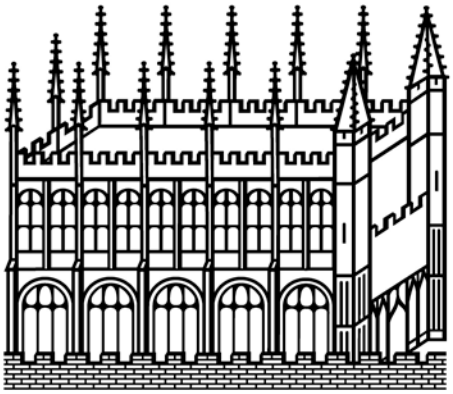

"SHREWD & PLAIN SPOKEN, EARNEST YET REFINED"

The Round Table

BY WILLIAM HAZLITT.

THE ROUND TABLE.

"I SHOULD belie my own conscience, if I said less than that I think W. H. to be in his natural and healthy state one of the wisest and finest spirits. . . . . I shall go to my grave without finding, or expecting to find, such another companion."—CHARLES LAMB.

"Hazlitt had a keen sense of the beautiful and subtle; and what is more he was deeply imbued with sympathies for the humane. He ranks high among the social writers—his intuitive feeling was in favour of the multitude; yet had he nothing of the demagogue in literature; he did not pander to a single vulgar passion."—(BULWER) LORD LYTTON.

THE ROUND TABLE.

BY

WILLIAM HAZLITT.

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1869.

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PRELIMINARY NOTE.

IN the year 1821 an ardent American admirer of William Hazlitt, writing from New York, sent over a curious present. "I feel assured," he wrote, in an important P.S., "that any part of so great a being as George Cooke will be esteemed a curiosity, and richly valued. The bearer of this will offer a morsel of the liver of this wondrous man."

The reply of William Hazlitt to Mr. R. C. Maywood, whose name deserves to be printed as that of the most eccentric of curiosity collectors, does not exist; but we quote the passage for the purpose of introducing our present to the British and American public. In this volume they have a portion of the mind, and in some respects the best part, of one of the most original and genuine of the English essayists. These essays were the first that their author presented to the public after, indeed, a sufficient practice of his pen in other fields. They were commenced in the "Examiner" in January, 1815, and concluded there

in January, 1817. "It was proposed," said the author, "by my friend, Mr. Leigh Hunt, to publish a series of papers in the "Examiner," after 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 Buonaparte 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 finish to the original design."

The defeat of Buonaparte at Waterloo had an extraordinary effect on William Hazlitt, his great admirer; this it may be well here to chronicle, as it will help some to a knowledge of the author, and is some key to the animosity of "Blackwood," the "Quarterly," and other reviews, and to the abuse so unsparingly lavished on the essayist. One critic went so far as to call him

"the pimpled Hazlitt," which epithet, as it insinuated drunkenness and a bloated face, while the victim possessed a clear complexion and was a water drinker, was accepted by the literary world, and continually reiterated. "When first I met Hazlitt in 1815," wrote Talfourd, "he was *staggering* under the blow of Waterloo. The re-appearance of his imperial idol on the coast of France and his triumphant march to Paris had excited his sympathy to the utmost pitch; and though sturdily English in feeling, he could scarcely forgive the valour of the conquerors; and bitterly resented the captivity of the emperor at St. Helena as if he had sustained a personal wrong. On this subject only he was 'eaten up with passion;' on all others he was the fairest and most candid of reasoners. His countenance was then handsome, but marked by a painful expression; his black hair, which had curled stiffly over his temples, had scarcely received its first tints of grey; his gait was awkward, his dress was neglected; and in the company of strangers his bashfulness was almost painful; but when in the society of Lamb and one or two others, he talked on his favourite themes of old English books, or old Italian pictures, no one's conversation could be more delightful."

