether any other painter ever joined the same depth of shadow with the same clearness?—whether his tones were not as fine as they were true?—whether a more thorough master of his art ever lived?—whether he deserved for this to be nicknamed by the writer of the catalogue, or to have his works "kept under, or himself held up to derision," by the patrons and directors of the "British Institution for the support and encouragement of the Fine Arts"?

But we have heard it said by a disciple and commentator of the catalogue (one would think it was hardly possible to descend lower than the writer himself), that the directors of the British Institution assume a consequence to themselves hostile to the pretensions of modern professors, out of the reputation of the old masters, whom they affect to look upon with wonder, to worship as something preternatural—that they consider the bare possession of an old picture as a title to distinction, and the respect paid to art as the highest pretension of the owner. And is this then a subject of complaint with the Academy, that genius is thus thought of, when its claims are once fully established?—that those high qualities, which are beyond the estimate of ignorance and selfishness while living, receive their reward from distant ages? Do they not "feel the future in the instant"? Do they not know that those qualities which appeal neither to interest nor passion can only find their level with time, and would they annihilate the only pretensions they have? Or have they no conscious affinity with true genius, no claim to the

reversion of true fame, no right of succession to this lasting inheritance and final reward of great exertions, which they would therefore destroy to prevent others from enjoying it? Does all their ambition begin and end in their *patriotic sympathy* with the sale of modern works of art, and have they no fellow-feeling with the hopes and final destiny of human genius? What poet ever complained of the respect paid to Homer as derogatory to himself? The envy and opposition to established fame is peculiar to the race of modern artists; and it is to be hoped it will remain so. It is the fault of their education. It is only by a liberal education that we learn to feel respect for the past or to take an interest in the future. The knowledge of artists is too often confined to their art, and their views to their own interest. Even in this they are wrong—in all respects they are wrong. As a mere matter of trade, the prejudice in favour of old pictures does not prevent, but assists, the sale of modern works of art. If there was not a prejudice in favour of old pictures there could be a prejudice in favour of none, and none would be sold. The professors seem to think, that for every old picture not sold one of their own would be. This is a false calculation. The contrary is true. For every old picture not sold one of their own (in proportion) would *not* be sold. The practice of buying pictures is a habit, and it must begin with those pictures which have a character and name, and not with those which have none. "Depend upon it," says Mr. Burke in a letter to Barry, "whatever attracts public attention to the arts will in the end be for the benefit of the artists themselves." Again, do not the Academicians know, that it is a contradiction in terms that a man should enjoy the advantages of posthumous fame in his lifetime? Most men cease to be of any consequence at all when they are dead; but it is the privilege of the man of genius to

survive himself. But he cannot in the nature of things anticipate this privilege; because in all that appeals to the general intellect of mankind this appeal is strengthened as it spreads wider and is acknowledged; because a man cannot unite in himself personally the suffrages of distant ages and nations; because popularity, a newspaper puff, cannot have the certainty of lasting fame; because it does not carry the same weight of sympathy with it; because it cannot have the same interest, the same refinement or grandeur. If Mr. West was equal to Raphael (which he is not), if Mr. Lawrence was equal to Vandyke or Titian (which he is not), if Mr. Turner was equal to Claude Lorraine (which he is not), if Mr. Wilkie was equal to Teniers (which he is not), yet they could not nor ought they to be thought of in the same manner, because there could not be the same proof of it, nor the same confidence in the opinion of a man and his friends, or of any one generation, as in that of successive generations and the voice of posterity. If it is said that we pass over the faults of the one and severely scrutinise the excellences of the other, this is also right and necessary, because the one have passed their trial and the others are upon it. If we forgive or overlook the faults of the ancients, it is because they have dearly earned it at our hands. We ought to have some objects to indulge our enthusiasm upon, and we ought to indulge it upon the highest, and those that are surest of deserving it. Would one of our Academicians expect us to look at his new house in one of the new squares with the same veneration as at Michael Angelo's, which he built with his own hands, as at Tully's villa, or at the tomb of Virgil? We have no doubt they would, but we cannot. Besides, if it were possible to transfer our old prejudices to new candidates, the way to effect this is not by destroying them. If we have no confidence in all that has gone before us, in what has

received the sanction of time and the concurring testimony of disinterested judges, are we to believe all of a sudden that excellence has started up in our own times, because it never existed before?—are we to take the artists' own word for their superiority to their predecessors? There is one other plea made by the moderns—"that they must live;" and the answer to it is, that they do live. An Academician makes his thousand a year by portrait-painting, and complains that the encouragement given to foreign art deprives him of the means of subsistence, and prevents him from indulging his genius in works of high history—"playing at will his virgin fancies wild."

As to the comparative merits of the ancients and the moderns, it does not admit of a question. The odds are too much in favour of the former, because it is likely that more good pictures were painted in the last three hundred than in the last thirty years. Now, the old pictures are the best remaining out of all that period, setting aside those of living artists. If they are bad, the art itself is good for nothing, for they are the best that ever were. They are not good because they are old; but they have become old because they are good. The question is not between this and any other generation, but between the present and all preceding generations, whom the catalogue writer, in his misguided zeal, undertakes to vilify and "to keep under, or hold up to derision." To say that the great names which have come down to us are not worth anything, is to say that the mountain-tops which we see in the farthest horizon are not so high as the intervening objects. If there had been any greater painters than Vandyke or Rubens, or Raphael or Rembrandt, or N. Poussin or Claude Lorraine, we should have heard of them, we should have seen them in the Gallery, and we should have read a patriotic and disinterested account of them in the '*Catalogue Raisonné*.'

Waiving the unfair and invidious comparison between all former excellence and the concentrated essence of it in the present age, let us ask who, in the last generation of painters, was equal to the old masters? Was it Highmore, or Hayman, or Hudson, or Kneller? Who was the English Raphael or Rubens or Vandyke of that day to whom the catalogue critic would have extended his patriotic sympathy and damning patronage? Kneller, we have been told, was thought superior to Vandyke by the persons of fashion whom he painted. So St. Thomas Apostle seems higher than St. Paul's while you are close under it; but the farther off you go the higher the mighty dome aspires into the skies. What is become of all those great men who flourished in our own time—"like flowers in men's caps, dying or ere they sicken"—Hoppner, Opie, Shee, Louthembourg, Rigaud, Romney, Barry, the painters of the Shakspeare Gallery? "Gone to the vault of all the Capulets," and their pictures with them, or before them. Shall we put more faith in their successors? Shall we take the words of their friends for their taste and genius? No, we will stick to what we know will stick to us, the "heirlooms" of the art, the black masters. The picture, for instance, of Charles I. on horseback, which our critic criticises with such heavy drollery, is worth all the pictures that were ever exhibited at the Royal Academy (from the time of Sir Joshua to the present time inclusive) put together. It shows more knowledge and feeling of the art, more skill and beauty, more sense of what it is in objects that give pleasure to the eye, with more power to communicate this pleasure to the world. If either this single picture or all the lumber that has ever appeared at the Academy were to be destroyed, there could not be a question which, with any artist or with any judge or lover of art. So stands the account between ancient and modern art! By this we may judge of all the rest. The

catalogue writer makes some strictures in the second part on the Waterloo Exhibition, which he does not think what it ought to be. We wonder he had another word to say on modern art after seeing it. He should instantly have taken the resolution of Iago—"From this time forth I never will speak more."

The writer of the 'Catalogue Raisonné' has fallen foul of two things which ought to be sacred to artists and lovers of art—genius and fame. If they are not sacred to them, we do not know to whom they will be sacred. A work such as the present shows that the person who could write it must either have no knowledge or taste for art, or must be actuated by a feeling of unaccountable malignity towards it. It shows that any body of men by whom it could be set on foot or encouraged are not an academy of art. It shows that a country in which such a publication could make its appearance is not the country of the fine arts. Does the writer think to prove the genius of his countrymen for art by proclaiming their utter insensibility and flagitious contempt for all beauty and excellence in the art, except in their own works? No! it is very true that the English are a shopkeeping nation, and the 'Catalogue Raisonné' is the proof of it.

Finally, the works of the moderns are not, like those of the old masters, a second nature. Oh art, true likeness of nature, "balm of hurt minds, great nature's second course, chief nourisher in life's feast!" of what would our catalogue-mongers deprive us in depriving us of thee and of thy glories, of the lasting works of the great painters, and of their names no less magnificent, grateful to our hearts as the sound of celestial harmony from other spheres, waking around us (whether heard or not) from youth to age—the stay, the guide, and anchor of our purest thoughts; whom having once seen, we always

remember, and who teach us to see all things through them; without whom life would be to begin again, and the earth barren—of Raphael, who lifted the human form halfway to Heaven; of Titian, who painted the mind in the face, and unfolded the soul of things to the eye; of Rubens, around whose pencil gorgeous shapes thronged numberless, startling us by the novel accidents of form and colour, putting the spirit of motion into the universe, and weaving a gay fantastic round and Bacchanalian dance with nature; of thee too, Rembrandt, who didst redeem one half of nature from obloquy, from the nickname in the catalogue, “smoothing the raven down of darkness till it smiled,” and tingeing it with a light like streaks of burnished ore—of these and more, of whom the world is scarce worthy! And what would they give us in return? Nothing.¹

No. XXXVII.

On Poetical Versatility.

THE spirit of poetry is in itself favourable to humanity and liberty; but, we suspect, not when its aid is most wanted. The spirit of poetry is not the spirit of

¹ See ‘Memoirs of W. H.’ 1867, vol. i. p. 211. Copies of the original catalogues of the exhibitions in 1816–17, of the Flemish and Dutch, and Italian and Spanish, masters in Pall Mall will be found in the British Museum, in a 4to volume, with the press-mark, 7856, e.

In the British Museum catalogues occur the following satires, attributed to R. Smirke, on the catalogues themselves:

‘A Catalogue Raisonné of the Pictures now exhibiting at the British Institution.’ No place, printer’s name, or date [1815]. 4to, pp. 74.

‘A Catalogue Raisonné of the Pictures now exhibiting in Pall Mall.’ No place, or printer’s name, 1816. 4to, pp. 46 + vi.

‘A Catalogue Raisonné,’ &c. Part second. 1816. 4to, pp. 48 + x.—ED.

mortification or of martyrdom. Poetry dwells in a perpetual Utopia of its own, and is for that reason very ill-calculated to make a Paradise upon earth, by encountering the shocks and disappointments of the world. Poetry, like law, is a fiction, only a more agreeable one. It does not create difficulties where they do not exist, but contrives to get rid of them whether they exist or not. It is not entangled in cobwebs of its own making, but soars above all obstacles. It cannot be "constrained by mastery." It has the range of the universe; it traverses the empyrean, and looks down on nature from a higher sphere. When it lights upon the earth, it loses some of its dignity and its use. Its strength is in its wings; its element the air. Standing on its feet, jostling with the crowd, it is liable to be overthrown, trampled on, and defaced; for its wings are of a dazzling brightness, "heaven's own tinct," and the least soil upon them shows to disadvantage. Sullied, degraded as we have seen it, we shall not insult over it, but leave it to Time to take out the stains, seeing it is a thing immortal as itself. "Being so majestic, we should do it wrong to offer it the show of violence." But the best things, in their abuse, often become the worst; and so it is with poetry when it is diverted from its proper end. Poets live in an ideal world, where they make everything out according to their wishes and fancies. They either find things delightful or make them so. They feign the beautiful and grand out of their own minds, and imagine all things to be, not what they are, but what they ought to be. They are naturally inventors, creators of truth, of love, and beauty; and while they speak to us from the sacred shrine of their own hearts, while they pour out the pure treasures of thought to the world, they cannot be too much admired and applauded. But when, forgetting their high calling, and becoming tools and puppets

in the hands of power, they would pass off the gewgaws of corruption and love-tokens of self-interest as the gifts of the Muse, they cannot be too much despised and shunned. We do not like novels founded on facts, nor do we like poets turned courtiers. Poets, it has been said, succeed best in fiction: and they should for the most part stick to it. Invention, not upon an imaginary subject, is a lie; the varnishing over the vices or deformities of actual objects is hypocrisy. Players leave their finery at the stage-door, or they would be hooted; poets come out into the world with all their bravery on, and yet they would pass for *bonâ fide* persons. They lend the colours of fancy to whatever they see: whatever they touch becomes gold, though it were lead. With them every Joan is a lady; and kings and queens are human. Matters of fact they embellish at their will; and reason is the plaything of their passions, their caprice, or their interest. There is no practice so base of which they will not become the panders; no sophistry of which their understanding may not be made the voluntary dupe. Their only object is to please their fancy. Their souls are effeminate, half man and half woman. They want fortitude and are without principle. If things do not turn out according to their wishes, they will make their wishes turn round to things. They can easily overlook whatever they do not like, and make an idol of anything they please. The object of poetry is to please; this art naturally gives pleasure and excites admiration. Poets, therefore, cannot do well without sympathy and flattery. It is accordingly very much against the grain that they remain long on the unpopular side of the question. They do not like to be shut out when laurels are to be given away at court—or places under government to be disposed of in romantic situations in the country. They are happy to be reconciled on the first opportunity to prince and people,

and to exchange their principles for a pension. They have not always strength of mind to think for themselves, nor courage enough to bear the unjust stigma of the opinions they have taken upon trust from others. Truth alone does not satisfy their pampered appetites without the sauce of praise. To prefer truth to all other things, it requires that the mind should have been at some pains in finding it out, and that we should feel a severe delight in the contemplation of truth, seen by its own clear light, and not as it is reflected in the admiring eyes of the world. A philosopher may perhaps make a shift to be contented with the sober draughts of reason; a poet must have the applause of the world to intoxicate him. Milton was, however, a poet and an honest man; he was Cromwell's secretary.

LIBERTY

No. XXXVIII.

On Actors and Acting.

PLAYERS are "the abstracts and brief chronicles of the times," the motley representatives of human nature. They are the only honest hypocrites. Their life is a voluntary dream, a studied madness. The height of their ambition is to be *beside themselves*. To-day kings, to-morrow beggars, it is only when they are themselves that they are nothing. Made up of mimic laughter and tears, passing from the extremes of joy or woe at the prompter's call, they wear the livery of other men's fortunes; their very thoughts are not their own. They are, as it were, train-bearers in the pageant of life, and hold a glass up to humanity, frailer than itself. We see ourselves at secondhand in them; they show us all that we are, all that we wish to be, and all that we dread to be. The stage is an epitome, a bettered likeness, of the

world, with the dull part left out; and indeed, with this omission, it is nearly big enough to hold all the rest. What brings the resemblance nearer is, that, as they imitate us, we, in our turn, imitate them. How many fine gentlemen do we owe to the stage! How many romantic lovers are mere Romeos in masquerade! How many soft bosoms have heaved with Juliet's sighs! They teach us when to laugh and when to weep, when to love and when to hate, upon principle and with a good grace. Wherever there is a playhouse the world will go on not amiss. The stage not only refines the manners, but it is the best teacher of morals, for it is the truest and most intelligible picture of life. It stamps the image of virtue on the mind by first softening the rude materials of which it is composed by a sense of pleasure. It regulates the passions by giving a loose to the imagination. It points out the selfish and depraved to our detestation, the amiable and generous to our admiration; and if it clothes the more seductive vices with the borrowed graces of wit and fancy, even those graces operate as a diversion to the coarser poison of experience and bad example, and often prevent or carry off the infection by inoculating the mind with a certain taste and elegance. To show how little we agree with the common declamations against the immoral tendency of the stage on this score, we will hazard a conjecture that the acting of the 'Beggar's Opera' a certain number of nights every year since it was first brought out has done more towards putting down the practice of highway robbery than all the gibbets that ever were erected. A person after seeing this piece is too deeply imbued with a sense of humanity, is in too good humour with himself and the rest of the world, to set about cutting throats or rifling pockets. Whatever makes a jest of vice leaves it too much a matter of indifference for any one in his senses to rush desperately

on his ruin for its sake. We suspect that just the contrary effect must be produced by the representation of 'George Barnwell,' which is too much in the style of the ordinary's sermon to meet with any better success. The mind, in such cases, instead of being deterred by the alarming consequences held out to it, revolts against the denunciation of them as an insult offered to its free-will, and, in a spirit of defiance, returns a practical answer to them by daring the worst that can happen. The most striking lesson ever read to levity and licentiousness is in the last act of 'The Inconstant,' where young Mirabel is preserved by the fidelity of his mistress, Orinda, in the disguise of a page, from the hands of assassins, into whose power he has been allured by the temptations of vice and beauty. There never was a rake who did not become in imagination a reformed man during the representation of the last trying scenes of this admirable comedy.

If the stage is useful as a school of instruction, it is no less so as a source of amusement. It is the source of the greatest enjoyment at the time, and a never-failing fund of agreeable reflection afterwards. The merits of a new play or of a new actor are always among the first topics of polite conversation. One way in which public exhibitions contribute to refine and humanise mankind is by supplying them with ideas and subjects of conversation and interest in common. The progress of civilisation is in proportion to the number of commonplaces current in society. For instance, if we meet with a stranger at an inn or in a stage-coach, who knows nothing but his own affairs, his shop, his customers, his farm, his pigs, his poultry, we can carry on no conversation with him on these local and personal matters; the only way is to let him have all the talk to himself. But if he has fortunately ever seen Mr. Liston act, this is an immediate topic of mutual conversation, and we agree together

the rest of the evening in discussing the merits of that inimitable actor, with the same satisfaction as in talking over the affairs of the most intimate friend.

If the stage thus introduces us familiarly to our contemporaries, it also brings us acquainted with former times. It is an interesting revival of past ages, manners, opinions, dresses, persons, and actions—whether it carries us back to the wars of York and Lancaster, or halfway back to the heroic times of Greece and Rome, in some translation from the French, or quite back to the age of Charles II. in the scenes of Congreve and of Etherege (the gay Sir George!)—happy age, when kings and nobles led purely ornamental lives; when the utmost stretch of a morning's study went no further than the choice of a sword-knot or the adjustment of a side-curl; when the soul spoke out in all the pleasing eloquence of dress; and beaux and belles, enamoured of themselves in one another's follies, fluttered like gilded butterflies in giddy mazes through the walks of St. James's Park!

A good company of comedians, a theatre royal judiciously managed, is your true Heralds' College—the only Antiquarian Society that is worth a rush. It is for this reason that there is such an air of romance about players, and that it is pleasanter to see them, even in their own persons, than any of the three learned professions. We feel more respect for John Kemble in a plain coat than for the Lord Chancellor on the woolsack. He is surrounded, to our eyes, with a greater number of imposing recollections; he is a more reverend piece of formality—a more complicated tissue of costume. We do not know whether to look upon this accomplished actor as Pierre, or King John, or Coriolanus, or Cato, or Leontes, or the Stranger. But we see in him a stately hieroglyphic of humanity, a living monument of departed greatness, a sombre comment on the rise and

fall of kings. We look after him till he is out of sight as we listen to a story of one of Ossian's heroes, to "a tale of other times!"

One of the most affecting things we know is to see a favourite actor take leave of the stage. We were present not long ago when Mr. Bannister quitted it. We do not wonder that his feelings were overpowered on the occasion: ours were nearly so too. We remembered him, in the first heyday of our youthful spirits, in 'The Prize,' in which he played so delightfully with that fine old croaker Suett, and Madame Storace—in the farce of 'My Grandmother,' in the 'Son-in-Law,' in *Autolycus*, and in *Scrub*, in which our satisfaction was at its height. At that time King, and Parsons, and Dodd, and Quick, and Edwin, were in the full vigour of their reputation, who are now all gone. We still feel the vivid delight with which we used to see their names in the playbills as we went along to the theatre. Bannister was one of the last of these that remained; and we parted with him as we should with one of our oldest and best friends. The most pleasant feature in the profession of a player, and which indeed is peculiar to it, is, that we not only admire the talents of those who adorn it, but we contract a personal intimacy with them. There is no class of society whom so many persons regard with affection as actors. We greet them on the stage; we like to meet them in the streets; they almost always recall to us pleasant associations; and we feel our gratitude excited without the uneasiness of a sense of obligation. The very gaiety and popularity, however, which surround the life of a favourite performer make the retiring from it a very serious business. It glances a mortifying reflection on the shortness of human life and the vanity of human pleasures. Something reminds us that "all the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players."

No. XXXIX.

On the Same.

It has been considered as the misfortune of first-rate talents for the stage that they leave no record behind them except that of vague rumour, and that the genius of a great actor perishes with him, "leaving the world no copy." This is a misfortune, or at least an unpleasant circumstance, to actors; but it is, perhaps, an advantage to the stage. It leaves an opening to originality. The stage is always beginning anew; the candidates for theatrical reputation are always setting out afresh, unencumbered by the affectation of the faults or the excellences of their predecessors. In this respect we should imagine that the average quantity of dramatic talent remains more nearly the same than that in any other walk of art. In no other instance do the complaints of the degeneracy of the moderns seem so unfounded as in this; and Colley Cibber's account of the regular decline of the stage, from the time of Shakspeare to that of Charles II. and from the time of Charles II. to the beginning of George II., appears quite ridiculous. The stage is a place where genius is sure to come upon its legs, in a generation or two at furthest. In the other arts, (as painting and poetry) it has been contended that what has been well done already, by giving rise to endless vapid imitations, is an obstacle to what might be done well hereafter; that the models or *chefs-d'œuvre* of art, where they are accumulated, choke up the path to excellence; and that the works of genius, where they can be rendered permanent and handed down from age to age, not only prevent, but render superfluous, future productions of the same kind. We have not, neither do we want, two Shakspeares, two Miltons, two

Raphaels, any more than we require two suns in the same sphere. Even Miss O'Neill stands a little in the way of our recollections of Mrs. Siddons. But Mr. Kean is an excellent substitute for the memory of Garrick, whom we never saw. When an author dies it is no matter, for his works remain. When a great actor dies there is a void produced in society, a gap which requires to be filled up. Who does not go to see Kean? Who, if Garrick were alive, would go to see him? At least one or the other must have quitted the stage. We have seen what a ferment has been excited among our living artists by the exhibition of the works of the old masters at the British Gallery. What would the actors say to it if, by any spell or power of necromancy, all the celebrated actors for the last hundred years could be made to appear again on the boards of Covent Garden and Drury Lane, for the last time, in all their most brilliant parts? What a rich treat to the town, what a feast for the critics, to go and see Betterton, and Booth, and Wilks, and Sandford, and Nokes, and Leigh, and Penkethman, and Bullock, and Estcourt, and Dogget, and Mrs. Barry, and Mrs. Montfort, and Mrs. Oldfield, and Mrs. Bracegirdle, and Mrs. Cibber, and Cibber himself, the prince of coxcombs, and Macklin, and Quin, and Rich, and Mrs. Clive, and Mrs. Pritchard, and Mrs. Abington, and Weston, and Shutter, and Garrick, and all the rest of those who "gladdened life, and whose deaths eclipsed the gaiety of nations"! We should certainly be there. We should buy a ticket for the season. We should enjoy *our hundred days* again. We should not lose a single night. We would not, for a great deal, be absent from Betterton's Hamlet or his Brutus, or from Booth's Cato, as it was first acted to the contending applause of Whigs and Tories. We should be in the first row when Mrs. Barry (who was kept by Lord Rochester, and with whom Otway was in

love) played Monimia or Belvidera; and we suppose we should go to see Mrs. Bracegirdle (with whom all the world was in love) in all her parts. We should then know exactly whether Penkethman's manner of picking a chicken and Bullock's mode of devouring asparagus answered to the ingenious account of them in the 'Tatler'; and whether Dogget was equal to Dowton—whether Mrs. Montfort¹ or Mrs. Abington was the finest lady—

¹ The following lively description of this actress is given by Cibber in his 'Apology':—

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

whether Wilks or Cibber was the best Sir Harry Wildair—whether Macklin was really “the Jew that Shakspeare drew,” and whether Garrick was, upon the whole, so great an actor as the world have made him out. Many people have a strong desire to pry into the secrets of futurity: for our own part, we should be satisfied if we had the power to recall the dead, and live the past over again as often as we pleased. Players, after all, have little reason to complain of their hard-earned, short-lived popularity. One thunder of applause from pit, boxes, and gallery, is equal to a whole immortality of posthumous fame; and when we hear an actor, whose modesty is equal to his merit, declare that he would like to see a dog wag his tail in approbation, what must he feel when he sees the whole house in a roar! Besides, Fame, as if their reputation had been entrusted to her alone, has been particularly careful of the renown of her theatrical favourites; she forgets one by one, and year by year, those who have been great lawyers, great statesmen, and great warriors in their day, but the name of Garrick still survives with the works of Reynolds and of Johnson.

Actors have been accused, as a profession, of being extravagant and dissipated. While they are said to be so, as a piece of common cant, they are likely to continue so. But there is a sentence in Shakspeare which should be stuck as a label in the mouths of our beadles and whippers-in of morality: “The web of our life is of a mingled yarn, good and ill together: our virtues would be proud if our faults whipped them not; and our vices would despair if they were not cherished by our virtues.” With respect to the extravagance of actors, as a traditional character, it is not to be wondered at. They

relieved from by her engagement to half a score visits, which she *swims* from him to make, with a promise to return in a twinkling.”
—*The Life of Colley Cibber*, p. 138.

live from hand to mouth: they plunge from want into luxury; they have no means of making money *breed*, and all professions that do not live by turning money into money, or have not a certainty of accumulating it in the end by parsimony, spend it. Uncertain of the future, they make sure of the present moment. This is not unwise. Chilled with poverty, steeped in contempt, they sometimes pass into the sunshine of fortune, and are lifted to the very pinnacle of public favour; yet even there cannot calculate on the continuance of success, but are, "like the giddy sailor on the mast, ready with every blast to topple down into the fatal bowels of the deep." Besides, if the young enthusiast who is smitten with the stage, and with the public as a mistress, were naturally a close *hunks*, he would become or remain a city clerk, instead of turning player. Again, with respect to the habit of convivial indulgence, an actor, to be a good one, must have a great spirit of enjoyment in himself, strong impulses, strong passions, and a strong sense of pleasure; for it is his business to imitate the passions, and to communicate pleasure to others. A man of genius is not a machine. The neglected actor may be excused if he drinks oblivion of his disappointments; the successful one, if he quaffs the applause of the world, and enjoys the friendship of those who are the friends of the favourites of fortune, in draughts of nectar. There is no path so steep as that of fame: no labour so hard as the pursuit of excellence. The intellectual excitement inseparable from those professions which call forth all our sensibility to pleasure and pain requires some corresponding physical excitement to support our failure, and not a little to allay the ferment of the spirits attendant on success. If there is any tendency to dissipation beyond this in the profession of a player, it is owing to the prejudices entertained against them—to that spirit of bigotry which, in a

neighbouring country, would deny actors Christian burial after their death, and to that cant of criticism which, in our own, slurs over their characters, while living, with a half-witted jest.

A London engagement is generally considered by actors as the *ne plus ultra* of their ambition, as "a consummation devoutly to be wished," as the great prize in the lottery of their professional life. But this appears to us, who are not in the secret, to be rather the prose termination of their adventurous career; it is the provincial commencement that is the poetical and truly enviable part of it. After that, they have comparatively little to hope or fear. "The wine of life is drunk, and but the lees remain." In London they become gentlemen, and the King's servants; but it is the romantic mixture of the hero and the vagabond that constitutes the essence of the player's life. It is the transition from their real to their assumed characters, from the contempt of the world to the applause of the multitude, that gives its zest to the latter, and raises them as much above common humanity at night, as in the daytime they are depressed below it. "Hurried from fierce extremes, by contrast made more fierce,"—it is rags and a flock-bed which give their splendour to a plume of feathers and a throne. We should suppose, that if the most admired actor on the London stage were brought to confession on this point, he would acknowledge that all the applause he had received from "brilliant and overflowing audiences" was nothing to the light-headed intoxication of unlooked-for success in a barn. In town, actors are criticised: in country-places, they are wondered at, or hooted at; it is of little consequence which, so that the interval is not too long between. For ourselves, we own that the description of the strolling player in 'Gil Blas,' soaking his dry crusts in the well by the roadside, presents to us a perfect picture of human felicity.

No. XL.

Why the Arts are not progressive : a Fragment.

It is often made a subject of complaint and surprise that the arts in this country and in modern times have not kept pace with the general progress of society and civilisation in other respects; and it has been proposed to remedy the deficiency by more carefully availing ourselves of the advantages which time and circumstances have placed within our reach, but which we have hitherto neglected—the study of the antique, the formation of academies, and the distribution of prizes.

First, the complaint itself, that the arts do not attain that progressive degree of perfection which might reasonably be expected from them, proceeds on a false notion; for the analogy appealed to in support of the regular advances of art to higher degrees of excellence totally fails; it applies to science, not to art. Secondly, the expedients proposed to remedy the evil by adventitious means are only calculated to confirm it. The arts hold immediate communication with nature, and are only derived from that source. When that original impulse no longer exists, when the inspiration of genius is fled, all the attempts to recall it are no better than the tricks of galvanism to restore the dead to life. The arts may be said to resemble Antæus in his struggle with Hercules, who was strangled when he was raised above the ground, and only revived and recovered his strength when he touched his mother earth.

Nothing is more contrary to the fact than the supposition that in what we understand by the *fine arts*, as painting and poetry, relative perfection is only the result of repeated efforts, and that what has been once well done constantly leads to something better. What is mechanical, reducible to rule, or capable of demonstration,

is progressive, and admits of gradual improvement: what is not mechanical or definite, but depends on genius, taste, and feeling, very soon becomes stationary or retrograde, and loses more than it gains by transfusion. The contrary opinion is, indeed, a common error, which has grown up, like many others, from transferring an analogy of one kind to something quite distinct, without thinking of the difference in the nature of the things, or attending to the difference of the results. For most persons, finding what wonderful advances have been made in biblical criticism, in chemistry, in mechanics, in geometry, astronomy, &c.—*i.e.*, in things depending on mere inquiry and experiment, or on absolute demonstration—have been led hastily to conclude that there was a general tendency in the efforts of the human intellect to improve by repetition, and in all other arts and institutions to grow perfect and mature by time. We look back upon the theological creed of our ancestors and their discoveries in natural philosophy with a smile of pity; science, and the arts connected with it, have all had their infancy, their youth, and manhood, and seem to have in them no principle of limitation or decay; and, inquiring no further about the matter, we infer, in the height of our self-congratulation and in the intoxication of our pride, that the same progress has been and will continue to be made in all other things which are the work of man. The fact, however, stares us so plainly in the face, that one would think the smallest reflection must suggest the truth and overturn our sanguine theories. The greatest poets, the ablest orators, the best painters, and the finest sculptors that the world ever saw, appeared soon after the birth of these arts, and lived in a state of society which was, in other respects, comparatively barbarous. Those arts which depend on individual genius and incommunicable power have always leaped at once from infancy to manhood, from the first rude

dawn of invention to their meridian height and dazzling lustre, and have in general declined ever after. This is the peculiar distinction and privilege of each, of science and of art: of the one, never to attain its utmost summit of perfection, and of the other, to arrive at it almost at once. Homer, Chaucer, Spenser, Shakspeare, Dante, and Ariosto (Milton alone was of a later age, and not the worse for it), Raphael, Titian, Michael Angelo, Correggio, Cervantes, and Boccaccio—all lived near the the beginning of their arts—perfected, and all but created them. These giant sons of genius stand, indeed, upon the earth, but they tower above their fellows, and the long line of their successors does not interpose anything to obstruct their view or lessen their brightness. In strength and stature they are unrivalled, in grace and beauty they have never been surpassed. In after-ages and more refined periods (as they are called), great men have arisen one by one, as it were by throes and at intervals; though in general the best of these cultivated and artificial minds were of an inferior order, as Tasso and Pope among poets, Guido and Vandyke among painters. But in the earliest stages of the arts, when the first mechanical difficulties had been got over and the language as it were acquired, they rose by clusters and in constellations, never to rise again.

The arts of painting and poetry are conversant with the world of thought within us and with the world of sense without us—with what we know and see and feel intimately. They flow from the sacred shrine of our own breasts, and are kindled at the living lamp of nature. The pulse of the passions assuredly beat as high, the depths and soundings of the human heart were as well understood, three thousand years ago, as they are at present; the face of nature and “the human face divine” shone as bright then as they have ever done. It is this light reflected by true genius on art that marks out its

path before it, and sheds a glory round the Muses' feet, like that which

"circled Una's angel face,
And made a sunshine in the shady place."

Nature is the soul of art. There is a strength in the imagination that reposes entirely on nature, which nothing else can supply. There is in the old poets and painters a vigour and grasp of mind, a full possession of their subject, a confidence and firm faith, a sublime simplicity, an elevation of thought, proportioned to their depth of feeling, an increasing force and impetus, which moves, penetrates, and kindles all that comes in contact with it, which seems, not theirs, but given to them. It is this reliance on the power of nature which has produced those masterpieces by the prince of painters, in which expression is all in all—where one spirit, that of truth, pervades every part, brings down heaven to earth, mingles cardinals and popes with angels and apostles, and yet blends and harmonises the whole by the true touches and intense feeling of what is beautiful and grand in nature. It was the same trust in nature that enabled Chaucer to describe the patient sorrow of Griselda; or the delight of that young beauty in the flower and the leaf, shrouded in her bower, and listening, in the morning of the year, to the singing of the nightingale, while her joy rises with the rising song, and gushes out afresh at every pause, and is borne along with the full tide of pleasure, and still increases and repeats and prolongs itself, and knows no ebb. It is thus that Boccaccio, in the divine story of the Hawk, has represented Frederigo Alberigi steadily contemplating his favourite falcon (the wreck and remnant of his fortune), and glad to see how fat and fair a bird she is, thinking what a dainty repast she would make for his mistress, who had deigned to visit him in his lowly cell.

So Isabella mourns over her pot of basile, and never asks for anything but that. So Lear calls out for his poor fool, and invokes the heavens, for they are old like him. So Titian impressed on the countenance of that young Neapolitan nobleman in the Louvre a look that never passed away. So Nicolas Poussin describes some shepherds wandering out in a morning of the spring, and coming to a tomb with this inscription, "I ALSO WAS AN ARCADIAN."

In general, it must happen in the first stages of the arts, that as none but those who had a natural genius for them would attempt to practise them, so none but those who have a natural taste for them would pretend to judge of or criticise them. This must be an incalculable advantage to the man of true genius, for it is no other than the privilege of being tried by his peers. In an age when connoisseurship had not become a fashion, when religion, war, and intrigue occupied the time and thoughts of the great, only those minds of superior refinement would be led to notice the works of art who had a real sense of their excellence, and in giving way to the powerful bent of his own genius the painter was most likely to consult the taste of his judges. He had not to deal with pretenders to taste, through vanity, affectation, and idleness. He had to appeal to the higher faculties of the soul; to that deep and innate sensibility to truth and beauty which required only a proper object to have its enthusiasm excited; and to that independent strength of mind which, in the midst of ignorance and barbarism, hailed and fostered genius wherever it met with it. Titian was patronised by Charles V., Count Castiglione was the friend of Raphael. These were true patrons and true critics; and as there were no others (for the world, in general, merely looked on and wondered), there can be little doubt that such a period of dearth of fictitious patronage would be the most

favourable to the full development of the greatest talents and the attainment of the highest excellence.

The diffusion of taste is not the same thing as the improvement of taste; but it is only the former of these objects that is promoted by public institutions and other artificial means. The number of candidates for fame and of pretenders to criticism is thus increased beyond all proportion, while the quantity of genius and feeling remains the same—with this difference, that the man of genius is lost in the crowd of competitors, who would never have become such but from encouragement and example; and that the opinion of those few persons whom nature intended for judges is drowned in the noisy suffrages of shallow smatterers in taste. The principle of universal suffrage, however applicable to matters of government which concern the common feelings and common interests of society, is by no means applicable to matters of taste, which can only be decided upon by the most refined understandings. The highest efforts of genius, in every walk of art, can never be properly understood by the generality of mankind: there are numberless beauties and truths which lie far beyond their comprehension. It is only as refinement and sublimity are blended with other qualities of a more obvious and grosser nature, that they pass current with the world. Taste is the highest degree of sensibility, or the impression made on the most cultivated and sensible of minds, as genius is the result of the highest powers both of feeling and invention. It may be objected that the public taste is capable of gradual improvement, because, in the end, the public do justice to works of the greatest merit. This is a mistake. The reputation ultimately, and often slowly, affixed to works of genius is stamped upon them by authority, not by popular consent or the common-sense of the world. We imagine that the admiration of the works of celebrated men has become common, because

the admiration of their names has become so. But does not every ignorant connoisseur pretend the same veneration and talk with the same vivid assurance of Michael Angelo, though he has never seen even a copy of any of his pictures, as if he had studied them accurately—merely because Sir Joshua Reynolds has praised him? Is Milton more popular now than when the 'Paradise Lost' was first published? Or does he not rather owe his reputation to the judgment of a few persons in every successive period, accumulating in his favour, and overpowering by its weight the public indifference? Why is Shakspeare popular? Not from his refinement of character or sentiment so much as from his power of telling a story, the variety and invention, the tragic catastrophe and broad farce of his plays. Spenser is not yet understood. Does not Boccaccio pass to this day for a writer of ribaldry, because his jests and lascivious tales were all that caught the vulgar ear, while the story of the Falcon is forgotten!



CONVERSATIONS
OF
JAMES NORTHCOTE, ESQ., R.A.
BY
WILLIAM HAZLITT.



NOTICE.

IN the sixteenth chapter of the 'Memoirs of William Hazlitt' (1867, 2 vols. 8vo.), there is a tolerably copious account of the circumstances which led to the original appearance of these 'Conversations' in the columns of the 'New Monthly Magazine' in 1826-7, and to the unfortunate and unpleasant consequences.

The 'Conversations' were printed in the magazine periodically under the title of 'Boswell Redivivus,' with an Introduction. They were collected into a volume in 1830, the Introduction being omitted. Notices of the work occur in the 'Examiner' of the 26th of September, 1830, and the 4th of May, 1833; in Leigh Hunt's 'Tatler' of the 28th of September, 1830; and in Tait's 'Edinburgh Magazine,' 1837, New Series, vol. iv. See Mr. Alexander Ireland's monograph, entitled 'List of the Writings of William Hazlitt and Leigh Hunt,' 1868, p. 71.

The names of many of the persons mentioned by initials in the Magazine series and in the edition of 1830 have now been supplied, so far as it was found practicable to do so, inasmuch as the motive for reserve or concealment seemed to exist no longer.

The writer in the 'Examiner' of the 4th of May, 1833, observes: "All the ill-nature in the book is Northcote's, and all, or almost all, the talent, Hazlitt's."

The author (for such Mr. Hazlitt may safely be presumed to have been to a large extent) quaintly says, in

the Introduction already referred to: "I have also introduced little incidental details that never happened, thus by lying to give a greater air of truth to the scene—an art understood by most historians. In a word, Mr. N. is only answerable for the wit, sense, and spirit that may be in these papers: I take all the dullness, impertinence, and malice upon myself. He has furnished the text: I fear I have often spoiled it by the commentary. Or, to give it a more favourable term, I have expanded him into a book, as another friend has continued the history of the Honeycombs down to the present period.¹ My Dialogues are done much upon the same principle as the 'Family Journal.' I shall be more than satisfied if they are thought to possess but half the spirit and verisimilitude." This is at least modestly and candidly put.

The quotation of the author's remarks upon his plan I have taken from the autograph MS. of 'Boswell Redivivus,' which I happen to possess—I am sorry to say, in an imperfect state. It is written in a remarkably neat and clear hand on small quarto paper.

W. C. H.

¹ Leigh Hunt, in his 'Tatler.' But the original Will Honeycomb was one of the heroes of the 'Spectator.'—Ed.

CONVERSATIONS.

Conversation the First.

CALLED on Mr. Northcote ; had, as usual, an interesting conversation. Spoke of some account of Lord Byron in a newspaper, which he thought must be like. "The writer says he did not wish to be thought merely a great poet. My sister asked, 'What then did he wish to be thought?' Why, I'll tell you ; he wished to be something different from everybody else. As to nobility, there were many others before him, so that he could not rely upon that ; and then as to poetry, there are so many wretched creatures that pretend to the name, that he looked at it with disgust ; he thought himself as distinct from them as the stars in the firmament. It comes to what Sir Joshua used to say, that a man who is at the head of his profession is above it. I remember being at Cosway's, where they were recommending some charitable institution for the relief of decayed artists, and I said I would not be of it, for it was holding out a temptation to idleness, and bringing those into the profession who were not fit for it. Some one who wanted to flatter me observed, 'I wonder you should talk in this manner, who are under such obligations to the art!' I answered immediately, 'If I am to take your compliment as I believe it is meant, I

might answer, that it is the art that is under obligation to me, not I to it. Do you suppose that Rubens, Titian, and others were under obligations to the art—they who raised it from obscurity, and made it all that it is? What would the art be without these? The world in general, as Miss Reynolds used to say with reference to her brother, think no more of a painter than they do of a fiddler, or a dancing-master, or a pianoforte-maker. And so of a poet. I have always said of that dispute about burying Lord Byron in Poets' Corner, that he would have resisted it violently if he could have known of it. Not but there were many very eminent names there with whom he would like to be associated, but then there were others that he would look down upon. If they had laid him there, he would have got up again. No; I'll tell you where they should have laid him. If they had buried him with the Kings in Henry the Seventh's Chapel he would have had no objection to that. One cannot alter the names of things, or the prejudices of the world respecting them, to suit one's convenience. I once went with Hoppner to the hustings to vote for Horne Tooke; and when they asked me what I was, I said, 'A painter.' At this Hoppner was very mad all the way home, and said I should have called myself a portrait-painter. I replied, the world had no time to trouble their heads about such distinctions. I afterwards asked Kemble, who agreed I was right, that he always called himself a player," &c.

I then observed I had been to the play with Godwin and his daughter, from the last of whom I had learnt something about Lord Byron's conversation. "What!" he said, "the beauty-daughter?" I said, "Do you think her a beauty, then?" "Why no, she rather thinks herself one; and yet there is something about her that would pass for such. Girls generally find out where to place themselves. She's clever, too, isn't she?"

“Oh, yes.” “What did she tell you about Lord Byron? Because I am curious to know all about him.” “I asked her if it was true that Lord Byron was so poor a creature as Hunt represented him. She at first misunderstood me, and said nothing could be meaner than he was, and gave some instances of it. I said, that was not what I meant; that I could believe anything of that kind of him; that whatever he took in his head he would carry to extremes, regardless of everything but the feeling of the moment; but that I could not conceive him to be in conversation, or in any other way, a flat and commonplace person.¹ ‘Oh, no,’ she said, ‘he was not. Hunt was hardly a fair judge. The other had not behaved well to him, and whenever they met, Hunt always began some kind of argument, and as Lord Byron could not argue they made but a bad piece of business of it, and it ended unsatisfactorily for all parties.’ I said, Hunt was too apt to put people to their trumps, or to force them upon doing, not what they could do, but what he thought he could do. He, however, not only gave his own opinion, but said Mr. Shelley could only just endure Lord Byron’s company. This seemed to me odd; for though he might be neither orator nor philosopher, yet anything he might say, or only stammer out in broken sentences, must be interesting; a glance, a gesture, would be full of meaning; or he would make one look about one like the tree in Virgil, that expressed itself by groans. To this she assented, and observed: ‘At least Shelley and myself found it so; for we generally sat with him till morning. He was perhaps a little moody and reserved at first; but by touching on certain strings he began to unbend, and gave the most extraordinary accounts of his own feelings and adventures that could be imagined. Besides, he was

¹ Mr. Moore has just written a book to prove the truth of the contrary opinion.

very handsome, and it was some satisfaction to look at a head at once so beautiful and expressive! I repeated what Hunt told me, that when he and Lord Byron met in Italy they did not know one another—he himself from having grown so thin, and Byron from having grown so fat, like a great chubby schoolboy—a circumstance which shocked his lordship so much that he took to drinking vinegar at a great rate, that he might recover the figure of the stripling god. I mentioned some things that Hunt had reported of Lord Byron; such as his saying, ‘He never cared for anything above a day,’—which might be merely in a fit of spleen, or from the spirit of contradiction, or to avoid an imputation of sentimentality.”—“Oh!” said Northcote, “that will never do, to take things literally that are uttered in a moment of irritation. You do not express your own opinion, but one as opposite as possible to that of the person that has provoked you. You get as far from a person you have taken a pique against as you can, just as you turn off the pavement to get out of the way of a chimney-sweeper; but it is not to be supposed you prefer walking in the mud, for all that. I have often been ashamed myself of speeches I have made in that way, which have been repeated to me as good things, when all I meant was that I would say anything sooner than agree to the nonsense or affectation I heard. You then set yourself against what you think a wrong bias in another, and are not like a wall, but a buttress—as far from the right line as your antagonist; and the more absurd he is the more so do you become. Before you attend to what any one says you should ask, Was he talking to a fool or a wise man? No; Hunt would make Lord Byron tributary to him, or would make him out to be nothing. I wonder you admire him as you do; and compare him to the wits of Charles II. It isn’t writing verses or painting a picture—that, as Sir Joshua

used to say, is what everybody can do ; but it is the doing something more than anybody else can do that entitles the poet or the artist to distinction, or makes the work live. But these people shut themselves up in a little circle of their own, and fancy all the world are looking at them." I said Hunt had been spoiled by flattery when he was young. "Oh, no!" he said, "it was not that. Sir Joshua was not spoiled by flattery, and yet he had as much of it as anybody need have ; but he was looking out to see what the world said of him, or thinking what figure he should make by the side of Correggio or Vandyke—not pluming himself on being a better painter than some one in the next street, or being surprised that the people at his own table spoke in praise of his pictures. It is a little mind that is taken up with the nearest object, or puffed up with immediate notice : to do anything great, we must look out of ourselves and see things upon a broader scale."

I told Northcote I had promised Hunt I would bring him to see him ; and then, said I, you would think as favourably of him as I do, and everybody else that knows him. "But you didn't say anything in my praise to induce him to come?" "Oh, yes, I exerted all my eloquence." "That wasn't the way. You should have said I was a poor creature, perhaps amusing for an hour or so, or curious to see, like a little dried mummy in a museum ; but he would not hear of your having two idols. Depend upon it he'll not come. Such characters only want to be surrounded with satellites or echoes ; and that is one reason they never improve. True genius, as well as wisdom, is ever docile, humble, vigilant, and ready to acknowledge the merit it seeks to appropriate from every quarter. That was Fuseli's mistake. Nothing was good enough for him that was not a repetition of himself. So once, when I told him of a very fine Vandyke, he made answer, 'And what is it? A little bit of

colour. I wouldn't go across the way to see it.' On my telling this to Sir Joshua, he said, 'Ay, he'll repent it—he'll repent it!' Wordsworth is another of those who would narrow the universe to their own standard. It is droll to see how hard you labour to prop him up, too, and seem to fancy he'll live." "I think he stands a better chance than Lord Byron. He has added one original feature to our poetry, which the other has not; and this you know, sir, by your own rule, gives him the best title." "Yes; but the little bit that he has added is not enough. None but great objects can be seen at a distance. If posterity looked at it with your eyes they might think his poetry curious and pretty. But consider how many Sir Walter Scotts, how many Lord Byrons, how many Dr. Johnsons there will be in the next hundred years—how many reputations will rise and sink in that time; and do you imagine, amid these conflicting and important claims, such trifles as descriptions of daisies and idiot-boys (however well they may be done) will not be swept away in the tide of time, like straws and weeds by the torrent? No; the world can only keep in view the principal and most perfect productions of human ingenuity; such works as Dryden's, Pope's, and a few others, that from their unity, their completeness, their polish, have the stamp of immortality upon them, and seem indestructible, like an element of nature. There are few of these; I fear your friend Wordsworth is not one."

I said I thought one circumstance against him was the want of popularity in his lifetime. Few people made much noise after their deaths who did not do so while they were living. Posterity could not be supposed to rake into the records of past times for the Illustrious Obscure, and only ratified or annulled the lists of great names handed down to them by the voice of common fame. Few people recovered from the neglect or obloquy of their contemporaries. The public would hardly be at

the pains to try the same cause twice over, or did not like to reverse its own sentence, at least when on the unfavourable side. There was Hobbes, for instance; he had a bad name while living, and it was of no use to think, at this time of day, of doing him justice. While the priests and politicians were tearing him in pieces for his atheism and arbitrary principles, Mr. Locke stole his philosophy from him; and I would fain see anyone restore it to the right owner. Quote the passages one by one, show that every principle of the modern metaphysical system was contained in Hobbes, and that all that succeeding writers have done was to deduce from Mr. Locke's imperfect concessions the very consequences, "armed all in proof," that already existed in an entire and unmutilated state in his predecessor, and you shall the next day hear Mr. Locke spoken of as the father of English philosophy as currently and confidently as if not the shadow of a doubt had ever been started on the subject. Mr. Hobbes, by the boldness and comprehensiveness of his views, had shocked the prejudices and drawn down upon his head the enmity of his contemporaries; Mr. Locke, by going more cautiously to work, and only admitting as much at a time as the public mind would bear, prepared the way for the rest of Mr. Hobbes' philosophy, and for a vast reputation for himself which nothing can impugn. *Stat nominis umbra.* The world are too far off to distinguish names from things, and call Mr. Locke the first of English philosophers, as they call a star by a particular name because others call it so. They also dislike to have their confidence in a great name destroyed, and fear that, by displacing one of their favoured idols from its niche in the Temple of Fame, they may endanger the whole building.

NORTHCOTE: "Why, I thought Hobbes stood as high as anybody. I have always heard him spoken of in that light. It is not his capacity that people dispute, but

they object to his character. The world will not encourage vice for their own sakes, and they give a casting-vote in favour of virtue. Mr. Locke was a modest, conscientious inquirer after truth, and the world had the sagacity to see this and to be willing to give him a hearing; the other, I conceive, was a bully, and a bad man into the bargain, and they did not want to be bullied into truth or to sanction licentiousness. This was unavoidable, for the desire of knowledge is but one principle of the mind. It was the same with Tom Paine. Nobody can deny that he was a very fine writer and a very sensible man; but he flew in the face of a whole generation, and no wonder that they were too much for him, and that his name is becoming a byword with such multitudes for no other reason than that he did not care what offence he gave them by contradicting all their most inveterate prejudices. If you insult a roomful of people you will be kicked out of it. So neither will the world at large be insulted with impunity. If you tell a whole country that they are fools and knaves, they will not return the compliment by crying you up as the pink of wisdom and honesty. Nor will those who come after be very apt to take up your quarrel. It was not so much Paine's being a Republican or an unbeliever, as the manner in which he brought his opinions forward (which showed self-conceit and want of feeling), that subjected him to obloquy. People did not like the temper of the man; it falls under the article of moral virtue. There are some reputations that are great merely because they are amiable. There is Dr. Watts; look at the encomiums passed on him by Dr. Johnson: and yet to what, according to his statement, does his merit amount? Why, only to this: that he did that best which none can do well, and employed his talents uniformly for the welfare of mankind. He was a good man, and the voice of the public has given him credit for being a great one. The world

may be forced to do homage to great talents, but they only bow willingly to these when they are joined with benevolence and modesty; nor will they put weapons into the hands of the bold and unprincipled sophist to be turned against their own interests and wishes."

I said there was a great deal in the manner of bringing truth forward to influence its reception with the reader, for not only did we resent unwelcome novelties advanced with an insolent and dogmatical air, but we were even ready to give up our favourite notions, when we saw them advocated in a harsh and intolerant manner by those of our own party, sooner than submit to the pretensions of blindfold presumption. If anything could make me a bigot it would be the arrogance of the freethinker; if anything could make me a slave it would be the sordid sneering fopperies and sweeping clauses of the liberal party. Renegadoes are generally made so, not by the overtures of their adversaries, but by disgust at the want of candour and moderation in their friends. Northcote replied: "To be sure there was nothing more painful than to have one's own opinions disfigured or thrust down one's throat by impertinence and folly; and that once when a pedantic coxcomb was crying up Raphael to the skies, he could not help saying, 'If there was nothing in Raphael but what *you* can see in him, we should not now have been talking of him!'"

Conversation the Second.

WHEN I called, I found Mr. Northcote painting a portrait of himself. Another stood on an easel. He asked me which I thought most like? I said the one he was about was the best, but not good enough. It looks like a physician or a member of Parliament, but it ought to look like something more—a cardinal or a Spanish

inquisitor. I do not think you ought to proceed in painting your own face as you do with some others—that is, by trying to improve upon it: you have only to make it like; for the more like it is, the better it will be as a picture. “Oh! he tried to make it like.” I found I had got upon a wrong scent. Mr. Northcote, as an artist, was not bound to have a fine head, but he was bound to paint one. I am always a very bad courtier: and think of what strikes me, and not of the effect upon others. So I once tried to compliment a very handsome *brunette*, by telling her how much I admired dark beauties. “Oh!” said Northcote, “you should have told her she was fair. She did not like *black*, though you did!” After all, there is a kind of selfishness in this plain-speaking. In the present case, it sets us wrong the whole morning, and I had to stay longer than usual to recover the old track. I was continually in danger of oversetting a stand with a small looking-glass, which Northcote particularly cautioned me not to touch; and every now and then he was prying into the glass by stealth, to see if the portrait was like. He had on a green velvet cap, and looked very like Titian.

Northcote, then turning round, said: “I wanted to ask you about a speech you made the other day. You said you thought you could have made something of portrait, but that you never could have painted history. What did you mean by that?”—“Oh! all I meant was, that sometimes, when I see a fine Titian or Rembrandt, I feel as if I could have done something of the same kind with the proper pains, but I have never the same feeling with respect to Raphael. My admiration is there utterly unmixed with emulation or regret. In fact, I see what is before me, but I have no invention.”

NORTHCOTE: “You do not know till you try. There is not so much difference as you imagine. Portrait often runs into history, and history into portrait, without our

knowing it. Expression is common to both, and that is the chief difficulty. The greatest history-painters have always been able portrait-painters. How should a man paint a thing in motion if he cannot paint it still? But the great point is to catch the prevailing look and character: if you are master of this, you can make almost what use of it you please. If a portrait has force, it will do for history; and if history is well painted, it will do for portrait. This is what gave dignity to Sir Joshua: his portraits had always that determined air and character that you know what to think of them as if you had seen them engaged in the most decided action. So Fuseli said of Titian's picture of Paul III. and his two nephews, 'That is true history!' Many of the groups in the Vatican, by Raphael, are only collections of fine portraits. That is why West, Barry, and others pretended to despise portrait—because they could not do it, and it would only expose their want of truth and nature. No! if you can give the *look*, you need not fear painting history. Yet how difficult that is, and on what slight causes it depends! It is not enough that it is seen, unless it is at the same time felt. How odd it seems, that often while you are looking at a face, and though you perceive no difference in the features, yet you find they have undergone a total alteration of expression! What a fine hand then is required to trace what the eye can scarcely be said to distinguish! So I used to contend against Sir Joshua, that Raphael had triumphed over this difficulty in 'The Miracle of Bolsena,' where he has given the internal blush of the unbelieving priest at seeing the water turned into blood: the colour to be sure assists, but the look of stupefaction and shame is also there in the most marked degree. Sir Joshua said it was my fancy, but I am as convinced of it as I am of my existence; and the proof is, that otherwise he has done nothing. There is no story without it; but he has trusted to the expression to tell

the story, instead of leaving the expression to be made out from the story. I have often observed the same thing in myself, when I have blamed any one as mildly as I could, not using any violence of language, nor indeed intending to hurt; and I have afterwards wondered at the effect; my sister has said, 'You should have seen your look,' but I did not know of it myself."—I said, "If you had, it would have been less felt by others. An instance of this made me laugh not long ago. I was offended at a waiter for very ill behaviour at an inn at Calais; and while he was out of the room I was putting on as angry a look as I could; but I found this sort of previous rehearsal to no purpose. The instant he returned into the room, I gave him a look that I felt made it unnecessary to tell him what I thought."—"To be sure, he would see it immediately."—"And don't you think, sir," I said, "that this explains the difficulty of fine acting, and the difference between good acting and bad—that is, between face-making or mouthing and genuine passion? To give the last, an actor must possess the highest truth of imagination, and must undergo an entire revolution of feeling. Is it wonderful that so many prefer an artificial to a natural actor, the mask to the man, the pompous pretension to the simple expression? Not at all; the wonder rather is that people in general judge so right as they do, when they have such doubtful grounds to go upon; and they would not, but they trust less to rules or reasoning than to their feelings."

NORTHCOTE: "You must come to that at last. The common-sense of mankind (whether a good or a bad one) is the best criterion you have to appeal to. You necessarily impose upon yourself in judging of your own works. Whenever I am trying at an expression I hang up the picture in the room and ask people what it means, and if they guess right I think I have succeeded. You yourself see the thing as you wish it, or according to

what you have been endeavouring to make it. When I was doing the figures of Argyll in prison and of his enemy who comes and finds him asleep, I had a great difficulty to encounter in conveying the expression of the last—indeed I did it from myself—I wanted to give a look of mingled remorse and admiration; and when I found that others saw this look in the sketch I had made, I left off. By going on, I might lose it again. There is a point of felicity which, whether you fall short of or have gone beyond it, can only be determined by the effect on the unprejudiced observer. You cannot be always with your picture to explain it to others; it must be left to speak for itself. Those who stand before their pictures and make fine speeches about them, do themselves a world of harm; a painter should cut out his tongue, if he wishes to succeed. His language addresses itself, not to the ear, but to the eye. He should stick to that as much as possible. Sometimes you hit off an effect without knowing it. Indeed the happiest results are frequently the most unconscious. Boaden was here the other day. You don't remember Henderson, I suppose?"—"No."—"He says his reading was the most perfect he ever knew. He thought himself a pretty good reader and a tolerable mimic—that he succeeded tolerably well in imitating Kemble, Mrs. Siddons, and others; but that there was something in Henderson's reading¹ so superior to all the rest that he never could come anything near it. I told him, 'You don't know that: if you were to hear him now you might think him even worse than your own imitation of him.' We deceive ourselves as much with respect to the excellences of others as we do with respect to our own, by dwelling on a favourite idea. In order to judge you should ask some

¹ For some account of John Henderson's appearance and abilities see Geneste, 'Some Account of the English Stage,' vol. vi. pp. 386-409.—Ed.

one else who remembered him. I spoke to him about Kemble, whose life he has been lately writing. I said, when he sat to me for the 'Richard III. meeting the Children,' he lent me no assistance whatever in the expression I wished to give, but remained quite immovable, as if he were sitting for an ordinary portrait. Boaden said, this was his way: he never put himself to any exertion except in his professional character. If any one wanted to know his idea of a part or of a particular passage his reply always was, 'You must come and see me do it.'

Northcote then spoke of "the boy," as he always calls him—Master Betty. He asked if I had ever seen him act, and I said, "Yes, and was one of his admirers." He answered, "Oh, yes! it was such a beautiful effusion of natural sensibility; and then that graceful play of the limbs in youth gave such an advantage over every one about him. Humphreys, the artist, said: 'He had never seen the little Apollo off the pedestal before.' You see the same thing in the boys at Westminster School. But no one was equal to him." Mr. Northcote alluded with pleasure to his unaffected manners when a boy, and mentioned, as an instance of his simplicity, his saying, one day: "If they admire me so much, what would they say to Mr. Harley?" (a tragedian in the same strolling company with himself). We then spoke of his acting since he was grown up. Northcote said, "He went to see him one night with Fuseli, in 'Alexander the Great,' and that he observed, coming out, they could get nobody to do it better." "Nor so well," said Fuseli. A question being put—"Why, then, could he not succeed at present?" "Because," said Northcote, "the world will never admire twice. The first surprise was excited by his being a boy, and when that was over nothing could bring them back again to the same point—not though he had turned out a second Roscius. They had taken a surfeit of their idol, and wanted something new. No-

thing he could do could astonish them so much the second time as the youthful prodigy had done the first time, and therefore he must always appear as a foil to himself, and seem comparatively flat and insipid. Garrick kept up the fever of public admiration as long as anybody, but when he returned to the stage after a short absence no one went to see him. It was the same with Sir Joshua; latterly Romney drew all his sitters from him. So they say the Exhibition is worse every year, though it is just the same—there are the same subjects and the same painters. Admiration is a forced tribute, and to extort it from mankind—envious and ignorant as they are—they must be taken unawares.” I remarked, “It was the same in books; if an author was only equal to himself, he was always said to fall off. The blow, to make the same impression, must be doubled, because we are prepared for it. We give him the whole credit of his first successful production because it was altogether unexpected; but if he does not rise as much above himself in the second instance as the first was above nothing, we are disappointed, and say he has fallen off, for our feelings are not equally excited.” “Just,” said Northcote, “as in painting a portrait; people are surprised at the first sitting, and wonder to see how you have got on; but I tell them they will never see so much done again; for at first there was nothing but a blank canvas to work upon, but afterwards you have to improve upon your own design, and this at every step becomes more and more difficult. It puts me in mind of an observation of Opie’s, that it was wrong to suppose that people went on improving to the last in any art or profession; on the contrary, they put their best ideas into their first works, which they have been qualifying themselves to undertake all their lives before; and what they gain afterwards in correctness and refinement they lose in originality and vigour.” I assented to this as a very

striking and, as I thought, sound remark. He said: "I wish you had known Opie; he was a very original-minded man. Mrs. Siddons used to say, 'I like to meet Mr. Opie, for then I always hear something I did not know before.' I do not say that he was always right, but he always put your thoughts into a new track that was worth following. I was very fond of Opie's conversation; and I remember once, when I was expressing my surprise at his having so little of the Cornish dialect, 'Why,' he said, 'the reason is, I never spoke at all till I knew you and Wolcott.' He was a true genius. Mr. — is a person of great judgment, but I do not learn so much from him. I think this is the difference between sense and genius: a man of genius judges for himself, and you hear nothing but what is original from him; but a man of sense, or with a knowledge of the world, judges as others do, and he is on this account the safest guide to follow, though not, perhaps, the most instructive companion. I recollect Miss Reynolds making nearly the same observation. She said, 'I don't know how it is; I don't think Miss C—— a very clever woman, and yet, whenever I am at a loss about anything, I always go to consult her, and her advice is almost sure to be right.' The reason was, that this lady, instead of taking her own view of the subject, as a person of superior capacity might have been tempted to do, considered only what light others would view it in, and pronounced her decision according to the prevailing rules and maxims of the world. When old Dr. Mudge¹ married his housemaid, Sterne, on hearing of it, exclaimed: 'Ay, I always thought him a genius, and now I am sure of it.' The truth was (and this was what Sterne meant), that Dr. Mudge saw a thousand virtues in this woman which

¹ The friend of Sir Joshua Reynolds. See 'Memoirs of W. H.' 1867, vol. ii. p. 200 (where the name is, by a printer's error, spelt Modge).—ED.

nobody else did, and could give a thousand reasons for his choice that no one about him had the wit to answer ; but nature took its usual course, and the event turned out as he had been forewarned, according to the former experience of the world in such matters. His being in the wrong did not prove him to be less a genius, though it might impeach his judgment or prudence. He was, in fact, wiser, and saw more of the matter, than any one of his neighbours who might advise him to the contrary ; but he was not so wise as the collective experience or common-sense of mankind on the subject, which his more cautious friends merely echoed. It is only the man of genius who has any right or temptation to make a fool of himself by setting up his own unsupported decision against that of the majority. He feels himself superior to any individual in the crowd, and therefore rashly undertakes to act in defiance of the whole mass of prejudice and opinion opposed to him. It is safe and easy to travel in a stage-coach from London to Salisbury ; but it would require great strength, boldness, and sagacity to go in a straight line across the country."