From the constitution of "The Round Table," it followed that many of its essays were by Leigh Hunt and others; these are not printed in this volume as not by Hazlitt, and one or two other ephemeral pieces are

purposely omitted, but all that is good and from the pen of the elegant and acute writer of "the Round Table" the reader has. The essays were gathered together, and issued in two volumes 12mo. in 1817 ; a second edition followed, and in 1841 a third edition was published. What the reader has here is "The Round Table," by William Hazlitt, not by Hazlitt and Company ; his partners were both inferior and dissimilar to him.

The father of the essayist was the Rev. William Hazlitt, M.A., author of "Sermons for the use of Families," published by subscription in 1808, and, during a residence in America, of several Unitarian tracts. William Hazlitt was born at Maidstone, 1778, educated at the Unitarian College at Hackney, met with some success in London as a portrait painter, having visited Paris, and copied pictures at the Louvre in 1802 ; but soon plunged into literature, lectured at the Russell Institution, wrote for the "Examiner," the "Morning Chronicle," in which papers his theatrical criticisms were much admired, and are now considered classics in that style of writing. He contributed also to the "Edinburgh Review" and the "Encyclopædia Britannica ;" in the latter, articles on the Fine Arts and the Life of Titian are from his pen. He died at No. 6, Frith Street, Soho, on Saturday, 18th of September, 1830, aged fifty-two years, five months, and eight days. A sensuous, sympathetic, self-observant, and retired man, never fully appreciated, full of glorious feelings which had no out-

let, given to self-pity, that most dangerous feeling, Hazlitt was unhappy in his literary, and alas, unhappy in his domestic life. He himself speaks of marriages being brought about "by repugnance and a sort of fatal fascination;" and his grandson adds to this sentence, "never, I suppose, was there a worse assorted pair than my grandfather and grandmother." The Essayist married a Miss Stoddart, a well-read, elegant, and well-educated lady, one of the best letter writers of her time. With any one but Hazlitt she might have been happy; but authors of a nervous and sensitive nature require peculiar treatment, which Hazlitt did not get. In the autograph MS. of the "Table Talk," in the "Essay on the Fear of Death," he had written a passage omitted in the printed version, which is a key to his nature and to his unhappiness. "I want an eye to cheer me, a hand to guide me, a breast to lean on; all of which I shall never have, but shall stagger into my grave without them, old before my time, unloved, unlovely, unless——. I would have some creature love me before I die. Oh! for the parting hand to ease the fall!" It is not worth while in this short sketch to pursue the subject further. If the inappreciation of the wife commenced the disagreement, the behaviour of the husband hastened its catastrophe. Mr. and Mrs. Hazlitt were separated and sued for a divorce. But enough of this. Some time before his death he had written, in the midst of much work, trouble, and disappointment—

too often the lot of literary life—"My public and private hopes have been left a ruin, or remain only to mock me. I would wish them to be re-edified. I should like to see some prospect of good to mankind, such as my life began with. I should like to leave some sterling work behind me. I should like to have some friendly hand to consign me to the grave. On these conditions I am ready, if not willing, to depart. I shall then write on my tomb—GRATEFUL AND CONTENTED.

"But I have thought and suffered too much to be willing to have thought and suffered in vain."

. . . . .

Nearly two years' more work brought this reflective and graceful essayist wiser and gentler thoughts. He died without a murmur or a struggle, so quietly that his son, sitting by his bedside with his friend, Charles Lamb, did not know that life had passed away. His last words were—"Well, I've had a happy life."

THE ROUND TABLE.

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 loath 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, farther, 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 to 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 passions 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, self-will, 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 satis-

fied 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.

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 the 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 de-

generates 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 partizans, 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, to 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.

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, good-naturedly, 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 II., 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 en-

tertains us, when he dates from his own apartment, with a quotation from Plutarch or a moral reflection; from the Grecian coffee-house 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 the 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.

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 common-place 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 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 heart-rending 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 in Westminster Abbey, on the Royal Exchange, and

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[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's 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.—LEIGH HUNT.

some very affecting ones on the death of a young lady. These, it must be allowed, are the perfection of elegant sermonizing. His 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 every thing about us, when few things else could.[1]

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 success-

[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 Herald's College.—LEIGH HUNT.

fully 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 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 neutralized 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 ab-

sorbed 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 serve 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 bye-corners, and do not, like Chaucer's Canterbury Pilgrims, march along the high road, 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 organized 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 generalize 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 common-places 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 befell *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 now-a-days—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." Shakespeare, 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 dulness, and 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.

ON POSTHUMOUS FAME:

WHETHER SHAKESPEARE WAS INFLUENCED BY A LOVE OF IT?

IT has been much disputed whether Shakespeare 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 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! "

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 embued 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 Lord 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 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

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[1] See also the passage in his prose works relating to the first design of "Paradise Lost."

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 Shakespeare. 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 Shakespeare. 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. Shakespeare 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 Shakespeare'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!

We will add another observation connected with this subject, which is, that men of the greatest genius produce

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[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 Shakespeare, as far as we can learn, enamoured of himself!

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.

ON HOGARTH'S MARRIAGE A-LA-MODE.

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 excellencies, more particularly with refer-

ence 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 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.

Boccacio, the most refined and sentimental of all the novel writers, has been stigmatized 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 inamorato, 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 snuff-box 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 women 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 *chef-d'œuvres.* 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 good-naturedly 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 straightforward 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 *protegée.*—As for the Quack, there can be no doubt en-

tertained 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 Acteon, 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 *chevaux-de-frise* of horns, which adorn and fortify the lack-lustre 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, every thing 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.

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 ex-

pression 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 facsimiles 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 foot-boy, 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 *fraternization* 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 Mons. Des Noyers in the back-ground, 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 play 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, who is found in the pocket of the serjeant. 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]

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[1] See an Essay on the genius of Hogarth, by Charles Lamb.

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, 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 Abbana and Pharphar, *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 yeanling kids
On hills where flocks are fled, *flies towards the springs*
Of Ganges or Hydaspes, Indian streams;
But in his way lights on the barren plains
Of Sericana, where Chineses 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 any thing 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 excellencies. 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 fledge 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 Shakespeare'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 spring time, 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 over-head 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.

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.

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 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 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 sympathize. 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 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 amuse-

ment 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 *jeu-d'esprits* 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 pleasantry. 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 every thing. 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 un-

[1] "A good sherris-sack hath a two-fold 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,

dertakings 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 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

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quick, forgetive, full of nimble, fiery, and delectable shapes, which, delivered over to the tongue, becomes excellent wit," &c. —*Second Part of Henry IV.*

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 five thousand pounds, with which he immediately bought an annuity of five hundred pounds 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 wrong-headedness. Whatever court he went to, (and he was often obliged to go

himself to some resty and refractory ones,) he as 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 attraction. There is an air of languid enjoyment in such persons, "in their eyes, in their arms, and their hands, and their face," which robs us of ourselves, and draws us by a secret sympathy towards them. Their minds are a shrine where pleasure reposes. Their smile diffuses 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, the outward expression of the inward harmony of the soul. Foreigners have more

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[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.—*Hazlitt.*

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. The Hindoos that we see about the streets are 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, 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-maître* 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.

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 protest 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 farther 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 disputant more disposed to take their opinions for granted, than those who call themselves Free-thinkers. 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 new-fangled prejudices; the whole exercise of their right of private judgment is, after a time, reduced to the repetition of a set of watch-words, 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's 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 pragmatical 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

[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.—*Hazlitt.*

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 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]

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[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

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 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 any thing worth knowing. Again, a contempt for the habits and manners of the world is as prejudicial as a contempt for their opinions. A puritanical abhorrence of every thing 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 every thing 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 communication corrupts 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

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concerts, but run after pictures. We do not know exactly how they stand with respect to circulating libraries. A Quaker poet would be a literary phenomenon. [At the time Hazlitt wrote this Bernard Barton, an elegant Quaker poet, was alive. Was Hazlitt aware of this? or is this an indirect puff, or merely an instance of the small worth of literary fame?—ED. *Bayard Series.*]

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 under-ground passage. It is not their object to shine; they have none of the usual incentives of vanity, light, airy, and ostentatious. Archiepiscopal 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]

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[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. [The notes throughout this article are by Hazlitt.]