Conversation the Third.

NORTHCOTE began by saying, " You don't much like Sir Joshua, I know ; but I think that is one of your prejudices. If I was to compare him with Vandyke and Titian, I should say that Vandyke's portraits are like pictures (very perfect ones no doubt), Sir Joshua's like the reflection in a looking-glass, and Titian's like the real people. There is an atmosphere of light and shade about Sir Joshua's which neither of the others have in the same degree, together with a vagueness that gives them a visionary and romantic character, and makes

them seem like dreams or vivid recollections of persons we have seen. I never could mistake Vandyke's for anything but pictures, and I go up to them to examine them as such; when I see a fine Sir Joshua, I can neither suppose it to be a mere picture nor a man, and I almost involuntarily turn back to ascertain if it is not some one behind me reflected in the glass; when I see a Titian I am riveted to it, and I can no more take my eye off from it than if it were the very individual in the room. That," he said, "is, I think, peculiar to Titian, that you feel on your good behaviour in the presence of his keen-looking heads, as if you were before company." I mentioned that I thought Sir Joshua more like Rembrandt than like either Titian or Vandyke: he enveloped objects in the same brilliant haze of a previous mental conception. "Yes," he said; "but though Sir Joshua borrowed a great deal, he drew largely from himself; or rather, it was a strong and peculiar feeling of nature working in him and forcing its way out in spite of all impediments, and that made whatever he touched his own. In spite of his deficiency in drawing and his want of academic rules and a proper education, you see this breaking out like a devil in all his works. It is this that has stamped him. There is a charm in his portraits, a mingled softness and force, a grasping at the end with nothing harsh or unpleasant in the means, that you will find nowhere else. He may go out of fashion for a time; but you must come back to him again, while a thousand imitators and academic triflers are forgotten. This proves him to have been a real genius. The same thing, however, made him a very bad master. He knew nothing of rules, which are alone to be taught, and he could not communicate his instinctive feeling of beauty or character to others. I learnt nothing from him while I was with him, and none of his scholars (if I may except myself) ever made any figure at all. He

only gave us his pictures to copy. Sir Joshua undoubtedly got his first ideas of the art from Gandy,¹ though he lost them under Hudson; but he easily recovered them afterwards. That is a picture of Gandy's there (pointing to a portrait of a little girl). If you look into it you will find the same broken surface and varying outline that was so marked a characteristic of Sir Joshua. There was nothing he hated so much as a distinct outline, as you see it in Mengs and the French School. Indeed, he ran into the opposite extreme; but it is one of the great beauties of art to show it waving and retiring, now losing and then recovering itself again, as it always does in nature, without any of that stiff edgy appearance which only pedants affect or admire. Gandy was never out of Devonshire; but his portraits are common there. His father was patronised by the Duke of Ormond, and one reason why the son never came out of his native county was, that when the Duke of Ormond was implicated in the rebellion to restore the Pretender in 1715, he affected to be thought too deep in his Grace's confidence and a person of too much consequence to venture up to London, so that he chose to remain a voluntary exile."

I asked Northcote if he remembered the name of Stringer at the Academy, when he first came up to town. He said he did, and that he drew very well, and once put the figure for him in a better position to catch the foreshortening. He inquired if I knew anything about him, and I said I had once vainly tried to copy a head of a youth by him admirably drawn and coloured, and in which he had attempted to give the effect of double vision by a second outline accompanying the contour of the face and features. Though the design might not be in good taste, it was executed in a way that made it next to impossible to imitate. I called on

¹ James Gandy died at Exeter in 1689, and is considered to have been a pupil of Vandyke. See Walpole's 'Anecdotes of Painting,' edit. 1862, p. 350, *note*.—ED.

him afterwards at his house at Knutsford, where I saw some spirited comic sketches in an unfinished state,¹ and a capital female by Cignani. All his skill and love of art had, I found, been sacrificed to his delight in Cheshire ale and the company of country squires. Tom Kershaw of Manchester used to say that he would rather have been Dan Stringer than Sir Joshua Reynolds at twenty years of age. Kershaw, like other north-country critics, thought more of the executive power than of the *æsthetical* faculty; forgetting that it signifies comparatively little how well you execute a thing if it is not worth executing. In consequence of something that was said of the egotism of artists, he observes: "I am sometimes thought cold and cynical myself; but I hope it is not from any such overweening opinion of myself. I remember once going with Wilkie to Angerstein's, and because I stood looking and said nothing, he seemed dissatisfied, and said, 'I suppose you are too much occupied with admiring to give me your opinion?' And I answered hastily, 'No, indeed! I was saying to myself, And is this all that the art can do?' But this was not, I am sure, an expression of triumph, but of mortification at the defects which I could not help observing, even in the most accomplished works. I knew they were the best, but I could have wished them to be a hundred times better than they were."

Northcote mentioned a conceited painter of the name of Edwards, who went with Romney to Rome, and when they got into the Sistine Chapel, turning round to him, said, "'Egad, George! we're bit!" He then spoke of his own journey to Rome, of the beauty of the climate, of the manners of the people, of the imposing effect of the Roman Catholic religion, of its favourableness to the fine arts, of the churches full of pictures, of the manner in which he passed his time, studying and looking into all

¹ One of 'The Blacksmith Swallowing the Tailor's News,' from Shakspeare.

the rooms in the Vatican. He had no fault to find with Italy, and no wish to leave it. "Gracious and sweet was all he saw in her!" As he talked, he looked as if he saw the different objects pass before him, and his eye glittered with familiar recollections. He said Raphael did not scorn to look out of himself or to be beholden to others. He took whole figures from Masaccio to enrich his designs, because all he wanted was to advance the art and ennoble human nature. After he saw Michael Angelo he improved in freedom and breadth; and if he had lived to see Titian, he would have done all he could to avail himself of his colouring. All his works are an effusion of the sweetness and dignity of his own character. He did not know how to make a picture; but for the conduct of the fable and the development of passion and feeling (noble but full of tenderness) there is nobody like him. This is why Hogarth can never come into the lists. He does not lift us above ourselves. Our curiosity may be gratified by seeing what men are, but our pride must be soothed by seeing them made better. Why else is Milton preferred to 'Hudibras' but because the one aggrandises our notions of human nature and the other degrades it? Who will make any comparison between a Madonna of Raphael and a drunken prostitute by Hogarth? Do we not feel more respect for an inspired Apostle than for a blackguard in the streets? Raphael points out the highest perfection of which the human form and faculties are capable, and Hogarth their lowest degradation or most wretched perversion. Look at his attempts to paint the good or beautiful, and you see how faint the impressions of these were in his mind. Yet these are what every one must wish to cherish in his own bosom, and must feel most thankful for to those who lend him the powerful assistance of their unrivalled conceptions of true grandeur and beauty. Sir Joshua strove to do this in his portraits, and this it was that

raised him in public estimation; for we all wish to get rid of defects and peculiarities as much as we can. He then said of Michael Angelo, he did not wonder at the fame he had acquired. You are to consider the state of the art before his time, and that he burst through the mean and little manner even of such men as Leonardo da Vinci and Pietro Perugino, and through the trammels that confined them; and gave all at once a gigantic breadth and expansion that had never been seen before, so that the world were struck with it as with a display of almost supernatural power, and have never ceased to admire since. We are not to compare it with the examples of art that have followed since, and that would never have existed but for him, but with those that preceded it. He found fault with the figure of the flying monk in the 'St. Peter Martyr,' as *fluttering* and theatrical, but agreed with me in admiring this picture, and in my fondness for Titian in general. He mentioned his going with Prince, Hoare, and Day to take leave of some fine portraits of Titian's that hung in a dark corner of a gallery at Naples; and as Day looked at them for the last time with tears in his eyes, he said, "Ah! he was a fine old *mouser!*" I said I had repeated this expression (which I had heard him allude to before) somewhere in writing, and was surprised that people did not know what to make of it. Northcote said: "Why, that is exactly what I should have thought. There is the difference between writing and speaking. In writing, you address the average quantity of sense or information in the world; in speaking, you pick your audience, or at least know what they are prepared for, or else previously explain what you think necessary. You understand the epithet because you have seen a great number of Titian's pictures, and know that catlike, watchful, penetrating look he gives to all his faces, which nothing else expresses, perhaps, so well as the

phrase Day made use of. But the world in general know nothing of this; all they know or believe is, that Titian is a great painter like Raphael, or any other famous person. Suppose any one was to tell you, Raphael was a fine old mouser; would you not laugh at this as absurd? And yet the other is equally nonsense or incomprehensible to them. No, there is a limit, a conversational licence, which you cannot carry into writing. There is one difficulty I have in writing: I do not know the point of familiarity at which I am to stop; and yet I believe I have ideas, and you say I know how to express myself in talking."

I inquired if he remembered much of Johnson, Burke, and that set of persons. He said, "Yes, a good deal," as he had often seen them. Burke came into Sir Joshua's painting-room one day when Northcote, who was then a young man, was sitting for one of the children in 'Count Ugolino.' (It is the one in profile, with the hand to the face.) He was introduced as a pupil of Sir Joshua's, and on his looking up, Mr. Burke said, "Then I see that Mr. Northcote is not only an artist, but has a head that would do for Titian to paint." Goldsmith and Burke had often violent disputes about politics, the one being a staunch Tory, and the other at that time a Whig and outrageous anti-courtier. One day he came into the room when Goldsmith was there, full of ire and abuse against the late King, and went on in such a torrent of the most unqualified invective that Goldsmith threatened to leave the room. The other however persisted, and Goldsmith went out, unable to bear it any longer. So much for Mr. Burke's pretended consistency and uniform loyalty! When Northcote first came to Sir Joshua he wished very much to see Goldsmith; and one day Sir Joshua, on introducing him, asked why he had been so anxious to see him. "Because," said Northcote, "he is a *notable*¹ man." This expression, "notable," in its ordinary

¹ That is, a *remarkable* man.

sense, was so contrary to Goldsmith's character, that they both burst out a-laughing very heartily. Goldsmith was two thousand pounds in debt at the time of his death, which was hastened by his chagrin and distressed circumstances; and when 'She Stoops to Conquer' was performed, he was so choked all dinner-time that he could not swallow a mouthful. A party went from Sir Joshua's to support it. The present title was not fixed upon till that morning. Northcote went with Ralph, Sir Joshua's man, into the gallery to see how it went off; and after the second act there was no doubt of its success.

Northcote says people had a great notion of the literary parties at Sir Joshua's. He once asked Lord B—— to dine with Dr. Johnson and the rest; but though a man of rank and also of good information, he seemed as much alarmed at the idea as if you had tried to force him into one of the cages at Exeter 'Change. Northcote remarked that he thought people of talents had their full share of admiration. He had seen young ladies of quality—Lady Marys and Lady Dorothis—peeping into a room where Mrs. Siddons was sitting, with all the same timidity and curiosity as if it were some preternatural being—he was sure, more than if it had been the Queen. He then made some observations on the respect paid to rank, and said, "However ridiculous it might seem, 't was no more than the natural expression of the hig^h est respect in other cases. For instance, as to that of bowing out of the King's presence backwards, would you not do the same if you were introduced to Dr. Johnson for the first time? You would contrive not to turn your back upon him till you were out of the room." He said, "You violent politicians make more rout about royalty than it is worth; it is only the highest place, and somebody must fill it, no matter who. Neither do the persons themselves think so much of it as you imagine; they are glad to get into privacy as much as they can. Nor is it

a sinecure. The late King, I have been told, used often to have to sign his name to papers, and do nothing else for three hours together, till his fingers fairly ached, and then he would take a walk in the garden and come back to repeat the same drudgery for three hours more. So, when they told Louis XV. that if he went on with his extravagance he would bring about a revolution, and be sent over to England with a pension, he merely asked, 'Do you think the pension would be a pretty good one?'

He noticed the 'Memoirs of Cardinal de Retz,' and praised them for their extreme vivacity and great insight into human nature. Once when the mob had besieged the palace, and the cardinal was obliged to go and appease them, a brickbat was flung at him and knocked him down; and one of the assailants presenting a bayonet at his throat, he suddenly called out, "Oh, you wretch! if your father could have seen you in this barbarous action what would he have said?" The man immediately withdrew, though, says the cardinal, "I knew no more of his father than the babe unborn." Northcote then adverted to the talent of players for drollery and sudden shifts and expedients, and said that, by living in an element of comic invention, they imbibed a portion of it. He repeated that jest of F. Reynolds, who filled up the blank in a militia paper that was sent him with the description, "Old, lame, and a coward;" and another story told of Matthews the comedian, who, being left in a room with an old gentleman and a little child, and the former putting the question to it, "Well, my dear, which do you like best, the dog or the cat?" by exercising his powers of ventriloquism, made the child seem to answer, "I don't care a d——n for either," to the utter confusion of the old gentleman, who immediately took the father to task for bringing up his son in such profaneness and total want of common humanity.

He then returned to the question of the inconsistent

and unreasonable expectations of mankind as to their success in different pursuits, and answered the common complaint, "What a shame it was that Milton only got thirteen pounds nine shillings and sixpence for 'Paradise Lost'!" He said, "Not at all; he did not write it to get money; he had gained what he had proposed by writing it—not thirteen pounds nine shillings and sixpence, but an immortal reputation. When Dr. Johnson was asked why he was not invited out to dine as Garrick was, he answered, as if it was a triumph to him, 'Because great lords and ladies don't like to have their mouths stopped.' But who *does* like to have their mouths stopped? Did he, more than others? People like to be amused, in general; but they did not give him the less credit for wisdom and a capacity to instruct them by his writings. In like manner, it has been said that the King only sought one interview with Dr. Johnson; whereas if he had been a buffoon or a sycophant he would have asked for more. No, there was nothing to complain of; it was a compliment paid by rank to letters, and once was enough. The King was more afraid of this interview than Dr. Johnson was, and went to it as a schoolboy to his task. But he did not want to have this trial repeated every day, nor was it necessary. The very jealousy of his self-love marked his respect; and if he had thought less of Dr. Johnson he would have been more willing to risk the encounter. They had each their place to fill, and would best preserve their self-respect, and perhaps their respect for each other, by remaining in their proper sphere. So they make an outcry about the Prince leaving Sheridan to die in absolute want. He had left him long before; was he to send every day to know if he was dying? These things cannot be helped without exacting too much of human nature." I agreed to this view of the subject, and said I did not see why literary people

should repine if they met with their deserts in their own way, without expecting to get rich ; but that they often got nothing for their pains but unmerited abuse and party obloquy. " Oh, it is not party spite," said he, " but the envy of human nature. Do you think to distinguish yourself with impunity ? Do you imagine that your superiority will be delightful to others, or that they will not strive all they can, and to the last moment, to pull you down ? I remember myself once saying to Opie, how hard it was upon the poor author or player to be hunted down for not succeeding in an innocent and laudable attempt, just as if they had committed some heinous crime ; and he answered, ' They *have* committed the greatest crime in the eyes of mankind—that of pretending to a superiority over them.' Do you think that party abuse and the running-down of particular authors is anything new ? Look at the manner in which Pope and Dryden were assailed by a set of reptiles. Do you believe the modern periodicals had not their prototypes in the party publications of that day ? Depend upon it, what you take for political cabal and hostility is, nine parts in ten, private pique and malice oozing out through those authorized channels."

We now got into a dispute about nicknames ; and Hume coming in and sitting down at my elbow, my old pugnacious habit seemed to return upon me. Northcote contended that they had always an appropriate meaning ; and I said their whole force consisted in their having absolutely none but the most vague and general. " Why," said Northcote, " did my father give me the name of ' Fat Jack,' but because I was lean ?" He gave an instance, which I thought made against himself, of a man at Plymouth, a baker by profession, who had got the name of Tiddydoll, he could not tell how. " Then," said I, " it was a name without any sense or meaning." " Be that as it may," said Northcote, " it almost drove

him mad. The boys called after him in the street, besieged his shop-windows; even the soldiers took it up, and marched to parade beating time with their feet and repeating 'Tiddydoll,' 'Tiddydoll,' as they passed by his door. He flew out upon them at the sound with inextinguishable fury, and was knocked down and rolled in the kennel, and got up in an agony of rage and shame, his white clothes covered all over with mud. A gentleman, a physician in the neighbourhood, one day called him in and remonstrated with him on the subject. He advised him to take no notice of his persecutors. 'What,' he said, 'does it signify? Suppose they were to call me Tiddydoll?' 'There,' said the man, 'you called me so yourself; you only sent for me in to insult me!' and, after heaping every epithet of abuse upon him, flew out of the house in a most ungovernable passion." I told Northcote this was just the thing I meant. Even if a name had confessedly no meaning, by applying it constantly and by way of excellence to another, it seemed as if he must be an abstraction of insignificance; whereas if it pointed to any positive defect or specific charge, it was at least limited to the one, and you stood a chance of repelling the other. The virtue of a nickname consisted in its being indefinable, and baffling all proof or reply. When Hume was gone Northcote extolled his proficiency in Hebrew, which astonished me not a little, as I had never heard of it. I said he was a very excellent man, and a good specimen of the character of the old Presbyterians, who had more of the idea of an attachment to principle, and less of an obedience to fashion or convenience, from their education and tenets, than any other class of people. Northcote assented to this statement, and concluded by saying, that Hume was certainly a very good man, and had no fault but that of not being fat.

Conversation the Fourth.

NORTHCOTE said he had been reading Kelly's 'Reminiscences.'¹ I asked what he thought of them? He said they were the work of a well-meaning man, who fancied all those about him good people, and everything they uttered clever. I said I recollected his singing formerly with Mrs. Crouch, and that he used to give great effect to some things of sentiment, such as, 'Oh! had I been by fate decreed,' &c., in 'Love in a Village.' Northcote said he did not much like him; there was a jerk, a kind of brogue, in his singing; though he had, no doubt, considerable advantages in being brought up with all the great singers, and having performed on all the first stages in Italy. I said there was no echo of all that now. "No," said Northcote, "nor in my time, though I was there just after him. He asked me once, many years ago, if I had heard of him in Italy, and I said 'No,' though I excused myself by stating that I had only been at Rome, where the stage was less an object, the Pope there performing the chief part himself." I answered, that I meant there was no echo of the fine singing at present in Italy, music being there dead as well as painting, or reduced to mere screaming, noise, and rant. "It is odd," he said, "how their genius seems to have left them. Everything of that sort appears to be at present no better than it is with us in a country town; or rather, it wants the simplicity and rustic innocence, and is more like the draggled-tailed finery of a lady's waiting-maid. They have nothing of their own; all is at secondhand. Did you see Thorwaldsen's things while you were there? A young artist brought me all

¹ This work was published in 1820, and again in 1826, in a smaller size. The 'Reminiscences' extend over nearly half a century.—Ed.

his designs the other day, as miracles that I was to wonder at and be delighted with. But I could find nothing in them but repetitions of the Antique, over and over, till I was surfeited." "He would be pleased at this." "Why, no! that is not enough; it is easy to imitate the Antique: if you want to last you must invent something. The other is only pouring liquors from one vessel into another, that become staler and staler every time. We are tired of the Antique; yet, at any rate, it is better than the vapid imitation of it. The world wants something new, and will have it. No matter whether it is better or worse, if there is but an infusion of new life and spirit it will go down to posterity—otherwise you are soon forgotten. Canova too is nothing, for the same reason; he is only a feeble copy of the Antique, or a mixture of two things the most incompatible, that and opera-dancing. But there is Bernini; he is full of faults; he has too much of that florid, redundant, fluttering style that was objected to Rubens; but then he has given an appearance of flesh that was never given before. The Antique always looks like marble, you never for a moment can divest yourself of the idea; but go up to a statue of Bernini's, and it seems as if it must yield to your touch. This excellence he was the first to give, and therefore it must always remain with him. It is true it is also in the Elgin Marbles; but they were not known in his time, so that he indisputably was a genius. Then there is Michael Angelo; how utterly different from the Antique, and in some things how superior! For instance, there is his statue of Cosmo de Medici, leaning on his hand, in the Chapel of St. Lorenzo at Florence; I declare it has that look of reality in it, that it almost terrifies you to be near it. It has something of the same effect as the mixture of life and death that is perceivable in wax-work; though that is a bad illustration, as this last is

disagreeable and mechanical, and the other is produced by a powerful and masterly conception. It was the same with Handel too; he made music speak a new language, with a pathos and a power that had never been dreamt of till his time. Is it not the same with Titian, Correggio, Raphael? These painters did not imitate one another, but were as unlike as possible, and yet were all excellent. If excellence were one thing, they must have been all wrong. Still, originality is not caprice or affectation; it is an excellence that is always to be found in nature, but has never had a place in art before. So Romney said of Sir Joshua, that there was that in his pictures which we had not been used to see in other painters, but we had seen it often enough in nature. Give this in your works, and nothing can ever rob you of the credit of it.

“I was looking into ‘Mandeville’¹ since I saw you. (I thought I had lost it, but I found it among a parcel of old books.) You may judge by that of the hold that anything like originality takes of the world; for though there is a great deal that is questionable and liable to very strong objection, yet they will not give it up, because it is the very reverse of commonplace; and they must go to that source to learn what can be said on that side of the question. Even if you receive a shock, you feel your faculties roused by it and set on the alert. Mankind do not choose to go to sleep.” I replied, that I thought this was true, yet at the same time the world seemed to have a wonderful propensity to admire the trite and traditional. I could only account for this from a reflection of our self-love. We could few of us invent, but most of us could imitate and repeat by rote; and as we thought we could get up and ride in the same jogtrot machine of learning, we affected to look up to this elevation as the post of honour. Northcote said,

¹ Mandeville's ‘Fable of the Bees,’ &c.—ED.

“You are to consider that learning is of great use to society; and though it may not add to the stock, is a necessary vehicle to transmit it to others. Learned men are the cisterns of knowledge, not the fountain-heads. They are only wrong in often claiming respect on a false ground, and mistaking their own province. They are so accustomed to ring the changes on words and received notions that they lose their perception of things. I remember being struck with this at the time of the Ireland controversy. Only to think of a man like Dr. Parr going down on his knees and kissing the pretended manuscript! It was not that he knew or cared anything about Shakspeare (or he would not have been so imposed upon); he merely worshipped a name, as a Catholic priest worships the shrine that contains some favourite relic.” I said the passages in Ireland’s play that were brought forward to prove the identity were the very thing that proved the contrary; for they were obvious parodies of celebrated passages in Shakspeare, such as that on death in ‘Richard II.,’—“And there the antic sits,” &c. Now, Shakspeare never parodied himself; but these learned critics were only struck with the verbal coincidence, and never thought of the general character or spirit of the writer. “Or without that,” said Northcote, “who that attended to the common-sense of the question would not perceive that Shakspeare was a person who would be glad to dispose of his plays as soon as he wrote them? If it had been such a man as Sir Philip Sidney, indeed, he might have written a play at his leisure, and locked it up in some private drawer at Penshurst, where it might have been found two hundred years after; but Shakspeare had no opportunity to leave such precious hoards behind him, nor place to deposit them in. Tresham made me very mad one day at Cosway’s, by saying they had found a lock of his hair and a picture; and Caleb Whitefoord, who ought

to have known better, asked me if I did not think Sheridan a judge, and that *he* believed in the authenticity of the Ireland papers!¹ I said, 'Do you bring him as a fair witness? He wants to fill his theatre, and would write a play himself, and swear it was Shakspeare's. He knows better than to cry *stale fish*.'"

I observed this was what made me dislike the conversation of learned or literary men. I got nothing from them but what I already knew, and hardly that; they poured the same ideas and phrases and cant of knowledge out of books into my ears, as apothecaries' apprentices made prescriptions out of the same bottles; but there were no new drugs or simples in their *materia medica*. Go to a Scotch professor, and he bores you to death by an eternal rhapsody about rent and taxes, gold and paper currency, population and capital, and the Teutonic Races—all which you have heard a thousand times before; go to a linendraper in the city, without education, but with common-sense and shrewdness, and you pick up something new, because nature is inexhaustible, and he sees it from his own point of view, when not cramped and hoodwinked by pedantic prejudices. A person of this character said to me the other day, in speaking of the morals of foreign nations: "It's all a mistake to suppose there can be such a difference, sir; the world are and must be moral; for when people grow up and get married they teach their children to be moral. No man wishes to have them turn out profligate." I said I had never heard this before, and it seemed to me to be putting society on new rollers. Northcote agreed it was an excellent observation. I added, this self-taught shrewdness had its weak sides too. The same person was arguing that mankind remained much the same, and always would do so. Cows and horses did not

¹ Alluding to the stupid and clumsy forgeries of W. H. Ireland the younger.—Ed.

change, and why then should men? He had forgot that cows and horses do not learn to read and write. "Ay, that was very well too," said Northcote; "I don't know but I agree with him rather than with you. I was thinking of the same thing the other day in looking over an old magazine, in which there was a long debate on an Act of Parliament to license gin-drinking. The effect was quite droll. There was one person who made a most eloquent speech to point out all the dreadful consequences of allowing this practice. It would debauch the morals, ruin the health, and dissolve all the bonds of society, and leave a poor, puny, miserable Lilliputian race, equally unfit for peace or war. You would suppose that the world was going to be at an end. 'Why, no,' the answer would have been; 'the world will go on much the same as before. You attribute too much power to an Act of Parliament. Providence has not taken its measures so ill as to leave it to an Act of Parliament to continue or discontinue the species. If it depended on our wisdom and contrivances whether it should last or not, it would be at an end before twenty years.' People are wrong about this; some say the world is getting better, others complain it is getting worse, when, in fact, it is just the same, and neither better nor worse." What a lesson, I said to myself, for our pragmatistical legislators and idle projectors!

I said I had lately been led to think of the little real progress that was made by the human mind, and how the same errors and vices revived under a different shape at different periods, from observing just the same humour in our ultra-reformers at present and in their predecessors in the time of John Knox. Our modern *wise-acres* were for banishing all the fine arts and finer affections, whatever was pleasurable and ornamental, from the commonwealth, on the score of utility, exactly as the others did on the score of religion. The real

motive in either case was nothing but a sour, envious, malignant disposition, incapable of enjoyment in itself, and averse to every appearance or tendency to it in others. Our peccant humours broke out and formed into what Milton called "a crust of formality" on the surface; and while we fancied we were doing God or man good service, we were only indulging our spleen, self-opinion, and self-will according to the fashion of the day. The existing race of freethinkers and sophists would be mortified to find themselves the counterpart of the monks and ascetics of old; but so it was. The dislike of the Westminster Reviewers to polite literature was only the old exploded Puritanic objection to human learning. Names and modes of opinion changed, but human nature was much the same. "I know nothing of the persons you speak of," said Northcote; "but they must be fools if they expect to get rid of the showy and superficial, and let only the solid and useful remain. The surface is a part of nature, and will always continue so. Besides, how many useful inventions owe their existence to ornamental contrivances! If the ingenuity and industry of man were not tasked to produce luxuries, we should soon be without necessaries. We must go back to the savage state. I myself am as little prejudiced in favour of poetry as almost any one can be; but surely there are things in poetry that the world cannot afford to do without. What is of absolute necessity is only a part; and the next question is, how to occupy the remainder of our time and thoughts (not so employed) agreeably and innocently. Works of fiction and poetry are of incalculable use in this respect. If people did not read the Scotch novels they would not read Mr. Bentham's philosophy. There is nothing to me more disagreeable than the abstract idea of a Quaker, which falls under the same article. They object to colours; and why do they object to colours? Do we not see that Nature delights in

them? Do we not see the same purpose of prodigal and ostentatious display run through all her works? Do we not find the most beautiful and dazzling colours bestowed on plants and flowers, on the plumage of birds, on fishes and shells, even to the very bottom of the sea? All this profusion of ornament, we may be sure, is not in vain. To judge otherwise is to fly in the face of nature and substitute an exclusive and intolerant spirit in the place of philosophy, which includes the greatest variety of man's wants and tastes, and makes all the favourable allowances it can. The Quaker will not wear coloured clothes, though he would not have a coat to his back if men had never studied anything but the mortification of their appetites and desires. But he takes care of his personal convenience by wearing a piece of good broad-cloth, and gratifies his vanity, not by finery, but by having it of a different cut from everybody else, so that he may seem better and wiser than they. Yet this humour, too, is not without its advantages; it serves to correct the contrary absurdity. I look upon the Quaker and the fop as two sentinels placed by nature at the two extremes of vanity and selfishness, and to guard, as it were, all the common-sense and virtue that lie between." I observed that these contemptible narrow-minded prejudices made me feel irritable and impatient. "You should not suffer that," said Northcote; "for then you will run into the contrary mistake, and lay yourself open to your antagonist. The monks, for instance, have been too hardly dealt with—not that I would defend many abuses and instances of oppression in them; but is it not as well to have bodies of men shut up in cells and monasteries, as to let them loose to make soldiers of them and to cut one another's throats? And out of that lazy ignorance and leisure what benefits have not sprung? It is to them we owe those beautiful specimens of Gothic architecture which can never be

surpassed; many of the discoveries in medicine and in mechanics are also theirs; and I believe the restoration of classical learning is owing to them. Not that I would be understood to say that all or a great deal of this could not have been done without them; but their leisure, their independence, and the want of some employment to exercise their minds, were the actual cause of many advantages we now enjoy; and what I mean is, that Nature is satisfied with imperfect instruments. Instead of snarling at everything that differs from us, we had better take Shakspeare's advice, and try to find

‘Tongues in the trees, books in the running brooks,
Sermons in stones, and good in everything.’”

It was at this time that Mr. Northcote read to me the following letter, addressed by him to a very young lady, who earnestly desired him to write a letter to her:—

“MY DEAR MISS K——,

“What in the world can make you desire a letter from me? Indeed, if I was a fine dandy of one-and-twenty, with a pair of stays properly padded, and also an iron busk, and whiskers under my nose, with my hair standing upright on my head, all in the present fashion, then it might be accounted for, as I might write you a fine answer in poetry about cupids and burning hearts, and sighs and angels and darts—such a letter as Mr. —— the poet might write. But it is long past the time for me to sing love-songs under your window with a guitar, and catch my death in some cold night, and so die in your service.

“But what has a poor grey-headed old man of eighty got to say to a blooming young lady of eighteen, but to relate to her his illness and pains, and tell her that past life is little better than a dream, and that he finds that all he has been doing is only vanity? Indeed, I may console

myself with the pleasure of having gained the flattering attention of a young lady of such amiable qualities as yourself, and have the honour to assure you, that I am your grateful friend and most obliged humble servant,

JAMES NORTHCOTE."

"Argyll Place, 1826."

I said, the hardest lesson seemed to be to look beyond ourselves. "Yes," said Northcote; "I remember, when we were young and making remarks upon the neighbours, an old maiden aunt of ours used to say, 'I wish to God you could see yourselves!' And yet perhaps, after all, this was not very desirable. Many people pass their whole lives in a very comfortable dream, who, if they could see themselves in the glass, would start back with affright. I remember once being at the Academy when Sir Joshua wished to propose a monument to Dr. Johnson in St. Paul's, and West got up and said, that the King, he knew, was averse to anything of the kind; for he had been proposing a similar monument in Westminster Abbey for a man of the greatest genius and celebrity—one whose works were in all the cabinets of the curious throughout Europe—one whose name they would all hear with the greatest respect; and then it came out, after a long preamble, that he meant Woollett, who had engraved his 'Death of Wolfe.' I was provoked, and I could not help exclaiming, 'My God! What! do you put him upon a footing with such a man as Dr. Johnson—one of the greatest philosophers and moralists that ever lived? We have thousands of engravers at any time!' And there was such a burst of laughter at this! Dance, who was a grave gentlemanly man, laughed till the tears ran down his cheeks; and Farington used afterwards to say to me, 'Why don't you speak in the Academy, and begin with My God! as you do sometimes?' I said, I had seen in a certain

painter something of this humour, who once very good-naturedly showed me a Rubens he had, and observed, with great *nonchalance*, 'What a pity that this man wanted expression!' I imagined Rubens to have looked round his gallery. Yet," he continued, "it is the consciousness of defect, too, that often stimulates the utmost exertions. If Pope had been a fine handsome man, would he have left those masterpieces that he has? But he knew and felt his own deformity, and therefore was determined to leave nothing undone to extend that corner of power that he possessed. He said to himself, They shall have no fault to find there. I have often thought, when very good-looking young men have come here intending to draw, 'What! are you going to bury yourselves in a garret?' And it has generally happened that they have given up the art before long, and married or otherwise disposed of themselves." I had heard an anecdote of Nelson, that, when appointed post-captain, and on going to take possession of his ship at Yarmouth, the crowd on the quay almost jostled him, and exclaimed, "What! have they made that little insignificant fellow a captain? He will do much, to be sure!" I thought this might have urged him to dare as he did, in order to get the better of their prejudices and his own sense of mortification. "No doubt," said Northcote, "personal defects or disgrace operate in this way. I knew an admiral who had got the nickname of 'Dirty Dick' among the sailors, and on his being congratulated on obtaining some desperate victory, all he said was, 'I hope they'll call me Dirty Dick no more!' There was a Sir Richard Granville formerly, who was appointed to convoy a fleet of merchant-ships, and had to defend them against a Spanish man-of-war, and did so with the utmost bravery and resolution, so that the convoy got safe off; but after that, he would not yield till he was struck senseless by a ball, and then the crew delivered

up the vessel to the enemy, who, on coming on board and entering the cabin where he lay, were astonished to find a mere puny shrivelled spider of a man, instead of the Devil they had expected to see. He was taken on shore in Spain, and died of his wounds there; and the Spanish women afterwards used to frighten their children, by telling them 'Don John of the Greenfield was coming!'"

Conversation the Fifth.

NORTHCOTE mentioned the death of poor ——, who had been with him a few days before, laughing and in great spirits; and the next thing he heard was that he had put an end to himself. I asked if there was any particular reason? He said "No;" that he had left a note upon the table, saying that his friends had forsaken him, that he knew no cause, and that he was tired of life. His patron, Croker, of the Admiralty, had, it seems set him to paint a picture of Louis the XVIII. receiving the Order of the Garter. He had probably been teased about that. These insipid court-subjects were destined to be fatal to artists. Poor Bird had been employed to paint a picture of Louis the XVIII. landing at Calais, and had died of chagrin and disappointment at his failure. Who could make anything of such a figure and such a subject? There was nothing to be done; and yet if the artist added anything of his own he was called to order by his would-be patrons, as falsifying what appeared to them an important event in history. It was only a person like Rubens who could succeed in such subjects, by taking what licenses he thought proper, and having authority enough to dictate to his advisers. A gentleman came in, who asked if —— was likely to have succeeded in his art? Northcote answered, "There were

several things against it. He was good-looking, good-natured, and a wit. He was accordingly asked out to dine, and caressed by those who knew him; and a young man, after receiving these flattering marks of attention, and enjoying the height of luxury and splendour, was not inclined to return to his painting-room, to brood over a design that would cost him infinite trouble, and the success of which was at least doubtful. Few young men of agreeable persons or conversation turned out great artists. It was easier to look in the glass than to make a dull canvas shine like a lucid mirror; and as to talking, Sir Joshua used to say, a painter should sew up his mouth. It was only the love of distinction that produced eminence; and if a man was admired for one thing, that was enough. We only work out our way to excellence by being imprisoned in defects. It requires a long apprenticeship, great pains, and prodigious self-denial, which no man will submit to, except from necessity, or as the only chance he has of escaping from obscurity. I remember when Mr. Lock (of Norbury Park) first came over from Italy; and old Dr. Moore, who had a high opinion of him, was crying over his drawings, and asked me if I did not think he would make a great painter. I said, 'No, never!'—'Why not?'—'Because he has six thousand a year.' No one would throw away all the advantages and indulgences this insured him, to shut himself up in a garret to pore over that which, after all, may expose him to contempt and ridicule. Artists, to be sure, have gone on painting after they have got rich, such as Rubens and Titian, and indeed Sir Joshua; but then it had by this time become a habit and a source of pleasure, instead of a toil to them, and the honours and distinction they had acquired by it counterbalanced every other consideration. Their love of the art had become greater than their love of riches or of idleness. But at first this is not the case, and the repugnance to labour is only

mastered by the absolute necessity for it. People apply to study only when they cannot help it. No one was ever known to succeed without this stimulus." I ventured to say that, generally speaking, no one I believed ever succeeded in a profession without great application; but that where there was a strong turn for anything a man in this sense could not help himself, and the application followed of course, and was in fact comparatively easy. Northcote turned short round upon me, and said: "Then you admit original genius? I cannot agree with you there." I said: "Waiving that, and not inquiring how the inclination comes, but early in life a fondness, a passion, for a certain pursuit is imbibed; the mind is haunted by this object, it cannot rest without it (any more than the body without food); it becomes the strongest feeling we have, and then, I think, the most intense application follows naturally, just as in the case of a love of money or any other passion; the most unremitting application, without this, is forced and of no use; and where this original bias exists no other motive is required." "Oh! but," said Northcote, "if you had to labour on by yourself without competitors or admirers you would soon lay down your pencil or your pen in disgust. It is the hope of shining, or the fear of being eclipsed, that urges you on. Do you think if nobody took any notice of what you did this would not damp your ardour?"—"Yes; after I had done anything that I thought worth notice it might, considerably; but how many minds (almost all the great ones) were formed in secrecy and solitude, without knowing whether they should ever make a figure or not! All they knew was, that they liked what they were about, and gave their whole souls to it. There was Hogarth, there was Correggio: what enabled these artists to arrive at the perfection in their several ways which afterwards gained them the attention of the world? Not

the premature applause of the bystanders, but the vivid tingling delight with which the one seized upon a grotesque incident or expression—‘the rapt soul sitting in the eyes’ of the other, as he drew a saint or an angel from the skies. If they had been brought forward very early, before they had served this thorough apprenticeship to their own minds (the opinion of the world apart), it might have damped or made coxcombs of them. It was the love and perception of excellence (or the favouring smile of the Muse) that in my view produced excellence and formed the man of genius. Some, like Milton, had gone on with a great work all their lives with little encouragement but the hope of posthumous fame.”—“It is not that,” said Northcote; “you cannot see so far. It is not those who have gone before you or those who are to come after you, but those who are by your side running the same race, that make you look about you. What made Titian jealous of Tintoret? Because he stood immediately in his way, and their works were compared together. If there had been a hundred Tintorets a thousand miles off, he would not have cared about them. That is what takes off the edge and stimulus of exertion in old age: those who were our competitors in early life, whom we wished to excel or whose good opinion we were most anxious about, are gone, and have left us in a manner by ourselves, in a sort of new world, where we know and are as little known as on entering a strange country. Our ambition is cold with the ashes of those whom we feared or loved. I remember old Alderman Boydell using an expression which explained this. Once when I was in the coach with him, in reply to some compliment of mine on his success in life, he said, ‘Ah! there was one who would have been pleased at it; but *her* I have lost!’ The fine coach and all the city trappings were nothing to him without his wife, who remembered what he was and the gradations and anxious

cares by which he rose to his present affluence, and was a kind of monitor to remind him of his former self and of the different vicissitudes of his fortune."

Northcote then spoke of old Alderman Boydell with great regret, and said: "He was a man of sense and liberality, and a true patron of the art. His nephew, who came after him, had not the same capacity, and wanted to dictate to the artists what they were to do. Northcote mentioned some instance of his wanting him to paint a picture on a subject for which he was totally unfit, and figures of a size which he had never been accustomed to, and he told him he must get somebody else to do it." I said: "Booksellers and editors had the same infirmity, and always wanted you to express their ideas, not your own. Sir Richard Phillips had once gone up to Coleridge, after hearing him talk in a large party, and offered him 'nine guineas a sheet for his conversation.' He calculated that the 'nine guineas a sheet' would be at least as strong a stimulus to his imagination as the wasting his words in a room full of company." Northcote: "Aye, he came to me once, and wished me to do a work which was to contain a history of art in all countries, and from the beginning of the world. I said it would be an invaluable work, if it could be done, but that there was no one alive who could do it."

Northcote afterwards, by some transition, spoke of the characters of women, and asked my opinion. I said, "All my metaphysics leaned to the vulgar side of these questions; I thought there was a difference of original genius, a difference in the character of the sexes, &c. Women appeared to me to do some things better than men, and therefore I concluded they must do other things worse." Northcote mentioned Annibal Caracci, and said: "How odd it was that, in looking at any work of his, you could swear it was done by a man! Ludovico Caracci had a finer and more intellectual expression,

but not the same bold and workmanlike character. There was Michael Angelo again; what woman would ever have thought of painting the figures in the Sistine Chapel? There was Dryden, too; what a thorough manly character there was in his style! And Pope" [I interrupted, "seemed to me between a man and a woman."] "It was not," he continued, "that women were not often very clever (cleverer than many men), but there was a point of excellence which they never reached. Yet the greatest pains had been taken with several. Angelica Kauffman had been brought up from a child to the art, and had been taken by her father (in boy's clothes) to the Academy to learn to draw; but there was an effeminate and feeble look in all her works, though not without merit. There was not the man's hand, or what Fuseli used to call 'a fist,' in them; that is, something, coarse and clumsy enough, perhaps, but still with strength and muscle. Even in common things, you would see a carpenter drive a nail in a way that a woman never would; or if you had a suit of clothes made by a woman, they would hang quite loose about you, and seem ready to fall off. Yet it is extraordinary, too," said Northcote, "that in what has sometimes been thought the peculiar province of men—courage and heroism—there have been women fully upon a par with any men, such as Joan of Arc and many others, who have never been surpassed as leaders in battle." I observed that of all the women I had ever seen or known anything of, Mrs. Siddons struck me as the grandest. He said, "Oh! it is her outward form which stamps her so completely for tragedy no less than the mental part. Both she and her brother were cut out by Nature for a tragedy king and queen. It is what Mrs. Hannah More has said of her: 'Hers is the afflicted!'" I replied that she seemed to me equally great in anger or in contempt, or in any stately part, as she was in grief; witness her Lady Macbeth. "Yes,"

he said; "that, to be sure, was a masterpiece." I asked what he thought of Mrs. Inchbald? He said, "Oh! very highly; there was no affectation in her. I once took up her 'Simple Story' (which my sister had borrowed from the circulating library), and looking into it I said, 'My God! what have you got here?' and I never moved from the chair till I had finished it. Her 'Nature and Art' is equally fine—the very marrow of genius." She seems to me, I added, like Venus writing books. "Yes, women have certainly been successful in writing novels, and in plays, too. I think Mrs. Centlivre's are better than Congreve's. Their letters, too, are admirable; it is only when they put on the breeches, and try to write like men, that they become pedantic and tiresome. In giving advice, too, I have often found that they excelled; and when I have been irritated by any trifling circumstance, and have laid more stress upon it than it was worth, they have seen the thing in a right point of view and tamed down my asperities." On this I remarked that I thought in general it might be said that the faculties of women were of a passive character. They judged by the simple effect upon their feelings without inquiring into causes. Men had to act; women had the coolness and the advantages of bystanders, and were neither implicated in the theories nor passions of men. While we were proving a thing to be wrong, they would feel it to be ridiculous. I said I thought they had more of common-sense, though less of acquired capacity, than men. They were freer from the absurdities of creeds and dogmas, from the virulence of party in religion and politics (by which we strove to show our sense and superiority), nor were their heads so much filled with the lumber of learned folios. I mentioned as an illustration, that when old Baxter (the celebrated casuist and Nonconformist divine) first went to Kidderminster to preach, he was almost pelted by the women for main-

taining from the pulpit the then fashionable and orthodox doctrine that "hell was paved with infants' skulls." The theory which the learned divine had piled up on arguments and authorities is now exploded; the common-sense feeling on the subject, which the women of that day took up in opposition to it as a dictate of humanity, would be now thought the philosophical one. "Yes," said Northcote, "but this exploded doctrine was knocked down by some man, as it had been set up by one; the women would let things remain as they are without making any progress in error or wisdom. We do best together; our strength and our weakness mutually correct each other." Northcote then read me from a manuscript volume lying by him a character drawn of his deceased wife by a Dissenting minister (a Mr. Fox, of Plymouth), which is so beautiful that I shall transcribe it here:—

"Written by Mr. John Fox on the death of his wife, who was the daughter of the Rev. Mr. Isaac Gelling.

"My dear wife died, to my unspeakable grief, Dec. 19th, 1762. With the loss of my dear companion died all the pleasure of my life. And no wonder; I had lived with her forty years, in which time nothing happened to abate the strictness of our friendship or to create a coolness or indifference, so common and even unregarded by many in the world. I thank God I enjoyed my full liberty, my health, such pleasures and diversions as I liked, perfect peace and competence, during the time; which were all seasoned and heightened every day more or less by constant marks of friendship, most inviolable affection, and a most cheerful endeavour to make my life agreeable. Nothing disturbed me but her many and constant disorders, under all which I could see how her faithful heart was strongly attached to me. And who could stand the shock of seeing the attacks of death upon her, and then her final dissolution? The consequences to

me were fatal. Old age rushed upon me like an armed man: my appetite failed, my strength was gone, every amusement became flat and dull; my countenance fell, and I have nothing to do but to drag on a heavy chain for the rest of my life, which I hope a good God will enable me to do without murmuring, and, in conclusion, to say with all my soul—

“TE DEUM LAUDAMUS!”

This was written on a paper blotted by tears, and stuck with wafers into the first page of the family Bible.

Mr. John Fox died 22nd of October, 1763; he was born May 10th, 1693.

Conversation the Sixth.

NORTHCOTE alluded to a printed story of his having hung an early picture of Haydon's out of sight, and of Fuseli's observing on the occasion, “By G—d, you are sending him to heaven before his time!” He said there was not the least foundation for this story; nor could there be, he not having been *hanger* that year. He read out of the same publication a letter from Burke to a young artist of the name of Barrow, full of excellent sense, advising him by no means to give up his profession as an engraver till he was sure he could succeed as a painter, out of idle ambition and an unfounded contempt for the humbler and more laborious walks of life. “I could not have thought it of him,” said Northcote; “I confess he never appeared to me so great a man.” I asked what kind of looking man he was? Northcote answered, “You have seen the picture? There was something I did not like—a thinness in the features and an expression of *hauteur*, though mixed with condescension and the manners of a gentle-

man. I can't help thinking he had a hand in the 'Discourses'—that he gave some of the fine graceful turns; for Sir Joshua paid a greater deference to him than to anybody else, and put up with freedoms that he would only have submitted to from some peculiar obligation. Indeed Miss Reynolds used to complain that, whenever any of Burke's poor Irish relations came over, they were all poured in upon them to dinner; but Sir Joshua never took any notice, but bore it all with the greatest patience and tranquillity. To be sure there was another reason: he expected Burke to write his Life, and for this he would have paid almost any price. This was what made him submit to the intrusions of Boswell, to the insipidity of Malone, and to the magisterial dictation of Burke; he made sure that out of these three one would certainly write his Life, and insure him immortality that way. He thought no more of the person who actually did write it afterwards than he would have suspected his dog of writing it. Indeed, I wish he could have known; for it would have been of some advantage to me, and he might have left me something not to dwell on his defects—though he was as free from them as any man; but you can make any one ridiculous with whom you live on terms of intimacy.

“I remember an instance of this that happened with respect to old Mr. Mudge, whom you must have heard me speak of, and who was esteemed an idol by Burke, Dr. Johnson, and many others. Sir Joshua wanted to reprint his sermons and prefix a life to them, and asked me to get together any particulars I could learn of him. So I gave him a manuscript account of Mr. Mudge, written by an old schoolfellow of his (Mr. Fox, a Dissenting minister in the West of England); after which I heard no more of the Life. Mr. Mudge was in fact a man of extraordinary talents and great eloquence; and by representing in a manner the High Church

notions both of Dr. Johnson and Sir Joshua (for both were inclined the same way), they came to consider him as a sort of miracle of virtue and wisdom. There was, however, something in Mr. Fox's plain account that would strike Sir Joshua, for he had an eye for nature; and he would at once perceive it was nearer the truth than Dr. Johnson's pompous character of him, which was proper only for a tombstone; it was like one of Kneller's portraits—it would do for anybody. That," said Northcote, "is old Mr. Mudge's definition of beauty, which Sir Joshua has adopted in the 'Discourses'—that it is the *medium of form*. For what is a handsome nose? A long nose is not a handsome nose—neither is a short nose a handsome one: it must then be one that is neither long nor short, but in the middle between both. Even Burke bowed to his authority, and Sir Joshua thought him the wisest man he ever knew. Once when Sir Joshua was expressing his impatience of some innovation, and I said, 'At that rate, the Christian religion could never have been established:' 'Oh!' he said, 'Mr. Mudge has answered that'—which seemed to satisfy him."

I made some remark, that I wondered he did not come up to London, though the same feeling seemed to belong to other clever men born in Devonshire (as Gandy), whose ambition was confined to their native county, so that there must be some charm in the place. "You are to consider," he replied, "it is almost a peninsula, so that there is no thoroughfare, and people are therefore more stationary in one spot. It is for this reason they necessarily intermarry among themselves, and you can trace the genealogies of families for centuries back; whereas in other places, and particularly here in London, where everything of that kind is jumbled together, you never know who any man's grandfather was. There are country squires and plain gentry down in that part of the world who have occupied the same estates long

before the Conquest (as the Suckbitches in particular—not a very sounding name), and who look down upon the Courtenays and others as upstarts. Certainly Devonshire, for its extent, has produced a number of eminent men—Sir Joshua, the Mudges, Dunning, Gay, Lord Chancellor King, Raleigh, Drake, and Sir Richard Granville in Queen Elizabeth's time, who made that gallant defence in an engagement with the Spanish fleet, and was the ancestor of Pope's Lord Lansdowne, 'What Muse for Granville will refuse to sing?' &c. Foster, the celebrated preacher, was also, I believe, from the West of England. He first became popular from the Lord Chancellor Hardwicke stopping in the porch of his chapel in the Old Jewry out of a shower of rain; and thinking he might as well hear what was going on he went in, and was so well pleased that he sent all the great folks to hear him, and he was run after as much as Irving has been in our time. An old fellow-student from the country, going to wait on him at his house in London, found a Shakspeare on the window-seat; and remarking the circumstance with some surprise, as out of the usual course of clerical studies, the other apologised by saying that he wished to know something of the world, that his situation and habits precluded him from the common opportunities, and that he found no way of supplying the deficiency so agreeable or effectual as looking into a volume of Shakspeare. Pope has immortalised him in the well-known lines:

'Let modest Foster, if he will, excel
Ten Metropolitans in preaching well.'

Dr. Mudge, the son of Mr. Zachary Mudge, who was a physician, was an intimate friend of my father's, and I remember him perfectly well. He was one of the most delightful persons I ever knew. Every one was enchanted with his society. It was not wit that he

possessed, but such perfect cheerfulness and good-humour that it was like health coming into the room. He was a most agreeable companion, quite natural and unaffected. His reading was the most beautiful I have ever heard. I remember his once reading Moore's fable of the 'Female Seducers' with such feeling and sweetness that every one was delighted, and Dr. Mudge himself was so much affected that he burst into tears in the middle of it. The family are still respectable, but derive their chief lustre from the first two founders, like clouds that reflect the sun's rays after he has sunk below the horizon, but in time turn grey and are lost in obscurity!"

I asked Northcote if he had ever happened to meet with a letter of Warburton's in answer to one of Dr. Doddridge's, complimenting the author of the 'Divine Legation of Moses' on the evident zeal and earnestness with which he wrote; to which the latter candidly replied, that he wrote with great haste and unwillingness, that he never sat down to compose till the printer's boy was waiting at the door for the manuscript, and that he should never write at all but as a relief to a morbid lowness of spirits, and to drive away uneasy thoughts that often assailed him.¹ "That indeed," observed Northcote, "gives a different turn to the statement; I thought at first it was only the common coquetry both of authors and artists, to be supposed to do what excites the admiration of others with the greatest ease and indifference, and almost without knowing what they are about. If what surprises *you* costs them nothing, the wonder is so much increased. When Michael Angelo proposed to fortify his native city, Florence, and he was desired to keep to his painting and sculpture, he answered that those were his recreations, but what he really understood was architecture. That

¹ This very interesting letter will be found in the 'Elegant Epistles.'

is what Sir Joshua considers as the praise of Rubens—that he seemed to make a plaything of the art. In fact, the work is never complete unless it has this appearance; and therefore Sir Joshua has laid himself open to criticism in saying that ‘a picture must not only be done well, it must seem to have been done easily.’ It cannot be said to be done well, unless it has this look. That is the fault of those laboured and timid productions of the modern French and Italian schools; they are the result of such a tedious, petty, mechanical process, that it is as difficult for you to admire as it has been for the artist to execute them. Whereas, when a work seems stamped on the canvas by a blow, you are taken by surprise, and your admiration is as instantaneous and electrical as the impulse of genius which has caused it. I have seen a whole-length portrait by Velasquez, that seemed done while the colours were yet wet; everything was touched in, as it were, by a wish; there was such a power that it thrilled through your whole frame, and you felt as if you could take up the brush and do anything. It is this sense of power and freedom which delights and communicates its own inspiration, just as the opposite, drudgery and attention to details, is painful and disheartening. There was a little picture of one of the Infants of Spain on horseback, also by Velasquez, which Mr. Agar had,¹ and with which Gainsborough was so transported that he said in a fit of bravado to the servant who showed it, “Tell your master I will give him a thousand pounds for that picture.” Mr. Agar began to consider what pictures he could purchase with the money,—if he parted with this; and at last, having made up his mind, sent Gainsborough word he might have the picture—who, not at all expecting this result, was a good deal confused, and declared, however he might admire it, he could not afford to give so large a sum for it.”

¹ Now at the Dulwich Gallery.

Conversation the Seventh.

NORTHCOTE complained of being unwell, though he said he could hardly expect to be otherwise at his age. He must think of making up the accounts of his life, such as it had been, though he added (checking himself) that he ought not to say that, for he had had his share of good as well as others. He had been reading in Boccaccio, where it was frequently observed that "such a one departed this *wretched* life at such a time;"—so that in Boccaccio's time they complained of the wretchedness of life as much as we do. He alluded to an expression of Coleridge's, which he had seen quoted in a newspaper, and which he thought very fine, "That an old Gothic cathedral always seemed to him like a petrified religion!" Some one asked, "Why does he not go and turn Black Monk?" "Because," I said, "he never does anything that he should do." "There are some things," said Northcote, "with respect to which I am in the same state that a blind man is as to colours. Homer is one of these. I am utterly in the dark about it; I can make nothing of his heroes or his gods. Whether this is owing to my not knowing the language, or to a change of manners, I cannot say." He was here interrupted by the entrance of the beautiful Mrs. Gunning—beautiful even in years. She said she had brought him a book to look at. She could not stop, for she had a lady waiting for her below, but she would call in some morning and have a long chat. After she was gone I remarked how handsome she still was; and he said, "I don't know why she is so kind as to come, except that I am the last link in the chain that connects her with all those she most esteemed when she was young—Johnson, Reynolds, Goldsmith—and remind her of the most delightful period of her life." I said, "Not only so, but you

remember what she was at twenty; and you thus bring back to her the triumphs of her youth—that pride of beauty which must be the more fondly cherished as it has no external vouchers, and lives chiefly in the bosom of its once lovely possessor. In her, however, the graces had triumphed over time; she was one of Ninon de l'Enclos' people, of the list of the immortals. I could almost fancy the shade of Goldsmith in the room, looking round with complacency." "Yes," said Northcote, "that is what Sir Joshua used to mention as the severest test of beauty—it was not then *skin-deep* only. She had gone through all the stages, and had lent a grace to each. There are beauties that are old in a year. Take away the bloom and freshness of youth, and there is no trace of what they were. Their beauty is not grounded on first principles. Good temper is one of the great preservers of the features." I observed, it was the same in the mind as in the body. There were persons of premature ability who soon ran to seed, and others who made no figure till they were advanced in life. I had known several who were very clever at seventeen or eighteen, but who had turned out nothing afterwards. "That is what my father used to say—that at that time of life the effervescence and intoxication of youth did a great deal, but that we must wait till the gaiety and dance of the animal spirits had subsided to see what people really were. It is wonderful" (said Northcote, reverting to the former subject) "what a charm there is in those early associations, in whatever recalls that first dawn and outset of life. 'Jack the Giant-killer' is the first book I ever read, and I cannot describe the pleasure it gives me even now. I cannot look into it without my eyes filling with tears. I do not know what it is (whether good or bad), but it is to me, from early impression, the most heroic of performances. I remember once not having money to buy it, and I transcribed it

all out with my own hand. This is what I was going to say about Homer. I cannot help thinking that one cause of the high admiration in which it is held is its being the first book that is put into the hands of young people at school: it is the first spell which opens to them the enchantments of the unreal world. Had I been bred a scholar, I dare say Homer would have been my 'Jack the Giant-killer!' There is an innocence and simplicity in that early age which makes everything relating to it delightful. It seems to me that it is the absence of all affectation, or even of *consciousness*, that constitutes the perfection of nature or art. That is what makes it so interesting to see girls and boys dancing at school; there is such natural gaiety and freedom, such unaffected, unpretending, unknown grace. That is the true dancing, and not what you see at the Opera. And again, in the most ordinary actions of children, what an ease, what a playfulness, what flames of beauty do they throw out, without being in the smallest degree aware of it! I have sometimes thought it a pity there should be such a precious essence, and that those who possess it should be quite ignorant of it; yet if they knew it, that alone would kill it. The whole depends on the utter absence of all egotism, of the remotest reflection upon self. It is the same in works of art—the simplest are the best. That is what makes me hate those *stuffed* characters that are so full of themselves that I think they cannot have much else in them. A man who admires himself prevents me from admiring him, just as by praising himself he stops my mouth; though the vulgar take their cue from a man's opinion of himself, and admire none but coxcombs and pedants. This is the best excuse for impudence and quackery, that the world will not be gained without it. The true favourites of nature, however, have their eyes turned towards the goddess, instead of looking at themselves in the glass. There is no pre-

tence or assumption about them. It seems difficult indeed for any one who is the object of attention to others not to be thinking of himself; but the greatest men have always been the most free from this bias, the weakest have been the soonest puffed up by self-conceit. If you had asked Correggio why he painted as he did, he would have answered, 'Because he could not help it.' Look at Dryden's verses, which he wrote just like a schoolboy, who brings up his task, without knowing whether he shall be rewarded or flogged for it. Do you suppose he wrote the description of Cymon for any other reason than because he could not help it, or that he had any more power to stop himself in his headlong career than the mountain torrent? Or turn to Shakspeare, who evidently does not know the value, the *dreadful* value (as I may say), of the expressions he uses. Genius gathers up its beauties, like the child, without knowing whether they are weeds or flowers: those productions that are destined to give forth an everlasting odour grow up without labour or design."

Mr. Patmore came in, and complimenting Northcote on a large picture he was about, the latter said, "It was his last great work"—he was getting too old for such extensive undertakings. His friend replied that Titian went on painting till near a hundred. "Aye," said Northcote, "but he had the devil to help him, and I have never been able to retain him in my service. It is a dreadful thing to see an immense black canvas spread out before you to commit sins upon." Something was said of the Academy, and Patmore made answer, "I know your admiration for corporate bodies." Northcote said, "They were no worse than others; all began well and ended ill. When the Academy first began one would suppose that the members were so many angels sent from heaven to fill the different situations, and that was the reason why it began; now the difficulty was to find anybody fit for them, and the defi-

ciency was supplied by interest, intrigue, and cabal. Not that I object to the individuals neither. As Swift said, "I like Jack, Tom, and Harry very well by themselves; but all together they are not to be endured. We see the effect of people acting in concert in animals (for men are only a more vicious sort of animals): a single dog will let you kick and cuff him as you please, and will submit to any treatment; but if you meet a pack of hounds, they will set upon you and tear you to pieces with the greatest impudence." Patmore: "The same complaint was made of the Academy in Barry's time, which is now thirty or forty years ago."¹ Northcote: "Oh yes, they very soon degenerated. It is the same in all human institutions. The thing is, there has been no way found yet to keep the devil out. It will be a curious thing to see whether that experiment of the American Government will last. If it does, it will be the first instance of the kind." Patmore: "I should think not. There is something very complicated and mysterious in the mode of their elections, which I am given to understand are managed in an underhand manner by the leaders of parties. And besides, in all governments the great desideratum is to combine activity with a freedom from selfish passions. But it unfortunately happens that in human life the selfish passions are the strongest and most active; and on this rock society seems to split. There is a certain period in a man's life when he is at his best (when he combines the activity of youth with the experience of manhood), after which he declines; and perhaps it may be the same with States. Things are not best at the beginning or at the end, but in the middle, which is but a point." Northcote: "Nothing stands still; it therefore either grows better or worse. When a thing has reached its utmost

¹ Barry's letter to the Dilettanti Society, enumerating his grievances, was published in 1798.

perfection, it then borders on excess ; and excess leads to ruin and decay."