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 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 fulness 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 slabbering-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 owed 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 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 scarecrows. Melancholy tailors, consumptive hair-dressers, squinting cobblers, women with child or in the ague, made up the forlorn hope of the pious cavalcade.[2] 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,

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[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."

[2] Such figures are not now seen; this essay is valuable as indicative of Hazlitt's mind and method.—Ed.]

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 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," Whitefield, 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 maudling sentimentalist, the religious prostitute, the disinterested poet-laureat, 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 a *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 favourable places of worship combines the noise and turbulence of a drunken brawl at an ale-house 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.

ON THE MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

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, Peaseblossom, Cobweb, Moth, and Mustardseed! It has been observed that Shakespeare'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 patchers, 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 any thing and every thing, 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 Shakespeare. 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 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 weapon in your hand, and kill me a red-hipt humble bee 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 mad-cap 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 Shakespeare 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:* or Hippolita's description of a chase, or Theseus's answer? The two last are as heroical and spirited, as the others are full of luscious tenderness. The reading of this play is like wandering in a grove by moonlight: the descriptions breathe a sweetness like odours thrown from beds of flowers.

Shakespeare 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

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* 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 humble bees,
> And for night tapers crop their waxen thighs,
> And light them at the fiery glow-worm's eyes,
> To have my love to bed, and to arise:
> And pluck the wings from painted butterflies,
> To fan the moonbeams from his sleeping eyes;
> Nod to him, elves, and do him courtesies."

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!"—"Ay, 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 any where 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.

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 good-natured 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 short-lived existence of his heroes; while Peachum and Lockitt are seen in the back-ground, parcelling out their months and weeks between them. The general view exhibited of human 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 humanized 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, "Hussey, hussey, you will be as ill used, 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! *

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* 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, translated from the English," which will eminently support what I have advanced. The principal one among this selection is the celebrated "Beg-

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, recognized only by the understanding. It is an immense riddle, containing numberless modifications of reason and prejudice,

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gar'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.

of thought and passion. Patriotism is not, in a strict or exclusive sense, a natural or personal affection, but a law of our national and moral nature, strengthened and determined by particular circumstances and associations, 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 India 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,* literature, manners, national customs) but this is the broad and firm basis.

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

* 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.

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 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 counted 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 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,

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[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.

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 by a difficulty in

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

"He said; and straight 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,
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."

Fairy Queen.

There is a striking description in Mr. Burke's "Reflections of

moving, or by disjointed movements, that distract the attention and defeat each other. Grace is the absence of every thing that indicates pain or difficulty, or 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 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

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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 Maria 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.

Titian's "Bath of Diana," at the Marquis of Stafford's, 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.

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 green-grocer's stall, have been made very interesting as pictures by the facility, skill, and spirit, with which they have been copied. One source of the pleasure thus received is undoubtedly the surprise or feeling of admiration, 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 farther acquaintance, and in proportion to the insight we acquire into the dis-

tinctions 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 analyzes, 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 any thing 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 decompounds 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 spear-grass 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 every thing 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 in-

teresting 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 Shakespeare were his greatest delight; and improving upon this perverse method of judging, the German writers, Goethé 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

[1] We here allude particularly to Turner, the ablest landscape painter now living, 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..—H.*

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 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.

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, unimpaired, 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 Acteon 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 cold

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 cognizable by one sense alone; but they lay an equal stress on all visible impressions; they do not interpret one sense by another;

[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.

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 sympathize 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 immoveable; 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 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 blow 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, Boccacio 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.

ON PEDANTRY.

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 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 deprive 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 knowledge 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 secresy. 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 pre-

tending 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]

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;" and we can never for-

[1] A good-natured man will always have a smack of pedantry about him. A lawyer, who talks about law, *certioraris*, *nolle prosequis*, 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 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.

get 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 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 even be 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 pur-

port 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 toilette. 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 dulness 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 tea-kettle and thin slices of bread and butter; and what the ingenious Mr. Bickerstaff wrote over night 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 civilization 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!

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 book-worm, 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 parts, 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 Oxenforde also,
> That unto logike hadde long ygo.

As lene was his horse as is a rake,
And he was not right fat, I undertake;
But loked holwe, and thereto soberly.
Ful thredbare was his overest courtepy,
For he hadde geten him yet no benefice,
Ne was nought worldly to have an office.
For him was lever han at his beddes hed
A twenty bokes, clothed in black or red,
Of Aristotle and his philosophie,
Than robes riche, or fidel, or sautrie.
But all be that he was a philosophre,
Yet hadde he but litel gold in cofre,
But all that he might of his frendes hente,
On bokes and on lerning he it spente,
And besily gan for the soules praie
Of hem, that gave him wherwith to scolaie.
Of studie toke he moste care and hede.
Not a word spake he more then was nede;
And that was said in forme and reverence,
And short, and quike, and full of high sentence.
Sowning in moral vertue was his speche,
And gladly wolde he lerne, and gladly teche."

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 buffoon." It is expected of him that he should be well-dressed, and he is poor; 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 every thing."

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 noon-tide 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, amusement, and the natural feelings and relations of society, is quite enough to take up the whole of our thoughts, time, and affections; and any thing 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 every thing, is the setting an extraordinary value on that which we can do, and that which we understand best, and 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 be either 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 other 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 rivalling 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 Froissard'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 bag-wig 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 civilization 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, dulness, 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 wrapped 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.

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 farther 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

[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.

radically wrong. Neither imagination nor reason can properly be said to have been the original predominant faculties of his mind. The strength both of imagination and reason, which he possessed, was borrowed from the 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

[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

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, 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

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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.

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 Chateau de Toune, where he passed the day with Mademoiselle G—— and Mademoiselle Galley; the story of his Zulietta, the proud, the charming Zulietta, whose last words, *Va Zanetto, e studia la Matamatica*, 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'Houptot; his literary projects, his fame, his misfortunes, his unhappy temper; his last solitary retirement in the lake and island of Bienne, 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]

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[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 Chambery: "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 Peres de S. Lazare. Cependant, cette vie, pour être plus libre, n'en étoit pas moins égale et réglée. J'etois 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'Eglise, 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

Rousseau, in all his writings, never once lost sight of himself. He was the same individual from first to last. The spring 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 per-

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sentir que la, et dont le souvenir vif m'y transporte de nouveau. Par exemple, tout ce qu'on répétait 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 Prétres, 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 soutanne 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 dîné 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 jambes; 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 Eglise 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 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 endêver, tout dans les souvenirs de ces tems de bonheur et d'innocence revient souvent me ravir et m'attrister.—*Confessions*, Liv. iii. p. 283.

haps 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, voila 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 Bienne 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 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.

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 these 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 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 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

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

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 his 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 realized 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 a 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 parts, 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 augured, 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!

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 bug-bear. 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 unexceptional, 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 uncom-

fortable 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 Froissard, speaking of the meeting of the Black Prince and the French King, "amused themselves sadly, according to the custom of their country,"—*se rejouissoient 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 any thing about them but to swagger over other nations. That which chiefly hits John's fancy in Shakespeare 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 jea-

lousy 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.

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 themselves; 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 discon-

certed 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 every thing 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 teaze 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 Shakespeare 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 villany 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 sympathizes 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 honester 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 preju-

dices, 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 under current 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 Rack-rent."

ON THE CHARACTER OF MILTON'S EVE.