Lord Grosvenor had bought a picture of Northcote's. An allusion was made to his enormous and increasing wealth. Northcote said he could be little the better for it. After a certain point it became a mere nominal distinction. He only thought of that which passed through his hands and fell under his immediate notice. He knew no more of the rest than you or I did ; he was merely perplexed by it. This was what often made persons in his situation tenacious of the most trifling sums, for this was the only positive or tangible wealth they had : the remote contingency was like a thing in the clouds, or mountains of silver and gold seen in the distant horizon. It was the same with Nollekens ; he died worth £200,000 ; but the money he had accumulated at his bankers was out of his reach and contemplation—*out of sight, out of mind* ; he was only muddling about with what he had in his hands, and lived like a beggar, in actual fear of want. Patmore said he was an odd little man, but, he believed, clever in his profession. Northcote assented, and observed : " He was an instance of what might be done by concentrating the attention on a single object. If you collect the rays of the sun in a focus, you could set any object on fire. Great talents were often dissipated to no purpose, but time and patience conquered everything. Without them, you could do nothing. So Giardini, when asked how long it would take to learn to play on the fiddle, answered, 'Twelve hours a day for twenty years together.' A few great geniuses may trifle with the arts, like Rubens ; but in general nothing can be more fatal than to suppose one's self a great genius." Patmore observed, that in common business those who gave up their whole time and thoughts to any pursuit generally succeeded in it, though far from bright men ; and we often found those who had acquired a name for

some one excellence people of moderate capacity in other respects. After Mr. Patmore was gone, Northcote said he was one of the persons of the soundest judgment he had ever known, and like Mr. Prince Hoare, the least liable to be imposed upon by appearances. Northcote made the remark that he thought it improper in any one to refuse lending a favourite picture for public exhibition, as it seemed not exclusively to belong to one person. "A jewel of this value belongs rather to the public than to the individual. Consider the multitudes you deprive of an advantage they cannot receive again—the idle of amusement, the studious of instruction and improvement." I said, this kind of indifference to the wishes of the public was *sending the world to Coventry*. We then spoke of a celebrated courtier, of whom I said I was willing to believe everything that was amiable, though I had some difficulty, while thinking of him, to keep the *valet* out of my head. Northcote: "He has certainly endeavoured to behave well; but there is no altering character. I myself might have been a courtier if I could have cringed and held my tongue; but I could no more exist in that element than a fish out of water. At one time I knew Lord R——and Lord H. S——,¹ who were intimate with the Prince, and recommended my pictures to him. Sir Joshua once asked me, 'What do you know of the Prince of Wales, that he so often speaks to me about you?' I remember I made him laugh by my answer, for I said, 'Oh, he knows nothing of me, nor I of him—it's only his *bragging!*' 'Well,' said he, 'that is spoken like a king!'. . . It was to-day I asked leave to write down one or two of these Conversations. He said I might, if I thought it worth while, "but I do assure you that you overrate them. You have not lived enough in society to be a judge. What is new to you you think will seem so to others. To be sure there is

¹ Query, Lord Henry Seymour?—ED.

one thing: I have had the advantage of having lived in good society myself. I not only passed a great deal of my younger days in the company of Reynolds, Johnson, and that circle, but I was brought up among the Mudges, of whom Sir Joshua (who was certainly used to the most brilliant society of the metropolis) thought so highly that he had them at his house for weeks, and even sometimes gave up his own bedroom to receive them. Yet they were not thought superior to several other persons at Plymouth, who were distinguished, some for their satirical wit, others for their delightful fancy, others for their information or sound sense, and with all of whom my father was familiar when I was a boy. Really, after what I recollect of these, some of the present people appear to me mere wretched pretenders, muttering out their own emptiness." I said, we had a specimen of Lord Byron's 'Conversations.' Northcote: "Yes; but he was a tyrant, and a person of that disposition never learns anything, because he will only associate with inferiors. If, however, you think you can make anything of it, and can keep clear of personalities, I have no objection to your trying; only I think, after the first attempt, you will give it up, as turning out quite differently from what you expected."

Conversation the Eighth.

NORTHCOTE spoke again of Sir Joshua, and said he was in some degree ignorant of what might be called the *grammatical* part of the art, or scholarship of academic skill; but he made up for it by an eye for nature, or rather by a feeling of harmony and beauty. Dance (he that was afterwards Sir Nathaniel Holland) drew the figure well, gave a strong likeness and a certain studied air to his portraits; yet they were so stiff and forced that they seemed as if put into a *vice*. Sir Joshua, with the defect of proportion

and drawing, threw his figures into such natural and graceful attitudes that they might be taken for the very people sitting or standing there. An arm might be too long or too short, but from the apparent ease of the position he had chosen it looked like a real arm, and neither too long nor too short. The mechanical measurements might be wrong, the general conception of nature and character was right; and this, which he felt most strongly himself, he conveyed in a corresponding degree to the spectator. Nature is not one thing, but a variety of things, considered under different points of view; and he who seizes forcibly and happily on any one of these does enough for fame. He will be the most popular artist who gives that view with which the world in general sympathise. A merely professional reputation is not very extensive, nor will it last long. W——, who prided himself on his drawing, had no idea of anything but a certain rigid *outline*, never considering the use of the limbs in moving, the effects of light and shade, &c., so that his figures, even the best of them, look as if cut out of wood. Therefore no one now goes to see them; while Sir Joshua's are as much sought after as ever, from their answering to a feeling in the mind, though deficient as literal representations of external nature. Speaking of artists, who were said, in the cant of connoisseurship, to be jealous of their outline, he said, "Rembrandt was not one of these. He took good care to lose it as fast as he could." Northcote then spoke of the breadth of Titian, and observed that though, particularly in his early pictures, he had finished highly and copied everything from nature, this never interfered with the general effect; there was no confusion or littleness; he threw such a broad light on the objects, that everything was seen in connection with the masses and in its place. He then mentioned some pictures of his own, some of them painted forty years ago, that had lately sold very well at

a sale at Plymouth; he was much gratified at this, and said it was almost like looking out of the grave to see how one's reputation got on.

Northcote told an anecdote of Sir George Beaumont, to show the credulity of mankind. When a young man he put an advertisement in the papers, to say that a Mynheer —, just come over from Germany, had found out a method of taking a likeness much superior to any other by the person's looking into a mirror and having the glass heated so as to bake the impression. He stated this wonderful artist to live at a perfumer's shop in Bond Street, opposite to an hotel where he lodged, and amused himself the next day to see the numbers of people who flocked to have their likenesses taken in this surprising manner. At last he went over himself to ask for Monsieur —, and was driven out of the shop by the perfumer in a rage, who said there was no Monsieur — nor Monsieur *Devil* lived there. At another time Sir George was going in a coach to a tavern with a party of gay young men. The waiter came to the coach-door with a light, and as he was holding this up to the others, those who had already got out went round, and getting in at the opposite coach-door came out again, so that there seemed to be no end to the procession, and the waiter ran into the house, frightened out of his wits. The same story is told of Swift and four clergymen dressed in canonicals.

Speaking of titles, Northcote said: "It was strange what blunders were often made in this way. Riall, (the engraver) had stuck 'Lord John Boringdon' under his print after Sir Joshua—it should be 'John Lord Boringdon'—and he calls the Earl of Carlisle 'Lord Carlisle'—Lord Carlisle denotes only a baron. I was once dining at Sir John Leicester's, and a gentleman who was there was expressing his wonder what connection a Prince of Denmark and a Duke of Gloucester

could have with Queen Anne, that prints of them should be inserted in a history that he had just purchased of her reign. 'No other,' I said, 'than that one of them was her son, and the other her husband.' The boy died when he was eleven years old, of a fever caught at a ball, dancing, or he would have succeeded to the throne. He was a very promising youth, though that indeed is what is said of all princes. Queen Anne took his death greatly to heart, and that was the reason why she never would appoint a successor. She wished her brother to come in, rather than the present family. That makes me wonder, after thrones have been overturned and kingdoms torn asunder to keep the Catholics out, to see the pains that are now taken to bring them in. It was this that made the late King say it was inconsistent with his coronation oath. Not that I object to tolerate any religion (even the Jewish), but they are the only one that will not tolerate any other. They are such devils (what with their cunning, their numbers, and their zeal), that if they once get a footing they will never rest till they get the whole power into their hands. It was but the other day that the Jesuits nearly overturned the empire of China; and if they were obliged to make laws and take the utmost precautions against their crafty encroachments, shall we open a door to them, who have only just escaped out of their hands?" I said I had thrown a radical reformer into a violent passion lately by maintaining that the Pope and cardinals of Rome were a set of as good-looking men as so many Protestant bishops or Methodist parsons, and that the Italians were the only people who seemed to me to have any faith in their religion as an object of imagination or feeling. My opponent grew almost black in the face, while inveighing against the enormous absurdity of transubstantiation; it was in vain I pleaded the beauty, innocence, and cheerfulness of the peasant-girls near Rome, who believed in this dreadful supersti-

tion, and who thought me *damned*, and would probably have been glad to see me burnt at a stake as a heretic. At length I said, that I thought reason and truth very excellent things in themselves, and that when I saw the rest of the world grow as fond of them as they were of absurdity and superstition, I should be entirely of his way of thinking; but I liked an interest in something (a wafer or a crucifix) better than an interest in nothing. What have philosophers gained by unloosing their hold of the *ideal* world, but to be hooted at and pelted by the rabble, and envied and vilified by one another, for want of a common bond of union and interest between them? I just now met the son of an old literary friend in the street, who seemed disposed to *cut* me for some hereditary pique, jealousy, or mistrust. Suppose his father and I had been Catholic priests (saving the *bar sinister*), how different would have been my reception! He is shortsighted, indeed; but had I been a cardinal he would have seen me fast enough; the costume alone would have assisted him. Where there is no framework of respectability founded on the *esprit de corps* and on public opinion cemented into a prejudice, the jarring pretensions of individuals fall into a chaos of elementary particles, neutralising each other by mutual antipathy, and soon become the sport and laughter of the multitude. Where the whole is referred to intrinsic real merit, this creates a standard of conceit, egotism, and envy in every one's own mind, lowering the class, not raising the individual. A Catholic priest walking along the street is looked up to as a link in the chain let down from heaven: a poet or philosopher is looked down upon as a poor creature, deprived of certain advantages, and with very questionable pretensions in other respects. Abstract intellect requires the weight of the other world to be thrown into the scale, to make it a match for the prejudices, vulgarity, ignorance, and selfishness of this.

“You are right,” said Northcote. “It was Archimedes who said he could move the earth if he had a place to fix his levers on: the priests have always found this *purchase* in the skies. After all, we have not much reason to complain, if they give us so splendid a reversion to look forward to. That is what I said to Godwin when he had been trying to unsettle the opinions of a young artist whom I knew:—‘Why should you wish to turn him out of one house till you have provided another for him? Besides, what do you know of the matter more than he does? His nonsense is as good as your nonsense, when both are equally in the dark. As to what your friend said of the follies of the Catholics, I do not think that the Protestants can pretend to be quite free from them.’ So when a chaplain of Lord Bath’s was teasing a Popish clergyman to know how he could make up his mind to admit that absurdity of Transubstantiation, the other made answer, ‘Why, I’ll tell you: when I was young I was taught to swallow Adam’s apple, and since that I have found no difficulty with anything else.’ We may say what we will of the Catholic religion; but it is more easy to abuse than to overturn it. I have for myself no objection to it but its insatiable ambition and its being such a dreadful engine of power. It is its very perfection as a system of profound policy and moral influence that renders it so formidable. Indeed, I have been sometimes suspected of leaning to it myself; and when Godwin wrote his ‘Life of Chaucer,’ he was said to have turned Papist from his making use of something I had said to him about confession. I don’t know but unfair advantage may be taken of it for state purposes; but I cannot help thinking it is of signal benefit in the regulation of private life. If servants have cheated or lied or done anything wrong, they are obliged to tell it to the priest, which makes them bear it in mind, and then a certain penance is assigned which they must

go through, though they do not like it. All this acts as a timely check, which is better than letting them go on till their vices get head, and then hanging them. The great, indeed, may buy themselves off (as where are they not privileged?) but this certainly does not apply to the community at large. I remember our saying to that old man (a Dominican friar whose picture you see there) that we wished he could be made a royal confessor; to which he replied, that he would not for the world be confessor to a king, because it would prevent him from the conscientious discharge of his duty. In former times, in truth, the traffic in indulgences was carried to great lengths; and this it was that broke up the system and gave a handle to the Protestants. The excellence of the scheme produced the power, and then the power led to the abuse of it. Infidel Popes went the farthest in extending the privileges of the Church; and being held back by no scruples of faith or conscience nearly ruined it. When some pious ecclesiastic was insisting to Leo X. on the necessity of reforming certain scandalous abuses, he pointed to a crucifix, and said, 'Behold the fate of a reformer! The system as it is is good enough for us!' They have taken the morality of the Gospel and engrafted upon it a system of superstition and priestcraft; but still perhaps the former prevails over the latter. Even that duty of humanity to animals is beautifully provided for, for on St. Anthony's Day, the patron of animals, the horses, &c. pass under a certain arch, and the priest sprinkles the holy water over them, so that they are virtually taken under the protection of the Church. We think we have a right to treat them anyhow because they have no souls. The Roman Catholic is not a barbarous religion, and it is also much milder than it was. This is a necessary consequence of the state of things. When three Englishmen were presented to Benedict XIV. (Lambertini), who was a man of wit and

letters, he observed to them, smiling, 'I know that you must look upon our religion as false and spurious, but I suppose you will have no objection to receive the blessing of an old man?' When Fuseli and I were there, an Englishman of the name of Brown had taken the pains to convert a Roman artist; the Englishman was sent from Rome and the student was taken to the Inquisition, where he was shown the hooks in the wall and the instruments of torture used in former times, reprimanded, and soon after dismissed." I asked Northcote whereabouts the Inquisition was? He said, "In a street behind the Vatican." He and Mr. Prince Hoare once took shelter in the portico out of a violent shower of rain, and considered it a great piece of inhumanity to be turned out into the street. He then noticed a curious mistake in Mrs. Radcliffe's 'Italian,' where some one is brought from Naples to the Inquisition, and made to enter Rome through the Porto di Popolo, and then the other streets on the English side of Rome are described with great formality; which is as if any one was described as coming by the coach from Exeter, and after entering at Whitechapel, proceeding through Cheapside and the Strand to Charing Cross. Northcote related a story told him by Nollekens of a singular instance of the effects of passion that he saw in the Trastevere, the oldest and most disorderly part of Rome.¹ Two women were quarrelling, when, having used the most opprobrious language, one of them drew a knife from her bosom and tried to plunge it into her rival's breast; but missing her blow, and the other retiring to a short distance and laughing at her, in a fit of impotent rage she struck it into her own bosom. Her passion had been worked up to an uncontrollable pitch, and being disappointed of its first object must find vent somewhere. I remarked it was what we did every

¹ These people are said to be the real descendants of the ancient Romans.

day of our lives in a less degree, according to the vulgar proverb of *cutting off one's nose to spite one's face*.

Northcote then returned to the subject of the sale of his pictures. He said it was a satisfaction, though a melancholy one, to think that one's works might fetch more after one's death than during one's lifetime. He had once shown Farington a landscape of Wilson's, for which a gentleman had given three hundred guineas at the first word; and Farington said he remembered Wilson painting it, and how delighted he was when he got thirty pounds for it. Barrett rode in his coach, while Wilson nearly starved, and was obliged to borrow ten pounds to go and die in Wales; yet he used to say that his pictures would be admired when the name of Barrett was forgotten. Northcote said he also thought it a great hardship upon authors that copyright should be restricted to a few years instead of being continued for the benefit of the family, as in the the case of 'Hudibras,' 'Paradise Lost,' and other works, by which booksellers made fortunes every year, though the descendants of the authors were still living in obscurity and distress. I said that in France a successful drama brought something to the author or his heirs every time it was acted. Northcote seemed to approve of this, and remarked that he always thought it very hard upon Richardson, just at the time he had brought out his 'Pamela' or 'Clarissa,' to have it pirated by an Irish bookseller, through a treacherous servant whom he kept in his shop, and thus to lose all the profits of his immortal labours.

Conversation the Ninth.

NORTHCOTE remarked to-day that artists were more particular than authors as to character—the latter did not seem to care whom they associated with. He (Northcote),

was disposed to attribute this to greater refinement of moral perception in his own profession. I said I thought it was owing to authors being more upon the town than painters, who were dependent upon particular individuals, and in a manner accountable to them for the persons they might be seen in company with or might occasionally bring into contact with them. For instance, I said I thought Haydon was wrong in asking me to his private day where I might meet with Lord M——, who was so loyal a man that he affected not to know that such a person as Admiral Blake had ever existed. On the same principle this noble critic was blind to the merit of Milton, in whom he could see nothing, though Mr. Pitt had been at the pains to repeat several fine passages to him. Northcote said: "It's extraordinary how particular the world sometimes are, and what prejudices they take up against people, even where there is no objection to character, merely on the score of opinion. There is Godwin, who is a very good man; yet when Mr. Haydon and myself wished to introduce him at the house of a lady who lives in a round of society and has a strong tinge of the *bluestocking*, she would not hear of it. The sound of the name seemed to terrify her. It was his *writings* she was afraid of. Even Cosway made a difficulty too."

I replied, "I should not have expected this of him, who was as great a visionary and as violent a politician as anybody could be."

Northcote: "It passed off in Cosway as a whim. He was one of those butterfly characters that nobody minded, so that his opinion went for nothing; but it would not do to bring any one else there, whose opinion might be more regarded and equally unpalatable. Godwin's case is particularly hard in this respect: he is a profligate in theory and a bigot in conduct. He does not seem at all to practise what he preaches, though this does not

appear to avail him anything." "Yes," I said, "he writes against himself. He has written against matrimony, and has been twice married. He has scouted all commonplace duties, and yet is a good husband and a kind father. He is a strange composition of contrary qualities. He is a cold formalist and full of ardour and enthusiasm of mind; dealing in magnificent projects and petty cavils; naturally dull, and brilliant by dint of study; pedantic and playful; a dry logician, and a writer of romances."

"You describe him," said Northcote, "as I remember Baretti once did Sir Joshua Reynolds at his own table, saying to him, 'You are extravagant and mean, generous and selfish, envious and candid, proud and humble, a genius and a mere ordinary mortal, at the same time.' I may not remember his exact words, but that was their effect. The fact was, Sir Joshua was a mixed character, like the rest of mankind in that respect, but knew his own failings, and was on his guard to keep them back as much as possible, though the defects would break out sometimes." "Godwin, on the contrary," I said, "is aiming to let his out, and to magnify them into virtues in a kind of hotbed of speculation. He is shocking on paper and tame in reality."

"How is that?" said Northcote.

"Why, I think it is easy enough to be accounted for; he is naturally a cold speculative character, and indulges in certain metaphysical extravagances as an agreeable exercise for the imagination, which alarm persons of a grosser temperament, but to which he attaches no practical consequences whatever. So it has been asked how some very immoral or irreligious writers, such as Helvetius and others, have been remarked to be men of good moral character; and I think the answer is the same. Persons of a studious phlegmatic disposition can with impunity give a licence to their thoughts which

they are under no temptation to reduce into practice. The sting is taken out of evil by their constitutional indifference, and they look on virtue and vice as little more than words without meaning, or the black and white pieces of a chess-board, in combining which the same skill and ingenuity may be shown. More depraved and combustible temperaments are warned of the danger of any latitude of opinion by their very proneness to mischief, and are forced by a secret consciousness to impose the utmost restraint both upon themselves and others. The greatest prudes are not always supposed to be the greatest enemies to pleasure. Besides, authors are very much confined by habit to a life of study and speculation, sow their wild oats in their books, and, unless where their passions are very strong indeed, take their swing in theory, and conform in practice to the ordinary rules and examples of the world."

Northcote said: "Certainly people are tenacious of appearances in proportion to the depravity of manners, as we may see in the simplicity of country places. To be sure, a rake like Hodge in 'Love in a Village' gets amongst them now and then; but in general they do many gross things without the least notion of impropriety, as if vice were a thing they had no more to do with than children." He then mentioned an instance of some young country people who had to sleep on the floor in the same room, and they parted the men from the women by some sacks of corn, which served for a line of demarcation and an inviolable partition between them. I told Northcote a story of a countrywoman who, coming to an inn in the West of England, wanted a bed; and being told they had none to spare still persisted, till the landlady said in a joke, "I tell you, good woman, I have none, unless you can prevail with the ostler to give you half of his." "Well," she said, "if he is a sober prudent man, I should not mind."

Something was then said of the manners of people abroad, who sometimes managed to unite an absence of *mauvaise honte* with what could hardly be construed into an ignorance of vice. The Princess Borghese (Buonaparte's sister), who was no saint, sat to Canova for a model, and being asked, "If she did not feel a little uncomfortable," answered "No, there was a fire in the room."

"Custom," said Northcote, "makes a wonderful difference in taking off the sharpness of the first inflammable impression. People, for instance, were mightily shocked when they first heard that the boys at the Academy drew from a living model. But the effect almost immediately wears off with them. It is exactly like copying from a statue. The stillness, the artificial light, the attention to what they are about, the publicity even, draws off any idle thoughts, and they regard the figure, and point out its defects or beauties, precisely as if it were of clay or marble." I said I had perceived this effect myself—that the anxiety to copy the object before one deadened every other feeling; but as this drew to a close, the figure seemed almost like something coming to life again, and that this was a very critical minute. He said he found the students sometimes watched the women out, though they were not of a very attractive appearance, as none but those who were past their prime would sit in this way; they look upon it as an additional disgrace to what their profession imposed upon them, and as something unnatural. One in particular (he remembered) always came in a mask. Several of the young men in his time had however been lured into a course of dissipation and ruined by such connections; one in particular, a young fellow of great promise, but affected, and who thought that profligacy was a part of genius. I said it was the easiest part. This was an advantage foreign art had over ours. A battered courtesan sat for Sir Joshua's

Iphigene; innocent girls sat for Canova's Graces, as I had been informed.

Northcote asked if I had sent my son to school? I said I thought of the Charterhouse, if I could compass it. I liked those old-established places, where learning grew for hundreds of years, better than any newfangled experiments or modern seminaries. He inquired if I had ever thought of putting him to school on the Continent; to which I answered, No, for I wished him to have an idea of home before I took him abroad; by beginning in the contrary method, I thought I deprived him both of the habitual attachment to the one and of the romantic pleasure in the other. Northcote observed there were very fine schools at Rome in his time; one was an Italian, and another a Spanish college, at the last of which they acted plays of Voltaire, such as *Zara*, *Mahomet*, &c., at some of which he had been present. The hall that served for the theatre was beautifully decorated; and just as the curtain was about to draw up, a hatchway was opened and showered down play-bills on their heads with the names of the actors; such a part being by a Spanish grandee of the first class, another by a Spanish grandee of the second class, and they were covered with jewels of the highest value. Several cardinals were also present (who did not attend the public theatres), and it was easy to gain admittance from the attention always shown to strangers. Northcote then spoke of the courtesy and decorum of the Roman clergy in terms of warm praise, and said he thought it in a great measure owing to the conclave being composed of dignitaries of all nations, Spanish, German, Italian, which merged individual asperities and national prejudices in a spirit of general philanthropy and mutual forbearance. I said I had never met with a look from a Catholic priest (from the highest to the lowest) that seemed to reproach me with being a

tramontane. This absence of all impertinence was to me the first of virtues. He repeated, I have no fault to find with Italy. There may be vice in Rome, as in all great capitals (though I did not see it); but in Parma and the remoter towns, they seem all like one great and exemplary family. Their kindness to strangers was remarkable. He said he had himself travelled all the way from Lyons to Genoa, and from Genoa to Rome, without speaking a word of the language and in the power of a single person, without meeting with the smallest indignity; and everywhere, both at the inns and on the road, every attention was paid to his feelings, and pains taken to alleviate the uncomfortableness of his situation. Set a Frenchman down in England to go from London to York in the same circumstances, and see what treatment he will be exposed to. He recollected a person of the name of Gogain, who had been educated in France and could not speak English; on landing, he held out half-a-guinea to pay the boatman, who had rowed him only about twenty yards from the vessel, which the fellow put in his pocket and left him without a single farthing. Abroad, he would have been had before the magistrate for such a thing, and probably sent to the galleys. There is a qualifying property in nature that makes most things equal. In England they cannot drag you out of your bed to a scaffold, or take an estate from you without some reason assigned; but as the law prevents any flagrant acts of injustice, so it makes it more difficult to obtain redress. "We pay," continued Northcote, "for every advantage we possess by the loss of some other. Poor Goblet, the other day, after making himself a drudge to Nollekens all his life, with difficulty recovered eight hundred pounds compensation; and though he was clearly entitled, by the will, to the models which the sculptor left behind him, he was afraid to risk the law expenses, and gave it up." Some person

had been remarking, that every one had a right to leave his property to whom he pleased. "Not," said Northcote, "when he had promised it to another." I asked if Mr. — was not the same person I had once seen come into his painting-room, in a rusty black coat and brown worsted stockings, very much with the air of a man who carries a pistol in an inside pocket? He said, "It might be: he was a dull man, but a great scholar—one of those described in the epigram—

" 'Oh ho! quoth Time to Thomas Hearne,
Whatever I forget, you learn.' "

We then alluded to an attack of Cobbett's on some spruce legacy-hunter, quoted in the last Sunday's *Examiner*; and Northcote spoke in raptures of the power in Cobbett's writings, and asked me if I had ever seen him. I said I had, for a short time; that he called *rogue* and *scoundrel* at every second word in the coolest way imaginable, and went on just the same in a room as on paper.

I returned to what Northcote lately said of his travels in Italy, and asked if there were fine Titians at Genoa or Naples. "Oh, yes!" he said, "heaps at the latter place. Titian had painted them for one of the Farnese family; and when the second son succeeded the eldest as King of Spain, the youngest, who was Prince of Parma, went to Naples, and took them with him. There is that fine one (which you have heard me speak of) of Paul III., and his two natural sons or nephews, as they were called. My God! what a look it has! The old man is sitting in his chair and looking up to one of the sons, with his hands grasping the armchair, and his long spider fingers, and seems to say (as plain as words can speak), 'You wretch! what do you want now?'—while the young fellow is advancing with a humble hypocritical air. It is true history, as Fuseli said, and indeed

it turned out so; for the son (or nephew) was afterwards thrown out of the palace-windows by the mob and torn to pieces by them." In speaking of the different degrees of information abroad, he remarked, "One of the persons where I lodged at Rome did not even know the family name of the reigning Pope, and only spoke of him as the *Papa*; another person, who was also my landlady, knew all their history, and could tell me the names of the cardinals from my describing their coats-of-arms to her."

Northcote related an anecdote of Mr. Moore (brother of the General), who was on board an English frigate in the American war, and coming in sight of another vessel which did not answer their signals, they expected an action, when the Captain called his men together, and addressed them in the following manner: "You dirty ill-looking blackguards! do you suppose I can agree to deliver up such a set of scarecrows as you as prisoners to that smart frippery Frenchman? I can't think of such a thing. No, by G—d! you must fight till not a man of you is left, for I should be ashamed of owning such a ragamuffin crew!" This was received with loud shouts and assurances of victory; but the vessel turned out to be an English one.

I asked if he had seen the American novels, in one of which ('The Pilot') there was an excellent description of an American privateer expecting the approach of an English man-of-war in a thick fog, when some one saw what appeared to be a bright cloud rising over the fog; but it proved to be the topsail of a seventy-four. Northcote thought this was striking, but had not seen the book. "Was it one of Irving's?"¹ Oh no! He is a mere trifler—a filigree man—an English *littérateur* at second-hand; but 'The Pilot' gave a true and unvarnished picture of American character and manners. The storm, the fight, the whole account of the ship's crew, and in

¹ By the late Fenimore Cooper.—Ed.

particular of an old boatswain, were done to the life—
everything

‘Suffered a sea-change
Into something new and strange.’

On land he did not do so well. The fault of American literature (when not a mere vapid imitation of ours) was, that it ran too much into dry, minute, literal description; or if it made an effort to rise above this ground of matter-of-fact, it was forced and exaggerated, “horrors accumulating on horror’s head.” They had *no natural imagination*. This was likely to be the case in a new country like America, where there were no dim traces of the past—no venerable monuments—no romantic associations; where all (except the physical) remained to be created, and where fiction, if they attempted it, would take as preposterous and extravagant a shape as their local descriptions were jejune and servile. Cooper’s novels and Brown’s romances (something on the model of Godwin’s) were the two extremes.

Some remark was made on the failure of a great bookseller,¹ and on the supposition that now we should find out the author of the Scotch novels. “Ay,” said Northcote, “we shall find more than one.” I said, I thought not; to say nothing of the beauties, the peculiarities of style and grammar in every page proved them to be by the same hand. Nobody else could write so well—or so ill, in point of mere negligence. Northcote said, “It was a pity he should fling away a fortune twice. There were some people who could not keep money when they had got it. It was a kind of incontinence of the purse. Zoffani did the same thing. He made a fortune in England by his pictures, which he soon got rid of, and another in India which went the same way.”

We somehow got from Sir Walter to the Queen’s trial, and the scenes at Brandenburg House. I said they were

¹ Ballantyne.—Ed.

a strong illustration of that instinct of servility, that *hankering* after rank and power, which appeared to me to be the base part of human nature. Here were all the patriots and Jacobins of London and Westminster, who scorned and hated the King, going to pay their homage to the Queen, and ready to worship the very rags of royalty. The wives and daughters of popular caricaturists and of forgotten demagogues were ready to pull caps in the presence-chamber for precedence, till they were parted by Mr. Alderman Wood. Every fool must go to kiss hands; "our maid's aunt of Brentford" must sip loyalty from the Queen's hand! That was the true court, to which *they* were admitted; the instant there was the smallest opening, all must in, *tag-rag and bobtail*. All the fierceness of independence and all the bristling prejudices of popular jealousy were smoothed down in a moment by the velvet touch of the Queen's hand! No matter what else she was (whether her cause was right or wrong)—it was the mock equality with sovereign rank, the acting in a farce of state, that was the secret charm. That was what drove them mad. The world must have something to admire; and the more worthless and stupid their idol is the better, provided it is fine: for it equally flatters their appetite for wonder, and hurts their self-love less. This is the reason why people formerly were so fond of idols: they fell down and worshipped them, and made others do the same, for theatrical effect; while, all the while, they knew they were but wood and stone painted over. We in modern times have got from the *dead* to the *living* idol, and bow to hereditary imbecility. The less of genius and virtue the greater our self-complacency. We do not care how high the elevation, so that it is wholly undeserved. True greatness excites our envy; mere rank, our unqualified respect. That is the reason of our antipathy to new-made dynasties, and of our acquiescence in old-

established despotism. We think *we* could sit upon a throne, if we had had the good luck to be born to one; but we feel we have neither talent nor courage to raise ourselves. If any one does, he seems to have got the start of us, and we are glad to pull him back again. I remember Mr. Railton of Liverpool¹ (a very excellent man and a good patriot), saying many years ago, in reference to Buonaparte and George III., that "the superiority of rank was quite enough for him, without the intellectual superiority." That is what has made so many renegades and furious anti-Buonapartists among our poets and politicians, because he got before them in the race of power. Northcote: "And the same thing made *you* stick to him, because you thought he was your fellow. It is wonderful how much of our virtues, as well as of our vices, is referable to self. Did you ever read Rochefoucault?"—Yes. "And don't you think he is right?"—In a great measure; but I like Mandeville better. He goes more into his subject. "Oh! he is a devil. There is a description of a clergyman's hand he has given, which I have always had in my eye whenever I have had to paint a fine gentleman's hand. I thought him too metaphysical, but it is long since I read him. His book was burnt by the common hangman, was it not?" Yes; but he did not at all like this circumstance, and is always recurring to it. "No one can like this kind of condemnation, because every sensible man knows he is not a judge in his own cause, and besides is conscious, if the verdict were on the other side, how ready he would be to catch at it as decisive in his favour." He said it was amusing to see the way in which he fell upon Steele, Shaftesbury, and other amiable writers, and the terror you were in for your favourites, just as when

¹ With whose daughter Mr. Hazlitt was once in love. See her portrait by John Hazlitt engraved in the 'Memoirs of W. H.' 1867, vol. ii. p. 13.—ED.

a hawk is hovering over and going to pounce upon some of the more harmless feathered tribe. He added, "It was surprising how Swift had escaped with so little censure; but the 'Gulliver's Travels' passed off as a story-book, and you might say in verse what you would be pelted for in plain prose. The same thing you have observed in politics may be observed in religion too. You see the anxiety to divide and bring nearer to our own level. The Creator of the universe is too high an object for us to approach; the Catholics therefore have introduced the Virgin Mary and a host of saints, with whom their votaries feel more at their ease and on a par. The real object of worship is kept almost out of sight. Dignum the singer (who is a Catholic) was arguing on this subject with some one who wanted to convert him, and he replied in his own defence, "If you had a favour to ask of some great person would you not first apply to a common friend to intercede for you?" In some part of the foregoing conversation, Northcote remarked that "West used to say, you could always tell the highest nobility at court from their profound humility to the King: the others kept at a distance, and did not seem to care about it. The more the former raised the highest person, the more they raised themselves, who were next in point of rank. They had a greater interest in the question; and the King would have a greater jealousy of them than of others. When B—— was painting the Queen, with whom he used to be quite familiar, he was one day surprised, when the Prince Regent came into the room, to see the profound homage and dignified respect with which he approached her. 'Good God!' said he to himself, 'here is the second person in the kingdom comes into the room in this manner, while I have been using the greatest freedoms!' To be sure that was the very reason: the second person in the kingdom wished to invest the first with all possible respect, so much of

which was naturally reflected back upon himself. B—— had nothing to lose or gain in this game of royal ceremony, and was accordingly treated as a cypher.”

Conversation the Tenth.

NORTHCOTE showed me a printed circular from the Academy, with blanks to be filled up by Academicians, recommending young students to draw. One of these related to an assurance as to the moral character of the candidate; Northcote said, “What can I know about that? This zeal for morality begins with inviting me to tell a lie. I know whether he can draw or not, because he brings me specimens of his drawings; but what am I to know of the moral character of a person I have never seen before? Or what business have the Academy to inquire into it? I suppose they are not afraid he will steal the Farnese Hercules; and as to idleness and debauchery, he will not be cured of these by cutting him off from the pursuit of a study on which he has set his mind and in which he has a fair chance to succeed. I told one of them, with as grave a face as I could, that as to his moral character he must go to his godfathers and godmothers for that. He answered, very simply, that they were a great way off, and that he had nobody to appeal to but his apothecary. The Academy is not an institution for the suppression of vice, but for the encouragement of the fine arts. Why then go out of their way to meddle with what was provided for by other means—the law and the pulpit? It would not have happened in Sir Joshua’s time,” continued Northcote, “nor even in Fuseli’s: but the present men are ‘dressed in a little brief authority,’ and they wish to make the most of it, without perceiving the limits. No good can possibly come of this *busybody* spirit. The dragging

morality into everything, in season and out of season, is only giving a handle to hypocrisy, and turning virtue into a byword for impertinence."

Here Northcote stopped suddenly to ask if there was not such a word as "rivulet" in the language? I said it was as much a word in the language as it was a thing in itself. He replied, it was not to be found in Johnson; the word was "riveret" there. I thought this must be in some of the new editions; Dr. Johnson would have knocked anybody down who had used the word "riveret." It put me in mind of a story of Young the actor, who being asked how he was, made answer that he had been indisposed for some days with a *feveret*. The same person, speaking of the impossibility of escaping from too great publicity, related an anecdote of his being once in a remote part of the Highlands, and seeing an old gentleman fishing he went up to inquire some particulars as to the mode of catching the salmon at what are called "salmon-leaps." The old gentleman began his reply, "Why, Mr. Young," at which the actor started back in great surprise. "Good God!" said Northcote, "did he consider this as a matter of wonder, that after showing himself on a stage for a number of years people should know his face? If an artist or an author were recognised in that manner it might be a proof of celebrity, because it would show that they had been sought for; but an actor is so much seen in public that it is no wonder he is known by all the world. I once went with Opie in the stage-coach to Exeter; and when we parted, he to go on to Cornwall and I to Plymouth, there was a young gentleman in the coach who asked me who it was that I had been conversing with.' I said it was Mr. Opie the painter; at which he expressed the greatest surprise, and was exceedingly concerned to think he had not known it before. I did not tell him who I was, to see if my name would electrify him in the same manner,

That brings to my mind the story I perhaps may have told you before of a Mr. A—— and Dr. Pennick of the Museum. They got into some quarrel at the theatre, and the former, presenting his card, said with great pomposity, 'My name is A——, sir;' to which the other answered, 'I hear it, sir, and am not terrified!'" I asked if this was the A—— who fought the duel with F——. He said he could not tell; but he was our ambassador to some of the petty German States.

A country gentleman came in, who complimented Northcote on his pictures of animals and birds, which I knew he would not like. He muttered something when he was gone, in allusion to the proverb of *giving snuff to a cat*. Afterwards, a miniature painter brought some copies he had made of a portrait of a young lady by Northcote. They were really very well, and we learned he was to have five guineas for the larger size and two for the smaller ones. I could now account for the humility and shabby appearance of the artist. He paid his court better than his rustic predecessor; for being asked by Northcote if the portrait of the young lady was approved, he said the mother had told him, before she engaged him to copy it, that "it was one of the *loveliest* pictures (that was her expression) that had ever been seen!" This praise was better relished than that of his dogs and parrots.

I took notice to Northcote that the man had a very good head, but that he put me in mind of the state and pretensions of the art, before artists wrote "Esquire" after their names. He said, "Yes, he was like Andrew Taffi, or some of those in Vasari." I observed how little he was paid for what he really did so well; to which Northcote merely replied, "In all things that are not necessary those in the second class must always be miserably paid. Copying pictures is like plain-work among women; it is what anybody can do, and therefore

nothing but a bare living is to be got by it." He added that the young lady, whose portrait her family was so anxious to have copied, was dead, and this was a kind of diversion to their grief. It was a very natural mode of softening it down; it was still recurring to the object of their regret and yet dwelling on it in an agreeable point of view. "The wife of General H——," he continued, "many years ago came to me to do a picture of her son, a lieutenant in the navy, who was killed in battle, but whom I had never seen. There was no picture of him to go by, but she insisted on my doing one under her direction. I attempted a profile, as the easiest; and she sat behind me and sang in a soft manner to herself, and told me what I was to do. It was a wretched business, as you may suppose, being made out from description; but she would have it to be a great likeness, and brought all the family and even the servants to see it, who probably did not dare to be of a different opinion. I said to her, 'What a pity it was Sir Joshua had not done a portrait of him in his lifetime!' At this she expressed great contempt, and declared she would not give twopence for all Sir Joshua's pictures; indeed, she had one which I was very welcome to have if I chose to come for it. I lost no time in going to her house, and when I came there she led me up into an old garret which was used as a lumber-room, and taking it carefully out of a shabby frame not worth a groat, said, 'There, take it, I am not sorry to get it out of the house.' I asked what it was that made her so indifferent about this picture, and she answered, 'It was a likeness of a young gentleman who had been kind enough to die, by which means the estate came to the General.' She spoke in this unfeeling manner though her own son had just died in the same circumstances; and she had had a monument made for him, and strewed flowers upon it, and made such a *fuss* about his death,

that she would hardly have known what to do if he had come to life again!" I asked what was her reason for disliking Reynolds' pictures? "Oh! that was her ignorance, she did not know why."

Northcote said: "Godwin called here with his daughter. I asked her about Lord Byron; she said his temper was so bad that nobody could live with him. The only way to pass the day tolerably well with him was to contradict him the first thing in the morning. I have known tempers of that kind myself; you must quarrel with them in order to be friends. If you did not conquer them they would conquer you." Something was observed about Byron and Tom Paine, as to their attacks upon religion; and I said that sceptics and philosophical unbelievers appeared to me to have just as little liberality or enlargement of view as the most bigoted fanatic. They could not bear to make the least concession to the opposite side. They denied the argument that because the Scriptures were fine they were therefore of Divine origin, and yet they virtually admitted it; for, not believing their truth, they thought themselves bound to maintain that they were good for nothing. I had once, I said, given great offence to a knot of persons of this description by contending that Jacob's dream was finer than anything in Shakspeare, and that Hamlet would bear no comparison with, at least one character in the New Testament. A young poet had said on this occasion he did not like the Bible, because there was nothing about flowers in it; and I asked him if he had forgot that passage, "Behold the lilies of the field," &c.? "Yes," said Northcote; "and in the Psalms and in the Book of Job there are passages of unrivalled beauty. In the latter there is the description of the war-horse, that has been so often referred to, and of the days of Job's prosperity; and in the Psalms, I think, there is that passage, 'He openeth his hands,

and the earth is filled with plenteousness; he turneth away his face, and we are troubled; he hideth himself, and we are left in darkness.' Or again, how fine is that expression, 'All the beasts of the forest are mine, and so are the cattle upon a thousand hills!' What an expanse, and what a grasp of the subject! Everything is done upon so large a scale, and yet with such ease, as if seen from the highest point of view. It has mightily a look of inspiration or of being dictated by a superior intelligence. They say mere English readers cannot understand Homer, because it is a translation; but why will it not bear a translation as well as the Book of Job, if it is as fine? In Shakspeare, undoubtedly, there is a prodigious variety and force of human character and passion, but he does not take us out of ourselves; he has a wonderful, almost a miraculous, fellow-feeling with human nature in every possible way, but that is all. 'Macbeth' is full of sublimity, but the sublimity is that of the earth, it does not reach to heaven. It is a still stronger objection that is made to Hogarth; he, too, gave the incidents and characters of human life with infinite truth and ability; but then it was in the lowest forms of all, and he could not rise even to common dignity or beauty. There is a faculty that enlarges and beautifies objects, even beyond nature. It is for this reason that we must, reluctantly perhaps, give the preference to Milton over Shakspeare; for his Paradise (to go no further) is certainly a scene of greater beauty and happiness than was ever found on earth, though so vividly described that we easily make the transition, and transport ourselves there. It is the same difference that there is between Raphael and Michael Angelo, though Raphael, too, in many of his works merited the epithet of *divine*." I mentioned some lines from Shakspeare I had seen quoted in a translation of a French work, and applied to those who adhered to Buonaparte in his misfortunes:

“———He that can endure
To follow with allegiance a fallen lord
Does conquer him that did his master conquer,
And earns a place i' the story.”

I said I was struck to see how finely they came in. “Oh!” replied Northcote, “if they were Shakspeare’s, they were sure to be fine. What a power there always is in any *bit* brought in from him or Milton among other things! How it shines like a jewel! I think Milton reads best in this way; he is too fine for a continuance. Don’t you think Shakspeare and the writers of that day had a prodigious advantage in using phrases and combinations of style which could not be admitted now that the language is reduced to a more precise and uniform standard, but which yet have a peculiar force and felicity when they can be justified by the privilege of age?” He said he had been struck with this idea lately in reading an old translation of Boccaccio (about the time of Queen Elizabeth), in which the language, though quaint, had often a beauty that could not well be conveyed in any modern translation.

He spoke of Lord Byron’s notions about Shakspeare. I said I did not care much about his opinions. Northcote replied, they were evidently capricious, and taken up in the spirit of contradiction. I said, not only so (as far as I can judge), but without any better-founded ones in his own mind. They appear to me conclusions without premisses or any previous process of thought or inquiry. I like old opinions with new reasons, not new opinions without any—not mere *ipse dixit*. He was too arrogant to assign a reason to others or to need one for himself. It was quite enough that he subscribed to any assertion, to make it clear to the world, as well as binding on his valet!

Northcote said there were people who could not argue. Fuseli was one of these. He could throw out very brilliant

and striking things, but if you at all questioned him, he could no more give an answer than a child of three years old. He had no resources, nor any *corps de reserve* of argument beyond his first line of battle. That was imposing and glittering enough. Neither was Lord Byron a philosopher, with all his sententiousness and force of expression. Probably one ought not to expect the two things together; for to produce a startling and immediate effect one must keep pretty much upon the surface, and the search after truth is a very slow and obscure process.

Conversation the Eleventh.

As soon as I went in to-day, Northcote asked me if that was *my* character of Shakspeare which had been quoted in a newspaper the day before? It was so like what he had thought a thousand times that he could almost swear he had written it himself. I said, No; it was from Kendall's 'Letters on Ireland;' though I believe I had expressed nearly the same idea in print. I had seen the passage myself, and hardly knew at first whether to be pleased or vexed at it. It was provoking to have one's words taken out of one's mouth as it were by another; and yet it seemed also an encouragement to reflect, that if one only threw one's bread upon the waters, one was sure to find it again after many days. The world, if they do not listen to an observation the first time, will listen to it at secondhand from those who have a more agreeable method of insinuating it, or who do not tell them too many truths at once. Northcote said, he thought the account undoubtedly just, to whomever it belonged.¹

¹ "Shakspeare's verses are not exactly 'wood-notes wild.' He was indebted to a most extensive reading at the same time as to a most transcendent genius. He did not pique himself upon originality, but sat down to write his plays for the simple purpose of the moment, and without a glimpse or an ambition of the immortality

The greatest genius (such as that of Shakspeare) implied the greatest power, and this implied the greatest ease and unconsciousness of effort, or of anything extraordinary effected. As this writer stated, "He would as soon think of being vain of putting one foot before another, as of writing 'Macbeth' or 'Hamlet.'" Or, as Hudibras has expressed it, poetry was to him

"—a thing no more difficile
Than to a blackbird 'tis to whistle."

which they were to acquire. He made use of whatever he recollected and thought desirable, with the contrivance of an ordinary playwright, and only grew original and vast and exquisite in spite of himself. If it be true that 'he wrote, not for an age, but for all time,' still there was no one who knew less of that fact than he! He imagined himself writing only for the day before him; and it is to this very circumstance that we owe the ease, the flashes, and the soarings of his spirit. He was never overpowered by the intended loftiness of the occasion. He made no efforts that were laborious, because his mind was always superior to his object, and never bowed down to it. He possessed, too, that affluence of genius which rendered him not only prodigal in its use, but almost unacquainted with its existence. He never stood upon its dignity; he was never fearful of its loss nor of its denial. The Swan of Avon, like the swans from which poets derive their title, was all strength and grace and beauty, without a consciousness of either. And this character of his genius accords with that character of facility, of gentleness, and of unostentation which his biographer ascribes to the man. He knew of nothing within himself of which he felt it worth while to be vain. He would as soon have been vain of his power to put one foot before another, as of his power to write the 'Tempest' or 'Macbeth.' It belongs, in the midst of abundance, to GENIUS AS BEAUTY, to be thoughtless of itself. It is only for the dull and the ugly—or at least for those in whom the claims to beauty or to genius are equivocal—to be for ever contemplating either in themselves, or for ever demanding the acknowledgments of others. With the plenary possessors the luxury is too common, too much of everyday wear, to fix their attention. The restlessness of the remainder is the restlessness of poverty, and contrasts itself with the carelessness of riches."—*Kendall's Letters on Ireland* (circa 1818).

“This (said he) is what I have always said of Correggio's style, that he could not help it: it was his nature. Besides, use familiarises us to everything. How could Shakspeare be expected to be astonished at what he did every day? No; he was thinking either merely of the subject before him, or of gaining his bread. It is only upstarts or pretenders who do not know what to make of their good fortune or undeserved reputation. It comes to the same thing that I have heard my brother remark with respect to my father and old Mr. Tolcher, whose picture you see there. He had a great friendship for my father and a great opinion of his integrity; and whenever he came to see him always began with saying, ‘Well, honest Mr. Samuel Northcote, how do you?’ This he repeated so often, and they were so used to it, that my brother said they became like words of course, and conveyed no more impression of anything peculiar than if he had merely said, ‘Well, good Mr. Northcote, *et cetera,*’ or used any common expression. So Shakspeare was accustomed to write his fine speeches till he ceased to wonder at them himself, and would have been surprised to find that you did.”

The conversation now turned on an answer in a newspaper to Canning's assertion that “Slavery was not inconsistent with the spirit of Christianity, inasmuch as it was the beauty of Christianity to accommodate itself to all conditions and circumstances.” Did Canning mean to say, because Christianity accommodated itself to or made the best of all situations it did not therefore give the preference to any? Because it recommended mildness and fortitude under sufferings, did it not therefore condemn the infliction of them? Or did it not forbid injustice and cruelty in the strongest terms? This were indeed a daring calumny on its founder: it were an insolent irony. Don Quixote would not have said so. It was like the Italian banditti, who when

they have cut off the ears of their victims make them go down on their knees and return thanks to an image of the Virgin Mary for the favour they have done them. It was because such things do exist that Christ came to set his face against them, and to establish the maxim, "Do unto others as you would that they should do unto you." If Mr. Canning will say that the masters would like to be treated as they treat their slaves, then he may say that slavery is consistent with the spirit of Christianity. No; the meaning of those maxims of forbearance and submission, which the Quakers have taken too literally, is, that you are not to drive out one devil by another; it aims at discouraging a resort to violence and anger, for if the temper it inculcates could become universal, there would be no injuries to resent. It objects against the power of the sword, but it is to substitute a power ten thousand times stronger than the sword—that which subdues and conquers the affections, and strikes at the very root and thought of evil. All that is meant by such sayings as that if a person "smites us on one cheek we are to turn to him the other," is, that we are to keep as clear as possible of a disposition to retaliate and exasperate injuries; or there is a Spanish proverb which explains this, that says, "*It is he who gives the second blow that begins the quarrel.*"

On my referring to what had been sometimes asserted of the inefficiency of pictures in Protestant churches, Northcote said he might be allowed to observe in favour of his own art, that though they might not strike at first, from a difference in our own belief, yet they would gain upon the spectator by force of habit. The practice of image-worship was probably an afterthought of the Papists themselves, from seeing the effects produced on the minds of the rude and ignorant by visible representations of saints and martyrs. The rulers of the Church at first only thought to amuse and attract the people by

pictures and statues (as they did by music and rich dresses, from which no inference was to be drawn); but when these representations of sacred subjects were once placed before the senses of an uninstructed but imaginative people, they looked at them with wonder and eagerness, till they began to think they saw them move; and then miracles were worked; and as this became a source of wealth and great resort to the several shrines and churches, every means were used to encourage the superstition and a belief in the supernatural virtues of the objects by the clergy and government. So he thought that if pictures were set up in our churches they would by degrees inspire the mind with all the feelings of awe or interest that were necessary or proper. It was less difficult to excite enthusiasm than to keep it under due restraint. So in Italy, the higher powers did not much relish those processions of naked figures, taken from scriptural stories (such as Adam and Eve), on particular holidays, for they led to scandal and abuse; but they fell in with the humour of the rabble, and were lucrative to the lower orders of priests and friars, and the Pope could not expressly discountenance them. He said we were in little danger (either from our religion or temperament) of running into those disgraceful and fanciful extremes, but should rather do everything in our power to avoid the opposite error of a dry and repulsive asceticism. We *could not* give too much encouragement to the fine arts.

Our talk of to-day concluded by his saying that he often blamed himself for uttering what might be thought harsh things; and that on mentioning this once to Kemble, and saying it sometimes kept him from sleep after he had been out in company, Kemble had replied, "Oh! you need not trouble yourself so much about them: others never think of them afterwards."

Conversation the Twelfth.

NORTHCOTE was painting from a little girl when I went in. B—— was there. Something was said of a portrait of Dunning by Sir Joshua (an unfinished head), and B—— observed, "Ah! my good friend, if you and I had known at that time what those things would fetch, we might have made our fortunes now. By laying out a few pounds on the loose sketches and sweepings of the lumber-room we might have made as many hundreds."

"Yes," said Northcote, "it was thought they would soon be forgot, and they went for nothing on that account; but they are more sought after than ever, because those imperfect hints and studies seem to bring one more in contact with the artist, and explain the process of his mind in the several stages. A finished work is in a manner detached from and independent of its author, like a child that can go alone: in the other case it seems to be still in progress, and to await his hand to finish it; or we supply the absence of well-known excellences out of our own imagination, so that we have a two-fold property in it."

Northcote read something out of a newspaper about the Suffolk Street Exhibition, in which his own name was mentioned, and M——'s, the landscape painter. B—— said his pictures were a trick—a streak of red and a streak of blue. But, said Northcote, there is some merit in finding out a new trick. I ventured to hint that the receipt for his was, clouds upon mountains, and mountains upon clouds—that there was number and quantity, but neither form nor colour. He appeared to me an instance of a total want of imagination; he mistook the character of the feelings associated with everything, and I mentioned as an instance his Adam and Eve, which had been much admired, but which was a

panoramic view of the map of Asia, instead of a representation of our first parents in Paradise.

After B—— was gone, we spoke of X——.¹ I regretted his want of delicacy towards the public as well as towards his private friends. I did not think he had failed so much from want of capacity as from attempting to bully the public into a premature or overstrained admiration of him, instead of gaining ground upon them by improving on himself; and he now felt the ill effects of the reaction of this injudicious proceeding. He had no real love of his art, and therefore did not apply or give his whole mind sedulously to it; and was more bent on bespeaking notoriety beforehand by puffs and announcements of his works, than on giving them that degree of perfection which would ensure lasting reputation. No one would ever attain the highest excellence who had so little nervous sensibility as to take credit for it (either with himself or others) without being at the trouble of producing it. It was securing the reward in the first instance; and afterwards, it would be too much to expect the necessary exertion or sacrifices. Unlimited credit was as dangerous to success in art as in business. “And yet he still finds dupes,” said Northcote; to which I replied, it was impossible to resist him, as long as you kept on terms with him: any difference of opinion or reluctance on your part made no impression on him, and unless you quarrelled with him downright you must do as he wished you. “And how then,” said Northcote, “do you think it possible for a person of this hard unyielding disposition to be a painter, where everything depends on seizing the nicest inflections of feeling and the most evanescent shades of beauty?”

“No! I'll tell you why he cannot be a painter. He has not virtue enough. No one can give out to others

¹ Probably Haydon is here meant.—ED.

what he has not in himself, and there is nothing in his mind to delight or captivate the world. I will not deny the mechanical dexterity, but he fails in the mental part. There was Sir Peter Lely: he is full of defects; but he was the fine gentleman of his age, and you see this character stamped on every one of his works; even his errors prove it; and this is one of those things that the world receive with gratitude. Sir Joshua again was not without his faults: he had not grandeur, but he was a man of a mild, bland, amiable character; and this predominant feeling appears so strongly in his works that you cannot mistake it; and this is what makes them so delightful to look at, and constitutes their charm to others, even without their being conscious of it. There was such a look of nature too. I remember once going through a suite of rooms where they were showing me several fine Vandykes; and we came to one where there were some children, by Sir Joshua, seen through a door—it was like looking at the reality, they were so full of life—the branches of the trees waved over their heads, and the fresh air seemed to play on their cheeks—I soon forgot Vandyke!

“So, in the famous St. Jerome of Correggio, Garrick used to say that the saint resembled a satyr, and that the child was like a monkey; but then there is such a look of life in the last it dazzles you with spirit and vivacity; you can hardly believe but it will move or fly; indeed Sir Joshua took his Puck from it, only a little varied in the attitude.” I said I had seen it not long ago, and that it had remarkably the look of a spirit or a fairy or preternatural being, though neither beautiful nor dignified. I remarked to Northcote, that I had never sufficiently relished Correggio; that I had tried several times to work myself up to the proper degree of admiration, but that I always fell back again into my former state of lukewarmness and scepticism; though I

could not help allowing that what he did, he appeared to me to do with more feeling than anybody else; that I could conceive Raphael or even Titian to have represented objects from mere natural capacity (as we see them in a looking-glass) without being absolutely wound up in them, but that I could fancy Correggio's pencil to thrill with sensibility. He brooded over the idea of grace or beauty in his mind till the sense grew faint with it; and, like a lover or a devotee, he carried his enthusiasm to the brink of extravagance and affectation, so enamoured was he of his art. Northcote assented to this as a just criticism, and said, "That is why his works must live; but X—— is a hardened egotist, devoted to nothing but himself." Northcote then asked about Mrs. Haydon, and if she was handsome? I said she might sit for the portrait of Rebecca in 'Ivanhoe.'

He then turned the conversation to 'Brambletye House.'¹ He thought the writer had failed in Charles II. and Rochester. Indeed it was a daring attempt to make *bons mots* for two such characters. The wit must be sharp and fine indeed that would do to put into their mouths: even Sir Walter might tremble to undertake it. He had made Milton speak too: this was almost as dangerous an attempt as for Milton to put words into the mouth of the Deity. The great difficulty was to know where to stop, and not to trespass on forbidden ground. Cervantes was one of the boldest and most original inventors; yet he had never ventured beyond his depth. He had in the person of his hero really represented the maxims of benevolence and generosity inculcated by the Christian religion; that was a law to him; and by his fine conception of the subject, he had miraculously succeeded. Shakspeare alone could be said in his grotesque creations

¹ A once popular novel so called. Of Brambletye House, in Sussex, see an account in Mr. Timbs's 'Something for Everybody,' (1861), p. 170, *et seq.*—Ed.

to be above all law. Richardson had succeeded admirably in 'Clarissa,' because he had a certain rule to go by or certain things to avoid, for a perfect woman was a negative character; but he had failed in 'Sir Charles Grandison,' and made him a lump of odious affectation, because a perfect man is not a negative but a positive character, and in aiming at faultlessness he had produced only the most vapid effeminacy. After all, 'Brambletye House' was about as good as the 'Rejected Addresses.' There was very little difference between a parody and an imitation. The defects and peculiarities are equally seized upon in either case.

He did not know how Sir Walter would take it. To have imitators seemed at first a compliment, yet no one liked it. You could not put Fuseli in a greater passion than by calling Maria Cosway an imitator of his. Nothing made Sir Joshua so mad as Miss Reynolds's portraits, which were an exact imitation of all his defects. Indeed, she was obliged to keep them out of his way. He said, "They made everybody else laugh, and himself cry." It is that which makes every one dread a mimic. Your self-love is alarmed without being so easily reassured. You know there is a difference, but it is not great enough to make you feel quite at ease. The line of demarcation between the true and the spurious is not sufficiently broad and palpable. The copy you see is vile or indifferent, and the original, you suspect (but for your partiality to yourself), is not, perhaps, much better.

That is what I have often felt in looking at the drawings of the students at the Academy, or when young artists have brought their first crude attempts for my opinion. The glaring defects, the abortive efforts, have almost disgusted me with the profession. "Good G—d!" I have said, "is this what the art is made up of? How do I know that my own productions may not appear in the same light to others?" Whereas the seeing the finest

specimens of art, instead of disheartening gives me courage to proceed; one cannot be wrong in treading in the same footsteps, and to fall short of them is no disgrace, while the faintest reflection of their excellence is glorious. It was this that made Correggio cry out, on seeing Raphael's works, "I also am a painter!" He felt a kindred spirit in his own breast. I said I recollected, when I was formerly trying to paint, nothing gave me the horrors so much as passing the old battered portraits at the doors of brokers' shops with the morning sun flaring full upon them. I was generally inclined to prolong my walk and put off painting for that day; but the sight of a fine picture had a contrary effect, and I went back and set to work with redoubled ardour.

Northcote happened to speak of a gentleman married to one of the —, of whom a friend had said, laughing, "There's a man that's in love with his own wife!" He mentioned the beautiful Lady F—— P——, and said her hair, which was in great quantities and very fine, was remarkable for having a single lock different from all the rest, which he supposed she cherished as a beauty. I told him I had not long ago seen the hair of Lucretia Borgia, of Milton, Buonaparte, and Dr. Johnson, all folded up in the same paper. It had belonged to Lord Byron. Northcote replied, one could not be sure of that; it was easy to get a lock of hair and call it by any name one pleased. In some cases, however, one might rely on its being the same. Mrs. Gunning had certainly a lock of Goldsmith's hair, for she and her sister (Miss Horneck) had wished to have some remembrance of him after his death; and though the coffin was nailed up it was opened again at their request (such was the regard Goldsmith was known to have for them), and a lock of his hair was cut off, which Mrs. Gunning still has. Northcote said Goldsmith's death was the severest blow Sir Joshua ever received; he did not paint all that day. It was proposed

to make a grand funeral for him, but Reynolds objected to this, as it would be over in a day, and said it would be better to lay by the money to erect a monument to him in Westminster Abbey; and he went himself and chose the spot. Goldsmith had begun another novel, of which he read the first chapter to the Misses Horneck a little before his death. Northcote asked what I thought of the 'Vicar of Wakefield'? And I answered, what everybody else did. He said there was that mixture of the ludicrous and the pathetic running through it which particularly delighted him; it gave a stronger resemblance to nature. He thought this justified Shakspeare in mingling up farce and tragedy together; life itself was a tragi-comedy. Instead of being pure, everything was chequered. If you went to an execution you would perhaps see an apple-woman in the greatest distress because her stall was overturned, at which you could not help smiling. We then spoke of 'Retaliation,' and praised the character of Burke in particular as a masterpiece. Nothing that he had ever said or done but what was foretold in it; nor was he painted as the principal figure in the foreground with the partiality of a friend or as the great man of the day, but with a background of history, showing both what he was and what he might have been. Northcote repeated some lines from 'The Traveller,' which were distinguished by a beautiful transparency, by simplicity and originality. He confirmed Boswell's account of Goldsmith as being about the middle height, rather clumsy, and tawdry in his dress.