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

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[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

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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. Shakespeare'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. Shakespeare seldom tantalizes 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 con-

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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 Bastile 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.—HAZLITT.

nected with the physiognomy of passion, as in her leaning with her cheek upon her arm, or which only convey the general impression of enthusiasm made on her lover's brain. One thing may be said, that Shakespeare 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."

Eve is not only represented as beautiful, but with conscious beauty. Shakespeare'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 baulked. This is but a conjecture! 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 answ'ring looks
> Of sympathy and love."

The poet afterwards adds :—

> " So spake our general mother, and with eyes
> Of conjugal attraction unreprov'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."

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 unwaken'd Eve
> 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 the beauty still to gaze."

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

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,
> Espoused Eve deck'd first her nuptial bed,
> And heavenly quires the hymenœan 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 footstep 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."

OBSERVATIONS ON MR. WORDSWORTH'S POEM, "THE EXCURSION."

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 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 hedge-row 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 familiarizes 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 sympathizes 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 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 every thing. 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 any thing 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 Oreads, 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:—

"How, 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 analyzed
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," or 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 farther. We shall not affirm with Rousseau (his authority would perhaps have little weight with Mr. Wordsworth)—*Tout homme reflechi est mechant;* 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 of those persons who have been devoted to the pursuit of any art or science,—of their restless morbidity of temperament, and indifference to every thing 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 analyzing 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 Bastile,
> With all the chambers in its horrid towers,
> Fell to the ground: by violence o'erthrown
> 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:

[1] This word is not English.

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 RECANTATION 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 day-star of liberty; that spring-time 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 Birth-day 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!

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 glistering spires and pinnacles adorned;" we meet with no knights pricked forth on airy steeds; no hair-breadth '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 every-day 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 mole-hill, 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 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 sympathize with Mr. Wordsworth in his attachment to groves and fields, we cannot extend the same admiration to their inhabitants, or to the manners of a 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 among 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.

All country people hate each other. They have so little comfort, that they envy their neighbours the smallest pleasure or advantage, and nearly grudge them-

selves 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 civilizers 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 nick-name 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, 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 familiarizing 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 Lord 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 hump-backed 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 civilized 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 dis-

tricts 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.

A DAY BY THE FIRE.

I AM one of those that delight in a fireside, and can enjoy it without even the help of a cat or a tea-kettle. To cats, indeed, I have an aversion, as animals that only affect a sociality, without caring a jot for anything but their own luxury; and my tea-kettle,—I frankly confess,—has long been displaced, or rather dismissed, by a bronze-coloured and graceful urn: though, between ourselves, I am not sure that I have gained anything by the exchange. Cowper, it is true, talks of the "bubbling and loud-hissing urn," which

> "Throws up a steamy column;"

but there was something so primitive and unaffected,—so warm-hearted and unpresuming, in the tea-kettle,—its song was so much more cheerful and continued,—and it kept the water so hot and comfortable as long as you wanted it,—that I sometimes feel as if I had sent off a good, plain, faithful old friend, who had but one

wish to serve me, for a superficial, smooth-faced upstart of a fellow, who, after a little promising and vapouring, grows cold and contemptuous, and thinks himself bound to do nothing but stand on a rug and have his person admired by the circle. To this admiration, in fact, I have been obliged to resort, in order to make myself think well of my bargain, if possible; and, accordingly, I say to myself every now and then during the tea,—"A pretty look with it—that urn;" or, "It's wonderful what a taste the Greeks had;" or, "The eye might have a great many enjoyments, if people would but look after forms and shapes." In the meanwhile, the urn leaves off its "bubbling and hissing,"—but then there is such an air with it! My tea is made of cold water,—but then the Greeks were such a nation!