A gentleman came in who had just shown his good taste in purchasing three pictures of Northcote—one a head of Sir Joshua by himself, and the other two by Northcote, a whole-length portrait of an Italian girl, and a copy of Omai, the South Sea chief. I could hear the artist in the outer room expressing some scruples as to

the consistency of his parting with one of them which he had brought from abroad, according to the strict letter of his custom-house oath—an objection which the purchaser, a member of Parliament, overruled by assuring him that “the peculiar case could not be contemplated by the spirit of the Act.” Northcote also expressed some regret at the separation from pictures that had become old friends. He however comforted himself that they would now find a respectable asylum, which was better than being knocked about in garrets and auction-rooms, as they would inevitably be at his death. “You may at least depend upon it,” said Mr. —, “that they will not be sold again for many generations.” This view into futurity brought back to my mind the time when I had first known these pictures; since then my life was flown, and with it the hope of fame as an artist (with which I had once regarded them), and I felt a momentary pang. Northcote took me out into the other room, when his friend was gone, to look at them; and on my expressing my admiration of the portrait of the Italian lady, he said she was the mother of Madame Bellocchi and was still living; that he had painted it at Rome about the year 1780; that her family was originally Greek, and that he had known her, her daughter, her mother, and grandmother. She and a sister, who was with her, were at that time full of the most charming gaiety and innocence. The old woman used to sit upon the ground without moving or speaking, with her arm over her head, and exactly like a bundle of old clothes. Alas! thought I, what are we but a heap of clay resting upon the earth, and ready to crumble again into dust and ashes!

Conversation the Thirteenth.

NORTHCOTE spoke about the failure of some printsellers. He said he did not wonder at it; it was a just punishment of their presumption and ignorance. They went into an exhibition, looked round them, fixed upon some contemptible performance, and without knowing anything about the matter, or consulting anybody, ordered two or three thousand pounds' worth of prints from it, merely out of purse-proud insolence, and because the money burnt in their pockets. Such people fancied that the more money they laid out the more they must get; so that extravagance became (by the turn their vanity gave to it) another name for thrift. Having spoken of a living artist's pictures as mere portraits that were interesting to no one except the people who sat for them, he remarked: "There was always something in the meanest face that a great artist could take advantage of. That was the merit of Sir Joshua, who contrived to throw a certain air and character even over ugliness and folly, that disarmed criticism and made you wonder how he did it. This at least is the case with his portraits; for, though he made his beggars look like heroes, he sometimes, in attempting history, made his heroes look like beggars. Grandi, the Italian colour-grinder, sat to him for King Henry VI., in 'The Death of Cardinal Beaufort,' and he looks not much better than a train-bearer, or one in a low and mean station; if he had sat to him for his portrait he would have made him look like a king. That was what made Fuseli observe in joke, that 'Grandi never held up his head after Sir Joshua painted him in his Cardinal Beaufort.' But the pictures I speak of are poor dry *facsimiles* (in a little timid manner, and with an attempt at drapery) of imbecile creatures, whose appearance is a satire on themselves and mankind.

Neither can I conceive why L—— should be sent over to paint Charles X. A French artist said to me on that occasion, 'We have very fine portrait-painters in Paris, sir!' . . . The poor engraver would be the greatest sufferer by these expensive prints. Tradespeople nowadays did not look at the thing with an eye to business, but ruined themselves and others by setting up for would-be patrons and judges of the art.

"Some demon whisper'd, Visto, have a taste!"

I said I thought L——'s pictures might do very well as mirrors for personal vanity to contemplate itself in (as you looked in the glass to see how you were dressed), but that it was a mistake to suppose they would interest any one else, or were addressed to the world at large. They were private, not public property. They never caught the eye in a shop-window, but were (as it appeared to me) a kind of lithographic painting, or thin meagre outlines, without the depth and richness of the art. I mentioned to Northcote the pleasure I had formerly taken in a little print of Gadshill from a sketch of his own, which I used at one time to pass a certain shop-window on purpose to look at. He said: "It was impossible to tell beforehand what would hit the public. You might as well pretend to say what ticket would turn up a prize in the lottery. It was not chance neither, but some unforeseen coincidence between the subject and the prevailing taste, that you could not possibly be a judge of. I had once painted two pictures—one of a Fortune-teller (a boy with a monkey), and another called 'The Visit to the Grandmother;' and Raphael Smith came to me and wanted to engrave them, being willing to give a handsome sum for the first, but only to do the last as an experiment. He sold ten times as many of the last as of the first, and told me that there were not less than five different impressions done of it in Paris;

and once, when I went to his house to get one to complete a set of engravings after my designs, they asked me six guineas for a proof impression! This was too much, but I was delighted that I could not afford to pay for my own work, from the value that was set upon it." I said, people were much alarmed at the late failures, and thought there would be a "blow-up," in the vulgar phrase. "Surely you can't suppose so? A blow-up! Yes, of adventurers and upstarts, but not of the country, if they mean that. This is like the man who thought that gin-drinking would put an end to the world. Oh no! The country will go on just as before, bating the distress to individuals. You may form an idea on the subject if you ever go to look at the effects of a fire the day after: you see nothing but smoke and ruins and bare walls, and think the damage can never be repaired; but if you pass by the same way a week after, you will find the houses all built up just as they were before, or even better than ever. No! there is the same wealth, the same industry and ingenuity, in the country as there was before; and till you destroy that you cannot destroy the country. These temporary distresses are only like disorders in the body, that carry off its bad and superfluous humours.

"My neighbour Mr. Rowe, the bookseller, informed me the other day that Signora Cecilia Davies frequently came to his shop, and always inquired after me. Did you ever hear of her?" No, never! "She must be very old now. Fifty years ago, in the time of Garrick, she made a vast sensation. All England rang with her name. I do assure you that in this respect Madame Catalani was not more talked of. Afterwards she had retired to Florence, and was the prima-donna there, when Storace first came out. This was at the time when Mr. Hoare and myself were in Italy; and I remember we went to call upon her. She had then in a great

measure fallen off, but she was still very much admired. What a strange thing a reputation of this kind is—that the person herself survives, and sees the meteors of fashion rise and fall one after another, while she remains totally disregarded, as if there had been no such person, yet thinking all the while that she was better than any of them! I have hardly heard her name mentioned in the last thirty years, though in her time she was quite as famous as any one since.” I said, an *opera* reputation was after all but a kind of private theatricals, and confined to a small circle compared with that of the regular stage, which all the world were judges of and took an interest in. It was but the echo of a sound, or like the blaze of phosphorus, that did not communicate to the surrounding objects. It belonged to a fashionable *coterie* rather than to the public, and might easily die away at the end of the season. I then observed I was more affected by the fate of players than by that of any other class of people. They seemed to me more to be pitied than anybody—the contrast was so great between the glare, the noise, and intoxication of their first success, and the mortifications and neglect of their declining years. They were made drunk with popular applause, and when this stimulus was withdrawn must feel the insignificance of ordinary life particularly vapid and distressing. There were no sots like the *sots of vanity*. There were no traces left of what they had been, any more than of a forgotten dream; and they had no consolation but in their own conceit, which, when it was without other vouchers, was a very uneasy comforter. I had seen some actors who had been favourites in my youth, and “cried up in the top of the compass,” treated, from having grown old and infirm, with the utmost indignity and almost hooted from the stage. I had seen poor — come forward under these circumstances, to stammer out an apology with the tears in his

eyes (which almost brought them into mine) to a set of apprentice-boys and box-lobby loungers, who neither knew nor cared what a fine performer and a fine gentleman he was thought twenty years ago. Players were so far particularly unfortunate. The theatrical public have a very short memory. Every four or five years there is a new audience, who know nothing but of what they have before their eyes, and who pronounce summarily upon this, without any regard to past obligations or past services, and with whom the veterans of the stage stand a bad chance indeed, as their former triumphs are entirely forgotten while they appear as living vouchers against themselves. "Do you remember," said Northcote, "Sheridan's beautiful lines on the subject in his 'Monody on Garrick'?" I said I did; and that it was probably the reading them early that had impressed this feeling so strongly on my mind. Northcote then remarked: "I think a great beauty is most to be pitied. She completely outlives herself. She has been used to the most bewitching homage, to have the highest court paid and the most flattering things said to her by all those who approach her, and to be received with looks of delight and surprise wherever she comes; and she afterwards not only finds herself deprived of all this and reduced to a cypher, but she sees it all transferred to another, who has become the reigning toast and beauty of the day in her stead. It must be a most violent shock. It is like a king who is dethroned and reduced to serve as a page in his own palace. I remember once being struck with seeing the Duchess of Devonshire, the same that Sir Joshua painted, and who was a miracle of beauty when she was young, and followed by crowds wherever she went—I was coming out of Mrs. W——'s, and on the landing-place, there was she, standing by herself, and calling over the bannister for her servant to come to her. If she had been as she once was, a

thousand admirers would have flown to her assistance ; but her face was painted over like a mask, and there was hardly any appearance of life left but the restless motion of her eyes. I was really hurt." I answered, the late Queen had much the same painful look that he described—her face highly rouged, and her eyes rolling in her head like an automaton, but she had not the mortification of having ever been a great beauty. "There was a Miss ——, too," Northcote added, "who was a celebrated beauty when she was a girl, and who also sat to Sir Joshua. I saw her not long ago, and she was grown as coarse and vulgar as possible ; she was like an apple-woman, or would do to keep the *Three Tuns*. The change must be very mortifying. To be sure, there is one thing, it comes on by degrees. The ravages of the smallpox must formerly have been a dreadful blow!" He said, literary men or men of talent in general were the best-off in this respect. The reputation they acquired was not only lasting, but gradually grew stronger if it was deserved. I agreed they were seldom spoiled by flattery, and had no reason to complain *after they were dead*. "Nor while they are living," said Northcote, "if it is not their own fault." He mentioned an instance of a trial about an engraving where he, West, and others had to appear, and of the respect that was shown them. Erskine, after flourishing away, made an attempt to puzzle Stothard by drawing two angles on a piece of paper, an acute and an obtuse one, and asking, "Do you mean to say these two are alike?" "Yes, I do," was the answer. "I see," said Erskine, turning round, "there is nothing to be got by *angling* here." West was then called upon to give his evidence, and there was immediately a lane made for him to come forward, and a stillness that you could hear a pin drop. The judge (Lord Kenyon) then addressed him: "Sir Benjamin, we shall be glad to hear your opinion."

Mr. West answered, "He had never received the honour of a title from his Majesty;" and proceeded to explain the difference between the two engravings which were charged with being copies the one of the other, with such clearness and knowledge of the art, though in general he was a bad speaker, that Lord Kenyon said, when he had done, "I suppose, gentlemen, you are perfectly satisfied. I perceive there is much more in this than I had any idea of, and am sorry I did not make it more my study when I was young." I remarked that I believed corporations of art or letters might meet with a certain attention, but it was the stragglers and candidates that were knocked about with very little ceremony. Talent or merit only wanted a frame of some sort or other to set it off to advantage. Those of my way of thinking were "bitter bad judges" on this point. A Tory scribe who treated mankind as rabble and *canaille* was regarded by them in return as a fine gentleman: a Reformer like myself, who stood up for liberty and equality, was taken at his word by the very journeymen that set up his paragraphs, and could not get a civil answer from the meanest shopboy in the employ of those on his own side of the question. Northcote laughed, and said I irritated myself too much about such things. He said it was one of Sir Joshua's maxims that the art of life consisted in not being overset by trifles. "We should look at the bottom of the account, not at each individual item in it, and see how the balance stands at the end of the year. We should be satisfied if the path of life is clear before us, and not fret at the straws or pebbles that lie in our way. What you have to look to is, whether you can get what you write printed and whether the public will read it, and not to busy yourself with the remarks of shopboys or printers' devils. They can do you neither harm nor good. The impertinence of mankind is a thing that no one can guard against."

Conversation the Fourteenth.

NORTHCOTE showed me a poem with engravings of Dartmoor, which were too fine by half.¹ I said I supposed Dartmoor would look more gay and smiling after having been thus illustrated, like a dull author who has been praised by a reviewer. I had once been nearly benighted there, and was delighted to get to the inn at Ashburton. "That," said Northcote, "is the only good of such places—that you are glad to escape from them, and look back to them with a pleasing horror ever after. Commend me to the Valdarno or Vallambrosa, where you are never weary of new charms, and which you quit with a sigh of regret. I have, however, told my young friend who sent me the poem that he has shown his genius in creating beauties where there were none, and extracting enthusiasm from rocks and quagmires. After that, he may write a very interesting poem on Kamtschatka." He then spoke of the panorama of the North Pole which had been lately exhibited—of the icebergs, the seals lying asleep on the shore, and the strange twilight—as well worth seeing. He said it would be curious to know the effect, if they could get to the Pole itself, though it must be impossible: the veins, he should suppose, would burst, and the vessel itself go to pieces from the extreme cold. I asked if he had ever read an account of twelve men who had been left all the winter in Greenland, and of the dreadful shifts to which they were reduced? He said he had not. They were obliged to build two booths of wood, one within the other; and

¹ I do not know what work is here intended, unless it be Carington's 'Dartmoor, A Descriptive Poem,' with notes by the late W. Burt, Esq., and twelve prints. (Lond. 1826, 18mo.?) There were two editions the same year, in one of which the preface by Burt is omitted. See Davidson's 'Bibliotheca Devoniensis,' 1852, p. 131. —ED.

if they had to go into the outer one during the severity of the weather, unless they used great precaution, their hands were blistered by whatever they took hold of as if it had been red-hot iron. The most interesting part was the account of their waiting for the return of light at the approach of spring, and the delight with which they first saw the sun shining on the tops of the frozen mountains. Northcote said: "This is the great advantage of descriptions of extraordinary situations by uninformed men: Nature, as it were, holds the pen for them; they give you what is most striking in the circumstances, and there is nothing to draw off the attention from the strong and actual impression, so that it is the next thing to the reality. Godwin was here the other day, and I showed him the note from my bookseller about the 'Fables,' with which you were so much pleased, but he saw nothing in it." I then said: "Godwin is not one of those who look attentively at nature or draw much from that source. Yet the rest is but like building castles in the air, if it is not founded in observation and experience. Or it is like the enchanted money in the 'Arabian Nights,' which turned to dry leaves when you came to make use of it. It is ingenious and amusing, and so far it is well to be amused when you can; but you learn nothing from the fine hypothesis you have been reading, which is only a better sort of dream, bright and vague, and utterly inapplicable to the purposes of common life. Godwin does not appeal to nature, but to art and execution. There is another thing—which it seems harsh and presumptuous to say—but he appears to me not always to perceive the difference between right and wrong. There are many others in the same predicament, though not such splendid examples of it. He is satisfied to make out a plausible case, to give the *pros* and *cons* like a lawyer; but he has no instinctive bias or feeling one way or other, except as he can give a studied reason for

it. Common-sense is out of the question ; such people despise common-sense, and the quarrel between them is a mutual one. 'Caleb Williams,' notwithstanding, is a decidedly original work: the rest are the sweepings of his study. That is but one thing, to be sure ; but no one does more than one thing." Northcote said that Sir Joshua used to say that no one produced more than six original things. I always said it was wrong to fix upon this number—five out of the six would be found upon examination to be repetitions of the first. A man can no more produce six original works than he can be six individuals at once. Whatever is the strong and prevailing bent of his genius, he will stamp upon some master-work ; and what he does else will be only the same thing over again, a little better or a little worse ; or if he goes out of his way in search of variety and to avoid himself, he will merely become a commonplace man or an imitator of others. You see this plainly enough in Cervantes—that he has exhausted himself in the 'Don Quixote.' He has put his whole strength into it: his other works are no better than what other people could write. If there is any exception it is Shakspeare: he seems to have had the faculty of dividing himself into a number of persons. His writings stand out from everything else and from one another. Othello, Lear, Macbeth, Falstaff, are striking and original characters ; but they die a natural death at the end of the fifth act, and no more come to life than the people themselves would. He is not reduced to repeat himself or revive former inventions under feigned names. This is peculiar to him: still it is to be considered that plays are short works, and only allow room for the expression of a part. But in a work of the extent of 'Don Quixote' the writer had scope to bring in all he wanted ; and indeed there is no point of excellence which he has not touched, from the highest courtly grace and the most romantic

enthusiasm down to the lowest ribaldry and rustic ignorance, yet carried off with such an air that you wish nothing away, and do not see what can be added to it. Every bit is perfect, and the author has evidently given his whole mind to it. That is why I believe that the Scotch novels are the production of several hands. Some parts are careless, others straggling: it is only where there is an opening for effect that the master-hand comes in, and in general he leaves his work for others to get on with it. But in 'Don Quixote' there is not a single line that you may not swear belongs to Cervantes." I inquired if he had read 'Woodstock'? He answered, No, he had not been able to get it. I said: "I had been obliged to pay five shillings for the loan of it at a regular bookseller's shop (I could not procure it at the circulating libraries), and that from the understood feeling about Sir Walter no objection was made to this proposal, which would in ordinary cases have been construed into an affront. I had wellnigh repented my bargain, but there were one or two scenes that repaid me—though none equal to his best, and in general it was very indifferent. The plot turned chiefly on English ghost scenes, a very mechanical sort of phantoms, who dealt in practical jokes and personal annoyances, turning beds upside down and sousing you all over with water, instead of supernatural and visionary horrors. It was very bad indeed, but might be intended to contrast the literal matter-of-fact imagination of the Southron with the loftier impulses of Highland superstition. Charles II. was not spared, and was brought in admirably (when in disguise) as a raw awkward Scotch lad, Master Kerne-guy. Cromwell was made a fine, bluff, overbearing blackguard, who exercised a personal superiority wherever he came, but was put in situations which I thought wholly out of character, and for which I apprehended there was no warrant in the history of the times. They

were therefore so far improper. A romance-writer might take an incident and work it out according to his fancy, or might build an imaginary superstructure on the ground of history, but he had no right to transpose the facts. For instance, he had made Cromwell act as his own tipstaff, and go to Woodstock to take Charles II. in person. To be sure, he had made him display considerable firmness and courage in the execution of this errand (as Lavender might in being the first to enter a window to secure a desperate robber); but the plan itself, to say nothing of the immediate danger, was contrary to Cromwell's dignity as well as policy. Instead of wishing to seize Charles with his own hand, he would naturally keep as far aloof from such a scene as he could, and be desirous to have it understood that he was anxious to shed as little more blood as possible. Besides, he had higher objects in view, and would, I should think, care not much more about Charles than about Master Kerne-guy. He would be glad to let him get away. In another place, he had made Cromwell start back in the utmost terror at seeing a picture of Charles I., and act all the frenzy of Macbeth over again at the sight of Banquo's ghost. This I should also suppose to be quite out of character, in a person of Cromwell's prosaic determined habits—to *fear a painted devil*." "No," said Northcote, "that is not the way he would look at it; it is seeing only a part; but Cromwell was a greater philosopher than to act so. The other story is more probable, of his visiting the dead body of Charles in a mask, and exclaiming in great agitation, as he left the room, 'Cruel necessity!' Yet even this is not sufficiently authenticated. No; he knew that it was come to this, that it was gone too far for either party to turn back, and that it must be final with one of them. The only question was, whether he should give himself up as the victim, and so render all that had been done useless, or exact the penalty from

what he thought the offending party. It was like a battle which must end fatally either way, and no one thought of lamenting because he was not on the losing side. In a great public quarrel there was no room for these domestic and personal regards; all you had to do was to consider well the justice of the cause, before you appealed to the sword. Would Charles I., if he had been victorious, have started at the sight of a picture of Cromwell? Yet Cromwell was as much of a man as he, and as firm as the other was obstinate." Northcote said, he wished he could remember the subject of a dispute he had with Godwin to see if I did not think he had the best of it. I replied, I should be more curious to hear something in which Godwin was right, for he generally made it a rule to be in the wrong in speaking of anything. I mentioned having once had a very smart debate with him about a young lady, of whom I had been speaking as very much like her aunt, a celebrated authoress, and as what the latter, I conceived, might have been at her time of life. Godwin said, when Miss — did anything like 'Evelina' or 'Cecilia,' he should then believe she was as clever as Madame d'Arblay. I asked him whether he did not think Miss Burney was as clever before she wrote those novels as she was after; or whether in general an author wrote a successful work for being clever, or was clever because he had written a successful work? Northcote laughed, and said, "That was so like Godwin." I observed that it arose out of his bigoted admiration of literature, so that he could see no merit in anything else, nor trust to any evidence of talent but what was printed. It was much the same fallacy that had sometimes struck me in the divines, who deduced original sin from Adam's eating the apple, and not his eating the apple from original sin, or a previous inclination to do something that he should not. Northcote remarked that speaking of 'Evelina'

put him in mind of what Opie had once told him, that when Dr. Johnson sat to him for his picture, on his first coming to town, he asked him if it was true that he had sat up all night to read Miss Burney's new novel, as it been reported? And he made answer, "I never read it through at all, though I don't wish this to be known." Sir Joshua also pretended to have read it through at a sitting, though it appeared to him (Northcote) affectation in them both, who were thorough-paced men of the world, and hackneyed in literature, to pretend to be so delighted with the performance of a girl, in which they could find neither instruction nor any great amusement, except from the partiality of friendship. So Johnson cried up Savage, because they had slept on bulks when they were young; and lest he should be degraded into a vagabond by the association, had elevated the other into a genius. Such prevarication or tampering with his own convictions was not consistent with the strict and formal tone of morality which he assumed on other and sometimes very trifling occasions, such as correcting Mrs. Thrale for saying that a bird flew in at the door instead of at the window. I said Savage, in my mind, was one of those writers (like Chatterton) whose vices and misfortunes the world made a set-off to their genius, because glad to connect these ideas together. They were only severe upon those who attacked their prejudices or their consequence. Northcote replied: "Savage the architect was here the other day, and asked me why I had abused his namesake, and called him an impostor. I answered, I had heard that character of him from a person in an obscure rank of life, who had known him a little before his death." Northcote proceeded: "People in that class are better judges than poets and moralists, who explain away everything by fine words and doubtful theories. The mob are generally right in their summary

judgments upon offenders. A man is seldom ducked, or pumped upon, or roughly handled by them unless he has deserved it. You see that in the galleries at the playhouse; they never let anything pass that is immoral, and they are even fastidious judges of wit. I remember there was some gross expression in Goldsmith's comedy the first night it came out, and there was a great uproar in the gallery, and it was obliged to be suppressed. Though rude and vulgar themselves, they do not like vulgarity on the stage; they come there to be taught manners." I said, they paid more attention than anybody else; and after the curtain drew up (though somewhat noisy before) were the best-behaved part of the audience, unless something went wrong. As the common people sought for refinement as a *treat*, people in high life were fond of grossness and ribaldry as a relief to their overstrained affectation of gentility. I could account in no other way for their being amused with the wretched *slang* in certain magazines and newspapers. I asked Northcote if he had seen the third series of —? He had not. I said they were like the composition of a footman, and I believed greatly admired in the upper circles, who were glad to see an author arrange a sideboard for them over again with servile alacrity. He said: "They delight in low coarse buffoonery, because it sets off their own superiority; whereas the rabble resent it when obtruded upon them, because they think it is meant against themselves. They require the utmost elegance and propriety for their money: as the showman says in Goldsmith's comedy, 'My bear dances to none but the genteelest of tunes—Water parted from the Sea, or the minuet in Ariadne!'"

Northcote then alluded to a new novel he had been reading. He said he never read a book so full of words; which seemed ridiculous enough to say, for a book was

necessarily composed of words, but here there was nothing else but words, to a degree that was surprising. Yet he believed it was sought after, and indeed he could not get it at the common library. "You are to consider, there must be books for all tastes and all ages. You may despise it, but the world do not. There are books for children till the time they are six years of age, such as 'Jack the Giant-killer,' 'The Seven Champions of Christendom,' 'Guy of Warwick' and others.¹ From that to twelve they like to read the 'Pilgrim's Progress' and 'Robinson Crusoe,' and then Fielding's novels and 'Don Quixote;' from twenty to thirty, books of poetry—Milton, Pope, Shakspeare; and from thirty, history and philosophy—what suits us then will serve us for the rest of our lives. For boarding-school girls Thomson's 'Seasons' has an immense attraction, though I never could read it. Some people cannot get beyond a newspaper or a geographical dictionary. What I mean to infer is, that we ought not to condemn too hastily, for a work may be approved by the public, though it does not exactly hit our taste; nay, those may seem beauties to others which seem faults to us. Why else do we pride ourselves on the superiority of our judgment if we are not more advanced in this respect than the majority of readers? But our very fastidiousness should teach us toleration. You have said very well of this novel, that it is a mixture of genteel and romantic affectation. One objection to the excessive rhodomontade which abounds in it is that you can learn nothing from such extravagant fictions; they are like nothing in the known world. I remember once speaking to Richardson² (Sheridan's friend) about Shakspeare's want of morality, and he

¹ See a paper on this subject in 'The Tatler.'

² William Richardson, author of 'Essays on some of Shakspeare's Dramatic Characters' (1783), and other works in criticism, which are still held in some estimation.—Ed.

replied, 'What! Shakspeare not moral? He is the most moral of all writers, because he is the most natural.' And in this he was right: for though Shakspeare did not intend to be moral, yet he could not be otherwise as long as he adhered to the path of nature. Morality only teaches us our duty by showing us the natural consequences of our actions; and the poet does the same while he continues to give us faithful and affecting pictures of human life—rewarding the good and punishing the bad. So far truth and virtue are one. But that kind of poetry which has not its foundation in nature, and is only calculated to shock and surprise, tends to unhinge our notions of morality and of everything else in the ordinary course of Providence."

Something being said of an artist who had attempted to revive the great style in our times, and the question being put whether Michael Angelo and Raphael, had they lived now, would not have accommodated themselves to the modern practice, I said, it appeared to me that (whether this was the case or not) they could not have done what they did without the aid of circumstances; that for an artist to raise himself above all surrounding opinions, customs, and institutions by a mere effort of the will was affectation and folly, like attempting to fly in the air; and that, though great genius might exist without the opportunities favourable to its development, yet it must draw its nourishment from circumstances and suck in inspiration from its native air. There was Hogarth—he was surely a genius; still the manners of his age were necessary to him; teeming as his works were with life, character, and spirit, they would have been poor and vapid without the night-cellars of St. Giles's, the drawing-rooms of St. James's. Would he in any circumstances have been a Raphael or a Phidias? I think not. But had he been twenty times a Raphael or a Phidias, I am quite sure it would never have appeared

in the circumstances in which he was placed. Two things are necessary to all great works and great excellence, the mind of the individual, and the mind of the age or country co-operating with his own genius. The last brings out the first, but the first does not imply or supersede the last. Pictures for Protestant churches are a contradiction in terms, where they are not objects of worship but of idle curiosity. Where there is not the adoration, the enthusiasm, in the spectator, how can it exist in the artist? The spark of genius is only kindled into a flame by sympathy. Northcote spoke highly of Vanbrugh, and of the calm superiority with which he bore the attacks of Swift, Pope, and that set, who made a point of decrying all who did not belong to their party. He said Burke and Sir Joshua thought his architecture far from contemptible; and his comedies were certainly first-rate. Richards (the scene-painter) had told him, the players thought 'The Provoked Husband' the best acting play on the stage; and Godwin said the 'City-Wives Confederacy' (taken from an indifferent French play) was the best written one. I ventured to add that 'The Trip to Scarborough' (altered but not improved by Sheridan) was not inferior to either of the others. I should doubt whether the direction given at Sir Tunbelly's castle on the arrival of Young Fashion—"Let loose the greyhound and lock up Miss Hoyden!"—would be in Sheridan's version, who, like most of his countrymen, had a prodigious ambition of elegance. Northcote observed, that talking of this put him in mind of a droll speech that was made when the officers got up a play on board the vessel that went lately to find out the North-west Passage. One of the sailors, who was admiring the performance, and saying how clever it was, was interrupted by the boatswain, who exclaimed, "Clever, did you say? I call it *philosophy*, by G—d!" He asked if he had ever mentioned to me that anecdote of Lord Mansfield who, when

an old woman was brought before him as a witch, and was charged, among other improbable things, with walking through the air, attended coolly to the evidence, and then dismissed the complaint by saying: "My opinion is that this good woman be suffered to return home, and whether she shall do this walking on the ground or riding through the air must be left entirely to her own pleasure, for there is nothing contrary to the laws of England in either." I mentioned a very fine dancer at the Opera (Mademoiselle Brocard) with whom I was much delighted; and Northcote observed that where there was grace and beauty accompanying the bodily movements it was very hard to deny the mental refinement or the merit of this art. He could not see why that which was so difficult to do, and which gave so much pleasure to others, was to be despised. He remembered seeing some young people at Parma (though merely in a country-dance) exhibit a degree of perfection in their movements that seemed to be inspired by the very genius of grace and gaiety. Miss Reynolds used to say that perfection was much the same in everything—nobody could assign the limits. I said authors alone were privileged to suppose that all excellence was confined to words. Till I was twenty I thought there was nothing in the world but books; when I began to paint I found there were two things both difficult to do and worth doing; and I concluded from that time there might be fifty—at least I was willing to allow every one his own choice. I recollect a certain poet saying he "should like to *ham-string* those fellows at the Opera"—I suppose because the great would rather see them dance than read 'Kehama.' Whatever can be done in such a manner that you can fancy a god to do it must have something in its nature divine. The ancients had assigned gods to dancing as well as to music and poetry, to the different attributes and perfections both of body and mind; and

perhaps the plurality of the heathen deities was favourable to a liberality of taste and opinion.

Northcote: "The most wretched scribbler looks down upon the greatest painter as a mere mechanic; but who would compare Lord Byron with Titian?"

Conversation the Fifteenth.

I WENT to Northcote in the evening to consult about his 'Fables.' He was downstairs in the parlour, and talked much as usual; but the difference of the accompaniments, the sitting down, the preparations for tea, the carpet and furniture, and a little fat lap-dog, interfered with old associations, and took something from the charm of his conversation. He spoke of a Mr. Laird, who had been employed to see his 'Life of Sir Joshua' through the press, and whom he went to call upon in an upper storey in Peterborough Court, Fleet Street, where he was surrounded by his books, his implements of writing, a hand-organ, and his coffee-pots; and he said he envied him this retreat more than any palace he had ever happened to enter. Northcote was not very well, and repeated his complaints. I said I thought the air (now summer was coming on) would do him more good than physic. His apothecary had been describing the dissection of the elephant which had just been killed at Exeter 'Change. It appeared that, instead of the oil which usually is found in the joints of animals, the interstices were in this case filled up with a substance resembling a kind of white paint. This Northcote considered as a curious instance of the wise contrivance of nature in the adaptation of means to ends; for even in pieces of artificial mechanism, though they use oil to lubricate the springs and wheels of clocks and other common-sized instruments, yet in very large and heavy ones, such as steam-

engines, &c., they are obliged to use grease, pitch, and other more solid substances, to prevent the friction. If they could dissect a flea, what a fine evanescent fluid would be found to lubricate its slender joints and assist its light movements! Northcote said the bookseller wished to keep the original copy of the 'Fables' to bind up as a literary curiosity. I objected to this proceeding as unfair. There were several slips of the pen and slovenlinesses of style (for which I did not think him at all accountable, since an artist wrote with his left hand and painted with his right), and I did not see why these accidental inadvertences, arising from diffidence and want of practice, should be as it were enshrined and brought against him. He said: "Mr. Prince Hoare tasked me the hardest in what I wrote in 'The Artist.' He pointed out where I was wrong, and sent it back to me to correct it. After all, what I did there was thought the best." I said Mr. Hoare was too fastidious, and spoiled what he did from a wish to have it perfect. He dreaded that a shadow of objection should be brought against anything he advanced, so that his opinions at last amounted to a kind of genteel truisms. One must risk something in order to do anything. I observed that this was remarkable in so clever a man; but it seemed as if there were some fatality by which the most lively and whimsical writers, if they went out of their own eccentric path and attempted to be serious, became exceedingly grave and even insipid. His farces were certainly very spirited and original. 'No Song no Supper' was the first play I had ever seen, and I felt grateful to him for this. Northcote agreed that it was very delightful, and said there was a volume of it when he first read it to them one night at Mrs. Rundle's, and that the players cut it down a good deal and supplied a number of things. There was a great piece of work to alter the songs for Madame Storace, who played in it, and who could not pronounce half the

English terminations. 'My Grandmother,' too, was a laughable idea, very ingeniously executed; and some of the songs in this had an equal portion of elegance and drollery, such as that in particular—

"For alas! long before I was born,
My fair one had died of old age!"

Still some of his warmest admirers were hurt at their being farces; if they had been comedies they would have been satisfied, for nothing could be greater than their success. They were the next to O'Keefe's, who in that line was the English Molière.

Northcote asked if I remembered the bringing-out of any of O'Keefe's? I answered, No. He said: "It had the oddest effect imaginable; at one moment they seemed on the point of being damned, and the next moment you were convulsed with laughter. Edwin¹ was inimitable in some of them. He was one of those actors, it is true, who carried a great deal off the stage with him that he would willingly have left behind, and so far could not help himself. But his awkward shambling figure in Bowkitt the dancing-master was enough to make one die with laughing. He was unrivalled in Lingo, where he was admirably supported by Mrs. Wells in Cowslip, when she prefers 'a roast duck' to all the birds in the heathen mythology; and in Peeping Tom, where he merely puts his head out, the faces that he made threw the audience into a roar." I said I remembered no further back than Bannister,² who used to delight me excessively in Lenitive in 'The Prize,' when I was a boy. Northcote said he was an imitator of Edwin, but at a considerable distance. He was a good-natured agreeable man, and the audience were delighted with him, because he was evidently delighted with them. In some respects he was a caricaturist; for instance, in Lenitive he stuck

¹ John Edwin. See 'Geneste,' vol. vii. p. 2, *et seq.*—ED.

² This was the elder actor of that name.—ED.

his pigtail on end, which he had no right to do, for no one had ever done it but himself. I said Liston appeared to me to have more comic humour than any one in my time, though he was not properly an actor. Northcote asked if he was not low-spirited, and told the story (I suspect an old one) of his consulting a physician on the state of his health, who recommended him to go and see Liston. I said he was grave and prosing, but I did not know there was anything the matter with him, though I had seen him walking along the street the other day with his face as fixed as if he had a lockjaw, a book in his hand, looking neither to the right nor the left, and very much like his own Lord Duberly. I did not see why he and Matthews should both of them be so *hipped*, except from their having "the player's melancholy," arising from their not seeing six hundred faces on the broad grin before them at all other times as well as when they were acting. He was, however, exceedingly unaffected, and remarkably candid in judging of other actors. He always spoke in the highest terms of Munden, whom I considered as overdoing his parts.¹ Northcote said, "Munden was excellent, but an artificial actor. You should have seen Weston," he continued. "It was impossible, from looking at him, for any one to say that he was acting. You would suppose they had gone out and found the actual character they wanted, and brought him upon the stage without his knowing it. Even when they interrupted him with peals of laughter and applause, he looked about him as if he was not at all conscious of having anything to do with it, and then went on as before. In *Scrub*, *Dr. Last*, and other parts of that kind, he was perfection itself. Garrick would never attempt

¹ The same praise may be extended to Matthews. Those who have seen this ingenious and lively actor only on the stage do not know half his merits. [The reference is, of course, to the elder Matthews.]

Abel Drugger after him. There was something peculiar in his face; for I knew an old schoolfellow of his who told me he used to produce the same effect when a boy, and when the master asked what was the matter, his companions would make answer, 'Weston looked at me, sir!' Yet he came out in tragedy, as indeed they all did." Northcote inquired if I had seen Garrick. I answered, "No; I could not very well, as he died the same year I was born." I mentioned having lately met with a striking instance of genealogical taste in a family, the grandfather of which thought nothing of Garrick, the father thought nothing of Mrs. Siddons, and the daughter could make nothing of the Scotch novels, but admired Mr. Theodore Hook's 'Sayings and Doings.'

Northcote then returned to the subject of his book, and said: "Sir Richard Phillips once wished me to do a very magnificent work indeed on the subject of art. He was like Curll, who had a number of fine titlepages, if any one could have written books to answer to them. He came here once with Godwin to show me a picture which they had just discovered of Chaucer, and which was to embellish Godwin's Life of him. I told them it was certainly no picture of Chaucer, nor was any such picture painted at that time." I said, Godwin had got a portrait about a year ago which he wished me to suppose was a likeness of President Bradshaw: I saw no reason for his thinking so, but that in that case it would be worth a hundred pounds to him. Northcote expressed a curiosity to have seen it, as he knew the descendants of the family at Plymouth. He remembered one of them, an old lady of the name of Wilcox, who used to walk about in Gibson's Field, near the town, so prim and starched, holding up her fan spread out like a peacock's tail, with such an air! on account of her supposed relationship to one of the regicides. They paid, however (in the vulgar opinion), for this dis-

tion; for others of them bled to death at the nose, or died of the bursting of a bloodvessel, which their wise neighbours did not fail to consider as a judgment upon them.

Speaking of Dr. Mudge, he said he had such a feeling of beauty in his heart, that it made angels of every one around him. To check a person who was running on against another he once said, "You should not speak in that manner, for you lead me to suppose you have the bad qualities you are so prone to dwell upon in others." A transition was here made to Lord Byron, who used to tell a story of a little red-haired girl, who, when countesses and ladies of fashion were leaving the room where he was in crowds (to cut him after his quarrel with his wife), stopped short near a table against which he was leaning, gave him a familiar nod, and said, "You should have married *me*, and then this would not have happened to you." A question being started whether Dr. Mudge was handsome, Northcote answered: "I could see no beauty in him as to his outward person, but there was an angelic sweetness of disposition that spread its influence over his whole conversation and manner. He had not wit, but a fine romantic enthusiasm, which deceived himself and enchanted others. I remember once his describing a picture by Rosa de Tivoli (at Saltram, of 'Two Bulls fighting'), and he gave such an account of their rage and manner of tearing up the ground that I could not rest till we went over to see it. When we came there it was nothing but a coarse daub, like what might be expected from the painter; but he had made the rest out of a vivid imagination. So my father told him a story of a bull-bait he had seen, in which the bull had run so furiously at the dog that he broke the chain and pitched upon his head and was killed. Soon after he came and told us the same story as an incident he himself had witnessed. He did not

mean to deceive, but the image had made such an impression on his fancy that he believed it to be one that he had himself been an eyewitness of." I was much amused with this account, and I offered to get him a copy of a whimsical production, of which a new edition had been printed.¹ I also recommended to him the 'Spanish Rogue,' as a fine mixture of drollery and grave moralizing. He spoke of 'Lazarillo de Tormes,' and of the 'Cheats of Scapin,' the last of which he rated rather low. The work was written by Scarron, whose widow, the famous Madame de Maintenon, afterwards became mistress to Louis XIV.

Conversation the Sixteenth.

N. THAT is your diffidence, which I can't help thinking you carry too far. For any one of real strength you are the humblest person I ever knew.

H. It is owing to pride.

N. You deny you have invention too. But it is want of practice. Your ideas run on before your executive power. It is a common case. There was Ramsay,² of whom Sir Joshua used to say that he was the most sensible among all the painters of his time; but he has left little to show it. His manner was dry and timid. He stopped short in the middle of his work, because he knew exactly how much it wanted. Now and then we find hints and sketches which show what he might have been, if his hand had been equal to his conceptions. I have seen a picture of his of the Queen, soon after she was married—a profile, and slightly done; but it was a paragon of elegance. She had a fan in her hand: Lord! how she held that fan! It was weak in execution,

¹ Most probably, Amory's 'John Bunce,' of which a new edition was printed in 1825.—ED.

² Allan Ramsay, son of the poet of the same name.—ED.

and ordinary in features—all I can say of it is, that it was the farthest possible removed from everything like vulgarity. A professor might despise it; but in the mental part I have never seen anything of Vandyke's equal to it. I could have looked at it for ever. I showed it to J——n; and he, I believe, came into my opinion of it. I don't know where it is now; but I saw in it enough to convince me that Sir Joshua was right in what he said of Ramsay's great superiority. His own picture of the King, which is at the Academy, is a finer composition, and shows greater boldness and mastery of hand; but I should find it difficult to produce anything of Sir Joshua's that conveys an idea of more grace and delicacy than the one I have mentioned. Reynolds would have finished it better; the other was afraid of spoiling what he had done, and so left it a mere outline. He was frightened before he was hurt.

H. Taste and even genius is but a misfortune without a correspondent degree of manual dexterity or power of language to make it manifest.

N. W—— was here the other day. I believe you met him going out. He came, he said, to ask me about the famous people of the last age—Johnson, Burke, &c. (as I was almost the only person left who remembered them), and was curious to know what figure Sir Walter Scott would have made among them.

H. That is so like a North Briton—"to make assurance doubly sure," and to procure a signature to an acknowledged reputation, as if it were a receipt for the delivery of a bale of goods.

N. I told him it was not for me to pronounce upon such men as Sir Walter Scott: they came before another tribunal. They were of that height that they were seen by all the world, and must stand or fall by the verdict of posterity. It signified little what any individual thought in such cases, it being equally an impertinence to set one's self against or to add one's

testimony to the public voice. But, as far as I could judge, I told him that Sir Walter would have stood his ground in any company; neither Burke nor Johnson nor any of their admirers would have been disposed or able to set aside his pretensions. These men were not looked upon in their day as they are at present:—Johnson had his ‘*Lexiphanes*,’ and Goldsmith was laughed at; their merits were to the full as much called in question, nay more so, than those of the author of ‘*Waverley*’ have ever been, who has been singularly fortunate in himself, or in lighting upon a barren age; but because their names have since become established and as it were sacred, we think they were always so; and W—— wanted me, as a competent witness, and as having seen both parties, to affix the same seal to his countryman’s reputation, which it is not in the power of the whole of the present generation to do, much less of any single person in it. No, we must wait for this. Time alone can give the final stamp: no living reputation can ever be of the same value or quality as posthumous fame. We must throw lofty objects to a distance in order to judge of them: if we are standing close under the Monument it looks higher than St. Paul’s. Posterity has this advantage over us—not that they are really wiser, but they see the proportions better from being placed further off. For instance, I liked Sir Walter, because he had an easy unaffected manner, and was ready to converse on all subjects alike. He was not like your friends the Lake poets, who talk about nothing but their own poetry. If, on the contrary, he had been stiff and pedantic, I should, perhaps, have been inclined to think less highly of the author from not liking the man; so that we can never judge fairly of men’s abilities till we are no longer liable to come in contact with their persons. Friends are as little to be trusted as enemies: favour or prejudice makes the votes

in either case more or less suspected, though "the vital signs that a name shall live" are in some instances so strong that we can hardly refuse to put faith in them; and I think this is one. I was much pleased with Sir Walter, and I believe he expressed a favourable opinion of me. I said to him, "I admire the way in which you begin your novels. You set out so abruptly, that you quite surprise me. I can't at all tell what's coming." "No," says Sir Walter, "nor I neither." I then told him, that when I first read 'Waverley' I said it was no novel: nobody could invent like that. Either he had heard the story related by one of the surviving parties, or he had found the materials in a manuscript concealed in some old chest. To which he replied, "You're not so far out of the way in thinking so." You don't know him, do you? He'd be a pattern to you. Oh! he has a very fine manner. You would learn to rub off some of your asperities. But you admire him, I believe?

H. Yes; on this side of idolatry and Toryism.

N. That is your prejudice.

H. Nay, it rather shows my liberality, if I am a devoted enthusiast notwithstanding. There are two things I admire in Sir Walter, his capacity and his simplicity, which indeed I am apt to think are much the same. The more ideas a man has of other things the less he is taken up with the idea of himself. Every one gives the same account of the author of 'Waverley' in this respect. When he was in Paris, and went to Galignani's, he sat down in an outer room to look at some book he wanted to see; none of the clerks had the least suspicion who it was. When it was found out the place was in a commotion. Cooper, the American, was in Paris at the same time: his looks and manner seemed to announce a much greater man. He strutted through the streets with a very consequential air, and in com-

pany held up his head, screwed up his features, and placed himself on a sort of pedestal to be observed and admired, as if he never relaxed in the assumption, nor wished it to be forgotten by others, that he was the American Sir Walter Scott. The real one never troubled himself about the matter. Why should he? He might safely leave that question to others. Indeed, by what I am told, he carries his indifference too far: it amounts to an implied contempt for the public, and misprision of treason against the commonwealth of letters. He thinks nothing of his works, although "all Europe rings with them from side to side." If so, he has been severely punished for his infirmity.

N. Though you do not know Sir Walter Scott, I think I have heard you say you have seen him?

H. Yes; he put me in mind of Cobbett, with his florid face and scarlet gown, which were just like the other's red face and scarlet waiscoat. The one is like an English farmer, the other like a Scotch laird. Both are large robust men, with great strength and composure of features; but I saw nothing of the *ideal* character in the romance-writer, any more than I looked for it in the politician.

N. Indeed! But you have a vast opinion of Cobbett too, haven't you? Oh, he's a giant! He has such prodigious strength; he tears up a subject by the roots. Did you ever read his Grammar, or see his attack on Mrs. — ? It was like a hawk pouncing on a wren. I should be terribly afraid to get into his hands. And then his homely familiar way of writing—it is not from necessity or vulgarity, but to show his contempt for aristocratic pride and arrogance. He only has a kitchen-garden; he could have a flower-garden too, if he chose. Peter Pindar said his style was like the Horse Guards, only one storey above the ground, while Junius's had all the airy elegance of Whitehall: but he could raise his style just as high as he pleased, though he does not

want to sacrifice strength to elegance. He knows better what he is about.

H. I don't think he'll set up for a fine gentleman in a hurry, though he has for a member of Parliament; and I fancy he would make no better figure in the one than in the other. He appeared to me, when I once saw him, exactly what I expected: in Sir Walter I looked in vain for a million of fine things! I could only explain it to myself in this way: that there was a degree of capacity in that huge double forehead of his that superseded all effort, made everything come intuitively and almost mechanically, as if it were merely transcribing what was already written, and by the very facility with which the highest beauty and excellence was produced, left few traces of it in the expression of the countenance and hardly any sense of it in the mind of the author. Expression only comes into the face as we are at a loss for words, or have a difficulty in bringing forward our ideas; but we may repeat the finest things by rote without any change of look or manner. It is only when the powers are tasked, when the moulds of thought are full, that the effect or the *wear-and-tear* of the mind appears on the surface. So, in general, writers of the greatest imagination and range of ideas, and who might be said to have all nature obedient to their call, seem to have been most careless of their fame and regardless of their works. They treat their productions, not as children, but as "bastards of their art;" whereas those who are more confined in their scope of intellect, and wedded to some one theory or predominant fancy, have been found to feel a proportionable fondness for the offspring of their brain, and have thus excited a deeper interest in it in the minds of others. We set a value on things as they have cost us dear: the very limitation of our faculties or exclusiveness of our feelings compels us to concentrate all our enthusiasm on a favourite subject; and, strange as it may

sound, in order to inspire a perfect sympathy in others, or to form a school, men must themselves be egotists. Milton has had fewer readers and admirers, but I suspect more devoted and bigoted ones, than ever Shakspeare had. Sir Walter Scott has attracted more universal attention than any writer of our time, but you may speak against him with less danger of making personal enemies than if you attack Lord Byron. Even Wordsworth has half a dozen followers, who set him up above everybody else, from a *common idiosyncrasy* of feeling and the singleness of the elements of which his excellence is composed. Before we can take an author entirely to our bosoms he must be another self; and he cannot be this if he is, "not one, but all mankind's epitome." It was this which gave such an effect to Rousseau's writings—that he stamped his own character and the image of his self-love on the public mind: *there* it is, and there it will remain, in spite of everything. Had he possessed more comprehension of thought or feeling it would only have diverted him from his object. But it was the excess of his egotism and his utter blindness to everything else that found a sympathy in the conscious feelings of every human breast, and shattered to pieces the pride of rank and circumstance by the pride of internal worth or upstart pretension. When Rousseau stood behind the chair of the master of the *Château* of —, and smiled to hear the company dispute about the meaning of the motto of the arms of the family, which he alone knew, and stumbled as he handed the glass of wine to his young mistress, and fancied she coloured at being waited upon by so learned a young footman—then was first kindled that spark which can never be quenched, then was formed the germ of that strong conviction of the disparity between the badge on his shoulder and the aspirations of his soul—the determination, in short, that external situation and advantages are but the mask, and

that the mind is the man—armed with which, impenetrable, incorrigible, he went forth, conquering and to conquer, and overthrew the monarchy of France and the hierarchies of the earth. Till then, birth and wealth and power were all in all, though but the framework or crust that envelopes the man; and what there was in the man himself was never asked, or was scorned and forgot. And while all was dark and grovelling within, while knowledge either did not exist or was confined to a few, while material power and advantages were everything, this was naturally to be expected. But with the increase and diffusion of knowledge this state of things must sooner or later cease; and Rousseau was the first who held the torch (lighted at the never-dying fire in his own bosom) to the hidden chambers of the mind of man—like another Prometheus, breathed into his nostrils the breath of a new and intellectual life, enraging the gods of the earth, and made him feel what is due to himself and his fellows. Before, physical force was everything: henceforward, mind, thought, feeling was a new element—a fourth estate in society. What! shall a man have read Dante and Ariosto, and be none the better for it? Shall he still be judged of only by his coat, the number of his servants in livery, the house over his head? While poverty meant ignorance, that was necessarily the case; but the world of books overturns the world of things, and establishes a new balance of power and scale of estimation. Shall we think only rank and pedigree divine, when we have music, poetry, and painting within us? Tut! we have read ‘Old Mortality,’ and shall it be asked whether we have done so in a garret or a palace, in a carriage or on foot? Or, knowing them, shall we not revere the mighty heirs of fame, and respect ourselves for knowing and honouring them? This is the true march of intellect, and not the erection of Mechanics’ Institutions or the printing of

twopenny trash, according to my notion of the matter, though I have nothing to say against them neither.

N. I thought you never would have done; however, you have come to the ground at last. After this rhapsody I must inform you that Rousseau is a character more detestable to me than I have power of language to express: an aristocrat, filled with all their worst vices—pride, ambition, conceit, and gross affectation; and though endowed with some ability, yet not sufficient ever to make him know right from wrong. Witness his novel of 'Eloisa.' His name brings to my mind all the gloomy horrors of a mob-government, which attempted from their ignorance to banish truth and justice from the world. I see you place Sir Walter above Lord Byron. The question is, not which keeps longest on the wing, but which soars highest, and I cannot help thinking there are essences in Lord Byron that are not to be surpassed. He is on a par with Dryden. All the other modern poets appear to me vulgar in the comparison. As a lady who comes here said, there is such an air of nobility in what he writes. Then there is such a power in the style—expressions almost like Shakspeare—"And looked round on them with their *wolfish* eyes."

H. The expression is in Shakspeare, somewhere in 'Lear.'

N. The line I repeated is in 'Don Juan.' I do not mean to vindicate the immorality or misanthropy in that poem—perhaps his lameness was to blame for this defect; but surely no one can deny the force, the spirit of it; and there is such a fund of drollery mixed up with the serious part. Nobody understood the tragi-comedy of poetry so well. People find fault with this mixture in general, because it is not well managed; there is a comic story and a tragic story going on at the same time, without their having anything to do with one another. But in Lord Byron they are brought together, just as they

are in nature. In like manner, if you go to an execution, at the very moment when the criminal is going to be turned off, and all eyes are fixed upon him, an old apple-woman and her stall are overturned, and all the spectators fall a-laughing. In real life the most ludicrous incidents border on the most affecting and shocking. How fine that is of the cask of butter in the storm! Some critics have objected to it as turning the whole into burlesque; on the contrary, it is that which stamps the character of the scene more than anything else. What did the people in the boat care about the rainbow which he has described in such vivid colours, or even about their fellow-passengers who were thrown overboard, when they only wanted to eat them? No! it was the loss of the firkin of butter that affected them more than all the rest; and it is the mention of this circumstance that adds a hardened levity and a sort of ghastly horror to the scene. It shows the master-hand; there is such a boldness and sagacity and superiority to ordinary rules in it. I agree, however, in your admiration of the *Waverley Novels*; they are very fine. As I told the author, he and Cervantes have raised the idea of human nature, not, as Richardson has attempted, by affectation and a false varnish, but by bringing out what there is really fine in it under a cloud of disadvantages. Have you seen the last?

H. No.

N. There is a character of a common smith or armourer in it, which, in spite of a number of weaknesses, and in the most ludicrous situations, is made quite heroic by the tenderness and humanity it displays. It is his best, but I had not read it when I saw him. No! all that can be said against Sir Walter is, that he has never made a *whole*. There is an infinite number of delightful incidents and characters, but they are disjointed and scattered. This is one of Fielding's merits; his novels are regular

compositions, with what the ancients called a *beginning*, a *middle*, and an *end*; every circumstance is foreseen and provided for, and the conclusion of the story turns round as it were to meet the beginning. 'Gil Blas' is very clever, but it is only a succession of chapters. 'Tom Jones' is a masterpiece, as far as regards the conduct of the fable.

H. Do you know the reason? Fielding had a hooked nose, the long chin. It is that introverted physiognomy that binds and concentrates.

N. But Sir Walter has not a hooked nose, but one that denotes kindness and ingenuity. Mrs. Abington had the pug-nose, who was the perfection of comic archness and vivacity; a hooked nose is my aversion.

Conversation the Seventeenth.

N. I SOMETIMES get into scrapes that way by contradicting people before I have well considered the subject, and I often wonder how I get out of them so well as I do. I remember once meeting with Sir —— ——, who was talking about Milton, and, as I have a natural aversion to a coxcomb, I differed from what he said, without being at all prepared with any arguments in support of my opinion.

H. But you had time enough to think of them afterwards?

N. I got through with it somehow or other. It is the very risk you run in such cases that puts you on the alert, and gives you spirit to extricate yourself from it. If you had full leisure to deliberate and to make out your defence beforehand, you perhaps could not do it so well as on the spur of the occasion. The surprise and flutter of the animal spirits gives the alarm to any little wit we possess, and puts it into a state of immediate requisition.

H. Besides, it is always easiest to defend a paradox or an opinion you don't care seriously about. I would sooner (as a matter of choice) take the wrong side than the right in any argument. If you have a thorough conviction on any point, and good grounds for it, you have studied it long, and the real reasons have sunk into the mind; so that what you can recall of them at a sudden *pinch* seems unsatisfactory and disproportionate to the confidence of your belief and to the magisterial tone you are disposed to assume. Even truth is a matter of habit and professorship. Reason and knowledge when at their height return into a kind of instinct. We understand the grammar of a foreign language best, though we do not speak it so well. But if you take up an opinion at a venture, then you lay hold of whatever excuse comes within your reach, instead of searching about for and bewildering yourself with the true reasons, and the odds are that the arguments thus got up are as good as those opposed to them. In fact the more sophisticated and superficial an objection to a received or well-considered opinion is, the more we are staggered and teased by it; and the next thing is to lose our temper, when we become an easy prey to a cool and disingenuous adversary. I would much rather (as the safest side) insist on Milton's pedantry than on his sublimity, supposing I were not in the company of very good judges. A single stiff or obscure line would outweigh a whole book of solemn grandeur in the mere flippant encounter of the wits, and in general, the truth and justice of the cause you espouse is rather an incumbrance than an assistance; or it is like heavy armour, which few have strength to wield. Anything short of complete triumph on the right side is defeat; any hole picked, or flaw detected, in an argument which we are holding earnestly and conscientiously is sufficient to raise the laugh against us. This is the greatest advantage which folly and

knavery have. We are not satisfied to be right unless we can prove others to be quite wrong; and as all the world would be thought to have some reason on their side, they are glad of any loophole or pretext to escape from the dogmatism and tyranny we would set up over them. Absolute submission requires absolute proofs. Without some such drawback the world might become too wise and too good, at least according to every man's private prescription. In this sense *ridicule is the test of truth*; that is, the levity and indifference on one side balances the formality and presumption on the other.

N. Horne Tooke used to play with his antagonists in the way you speak of. He constantly threw Fuseli into a rage and made him a laughingstock, by asking him to explain the commonest things, and often what Fuseli understood much better than he did. But, in general, I think it is less an indifference to truth than the fear of finding yourself in the wrong that carries you through when you take up any opinion from caprice or the spirit of contradiction. Danger almost always produces courage and presence of mind. The faculties are called forth with the occasion. You see men of very ordinary characters, placed in extraordinary circumstances, act like men of capacity. The late King of France was thought weak and imbecile, till he was thrown into the most trying situations; and then he showed sense, and even eloquence, which no one had ever suspected. Events supplied the want of genius and energy; the external impressions were so strong that the dullest or most indolent must have been roused by them. Indeed the wise man is perhaps more liable to err in such extreme cases, by setting up his own preconceptions and self-will against circumstances, than the commonplace character, who yields to necessity and is passive under existing exigencies. It is this which makes kings and ministers equal to their situations. They may be very

poor creatures in themselves; but the importance of the part they have to act and the magnitude of their responsibility inspire them with a factitious and *official* elevation of view. Few people are found totally unfit for high station, and it is lucky that it is so. Perhaps men of genius and imagination are the least adapted to get into the state go-cart; Buonaparte, we see, with all his talent, only drove to the devil. When Richard II. was quite a youth, and he went to suppress the rebellion of Wat Tyler in Smithfield, and the latter was killed, his followers drew their bows and were about to take vengeance on the young king, when he stepped forward and said that "now, as their leader was dead, he would be their leader." This instantly disarmed their rage, and they received him with acclamations. He had no other course left; the peril he was in made him see his place of safety. Courage has a wonderful effect: this makes mad people so terrible—that they have no fear. Even wild beasts, or a mob (which is much the same thing), will hardly dare to attack you if you show no fear of them. I have heard Lord Exmouth (Sir Edward Pellew) say that once when he was out with his ship at sea, and there was a mutiny on board and no chance of escape, he learned (from a spy he had among them) the moment when the ringleaders were assembled and about to execute their design of putting the captain and all the officers to death, when, taking a pistol in each hand, he went down into the cockpit into the midst of them, and threatening to shoot the first man that stirred, took them every one prisoners. If he had betrayed the least fear, or any of them had raised a hand, he must have been instantly sacrificed. But he was bolder than any individual in the group, and by this circumstance had the ascendancy over the whole put together. A similar act of courage is related of Peter the Great, who singly entered the haunt of some conspirators, and striking

down the leader with a blow on the face, spread consternation amongst the assassins, who were terrified by his fearlessness.

[*A book of prints was brought in, containing views of Edinburgh.*]

N. It is curious to what perfection these things are brought, and how cheap they are. It is that which makes them sell and ensures the fortune of those who publish them. Great fortunes are made out of small profits, which allow all the world to become purchasers. That is the reason the Colosseum will hardly answer. There never was an example of an exhibition in England answering at a crown apiece. People look twice at their money before they will part with it, if it be more than they are accustomed to pay. It becomes a question, and perhaps a few stragglers go; whereas they ought to go in a stream and as a matter of course. If people have to pay a little more than usual, though a mere trifle, they consider it in the light of an imposition, and resent it as such; if the price be a little under the mark, they think they have saved so much money, and snap at it as a bargain. The publishers of the work on Edinburgh are the same who brought out the 'Views of London;' and it is said the success of that undertaking enabled them to buy up Lackington's business. E——, the architect, I am told, suggested the plan, but declined a share that was offered him in it, because he said nothing that he had been engaged in had ever succeeded. The event would not belie the notion of his own ill-luck. It is singular on what slight turns good or ill fortune depends. Lackington (I understood, from the person who brought the 'Edinburgh Views' here) died worth near half-a-million; nobody could tell how he had made it. At thirty he was not worth a shilling. The great difficulty is in the first hundred pounds.

H. It is sympathy with the mass of mankind, and finding out from yourself what it is they want and must have.

N. It seems a good deal owing to the most minute circumstances. A difference of sixpence in the price will make all the difference in the sale of a book. Sometimes a work lies on the shelf for a time and then runs like wildfire. There was 'Drelincourt on Death,' which is a fortune in itself; it hung on hand, *nobody* read it, till Defoe put a ghost story into it, and it has been a stock-book ever since. It is the same in prints. A catching subject or name will make one thing a universal favourite, while another of ten times the merit is never noticed. I have known this happen to myself in more than one instance. This is the provoking part in Westall and some other painters who, taking advantage of the externals and accidents of their art, have run away with nearly all the popularity of their time. Jack Taylor¹ was here the other day to say that Westall and his friends complained bitterly of the things I said about him. I replied that I had only spoken of him as an artist, which I was at liberty to do; and that if he were offended, I would recommend to him to read the story of Charles II. and the Duchess of Cleveland, who came to the King with a complaint that whenever she met Nell Gwynne in the street the latter put her head out of the coach and made mouths at her. "Well, then," says Charles II., "the next time you meet Nelly and she repeats the offence, do you make mouths at her again." So if Mr. Westall is hurt at my saying things of him, all he has to do is to say things of me in return.

H. I confess I never liked Westall. It was one of the errors of my youth that I did not think him equal to Raphael and Rubens united, as Payne Knight con-

¹ The editor of the *Sun* newspaper.—ED.

tended ; and I have fought many a battle with numbers (if not odds) against me on that point.

N. Then you must have the satisfaction of seeing a change of opinion at present.

H. Pardon me, I have not that satisfaction ; I have only a double annoyance from it. It is no consolation to me that an individual was overrated by the folly of the public formerly, and that he suffers from their injustice and fickleness at present. It is no satisfaction to me that poor Irving is reduced to his primitive congregation, and that the stream of coronet coaches no longer rolls down Holborn or Oxford Street to his chapel. They ought never to have done so, or they ought to continue to do so. The world (whatever in their petulance and profligacy they may think) have no right to intoxicate poor human nature with the full tide of popular applause and then to drive it to despair for the want of it. There are no words to express the cruelty, the weakness, the shamelessness of such conduct, which resembles that of the little girl who dresses up her doll in the most extravagant finery, and then, in mere wantonness, strips it naked to its wool and bits of wood again—with this difference, that the doll has no feeling, whereas the world's idols are wholly sensitive.

[*Of some one who preferred appearances to realities.*]

N. I can understand the character, because it is exactly the reverse of what I should do and feel. It is like dressing out of one's sphere, or any other species of affectation and imposture. I cannot bear to be taken for anything but what I am. It is like what the country-people call "having a halfpenny head and farthing tail." That is what makes me mad when people sometimes come and pay their court to me by saying, "Bless me, how sagacious you look! What a penetrating countenance!" "No," I say, "that is but the titlepage ; what

is there in the book? Your dwelling so much on the exterior seems to imply that the inside does not correspond to it." Don't let me look wise and be foolish, but let me be wise though I am taken for a fool. Anything else is quackery; it is as if there was no real excellence in the world but in opinion. I used to blame Sir Joshua for this: he sometimes wanted to get 'Collins's earth,' but did not like to have it known. Then there were certain oils that he made a great fuss and mystery about. I have said to myself, Surely there is something deeper and nobler in the art, that does not depend on all this trick and handicraft. Give Titian and a common painter the same materials and tools to work with, and then see the difference between them. This is all that is worth contending for. If Sir Joshua had had no other advantage than the using 'Collins's earth' and some particular sort of megilp, we should not now have been talking about him. When W—— was here the other day, he asked about Mengs and his school, and when I told him what I thought he said "Is that your own opinion, or did you take it from Sir Joshua?" I answered that if I admired Sir Joshua it was because there was something congenial in our tastes, and not because I was his pupil. I saw his faults, and differed with him often enough. If I have any bias it is the other way—to take fancies into my head, and run into singularity and cavils. In what I said to you about Ramsay's picture of the Queen, for instance, I don't know that any one ever thought so before, or that any one else would agree with me. It might be set down as mere whim and caprice, but I can't help it if it is so. All I know is, that such is my feeling about it, which I can no more part with than I can part with my own existence. It is the same in other things, as in music. There was an awkward composer at the Opera many years ago of the name of Boccarelli; what he did was stupid enough in general, but I remember he sang

an air one day at Cosway's, which they said Shield had transferred into 'The Flich of Bacon.' I cannot describe the effect it had upon me; it seemed as if it wound into my very soul; I would give anything to hear it sung again. So I could have listened to Dignum's singing the lines out of Shakspeare—"Come unto these yellow sands, and then take hands"—a hundred times over. But I am not sure that others would be affected in the same manner by it; there may be some quaint association of ideas in the case. But at least, if I am wrong, the folly is my own.

H. There is no danger of the sort except from affectation, which I am sure is not your case. All the real taste and feeling in the world is made up of what people *take in their heads* in this manner. Even if you were right only once in five times in these hazardous experiments and rude guesses, that would be a fifth part of the truth; whereas if you merely repeated after others by rote, or waited to have all the world on your side, there could be absolutely nothing gained at all. If any one had come in and had expressed the same idea of Ramsay's portrait of the Queen, this would doubtless be a confirmation of your opinion, like two persons finding out a likeness; but suppose W—— had gone away with your opinion in his pocket, and had spread it about everywhere what a fine painter Ramsay was, I do not see how this would have strengthened your conclusion; nay, perhaps the people whom he got as converts would entirely mistake the meaning, and come to you with the very reverse of what you had said, as a prodigious discovery. This is the way in which these unanimous verdicts are commonly obtained. You might say that Ramsay was not a fine painter, but a man of real genius. The world, not comprehending the distinction, would merely come to the gross conclusion that he was both one and the other. Thus, even truth is vulgarly debased into *common-*

place and nonsense. So that it is not simply, as Mr. Locke observed, "That there are not so many wrong opinions in the world as is generally imagined, for most people have no opinion at all, but take up with those of others, or with mere hearsay and echoes;" but these echoes are often false ones, and no more like the original idea than the rhyming echoes in 'Hudibras,' or than Slender's *mum* and *budget*.

N. But don't you think the contrary extreme would be just as bad—if every one set up to judge for himself, and every question was split into an endless variety of opinions?

H. I do not see that this would follow. If persons who are sincere and free to inquire differ widely on any subject, it is because it is beyond their reach, and there is no satisfactory evidence one way or the other. Supposing a thing to be doubtful, why should it not be left so? But men's passions and interests, when brought into play, are most tenacious on those points, where their understandings afford them least light. Those doctrines are *established* which need propping up, as men place beams against falling houses. It does not require an Act of Parliament to persuade mathematicians to agree with Euclid, or painters to admire Raphael.

N. And don't you think this the best rule for the rest of the world to go by?

H. Yes; but not if the doctors themselves differed; then it would be necessary to *clench the nail* with a few smart strokes of bigotry and intolerance. What admits of proof men agree in, if they have no interest to the contrary; what they differ about, in spite of all that can be said, is matter of taste or conjecture.

Conversation the Eighteenth.

N. OPIE, I remember, used to argue that there were as many different sorts of taste as genius. He said, "If I am engaged on a picture, and endeavour to do it according to the suggestions of my employers, I do not understand exactly what they want, nor they what I can do, and I please no one; but if I do it according to my own notions I belong to a class, and if I am able to satisfy myself I please that class." You did not know Opie? You would have admired him greatly. I do not speak of him as an artist, but as a man of sense and observation. He paid me the compliment of saying, "that we should have been the best friends in the world if we had not been rivals." I think he had more of this feeling than I had, perhaps because I had most vanity. We sometimes got into foolish altercations. I recollect once in particular, at a banker's in the City, we took up the whole of dinner-time with a ridiculous controversy about Milton and Shakspeare. I am sure we neither of us had the least notion which was right; and when I was heartily ashamed of it, a foolish citizen who was present added to my confusion by saying, "Lord! what would I give to hear two such men as you talk every day!" This quite humbled me; I was ready to sink with vexation; I could have resolved never to open my mouth again. But I can't help thinking W—— was wrong in supposing I borrow everything from others. It is not my character. I never could learn my lesson at school. My copy was hardly legible; but if there was a prize to be obtained, or my father was to see it, then I could write a very fine hand, with all the usual flourishes. What I know of history (and something about heraldry) has been gathered up, when I had to inquire into the subject for a picture; if it had been set me as a task, I

should have forgotten it immediately. In the same way when Boydell came and proposed a subject for a picture to me, and pointed out the capabilities, I always said I could make nothing of it; but as soon as he was gone, and I was left to myself, the whole then seemed to unfold itself naturally. I never could study the rules of composition, or make sketches and drawings beforehand; in this, probably, running into the opposite error to that of the modern Italian painters, whom Fuseli reproaches with spending their whole lives in preparation. I must begin at once or I can do nothing. When I set about the 'Wat Tyler,' I was frightened at it; it was the largest work I had ever undertaken; there were to be horses and armour, and buildings, and several groups in it; when I looked at it, the canvas seemed ready to fall upon me. But I had committed myself, and I could not escape; disgrace was behind me, and every step I made in advance was so much positively gained. If I had stayed to make a number of designs and try different experiments, I never should have had the courage to go on. Half the things that people do not succeed in are through fear of making the attempt. Like the recruit in Farquhar's comedy, you grow wondrous bold when you have once taken "list-money." When you *must* do a thing, you feel in some measure that you *can* do it. You have only to commit yourself beyond retreat. It is like the soldier going into battle, or a player first appearing on the stage: the worst is over when they arrive upon the scene of action.

H. I found nearly the same thing that you describe, when I first began to write for the newspapers. I had not till then been in the habit of writing at all, or had been a long time about it; but I perceived that with the necessity the fluency came. Something I did *took*; and I was called upon to do a number of things all at once. I was in the middle of the stream, and must sink

or swim. I had, for instance, often a theatrical criticism to write after midnight, which appeared the next morning. There was no fault found with it—at least it was as good as if I had had to do it for a weekly paper. I only did it at once, and recollected all I had to say on the spot, because I could not put it off for three days, when perhaps I should have forgotten the best part of it. Besides, when one is pressed for time, one saves it. I might set down nearly all I had to say in my mind while the play was going on. I know I did not feel at a loss for matter—the difficulty was to compress and write it out fast enough. When you are tied to time you can come to time. I conceive in like manner more wonder is expressed at *extempore* speaking than it is entitled to. Not to mention that the same well-known topics continually recur, and that the speakers may con their *extempore* speeches over beforehand, and merely watch their opportunity to slide them in dexterously into the grand procession of the debate, a man when once on his legs *must say something*, and this is the utmost that a public speaker generally says. If he has anything good to say, he can recollect it just as well at once as in a week's literary leisure, as well standing up as sitting down, except from habit. We are not surprised at a man's telling us his thoughts across a table: why should we be so at his doing the same thing when mounted on one? But he excites more attention: *that* gives him a double motive. A man's getting up to make a speech in public will not give him a command of words or thoughts if he is without them; but he may be delivered of all the brilliancy or wisdom he actually possesses, in a longer or a shorter space, according to the occasion. The circumstance of the time is optional; necessity, if it be not the mother of invention, supplies us with the memory of all we know.

N. (*After a pause.*) There is no end of the bigotry and

prejudice in the world; one can only shrug one's shoulders and submit to it. Have you seen the copies they have got down at the club-house in Pall Mall of the groups of horses from the Elgin Marbles? Lord! how inferior they are to Rubens'! So stiff and poor and dry, compared to his magnificent spirit and bold luxuriance! I should not know them to be horses; they are as much like anything else. I was at Somerset House the other day. They talk of the Dutch painters; why, there are pictures there of interiors and other subjects of familiar life, that throw all the boasted *chefs-d'œuvre* of the Dutch School to an immeasurable distance. I do not speak of history, which has not been fairly tried; but in all for which there has been encouragement, no nation can go beyond us. We have resources and a richness of capacity equal to any undertaking.

H. Do you recollect any in particular that you admired at the Exhibition?

N. No, I do not remember the names; but it was a general sense of excellence and truth of imitation of natural objects. As to lofty history, our religion scarcely allows it. The Italians had no more genius for painting nor a greater love of pictures than we; but the *Church* was the foster-mother of the fine arts. Being the most politic and powerful establishment in the world, they laid their hands on all that could allure and impress the minds of the people—music, painting, architecture, ceremonies; and this produced a succession of great artists and noble works till the churches were filled, and then they ceased. The genius of Italian art was nothing but the genius of Popery. God forbid we should purchase success at the same price! Everything at Rome is like a picture—is calculated for show. I remember walking through one of the bye-streets near the Vatican, where I met some procession in which the Pope was; and all at once I saw a number of the most beautiful Arabian

horses curveting and throwing out their long tails, like a vision or a part of a romance. We should here get one or two at most. All our holiday pageants, even the coronation, are low Bartlemy Fair exhibitions compared with what you see at Rome. And then to see the Pope give the benediction at St. Peter's, raising himself up and spreading out his hands in the form of a cross, with an energy and dignity as if he was giving a blessing to the whole world! No, it is not enough to *see* Popery in order to hate it—it must be felt too. A poor man going through one of the narrow streets where a similar procession was passing was fiercely attacked by a soldier of the Swiss Guards, and ordered to stand back. The man said he could retire no further, for he was close against the wall. “Get back, you and the wall, too!” was the answer of haughty servility and mild despotism. It is this spirit peeping out that makes one dread the fairest outside appearances; and with this spirit, and the power and determination it implies to delude and lead the multitude blindfold with every lure to their imagination and their senses, I will answer for the production of finer historical and scripture pieces in this country (let us be as far north as we will) than we have yet seen.

H. You do not think, then, that we are naturally a dry sour Protestant set? Is not the air of Ireland Popish and that of Scotland Presbyterian?

N. No; though you may have it so if you please. K—— has been wanting my two copies of ——, though I do not think he will bid high enough to induce me to part with them. I am in this respect like Opie, who had an original by Sir Joshua that he much valued, and he used to say, “I don't know what I should do in that case, but I hope to G—d nobody will offer me £500 for it!” It is curious, this very picture sold for £500 the other day. So it is that real merit creeps on,

and is sure to find its level. 'The Holy Family' sold among Lord Gwydyr's pictures for £1900.

H. Is that fine?

N. Oh! yes, it is certainly fine. It wants the air of history, but it has a rich colour and great simplicity and innocence. It is not equal to 'The Snake in the Grass,' which Mr. Peel gave 1600 guineas for. That was his *forte*: nothing is wanting there.

A STRANGER. I thought Sir Joshua's colours did not stand?

N. That is true of some of them; he tried experiments, and had no knowledge of chemistry, and bought colours of Jews; but I speak of them as they came from the easel. As he left them and intended them to be, no pictures in the world would stand by the side of them. Colour seemed to exist substantively in his mind. You see this still in those that have not faded—in his latter works especially, which were also his best; and this, with character and a certain sweetness, must always make his works invaluable. You come to this at last: what you find in any one that you can get nowhere else. If you have this about you, you need not be afraid of time. Gainsborough had the saving grace of originality; and you cannot put him down for that reason. With all their faults, and the evident want of an early study and knowledge of the art, his pictures fetch more every time they are brought to the hammer. I don't know what it was that his 'View of the Mall in St. James's Park' sold for not long ago. I remember Mr. Prince Hoare coming to me, and saying what an exquisite picture Gainsborough had painted of the Park. You would suppose it would be stiff and formal, with straight rows of trees and people sitting on benches: it is all in motion, and in a flutter like a lady's fan. Watteau is not half so airy. His picture of young Lord — was a masterpiece—there was such a look of

natural gentility! You must recollect his 'Girl feeding Pigs:' the expression and truth of nature were never surpassed. Sir Joshua was struck with it, though he said he ought to have made her a beauty.

H. Perhaps it was as well to make sure of one thing at a time. I remember being once driven by a shower of rain for shelter into a picture-dealer's shop in Oxford Street, where there stood on the floor a copy of Gainsborough's 'Shepherd Boy' with the thunderstorm coming on. What a truth and beauty was there! He stands with his hands clasped, looking up with a mixture of timidity and resignation, eyeing a magpie chattering over his head, while the wind is rustling in the branches. It was like a vision breathed on the canvas. I have been fond of Gainsborough ever since.

N. Oh! that was an essence: but it was only a copy you saw? The picture was finer than his 'Woodman,' which has a little false glitter and attempt at theatrical effect; but the other is innocence itself. Gainsborough was a natural gentleman; and with all his simplicity he had wit too. An eminent counsellor once attempted to puzzle him on some trial about the originality of a picture by saying, "I observe you lay great stress on the phrase, the *painter's eye*; what do you mean by that?" "The painter's eye," answered Gainsborough, "is to him what the lawyer's tongue is to you." Sir Joshua was not fond of Wilson, and said at one of the Academy dinners, "Yes, Gainsborough is certainly the best landscape painter of the day." "No," replied Wilson, who overheard him, "but he is the best portrait painter." This was a sufficient testimony in Gainsborough's favour.

H. He did not make himself agreeable at Buckingham House, any more than Sir Joshua, who kept a certain distance and wished to appear as a gentleman; they

wanted a *buffoon*, whom they might be familiar with at first and insult the moment he overstepped the mark, or as soon as they grew tired of him. Their favourites must be like pet lapdogs or monkeys.

N. C—— went to court the other day after a long absence. He was very graciously received, notwithstanding. The King held out his hand for him to kiss; he recollected himself in time to perceive the object. He was struck with the manner in which the great people looked towards the King, and the utter insignificance of everything else; “and then,” said C——, “as soon as they are out of the palace, they get into their carriages, and ride over you with all the fierceness and insolence imaginable.” West used to say you could tell the highest nobility at court by their being the most abject. This was policy, for the most powerful would be most apt to excite jealousy in the sovereign; and by showing an extreme respect they thought to prevent the possibility of encroachment or insult. Garrick complained that when he went to read before the court not a look or a murmur testified approbation; there was a profound stillness—every one only watched to see what the King thought. It was like reading to a set of waxwork figures: he who had been accustomed to the applause of thousands could not bear this assembly of mutes. Marchant went to the late King about a cameo, who was offended at his saying the face must be done in full and not as a profile; “Then,” said the patron, “I’ll get somebody else to do it.” Coming out at the door, one of the pages asked the artist, “Why do you contradict the King? He is not used to be contradicted.” This is intelligible in an absolute despotism, where the will of the sovereign is law, and where he can cut off your head if he pleases; but is it not strange in a free country?

H. It is placing an ordinary mortal on the top of a

pyramid, and kneeling at the bottom of it to the "highest and mightiest." It is a trick of human reason surpassing the grossness of the brute.

Conversation the Nineteenth.

H. FASHION is gentility running away from vulgarity, and afraid of being overtaken by it. It is a sign the two things are not very far asunder.

N. Yes; Mr. — used to say, that just before the women in his time left off hoops they looked like bats. Going on from one affectation to another, they at last wore them close under their arms, so that they resembled wings growing out from their shoulders; and having reached the top of the absurdity, they then threw them aside all at once. If long waists are the fashion one season they are exploded the next; as soon as the court adopts any particular mode, the city follows the example, and as soon as the city takes it up the court lays it down. The whole is caricature and masquerade. *Nature only is left out*; for that is either common, or what is fine in it would not always be found on the fashionable side of the question. It may be the fashion to paint or not to paint; but if it were the fashion to have a fine complexion many fashionable people must go without one, and many unfashionable ones would be at the height of it. Deformity is as often the fashion as beauty, yet the world in general see no other beauty than fashion, and their vanity or interest or complaisance bribes their understanding to disbelieve even their senses. If cleanliness is the fashion, then cleanliness is admired; if dirt, hair-powder, and pomatum are the fashion, then dirt, hair-powder, and pomatum are admired just as much, if not more, from their being disagreeable.

H. The secret is, that fashion is imitating, in certain things that are in our power and that are nearly indifferent in themselves, those who possess certain other advantages that are not in our power, and which the possessors are as little disposed to part with as they are eager to obtrude them upon the notice of others by every external symbol at their immediate control. We think the cut of a coat fine because it is worn by a man with ten thousand a-year, with a fine house and a fine carriage; as we cannot get the ten thousand a-year, the house, or the carriage, we get what we can—the cut of the fine gentleman's coat, and thus are in the fashion. But as we get it he gets rid of it, which shows that he cares nothing about it; but he keeps his ten thousand a-year, his fine house, and his fine carriage. A rich man wears gold buckles to show that he is rich; a coxcomb gets gilt ones to look like the rich man, and as soon as the gold ones prove nothing the rich man leaves them off. So it is with all the real advantages that fashionable people possess. Say that they have more grace, good manners, and refinement than the rabble; but these do not change every moment at the nod of fashion. Speaking correctly is not proper to one class more than another; if the fashionable, to distinguish themselves from the vulgar, affect a peculiar tone or set of phrases, this is mere *slang*. The difference between grace and awkwardness is the same one year after another. This is the meaning of "natural politeness." It is a perception of and attention to the feelings of others, which is the same thing, whether it is neglected by the great or practised by the vulgar. The barrier between refinement and grossness cannot be arbitrarily effaced. Nothing changes but what depends on the shallow affectation and assumption of superiority. Real excellence can never become vulgar. So Pope says in his elegant way:

“Virtue may choose the high or low degree,
’Tis just the same to virtue and to me;
Dwell in a monk or light upon a king,
She’s still the same belov’d contented thing.
Vice is undone if she forgets her birth,
And stoops from angels to the dregs of earth.”

Pope’s verse is not admired because it was once the fashion: it will be admired, let the fashion change how it will.

N. When Sir Joshua Reynolds wanted to learn what real grace was he studied it in the attitudes of children, not in the school of the dancing-master, or in the empty strut or mawkish languor of fashion. A young painter asked me the other day whether I thought that Guido was not chargeable with affectation? I told him that I thought *not*, or in a very trifling degree. I could not deny that Guido sometimes bordered on and reminded me of it; or that there was that which in anybody else might be really so, but that in him it seemed only an extreme natural gentility. He puts his figures into attitudes that are a little too courtly and studied, but he probably could not help it.

H. It was rather the excess of a quality or feeling in his mind, than the aiming to supply the defect of one.

N. Yes; there is no suspicion of what he is doing. The odious part of affectation is, when there is an evident design to impose on you with counterfeit pretensions. So in another point that might be objected to him, the impropriety of his naked figures, no mortal can steer clearer of it than he does. They may be strictly said to be clothed with their own delicacy and beauty. There is the ‘Venus Attired by the Graces:’ what other painter durst attempt it? They are to be all beauties, all naked; yet he has escaped as if by a miracle—none but the most vicious can find fault with it; the very beauty, elegance, and grace keep down instead of exciting improper ideas. And then, again, the ‘Andromeda chained

to the Rock'—both are, I believe, in the drawing-room at Windsor: but there is no possible offence to be taken at them, nothing to shock the most timid or innocent, because there was no particle of grossness in the painter's mind. I have seen pictures by others muffled up to the chin, that had twenty times as much vice in them. It is wonderful how the cause is seen in the effect. So we find it in Richardson. 'Clarissa' is a story in the midst of temptation; but he comes clear and triumphant out of that ordeal, because his own imagination is not contaminated by it. If there had been the least hint of an immoral tendency, the slightest indication of a wish to inflame the passions, it would have been all over with him. The intention always will peep out—you do not communicate a disease if you are not infected with it yourself. Albano's nymphs and goddesses seem waiting for admirers; Guido's are protected with a veil of innocence and modesty. Titian would have given them an air of Venetian courtesans; Raphael would have made them look something more than mortal: neither would have done what Guido has effected, who has conquered the difficulty by the pure force of feminine softness and delicacy.

H. I am glad to hear you speak so of Guido. I was beginning before I went abroad to have a "sneaking contempt" for him as insipid and monotonous, from seeing the same everlasting repetitions of Cleopatras and Madonnas; but I returned a convert to his merits. I saw many indifferent pictures attributed to great masters, but wherever I saw a Guido I found elegance and beauty that answered to the "silver" sound of his name. The mind lives on a round of names, and it is a great point gained not to have one of these snatched from us by a sight of their works. As to the display of the naked figure in works of art, the case to me seems clear; it is only when there is nothing but the naked figure that it is offensive.

In proportion as the beauty or perfection of the imitation rises the indecency vanishes. You look at it then with an eye to art, just as the anatomist examines the human figure with a view to science. Other ideas are introduced. Jeffrey, of Edinburgh, had a large sprawling Danae hanging over the chimneypiece of his office, where he received Scotch parsons and their wives on law business; he thought it a triumph over Presbyterian prudery and prejudice, and a sort of chivalrous answer to the imputed barbarism of the North. It was certainly a paradox in taste, a breach of manners. He asked me if I objected to it because it was naked? "No," I said, "but because it is ugly; you can only have put it there because it is naked, and that alone shows a felonious intent. Had there been either beauty or expression, it would have *conducted off* the objectionable part. As it is, I don't see how you can answer it to the kirk sessions."

N. I remember Sir Watkyn Wynn employed Sir Joshua and Dance, who was a very eminent designer, to ornament a music-room which he had built. Sir Joshua on this occasion painted his Cecilia, which he made very fine at first, but afterwards spoiled it; and Dance chose the subject of Orpheus. When I asked Miss Reynolds what she thought of it, she said she had no doubt of its being clever and well done, but that it looked "like a naked man." This answer was conclusive against it, for if the inspiration of the character had been given you would have overlooked the want of clothes. The nakedness only strikes and offends the eye in the barrenness of other matter. It is the same in the drama. Mere grossness or ribaldry is intolerable, but you often find in the old comedy that the wit and ingenuity (as well as custom) carry off what otherwise could not be borne. The laughter prevents the blush. So an expression seems gross in one person's mouth which in another's passes off with perfect innocence. The reason is, there

is something in the manner that gives a quite different construction to what is said. Have you seen the Alcides—the two foreigners who perform such prodigious feats of strength at the theatre, but with very little clothing on? They say the people hardly know what to make of it. They should not be too sure that this is any proof of their taste or virtue.

H. I recollect a remark of Coleridge's on the conclusion of the story of 'Paul and Virginia' by Bernardin St. Pierre. Just before the shipwreck, and when nothing else can save the heroine from perishing, an athletic figure comes forward stripped, but with perfect respect, and offers to swim with her to the shore; but instead of accepting his proposal she turns away with affected alarm. This, Coleridge said, was a proof of the prevailing tone of French depravity, and not of virgin innocence. A really modest girl in such circumstances would not have thought of any scruple.

N. It is the want of imagination or of an insight into nature in ordinary writers; they do not know how to place themselves in the situations they describe. Whatever feeling or passion is uppermost fills the mind and drives out every other. If you were confined in a vault and thought you saw a ghost you would rush out, though a lion was at the entrance. On the other hand, if you were pursued by a lion you would take refuge in a charnel-house, though it was full of spirits, and would disregard the dead bones and putrid relics about you. Both passions may be equally strong; the question is, which is roused first? But it is few who can get to the fountain-head, the secret springs of Nature. Shakspeare did it always, and Sir Walter Scott frequently. Godwin says he always was pleased with my conversation before you broached that opinion; but I do not see how that can be, for he always contradicts and thwarts me. When two people are constantly crossing one another on the

road, they cannot be very good company. You agree to what I say, and often explain or add to it, which encourages me to go on.

H. I believe Godwin is sincere in what he says, for he has frequently expressed the same opinion to me.

N. That might be so, though he took great care not to let me know it. People would often more willingly speak well of you behind your back than to your face; they are afraid either of shocking your modesty or gratifying your vanity. That was the case with ——. If he ever was struck with anything I did he made a point not to let me see it; he treated it lightly and said it was very well.

H. I do not think Godwin's differing with you was any proof of his opinion. Like most authors, he has something of the schoolmaster about him, and wishes to keep up an air of authority. What you say may be very well for a learner, but he is the oracle. You must not set up for yourself, and to keep you in due subordination he catechises and contradicts from mere habit.

N. Human nature is always the same. It was so with Johnson and Goldsmith. They would allow no one to have any merit but themselves. The very attempt was a piece of presumption and a trespass upon their privileged rights. I remember a poem that came out, and that was sent to Sir Joshua; his servant, Ralph, had instructions to bring it in just after dinner. Goldsmith presently got hold of it, and seemed thrown into a rage before he had read a line of it. He then said, "What wretched stuff is here? What c—rsed nonsense that is!" and kept all the while marking the passages with his thumb-nail, as if he would cut them in pieces. At last Sir Joshua, who was provoked, interfered, and said, "Nay, don't spoil my book, however." Dr. Johnson looked down on the rest of the world as pigmies; he smiled at the very idea that any one should set up for a fine writer but himself.

They never admitted Colman as one of the set; Sir Joshua did not invite him to dinner. If he had been in the room Goldsmith would have flown out of it, as if a dragon had been there. I remember Garrick once saying, "D—n his *dishclout* face! His plays would never do, if it were not for my patching them up and acting in them." Another time he took a poem of Colman's and read it backwards to turn it into ridicule. Yet some of his pieces keep possession of the stage, so that there must be something in them.

H. Perhaps he was later than they, and they considered him as an interloper on that account?

N. No; there was a prejudice against him; he did not somehow fall into the train. It was the same with Vanbrugh in Pope's time. They made a jest of him, and endeavoured to annoy him in every possible way; he was a *black sheep* for no reason in the world except that he was cleverer than they—that is, could build houses and write verses at the same time. They laughed at his architecture, yet it is certain that it is quite original, and at least a question whether it is not beautiful as well as new. He was the first who sank the window-frames within the walls of houses; they projected before. He did it as a beauty, but it has been since adopted by Act of Parliament, to prevent fire. Some gentleman was asking me about the imposing style of architecture with which Vanbrugh had decorated the top of Blenheim House; he had mistaken the chimneys for an order of architecture; so that what is an eyesore in all other buildings Vanbrugh has had the art to convert into an ornament. And then his wit! Think what a comedy is 'The Provoked Husband'! What a scope and comprehension in the display of manners from the highest to the lowest! It was easier to write an epigram on Brother Van than such a play as this. I once asked Richards the scene-painter, who was perfectly used to

the stage, and acquainted with all the actors, what he considered as the best play in the language? And he answered, without hesitation, 'The Journey to London.'

H. Lord Foppington is also his, if he wanted supporters. He was in the same situation as Rousseau with respect to the wits of his time, who traces all his misfortunes and the jealousy that pursued him through life to the success of the 'Devin du Village.' He said Diderot and the rest could have forgiven his popularity as an author, but they could not bear his writing an opera.

N. If you belong to a set you must either lead or follow; you cannot maintain your independence. Beattie did very well with the great folks in my time, because he looked up to them, and he excited no uneasy sense of competition. Indeed he managed so well that Sir Joshua flattered him and his book in return in the most effectual manner. In his allegorical portrait of the doctor he introduced the angel of truth chasing away the demons of falsehood and impiety, who bore an obvious resemblance to Hume and Voltaire. This brought out Goldsmith's fine reproof of his friend, who said that "Sir Joshua might be ashamed of debasing a genius like Voltaire before a man like Beattie, whose works would be forgotten in a few years, while Voltaire's fame would last for ever." Sir Joshua Reynolds took the design of this picture from one of a similar subject by Tintoret, now in the royal collection in Kensington Palace. He said he had no intention of the sort: Hume was a broad-backed clumsy figure, not very like; but I know he meant Voltaire, for I saw a French medal of him lying about in the room. Mrs. Beattie also came up with her husband to London. I recollect her asking for "a little *paurter*," in her broad Scotch way. It is like Cibber's seeing Queen Anne at Nottingham when he was a boy, and all he could remember about her was her asking

him to give her a glass of wine-and-water." She was an ordinary character, and belonged to the class of good sort of people. So the Margravine of Baireuth describes the Duchess of Kendal, who was mistress to George I., to be a quiet inoffensive character, who would do neither good nor harm to anybody. Did you ever read her 'Memoirs'? Lord! what an account she gives of the state of manners at the old Court of Prussia, and of the brutal despotism and cruelty of the king! She was his daughter, and he used to strike her, and drag her by the hair of her head, and leave her, with her face bleeding, and often senseless, on the floor for the smallest trifles; and he treated her brother, afterwards Frederic II. (and to whom she was much attached) no better. That might in part account for the hardness of his character at a later period.

H. I suppose Prussia was at that time a mere petty state, or sort of by-court, so that what they did was pretty much done in a corner, and they were not afraid of being talked of by the rest of Europe?

N. No; it was quite an absolute monarchy, with all the pomp and pretensions of sovereignty. Frederic (the father) was going, on some occasion when he was displeased with him, to strike our ambassador; but this conduct was resented and put a stop to. The Queen (sister to George II., and who was imprisoned so long on a suspicion of conjugal infidelity) appears to have been a violent-spirited woman, and also weak. George I. could never learn to speak English, and his successor, George II., spoke it badly, and neither ever felt himself at home in this country; and they were always going over to Hanover, where they found themselves lords and masters, while here, though they had been raised so much higher, their dignity never sat easy upon them. They did not know what to make of their new situation.

[Northcote here read me a letter I had heard him

speak of relative to a distinguished character¹ mentioned in a former conversation.]

“ A Letter to Mr. Northcote in London from his Brother at Plymouth, giving an Account of a Shipwreck.

“ Plymouth, Jan. 28, 1796.

“ We have had a terrible succession of stormy weather of late. Tuesday, immediately after dinner, I went to the Hoe to see the *Dutton* East Indiaman, full of troops, upon the rocks, directly under the flagstaff of the citadel. She had been out seven weeks on her passage to the West Indies as a transport, with 400 troops on board, besides women and the ship's crew; and had been just driven back by stress of weather, with a great number of sick on board. You cannot conceive anything so horrible as the appearance of things altogether which I beheld when I first arrived on the spot. The ship was stuck on sunken rocks, somewhat inclining to one side, and without a mast or the bowsprit standing; and her decks covered with the soldiers as thick as they could possibly stand by one another, with the sea breaking in a most horrible manner all around them. And what still added to the melancholy grandeur of the scene was the distress guns, which were fired now and then directly over our head, from the citadel.

“ When I first came to the spot I found that they had by some means got a rope with one end of it fixed to the ship, and the other was held by the people on shore, by which means they could yield as the ship swung. Upon this rope they had got a ring, which they could by means of two smaller ropes draw forwards and backwards from the ship to the shore; to this ring they had fixed a loop, which each man put under his arms; and by this means, and holding by the ring with his hands, he supported himself, hanging to the ring, while he was

¹ Sir Edward Pellew (Lord Exmouth).—ED.

drawn to the shore by the people there; and in this manner I saw a great many drawn on shore. But this proved a tedious work; and though I looked at them for a long time, yet the numbers on the deck were not apparently diminished; besides, from the motion which the ship had by rolling on the rocks, it was not possible to keep the rope equally stretched; and from this cause, as well as from the sudden rising of the waves, you would at one moment see a poor wretch hanging ten or twenty feet above the water, and the next you would lose sight of him in the foam of a wave, though some escaped better.

“But this was not a scheme which the women and many of the sick could avail themselves of.

“I observed with some admiration the behaviour of a captain of a man-of-war, who seemed interested in the highest degree for the safety of these poor wretches. He exerted himself uncommonly, and directed others what to do on shore, and endeavoured in vain with a large speaking-trumpet to make himself heard by those on board; but finding that nothing could be heard but the roaring of the wind and sea, he offered anybody five guineas instantly who would suffer himself to be drawn on board with instructions to them what to do. And when he found that nobody would accept his offer, he gave an instance of the highest heroism: for he fixed the rope about himself and gave the signal to be drawn on board. He had his uniform coat on and his sword hanging at his side. I have not room to describe the particulars; but there was something grand and interesting in the thing, for as soon as they had pulled him into the wreck he was received with three vast shouts by the people on board; and these were immediately echoed by those who lined the shore, the garrison-walls, and lower batteries. The first thing he did was to rig out two other ropes like the first, which I saw him most active in doing with his own hands. This quick-

ened the matter a good deal, and by this time two large open row-boats were arrived from the dockyard, and a sloop had with difficulty worked out from Plymouth Pool. He then became active in getting out the women and the sick, who were with difficulty got into the open boats and by them carried off to the sloop, which kept off for fear of being stove against the ship or thrown upon the rocks. He suffered but one boat to approach the ship at a time, and stood with his drawn sword to prevent too many rushing into the boat. After he had seen all the people out of the ship to about ten or fifteen, he fixed himself to the rope as before and was drawn ashore, where he was again received with shouts. Upon my inquiry who this gallant officer was, I was informed that it was Sir Edward Pellew, whom I had heard the highest character of before, both for bravery and mercy.

“The soldiers were falling into disorder when Sir Edward went on board. Many of them were drunk, having broken into the cabin and got at the liquor. I saw him beating one with the flat of his broadsword, in order to make him give up a bundle he had made up of plunder. They had but just time to save the men before the ship was nearly under water. I observed a poor goat and a dog amongst the crowd, when the people were somewhat thinned away. I saw the goat marching about with much unconcern; but the dog showed evident anxiety, for I saw him stretching himself out at one of the portholes, standing partly upon the port and partly upon a gun, and looking earnestly towards the shore, where I suppose he knew his master was. All these perished soon after, as the ship was washed all over as the sea rose—she is now in pieces.”

Conversation the Twentieth.

N. HAVE you seen the 'Life of Sir Joshua,' just published?

H. No.

N. It is all, or nearly all, taken from my account,¹ and yet the author misrepresents or contradicts everything I say, I suppose to show that he is under no obligation to me. I cannot understand the drift of his work, nor who it is he means to please. He finds fault with Sir Joshua, among a number of other things, for not noticing Hogarth. Why, it was not his business to notice Hogarth any more than it was to notice Fielding. Both of them were great wits and describers of manners in common life, but neither of them came under the article of painting. What Hogarth had was his own, and nobody will ever have it again in the same degree. But all that did not depend on his own genius was detestable, both as to his subjects and his execution. Was Sir Joshua to recommend these as models to the student? No! we are to imitate only what is best, and that in which even failure is honourable—not that where only originality and the highest point of success can at all excuse the attempt. Cunningham (the writer of the Life) pretends to cry up Hogarth as a painter; but this is not true. He moulded little figures, and placed them to see how the lights fell and how the drapery came in, which gave a certain look of reality and relief; but this was not enough to give breadth or grace, and his figures look like puppets after all, or like dolls dressed up. Who would compare any of these little, miserable, deformed caricatures of men and women to the figure of St. Paul preaching at Athens? What we

¹ Published in 1813-15, 4to.—Ed.

justly admire and emulate is, that which raises human nature, not that which degrades and holds it up to scorn. We may laugh to see a person rolled in the kennel, but we are ashamed of ourselves for doing so. We are amused with 'Tom Jones,' but we rise from the perusal of 'Clarissa' with higher feelings and better resolutions than we had before. St. Giles's is not the only school of art. It is nature, to be sure; but we must select nature. Ask the meanest person in the gallery at a playhouse which he likes best, the tragedy or the farce, and he will tell you, without hesitation, the tragedy, and will prefer Mrs. Siddons to the most exquisite buffoon. He feels an ambition to be placed in the situations and to be associated with the characters described in tragedy, and none to be connected with those in a farce, because he feels a greater sense of power and dignity in contemplating the one, and only sees his own weakness and littleness reflected and ridiculed in the other. Even the poetry, the blank verse, pleases the most illiterate, which it would not do if it were not natural. The world do not receive monsters. This is what I used to contest with Sir Joshua. He insisted that the blank verse in tragedy was purely artificial—a thing got up for the occasion. But surely every one must feel that he delivers an important piece of information or asks a common question in a different tone of voice. If it were not for this, the audience would laugh at the measured speech or step of a tragic actor as burlesque, just as they are inclined to do at an opera. Old Mr. Tolcher used to say of the famous Pulteney, "My Lord Bath always speaks in blank verse!" The stately march of his ideas no doubt made it natural to him. Mr. Cunningham will never persuade the world that Hogarth is superior to Raphael or Reynolds. Common-sense is against it. I don't know where he picked up the notion.

H. Probably from Mr. Lamb,¹ who endeavours to set up Hogarth as a great tragic as well as comic genius, not inferior in either respect to Shakspeare.

N. I can't tell where he got such an opinion, but I know it is great nonsense. Cunningham gives a wrong account of an anecdote which he has taken from me. Dr. Tucker, Dean of Gloucester, had said at a meeting of the Society of Arts that "a pin-maker was a more important member of society than Raphael." Sir Joshua had written some remark on this assertion in an old copybook which fell into my hands, and which nobody probably ever saw but myself. Cunningham states that Sir Joshua was present when Dean Tucker made the speech at the Society, and that he immediately rose up, and with great irritation answered him on the spot, which is contrary both to the fact and to Sir Joshua's character. He would never have thought of rising to contradict any one in a public assembly for not agreeing with him on the importance of his own profession. In one part of the new *Life*, it is said that Sir Joshua, seeing the ill effects that Hogarth's honesty and bluntness had had upon his prospects as a portrait-painter, had learnt the art to make himself agreeable to his sitters, and to mix up the oil of flattery with his discourse as assiduously as with his colours. This is far from the truth. Sir Joshua's manners were indeed affable and obliging, but he flattered nobody; and instead of gossiping, or making it his study to amuse his sitters, minded only his own business. I remember being in the next room the first time the Duchess of Cumberland came to sit, and I can vouch that scarce a word was spoken for near two hours. Another thing remarkable, to show how little Sir Joshua crouched to the great, is that he never even gave them their proper titles. I never

¹ In his 'Essay on the Genius and Character of Hogarth,' published in the third number of 'The Reflector.'—ED.

heard the words "your lordship" or "your ladyship" come from his mouth; nor did he ever say "Sir" in speaking to any one but Dr. Johnson; and when he did not hear distinctly what the latter said (which often happened), he would then say "Sir?" that he might repeat it. He was in this respect like a Quaker, not from any scruples or affectation of independence, but possibly from some awkwardness and confusion in addressing the variety of characters he met with, or at his first entrance on his profession. His biographer is also unjust to Sir Joshua in stating that his table was scantily supplied out of penuriousness. The truth is, Sir Joshua would ask a certain number and order a dinner to be provided; and then in the course of the morning two or three other persons would drop in, and he would say, "I have got So-and-so to dinner, will you join us?" which they being always ready to do, there were sometimes more guests than seats; but nobody complained of this, or was unwilling to come again. If Sir Joshua had really grudged his guests they would not have repeated their visits twice, and there would have been plenty of room and of provisions the next time. Sir Joshua never gave the smallest attention to such matters; all he cared about was his painting in the morning and the conversation at his table, to which last he sacrificed his interest; for his associating with men like Burke, who was at that time a great oppositionist, did him no good at court. Sir Joshua was equally free from meanness or ostentation and encroachment on others; no one knew himself better, or more uniformly kept his place in society.

H. It is a pity to mar the idea of Sir Joshua's dinner-parties, which are one of the pleasantest instances on record of a cordial intercourse between persons of distinguished pretensions of all sorts. But some people do not care what they spoil, so that they can tell disagreeable truths.

N. In the present case there is not even that excuse. The statement answers no good end, while it throws a very unfounded slur on Sir Joshua's hospitality and love of good cheer. It is insinuated that he was sparing of his wine, which is not true. Again, I am blamed for not approving of Dr. Johnson's speech to Sir Joshua at the Miss Cottrells', when the Duchess of Argyll came in, and he thought himself neglected—"How much do you think you and I could earn in a week, if we were to work as hard as we could?" This was a rude and unmerited insult. The Miss Cottrells were the daughters of an admiral and people of fashion, as well as the Duchess of Argyll, and they naturally enough fell into conversation about persons and things that they knew, though Dr. Johnson had not been used to hear of them. He therefore thought it affectation and insolence, whereas the vulgarity and insolence were on his own side. If I had any fault to find with Sir Joshua, it would be that he was a very bad master in the art. Of all his pupils, I am the only one who ever did anything at all. He was like the boy teaching the other to swim: "How do you do when you want to turn?" "How must you do when you turn? Why, you must look that way!" Sir Joshua's instructions amounted to little more. People talk of the instinct of animals as if a *blind reason* were an absurdity; whereas whatever men can do best, they understand and can explain least. Your son was looking at that picture of the lapdog the other evening. There is a curious story about that. The dog was walking out with me one day and was set upon and bit by a strange dog, for all dogs know and hate a favourite. He was a long time in recovering from the wound; and one day when Mr. Prince Hoare called he ran up to him, leaped up quite overjoyed, then lay down, began to whine, patted the place where he had been hurt with his paws, and went through the whole history of his

misfortune. It was a perfect pantomime. I will not tell the story to Godwin, for the philosopher would be jealous of the sagacity of the cur.

H. There was Jack Spines, the racket-player: he excelled in what is called "the half-volley." Some amateurs of the game were one day disputing what this term of art meant. Spines was appealed to. "Why, gentlemen," says he, "I really can't say exactly; but I should think, the half-volley is something between the volley and the half-volley." This definition was not quite the thing. The celebrated John Davies, the finest player in the world, could give no account of his proficiency that way. It is a game which no one thinks of playing without putting on a flannel jacket; and after you have been engaged in it for ten minutes you are just as if you had been dipped in a mill-pond. John Davies never pulled off his coat; and merely buttoning it that it might not be in his way, would go down into the Fives Court and play two of the best players of the day, and at the end of the match you could not perceive that a hair of his head was wet. Powell, the keeper of the court, (why does not Sir B. Nash, among so many innovations, rebuild it?) said he never seemed to follow the ball, but that it came to him—he did everything with such ease.

N. Then every motion of that man was perfect grace. There was not a muscle in his body that did not contribute its share to the game. So, when they begin to learn the pianoforte, at first they use only the fingers, and are soon tired to death; then the muscles of the arm come into play, which relieves them a little; and at last the whole frame is called into action, so as to produce the effect with entire ease and gracefulness. It is the same in everything; and he is indeed a poor creature who cannot do more, from habit or natural genius, than he can give any rational account of.

[Some remarks having been made on the foregoing conversation, Mr. Northcote, the next time I saw him, took up the subject nearly as follows :]

N. The newspaper critic asks with an air of triumph, as if he had found a mare's-nest, "What! are Sophia Western and Allworthy St. Giles's?" Why, they are the very ones; they are Tower stamp! Blifil, and Black George, and Square are not—they have some sense and spirit in them, and are so far redeemed, for Fielding put his own cleverness and ingenuity into them; but as to his refined characters, they are an essence of vulgarity and insipidity. Sophia is a poor doll; and as to Allworthy, he has not the soul of a goose. And how does he behave to the young man that he has brought up and pampered with the expectations of a fortune and of being a fine gentleman? Does he not turn him out to starve or rob on the highway, without the shadow of an excuse, on a mere maudlin sermonising pretext of morality, and with as little generosity as principle? No! Fielding did not know what virtue or refinement meant. As Richardson said, he should have thought his books were written by an ostler; or Sir John Hawkins has expressed it still better, that the virtues of his heroes are the virtues of dogs and horses; he does not go beyond that—nor indeed so far, for his Tom Jones is not so good as Lord Byron's Newfoundland dog. I have known Newfoundland dogs with twenty times his understanding and goodnature. That is where Richardson has the advantage over Fielding—the virtues of *his* characters are not the virtues of animals. Clarissa holds her head in the skies, a "bright particular star;" for whatever may be said, we have such *ideas*—and thanks to those who sustain and nourish them, and woe to those critics who would confound them with the dirt under our feet and Grub-street jargon! No, that is what we want—to

have the line made as black and as broad as possible that separates what we have in common with the animals from what we *pretend* (at least) to have above them. That is where the newspaper critic is wrong, in saying that the blackguard in the play is equal to Mrs. Siddons. No, he is not equal to Mrs. Siddons, any more than a baited bull or an over-drove ox is equal to Mrs. Siddons. There is the same animal fury in Tyke that there is in the maddened brute, with the same want of any ideas beyond himself and his own mechanical and coarse impulses; it is the lowest stage of human capacity and feeling violently acted upon by circumstances. Lady Macbeth, if she is the demon, is not the brute; she has the intellectual part, and is hurried away no less by the violence of her will than by a wide scope of imagination and a lofty ambition. Take away all dignity and grandeur from poetry and art, and you make Emery equal to Mrs. Siddons, and Hogarth to Raphael, but not else. Emery's Tyke in his extremity calls for brandy—Mrs. Siddons does not, like Queen Dollalolla, call for a glass of gin. Why not? Gin is as natural a drink as poison; but if Bianca Capella, instead of swallowing the poison herself, when she found it was not given to her enemy, had merely got drunk for spite, in the manner of Hogarth's heroines, she would not have been recorded in history. There is then a foundation for the distinction between the heroic and the natural, which I am not bound to explain any more than I am to account why black is not white.

H. If Emery is equal to Mrs. Siddons, Morton is equal to Shakspeare; though it would be difficult to bring such persons to that conclusion.

N. I'll tell you why Emery is not equal to Mrs. Siddons; there are a thousand Emerys to one Mrs. Siddons; the stage is always full of six or seven comic actors at a time, so that you cannot tell which is best—

Emery, Fawcett, Munden, Lewis; but in my time I have seen but Garrick and Mrs. Siddons, who have left a gap behind them that I shall not live to see filled up. Emery is the first blackguard or stage-coach driver you see in a row in the street; but if you had not seen Mrs. Siddons you could have no idea of her, nor can you convey it to any one who has not. She was like a preternatural being descended to the earth. I cannot say Sir Joshua has done her justice. I regret Mrs. Abington too—she was the Grosvenor Square of comedy, if you please. I am glad that Hogarth did not paint her; it would have been a thing to spit upon. If the correspondent of the newspaper wants to know where *my* Grosvenor Square of art is, he'll find it in 'The Provoked Husband,' in 'Lord and Lady Townly'—not in the 'History of a Foundling,' or in the pompous swagbellied peer with his dangling pedigree, or his gawky son-in-law, or his dawdling *malkin* of a wife from the city, playing with the ring like an idiot, in the 'Marriage à la mode!' There may be vice and folly enough in Vanbrugh's scenes; but it is not the vice of St. Giles's, it does not savour of the kennel. Not that I would have my interrogator suppose that I think all is vice in St. Giles's. On the contrary, I could find at this moment instances of more virtue, refinement, sense, and beauty there than there are in his *Sophy*. No, nature is the same everywhere; there are as many handsome children born in St. Giles's as in Grosvenor Square; but the same care is not taken of them; and in general they grow up greater beauties in the one than the other. A child in St. Giles's is left to run wild—it thrusts its finger into its mouth or pulls its nose about; but if a child of people of fashion play any tricks of this kind, it is told immediately, "You must not do this, unless you would have your mouth reach from ear to ear; you must not say that; you must not sit in such a manner, or you'll grow double." This seems

like art; but it is only giving nature fair play. No one was allowed to touch the Princess Charlotte when a child. She was taken care of like something precious. The sister of the Duke of —— had her nose broke when a child in a quarrel with her sister, who flung a tea-basin at her; but all the doctors were immediately called in and every remedy was applied, so that when she grew up there was no appearance of the accident left. If the same thing had happened to a poor child she would have carried the marks of it to her grave. So you see a number of crooked people and twisted legs among the lower classes. This was what made Lord Byron so mad—that he had misshapen feet. Don't you think so?

H. Yes; Tom Moore told a person I know that that was the cause of all his misanthropy—he wanted to be an Adonis, and could not.

N. Ay, and of his genius too; it made him write verses in revenge. There is no knowing the effect of such sort of things—of defects we wish to balance. Do you suppose we owe nothing to Pope's deformity? He said to himself, "If my person be crooked my verses shall be straight." I myself have felt this in passing along the street, when I have heard rude remarks made on my personal appearance. I then go home and paint: but I should not do this if I thought all that there is in art was contained in Hogarth—I should then feel neither pride nor consolation in it. But if I thought, instead of his doll-like figures cut in two with their insipid dough-baked faces, I should do something like Sir Joshua's 'Iphigene,' with all that delights the sense in richness of colour and luxuriance of form; or instead of the women spouting the liquor in one another's faces, in 'The Rake's Progress,' I could give the purity, and grace, and real elegance (appearing under all the incumbrance of the fashionable dresses of the day) of Lady Sarah Bunbury, or of the Miss Hornecks, sacrificing to the Graces, or of Lady Essex, with her

long waist and ruffles, but looking a pattern of the female character in all its relations, and breathing dignity and virtue—then I should think this an object worth living for, or (as you have expressed it very properly) should even be proud of having failed. This is the opinion the world have always entertained of the matter. Sir Joshua's name is repeated with more respect than Hogarth's. It is not for his talents, but for his taste and the direction of them. In meeting Sir Joshua (merely from a knowledge of his works) you would expect to meet a gentleman—not so of Hogarth. And yet Sir Joshua's claims and possessions in art were not of the highest order.

H. But he was decent, and did not profess the arts and accomplishments of a merryandrew.

N. I assure you it was not for want of ability, either. When he was young he did a number of caricatures of different persons, and could have got any price for them. But he found it necessary to give up the practice. Leonardo da Vinci, a mighty man, and who had titles manifold, had a great turn for drawing laughable and grotesque likenesses of his acquaintances; but he threw them all in the fire. It was to him a kind of profanation of the art. Sir Joshua would almost as soon have forged as he would have set his name to a caricature. Gilray (whom you speak of) was eminent in this way; but he had other talents as well. In 'The Embassy to China,' he has drawn the Emperor of China a complete Eastern voluptuary, fat and supine, with all the effects of climate and situation evident upon his person; and Lord Macartney is an elegant youth, a real Apollo; then, indeed, come Punch and the puppet-show after him, to throw the whole into ridicule. In the 'Revolutionists' Jollyboat,' after the opposition were defeated, he has placed Fox and Sheridan, and the rest, escaping from the wreck: Dante could not have described them as

looking more sullen and gloomy. He was a great man in his way. Why does not Mr. Lamb write an essay on the 'Twopenny Whist'? Yet it was against his conscience, for he had been on the other side, and was bought over. The minister sent to ask him to do *them* half a dozen at a certain price, which he agreed to, and took them to the Treasury; but there being some demur about the payment he took them back with some saucy reply. He had not been long at home before a messenger was sent after him with the money.

Conversation the Twenty-first.

N. GODWIN and I had a dispute lately about the capacity of animals. He appeared to consider them as little better than machines. He made it the distinguishing mark of superiority in man that he is the only animal that can transmit his thoughts to future generations. "Yes," I said, "for future generations to take no sort of notice of them." I allowed that there were a few extraordinary geniuses that every one must look up to—and I mentioned the names of Shakspeare and Dryden. But he would not hear of Dryden, and began to pull him in pieces immediately. "Why then," I answered, "if you cannot agree among yourselves even with respect to four or five of the most eminent, how can there be the vast and overwhelming superiority you pretend to?" I observed that instinct in animals answered very much to what we call genius. I spoke of the wonderful powers of smell, and the sagacity of dogs, and the memory shown by horses in finding a road that they have once travelled; but I made no way with Godwin—he still went back to Lear and Othello.

H. I think he was so far right; for as this is what he

understands best and has to imitate, it is fit he should admire and dwell upon it most. He cannot acquire the smell of the dog or the sagacity of the horse, and therefore it is of no use to think about them; but he may, by dint of study and emulation, become a better poet or philosopher. The question is not merely what is best in itself (of that we are hardly judges), but what sort of excellence we understand best and can make our own; for otherwise, in affecting to admire we know not what, we may admire a nonentity or a deformity. Abraham Tucker has remarked very well on this subject that a swine wallowing in the mire may, for what he can tell, be as happy as a philosopher in writing an essay; but that is no reason why he (the philosopher) should exchange occupations or tastes with the brute, unless he could first exchange *natures*. We may suspend our judgments in such cases as a matter of speculation or conjecture, but that is different from the habitual practical feeling. So I remember Wordsworth being nettled at D—— (who affected a fashionable taste) for saying, on coming out of the Marquis of Stafford's gallery, "A very noble art, very superior to poetry!" If it were so, Wordsworth observed, he could know nothing about it, who had never seen any fine pictures before. It was like an European adventurer saying to an African chieftain, "A very fine boy, sir, your black son—very superior to my white one!" This is mere affectation; we might as well pretend to be thrown into rapture by a poem written in a language we are not acquainted with. We may notwithstanding believe that it is very fine, and have no wish to hang up the writer because he is not an Englishman. A spider may be a greater mechanic than Watt or Arkwright; but the effects are not brought home to us in the same manner, and we cannot help estimating the cause by the effect. A friend of mine teazes me with questions, "Which was the greatest man, Sir Isaac

Newton or a first-rate chess-player?" It refers itself to the head of the *Illustrious Obscure*. A club of chess-players might give it in favour of the Great Unknown; but all the rest of the world, who have heard of the one and not of the other, will give it against him. We cannot set aside those prejudices which are founded on the limitation of our faculties or the constitution of society, only that we need not lay them down as abstract or demonstrable truths. It is there the bigotry and error begin. The language of taste and moderation is, "I prefer this, because it is best to me;" the language of dogmatism and intolerance is, "Because I prefer it, it is best in itself, and I will allow no one else to be of a different opinion."

N. I find, in the last conversation I saw, you make me an admirer of Fielding, and so I am; but I find great fault with him too. I grant he is one of those writers that I remember; he stamps his characters, whether good or bad, on the reader's mind. This is more than I can say of every one. For instance, when Godwin plagues me about my not having sufficient admiration of Wordsworth's poetry, the answer I give is, that it is not my fault, for I have utterly forgotten it; it seemed to me like the ravelings of poetry. But to say nothing of Fielding's immorality, and his fancying himself a fine gentleman in the midst of all his coarseness, he has oftener described *habits* than *character*. For example, Western is no character; it is merely the language, manners, and pursuits of the country squire of that day; and the proof of this is, that there is no Squire Western now. Manners and customs wear out, but characters last for ever. I remember making this remark to Holcroft, and he asked me, "What was the difference?" Are you not surprised at this?

H. Not in him. If you mentioned the word *character*, he stopped you short by saying that it was merely the difference of circumstances; or if you hinted at the

difference of natural capacity, he said, "Then, sir, you must believe in *innate ideas*." He surrendered his own feelings and better judgment to a set of cant phrases, called "the modern philosophy."

N. I need not explain the difference to you. Character is the groundwork, the natural *stamina*, of the mind, on which circumstances only act. You see it in St. Giles's: there are characters there that in the midst of filth, and vice, and ignorance, retain some traces of their original goodness, and struggle with their situation to the last: as in St. James's you will find wretches that would disgrace a halter. 'Gil Blas' has character.

H. I thought he only gave professions and classes, players, footmen, sharpers, courtesans, but not the individual, as Fielding often does, though we should strip Western of his scarlet hunting-dress and jockey phrases. There is Square, Blifil, Black George, Mrs. Fitzpatrick, Parson Adams; and a still greater cluster of them in the one that is least read—the noble peer, the lodging-house-keeper, Mrs. Bennet, and Colonel Bath. -

N. You mean 'Amelia'? I have not read that, but will get it. I allow in part what you say; but in the best there is something too local and belonging to the time. But what I chiefly object to in Fielding is his conceit, his consciousness of what he is doing, his everlasting recommendation and puffing of his own wit and sagacity. His introductory chapters make me sick.

H. Why, perhaps Fielding is to be excused as a disappointed man. All his success was late in life, for he died in 1754; and 'Joseph Andrews' (the first work of his that was popular) was published in 1742. All the rest of his life he had been drudging for the booksellers, or bringing out unsuccessful comedies. He probably anticipated the same result in his novels, and wished to bespeak the favour of the reader by putting himself too much forward. His prefaces are like Ben Jonson's

prologues, and from the same cause, mortified vanity—though it seems odd to say so at present, after the run his writings have had; but he could not foresee that, and only lived a short time to witness it.

N. I can bear anything but that conscious look; it is to me like the lump of soot in the broth, that spoils the whole mess. Fielding was one of the swaggerers.

H. But he had much to boast of.

N. He certainly was not idle in his time. Idleness would have ruined a greater man.

H. Then you do not agree to a maxim I have sometimes thought might be laid down, that no one is idle who can do anything?

N. No, certainly.

H. I conceive it may be illustrated from Wilson, who was charged with idleness, and who, after painting a little, used to say, as soon as any friend dropped in, "Now let us go somewhere,"—meaning to the alehouse. All that Wilson could do he did, and that finely too, with a few well-disposed masses and strokes of the pencil; but he could not finish, or he would have staid within all the morning to work up his pictures to the perfection of Claude's. He thought it better to go to the alehouse than to spoil what he had already done. I have in my own mind made this excuse for —, ¹ that he could only make a first sketch, and was obliged to lose the greatest part of his time in waiting for *windfalls* of heads and studies. I have sat to him twice, and each time I offered to come again, and he said he would let me know, but I heard no more of it. The sketch went as it was—of course in a very unfinished state.

N. But he might have remedied this by diligence and practice.

H. I do not know that he could: one might say that there is the same abruptness and crudity in his character

¹ Query, W. Bewick.—ED.

throughout—in his conversation, his walk, and look—great force and spirit, but neither softness nor refinement.

N. If he had more humility he might have seen all that in the works of others, and have strove to imitate it.

H. What I mean is, that it was his not having the sense of these refinements in himself that prevented his perceiving them in others, or taking pains to supply a defect to which he was blind.

N. I do not think that, under any circumstances, he would have made a Raphael. But your reasoning goes too much to what Dr. Johnson ridiculed in poetry—fits of inspiration, and a greater flow of ideas in the autumn than in the spring. Sir Joshua used to work at all times, whether he was in the humour or not.

H. And so would every one else with his motives and ability to excel. Lawyers without fees are accused of idleness, but this goes off when the briefs pour in.

N. Did you see the newspaper accounts of the election of the new Pope? It appears that nothing could exceed his repugnance to be chosen. He begged and even wept to be let off. You are to consider, he is an old man labouring under a mortal disease (which is one circumstance that led to his elevation)—to be taken from the situation of cardinal (in itself a very enviable one) and thrust violently into a mass of business, of questions and cabals which will distract him, and where he can get no thanks, and may incur every kind of odium. It is true he has an opportunity of making the fortunes of his family; and if he prefers them to himself it is all very well, but not else. To persons of a restless and aspiring turn of mind, ambition and grandeur are very fine things, but to others they are the most intolerable tax. There is our own King—there is no conceiving the punishment that those processions and public show-days are to him; and then as to all the pomp and glitter that we so much admire, it is, to those who are accus-

tomed to it and who see behind the curtain, like so much cast-off rags and tinsel or Monmouth-street finery. They hold it in inconceivable scorn, and yet they can hardly do without it, from the slavery of habit. Then the time of such people is never their own—they are always performing a part (and generally a forced and irksome one) in what no way interests or concerns them. The late King,¹ to whom rank was a real drudgery, used to stand buried in a pile of papers, so that you could not see those on the other side of the table, which he had merely to sign. It is no wonder kings are sometimes seen to retire to a monastery, where religion leaves this asylum open to them, or are glad to return to their shepherd's crook again. No situation can boast of complete ease or freedom; and even *that* would have its disadvantages. And then, again, look at those labourers at the top of the house yonder, working from morning till night, and exposed to all weathers, for a bare pittance, without hope to sweeten their toil, and driven on by hunger and necessity! When we turn to others, whether those above or below us, we have little reason to be dissatisfied with our own situation in life. But in all cases it is necessary to employ means to ends, be the object what it may; and where the first have not been taken it is both unjust and foolish to repine at the want of success. The common expression, "Fortune's fools," may seem to convey a slur on the order of Providence; but it rather shows the equality of its distributions. Are the men of capacity to have all the good things to themselves? They are proud of their supposed superiority—why are they not contented with it? If a fool is not to grow rich, the next thing would be that none but men of genius should have a coat to their backs or be thought fit to live. If it were left to them to provide food or clothes they would have none for themselves.

¹ George III.

It is urged as a striking inequality that enterprising manufacturers, for instance, should rise to great wealth and honours, while thousands of their dependents are labouring hard at one or two shillings a day; but we are to recollect that if it had not been for men like these the working-classes would have been perishing for want; they collect the others together, give a direction and find a vent for their industry, and may be said to exercise a part of *sovereign* capacity. Everything has its place and due subordination. If authors had the direction of the world nothing would be left standing but printing-presses.

N. What do you think of that portrait?

H. It is very ladylike, and, I should imagine, a good likeness.

N. J—— said I might go on painting yet—he saw no falling off. *They* are pleased with it. I have painted almost the whole family, and the girls would let their mother sit to nobody else. But, Lord! everything one can do seems to fall so short of nature—whether it is the want of skill or the imperfection of the art, that cannot give the successive movements of expression and changes of countenance—I am always ready to beg pardon of my sitters after I have done, and to say I hope they'll excuse it. The more one knows of the art, and indeed the better one can do, the less one is satisfied. This made Titian write under his pictures "*faciebat*," signifying that they were only in progress. I remember Burke came in one day when Sir Joshua had been painting one of the Lennoxes; he was quite struck with the beauty of the performance, and said he hoped Sir Joshua would not touch it again; to which the latter replied, that if he had seen the original he would have thought little of the picture, and that there was a *look* which it was hardly in the power of art to give. No! all we can do is to produce something that makes a distant ap-

proach to nature, and that serves as a faint relic of the individual. A portrait is only a little better memorial than the parings of the nails or a lock of the hair.

H. Who is it?

N. It is a Lady W——; you have heard me speak of her before. She is a person of great sense and spirit, and combines very opposite qualities from a sort of natural strength of character. She has shown the greatest feeling and firmness united; no one can have more tenderness in her domestic connections, and yet she has borne the loss of some of them with exemplary fortitude. Perhaps the one is a consequence of the other; for where the attachment or even the regret is left, all is not lost. The mind has still a link to connect it with the beloved object. She has no affectation, and therefore yields to unavoidable circumstances as they arise. Inconsolable grief is often mere cant, and a trick to impose on ourselves and others. People of any real strength of character are seldom affected: those who have not the clue of their own feelings to guide them do not know what to do, and study only how to produce an effect. I recollect one of the Miss Berrys, Lord Orford's favourites, whom I met with at a party formerly, using the expression: "That seal of mediocrity, affectation!" Don't you think this striking?

H. Yes; but not quite free from the vice it describes.

N. Oh! they had plenty of that; they were regular *bluestockings*, I assure you, or they would not have been so entirely to his lordship's taste, who was a mighty coxcomb. But there is none of that in the person I have been speaking of—she has very delightful, genteel, easy manners.

H. That is the only thing I envy in people in that class.

N. But you are not to suppose they all have it; it is only those who are born with it, and who would

have had it in a less degree in every situation of life. Vulgarity is the growth of courts as well as of the hovel. We may be deceived by a certain artificial or conventional manner in persons of rank and fashion; but they themselves see plainly enough into the natural character. I remember Lady W—— told me, as an instance to this purpose, that when she was a girl she and her sister were introduced at court; and it was then the fashion to stand in a circle, and the Queen came round and spoke to the different persons in turn. There was some high lady who came in after them, and pushed rudely into the circle so as to get before them. But the Queen, who saw the circumstance, went up and spoke to them first, and then passed on (as a just punishment) without taking any notice whatever of the forward intruder. I forget how it arose the other day, but she asked me: "Pray, Mr. Northcote, is discretion reckoned one of the cardinal virtues?" "No," I said, "it is not one of them, for it is all." If we had discretion at all times, we should never do wrong; but we are taken off our guard by being thrown into new and difficult situations, and have not time to weigh the consequences or to summon resolution to our aid. That is what Opie used to say when he had been engaged in an argument overnight—what excellent answers he could give the next day, and was vexed with himself for not having thought of them. No; if we had sufficient presence of mind to foresee the consequences of our actions on the spot, we should very rarely have occasion to repent of them afterwards.

H. You put me in mind of Cicero's account of the cardinal virtues, in his 'Offices,' who makes them out to be four; and then says they are all referable to the first, which is Prudence.

N. Ay; do you recollect what they are?

H. Prudence, Temperance, Justice, and Fortitude.

N. They are too much alike. The most distinct is Fortitude.

H. I never could make much of Cicero, except his two treatises on Friendship and Old Age, which are most amiable gossiping. I see that Canning borrowed his tautology from Cicero, who runs on with such expressions as, "I will *bear*—I will *suffer*—I will *endure* any extremity." This is bad enough in the original, it is inexcusable in the copy. Cicero's style, however, answered to the elegance of his finely-turned features; and in his long graceful neck you may trace his winding and involuted periods.

N. Do you believe in that sort of stuff?

H. Not more than I can help.

Conversation the Twenty-second.

N. I OUGHT to cross myself, like the Catholics, when I see you. You terrify me by repeating what I say. But I see you have regulated yourself. There is nothing personally offensive, except what relates to Sir Walter. You make him swear too, which he did not do. He would never use the expression "Egad." These little things mark the gentleman. I am afraid, if he sees it, he'll say I'm a babbler. That is what they dread so at court—that the least word should transpire.

H. They may have their reasons for caution. At least, they can gain nothing, and might possibly lose equally by truth or falsehood, as it must be difficult to convey an adequate idea of royalty. But authors are glad to be talked about. If Sir W. Scott has an objection to having his name mentioned, he is singularly unlucky. Enough was said in his praise; and I do not believe he is captious. I fancy he *takes the rough with the smooth*. I did not well know what to do. You seemed to express a

wish that the Conversations should proceed, and yet you are startled at particular phrases, or I would have brought you what I had done to show you. I thought it best to take my chance of the general impression.

N. Why, if kept to be published as a diary after my death, they might do: nobody could then come to ask me questions about them. But I cannot say they appear very striking to me. One reason may be, what I observe myself cannot be very new to me. If others are pleased they are the best judges. It seems very odd that you, who are acquainted with some of the greatest authors of the day, cannot find anything of theirs worth setting down.

H. That by no means pleases them. I understand Godwin is angry at the liberty I take with you. He is quite safe in this respect. I might answer him much in the manner of the fellow in 'The Country Girl' when his friend introduces his mistress and he salutes her—"Why, I suppose if I were to introduce my grandmother to you"—"Sir," replies the other, "I should treat her with the utmost respect." So I shall never think of repeating any of Godwin's conversations. My indifference may arise in part, as you say, from their not being very new to me. Godwin might, I dare say, argue very well on the doctrine of philosophical necessity or many other questions; but then I have read all this before in Hume or other writers, and I am very little edified, because I have myself had access to the same sources that he has drawn from. But you, as an artist, have been pushed into an intercourse with the world as well as an observation of nature, and combine a sufficient knowledge of general subjects with living illustrations of them. I do not like the conversation of mere men of the world or anecdote-mongers, for there is nothing to bind it together, and the other sort is pedantic and tiresome from repetition—so that there is nobody but you I can come to.

N. You do not go enough into society, or you would be cured of what I cannot help regarding as a whim. You would there find many people of sense and information whose names you never heard of. It is not those who have made most noise in the world who are persons of the greatest general capacity. It is the making the most of a little, or the being determined to get before others in some one thing (perhaps for want of other recommendations), that brings men into notice. Individuals gain a reputation, as they make a fortune, by application and by having set their minds upon it. But you have set out (like other people brought up among books) with such exclusive notions of authors and literary fame, that if you find the least glimmering of common-sense out of this pale you think it a prodigy, and run into the opposite extreme. I do not say that you have not a perception of character, or have not thought, as far as you have observed; but you have not had the opportunities. You turn your back on the world, and fancy that they turn their backs on you. This is a very dangerous principle. You become reckless of consequences. It leads to an abandonment of character. By setting the opinion of others at defiance you lose your self-respect. It is of no use that you still say you will do what is right; your passions usurp the place of reason, and whisper you that whatever you are bent upon doing is right. You cannot put this deception on the public, however false or prejudiced their standard may be; and the opinion of the world, therefore, acts as a seasonable check upon wilfulness and eccentricity.

H. What you have stated is the best excuse I could make for my own faults or blunders. When one is found fault with for nothing, or for doing one's best, one is apt to give the world their revenge. All the former part of my life I was treated as a cipher; and since I have got into notice I have been set upon as a wild beast. When

this is the case, and you can expect as little justice as candour, you naturally in self-defence take refuge in a sort of misanthropy and cynical contempt for mankind. One is disposed to humour them, and to furnish them with some ground for their idle and malevolent censures.

N. But you should not. If you do nothing to confirm them in their first prejudices, they will come round in time. They are *slow* to admit claims, because they are not *sure* of their validity; and they thwart and cross-examine you to try what temper you are made of. Without some such ordeal or difficulty thrown in the way, every upstart and pretender must be swallowed whole. That would never do. But if you have patience to stand the test, justice is rendered at last, and you are stamped for as much as you are worth. You certainly have not spared others: why should you expect nothing but "the milk of human kindness"? Look to those men behind you [*a collection of portraits on the same frame*]*—*there is Pope and Dryden—did they fare better than living authors? Had not Dryden his Shadwell, and Pope his Dennis,¹ who fretted him to a shadow and galled him almost to death? There was Dr. Johnson, who in his writings was a pattern of wisdom and morality—he declared that he had been hunted down, as if he had been the great enemy of mankind. But he had strength of mind to look down upon it. Not to do this is either infirmity of temper, or shows a conscious want of any claims that are worth carrying up to a higher tribunal than the cabal and clamour of the moment. Sir Joshua always despised malicious reports; he knew they would blow over: at the same time, he as little regarded exaggerated praise. Nothing you could say had any effect, if he was not satisfied with himself. He had a great game to play, and only looked to the result. He had studied himself thoroughly; and besides

¹ John Dennis, the critic.—Ed.

had great equanimity of temper, which, to be sure, it is difficult to acquire, if it is not natural. You have two faults: one is a feud or quarrel with the world, which makes you despair, and prevents you taking all the pains you might; the other is a carelessness and mismanagement, which makes you throw away the little you actually do, and brings you into difficulties that way. Sir Joshua used to say it was as wrong for a man to think too little as too much of himself: if the one ran him into extravagance and presumption, the other sank him in sloth and insignificance. You see the same thing in horses; if they cannot stir a load at the first effort they give it up as a hopeless task; and nothing can rouse them from their sluggish obstinacy but blows and ill-treatment.

H. I confess all this, but I hardly know how to remedy it; nor do I feel any strong inducement. Taking one thing with another, I have no great cause to complain. If I had been a merchant, a bookseller, or the proprietor of a newspaper, instead of what I am, I might have had more money, or possessed a town and country house, instead of lodging in a first or second floor, as it may happen. But what then? I see how the man of business and fortune passes his time. He is up and in the City by eight, swallows his breakfast in haste, attends a meeting of creditors, must read Lloyd's Lists, consult the price of consols, study the markets, look into his accounts, pay his workmen, and superintend his clerks. He has hardly a minute in the day to himself, and perhaps in the four-and-twenty hours does not do a single thing that he would do if he could help it. Surely, this sacrifice of time and inclination requires some compensation—which it meets with. But how am I entitled to make my fortune (which cannot be done without all this anxiety and drudgery), who do hardly anything at all, and never anything but what I like to

do? I rise when I please, breakfast *at length*, write what comes into my head, and after taking a mutton-chop and a dish of strong tea, go to the play, and thus my time passes. Mr. — has no time to go to the play. It was but the other day that I had to get up a little earlier than usual to go into the City about some money transaction, which appeared to me a prodigious hardship; if so, it was plain that I must lead a tolerably easy life. Nor should I object to passing mine over again. Till I was twenty I had no idea of anything but books, and thought everything else was worthless and mechanical. The having to study painting about this time, and finding the difficulties and beauties it unfolded, opened a new field to me, and I began to conclude that there might be a number of other things between heaven and earth that were never dreamt of in my philosophy. Ask Godwin, or any other literary man who has never been taken out of the leading-strings of learning, and you will perceive that they hold for a settled truth that the universe is built of words. Godwin has no interest but in literary fame, of which he is the worshipper; he cannot believe that any one is clever, or has even common-sense, who has not written a book. If you talk to him of Italian cities, where great poets and patriots lived, he heaves a sigh; and if I were possessed of a fortune, he should go and visit the house where Galileo lived, or the tower where Ugolino was imprisoned. He can see with the eyes of his mind: to all else he is marble. It is like speaking to him of the objects of a sixth sense; every other language seems dumb and inarticulate.

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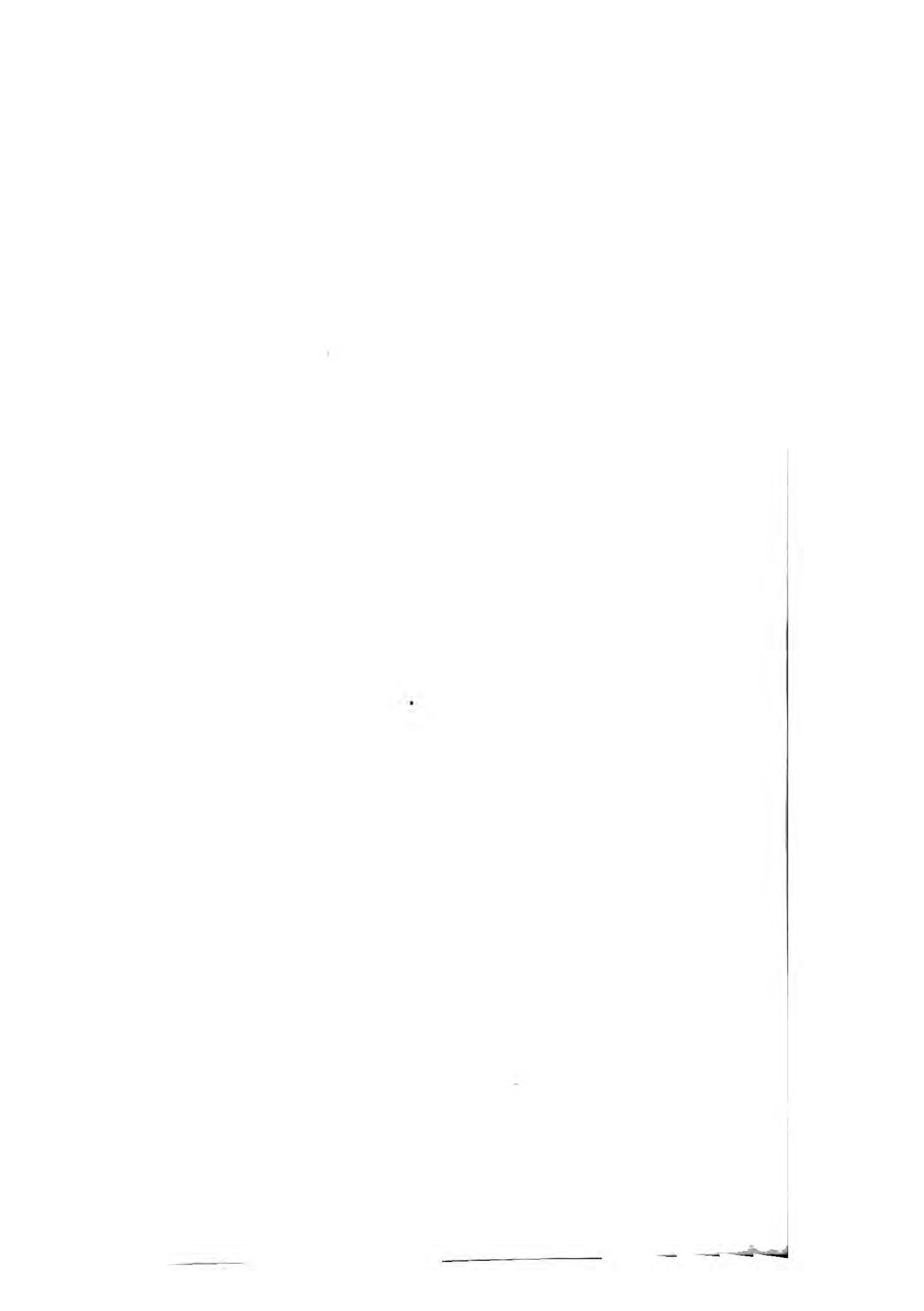
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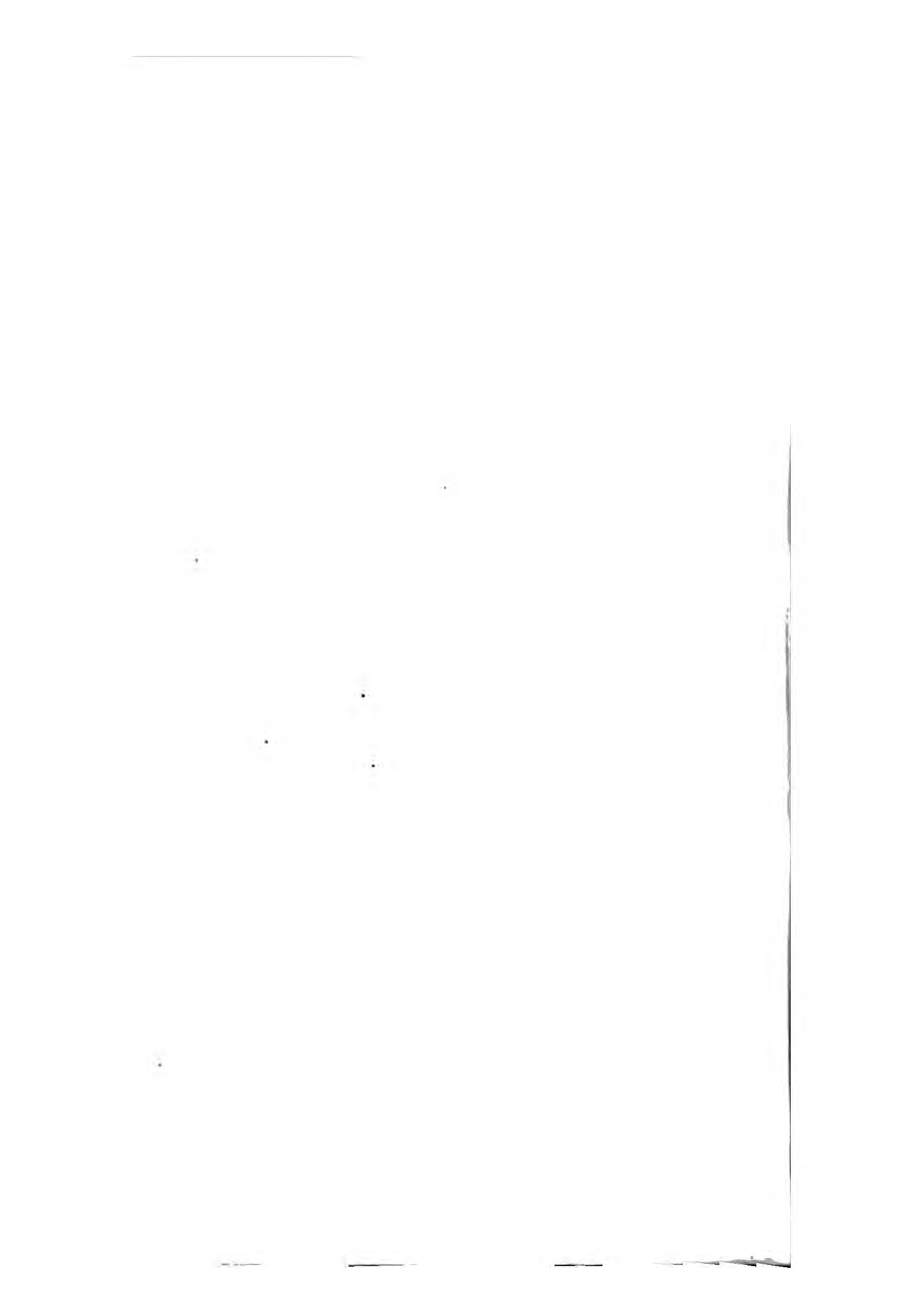
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CHARACTERISTICS,
IN THE MANNER OF ROCHEFOUCAULD'S MAXIMS;
TO WHICH
ARE NOW FIRST ADDED
COMMONPLACES,
AND
TRIFLES LIGHT AS AIR.
BY
WILLIAM HAZLITT.



PREFACE TO THE ORIGINAL EDITION.

THE following work was suggested by a perusal of Rochefoucauld's 'Maxims and Moral Reflections.' I was so struck with the force and beauty of the style and matter, that I felt an earnest ambition to embody some occasional thoughts of my own in the same form. This was much easier than to retain an equal degree of spirit. Having, however, succeeded indifferently in a few, the work grew under my hands; and both the novelty and agreeableness of the task impelled me forward. There is a peculiar *stimulus*, and at the same time a freedom from all anxiety, in this mode of writing. A thought must tell at once, or not at all. There is no opportunity for considering how we shall make out an opinion by labour and prolixity. An observation must be self-evident; or a reason or illustration (if we give one) must be pithy and concise. Each Maxim should contain the essence or groundwork of a separate Essay, but so developed as of itself to suggest a whole train of reflections to the reader; and it is equally necessary to avoid paradox or commonplace. The style also must be sententious and epigrammatic, with a certain pointedness and involution of expression, so as to keep the thoughts distinct, and to prevent them from running endlessly into one another. Such are the conditions to which it seemed to me necessary to conform, in order to insure anything like success to a work of this kind, or to render the pleasure of the perusal equal to the difficulty of the execution.

There is only one point in which I dare even allude to a comparison with Rochefoucauld—*I have had no theory to maintain*; and have endeavoured to set down each thought as it occurred to me, without bias or prejudice of any sort.

PREFACE TO THE NEW EDITION.

OF this little volume there has been only one *edition*; but new titlepages, without date, were added to the unsold copies by the original publisher, and again so late as 1837, with a new Preface (yet the old one retained) by Mr. R. H. Horne, author of 'Orion' and other works.

I am not prepared to say that it was more than an accidental coincidence that the title of the present little work is identical with that of the better-known one by Lord Shaftesbury, which was a favourite book with the Rev. Mr. Hazlitt (the author's father), and which he is represented, in a portrait painted in 1804, as holding in his hand, or at least in front of him.

'COMMONPLACES,' here annexed, were contributed to the *Literary Examiner* in 1823, and 'TRIFLES LIGHT AS AIR' to the *Atlas* newspaper for 1829. Both are now first reproduced from the sources specified.

It will be perceived that the 'COMMONPLACES' are expressions of sentiments and declarations of opinion, rather than maxims. In some cases the chain of thought is pursued through successive sentences.

W. C. H.

Kensington, W., July, 1871.

CHARACTERISTICS.

I. OF all virtues, magnanimity is the rarest. There are a hundred persons of merit for one who willingly acknowledges it in another.

II. It is often harder to praise a friend than an enemy. By the last we may acquire a reputation for candour; by the first we only seem to discharge a debt, and are liable to a suspicion of partiality. Besides, though familiarity may not breed contempt, it takes off the edge of admiration; and the shining points of character are not those we chiefly wish to dwell upon. Our habitual impression of any one is very different from the light in which he would choose to appear before the public. We think of him *as a friend*: we must forget that he is one before we can extol him to others.

III. To speak highly of one with whom we are intimate is a species of egotism. Our modesty as well as our jealousy teaches us caution on this subject.

IV. What makes it so difficult to do justice to others is, that we are hardly sensible of merit unless it falls in with our own views and line of pursuit; and where this is the case it interferes with our own pretensions. To be forward to praise others implies either great eminence, that can afford to part with applause, or great quickness

of discernment, with confidence in our own judgments; or great sincerity and love of truth, getting the better of our self-love.

V. Many persons are so narrow in this respect, that they cannot bring themselves to allow the most trifling merit in any one else. This is not altogether ill-nature, but a meanness of spirit or want of confidence in themselves, which is upset and kicks the beam if the smallest particle of praise is thrown into another's scale. They are poor feeble insects tottering along the road to fame, that are crushed by the shadow of opposition or stopped by a whisper of rivalry.

VI. There are persons, not only whose praise, but whose very names, we cannot bear to hear.

VII. There are people who cannot praise a friend for the life of them. With every effort, and all the goodwill in the world, they shrink from the task, through a want of mental courage; as some people shudder at plunging into a cold-bath from weak nerves.

VIII. Others praise you behind your back, who will not on any account do so to your face. Is it that they are afraid of being taken for flatterers?—or that they had rather any one else should know they think well of you than yourself?—as a rival is the last person from whom we should wish to hear the favourable opinion of a mistress, because it gives him most pleasure.

IX. To deny undoubted merit in others is to deny its existence altogether, and consequently our own. The example of illiberality we set, is easily turned against ourselves.

X. Magnanimity is often concealed under an appearance of shyness and even poverty of spirit. Heroes, according to Rousseau, are not known by the loftiness of

their carriage; as the greatest braggarts are generally the merest cowards.

XI. Men of the greatest genius are not always the most prodigal of their encomiums. But then it is when their range of power is confined, and they have in fact little perception, except of their own particular kind of excellence.

XII. Popularity disarms envy in well-disposed minds. Those are ever the most ready to do justice to others who feel that the world has done them justice. When success has not this effect in opening the mind, it is a sign that it has been ill-deserved.

XIII. Some people tell us all the harm, others as carefully conceal all the good, they hear of us.

XIV. It signifies little what we say of our acquaintance, so that we do not tell them what others say against them. Talebearers make all the real mischief.

XV. The silence of a friend commonly amounts to treachery. His not daring to say anything in our behalf implies a tacit censure.

XVI. It is hard to praise those who are dispraised by others. He is little short of a hero who perseveres in thinking well of a friend who has become a butt for slander and a byword.

XVII. However we may flatter ourselves to the contrary, our friends think no higher of us than the world do. They see us with the jaundiced or distrustful eyes of others. They may know better, but their feelings are governed by popular prejudice. Nay, they are more shy of us (when under a cloud) than even strangers; for we involve them in a common disgrace, or compel them to embroil themselves in continual quarrels and disputes in our defence.

XVIII. We find those who are officious and troublesome through sheer imbecility of character. They can neither resolve to do a thing, nor to let it alone ; and, by getting in the way, hinder, where perhaps they meant to help. To volunteer a service and shrink from the performance, is to prevent others from undertaking it.

XIX. Envy, among other ingredients, has a mixture of the love of justice in it. We are more angry at undeserved than at deserved good-fortune.

XX. We admit the merit of some much less willingly than that of others. This is because there is something about them that is at variance with their boasted pretensions—either a heaviness importing stupidity, or a levity inferring folly, &c.

XXI. The assumption of merit is easier, less embarrassing, and more effectual than the positive attainment of it.

XXII. Envy is the most universal passion. We only pride ourselves on the qualities we possess, or think we possess ; but we envy the pretensions we have, and those which we have not, and do not even wish for. We envy the greatest qualities and every trifling advantage. We envy the most ridiculous appearance or affectation of superiority. We envy folly and conceit ; nay, we go so far as to envy whatever confers distinction or notoriety, even vice and infamy.

XXIII. Envy is a littleness of soul, which cannot see beyond a certain point, and if it does not occupy the whole space feels itself excluded.

XXIV. Or, it often arises from weakness of judgment. We cannot make up our minds to admit the soundness of certain pretensions ; and therefore hate the appearance, where we are doubtful about the reality. We con-

sider every such tax on our applause as a kind of imposition or injustice; so that the withholding our assent is from a fear of being tricked out of our good opinion under false pretences. This is the reason why sudden or upstart advantages are always an object of such extreme jealousy, and even of contempt, and why we so readily bow to the claims of posthumous and long-established reputation. The last is the sterling coin of merit, which we no longer question or cavil at: the other we think may be tinsel, and we are unwilling to give our admiration in exchange for a bauble. It is not that the candidates for it in the one case are removed out of our way, and make a diversion to the more immediate claims of our contemporaries; but that their own are so clear and universally acknowledged, that they come home to our feelings and bosoms with their full weight, without any drawbacks of doubt in our own minds or objection on the part of others. If our envy were intrinsically and merely a hatred of excellence and of the approbation due to it, we should hate it the more the more distinguished and unequivocal it was. On the other hand, our faith in standard reputation is a kind of religion; and our admiration of it, instead of a cold servile offering, an enthusiastic homage. There are people who would attempt to persuade us that we read Homer or Milton with pleasure, only to spite some living poet. With them, all our best actions are hypocrisy, and our best feelings, affectation.

XXV. The secret of our self-love is just the same as that of our liberality and candour. We prefer ourselves to others, only because we have a more intimate consciousness and confirmed opinion of our own claims and merits than of any other person's.

XXVI. It argues a poor opinion of ourselves, when

we cannot admit any other class of merit besides our own, or any rival in that class.

XXVII. Those who are the most distrustful of themselves are the most envious of others; as the most weak and cowardly are the most revengeful.

XXVIII. Some persons of great talents and celebrity have been remarkable for narrowness of mind, and an impatience of everything like competition. Garrick and other public favourites might be mentioned as instances. This may perhaps be accounted for, either from an undue and intoxicating share of applause, so that they became jealous of popularity as of a mistress; or from a want of other resources, so as to be unable to repose on themselves without the constant stimulus of incense offered to their vanity.

XXIX. We are more jealous of frivolous accomplishments with brilliant success, than of the most estimable qualities without it. Dr. Johnson envied Garrick, whom he despised, and ridiculed Goldsmith, whom he loved.

XXX. Persons of slender intellectual stamina dread competition, as dwarfs are afraid of being run over in the street. Yet vanity often prompts them to hazard the experiment, as women through foolhardiness rush into a crowd.

XXXI. We envy others for any trifling addition to their acknowledged merit more than for the sum-total, much as we object to pay an addition to a bill, or grudge an acquaintance an unexpected piece of good-fortune. This happens either because such an accession of accomplishment is like stealing a march upon us, and implies a versatility of talent we had not reckoned upon; or it seems an impertinence and affectation for a man to go out of his way to distinguish himself; or it is because

we cannot account for his proficiency mechanically, and as a thing of course, by saying "It is his trade." In like manner, we plume ourselves most on excelling in what we are not bound to do, and are most flattered by the admission of our most questionable pretensions. We nurse the rickety child, and want to have our faults and weak sides pampered into virtues. We feel little obliged to any one for owning the merit we are known to have—it is an old story—but we are mightily pleased to be complimented on some fancy we set up for: it is "a feather in our cap," a new conquest, an extension of our sense of power. A man of talent aspires to a reputation for personal address or advantages. Sir Robert Walpole wished to pass for a man of gallantry, for which he was totally unfit. A woman of sense would be thought a beauty, a beauty a great wit, and so on.

XXXII. Some there are who can only find out in us those good qualities which nobody else has discovered: as there are others who make a point of crying up our deserts, after all the rest of the world have agreed to do so. The first are patrons, not friends: the last are not friends, but sycophants.

XXXIII. A distinction has been made between acuteness and subtlety of understanding. This might be illustrated by saying, that acuteness consists in taking up the points or solid atoms, subtlety in feeling the air of truth.

XXXIV. Hope is the best possession. None are completely wretched but those who are without hope; and few are reduced so low as that.

XXXV. Death is the greatest evil, because it cuts off hope.

XXXVI. While we desire we do not enjoy; and with enjoyment desire ceases, which should lend its strongest

zest to it. This, however, does not apply to the gratifications of sense, but to the passions, in which distance and difficulty have a principal share.

XXXVII. To deserve any blessing is to set a just value on it. The pains we take in its pursuit are only a consequence of this.

XXXVIII. The wish is often "father to the thought:" but we are quite as apt to believe what we dread as what we hope.

XXXIX. The amiable is the voluptuous in expression or manner. The sense of pleasure in ourselves is that which excites it in others; or, the art of pleasing is to seem pleased.

XL. Let a man's talents or virtues be what they may, we only feel satisfaction in his society as he is satisfied in himself. We cannot enjoy the good qualities of a friend if he seems to be none the better for them.

XLI. We judge of others for the most part by their good opinion of themselves: yet nothing gives such offence, or creates so many enemies, as that extreme self-complacency or superciliousness of manner, which appears to set the opinion of every one else at defiance.

XLII. Self-sufficiency is more provoking than rudeness or the most unqualified or violent opposition, inasmuch as the latter may be retorted, and implies that we are worth notice; whereas the former strikes at the root of our self-importance, and reminds us that even our good opinion is not worth having. Nothing precludes sympathy so much as a perfect indifference to it.

XLIII. The confession of our failings is a thankless office. It savours less of sincerity or modesty than of

ostentation. It seems as if we thought our weaknesses as good as other people's virtues.

XLIV. A coxcomb is generally a favorite with women. To a certain point his self-complacency is agreeable in itself; and beyond that, even if it grows fulsome, it only piques their vanity the more to make a conquest of his. He becomes a sort of rival to them in his own good opinion, so that his conceit has all the effect of jealousy in irritating their desire to withdraw his admiration from himself.

XLV. Nothing is more successful with women than that sort of condescending patronage of the sex which goes by the general name of gallantry. It has the double advantage of imposing on their weakness and flattering their pride. By being indiscriminate, it tantalises and keeps them in suspense; and by making a profession of an extreme deference for the sex in general, it naturally suggests the reflection, what a delightful thing it must be to gain the exclusive regard of a man who has so high an opinion of what is due to the female character! It is possible for a man, by talking of what is feminine or unfeminine, vulgar or genteel, by saying how shocking such an article of dress is, or that no lady ought to touch a particular kind of food, fairly to starve or strip a whole circle of simpletons half-naked by mere dint of impertinence and an air of commonplace assurance. How interesting to be acquainted with a man whose every thought turns upon the sex! How charming to make a conquest of one who sets up for a consummate judge of female perfections!

XLVI. We like characters and actions which we do not approve. There are amiable vices and obnoxious virtues, on the mere principle that our sympathy with a person who yields to obvious temptations and agreeable

impulses (however prejudicial) is itself agreeable, while to sympathise with exercises of self-denial or fortitude is a painful effort. Virtue costs the spectator, as well as the performer, something. We are touched by the immediate motives of actions—we judge of them by the consequences. We like a convivial character better than an abstemious one, because the idea of conviviality in the first instance is pleasanter than that of sobriety. For the same reason, we prefer generosity to justice, because the imagination lends itself more easily to an ebullition of feeling than to the suppression of it on remote and abstract principles; and we like a good-natured fool, or even knave, better than the severe professors of wisdom and morality. Cato, Brutus, &c., are characters to admire and applaud, rather than to love or imitate.

XLVII. Personal pretensions alone ensure female regard. It is not the eye, that sees whatever is sublime or beautiful in nature, that the fair delight to see gazing in silent rapture on themselves, but that which is itself a pleasing object to the sense. I may look at a Claude or a Raphael by turns, but this does not alter my own appearance; and it is that which women attend to.

XLVIII. There are persons that we like, though they do not like us. This happens very rarely; and, indeed, it argues a strong presumption of merit both in them and in ourselves. We fancy they only want to know us better, to be convinced of the prize they would obtain in our friendship. There are others to whom no civilities or good offices on their parts can reconcile us, from an original distaste; yet even this repugnance would not perhaps be proof against time and custom.

XLIX. We may observe persons who seem to have a peculiar delight in the disagreeable. They catch all

sorts of uncouth tones and gestures, the manners and dialect of clowns and hoydens, and aim at vulgarity as others ape gentility. (This is what is often understood by a love of low life.) They say all sorts of disagreeable things without meaning or feeling what they say. What startles or shocks other people is to them an amusing excitement, a flip to their constitutions; and from the bluntness of their perceptions, and a certain wilfulness of spirit, not being able to enter into the refined and pleasurable, they make a merit of being insensible to everything of the kind. Masculine women, for instance, are those who, not being possessed of the charms and delicacy of the sex, effect a superiority over it by throwing aside all decorum.

L. We find another class who continually do and say what they ought not and what they do not intend, and who are governed almost entirely by an instinct of absurdity. Owing to a perversity of imagination or irritability of nerve, the idea that a thing is improper acts as a mechanical inducement to do it; the fear of committing a blunder is so strong, that they bolt out whatever is uppermost in their minds, before they are aware of it. The dread of some object haunts and rivets attention to it; and a continual, uneasy, morbid apprehensiveness of temper takes away the self-possession, and hurries them into the very mistakes they wish to avoid.

LI. There are few people quite above, or completely below, par.

LII. Society is a more level surface than we imagine. Wise men or absolute fools are hard to be met with, as there are few giants or dwarfs. The heaviest charge we can bring against the general texture of society is, that it is commonplace; and many of those who are singular

had better be commonplace. Our fancied superiority to others is in some one thing, which we think most of because we excel in it, or have paid most attention to it; whilst we overlook their superiority to us in something else, which they set equal and exclusive store by. This is fortunate for all parties. I never felt myself superior to any one, who did not go out of his way to affect qualities which he had not. In his own individual character and line of pursuit every one has knowledge, experience, and skill; and who shall say which pursuit requires most, thereby proving his own narrowness and incompetence to decide? Particular talent or genius does not imply general capacity. Those who are most versatile are seldom great in any one department: and the stupidest people can generally do something. The highest preeminence in any one study commonly arises from the concentration of the attention and faculties on that one study. He who expects from a great name in politics, in philosophy, in art, equal greatness in other things, is little versed in human nature. Our strength lies in our weakness. The learned in books is ignorant of the world. He who is ignorant of books is often well acquainted with other things. For life is of the same length in the learned and the unlearned; the mind cannot be idle; if it is not taken up with one thing, it attends to another, through choice or necessity; and the degree of previous capacity in one class or another is a mere lottery.

LIII. Some things, it is true, are more prominent, and lead to more serious consequences, than others, so as to excite a greater share of attention and applause. Public characters—authors, warriors, statesmen, &c.—nearly monopolise public consideration in this way, and we are apt to judge of their merit by the noise they make in the world. Yet none of these classes would be willing to

make the rule absolute; for a favourite player gains as much applause as any of them. A poet stands a poor chance either of popularity with the vulgar, or influence with the great, against a fashionable opera-dancer or singer. Reputation or notoriety is not the stamp of merit. Certain professions, like certain situations, bring it into greater notice, but have, perhaps, no more to do with it than birth or fortune. Opportunity sometimes, indeed, "throws a cruel sunshine on a fool." I have known several celebrated men, and some of them have been persons of the weakest capacity; yet accident had lifted them into general notice, and probably will hand their memories down to posterity. There are names written in her immortal scroll at which FAME blushes!

LIV. The world judge of men by their ability in their profession, and we judge of ourselves by the same test; for it is that on which our success in life depends. Yet how often do our talents and pursuits lie in different directions! The best painters are not always the cleverest men; and an author who makes an unfavourable or doubtful impression on the public may in himself be a person of rare and agreeable qualifications. One cause of this is affectation. We constantly aim at what we are least fit for, thwarting or despising our natural bent; so that our performances and our characters are unaccountably at variance.

LV. If a man is disliked by one woman he will succeed with none. The sex (one and all) have the same secret, or freemasonry, in judging of men.

LVI. Any woman may act the part of a coquette successfully who has the reputation without the scruples of modesty. If a woman passes the bounds of propriety for our sakes, and throws herself unblushingly at our heads, we conclude it is either from a sudden and violent

liking, or from extraordinary merit on our parts—either of which is enough to turn any man's head who has a single spark of gallantry or vanity in his composition.

LVII. The surest way to make ourselves agreeable to others is by seeming to think them so. If we appear fully sensible of their good qualities, they will not complain of the want of them in us.

LVIII. We often choose a friend as we do a mistress—for no particular excellence in themselves, but merely from some circumstance that flatters our self-love.

LIX. Silence is one great art of conversation. He is not a fool who knows when to hold his tongue; and a person may gain credit for sense, eloquence, wit, who merely says nothing to lessen the opinion which others have of these qualities in themselves.

LX. There are few things in which we deceive ourselves more than in the esteem we profess to entertain for our friends. It is little better than a piece of quackery. The truth is, we think of them as we please—that is, as they please or displease us. As long as we are in good-humour with them, we see nothing but their good qualities; but no sooner do they offend us than we rip up all their bad ones (which we before made a secret of, even to ourselves) with double malice. He who but now was little less than an angel of light shall be painted in the blackest colours for a slip of the tongue, “some trick not worth an egg,” for the slightest suspicion of offence given or received. We often bestow the most opprobrious epithets on our best friends, and retract them twenty times in the course of a day, while the man himself remains the same. In love, which is all rhapsody and passion, this is excusable, but in the ordinary intercourse of life it is preposterous.

LXI. A man who is always defending his friends from the most trifling charges, will be apt to make other people their enemies.

LXII. There are those who see everything through a medium of enthusiasm or prejudice; and who therefore think, that to admit any blemish in a friend is to compromise his character altogether. The instant you destroy their heated exaggerations they feel that they have no other ground to stand upon.

LXIII. We are ridiculous enough in setting up for patterns of perfection ourselves, without becoming answerable for that of others. It is best to confine our absurdities at home.

LXIV. We do not like our friends the worse because they sometimes give us an opportunity to rail at them heartily. Their faults reconcile us to their virtues. Indeed, we never have much esteem or regard except for those that we can afford to speak our minds of freely, whose follies vex us in proportion to our anxiety for their welfare, and who have plenty of redeeming points about them to balance their defects. When we "spy abuses" of this kind, it is a wiser and more generous proceeding to give vent to our impatience and ill-humour, than to brood over it, and let it, by sinking into our minds, poison the very sources of our goodwill.

LXV. To come to an explanation with a friend is to do away half the cause of offence; as to declare the grounds of our complaints and chagrin to a third party is tacitly to pass them over. Our not daring to hint at the infirmities of a friend implies that we are ashamed to own them, and that we can only hope to keep on good terms with him by being blind to his real character.

LXVI. It is well that there is no one without a fault, for he would not have a friend in the world: he would seem to belong to a different species.

LXVII. Even among actors, painters, &c., those who are the most perfect are not always the most admired. It is those who strike by their inequalities, and whose faults and excellences keep up a perpetual warfare between the partisans on both sides, that are the most talked of and produce the greatest effect. Nothing is prominent that does not act as a foil to itself. Emery's acting was without a fault. This was all that was ever said about it. His merit was one of those things that nobody insisted on because it was taken for granted. Mr. Kean agitates and almost convulses the public mind by contrary extremes. It is a question whether Raphael would have acquired so great a name, if his colouring had been equal to his drawing or expression. As it is, his figures stand out like a rock severed from its base: while Correggio's are lost in their own beauty and sweetness. Whatever has not a mixture of imperfection in it soon grows insipid, or seems "stupidly good."

LXVIII. I have known persons without a friend—never any one without some virtue. The virtues of the former conspired with their vices to make the whole world their enemies.

LXIX. The study of metaphysics has this advantage, at least: it promotes a certain integrity and uprightness of understanding, which is a cure for the spirit of lying. He who has devoted himself to the discovery of truth feels neither pride nor pleasure in the invention of falsehood, and cannot condescend to any such paltry expedient. If you find a person given to vulgar shifts and rhodomontade, and who at the same time tells you he is a metaphysician, do not believe him.

LXX. It is the mischief of the regular study of all art and science that it proportionably unfits a man for those pursuits or emergencies in life which require mere courage and promptitude. To any one who has found how difficult it is to arrive at truth or beauty, with all the pains and time he can bestow upon them, everything seems worthless that can be obtained by a mere assumption of the question, or putting a good face upon the matter. Let a man try to produce a fine picture or to solve an abstruse problem by giving himself airs of self-importance, and see what he will make of it. But in the common intercourse of life too much depends on this sort of assurance and quackery. This is the reason why scholars and other eminent men so often fail in what personally concerns themselves. They cannot take advantage of the follies of mankind, nor submit to arrive at the end they have in view by unworthy means. Those who cannot make the progress of a single step in a favourite study without infinite pains and preparation, scorn to carry the world before them, or to win the good opinion of any individual in it, by vapouring and impudence. Yet these last qualities often succeed without an atom of true desert, and "fools rush in where angels fear to tread." In nine cases out of ten, the mere sanguineness of our pursuit ensures success; but the having tasked our faculties as much as they will bear does not tend to enhance our overweening opinion of ourselves. The labours of the mind, like the drudgery of the body, impair our animal spirits and alacrity. Those who have done nothing, fancy themselves capable of everything: while those who have exerted themselves to the utmost only feel the limitation of their powers, and evince neither admiration of themselves nor triumph over others. Their work is still to do, and they have no time or disposition for fooling. This is the reason why the greatest men have the least appearance of it.

LXXI. Persons who pique themselves on their understanding are frequently reserved and haughty: persons who aim at wit are generally courteous and sociable. Those who depend at every turn on the applause of the company must endeavour to conciliate the good opinion of others by every means in their power.

“A jest’s prosperity lies in the ear
Of him who hears it.”

If a habit of jesting lowers a man, it is to the level of humanity. Wit nourishes vanity; reason has a much stronger tincture of pride in it.

LXXII. Satirists gain the applause of others through fear, not through love.

LXXIII. Some persons can do nothing but ridicule others.

LXXIV. Parodists, like mimics, seize only on defects, or turn beauties into blemishes. They make bad writers and indifferent actors.

LXXV. People of the greatest gaiety of manners are often the dullest company imaginable. Nothing is so dreary as the serious conversation or writing of a professed wag. So the gravest persons, divines, mathematicians, and so on, make the worst and poorest jokes, puns, &c.

LXXVI. The expression of a Frenchman’s face is often as melancholy when he is by himself as it is lively in conversation. The instant he ceases to talk, he becomes quite chapfallen.

LXXVII. To point out defects, one would think it necessary to be equally conversant with beauties. But this is not the case. The best caricaturists cannot draw a common outline, nor the best comic actors speak a

line of serious poetry, without being laughed at. This may be perhaps accounted for in some degree by saying, that the perfection of the ludicrous implies that looseness or disjointedness of mind which receives most delight and surprise from oddity and contrast, and which is naturally opposed to the steadiness and unity of feeling required for the serious, or the sublime and beautiful.

LXXVIII. Different persons have different limits to their capacity. Thus, some excel in one profession generally, such as acting; others in one department of it, as tragedy; others in one character only. Garrick was equally great in tragedy and comedy; Mrs. Siddons only shone in tragedy; Russell could play nothing but Jerry Sneak.¹

LXXIX. Comic actors have generally attempted tragedy first, and have a hankering after it to the last. It was the case with Weston, Shuter, Munden, Bannister, and even Liston. Prodigious! The mistake may perhaps be traced to the imposing *éclat* of tragedy, and the awe produced by the utter incapacity of such persons to know what to make of it.

LXXX. If we are not first, we may as well be last in any pursuit. To be worst is some kind of distinction, and implies, by the rule of contrary, that we ought to excel in some opposite quality. Thus, if any one has scarcely the use of his limbs, we may conceive it is from his having exercised his mind too much. We suppose that an awkward boy at school is a good scholar. So, if a man has a strong body, we compliment him with a weak mind, and *vice versâ*.

¹ There is a pleasant instance of this mentioned in 'The Tatler.' There was an actor of that day who could play nothing but the Apothecary in 'Romeo and Juliet.' He succeeded so well in this, that he grew fat upon it, when he was set aside; and having then nothing to do, pined away till he became qualified for the part again, and had another run in it.

LXXXI. There is a natural principle of antithesis in the human mind. We seldom grant one excellence but we hasten to make up for it by a contrary defect, to keep the balance of criticism even. Thus we say, "Titian was a great colourist, but did not know how to draw." The first is true; the last is a mere presumption from the first, like alternate rhyme and reason; or a compromise with the weakness of human nature, which soon tires of praise.

LXXXII. There is some reason for this cautious distribution of merit; for it is not necessary for one man to possess more than one quality in the highest perfection, since no one possesses all, and we are in the end forced to collect the idea of perfection in art from a number of different specimens. It is quite sufficient for any one person to do any one thing better than everybody else. Anything beyond this is like an impertinence. It was not necessary for Hogarth to paint his 'Sigmunda,' nor for Mrs. Siddons to abridge 'Paradise Lost.'

LXXXIII. On the stage none but originals can be counted as anything; the rest are "men of no mark or likelihood." They give us back the same impression we had before, and make it worse instead of better.

LXXXIV. It was ridiculous to set up Mr. Kean as a rival to Mr. Kemble. Whatever merits the first might have, they were of a totally different class, and could not possibly interfere with, much less injure, those of his great predecessor. Mr. Kemble stood on his own ground, and he stood high on it. Yet there certainly was a reaction in this case. Many persons saw no defect in Mr. Kemble till Mr. Kean came, and then, finding themselves mistaken in the abstract idea of perfection they had indulged in, were ready to give up their opinion altogether. When a man is a great favourite with the

public, they incline, by a natural spirit of exaggeration and love of the marvellous, to heap all sorts of perfections upon him; and when they find by another's excelling him in some one thing that this is not the case, they are disposed to strip their former idol, and leave him "bare to weather." Nothing is more unjust or capricious than public opinion.

LXXXV. The public have neither shame nor gratitude.

LXXXVI. Public opinion is the mixed result of the intellect of the community acting upon general feeling.

LXXXVII. Our friends are generally ready to do everything for us except the very thing we wish them to do. There is one thing in particular they are always disposed to give us, and which we are as unwilling to take—namely, advice.

LXXXVIII. Good-nature is often combined with ill temper. Our own uncomfortable feelings teach us to sympathise with others, and to seek relief from our own uneasiness in the satisfactions we can afford them. Ill-nature combined with good temper is an unnatural and odious character. Our delight in mischief and suffering, when we have no provocation to it from being ill-at-ease ourselves, is wholly unpardonable. Yet I have known one or two instances of this sort of callous levity and gay laughing malignity. Such people "poison in jest."

LXXXIX. It is wonderful how soon men acquire talents for offices of trust and importance. The higher the situation, the higher the opinion it gives us of ourselves; and as is our confidence, so is our capacity. We assume an equality with circumstances.

XC. The difficulty is for a man to rise to high station,

not to fill it; as it is easier to stand on an eminence than to climb up to it. Yet he alone is truly great who is so without the aid of circumstances and in spite of fortune, who is as little lifted up by the tide of opinion as he is depressed by neglect or obscurity, and who borrows dignity only from himself. It is a fine compliment which Pope has paid to Lord Oxford :

“ A soul supreme, in each hard instance tried,
Above all pain, all passion, and all pride :
The rage of power, the blast of public breath,
The lust of lucre, and the dread of death !”

XCI. The most silent people are generally those who think most highly of themselves. They fancy themselves superior to every one else ; and, not being sure of making good their secret pretensions, decline entering the lists altogether. They thus “lay the flattering unction to their souls,” that they could have said better things than others, or that the conversation was beneath them.

XCII. There are writers who never do their best, lest, if they should fail, they should be left without excuse in their own opinion. While they trifle with a subject they feel superior to it. They will not take pains, for this would be a test of what they are actually able to do, and set a limit to their pretensions, while their vanity is unbounded. The more you find fault with them, the more careless they grow, their affected indifference keeping pace with and acting as a shield against the disapprobation or contempt of others. They fancy whatever they condescend to write must be good enough for the public.

XCIII. Authors who acquire a high celebrity and conceal themselves seem superior to fame. Producing great works incognito is like doing good by stealth. There is an air of magnanimity in it which people wonder at. Junius and the author of ‘Waverley’

are striking examples. Junius, however, is really unknown; while the author of 'Waverley' enjoys all the credit of his writings without acknowledging them. Let any one else come forward and claim them, and we should then see whether Sir Walter Scott would stand idle by. It is a curious argument that he cannot be the author, because the real author could not help making himself known; when, if he is not so, the real author has never even been hinted at, and lets another run away with all the praise.

XCIV. Some books have a personal character: we are attached to the work for the sake of the author. Thus we read Walton's 'Angler' as we should converse with an agreeable old man, not for what he says, so much as for his manner of saying it, and the pleasure he takes in the subject.

XCV. Some persons are exceedingly shocked at the cruelty of Walton's 'Angler'—as if the most humane could be expected to trouble themselves about fixing a worm on a hook, at a time when they burnt men at a stake "in conscience and tender heart." We are not to measure the feelings of one age by those of another. Had Walton lived in our day, he would have been the first to cry out against the cruelty of angling. As it was, his flies and baits were only a part of his tackle. They had not, at this period, the most distant idea of setting up as candidates for our sympathy! Man is naturally a savage, and emerges from barbarism by slow degrees. Let us take the streaks of light, and be thankful for them as they arise and tinge the horizon one by one, and not complain because the noon is long after the dawn of refinement.

XCVI. Livery-servants (I confess it) are the only people I do not like to sit in company with. They

offend, not only by their own meanness, but by the ostentatious display of the pride of their masters.

XCVII. It has been observed that the proudest people are not nice in love. In fact, they think they raise the object of their choice above every one else.

XCVIII. A proud man is satisfied with his own good opinion, and does not seek to make converts to it. Pride erects a little kingdom of its own, and acts as sovereign in it. Hence we see why some men are so proud they cannot be affronted, like kings who have no peer or equal.

XCIX. The proudest people are as soon repulsed as the most humble. The last are discouraged by the slightest objection or hint of their conscious incapacity; while the first disdain to enter into any competition, and resent whatever implies a doubt of their self-evident superiority to others.

C. What passes in the world for talent, or dexterity, or enterprise, is often only a want of moral principle. We may succeed where others fail, not from a greater share of invention, but from not being nice in the choice of expedients.

CI. Cunning is the art of concealing our own defects and discovering other people's weaknesses. Or it is taking advantages of others which they do not suspect, because they are contrary to propriety and the settled practice. We feel no inferiority to a fellow who picks our pockets; though we feel mortified at being overreached by trick and cunning. Yet there is no more reason for it in the one case than in the other. Any one may win at cards by cheating—till he is found out: we have been playing against odds. So any one may deceive us by lying, or take an unfair advantage of us, who is not withheld by a sense of shame or honesty from doing so.

CII. The completest hypocrites are so by nature. That is, they are without sympathy with others to distract their attention—or any of that nervous weakness, which might revolt or hesitate at the baseness of the means necessary to carry on their system of deception. You can no more tell what is passing in the minds of such people than if they were of a different species. They, in fact, are so as to all moral intents and purposes; and this is the advantage they have over you. You fancy there is a common link between you, while in reality there is none.

CIII. The greatest hypocrites are the greatest dupes. This is either because they think only of deceiving others and are off their guard, or because they really know little about the feelings or characters of others, from their want of sympathy and of consequent sagacity. Perhaps the resorting to trick and artifice in the first instance implies not only a callousness of feeling, but an obtuseness of intellect, which cannot get on by fair means. Thus a girl, who is ignorant and stupid, may yet have cunning enough to resort to silence as the only chance of conveying an opinion of her capacity.

CIV. The greatest talents do not generally attain to the highest stations; for, though high, the ascent to them is narrow, beaten, and crooked. The path of genius is free, and its own. Whatever requires the concurrence and co-operation of others, must depend chiefly on routine and an attention to rules and minutiae. Success in business is therefore seldom owing to uncommon talents or original power, which is untractable and selfwilled, but to the greatest degree of commonplace capacity.

CV. The error in the reasonings of Mandeville, Rochefoucauld, and others, is this: they first find out that there is something mixed in the motives of all our

actions, and they then proceed to argue, that they must all arise from one motive—namely, self-love. They make the exception the rule. It would be easy to reverse the argument, and prove that our most selfish actions are disinterested. There is honour among thieves. Robbers, murderers, &c. do not commit those actions from a pleasure in pure villainy, or for their own benefit only, but from a mistaken regard to the welfare or good opinion of those with whom they are immediately connected.

CVI. It is ridiculous to say, that compassion, friendship, &c. are at bottom only selfishness in disguise, because it is we who feel pleasure or pain in the good or evil of others; for the meaning of self-love is not that it is I who love, but that I love myself. The motive is no more selfish because it is I who feel it, than the action is selfish because it is I who perform it. To prove a man selfish, it is not surely enough to say, that it is he who feels (this is a mere quibble), but to show that he does not feel for another; that is, that the idea of the suffering or welfare of others does not excite any feeling whatever of pleasure or pain in his mind, except from some reference to or reflection on himself. Self-love, or the love of self, means that I have an immediate interest in the contemplation of my own good, and that this is a motive to action; and benevolence, or the love of others, means in like manner that I have an immediate interest in the idea of the good or evil that may befall them, and a disposition to assist them, in consequence. Self-love, in a word, is sympathy with myself—that is, it is I who feel it, and I who am the object of it: in benevolence or compassion, it is I who still feel sympathy, but another (not myself) is the object of it. If I feel sympathy with others at all, it must be disinterested. The pleasure it may give me

is the consequence, not the cause, of my feeling it. To insist that sympathy is self-love because we cannot feel for others, without being ourselves affected pleasurable or painfully, is to make nonsense of the question; for it is to insist that in order to feel for others properly and truly, we must in the first place feel nothing. *C'est une mauvaise plaisanterie.* That the feeling exists in the individual must be granted, and never admitted of a question: the only question is, how that feeling is caused and what is its object—and it is to express the two opinions that may be entertained on this subject, that the terms self-love and benevolence have been appropriated. Any other interpretation of them is an evident abuse of language, and a subterfuge in argument, which, driven from the fair field of fact and observation, takes shelter in verbal sophistry.

CVII. Humility and pride are not easily distinguished from each other. A proud man, who fortifies himself in his own good opinion, may be supposed not to put forward his pretensions through shyness or deference to others; a modest man, who is really reserved and afraid of committing himself, is thought distant and haughty; and the vainest coxcomb, who makes a display of himself and his most plausible qualifications, often does so to hide his deficiencies, and to prop up his tottering opinion of himself by the applause of others. Vanity does not refer to the opinion a man entertains of himself, but to that which he wishes others to entertain of him. Pride is indifferent to the approbation of others; as modesty shrinks from it, either through bashfulness, or from an unwillingness to take any undue advantage of it. I have known several very forward, loquacious, and even overbearing persons, whose confidential communications were oppressive from the sense they entertained of their own demerits. In company they talked on in mere bravado,

and for fear of betraying, their weak side, as children make a noise in the dark.

CVIII. True modesty and true pride are much the same thing: both consist in setting a just value on ourselves—neither more nor less. It is a want of proper spirit to fancy ourselves inferior to others in those things in which we really excel them. It is conceit and want of common-sense to arrogate a superiority over others without the most well-founded pretensions.

CIX. A man may be justly accused of vanity and presumption, who either thinks he possesses qualifications which he has not, or greatly overrates those which he has. An egotist does not think well of himself because he possesses certain qualities, but fancies he possesses a number of excellences because he thinks well of himself through mere idle self-complacency. True moderation is the bounding of our self-esteem within the extent of our acquirements.

CX. Conceit is the most contemptible and one of the most odious qualities in the world. It is vanity driven from all other shifts, and forced to appeal to itself for admiration. An author, whose play has been *damned* overnight, feels a paroxysm of conceit the next morning. Conceit may be defined as a restless, overweening, petty, obtrusive, mechanical delight in our own qualifications, without any reference to their real value, or to the approbation of others—merely because they are ours, and for no other reason whatever. It is the extreme of selfishness and folly.

CXI. Confidence or courage is conscious ability—the sense of power. No man is ever afraid of attempting what he knows he can do better than any one else. Charles Fox felt no diffidence in addressing the House of Commons; he was reserved and silent in company, and had no opinion of his talent for writing—that is, he

knew his powers and their limits. The torrent of his eloquence rushed upon him from his knowledge of the subject and his interest in it, unchecked and unbidden, without his once thinking of himself or his hearers. As a man is strong, so is he bold. The thing is, that wherever we feel at home, there we are at our ease. The late Sir John Moore once had to review the troops at Plymouth before the King; and while he was on the ground, and had to converse with the different persons of the Court with the ladies, and with Mr. Pitt (whom he thought a great man), he found himself a good deal embarrassed: but the instant he mounted his horse, and the troops were put in motion, he felt quite relieved, and had leisure to observe what an awkward figure Mr. Pitt made on horseback.

CXII. The truly proud man knows neither superiors nor inferiors. The first he does not admit of—the last he does not concern himself about. People who are insolent to those beneath them crouch to those above them. Both show equal meanness of spirit and want of conscious dignity.

CXIII. No elevation or success raises the humble man in his own opinion. To the proud the slightest repulse or disappointment is the last indignity. The vain man makes a merit of misfortune, and triumphs in his disgrace.

CXIV. We reserve our gratitude for the manner of conferring benefits; and we revolt against this, except when it seems to say we owe no obligation at all, and thus cancels the debt of gratitude as soon as it is incurred.

CXV. We do not hate those who injure us, if they do not at the same time wound our self-love. We can forgive any one sooner than those who lower us in our own

opinion. It is no wonder, therefore, that we as often dislike others for their virtues as for their vices. We naturally hate whatever makes us despise ourselves.

CXVI. When you find out a man's ruling passion, beware of crossing him in it!

CXVII. We sometimes hate those who differ from us in opinion worse than we should for an attempt to injure us in the most serious point. A favourite theory is a possession for life; and we resent any attack upon it proportionably.

CXVIII. Men will die for an opinion as soon as for anything else. Whatever excites the spirit of contradiction is capable of producing the last effects of heroism, which is only the highest pitch of obstinacy in a good or a bad cause, in wisdom or in folly.

CXIX. We are ready to sacrifice life, not only for our own opinion, but in deference to that of others. Conscience, or its shadow, honour, prevails over the fear of death. The man of fortune and fashion will throw away his life, like a bauble, to prevent the slightest breath of dishonour. So little are we governed by self-interest, and so much by imagination and sympathy!

CXX. The most impertinent people are less so from design than from inadvertence. I have known a person who could scarcely open his lips without offending some one, merely because he harboured no malice in his heart. A certain excess of animal spirits with thoughtless good-humour will often make more enemies than the most deliberate spite and ill-nature, which is on its guard, and strikes with caution and safety.

CXXI. It is great weakness to lay ourselves open to others, who are reserved towards us. There is not only no equality in it, but we may be pretty sure they will

turn a confidence, which they are so little disposed to imitate, against us.

CXXII. A man has no excuse for betraying the secrets of his friends, unless he also divulges his own. He may then seem to be actuated, not by treachery, but indiscretion.

CXXIII. As we scorn them who scorn us, so the contempt of the world (not seldom) makes men proud.

CXXIV. Even infamy may be oftentimes a source of secret self-complacency. We smile at the impotence of public opinion, when we can survive its worst censures.

CXXV. Simplicity of character is the natural result of profound thought.

CXXVI. The affected modesty of most women is a decoy for the generous, the delicate, and unsuspecting; while the artful, the bold, and unfeeling either see or break through its slender disguises.

CXXVII. We as often repent the good we have done as the ill.

CXXVIII. The measure of any man's virtue is what he would do, if he had neither the laws nor public opinion, nor even his own prejudices, to control him.

CXXIX. We like the expression of Raphael's faces without an edict to enforce it. I do not see why there should not be a taste in morals formed on the same principle.

CXXX. Where a greater latitude is allowed in morals, the number of examples of vice may increase, but so do those of virtue: at least, we are surer of the sincerity of the latter. It is only the exceptions to vice, that arise neither from ignorance nor hypocrisy, that are worth counting.

CXXXI. The fear of punishment may be necessary to the suppression of vice; but it also suspends the finer motives to virtue.

CXXXII. No wise man can have a contempt for the prejudices of others; and he should even stand in a certain awe of his own, as if they were aged parents and monitors. They may in the end prove wiser than he.

CXXXIII. We are only justified in rejecting prejudices, when we can explain the grounds of them; or when they are at war with nature, which is the strongest prejudice of all.

CXXXIV. Vulgar prejudices are those which arise out of accident, ignorance, or authority: natural prejudices are those which arise out of the constitution of the human mind itself.

CXXXV. Nature is stronger than reason: for nature is, after all, the text, reason but the comment. He is indeed a poor creature who does not feel the truth of more than he knows or can explain satisfactorily to others.

CXXXVI. The mind revolts against certain opinions, as the stomach rejects certain foods.

CXXXVII. The drawing a certain positive line in morals, beyond which a single false step is irretrievable, makes virtue formal, and vice desperate.

CXXXVIII. Most codes of morality proceed on a supposition of *original sin*; as if the only object was to coerce the headstrong propensities to vice, and there were no natural disposition to good in the mind, which it was possible to improve, refine, and cultivate.

CXXXIX. This *negative* system of virtue leads to a very low style of moral sentiment. It is as if the highest

excellence in a picture was to avoid gross defects in drawing; or in writing, instances of bad grammar. It ought surely to be our aim in virtue, as well as in other things, "to snatch a grace beyond the reach of art."

CXL. We find many things to which the prohibition of them constitutes the only temptation.

CXLI. There is neither so much vice nor so much virtue in the world as it might appear at first sight that there is. Many people commit actions that they hate, as they affect virtues that they laugh at, merely because others do so.

CXLII. When the imagination is continually led to the brink of vice by a system of terror and denunciations, people fling themselves over the precipice from the mere dread of falling.

CXLIII. The maxim "*Video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor*" has not been fully explained. In general, it is taken for granted, that those things that our reason disapproves, we give way to from passion. Nothing like it. The course that persons in the situation of Medea pursue has often as little to do with inclination as with judgment; but they are led astray by some object of a disturbed imagination, that shocks their feelings and staggers their belief, and they grasp the phantom to put an end to this state of tormenting suspense, and to see whether it is human or not.

CXLIV. Vice, like disease, floats in the atmosphere.

CXLV. Honesty is one part of eloquence: we persuade others by being in earnest ourselves.

CXLVI. A mere sanguine temperament often passes for genius and patriotism.

CXLVII. Animal spirits are continually taken for

wit and fancy; and the want of them, for sense and judgment.

CXLVIII. In public speaking, we must appeal either to the prejudices of others, or to the love of truth and justice. If we think merely of displaying our own ability, we shall ruin every cause we undertake.

CXLIX. Those who cannot miss an opportunity of saying a good thing, or of bringing in some fantastical opinion of their own, are not to be trusted with the management of any great question.

CL. There are some public speakers who commit themselves and their party by extravagances uttered in heat and through vanity, which they retract in cold blood through cowardice and caution. They outrage propriety, and trim to self-interest.

CLI. An honest man is respected by all parties. We forgive a hundred rude or offensive things that are uttered from conviction or in the conscientious discharge of a duty — never one that proceeds from design, or with a view to raise the person who says it above us.

CLII. Truth from the mouth of an honest man, or severity from a good-natured one, has a double effect.

CLIII. A person who does not endeavour to seem more than he *is*, will generally be thought nothing of. We habitually make such large deductions for pretence and imposture, that no real merit will stand against them. It is necessary to set off our good qualities with a certain air of plausibility and self-importance, as some attention to fashion is necessary to decency.

CLIV. If we do not aspire to admiration, we shall fall into contempt. To expect sheer evenhanded justice from mankind is folly. They take the gross inventory

of our pretensions ; and not to have them overlooked entirely, we must place them in a conspicuous point of view, as men write their trades or fix a sign over the doors of their houses. Not to conform to the established practice in either respect, is false delicacy in the commerce of the world.

CLV. There has been a considerable change in dress and manners in the course of a century or two, as well as in the signs and badges of different professions. The streets are no longer encumbered with numberless emblems of mechanical or other occupations, nor crowded with the pomp and pageantry of dress, nor embroiled by the insolent airs assumed by the different candidates for rank and precedence. Our pretensions become less gross and obtrusive with the progress of society, and as the means of communication become more refined and general. The simplicity and even slovenliness of the modern beau form a striking contrast to the dazzling finery and ostentatious formality of the oldfashioned courtier ; yet both are studied devices and symbols of distinction. It would be a curious speculation to trace the various modes of affectation in dress from the age of Elizabeth to the present time, in connection with the caprices of fashion and the march of opinion ; and to show in what manner Sir Isaac Newton's 'Principia' or Rousseau's 'Emilius' have contributed to influence the gliding movements and curtail the costume of a modern dandy !

CLVI. Unlimited power is helpless, as arbitrary power is capricious. Our energy is in proportion to the resistance it meets. We can attempt nothing great, but from a sense of the difficulties we have to encounter : we can persevere in nothing great, but from a pride in overcoming them. Where our will is our law, we eagerly set about the first trifle we think of, and lay it aside for the next trifle that presents itself, or that is

suggested to us. The character of despotism is apathy or levity—or the love of mischief, because the latter is easy, and suits its pride and wantonness.

CLVII. Affectation is as necessary to the mind as dress is to the body.

CLVIII. Man is an intellectual animal, and therefore an everlasting contradiction to himself. His senses centre in himself, his ideas reach to the ends of the universe; so that he is torn in pieces between the two, without a possibility of its ever being otherwise. A mere physical being, or a pure spirit, can alone be satisfied with itself.

CLIX. Our approbation of others has a good deal of selfishness in it. We like those who give us pleasure, however little they may wish for or deserve our esteem in return. We prefer a person with vivacity and high spirits, though bordering upon insolence, to the timid and pusillanimous; we are fonder of wit joined to malice, than of dullness without it. We have no great objection to receive a man who is a villain as our friend, if he has plausible exterior qualities; nay, we often take a pride in our harmless familiarity with him, as we might in keeping a tame panther; but we soon grow weary of the society of a good-natured fool who puts our patience to the test, or of an awkward clown who puts our pride to the blush.

CLX. We are fonder of visiting our friends in health than in sickness. We judge less favourably of their characters, when any misfortune happens to them; and a lucky hit, either in business or reputation, improves even their personal appearance in our eyes.

CLXI. An heiress with a large fortune and a moderate share of beauty easily rises into a reigning toast.

CLXII. One shining quality lends a lustre to another, or hides some glaring defect.

CLXIII. We are never so much disposed to quarrel with others as when we are dissatisfied with ourselves.

CLXIV. We are never so thoroughly tired of the company of any one else as we sometimes are of our own.

CLXV. People outlive the interest which, at different periods of their lives, they take in themselves. When we forget old friends, it is a sign we have forgotten ourselves, or despise our former ways and notions as much as we do their present ones.

CLXVI. We fancy ourselves superior to others, because we find that we have improved; and at no time did we think ourselves inferior to them.

CLXVII. The notice of others is as necessary to us as the air we breathe. If we cannot gain their good opinion, we change our battery, and strive to provoke their hatred and contempt.

CLXVIII. Some malefactors, at the point of death, confess crimes of which they have never been guilty thus to raise our wonder and indignation in the same proportion; or to show their superiority to vulgar prejudice, and brave that public opinion of which they are the victims.

CLXIX. Others make an ostentatious display of their penitence and remorse, only to invite sympathy, and create a diversion in their own minds from the subject of their impending punishment. So that we excite a strong emotion in the breasts of others, we care little of what kind it is, or by what means we produce it. We have equally the feeling of power. The sense of insignificance, or of being an object of perfect indifference to

others, is the only one that the mind never covets nor willingly submits to.

CLXX. There are not wanting instances of those who pass their whole lives in endeavouring to make themselves ridiculous. They only tire of their absurdities when others are tired of talking about and laughing at them, so that they have become a stale jest.

CLXXI. People in the grasp of death wish all the evil they have done (as well as all the good) to be known, not to make atonement by confession, but to excite one more strong sensation before they die, and to leave their interests and passions a legacy to posterity, when they themselves are exempt from the consequences.

CLXXII. We talk little if we do not talk about ourselves.

CLXXIII. We may give more offence by our silence than even by impertinence.

CLXXIV. Obstinate silence implies either a mean opinion of ourselves, or a contempt of our company: and it is the more provoking, as others do not know to which of these causes to attribute it, whether to humility or pride.

CLXXV. Silence proceeds either from want of something to say, or from a phlegmatic indifference which closes up our lips. The sea, or any other striking object, suddenly bursting on a party of mutes in a stagecoach, will occasion a general exclamation of surprise; and the ice being once broken, they may probably be good company for the rest of the journey.

CLXXVI. We compliment ourselves on our national reserve and taciturnity by abusing the loquacity and frivolity of the French.

CLXXVII. Nations, not being willing or able to correct their own errors, justify them by the opposite errors of other nations.

CLXXVIII. We easily convert our own vices into virtues, the virtues of others into vices.

CLXXIX. A person who talks with equal vivacity on every subject, excites no interest in any. Repose is as necessary in conversation as in a picture.

CLXXX. The best kind of conversation is that which may be called *thinking aloud*. I like very well to speak my mind on any subject (or to hear another do so), and to go into the question according to the degree of interest it naturally inspires, but not to have to get up a thesis upon every topic. There are those, on the other hand, who seem always to be practising on their audience, as if they mistook them for a debating-society, or to hold a general retainer, by which they are bound to explain every difficulty, and answer every objection that can be started. This, in private society and among friends, is not desirable. You thus lose the two great ends of conversation, which are to learn the sentiments of others, and see what they think of yours. One of the best talkers I ever knew had this defect—that he evidently seemed to be considering less what he felt on any point than what might be said upon it, and that he listened to you, not to weigh what you said, but to reply to it, like counsel on the other side. This habit gave a brilliant smoothness and polish to his general discourse, but at the same time took from its solidity and prominence: it reduced it to a tissue of lively, fluent, ingenious commonplaces (for original genuine observations are like “minute drops from off the eaves,” and not an incessant shower), and, though his talent in this way was carried to the very extreme of cleverness, yet I think it seldom, if ever, went beyond it.

CLXXXI. Intellectual excellence can seldom be a source of much satisfaction to the possessor. In a gross period, or in vulgar society, it is not understood; and among those who are refined enough to appreciate its value, it ceases to be a distinction.

CLXXXII. There is, I think, an essential difference of character in mankind, between those who wish *to do*, and those who wish to *have*, certain things. I observe persons expressing a great desire to possess fine horses, hounds, dress, equipage, &c., and an envy of those who have them. I myself have no such feeling, nor the least ambition to shine, except by doing something better than others. I have the love of power, but not of property. I should like to be able to outstrip a greyhound in speed; but I should be ashamed to take any merit to myself from possessing the fleetest greyhound in the world. I cannot transfer my personal identity from myself to what I merely call *mine*. The generality of mankind are contented to be estimated by what they possess, instead of what they are.

CLXXXIII. Buonaparte observes, that the diplomats of the new school were no match for those brought up under the ancient *régime*. The reason probably is, that the modern style of intellect inclines to abstract reasoning and general propositions, and pays less attention to individual character, interests, and circumstances. The moderns have, therefore, less tact in watching the designs of others, and less closeness in hiding their own. They perhaps have a greater knowledge of things, but less of the world. They calculate the force of an argument, and rely on its success, moving *in vacuo*, without sufficiently allowing for the resistance of opinion and prejudice.

CLXXXIV. The most comprehensive reasoners are

not always the deepest or nicest observers. They are apt to take things for granted too much, as parts of a system. Lord Egmont, in a speech in Parliament, in the year 1750, has the following remarkable observations on this subject:—"It is not common-sense, but downright madness, to follow general principles in this wild manner without limitation or reserve; and give me leave to say one thing, which I hope will be long remembered and well thought upon by all those who hear me—that those gentlemen who plume themselves thus upon their open and extensive understandings are, in fact, the men of the narrowest principles in the kingdom. For what is a narrow mind? It is a mind that sees any proposition in one single contracted point of view, unable to complicate any subject with the circumstances, or considerations, that are or may or ought to be combined with it. And pray, what is that understanding which looks upon the question of naturalization only in this general view, that naturalization is an increase of the people, and the increase of the people is the riches of the nation?—never admitting the least reflection, what the people are whom you let in upon us; how, in the present bad regulation of the police, they are to be employed or maintained; how their principles, opinions, or practice may influence the religion or politics of the State, or what operation their admission may have upon the peace and tranquillity of the country. Is not such a genius equally contemptible and narrow with that of the poorest mortal upon earth, who grovels for his whole life within the verge of the opposite extreme?"

CLXXXV. In an Englishman, a diversity of profession and pursuit (as the having been a soldier, a valet, a player, &c.) implies a dissipation and dissoluteness of character, and a fitness for nothing. In a Frenchman,

it only shows a natural vivacity of disposition, and a fitness for everything.

CLXXXVI. Impudence, like everything else, has its limits. Let a man be ever so hardened and unblushing, there is a point at which his courage is sure to fail him; and not being able to carry off the matter with his usual air of confidence, he becomes more completely confused and awkward than any one else would in the same circumstances.

CLXXXVII. Half the miseries of human life proceed from our not perceiving the incompatibility of different attainments, and consequently aiming at too much. We make ourselves wretched in vainly aspiring after advantages we are deprived of; and do not consider that if we had these advantages, it would be quite impossible for us to retain those which we actually do possess, and which after all, if it were put to the question, we would not consent to part with for the sake of any others.

CLXXXVIII. If we use no ceremony towards others, we shall be treated without any. People are soon tired of paying trifling attentions to those who receive them with coldness, and return them with neglect.

CLXXXIX. Surly natures have more pleasure in disobliging others than in serving themselves.

CXC. People in general consult their prevailing humour or ruling passion (whatever it may be) much more than their interest.

CXCI. One of the painters (Teniers) has represented monkeys with a monk's cloak and cowl. This has a ludicrous effect enough. To a superior race of beings the pretensions of mankind to extraordinary sanctity and virtue must seem equally ridiculous.

CXCII. When we speak ill of people behind their

backs, and are civil to them to their faces, we may be accused of insincerity. But the contradiction is less owing to insincerity than to the change of circumstances. We think well of them while we are with them; and in their absence recollect the ill we durst not hint at or acknowledge to ourselves in their presence.

CXCIII. Our opinions are not our own, but in the power of sympathy. If a person tells us a palpable falsehood, we not only dare not contradict him, but we dare hardly disbelieve him to his face. A lie boldly uttered has the effect of truth for the instant.

CXCIV. A man's reputation is not in his own keeping, but lies at the mercy of the profligacy of others. Calumny requires no proof. The throwing-out malicious imputations against any character leaves a stain, which no after-reputation can wipe out. To create an unfavourable impression, it is not necessary that certain things should be true, but that they have been said. The imagination is of so delicate a texture, that even words wound it.

CXCV. A nickname is a mode of insinuating a prejudice against another under some general designation, which, as it offers no proof, admits of no reply.

CXCVI. It does not render the person less contemptible or ridiculous in vulgar opinion, because it may be harmless in itself, or even downright nonsense. By repeating it incessantly, and leaving out every other characteristic of the individual whom we wish to make a byword of, it seems as if he were an abstraction of insignificance.

CXCVII. Want of principle is power. Truth and honesty set a limit to our efforts, which impudence and hypocrisy easily overleap.

CXCVIII. There are many who talk on from

ignorance rather than from knowledge, and who find the former an inexhaustible fund of conversation.

CXCIX. Nothing gives such a blow to friendship as the detecting another in an untruth: it strikes at the root of our confidence ever after.

CC. In estimating the value of an acquaintance or even friend, we give a preference to intellectual or convivial over moral qualities. The truth is, that in our habitual intercourse with others, we much oftener require to be amused than assisted. We consider less, therefore, what a person with whom we are intimate is ready to do for us in critical emergencies, than what he has to say on ordinary occasions. We dispense with his services, if he only saves us from ennui. In civilised society words are of as much importance as things.

CCI. We cultivate the society of those who are above us in station, and beneath us in capacity. The one we do from choice, the other from necessity. Our interest dictates our submission to the first; our vanity is flattered by the homage of the last.

CCII. A man of talents, who shrinks from a collision with his equals or superiors, will soon sink below himself. We improve by trying our strength with others, not by showing it off. A person who shuts himself up in a little circle of dependants and admirers for fear of losing ground in his own opinion by jostling with the world at large, may continue to be gaped at by fools, but will forfeit the respect of sober and sensible men.

CCIII. There are others, who, entertaining a high opinion of themselves, and not being able (for want of plausible qualities) to gather a circle of butterflies round them, retire into solitude, and there worship the Echoes and themselves. They gain this advantage by it—the Echoes do not contradict them. But it is a question

whether by dwelling always on their own virtues and merits, unmolested, they increase the stock. They, indeed, pamper their ruling vices, and pile them mountain-high; and, looking down on the world from the elevation of their retreat, idly fancy that the world has nothing to do but to look up to them with wondering eyes.

CCIV. It is a false principle, that because we are entirely occupied with ourselves, we must equally occupy the thoughts of others. The contrary inference is the fair one.

CCV. It is better to desire than to enjoy—to love than to be loved.

CCVI. Every one would rather be Raphael than Hogarth. Without entering into the question of the talent required for their different works, or the pleasure derived from them, we prefer that which confers dignity on human nature to that which degrades it. We would wish to *do* what we would wish to be. And, moreover, it is most difficult to do what it is most difficult to be.

CCVII. A selfish feeling requires less moral capacity than a benevolent one: a selfish expression requires less intellectual capacity to execute it than a benevolent one; for in expression, and all that relates to it, the intellectual is the reflection of the moral. Raphael's figures are sustained by ideas; Hogarth's are distorted by mechanical habits and instincts. It is elevation of thought that gives grandeur and delicacy of expression to passion. The expansion and refinement of the soul are seen in the face as in a mirror. An enlargement of purpose gives a corresponding enlargement of form. The mind, as it were, acts over the whole body, and animates it equally; while petty and local interests seize on particular parts, and distract it by contrary and

mean expressions. Now, if mental expression has this superior grandeur and grace, we can account at once for the superiority of Raphael. For there is no doubt, that it is more difficult to give a whole continuously and proportionably, than to give the parts separately and disjointedly, or to define the same subtle but powerful expression over a large mass than to caricature it in a single part or feature. The actions in Raphael are like a branch of a tree swept by the surging blast; those in Hogarth like straws whirled and twitched about in the gusts and eddies of passion. I do not mean to say that goodness alone constitutes greatness, but mental power does. Hogarth's 'Good Apprentice' is insipid: Raphael has clothed 'Elymas the Sorcerer' with all the dignity and grandeur of vice. Selfish characters and passions borrow greatness from the range of imagination and strength of purpose; and besides, have an advantage in natural force and interest.

CCVIII. We find persons who are actuated in all their tastes and feelings by a spirit of contradiction. They like nothing that other people do, and have a natural aversion to whatever is agreeable in itself. They read books that no one else reads, and are delighted with passages that no one understands but themselves. They only arrive at beauties through faults and difficulties, and all their conceptions are brought to light by a sort of Cæsarean process. This is either an affectation of singularity, or a morbid taste, that can relish nothing that is obvious and simple.

CCIX. An unaccountable spirit of contradiction is sometimes carried into men's behaviour and actions. They never do anything from a direct motive, or in a straightforward manner. They get rid of all sorts of obligations, and rush on destruction without the shadow of an excuse. They take a perverse delight in acting not

only contrary to reason, but in opposition to their own inclinations and passions, and are for ever in a state of cross-purposes with themselves.

CCX. There are some persons who never decide from deliberate motives at all, but are the mere creatures of impulse.

CCXI. Insignificant people are a necessary relief in society. Such characters are extremely agreeable, and even favourites, if they appear satisfied with the part they have to perform.

CCXII. Little men seldom seem conscious of their diminutive size; or make up for it by the erectness of their persons, or a peculiarly dapper air and manner.

CCXIII. Any one is to be pitied who has just sense enough to perceive his deficiencies.

CCXIV. I had rather be deformed than a dwarf and well-made. The one may be attributed to accident; the other looks like a deliberate insult on the part of nature.

CCXV. Personal deformity, in the well-disposed, produces a fine placid expression of countenance; in the ill-tempered and peevish, a keen sarcastic one.

CCXVI. People say ill-natured things without design, but not without having a pleasure in them.

CCXVII. A person who blunders upon system has a secret motive for what he does, unknown to himself.

CCXVIII. If any one by his general conduct contrives to part friends, he may not be aware that such is the tendency of his actions, but assuredly it is their motive. He has more pleasure in seeing others cold and distant than cordial and intimate.

CCXIX. A person who constantly meddles to no purpose, means to do harm, and is not sorry to find he has succeeded.

CCXX. Cunning is natural to mankind. It is the sense of our weakness, and an attempt to effect by concealment what we cannot do openly and by force.

CCXXI. In love we never think of moral qualities, and scarcely of intellectual ones. Temperament and manner alone (with beauty) excite love.

CCXXII. There is no one thoroughly despicable. We cannot descend much lower than an idiot; and an idiot has some advantages over a wise man.

CCXXIII. Comparisons are odious, because they reduce every one to a standard he ought not to be tried by; or leave us in possession only of those claims which we can set up, to the entire exclusion of others. By striking off the common qualities, the remainder of excellence is brought down to a contemptible fraction. A man may be six feet high and only an inch taller than another. In comparisons, this difference of an inch is the only thing thought of or ever brought into question. The greatest genius or virtue soon dwindles into nothing by such a mode of computation.

CCXXIV. It is a fine remark of Rousseau's that the best of us differ from others in fewer particulars than we agree with them in. The difference between a tall and a short man is only a few inches, whereas they are both several feet high. So a wise or learned man knows many things of which the vulgar are ignorant; but there is a still greater number of things the knowledge of which they share in common with him.

CCXXV. I am always afraid of a fool: one cannot be sure that he is not a knave as well.

CCXXVI. Weakness has its hidden resources, as well as strength. There is a degree of folly and meanness which we cannot calculate upon, and by which we are

as much liable to be foiled, as by the greatest ability or courage.

CCXXVII. We can only be degraded in a contest with low natures. The advantages that others obtain over us are fair and honourable to both parties.

CCXXVIII. Reflection makes men cowards. There is no object that can be put in competition with life, unless it is viewed through the medium of passion, and we are hurried away by the impulse of the moment.

CCXXIX. The youth is better than the old age of friendship.

CCXXX. In the course of a long acquaintance we have repeated all our good things, and discussed all our favourite topics several times over, so that our conversation becomes a mockery of social intercourse. We might as well talk to ourselves. The soil of friendship is worn out with constant use. Habit may still attach us to each other, but we feel ourselves fettered by it. Old friends might be compared to old married people without the tie of children.

CCXXXI. We grow tired of ourselves, much more of other people. Use may in part reconcile us to our own tediousness, but we do not adopt that of others on the same paternal principle. We may be willing to tell a story twice, never to hear one more than once.

CCXXXII. If we are long absent from our friends, we forget them; if we are constantly with them, we despise them.

CCXXXIII. There are no rules for friendship. It must be left to itself; we cannot force it any more than love.

CCXXXIV. The most violent friendships soonest wear themselves out.

CCXXXV. To be capable of steady friendship or lasting love, are the two greatest proofs, not only of goodness of heart, but of strength of mind.

CCXXXVI. It makes us proud when our love of a mistress is returned; it ought to make us prouder that we can love her for herself alone, without the aid of any such selfish reflection. This is the religion of love.

CCXXXVII. An English officer who had been engaged in an intrigue in Italy, going home one night, stumbled over a man fast asleep on the stairs. It was a bravo who had been hired to assassinate him. Such, in this man, was the force of conscience!

CCXXXVIII. An eminent artist having succeeded in a picture which drew crowds to admire it, received a letter from a shuffling old relation in these terms, "Dear cousin, now you may draw good bills with a vengeance." Such is the force of habit! This man only wished to be a Raphael that he might carry on his old trade of drawing bills.

CCXXXIX. Mankind are a herd of knaves and fools. It is necessary to join the crowd or get out of their way in order not to be trampled to death by them.

CCXL. To think the worst of others, and to do the best we can ourselves, is a safe rule, but a hard one to practise.

CCXLI. To think ill of mankind, and not wish ill to them, is perhaps the highest wisdom and virtue.

CCXLII. We may hate and love the same person, nay even at the same moment.

CCXLIII. We never hate those whom we have once loved, merely because they have injured us. "We may kill those of whom we are jealous," says Fielding, "but

we do not hate them." We are enraged at their conduct, and at ourselves as the objects of it, but this does not alter our passion for them. The reason is, we loved them without their loving us; we do not hate them because they hate us. Love may turn to indifference with possession, but is irritated by disappointment.

CCXLIV. Revenge against the object of our love is madness. No one would kill the woman he loves, but that he thinks he can bring her to life afterwards. Her death seems to him as momentary as his own rash act. See 'Othello.'—"My wife! I have no wife," &c. He stabbed not at her life, but at her falsehood; he thought to kill the wanton and preserve the wife.

CCXLV. We revenge in haste and passion; we repent at leisure and from reflection.

CCXLVI. By retaliating our sufferings on the heads of those we love, we get rid of a present uneasiness, and incur lasting remorse. With the accomplishment of our revenge our fondness returns; so that we feel the injury we have done them even more than they do.

CCXLVII. I think men formerly were more jealous of their rivals in love; they are now more jealous of their mistresses, and lay the blame on them. That is, we formerly thought more of the mere possession of the person, which the removal of a favoured lover prevented; and we now think more of a woman's affections, which may still follow him to the tomb. To kill a rival is to kill a fool; but the goddess of our idolatry may be a sacrifice worthy of the gods. Hackman did not think of shooting Lord Sandwich, but Miss Ray.

CCXLVIII. Many people in reasoning on the passions make a continual appeal to common-sense. But passion is without common-sense, and we must frequently discard the one in speaking of the other.

CCXLIX. It is provoking to hear people at their ease talking reason to others in a state of violent suffering. If you can remove their suffering by speaking a word, do so ; and then they will be in a state to hear calm reason.

CCL. There is nothing that I so hate as I do to hear a commonplace set up against a feeling of truth and nature.

CCLI. People try to reconcile you to a disappointment in love, by asking why you should cherish a passion for an object that has proved itself worthless. Had you known this before, you would not have encouraged the passion ; but that having been once formed, knowledge does not destroy it. If we have drunk poison, finding it out does not prevent its being in our veins : so passion leaves its poison in the mind. It is the nature of all passion and of all habitual affection ; we throw ourselves upon it at a venture, but we cannot return by choice. If it is a wife that has proved unworthy, men compassionate the loss, because there is a tie, they say, which we cannot get rid of. But has the heart no ties ? Or if it is a child, they understand it. But is not true love a child ? Or when another has become a part of ourselves, " where we must live or have no life at all," can we tear them from us in an instant ?—No : these bargains are for life ; and that for which our souls have sighed for years, cannot be forgotten with a breath, and without a pang.

CCLII. Besides, it is uncertainty and suspense that chiefly irritate jealousy to madness. When we know our fate, we become gradually reconciled to it, and try to forget a useless sorrow.

CCLIII. It is wonderful how often we see and hear of Shakspeare's plays without being annoyed with it. Were

it any other writer, we should be sick to death of the very name. But his volumes are like that of nature, we can turn to them again and again :

“ Age cannot wither nor custom stale
His infinite variety.”

CCLIV. The contempt of a wanton for a man who is determined to think her virtuous, is perhaps the strongest of all others. He officiously reminds her of what she ought to be; and she avenges the galling sense of lost character on the fool who still believes in it.

CCLV. To find that a woman whom we loved has forfeited her character, is the same thing as to learn that she is dead.

CCLVI. The only vice that cannot be forgiven is hypocrisy. The repentance of a hypocrite is itself hypocrisy.

CCLVII. Once a renegado, and always a renegado.

CCLVIII. By speaking truth to the really beautiful, we learn to flatter other women.

CCLIX. There is a kind of ugliness which is not disagreeable to women. It is that which is connected with the expression of strong but bad passions, and implies spirit and power.

CCLX. People do not persist in their vices because they are not weary of them, but because they cannot leave them off. It is the nature of vice to leave us no resource but in itself.

CCLXI. Our consciousness of injustice makes us add to the injury. By aggravating a wrong we seem to ourselves to justify it. The repetition of the blow inflames our passion and deadens reflection.

CCLXII. In confessing the greatest offences, a

criminal gives himself credit for his candour. You and he seem to have come to an amicable understanding on his character at last.

CCLXIII. A barefaced profligacy often succeeds to an overstrained preciseness in morals. People in a less licentious age carefully conceal the vices they have; as they afterwards, with an air of philosophic freedom, set up for those they have not.

CCLXIV. It is a sign that real religion is in a state of decay, when passages in compliment to it are applauded at the theatre. Morals and sentiment fall within the province of the stage; but religion, except where it is considered as a beautiful fiction which ought to be treated with lenity, does not depend upon our suffrages.

CCLXV. There are persons to whom success gives no satisfaction, unless it is accompanied with dishonesty. Such people willingly ruin themselves in order to ruin others.

CCLXVI. Habitual liars invent falsehoods, not to gain any end or even to deceive their hearers, but to amuse themselves. It is partly practice and partly habit. It requires an effort in them to speak truth.

CCLXVII. A knave thinks himself a fool all the time he is not making a fool of some other person.

CCLXVIII. Fontenelle said, "If his hand were full of truths, he would not open his fingers to let them out." Was this a satire on truth or on mankind?

CCLXIX. The best kind of conversation is that which is made up of observations, reflections, and anecdotes. A string of stories without application is as tiresome as a long-winded argument.

CCLXX. The most insignificant people are the most apt to sneer at others. They are safe from reprisals, and

have no hope of rising in their own esteem, but by lowering their neighbours. The severest critics are always those, who have either never attempted, or who have failed in, original composition.

CCLXXI. More remarks are made upon any one's dress, looks, &c. in walking twenty yards along the streets of Edinburgh, or other provincial towns, than in passing from one end of London to the other.

CCLXXII. There is less impertinence and more independence in London than in any other place in the kingdom.

CCLXXIII. A man who meets thousands of people in a day who never saw or heard of him before, if he thinks at all, soon learns to think little of himself. London is the place where a man of sense is soonest cured of his coxcomby, or where a fool may indulge his vanity with impunity, by giving himself what airs he pleases. A valet and a lord are there nearly on a level. Among a million of men, we do not count the units, for we have not time.

CCLXXIV. There is some virtue in almost every vice, except hypocrisy; and even that, while it is a mockery of virtue, is at the same time a compliment to it.

CCLXXV. It does not follow that a man is a hypocrite because his actions give the lie to his words. If he at one time seems a saint and at other times a sinner, he possibly is both in reality, as well as in appearance. A person may be fond of vice and of virtue too; and practise one or the other, according to the temptation of the moment. A priest may be pious, and a sot or bigot. A woman may be modest, and a rake at heart. A poet may admire the beauties of nature, and be envious of those of other writers. A moralist may act contrary to his own precepts, and yet be sincere in

recommending them to others. These are indeed contradictions, but they arise out of the contradictory qualities in our nature. A man is a hypocrite only when he affects to take a delight in what he does not feel, not because he takes a perverse delight in opposite things.

CCLXXVI. The greatest offence against virtue is to speak ill of it. To recommend certain things is worse than to practise them. There may be an excuse for the last in the frailty of passion; but the former can arise from nothing but an utter depravity of disposition. Any one may yield to temptation, and yet feel a sincere love and aspiration after virtue; but he who maintains vice in theory, has not even the idea or capacity for virtue in his mind. Men err: fiends only make a mock at goodness.

CCLXXVII. The passions make antitheses and subtle distinctions, finer than any pen.

CCLXXVIII. I used to think that men were governed by their passions more than by their interest or reason, till I heard the contrary maintained in Scotland, viz. that the main-chance is the great object in life; and the proof given of it was, that every man in the street, where we were talking, however he might have a particular hobby, minded his business as the principal thing, and endeavoured to make both ends meet at the end of the year. This was a shrewd argument, and it was Scotch. I could only answer it in my own mind by turning to different persons among my acquaintance who have been ruined with their eyes open by some whim or fancy. One, for instance, married a girl of the town: a second divorced his wife to marry a wench at a lodging-house, who refused him, and whose cruelty and charms are the torment of his own life, and that of all his friends: a third drank himself to death: a fourth is the dupe and victim of quack advertisements: a fifth is the slave of

his wife's ill-humour : a sixth quarrels with all his friends without any motive : a seventh lies on to the end of the chapter, and to his own ruin, &c. It is true none of these are Scotchmen ; and yet they live in houses, rather than in the open air, and follow some trade or vocation to avoid starving outright. If this is what is meant by a calculation of consequences, the doctrine may hold true ; but it does not infringe upon the main point. It affects the husk, the shell, but not the kernel of our dispositions. The pleasure or torment of our lives is in the pursuit of some favourite passion or perverse humour :

“ Within our bosoms reigns another lord,
Passion—sole judge and umpire of itself.”

CCLXXIX. There are few things more contemptible than the conversation of men of the town. It is made up of the technicalities and cant of all professions, without the spirit or knowledge of any. It is flashy and vapid, and is like the rinsings of different liquors at a night-cellar, instead of a bottle of fine old port. It is without clearness or body, and a heap of affectation.

CCLXXX. The conversation of players is either dull or bad. They are tempted to say gay or fine things from the habit of uttering them with applause on the stage, and unable to do it from the habit of repeating what is set down for them by rote. A good comic actor, if he is a sensible man, will generally be silent in company. It is not his profession to invent *bon mots*, but to deliver them ; and he will scorn to produce a theatrical effect by grimace and mere vivacity. A great tragic actress should be a mute, except on the stage. She cannot raise the tone of common conversation to that of tragedy, and any other must be quite insipid to her. Repose is necessary to her. She who died the night before in ‘Cleopatra’ ought not to revive till she appears again as ‘Cassandra’ or ‘Aspasia.’ In the intervals of her

great characters, her own should be a blank, or an unforced, unstudied part.

CCLXXXI. To marry an actress for the admiration she excites on the stage, is to imitate the man who bought 'Punch.'

CCLXXXII. To expect an author to talk as he writes is ridiculous; or even if he did, you would find fault with him as a pedant. We should read authors, and not converse with them.

CCLXXXIII. Extremes meet. Excessive refinement is often combined with equal grossness. They act as a relief to each other, and please by contrast.

CCLXXXIV. The seeds of many of our vices are sown in our blood: others we owe to the bile or a fit of indigestion. A sane mind is generally the effect of a sane body.

CCLXXXV. Health and good temper are the two greatest blessings in life. In all the rest men are equal, or find an equivalent.

CCLXXXVI. Poverty, labour, and calamity are not without their luxuries, which the rich, the indolent, and the fortunate in vain seek for.

CCLXXXVII. Good and ill seem as necessary to human life as light and shade are to a picture. We grow weary of uniform success, and pleasure soon surfeits. Pain makes ease delightful, hunger relishes the homeliest food, fatigue turns the hardest bed to down; and the difficulty and uncertainty of pursuit in all cases enhance the value of possession. The wretched are in this respect fortunate, that they have the strongest yearnings after happiness; and to desire is in some sense to enjoy. If the schemes of Utopians could be realised, the tone of society would be changed from what it is, into a sort of insipid high life. There could be no fine tra-

gedies written; nor would there be any pleasure in seeing them. We tend to this conclusion already with the progress of civilisation.

CCLXXXVIII. The pleasure derived from tragedy is to be accounted for in this way: that, by painting the extremes of human calamity, it by contrast kindles the affections, and raises the most intense imagination and desire of the contrary good.

CCLXXXIX. The question respecting dramatic illusion has not been fairly stated. There are different degrees and kinds of belief. The point is not whether we do or do not believe what we see to be a positive reality, but how far and in what manner we believe in it. We do not say every moment to ourselves, "This is real;" but neither do we say every moment, "This is not real." The involuntary impression steals upon us till we recollect ourselves. The appearance of reality, in fact, is the reality, so long and in as far as we are not conscious of the contradictory circumstances that disprove it. The belief in a well-acted tragedy never amounts to what the witnessing the actual scene would prove, and never sinks into a mere phantasmagoria. Its power of affecting us is not, however, taken away, even if we abstract the feeling of identity; for it still suggests a stronger idea of what the reality *would be*, just as a picture reminds us more powerfully of the person for whom it is intended, though we are conscious it is not the same.

CCXC. We have more faith in a well-written romance, while we are reading it, than in common history. The vividness of the representations in the one case, more than counterbalances the mere knowledge of the truth of the facts in the other.

CCXCI. It is remarkable how virtuous and generously disposed every one is at a play. We uniformly applaud

what is right and condemn what is wrong, when it costs us nothing but the sentiment

CCXCII. Great natural advantages are seldom combined with great acquired ones, because they render the labour required to attain the last superfluous and irksome. It is only necessary to be admired; and if we are admired for the graces of our persons, we shall not be at much pains to adorn our minds. If Pope had been a beautiful youth he would not have written 'The Rape of the Lock.'¹ A beautiful woman, who has only to show herself to be admired, and is famous by nature, will be in no danger of becoming a bluestocking to attract notice by her learning or to hide her defects.

CCXCIII. Those people who are always improving never become great. Greatness is an eminence, the ascent to which is steep and lofty, and which a man must seize on at once by natural boldness and vigour, and not by patient wary steps.

CCXCIV. The late Mr. Opie remarked, that an artist often put his best thoughts into his first works. His earliest efforts were the result of the study of all his former life, whereas his later and more mature performances (though perhaps more skilful and finished) contained only the gleanings of his after-observation and experience.

CCXCV. The effort necessary to overcome difficulty urges the student on to excellence. When he can once do well with ease, he grows comparatively careless and indifferent, and makes no farther advances to perfection.

CCXCVI. When a man can do better than every one else in the same walk, he does not make any very painful exertions to outdo himself. The progress of improvement ceases nearly at the point where competition ends.

¹ Milton was a beautiful youth, and yet he wrote 'Paradise Lost.'

CCXCVII. We are rarely taught by our own experience ; and much less do we put faith in that of others.

CCXCVIII. We do not attend to the advice of the sage and experienced, because we think they are old, forgetting that they once were young, and placed in the same situations as ourselves.

CCXCIX. We are egotists in morals as well as in other things. Every man is determined to judge for himself as to his conduct in life, and finds out what he ought to have done, when it is too late to do it. For this reason, the world has to begin again with each successive generation.

CCC. We should be inclined to pay more attention to the wisdom of the old, if they showed greater indulgence to the follies of the young.

CCCI. The best lesson we can learn from witnessing the folly of mankind is not to irritate ourselves against it.

CCCII. If the world were good for nothing else, it is a fine subject for speculation.

CCCIII. In judging of individuals, we always allow something to character ; for even when this is not agreeable or praiseworthy, it affords exercise for our sagacity, and baffles the harshness of our censure.

CCCIV. There are persons to whom we never think of applying the ordinary rules of judging. They form a class by themselves, and are curiosities in morals, like nondescripts in natural history. We forgive whatever they do or say, for the singularity of the thing, and because it excites attention. A man who has been hanged is not the worse subject for dissection, and a man who deserves to be hanged may be a very amusing companion or topic of discourse.

CCCIV. Every man, in his own opinion, forms an exception to the ordinary rules of morality.

CCCVI. No man ever owned to the title of a murderer, a tyrant, &c., because, however notorious the facts might be, the epithet is accompanied with a reference to motives, and marks of opprobrium in common language and in the feelings of others, which he does not acknowledge in his own mind.

CCCVII. There are some things, the idea of which alone is a clear gain to the human mind. Let people rail at virtue, at genius, and friendship as long as they will—the very names of these disputed qualities are better than anything else that could be substituted for them, and embalm even the most angry abuse of them.

CCCVIII. If goodness were only a theory, it were a pity it should be lost to the world.

CCCIX. Were good and evil ever so nearly balanced in reality, yet imagination would add a casting-weight to the favourable scale by anticipating the bright side of what is to come, and throwing a pleasing melancholy on the past.

CCCX. Women, when left to themselves, talk chiefly about their dress; they think more about their lovers than they talk about them.

CCCXI. With women, the great business of life is love, and they generally make a mistake in it. They consult neither the heart nor the head, but are led away by mere humour and fancy. If, instead of a companion for life, they had to choose a partner in a country-dance, or to trifle away an hour with, their mode of calculation would be right. They tie their true-lover's knots with idle thoughtless haste, while the institutions of society render it indissoluble.

CCCXII. When we hear complaints of the wretchedness or vanity of human life, the proper answer to them would be that there is hardly any one who at some time or other has not been in love. If we consider the high abstraction of this feeling, its depth, its purity, its voluptuous refinement, even in the meanest breast, how sacred and how sweet it is, this alone may reconcile us to the lot of humanity. That drop of balm turns the bitter cup to a delicious nectar—

“ And vindicates the ways of God to man ”

CCCXIII. It is impossible to love entirely, without being loved again. Otherwise, the fable of Pygmalion would have no meaning. Let any one be ever so much enamoured of a woman who does not requite his passion, and let him consider what he feels when he finds her scorn or indifference turning to mutual regard—the thrill, the glow of rapture, the melting of two hearts into one, the creation of another self in her—and he will own that he was before only half in love!

CCCXIV. Women never reason, and therefore they are (comparatively) seldom wrong. They judge instinctively of what falls under their immediate observation or experience, and do not trouble themselves about remote or doubtful consequences. If they make no profound discoveries, they do not involve themselves in gross absurdities. It is only by the help of reason and logical inference, according to Hobbes, that “man becomes excellently wise, or excellently foolish.”¹

CCCXV. Women are less cramped by circumstances or education than men. They are more the creatures of nature and impulse, and less cast in the mould of habit or prejudice. If a young man and woman in common life are seen walking out together on a holiday,

¹ ‘Leviathan.’

the girl has the advantage in point of air and dress. She has a greater aptitude in catching external accomplishments and the manners of her superiors, and is less depressed by a painful consciousness of her situation in life. A Quaker girl is often as sensible and conversable as any other woman; while a Quaker man is a bundle of quaint opinions and conceit. Women are not spoiled by education and an affectation of superior wisdom. They take their chance for wit and shrewdness, and pick up their advantages according to their opportunities and turn of mind. Their faculties (such as they are) shoot out freely and gracefully, like the slender trees in a forest; and are not clipped and cut down, as the understandings of men are, into uncouth shapes and distorted fancies, like yew-trees in an old-fashioned garden. Women, in short, resemble self-taught men, with more pliancy and delicacy of feeling.

CCCXVI. Women have as little imagination as they have reason. They are pure egotists; they cannot go out of themselves. There is no instance of a woman having done anything great in poetry or philosophy. They can act tragedy, because this depends very much on the physical expression of the passions; they can sing, for they have flexible throats and nice ears; they can write romances about love, and talk for ever about nothing.

CCCXVII. Women are not philosophers or poets, patriots, moralists, or politicians—they are simply women.

CCCXVIII. Women have a quicker sense of the ridiculous than men, because they judge from immediate impressions, and do not wait for the explanation that may be given of them.

CCCXIX. Englishwomen have nothing to say on

general subjects: Frenchwomen talk equally well on them or any other. This may be obviously accounted for from the circumstance that the two sexes associate much more together in France than they do with us, so that the tone of conversation in the women has become masculine, and that of the men effeminate. The tone of apathy and indifference in France to the weightier interests of reason and humanity is ascribable to the same cause. Women have no speculative faculty or fortitude of mind, and wherever they exercise a continual and paramount sway, all must be soon laughed out of countenance but the immediately intelligible and agreeable—but the showy in religion, the lax in morals, and the superficial in philosophy.

CCCXX. The texture of women's minds, as well as of their bodies, is softer than that of men's: but they have not the same strength of nerve, of understanding, or of moral purpose.

CCCXXI. In France knowledge circulates quickly, from the mere communicativeness of the national disposition. Whatever is once discovered, be it good or bad, is made no secret of, but is spread quickly through all ranks and classes of society. Thought then runs along the surface of the mind like an electrical fluid; while the English understanding is a non-conductor to it, and damps it with its torpedo touch.

CCCXXII. The French are fond of reading as well as of talking. You may constantly see girls tending an apple-stall in the coldest day in winter, and reading Voltaire or Racine. Such a thing was never known in London as a barrow-woman reading Shakspeare. Yet we talk of our widespread civilisation, and ample provisions for the education of the poor!

CCCXXIII. In comparing notes with the French

we cannot boast even of our superior conceit : for in that too they have the advantage of us.

CCCXXIV. It is curious that the French, with all their vivacity and love of external splendour, should tolerate nothing but their prosing didactic style of tragedy on the stage; and that, with all their flutter and levity, they should combine the most laborious patience and minute finishing in works of art. A French student will take several weeks to complete a chalk drawing from a head of Leonardo da Vinci, which a dull plodding Englishman would strike off in as many hours.

CCCXXV. The Dutch perhaps finished their landscapes so carefully, because there was a want of romantic and striking objects in them, so that they could only be made interesting by the accuracy of the details.

CCCXXVI. An awkward Englishman has an advantage in going abroad. Instead of having his deficiency more remarked, it is less so; for all Englishmen are thought awkward alike. Any slip in politeness or abruptness of address is attributed to an ignorance of foreign manners, and you escape under the cover of the national character. Your behaviour is no more criticised than your accent. They consider the barbarism of either as a compliment to their own superior refinement.

CCCXXVII. The difference between minuteness and subtlety or refinement seems to be this—that the one relates to the parts, and the other to the whole. Thus, the accumulation of a number of distinct particulars in a work, as the threads of a gold-laced buttonhole, or the hairs on the chair in a portrait of Denner's, is minute or high finishing; the giving the gradations of tone in a sky of Claude's from azure to gold, where the distinction at each step is imperceptible, but the whole effect is striking and grand, and can only be seized upon by the eye and taste, is true refinement and delicacy.

CCCXXVIII. The forte of the French is a certain facility and grace of execution. The Germans, who are the opposite to them, are full of throes and labour, and do everything by an overstrained and violent effort.

CCCXXIX. The conversation of a pedantic Scotchman is like a canal with a great number of locks in it.

CCCXXX. The most learned are often the most narrowminded men.

CCCXXXI. The insolence of the vulgar is in proportion to their ignorance: they treat everything with contempt which they do not understand.

CCCXXXII. Our contempt for others proves nothing but the illiberality and narrowness of our own views. The English laugh at foreigners, because, from their insular situation, they are unacquainted with the manners and customs of the rest of the world.

CCCXXXIII. The true barbarian is he who thinks everything barbarous but his own tastes and prejudices.

CCCXXXIV. The difference between the vanity of a Frenchman and an Englishman seems to be this: the one thinks everything right that is French, the other thinks everything wrong that is not English. The Frenchman is satisfied with his own country; the Englishman is determined to pick a quarrel with every other.

CCCXXXV. The national precedence between the English and Scotch may be settled by this—that the Scotch are always asserting their superiority over the English, while the English never say a word about their superiority over the Scotch. The first have got together a great number of facts and arguments in their own favour; the last never trouble their heads about the

matter, but have taken the point for granted as self evident.

CCCXXXVI. The great characteristic of the Scotch is that of all semi-barbarous people—namely, a hard defiance of other nations.

CCCXXXVII. Those who are tenacious on the score of their faults show that they have no virtues to bring as a set-off against them.

CCCXXXVIII. An Englishman in Scotland seems to be travelling in a conquered country, from the suspicion and precautions he has to encounter; and this is really the history of the case.

CCCXXXIX. We learn a great deal from coming into contact and collision with individuals of other nations. The contrast of character and feeling, the different points of view from which they see things, is an admirable test of the truth or reasonableness of our opinions. Among ourselves we take a number of things for granted, which, as soon as we find ourselves among strangers, we are called upon to account for. With those who think and feel differently from our habitual tone, we must have a reason for the faith that is in us, or we shall not come off very triumphantly. By this comparing of notes, by being questioned and cross-examined, we discover how far we have taken up certain notions on good grounds, or barely on trust. We also learn how much of our best knowledge is built on a sort of acquired instinct, and how little we can analyse those things that seem to most of us self-evident. He is no mean philosopher who can give a reason for one half of what he thinks. It by no means follows that our tastes or judgments are wrong, because we may be at fault in an argument. A Scotchman and a Frenchman would differ equally from an Englishman, but would run into contrary extremes.

He might not be able to make good his ground against the levity of the one or the pertinacity of the other, and yet he might be right, for they cannot both be so. By visiting different countries and conversing with their inhabitants, we strike a balance between opposite prejudices, and have an average of truth and nature left.

CCCXL. Strength of character as well as strength of understanding is one of the guides that point the way to truth. By seeing the bias and prejudices of others marked in a strong and decided manner we are led to detect our own; from laughing at their absurdities we begin to suspect the soundness of our own conclusions which we find to be just the reverse of them. When I was in Scotland some time ago, I learnt most from the person whose opinions were, not most right (as I conceive), but most Scotch. In this case, as in playing a game at bowls, you have only to allow for a certain bias in order to hit the Jack; or, as in an algebraic equation, you deduct so much for national character and prejudice, which is a known or given quantity, and what remains is the truth.

CCCXLI. We learn little from mere captious controversy or the collision of opinions, unless where there is this collision of character to account for the difference, and remind one, by implication, where one's own weakness lies. In the latter case, it is a shrewd presumption that inasmuch as others are wrong, so are we; for the widest breach in argument is made by mutual prejudice.

CCCXLII. There are certain moulds of national character in which all our opinions and feelings must be cast, or they are spurious and vitiated. A Frenchman and an Englishman, a Scotchman and an Irishman, seldom reason alike on any two points consecutively. It

is vain to think of reconciling these antipathies—they are something in the juices and the blood. It is not possible for a Frenchman to admire Shakspeare, except out of mere affectation; nor is it at all necessary that he should, while he has authors of his own to admire. But then his not admiring Shakspeare is no reason why we should not. The harm is not in the natural variety of tastes and dispositions, but in setting up an artificial standard of uniformity, which makes us dissatisfied with our own opinions, unless we can make them universal, or impose them as a law upon the world at large.

CCCXLIII. I had rather be a lord than a king. A lord is a private gentleman of the first class, amenable only to himself. A king is a servant of the public, dependent on opinion, a subject for history, and liable to be “baited with the rabble’s curse.” Such a situation is no sinecure. Kings indeed were gentlemen when their subjects were vassals, and the world (instead of a stage on which they have to perform a difficult and stubborn part) was a deer-park through which they ranged at pleasure. But the case is altered of late; and it is better, and has more of the sense of personal dignity in it, to come into possession of a large old family estate and ancestral groves, than to have a kingdom to govern—or to lose.

CCCXLIV. The affectation of gentility by people without birth or fortune is a very idle species of vanity. For those who are in middle or humble life to aspire to be always seen in the company of the great, is like the ambition of a dwarf who should hire himself as an attendant to wait upon a giant. But we find great numbers of this class whose pride or vanity seems to be sufficiently gratified by the admiration of the finery or superiority of others, without any further object. There are sycophants who take a pride in being seen in the

train of a great man, as there are fops who delight to follow in the train of a beautiful woman (from a mere impulse of admiration and excitement of the imagination), without the smallest personal pretensions of their own.

CCCXLV. There is a double aristocracy of rank and letters which is hardly to be endured—*monstrum ingens biforme*. A lord who is a poet as well regards the House of Peers with contempt, as a set of dull fellows; and he considers his brother authors as a Grub-street crew. A king is hardly good enough for him to touch: a mere man of genius is no better than a worm. He alone is all-accomplished. Such people should be *sent to Coventry*; and they generally are so, through their insufferable pride and self-sufficiency.

CCCXLVI. The great are fond of patronising men of genius when they are remarkable for personal insignificance, so that they can dandle them like parroquets or lapdogs; or when they are distinguished by some awkwardness which they can laugh at, or some meanness which they can despise. They do not wish to encourage or show their respect for wisdom or virtue, but to witness the defects or ridiculous circumstances accompanying these, that they may have an excuse for treating all sterling pretensions with supercilious indifference. They seek at best to be amused, not to be instructed. Truth is the greatest impertinence a man can be guilty of in polite company; and players and buffoons are the *beau ideal* of men of wit and talents.

CCCXLVII. We do not see nature merely from looking at it. We fancy that we see the whole of any object that is before us, because we know no more of it than what we see. The rest escapes us, as a matter of course; and we easily conclude that the idea in our minds and the image in nature are one and the same. But in fact

we only see a very small part of nature, and make an imperfect abstraction of the infinite number of particulars which are always to be found in it as well as we can. Some do this with more or less accuracy than others, according to habit or natural genius. A painter, for instance, who has been working on a face for several days, still finds out something new in it which he did not notice before, and which he endeavours to give in order to make his copy more perfect—which shows how little an ordinary and unpractised eye can be supposed to comprehend the whole at a single glance. A young artist, when he first begins to study from nature, soon makes an end of his sketch, because he sees only a general outline, and certain gross distinctions and masses. As he proceeds a new field opens to him; differences crowd upon differences; and as his perceptions grow more refined, he could employ whole days in working upon a single part, without satisfying himself at last. No painter, after a life devoted to the art, and the greatest care and length of time given to a single study of a head or other object, ever succeeded in it to his wish, or did not leave something still to be done. The greatest artists that have ever appeared are those who have been able to employ some one view or aspect of nature, and no more. Thus Titian was famous for colouring, Raphael for drawing; Correggio for the gradations, Rembrandt for the extremes, of light and shade. The combined genius and powers of observation of all the great artists in the world would not be sufficient to convey the whole of what is contained in any one object in nature; and yet the most vulgar spectator thinks he sees the whole of what is before him, at once and without any trouble at all.

CCCXLVIII. A copy is never so good as an original. This would not be the case, indeed, if great painters were

in the habit of copying bad pictures; but as the contrary practice holds, it follows that the excellent parts of a fine picture must lose in the imitation, and the indifferent part will not be proportionally improved by anything substituted at a venture for them.

CCCXLIX. The greatest painters are those who have combined the finest general effect with the highest degree of delicacy and correctness of detail. It is a mistake that the introduction of the parts interferes or is incompatible with the effect of the whole: both are to be found in nature. The most finished works of the most renowned artists are also the best.

CCCL. We are not weaned from a misplaced attachment by (at last) discovering the unworthiness of the object. The character of a woman is one thing, her graces and attractions another; and these last acquire even an additional charm and piquancy from the disappointment we feel in other respects. The truth is, a man in love prefers his passion to every other consideration, and is fonder of his mistress than he is of virtue. Should she prove vicious, she makes vice lovely in his eyes.

CCCLI. An accomplished coquette excites the passions of others in proportion as she feels none herself. Her forwardness allures, her indifference irritates desire. She fans the flame that does not scorch her own bosom, plays with men's feelings, and studies the effect of her several arts at leisure and unmoved.

CCCLII. Grace in women is the secret charm that draws the soul into its circle, and binds a spell round it for ever: the reason of which is, that habitual grace implies a continual sense of delight, of ease and propriety, which nothing can interrupt—ever varying, and adapting itself to all circumstances alike.

CCCLIII. Even among the most abandoned of the sex, there is generally found to exist one strong and individual attachment, which remains unshaken through all circumstances. Virtue steals like a guilty thing into the secret haunts of vice and infamy, clings to their devoted victim, and will not be driven quite away. Nothing can destroy the human heart.

CCCLIV. There is a heroism in crime as well as in virtue. Vice and infamy have their altars and their religion. This makes nothing in their favour, but is a proud compliment to man's nature. Whatever he is or does, he cannot entirely efface the stamp of the Divinity on him. Let him strive ever so, he cannot divest himself of his natural sublimity of thought and affection, however he may pervert or deprave it to ill.

CCCLV. We judge of character too much from names and classes and modes of life. It alters very little with circumstances. The theological doctrines of Original Sin, of Grace, and Election, admit of a moral and natural solution. Outward acts or events hardly reach the inward disposition or fitness for good or evil. Humanity is to be met with in a den of robbers—nay, modesty in a brothel. Nature prevails, and vindicates its rights to the last.

CCCLVI. Women do not become abandoned with the mere loss of character. They only discover the vicious propensities which they before were bound to conceal. They do not (all at once) part with their virtue, but throw aside the veil of affectation and prudery.

CCCLVII. It is enough to satisfy ambition to excel in some one thing. In everything else one would wish to be a common man. Those who aim at every kind of distinction turn out mere pretenders and coxcombs. One of the ancients has said that "the wisest and most

accomplished man is like the statues of the gods placed against a wall : in front, an Apollo or a Mercury ; behind, a plain piece of marble."

CCCLVIII. The want of money, according to the poet, has the effect of making men ridiculous. It not only has this disadvantage with respect to ourselves, but it often shows us others in a very contemptible point of view. If we sink in the opinion of the world from adverse circumstances, the world is apt to sink equally in ours. Poverty is the test of civility and the touchstone of friendship.

CCCLIX. There are those who borrow money in order to lend it again. This is raising a character for generosity at an easy rate.

CCCLX. The secret of the difficulties of those people who make a great deal of money, and yet are always in want of it, is this : they throw it away as soon as they get it, on the first whim or extravagance that strikes them, and have nothing left to meet ordinary expenses or discharge old debts.

CCCLXI. Those who have the habit of *being generous before they are just*, fancy they are getting out of difficulties all their lives, because it is in their power to do so whenever they will ; and for this reason they go on in the same way to the last, because the time never comes for baulking their inclinations or breaking off a bad habit.

CCCLXII. It is a mistake that we court the society of the rich and the great merely with a view to what we can obtain from them. We do so because there is something in external rank and splendour that gratifies and imposes on the imagination : just as we prefer the company of those who are in good health and spirits to that of the sickly and hypochondriacal, or as we

would rather converse with a beautiful woman than with an ugly one.

CCCLXIII. Shakspeare says, "Men's judgments are a parcel of their fortunes." A person in depressed circumstances is not only not listened to: he has not the spirit to say a good thing.

CCCLXIV. We are very much what others think of us. The reception our observations meet with gives us courage to proceed or damps our efforts. A man is a wit and a philosopher in one place who dares not open his mouth and is considered as a blockhead in another. In some companies nothing will go down but coarse practical jests, while the finest remark or sarcasm would be disregarded.

CCCLXV. Men of talent rise with their company, and are brought out by the occasion. Coxcombs and pedants have no advantage but over the dull and ignorant, with whom they talk on by rote.

CCCLXVI. In France or abroad one feels one's self at a loss; but then one has an excuse ready in an ignorance of the language. In Scotland they speak the same language, but do not understand a word that you say. One cannot get on in society without ideas in common. To attempt to convert strangers to your notions, or to alter their whole way of thinking in a short stay among them, is indeed making a toil of a pleasure, and enemies of those who may be inclined to be friends.

CCCLXVII. In some situations, if you say nothing you are called dull; if you talk, you are thought impertinent or arrogant. It is hard to know what to do in this case. The question seems to be whether your vanity or your prudence predominates.

CCCLXVIII. One has sometimes no other way of escaping from a sense of insignificance but by offending the self-love of others. We should recollect, however, that good manners are indispensable at all times and places, whereas no one is bound to make a figure at the expense of propriety.

CCCLXIX. People sometimes complain that you do not talk, when they have not given you an opportunity to utter a word for a whole evening. The real ground of disappointment has been that you have not shown a sufficient degree of attention to what they have said.

CCCLXX. I can listen with patience to the dullest or emptiest companion in the world, if he does not require me to do anything more than listen.

CCCLXXI. Wit is the rarest quality to be met with among people of education, and the most common among the uneducated.

CCCLXXII. Are we to infer from this that wit is a vulgar faculty, or that people of education are proportionably deficient in liveliness and spirit?

CCCLXXIII. We seldom hear and seldomer make a witty remark: yet we read nothing else in Congreve's plays.

CCCLXXIV. Those who object to wit are envious of it.

CCCLXXV. The persons who make the greatest outcry against bad puns are the very same who also find fault with good ones. A bad pun at least generally leads to a wise remark—*that it is a bad one.*

CCCLXXVI. A grave blockhead should always go about with a lively one: they show one another off to the best advantage.

CCCLXXVII. A lively blockhead in company is a

public benefit. Silence or dullness by the side of folly looks like wisdom.

CCCLXXVIII. It is not easy to write essays like Montaigne, nor maxims in the manner of the Duc de la Rochefoucauld.

CCCLXXIX. The most perfect style of writing may be that which treats strictly and methodically of a given subject; the most amusing (if not the most instructive) is that which mixes up the personal character of the author with general reflections.

CCCLXXX. The seat of knowledge is in the head; of wisdom, in the heart. We are sure to judge wrong if we do not feel right.

CCCLXXXI. He who exercises a constant independence of spirit, and yet seldom gives offence by the freedom of his opinions, may be presumed to have a well-regulated mind.

CCCLXXXII. There are those who never offend by never speaking their minds; as there are others who blurt out a thousand exceptionable things without intending it, and because they are actuated by no feelings of personal enmity towards any one.

CCCLXXXIII. Cowardice is not synonymous with prudence. It often happens that the better part of discretion is valour.

CCCLXXXIV. Mental cowards are afraid of expressing a strong opinion, or of striking hard, lest the blow should be retaliated. They throw themselves on the forbearance of their antagonists, and hope for impunity in their insignificance.

CCCLXXXV. No one ever gained a good word from friend or foe, from man or woman, by want of spirit.

The public know how to distinguish between a contempt for themselves and the fear of an adversary.

CCCLXXXVI. Never be afraid of attacking a bully.

CCCLXXXVII. An honest man speaks truth, *though* it may give offence ; a vain man, *in order that* it may.

CCCLXXXVIII. Those only deserve a monument—who do not need one—that is, who have raised themselves a monument in the minds and memories of men.

CCCLXXXIX. Fame is the inheritance, not of the dead, but of the living. It is we who look back with lofty pride to the great names of antiquity, who drink of that flood of glory as of a river, and refresh our wings in it for future flight.

CCCXC. The inhabitant of a metropolis is apt to think this circumstance alone gives him a decided superiority over every one else, and does not improve that natural advantage so much as he ought.

CCCXCI. A true-bred Cockney fancies his having been born in London is a receipt in full for every other species of merit : he belongs, in his own opinion, to a privileged class.

CCCXCII. The number of objects we see from living in a large city amuses the mind like a perpetual raree-show, without supplying it with any ideas. The understanding thus becomes habitually mechanical and superficial.

CCCXCIII. In proportion to the number of persons we see, we forget that we know less of mankind.

CCCXCIV. Pertness and conceit are the characteristics of a true Cockney. He feels little respect for the greatest things, from the opportunity of seeing them often and without trouble ; and at the same time he entertains a

high opinion of himself from his familiarity with them. He who has seen all the great actors, the great public characters, the chief public buildings, and the other wonders of the metropolis, thinks less of them from this circumstance; but conceives a prodigious contempt for all those who have not seen what he has.

CCCXCV. The confined air of a metropolis is hurtful to the minds and bodies of those who have never lived out of it. It is impure, stagnant, without breathing-space to allow a larger view of ourselves or others; and gives birth to a puny, sickly, unwholesome, and degenerate race of beings.

CCCXCVI. Those who, from a constant change and dissipation of outward objects, have not a moment's leisure left for their own thoughts, can feel no respect for themselves, and learn little consideration for humanity.

CCCXCVII. Profound hypocrisy is inconsistent with vanity, for the last would betray our designs by some premature triumph. Indeed, vanity implies a sympathy with others, and consummate hypocrisy is built on a total want of it.

CCCXCVIII. A hypocrite despises those whom he deceives, but has no respect for himself. He would make a dupe of himself too, if he could.

CCCXCIX. There is a degree of selfishness so complete that it does not feel the natural emotions of resentment, contempt, &c., against those who have done all they could to provoke them. Everything but itself is a matter of perfect indifference to it. It feels towards others no more than if they were of a different species; and inflicts torture or imparts delight, itself unmoved and immovable.

CCCC. Egotism is an infirmity that perpetually grows

upon a man, till at last he cannot bear to think of anything but himself, or even to suppose that others do.

CCCCI. He will never have true friends who is afraid of making enemies.

CCCCII. The way to procure insults is to submit to them. A man meets with no more respect than he exacts.

CCCCIII. What puts the baseness of mankind in the strongest point of view is, that they avoid those who are in misfortune, instead of countenancing or assisting them. They anticipate the increased demand on their sympathy or bounty, and escape from it as from a falling house.

CCCCIV. Death puts an end to rivalry and competition. The dead can boast no advantage over us, nor can we triumph over them.

CCCCV. We judge of an author by the quality, not the quantity, of his productions. Unless we add as much to our reputation by a second attempt as we did by our first, we disappoint expectation, and lose ground with the public. Those therefore who have done the least have often the greatest reputation. The author of 'Waverley' has not risen in public estimation by the extreme voluminousness of his writings: for it seems as if that which is done so continually could not be very difficult to do, and that there is some trick or *knack* in it. The miracle ceases with the repetition. The 'Pleasures of Hope' and the 'Pleasures of Memory,' on the contrary, stand alone and increase in value, because they seem unrivalled and inimitable, even by the authors themselves. An economy of expenditure is the way to grow rich in fame, as well as in other pursuits.

CCCCVI. It is better to drink of deep griefs than to taste shallow pleasures.

CCCCVII. Those who can command themselves command others.

CCCCVIII. A surfeit of admiration or friendship often ends in an indifference worse than hatred or contempt. It is not a lively perception of faults, but a sickly distaste to the very idea of the persons formerly esteemed, a palling of the imagination, or a conscious inertness and inability to revive certain feelings—a state from which the mind shrinks with greater repugnance than from any other.

CCCCIX. The last pleasure in life is the sense of discharging our duty.

CCCCX. Those people who are fond of giving trouble like to take it; just as those who pay no attention to the comforts of others are generally indifferent to their own. We are governed by sympathy; and the extent of our sympathy is determined by that of our sensibility.

CCCCXI. No one is idle who can do anything.

CCCCXII. Friendship is cemented by interest, vanity, or the want of amusement: it seldom implies esteem, or even mutual regard.

CCCCXIII. Some persons make promises for the pleasure of breaking them.

CCCCXIV. Praise is no match for blame and obloquy; for, were the scales even, the malice of mankind would throw in the casting-weight.

CCCCXV. The safest kind of praise is to foretell that another will become great in some particular way. It has the greatest show of magnanimity, and the least of it in reality. We are not jealous of dormant merit, which nobody recognises but ourselves, and which, in proportion as it developes itself, demonstrates our sagacity. If our

prediction fails it is forgotten, and if it proves true we may then set up for prophets.

CCCCXVI. Men of genius do not excel in any profession because they labour in it, but they labour in it because they excel.

CCCCXVII. Vice is man's nature: virtue is a habit—or a mask.

CCCCXVIII. The foregoing maxim shows the difference between truth and sarcasm.

CCCCXIX. Exalted station precludes even the exercise of natural affection, much more of common humanity.

CCCCXX. We for the most part strive to regulate our actions, not so much by conscience or reason, as by the opinion of the world. But by "the world" we mean those who entertain an opinion about us. Now this circle varies exceedingly, but never expresses more than a part. In senates, in camps, in town, in country, in courts, in a prison, a man's vices and virtues are weighed in a separate scale by those who know him, and who have similar feelings and pursuits. We care about no other opinion. There is a moral horizon which bounds our view, and beyond which the rest is air. The public is divided into a number of distinct jurisdictions for different claims; and posterity is but a name, even to those who sometimes dream of it.

CCCCXXI. We can bear to be deprived of everything but our self-conceit.

CCCCXXII. Those who are fond of setting things to-rights have no great objection to seeing them wrong. There is often a good deal of spleen at the bottom of benevolence.

CCCCXXIII. The reputation of science, which ought

to be the most lasting, as synonymous with truth, is often the least so. One discovery supersedes another; and the progress of light throws the past into obscurity. What has become of the Blacks, the Lavoisiers, the Priestleys, in chemistry? In political economy, Adam Smith is laid on the shelf, and Davenant and De Witt have given place to the Says, the Ricardos, the Malthuses, and the MacCullochs. These persons are happy in one respect: they have a sovereign contempt for all who have gone before them, and never dream of those who are to come after them and usurp their place. When any set of men think theirs the only science worth studying, and themselves the only infallible persons in it, it is a sign how frail the traces are of past excellence in it, and how little connection it has with the general affairs of human life. In proportion to the profundity of any inquiry is its futility. The most important and lasting truths are the most obvious ones. Nature cheats us with her mysteries, one after another, like a juggler with his tricks, but shows us her plain honest face without our paying for it. The understanding only blunders more or less in trying to find out what things are in themselves: the heart judges at once of its own feelings and impressions; and these are true and the same.

CCCCXXIV. Scholastic divinity was of use in its day, by affording exercise to the mind of man. Astrology, and the finding-out the philosopher's stone, answered the same purpose. If we had not something to doubt, to dispute and quarrel about, we should be at a loss what to do with our time.

CCCCXXV. The multitude, who require to be led, still hate their leaders.

CCCCXXVI. It has been said that any man may have any woman.

CCCCXXVII. Many people are infatuated with ill-success, and reduced to despair by a lucky turn in their favour. While all goes well they are like fish out of water. They have no confidence or sympathy with their good-fortune, and look upon it as a momentary delusion. Let a doubt be thrown on the question, and they begin to be full of lively apprehensions again; let all their hopes vanish, and they feel themselves on firm ground once more. From want of spirit or of habit, their imaginations cannot rise from the low ground of humility, cannot reflect the gay flaunting colours of the rainbow, flag and droop into despondency, and can neither indulge the expectation nor employ the means of success. Even when it is within their reach they dare not lay hands upon it, and shrink from unlooked-for prosperity as something of which they are ashamed and unworthy. The class of croakers here spoken of are less delighted at other people's misfortunes than at their own. Querulous complaints and anticipations of failure are the food on which they live, and they at last acquire a passion for that which is the favourite subject of their thoughts and conversation.

CCCCXXVIII. There are some persons who never succeed, from being too indolent to undertake anything; and others who regularly fail, because the instant they find success in their power, they grow indifferent and give over the attempt.

CCCCXXIX. To be remembered after we are dead is but a poor recompense for being treated with contempt while we are living.

CCCCXXX. Mankind are so ready to bestow their admiration on the dead because the latter do not hear it, or because it gives no pleasure to the objects of it. Even fame is the offspring of envy.

CCCCXXXI. Truth is not one, but many; and an observation may be true in itself that contradicts another equally true, according to the point of view from which we contemplate the subject.

CCCCXXXII. Much intellect is not an advantage in courtship. General topics interfere with particular attentions. A man, to be successful in love, should think only of himself and his mistress. Rochefoucauld observes that lovers are never tired of each other's company, because they are always talking of themselves.

CCCCXXXIII. The best kind of oratory or argument is not that which is most likely to succeed with any particular person. In the latter case we must avail ourselves of our knowledge of individual circumstances and character: in the former we must be guided by general rules and calculations.

CCCCXXXIV. The picture of 'The Misers,' by Quintin Matsys, seems to proceed upon a wrong idea. It represents two persons of this description engaged and delighted with the mutual contemplation of their wealth. But avarice is not a social passion; and the true miser should retire into his cell to gloat over his treasures alone, without sympathy or observation.

COMMONPLACES.¹

I. THE art of life is to know how to enjoy a little and to endure much.

II. Liberty is the only true riches: of all the rest we are at once the masters and the slaves.

III. Do I not feel this from the least shadow of restraint, of obligation, of dependence? Why then do I complain? I have had nothing to do all my life but to think, and have enjoyed the objects of thought, the sense of truth and beauty, in perfect integrity of soul. No one has said to me, "Believe this, do that, say what we would have you;" no one has come between me and my freewill. I have breathed the very air of truth and independence. Compared with this unbiassed, uncontrolled possession of the universe of thought and nature, what I have wanted is light in the balance, and hardly claims the tribute of a sigh. O Liberty! what a mistress art thou! Have I not enjoyed thee as a bride, and drunk thy spirit as of a wine-cup?—and will yet do so to my latest breath.

IV. But is not liberty dangerous, and selfwill excessive? I do not think so: for those who are not governed by their own feelings are led away by prejudice

¹ Now first republished from the 'Literary Examiner,' 1823, pp. 156-378.—ED.

and interest ; and reason is a safer guide than opinion—liberty a nobler one than fear.

V. Do I see a Claude? What is there to prevent me from fixing my eye, my heart, my understanding, upon it? What sophist shall deter me from thinking it fine? What is there to make me afraid of expressing what I think? I enter into all its truth and beauty. I wonder over it, I detect each hidden grace, I revel and luxuriate in it, without any doubts or misgivings. Is not this to be master of it and of myself? But is the picture mine? No—oh! yes, ten times over!

VI. That thing, a lie, has never come near my soul. I know not what it is, to fear to think, or to say what I think.

VII. I am choked, pent-up, in any other atmosphere but this. I cannot imagine how kings and courtiers contrive to exist. I could no more live without daring to speak, to look, to feel what I thought, than I could hold in my breath for any length of time. Nor could I bear to debar others of this privilege. Were it not that the great world play the part of slaves themselves, they would hate to be surrounded with nothing but slaves, and to see meanness and hypocrisy crawling before them, as much as we do to see a spider crawling in our path.

VIII. I never knew what it was to feel like a footman. How many lords-in-waiting can say as much?

IX. When I consider how little difference there is in mankind (either in body or mind), I cannot help being astonished at the airs some people give themselves.

X. I am proud up to the point of equality: everything above or below that appears to me arrant impertinence or abject meanness.

XI. The ignorant and vulgar think that a man wants

spirit if he does not insult and triumph over them : this is a great mistake.

XII. For a man to be a coxcomb shows a want of imagination. No one will ever pride himself on his beauty who has studied the head of the Antinous, or be in danger of running into the excess of the fashion who has any knowledge of the Antique. The ideal is incompatible with personal vanity.

XIII. A scholar is like a book written in a dead language : it is not every one that can read in it.

XIV. Just as much as we see in others we have in ourselves.

XV. A painter gives only his own character in a portrait—whether grave or gay, gross or refined, wise or foolish. Even in copying a head, there is some difficulty in making the features unlike our own. A person with a low forehead or a short chin puts a constraint upon himself in painting a high forehead or a long chin. So much has sympathy to do with the operations both of the eye and the hand, with observation and practice.

XVI. People at a play hiss an unsuccessful author or actor, as if the latter had committed some heinous crime : he has committed the greatest crime, that of setting up a superiority over us which he has failed to make good.

XVII. The rich, who do nothing themselves, represent idleness as the greatest crime. They have reason : it is necessary that some one should do something.

XVIII. What a pity that kings and great men do not write books instead of mere authors ! What superior views they must have of things, and how the world would be benefited by the communication !

XIX. The greatest proof of superiority is to bear with impertinence.

XX. No truly great man ever thought himself so.

XXI. Every man, in judging of himself, is his own contemporary.

XXII. Abuse is an indirect species of homage.

XXIII. From the height from which the great look down on the world all the rest of mankind seem equal.

XXIV. It is a bad style that requires frequent breaks and marks of admiration.

XXV. It happens in conversation as in different games: one person seems to excel till another does better, and we then think no more of the first.

XXVI. Those who can keep secrets have no curiosity. We only wish to gain knowledge, that we may impart it.

XXVII. Genius is a native to the soil where it grows—is fed by the air, and warmed by the sun; and is not a hothouse plant or an exotic.

XXVIII. All truly great works of art are national in their character and origin.

XXIX. People are distinguished less by a genius for any particular thing than by a peculiar tone and manner of feeling and thinking, whatever be the subject. The same qualities of mind or characteristic excellence that a man shows in one art he would probably have displayed in any other. I have heard Mr. Northcote say that he thought Sir Joshua Reynolds would have written excellent genteel comedies. His 'Discourses' certainly are bland and amiable (rather than striking or original), like his pictures.

XXX. The same kind of excellence may be observed

to prevail in different arts at the same period of time, as characteristic of the spirit of the age. Fielding and Hogarth were contemporaries.

XXXI. There is an analogy in the style of certain authors to certain professions. One writes like a lawyer; it seems as if another would have made an eminent physician. Mandeville said of Addison that he was "a parson in a tie-wig;" and there is something in 'The Spectator' to justify this description of him.

XXXII. Salvator Rosa paints like a soldier; Nicholas Poussin like a professor at a university; Guido like a finished gentleman; Parmegiano with something of the air of a dancing-master. Alas! Guido was a gamester and a madman, and Parmegiano a searcher after the philosopher's stone! One of the happiest ideas in modern criticism was that of designating different living poets by the cups Apollo gives them to drink out of: thus Wordsworth is made to drink out of a wooden bowl, Lord Byron out of a skull chased with silver, &c.

XXXIII. Extreme impatience and irritability are often combined with a corresponding degree of indifference and indolence. When the eagerness of pursuit or the violence of opposition ceases, nothing is left to interest the mind that has been once accustomed to a state of morbid excitement.

XXXIV. Artists and other studious professions are not happy, for this reason: they cannot enjoy mental repose. A state of lassitude and languor succeeds to that of overstrained anxious exertion.

XXXV. It is the custom at present to exclude all but scientific and mechanical subjects from our fashionable public institutions, lest any allusions to popular sentiments or the cause of humanity should by chance

creep in, to the great annoyance of the polite and well-informed part of the audience.

XXXVI. People had much rather be thought to look ill than old : because it is possible to recover from sickness, but there is no recovering from age.

XXXVII. I never knew but one person who had a passion for truth, and only one who had the same regard to the distinction between right and wrong that others have to their own interest.

XXXVIII. Women are the sport of caprice, the slaves of custom.

XXXIX. When men are not favourites with women, it is either from habits of vulgar debauchery, or from constitutional indifference ; or from an overstrained and pedantic idea of the sex, taken from books, and answering to nothing in real life.

XL. The object of books is to teach us ignorance ; that is, to throw a veil over nature, and persuade us that things are not what they are, but what the writer fancies or wishes them to be.

XLI. My little boy said the other day, " He could not tell what to do without a book to read ; he should wander about without knowing what to do with himself." So have I wandered about, till now, and, waking from the dream of books at last, don't know what to do with myself. My poor little fellow ! may'st thou dream long amidst thy darling books, and never wake !

XLII. Political truth is a libel—religious truth blasphemy.

XLIII. The greatest crime in the eyes of the world is to endeavour to instruct or amend it.

XLIV. Weighing remote consequences in the mind is like weighing the air in scales.

XLV. A hypocrite seems to be the only perfect character, since it embraces the extremes of what human nature *is*, and of what it *would be thought*.

XLVI. The Scotch understanding differs from the English as an encyclopædia does from a circulating library. An Englishman is contented to pick up a few odds-and-ends of knowledge: a Scotchman is master of every subject alike. Here each individual has a particular *hobby* and favourite bypath of his own: in Scotland learning is a common hack, which every one figures away with and uses at his pleasure.

XLVII. A misanthropic writer might be called *the Devil's amanuensis*.

XLVIII. To be a lord, a papist, and poor, is the most enviable distinction of humanity. There is all the pride and sense of independence, irritated and strengthened by being proscribed by power, and liable to be harassed by petty daily insults from every the meanest vassal. What a situation to make the mind recoil from the world upon itself, and to sit and brood in moody grandeur and disdain of soul over fallen splendours and present indignities! It is just the life I should like to have led.

XLIX. The tone of good society is marked by the absence of personalities. Among well-informed persons there are plenty of topics to discuss, without giving pain to any one present—without submitting to act the part of a *butt*, or of that still poorer creature, the wag that plays upon him.

L. Londoners complain of the dullness of the country, and country-people feel equally uncomfortable and at a loss what to do with themselves in town. The fault is neither in the town nor in the country: every one is naturally unsettled and dissatisfied without his usual resources and occupations, let them be *what* or *where* they may.

LI. Each rank in society despises that which is a step below it, and the highest looks down upon them all. To get rid of the impertinence of artificial pretensions we resort to nature at last. Kings, for this reason, are fond of low company, and lords marry actresses and barmaids. The Duke of York (not the present, but the late King's brother) was at a ball at Plymouth. He danced with a Miss Byron, a very pretty girl, daughter of the admiral of that name, and aunt to our poet. But there was a Mrs. Fanning present, who was a paragon of beauty. The Duke asked, "Who is she?" "A baker's daughter," was the answer. "I don't mean that; but what is she now?"—"A broker's wife." The lady did not perceive that to a prince of the blood there was little difference between a tradesman's wife and the daughter of a naval officer, but that the handsomest woman at a ball was an object of admiration, in spite of circumstances.

LII. It has been asked whether Lord Byron is a writer likely to live? Perhaps not: he has intensity of power, but wants distinctive character. In my opinion, Mr. Wordsworth is the only poet of the present day that is likely to live—*should he ever happen to be born*. But who will be the midwife to bring his works to light? It is a question whether Milton would have become popular without the help of Addison; nay, it is a question whether he is so, even with it.

LIII. An anecdote is told of General Wolfe,¹ that he was out with a party of friends in a boat the day before the Battle of Quebec. It was a beautiful summer evening, and the conversation turned to Gray's 'Elegy in a Country Churchyard,' which was just then published. Wolfe repeated the lines, "For who, to dumb forgetful-

¹ See Mackenzie's 'Life of Home,' the author of 'Douglas.'

ness a prey," &c., with enthusiasm, and said, "I would rather be the author of those lines than beat the French to-morrow!" He did beat the French and was himself killed the next day. Perhaps it was better to be capable of uttering a sentiment like this than to gain a battle or write a poem.

LIV. Authors, a short time since, set upon Government: Government have of late turned the tables on them, and set upon authors. In one respect, it must be confessed, the court tools have greatly the advantage of us: they can go all lengths in vulgar Billingsgate and abuse without being charged with vulgarity. They have the sanction of the Court, they plead the King's privilege. It is not to be supposed that anything inelegant or gross can be patronised at Carlton House. Everything about a place, even the convenience of an Admiralty secretary, must, one would think, be kept sweet and wholesome. But, instead of the least refinement and polish, they treat us with nothing but garbage. A lie and a nickname are their favourite figures of rhetoric—the alternate substitutes for wit and argument—the twin-supporters of the Bible and the Crown. They use us (it seems), contrary to the advice of Hamlet, "according to our own deserts, and not their own dignity." The dirt they fling sticks on their opponents, without soiling their own fingers. Loyalty is "the true fuller's earth, that takes out all stains." At all events, do or say what they can, it is they who are the *gentlemen*, and we who are the *blackguards*. If we were to call Sir Walter Scott a "Sawney" writer, or Mr. Croker "Jackey," it would be thought shocking, indecent, vulgar, and no one would look at our publication twice; yet on the Tory side the same thing passes for the height of sense and wit; and ladies of quality are delighted with the 'John Bull,' gentlemen read 'Blackwood,' and divines take in

the 'Quarterly.' There is Mr. William Mudford, of the 'Courier'—a vapid commonplace hack, pert and dull—but who would think of calling him by the diminutive of his Christian name? No! these are the extreme resources reserved for the *court classics*, who in the zeal of their loyalty are allowed to forget their manners. There is, in fact, nothing too mean for the genius of these writers, or too low for the taste of their employers.

LV. A Tory can rise no higher than *the assumption of a question*. If he relied on anything but custom and authority, he would cease to be a Tory. He has a prejudice in favour of certain *things*, and against certain *persons*: this is all he knows of the matter. He therefore gives you assertions for argument, and abuse for wit. If you ask a reason for his opinions, he calls you names; and if you ask why he does so, he proves that he is in the right, by repeating them a thousand times. A nickname with him is the test of truth. It vents his spleen, strengthens his own prejudices, and communicates them mechanically to his hearers.

LVI. When an elector of Hanover is made into a king of England, what does he become in the course of a century?—A George the Fourth!

LVII. If I were to give a toast at a loyal and patriotic meeting, it should be, "Down with the Stuarts all over the world!"

LVIII. The taste of the great in pictures is singular, but not unaccountable. The King is said to prefer the Dutch to the Italian school of painting; and if you hint your surprise at this, you are looked upon as a very Gothic and *outré* sort of person. You are told however, by way of consolation, "To be sure, there is Lord Carlisle likes an Italian picture—Mr. Holwell Carr likes an Italian picture—the Marquis of Stafford is fond of an

Italian picture—Sir George Beaumont likes an Italian picture.” These, notwithstanding, are regarded as quaint and daring exceptions to the established rule, and their preference is a species of *lèse-majesté* in the fine arts—as great an eccentricity and want of fashionable etiquette as if any gentleman or nobleman still preferred old claret to new, when the King is known to have changed his mind on this subject; or was guilty of the offence of dipping his forefinger and thumb in the middle of a snuffbox, instead of gradually approximating the contents to the edge of the box, according to the most approved models. One would imagine that the great and exalted in station would like lofty subjects in works of art, whereas they seem to have an exclusive predilection for the mean and mechanical. One would think those whose word is law would be pleased with the great and striking effects of the pencil:¹ on the contrary, they admire nothing but the little and elaborate. They have a fondness for cabinet or *furniture* pictures, and a proportionable antipathy to works of genius. Even arts with them must be servile to be tolerated. Perhaps the seeming contradiction may be thus explained: these persons are raised so high above the rest of the species, that the more violent and agitating pursuits of mankind appear to them like the turmoil of ants on a molehill. Nothing interests them but their own pride and self-importance. Our passions are to them an impertinence—an expression of high sentiment they rather shrink from as a ludicrous and upstart assumption of equality. They therefore like what glitters to the

¹ The Duke of Wellington, it is said, cannot enter into the merits of Raphael, but he admires “the spirit and fire of Tintoret.” I do not wonder at this bias. A sentiment, probably, never dawned upon his Grace’s mind; but he may be supposed to relish the dashing execution and *hit or miss* manner of the Venetian artist. O Raphael! well is it that it was one who did not understand thee that blundered upon the destruction of humanity!

eye, what is smooth to the touch ; but they shun, by an instinct of sovereign taste, whatever has a soul in it, and implies a *reciprocity* of feeling. The gods of the earth can have no interest in anything human ; they are cut off from all sympathy with the "bosoms and businesses of men." Instead of requiring to be wound up beyond their habitual feeling of stately dignity, they wish to have the springs of overstrained pretension let down, to be relaxed with "trifles light as air," to be amused with the familiar and frivolous, and to have the world appear a scene of *still life*, except as they disturb it. The little in thought and internal sentiment is a necessary relief and set-off to the oppressive sense of external magnificence. Hence kings babble and repeat they know not what. A childish dotage often accompanies the consciousness of absolute power. Repose is somewhere necessary, and the soul sleeps while the senses gloat around. Besides, the mechanical and high-finished style of art may be considered as something *done to order*. It is a task, to be executed more or less perfectly, according to the price given and the industry of the artist. We stand by, as it were, see the work done, insist upon a greater degree of neatness and accuracy, and exercise a sort of petty jealous jurisdiction over each particular. We are judges of the minuteness of the details, and though ever so nicely executed, as they give us no ideas beyond what we had before, we do not feel humbled in the comparison. The artisan scarcely rises into the artist, and the name of genius is degraded rather than exalted in his person. The performance is so far ours that we have paid for it, and the highest price is all that is necessary to produce the highest finishing. But it is not so in works of genius and imagination. Their price is above rubies. The inspiration of the Muse comes not with the fiat of a monarch, with the donation of a patron ; and therefore the great turn with disgust or effeminate

indifference from the mighty masters of the Italian school because such works baffle and confound their self-will, and make them feel that there is something in the mind of man which they can neither give nor take away:

“Quam nihil ad tuum, Papinane, ingenium!”

LIX. The style of conversation in request in courts proceeds much upon the same principle. It is low, and it is little. I have known a few persons who have had access to the presence (and who might be supposed to catch what they could of the tone of royalty at second-hand, bating the dignity—God knows there was nothing of that!) and I should say they were the *highest finishers* in this respect I ever met with. No circumstance escaped them; they worked out all the details (whether to the purpose or not) like a facsimile; they mimicked everything, explained everything; the story was not *told*, but acted over again. It is true, there were no *grandes pensées*; there was a complete truce with all thought and reflection; but they were everlasting dealers in matters of fact, and there was no end of their minute prolixity. One must suppose this mode pleased their betters, or was copied from them. Dogberry's declaration, “Were I as tedious as a king I could find in my heart to bestow it all upon your worship,” is not so much a blunder of the clown's as a sarcasm of the poet's. Are we to account for the effect (as before) from supposing that their overstrained attention to great things makes them seek for a change in little ones?—or that their idea of themselves as raised above every one else is confirmed by dwelling on the meanest and most insignificant objects?—or is it that, from their ignorance and seclusion from the world, everything is alike new and wonderful to them? Or that, dreading the insincerity of those about them, they exact an extraordinary degree of trifling accuracy, and require every one to tell a story

as if he was giving evidence on oath before a court of justice? West said that the late King used to get him up into a corner, and fairly put his hands before him so that he could not get away, till he had got every particular out of him relating to the affairs of the Royal Academy. This weakness in the mind of kings has been well insisted on by Peter Pindar: it is of course like one of the spots in the sun.

LX. I hate to be near the sea, and to hear it roaring and raging like a wild beast in its den. It puts me in mind of the everlasting efforts of the human mind, struggling to be free and ending just where it began.

LXI. Happy are they that can say with Timon, "I am Misanthropos, and hate mankind!" They can never be at a loss for subjects to exercise their spleen upon: their sources of satisfaction must hold out while the world stands. Those who do not pity others assuredly need not envy them; if they take pleasure in the distresses of their fellow-creatures, they have their wish. Let them cast an eye on that long disease, human life, on that villainous compound, human nature, and glut their malice. There is madness, there is idiotcy, there is sickness, old age, and death; there is the cripple, the blind, and the deaf; there is the deformed in body, the weak in mind, the prisoner and the gaoler, the beggar and the dwarf; there is poverty, labour, pain, ignominy; there is riches, pride, griping avarice, bloated luxury; there is the agony of suffering or the lassitude of ennui; there is the sickness of the heart from hope delayed, and the worse and more intolerable sickness from hope attained; there is the gout, the stone, the plague—cold, fever, thirst, and nakedness—shipwreck, famine, fire, and the sword: all are instruments of human fate, and pamper the dignity of human nature. There are the racking pains of jealousy, remorse, and anguish—the lingering

ones of disappointment, sorrow, and regret; there is the consciousness of unmerited hopeless obscurity, and "the cruel sunshine thrown by fortune on a fool;" there is unrequited love, and—marriage; there is the coquette, slighting others and slighted in her turn—the jilt, the antiquated prude, the brutal husband, and the commonplace wife; there are vows of celibacy and lost character; there is the cabal, the idle gossiping, the churlishness, and dullness of the country, the heartlessness and profligacy of great cities; there are the listless days, the sleepless nights, the having too much or too little to do; years spent in vain in a pursuit, or, if successful, the having to leave it at last; there are the jealousies of different professions among themselves or of each other—lawyers, divines, physicians, artists; the contempt of the more thriving for the less fortunate, and the hatred and heartburnings with which it is repaid; there is hypocrisy, oppression, falsehood, treachery, cowardice, selfishness, meanness; the luck of fools, the respectability of knaves; the cant of piety, loyalty, and humanity; the lamentations of West India planters over the ingratitude of their negro slaves, and Louis XVIII. resigning to God and the Mother of all Saints the credit of the success of his arms; there are sects and parties, kings and their subjects, queens and common-councilmen, speeches in Parliament; plays and actors *damned*, or successful for a time, and then laid on the shelf and heard of no more; quacks at all corners, mountebanks in the pulpit, and drones in the state; peace and war, treaties of offence and defence, conspiracies, revolutions, Holy Alliances; the sudden death of Lord Castlereagh, and the oratory of his successor, Mr. Canning, hid for the present, like the moon "in its vacant interlunar cave;" and Ferdinand and his paper kites, and the Cortes, unconscious of the rebel maxim, "Catch a king and kill a king;" and Slop, raving at the bloodthirsty victims of courtly assassins,

and whetting mild daggers for patriot throats; and Mr. Croker's *cheat-the-gallows face* in the 'Quarterly,' and Lord Wellington's *heart* in the cause of Spanish liberty, and a beloved monarch, retired amid all this to shady solitude "to play with wisdom." A good hater may here find wherewithal to feed the largest spleen, and swell it, even to bursting!

LXII. Happiness, like mocking, is catching. At least, none but those who are happy in themselves can make others so. No wit, no understanding, neither riches nor beauty, can communicate this feeling; the happy alone can make happy. Love and joy are twins, or born of each other.

LXIII. No one knows when he is safe from ridicule.

LXIV. Is it a misfortune or a happiness that we so often like the faults of one we love better than the virtues of any other woman?—that we like her refusals better than all other favours?—that we like her love of others better than any one else's love of us?

LXV. If a man were refused by a woman a thousand times and he really loved her, he would still think that at the bottom of her heart she preferred him to every one else. Nor is this wonderful, when we consider that all passion is a species of madness, and that the feeling in the mind towards the beloved object is the most amiable and delightful thing in the world? Our love to her is heavenly, and so (the heart whispers us) must hers be to us; though it were buried at the bottom of the sea—nay, from the tomb, our self-love would revive it. We never can persuade ourselves that a mistress cares nothing about us till we no longer care about her. No! It is certain that there is nothing truly deserving of love but love, and

"In spite of pride, in erring reason's spite,"

we still believe in the justice of the blind god.

LXVI. It would be easy to forget a misplaced attachment, but that we do not like to acknowledge ourselves in the wrong.

LXVII. A great mind is one that can forget or look beyond itself.

LXVIII. The grand scenes of nature are more adapted for occasional visits than for constant residence. They are the temples of the goddess, not fit dwellings for her worshippers. Familiarity breeds contempt or indifference; and it is better to connect this feeling with the petty and trivial than with the lofty and sublime. Besides, it is unnecessary to run the risk in the latter case. One chief advantage of the great and magnificent objects of nature is, that they stamp their image on the mind for ever; the blow need not be repeated to have the desired effect. We take them with us wherever we go—we have but to think of them and they appear; and at the distance of half a life, or of the circumference of the globe, we unlock the springs of memory, and the tall mountain shoots into the sky, the lake expands its bosom, and the cataract rushes from the pine-clad rock. The bold majestic outline is all that there is to discover in such situations, and this we can always remember. In more cultivated and artificial scenes we may observe a thousand hedgerow beauties with curious eye, or pluck the tender flower beneath our feet, while Skiddaw hovers round our heads and the echoes of Helvellyn thunder in our hearts.

LXIX. I should always choose to live within reach of a fine prospect, rather than to see one from my windows. A number of romantic distant objects staring in upon one (uncalled for) tantalise the imagination, and tempt the truant feet; whereas, at home, I wish to feel satisfied where I am, and sheltered from the world.

LXX. Mr. Martin's picture of 'Adam and Eve in Paradise' has this capital defect, that there is no *repose* in it. You see two insignificant naked figures, and a preposterous architectural landscape, like a range of buildings, overlooking them. They might as well be represented sleeping on the top of the pinnacle of the Temple, with the world and all the glories thereof spread out before them. They ought to have been painted imparadised in one another's arms, shut up in measureless content, with Eden's choicest bowers closing round them, and Nature stooping to clothe them with vernal flowers. Nothing could be too retired, too voluptuous, too sacred from day's garish eye; instead of which you have a gaudy panoramic view, a glittering barren waste, a triple row of clouds, of rocks and mountains, piled one upon the other—as if the imagination already bent its idle gaze over that wide world which was so soon to be their place of exile, and the aching restless spirit of the artist was occupied in building a stately prison for our first parents, instead of decking their bridal bed and wrapping them in a shortlived dream of bliss.

LXXI. The mind tires of variety, but becomes reconciled to uniformity. Change produces a restless habit, a love of further change; the recurrence of the same objects conduces to repose and to content. My uncle Toby's bowling-green bounded his harmless ambition: Buonaparte, not contented with France and Europe for a pleasure-ground, wanted to have Russia for an ice-house; and Alexander, at the farthest side of India, wept for new worlds to conquer. If we let our thoughts wander abroad, there is no end to fantastic projects, to the craving after novelty, to fickleness, and disappointment: if we confine them at home, peace may find them there. Mr. Horne Tooke used to contend that all tendency to excess was voluntary in the mind; the wants of nature kept

within a certain limit. Even if a person adhered to a regular number of cups of tea or glasses of wine, he did not feel tempted to exceed this number : but if he once went beyond his usual allowance, the desire to transgress increased with its indulgence, and the artificial appetite was proportioned to the artificial stimulus. It has been remarked that in the tropical climates, where there is no difference of seasons, time passes away on smoother and swifter pinions, "the earth spins round on its soft axle," unnoticed, unregretted, and life wears out soonest and best in sequestered privacy, within the round of a few simple unenvied enjoyments.

LXXII. The retailing of a set of anecdotes is not conversation. A story admits of no answer ; a remark or an opinion naturally calls forth another, and leads to as many different views of a subject as there are minds in company. An officer in a Scotch marching regiment has always a number of very edifying anecdotes to communicate ; but unless you are of the same mess or the same clan, you are necessarily sent to Coventry. Prosing mechanical narrations of this kind are tedious, as well as tinctured with egotism : if they are set off with a brilliant manner, with mimicry and action, they become theatrical. The speaker is a kind of Mr. Mathews at home, and the audience are more or less delighted and amused with the exhibition ; but there is an end of society, and you no more think of interrupting a confirmed story-teller than you would of interrupting a favourite actor on the stage.

LXXIII. The Queen's trial gave a deathblow to the hopes of all reflecting persons with respect to the springs and issues of public spirit and opinion. It was the only question I ever knew that excited a thorough popular feeling. It struck its roots into the heart of the nation ; it took possession of every house or cottage in the

kingdom; man, woman, and child took part in it, as if it had been their own concern. Business was laid aside for it; people forgot their pleasures, even their meals were neglected; nothing was thought off but the fate of the Queen's trial. The arrival of the 'Times' newspaper was looked upon as an event in every village; the mails hardly travelled fast enough, and he who had the latest intelligence in his pocket was considered as the happiest of mortals. It kept the town in a ferment for several weeks; it agitated the country to the remotest corner. It spread like wildfire over the kingdom; the public mind was electrical. So it should be on other occasions; it was only so on this. An individual may be oppressed, a nation may be trampled upon, mankind may be threatened with annihilation of their rights and the threat enforced; and not a finger is raised, not a heart sinks, not a pulse beats quicker in the public or private quarrel; a momentary burst of vain indignation is heard, dies away, and is forgotten. Truth has no echo, but folly and imposture have a thousand reverberations in the hollowness of the human heart. At the very time when all England went mad about the poor Queen, a man of the name of Bruce was sent to Botany Bay for having spoken to another who was convicted of sedition, and no notice was taken of it. We have seen what has been done in Spain, and earth does not roll its billows over the heads of tyrants, to bury them in a common grave. What was it then in the Queen's cause that stirred this mighty "coil and pudder" in the breast? Was it the love of truth, of justice, of liberty? No such thing! Her case was at best doubtful, and she had only suffered the loss of privileges peculiar to herself. But she was a queen, she was a woman, and a *thorn in the King's side*. There was the cant of loyalty, the cant of gallantry, and the cant of freedom, mixed altogether in delightful and inextricable confusion. She was a queen

—all the loyal and well-bred bowed to the name; she was a wife—all the women took the alarm; she was at variance with the lawful sovereign—all the “free and independent electors” of Westminster and London were up in arms. The Queen’s name was a tower of strength, which these persons had hitherto wanted and were glad to catch at. Though a daughter of the Duke of Brunswick, though a granddaughter of George III., yet, because she was separated from her husband, she must be hand-and-glove with the people—the wretched, helpless, doating, credulous, meddling people, who are always ready to lick the hands not just then raised to shed their blood or rivet on their chains. There was here an idol to pull down and an idol to set up. There was an imperial title and meretricious frontispiece to the spurious volume of Liberty. There was the mock majesty of an empty throne behind the real one, and the impertinence of mankind was interested to thrust the unwelcome claimant into it. City patriots stood a chance of becoming liege men and true to a queen—of their own choosing. The spirit of faction was half merged in the spirit of servility. There was a rag-fair of royalty; every one carried his own paints and patches into the presence of the new Lady of Loretto; there was a sense of homage due, of services and countenance bestowed on majesty. This popular farce had all the charm of *private theatricals*. The Court of St. James’s was nothing to the *make-believe* Court at Kew. The King was a sort of *state-fixture*; but the Queen Consort, the favourite of the rabble, was herself one of them. The presence-doors were flung open, and every black-guard and blockhead rushed in. What an opportunity to see, to hear, to touch a queen! To gratify the itch of loyalty by coming in contact with the person of the sovereign was a privilege reserved for a few; but to receive this favour at the Queen’s hands was a distinction

common to all. All the trades of London came to kiss the Queen's hand; Presbyterian parsons knelt to kiss the hand of their royal mistress; the daughters of country curates and of city knights sipped loyalty from the back of her Majesty's hand. Radicals and Reformers contended who should be first in paying homage to the Queen; there was a race for precedence, quarrelling and pulling of caps, between the wives of distinguished orators and caricaturists, at the very footsteps of the throne; while Mr. Alderman Wood,

“A gentle husher, Vanity by name,”

strove to keep the peace, and vindicate the character of civic dames for courtly manners. Mr. Place, Mr. Hone, Mr. Thelwall, Sir Richard Phillips, kissed her Majesty's hand; Mr. Cobbett alone was not invited¹—it was thought he might *bite*. What a pity that it was before Mr. Irving's time, or he might have thrown in the casting-weight of his perfect mind and body, and *ousted* both the King and Bergami! In the midst of all this, his Majesty went to the play, bowed to the boxes, the pit, the gallery, and to the *actors*; and you would suppose, in four days' time, that a whisper had never been uttered to imply that the King not only was not the most graceful man in his dominions, but the best of monarchs and of husbands. The Queen and her picnic parties were no more thought of. What a scene for history to laugh at!

LXXIV. A crowd was collected under the Horse Guards, and on inquiry I found it was to see the Duke of York come out. “What went they forth for to see?” They were some of the lowest and most wretched of the people, and it was perhaps the sense of contrast—a sense of which the great and mighty have always

¹ This is *bien trouvé*, but not quite correct.—ED.

availed themselves liberally, to cherish the enthusiasm of their admirers. It was also curiosity to see a name, a sound, that they had so often heard, reduced to an object of sight—a metaphysical and political abstraction actually coming out of a door with a ruddy face and a frock-coat. It was, in the first place, the Commander-in-Chief, and the commander of the troops at Dunkirk, the author of the love-letters to Mrs. Clark and of army circulars, the son of the King and presumptive heir to the Crown—there were all these contradictions embodied in the same person. “Oh, the wonderful works of nature!” as the Recruit in the play says on looking at the guinea which has just enlisted him. So we may say on looking at a king or a king’s brother. I once pointed out the Duke of York to a Scotchman. “Is that his Grace—I mean his Royal Highness?” said the native of the North, out of breath to acknowledge the title, and pay with his tongue the instinctive adulation which his heart felt.

LXXV. When Effie Deans becomes a fine lady, do we not look back with regret to the time when she was the poor faded lily of St. Leonards, the outcast and condemned prisoner? So, should the cause of liberty and mankind ever become triumphant instead of militant, may we not heave a sigh of regret over the past, and think that poor suffering human nature, with all its wrongs and insults, trodden into the earth like a vile weed, was a more interesting topic for reflection? We need not be much alarmed for the event, even if this should be so; for the way to Utopia is not “the primrose path of dalliance,” and, at the rate we have hitherto gone on, it must be many thousand years off.

LXXVI. Mankind are an incorrigible race. Give them but bugbears and idols, it is all that they ask; the distinctions of right and wrong, of truth and falsehood, of good and evil, are worse than indifferent to them.

LXXVII. The Devil was a great loss in the preternatural world. He was always something to fear and to hate; he supplied the antagonist powers of the imagination, and the arch of true religion hardly stands firm without him. Mr. Irving may perhaps bring him into fashion again.

LXXVIII. Perhaps the evils arising from excessive inequality in a State would be sufficiently obviated if property were divided equally among the surviving children. But it is said it would be impossible to make a law for this purpose under any circumstances or with any qualifications, because the least interference with the disposal of property would be striking at its existence, and at the very root of all property. And yet this objection is urged in those very countries where the law of primogeniture (intended to keep it in disproportionate masses, and setting aside the will of the testator altogether,) is established as an essential part of the law of the land. So blind is reason, where passion or prejudice intervenes!

LXXIX. Kings who set up for gods upon earth should be treated as madmen, which one half of them, or as idiots, which the other half, really are.

LXXX. Tyrants are at all times mad with the lust of power.

LXXXI. Reformers are naturally speculative people, and speculative people are effeminate and inactive. They brood over ideas, till realities become almost indifferent to them. They talk when they should act, and are distracted with nice doubts and distinctions, while the enemy is thundering at the gates and the bombshells are bursting at their feet. They hold up a paper constitution as their shield, which the sword pierces through, and drinks their heart's blood. They are cowards, too, at bottom, and dare not strike a decisive blow lest it

should be retaliated. While they merely prate of moderation and the public good, they think, if the worst comes to the worst, there may still be a chance of retreat for them, hoping to screen themselves behind their imbecility. They are not like their opponents, whose all is at stake, and who are urged on by instinctive fury and habitual cunning to defend it. The common good is too remote a speculation to call forth any violent passions or personal sacrifices, and if it should be lost it is as fine a topic as ever to harangue and lament about. Patriots are, by the constitution of their minds, poets; and an elegy on the fall of Liberty is as interesting to hear or to recite as an ode on its most triumphant success. They who let off Ferdinand the other day, confiding in the promises of a traitor and in the liberality of a despot, were greater hypocrites to themselves than he was.

LXXXII. In the late quarrel about liberty, upwards of five millions of men have been killed, and *one king!*

LXXXIII. The people (properly speaking) are not a herd of slaves just let loose, or else goaded on, like blind drudges, to execute the behests of their besotted task-masters; but the band of free citizens, taught to know their rights and prepared to exercise them.

LXXXIV. The people are the slaves of ignorance and custom; the friends of the people are the dupes of reason and humanity. Power stops at nothing but its own purposes.

LXXXV. The author of 'Waverley' observes: "In truth the Scottish peasantry are still infected with that rage for funeral ceremonial which once distinguished the grandees of the kingdom so much, that a sumptuary law was made by the Parliament of Scotland for the purpose of restraining it; and I have known many in the lowest stations who have denied themselves, not merely the

comforts but almost the necessaries of life, in order to save such a sum of money as might enable their surviving friends to bury them like Christians, as they termed it; nor could their faithful executors be prevailed upon, though equally necessitous, to turn to the use and maintenance of the living the money vainly wasted upon the interment of the dead.”—(‘*Antiquary*,’ vol. iv. p. 48.) If I were to attempt an explanation of the peculiar delight and pride which the Scotch are thus supposed to take in funeral ceremonies, I should say that, as inhabitants of wild and barren districts, they are more familiar with the face of nature than with the face of man, and easily turn to it as their place of rest and final home. There is little difference, in their imaginations, between treading the green mountain-turf and being laid beneath it. The world itself is but a living tomb to them. Their mode of subsistence is cold, hard, comfortless, bare of luxuries and of enjoyments, torpid, inured to privations and self-denial; and death seems to be its consummation and triumph, rather than its unwelcome end. Their life was a sort of struggle for a dreary existence, so that it relapses into the grave with joy and a feeling of exultation. The grey rock out of which their tomb is cut is a citadel against all assaults of the flesh and the spirit; the kindred earth that wraps the weather-beaten worn-out body is a soft and warm resting-place from the hardships it has had to encounter. It is no wonder, therefore, that the Scotch prepare for the due celebration of this event with the foresight characteristic of them, and that their friends consign them to the earth with becoming fortitude and costly ceremony. “*Man*,” says Sir Thomas Brown, though in quite a different spirit—“man is a noble animal, splendid in ashes and pompous in the grave; solemnising natiivities and deaths with equal lustre, nor omitting ceremonies of bravery, even in the infancy of his nature.” (See his ‘*Urn-Burial*.’)

LXXXVI. In 'The Heart of Mid-Lothian' (vol. iv. p. 13) we meet with the following reflections: "Perhaps one ought to be actually a Scotchman to conceive how ardently, under all distinctions of rank and situation, they feel their mutual connection with each other as natives of the same country. There are, I believe, more associations common to the inhabitants of a rude and wild than of a well-cultivated and fertile country; their ancestors have more seldom changed their place of residence; their mutual recollection of remarkable objects is more accurate; the high and the low are more interested in each other's welfare; the feelings of kindred and relationship are more widely extended; and, in a word, the bonds of patriotic affection, always honourable, even when a little too exclusively strained, have more influence on men's feelings and actions." Thus far our author, but without making much progress in the question he has started. "Via, Goodman Dull! thou hast spoken no word all this while," I might say, but I do not choose to say so, to the Great Unknown. There is an enumeration of particulars, slightly and collaterally connected with the subject, but, as "Douce David Deans" would say, "they do not touch the root of the matter." In fact, then, the mind more easily forms a strong and abstracted attachment to the soil (in which it was bred) in remote and barren regions, where few artificial objects or pursuits fritter away attention or divert it from its devotion to the naked charms of nature—(perhaps the privations, dangers, and loneliness incident to such situations also enhance the value and deepen the interest we take in them); and again, in a rude and scattered population, where there is a dearth and craving after general society, we naturally become more closely and permanently attached to those few persons with whom neighbourhood, or kindred, or a common cause, or similar habits or language, bring us into contact. Two English-

men meeting in the wilds of Arabia would instantly become friends, though they had never seen one another before, from the want of all other society and sympathy. So it is in the ruder and earlier stages of civilisation. This is what attaches the Highlander to his hill and to his clan; this is what attaches Scotchmen to their country and to one another. A Londoner, in his fondness for London, is distracted between the playhouses, the opera, the shops, the coffeehouses, the crowded streets, &c. An inhabitant of Edinburgh has none of these diversities to reconcile; he has but one idea in his head or in his mouth—that of the Calton Hill: an idea which is easily embraced, and which he never quits his hold of till something more substantial offers—a situation as porter in a warehouse, or as pimp to a great man.

TRIFLES LIGHT AS AIR.¹

I. THERE is no flattery so gross or extravagant but it will be acceptable. It leaves some sting of pleasure behind, since its very excess seems to imply that there must be some foundation for it. Tell the ugliest person in the world that he is the handsomest, the greatest fool that he is a wit, and he will believe and thank you. There is a possibility at least that you may be sincere. Even the sycophant's ironical laugh turns to a smile of self-complacency at our own fancied perfections.

II. There is no abuse so foul or unprovoked but some part of it will *stick*. Ill words break the charm of good deeds. Call a man names all the year round, and at the end of the year (for no other reason) his best friends will not care to mention his name. It is no pleasant reflection that a man has been accused, however unjustly, of a folly or a crime. We involuntarily associate words with things; and the imagination retains an unfavourable impression long after the understanding is disabused. Or, if we repel the charge and resent the injustice, this is making a toil of a pleasure, and our cowardice and indolence soon take part with the malice of mankind. The assailants are always the more courageous party. It degrades a man even to be subjected to undeserved reproach, for it seems as if without some flaw or blemish

¹ Now first re-published from the 'Atlas' newspaper, September the 27th and October the 11th, 1829.—Ed.

no one would dare to attack him ; so that the viler and more unprincipled the abuse, the lower it sinks, not him who offers, but him who is the object of it, in general estimation. If we see a man covered with mud we avoid him, without expressing the cause. The favourites of the public, like Cæsar's wife, must not be suspected ; and it is enough if we admire and bear witness to the superiority of another under the most favourable circumstances. To do this in spite of secret calumny and vulgar clamour is a pitch of generosity which the world has not arrived at.

III. A certain *manner* makes more conquests than either wit or beauty. Suppose a woman to have a graceful ease of deportment, and a mild self-possession pervading every look and tone of voice ; this exercises an immediate influence on a person of an opposite and irritable temperament—it calms and enchants him at once. It is like soft music entering the room. From that time he can only breathe in her presence, and to be torn from her is to be torn from himself for ever.

IV. Fame and popularity are disparate quantities, having no common measure. A poet or painter now living may be as great as any poet or painter that ever did live ; and if he be so, he will be so thought of by future ages, but he cannot by the present. Persons of overweening vanity and shortsighted ambition, who would forestall the need of fame, show themselves unworthy of it, for they reduce it to a level with the reputation they have already earned. They should surely leave something to look forward to. It is weighing dross against gold—comparing a meteor with the polar star. Lord Byron's narrowness or presumption in this respect was remarkable. What ! did he not hope to live two hundred years himself, that he should say it was merely a fashion to admire Milton and Shakspeare, as it was the fashion

to admire him? Those who compare Sir Walter Scott with Shakspeare do not know what they are doing. They may blunt the feeling with which we regard Shakspeare as an old and tried friend, though they cannot transfer it to Sir Walter Scott, who is, after, all but a new and dazzling acquaintance. To argue that there is no difference in the circumstances is not to put the author of 'Waverley' into actual possession of the reversion of fame, but to say that he shall never enjoy it, since it is no better than a chimera and an illusion. It is striking at the foundation of true and lasting renown, and overturning with impatient and thoughtless hands the proud pre-eminence, the golden seats and blest abodes, which the predestined heirs of immortality wait for beyond the tomb. The living are merely candidates (more or less successful) for popular applause: the *dead* are a religion, or they are nothing.

V. Persons who tell an artist that he is equal to Claude, or a writer that he is as great as Bacon, do not add to the satisfaction of their hearers, but pay themselves a left-handed compliment, by supposing that their judgment is equivalent to the suffrage of posterity.

VI. A French artist advised young beginners against being too fond of a variety of colours, which might do very well on a smaller scale, but when they came to paint a large picture they would find they had soon lavished all their resources. So superficial writers may deck out their barren round of commonplaces in the finest phrases imaginable; but those who are accustomed to *work out* a subject by dint of study must not use up their whole stock of eloquence at once; they must bring forward their most appropriate expressions as they approach nearer to the truth, and raise their style with their thoughts. A good general keeps his reserve, the *élite* of his troops, to charge at the critical moment.

VII. "Procrastination is the thief of time." It is singular that we are so often loth to begin what gives us great satisfaction in the progress, and what, after we have once begun it, we are as loth to leave off. The reason is, that the imagination is not excited till the first step is taken or the first blow struck. Before we begin a certain task we have little notion how we shall set about it, or how we shall proceed; it is like attempting something of which we have no knowledge, and which we feel we are incapable of doing. It is no wonder, therefore, that a strong repugnance accompanies this seeming inaptitude: it is having to *make bricks without straw*. But after the first effort is over, and we have turned our minds to the subject, one thing suggests another, our ideas pour in faster than we can use them, and we launch into the stream, which bears us on with ease and pleasure to ourselves. The painter who did not like to mix his colours or begin on a new canvas in the morning, sees the light close in upon him with unwilling eyes; and the essayist, though gravelled for a thought or at a loss for words at the outset of his labours, winds up with alacrity and spirit.

VIII. Conversation is like a game at tennis, or any other game of skill. A person shines in one company who makes no figure in another—just as a tolerably good cricketer, who might be an acquisition to a country club, would have his wicket struck down at the first bowl at Lord's Ground. The same person is frequently dull at one time and brilliant at another: sometimes those who are most silent at the beginning of an entertainment are most loquacious at the end. There is a *run in the luck* both in cards and conversation. Some people are good speakers but bad hearers: these are put out, unless they have all the talk to themselves. Some are best in a *tête-à-tête*, others in a mixed company. Some persons talk well on

a set subject, who can hardly answer a common question, still less pay a compliment or make a repartee. Conversation may be divided into the *personal* or the *didactic*: the one resembles the style of a lecture, the other that of a comedy. There are as many who fail in conversation from aiming at too high a standard of excellence, and wishing only to utter oracles or *jeux-d'esprit*, as there are who expose themselves from having no standard at all, and saying whatever comes into their heads. Pedants and gossips compose the largest class. Numbers talk on without paying any attention to the effect they produce upon their audience. Some few take no part in the discourse but by assenting to everything that is said; and these are not the worst companions in the world. An outcry is sometimes raised against dull people, as if it were any fault of theirs. The most brilliant performers very soon grow dull, and we like people to begin as they end. There is then no disappointment or false excitement. The great ingredient in society is goodwill. He who is pleased with what he himself has to say, and listens in his turn with patience and good-humour, is wise and witty enough for us. We do not covet those parties where one wit dares not go, because another is expected. How delectable must the encounter of such pretenders be to one another!—how edifying to the bystanders!

IX. It was well said by Mr. Coleridge that people never improve by contradiction, but by *agreeing to differ*. If you discuss a question amicably you may gain a clear insight into it; if you dispute about it you only throw dust in one another's eyes. In all angry or violent controversy your object is, not to learn wisdom, but to prove your adversary a fool; and in this respect, it must be admitted, both parties usually succeed.

X. Envy is the ruling passion of mankind. The

explanation is obvious. As we are of infinitely more importance in our own eyes than all the world beside, the chief bent and study of the mind is directed to impress others with this self-evident but disputed distinction, and to arm ourselves with the exclusive signatures and credentials of our superiority, and to hate and stifle all that stands in the way of or obscures our absurd pretensions. Each individual looks upon himself in the light of a dethroned monarch, and the rest of the world as his rebellious subjects and runaway slaves, who withhold the homage that is his natural due, and burst the chains of opinion he would impose upon them. The madman in Hogarth (sooth to say), with his crown of straw and wooden sceptre, is but a type and commonplace emblem of everyday life.

XI. It has been made a subject of regret that in forty or fifty years' time (if we go on as we have done) no one will read Fielding. What a falling-off! Already, if you thoughtlessly lend 'Joseph Andrews' to a respectable family, you find it returned upon your hands as an improper book. To be sure people read 'Don Juan,' but *that* is in verse. The worst is, that this senseless fastidiousness is more owing to an affectation of gentility than to a disgust at vice. It is not the scenes that are described at an alehouse, but the *alehouse* at which they take place, that gives the mortal stab to taste and refinement. One comfort is, that the manners and characters which are objected to as *low* in Fielding have in a great measure disappeared or taken another shape; and this at least is one good effect of all excellent satire—that it destroys "the very food whereon it lives." The generality of readers, who only seek for the representation of existing models, must therefore, after a time, seek in vain for this obvious verisimilitude in the most powerful and popular works of the kind, and will be either

disgusted or at a loss to understand the application. People of sense and imagination, who look beyond the surface or the passing folly of the day, will always read 'Tom Jones.'

XII. There is a set of critics and philosophers who have never read anything but what has appeared within the last ten years, and to whom every mode of expression or turn of thought extending beyond that period has a very odd effect. They cannot comprehend how people used such out-of-the-way phrases in the time of Shakspeare; the style of Addison would not do now; even Junius, they think, would make but a shabby *threadbare* figure in the columns of a modern newspaper. All the riches that the language has acquired in the course of time, all the idiomatic resources arising from study or accident, are utterly discarded—sink underground; and all that is admired by the weak, or sought after by the vain, is a thin surface of idle affectation and glossy innovations. Even spelling and pronunciation have undergone such changes within a short time that Pope and Swift require a little modernizing to accommodate them to "ears polite;" and a *bluestocking belle* would be puzzled in reciting Dryden's sounding verse, with its occasional barbarous oldfashioned accenting, if it were the custom to read Dryden aloud in those serene morning circles. There is no class more liable to set up this narrow superficial standard, than people of fashion, in their horror of what is vulgar and ignorance of what really is so; they have a jargon of their own, but scout whatever does not fall in with it as Gothic and *outré*; the English phrases handed down from the last age they think come east of Temple Bar, and they perform a sedulous quarantine against them. The 'Times,' having found it so written in some outlandish *dépêche* of the Marquis of Wellesley's, chose, as a mark of the *haute littérature*, to spell *dispatch*

enchanted mirror, an Englishwoman of quality two hundred years ago, sitting in unconscious state, with her child playing at her feet, and with all the dovelike innocence of look, the grace and refinement, that it is possible for virtue and breeding to bestow. It is enough to make us proud of our nature and our countrywomen, and dissipates at once the idle *upstart* prejudice that all before our time was sordid and scarce civilised. If our progress does not appear so great as our presumption had suggested, what does it signify? With such models kept in view, our chief object ought to be, not to degenerate; and though the future prospect is less gaudy and imposing, the retrospect opens a larger and brighter vista of excellence.

XVII. I am by education and conviction inclined to republicanism and puritanism. In America they have both; but I confess I feel a little staggered in the practical efficacy and saving grace of *first principles*, when I ask myself, "Can they throughout the United States, from Boston to Baltimore, produce a single head like one of Titian's Venetian nobles, nurtured in all the pride of aristocracy and all the blindness of Popery?" Of all the branches of political economy, the human face is perhaps the best criterion of *value*.

XVIII. The French Revolutionists in the "Reign of Terror," with Robespierre at their head, made one grand mistake. They really thought that by getting rid of the patrons and abettors of the ancient *régime* they should put an end to the breed of tyrants and slaves; whereas in order to do this it would be necessary to put an end to the whole human race.