If there is any one thing that can reconcile me to the loss of my kettle, more than another, it is that my fire has been left to itself; it has full room to breathe and to blaze, and I can poke it as I please. What recollections does that idea excite!—Poke it as I please!—Think, benevolent reader,—think of the pride and pleasure of having in your hand that awful, but, at the same time, artless weapon, a poker,—of putting it into the proper bar,—gently levering up the coals,—and seeing the instant and bustling flame above! To what can I compare that moment? That sudden, empyreal enthusiasm? That fiery expression of vivification? That ardent acknowledgment, as it were, of the care and kindliness of the operator? Let me consider a moment:—it is very odd;—I was always reckoned a lively hand at a simile;—but language and combination absolutely fail me here. If it is like anything, it must be something beyond everything in beauty and life. Oh—I have it now:—think, reader,—if you are one of those who can

muster up sufficient sprightliness to engage in a game of forfeits,—on Twelfth Night, for instance,—think of a blooming girl, who is condemned to "open her mouth and shut her eyes, and see what heaven," in the shape of a mischievous young fellow, "will send her." Her mouth is opened accordingly, the fire of her eyes is dead, her face assumes a doleful air;—up walks the aforesaid heaven or mischievous young fellow, (young Ouranos,—Hesiod would have called him,) and, instead of a piece of paper, a thimble, or a cinder, claps into her mouth a peg of orange or a long slice of citron;—then her eyes above instantly light up again,—the smiles wreathe about,—the sparklings burst forth, and all is warmth, brilliancy, and delight. I am aware that this simile is not perfect; but if it would do for an epic poem, as I think it might, after Virgil's whipping-tops and Homer's jackasses and black-puddings, the reader, perhaps, will not quarrel with it.

But to describe my feelings in an orderly manner, I must request the reader to go with me through a day's enjoyments by the fireside. It is part of my business to look about for helps to reflection; and, for this reason, among many others, I indulge myself in keeping a good fire from morning till night. I have also a reflective turn for an easy chair, and a very thinking attachment to comfort in general. But of this, as I proceed.—Imprimis, then,—the morning is clear and cold,—time, half-past seven,—scene, a breakfast-room. Some persons, by the bye, prefer a thick and rainy morning, with a sobbing wind, and the clatter of pattens along the streets; but, I confess, for my own part, that being a sedentary person, and too apt to sin against the duties of exercise, I have somewhat too sensitive a consciousness of bad weather, and feel a heavy sky go over

me like a feather-bed, or rather like a huge brush which rubs all my nap the wrong way. I am growing better in this respect, and by the help of a stout walk at noon, and getting, as it were, fairly into a favourite poet and a warm fire of an evening, begin to manage a cloud or an east wind tolerably well;—but still, for perfection's sake on the present occasion, I must insist upon my clear morning, and will add to it, if the reader pleases, a little hoar frost upon the windows, a bird or two coming after the crumbs, and the light smoke from the neighbouring chimneys brightening up into the early sunshine. Even the dustman's bell is not unpleasant from its association; and there is something absolutely musical in the clash of the milkpails suddenly unyoked, and the ineffable, *ad libitum* note that follows.

The waking epicure rises with an elastic anticipation; enjoys the freshening cold-water which endears what is to come; and even goes placidly through the villanous scraping process which we soften down into the level and lawny appellation of shaving. He then hurries down stairs, rubbing his hands, and sawing the sharp air through his teeth; and as he enters the breakfast-room, sees his old companion glowing through the bars, —the life of the apartment,—and wanting only his friendly hand to be lightened a little, and enabled to shoot up into dancing brilliancy. (I find I am getting into a quantity of epithets here; and must rein in my enthusiasm.)—What need I say? The poker is applied, and would be so whether required or not, for it is impossible to resist the sudden ardour inspired by that sight:—the use of the poker, on first seeing one's fire, is as natural as shaking hands with a friend. At that movement, a hundred little sparkles fly up from the coal-dust that falls within, while, from the masses them-

selves, a roaring flame mounts aloft with a deep and fitful sound as of a shaken carpet:—epithets again;—I must recur to poetry at once:—

> Then shine the bars, the cakes in smoke aspire,
> A sudden glory bursts from all the fire.
> The conscious wight, rejoicing in the heat,
> Rubs the blithe knees, and toasts th' alternate feet.[1]

The utility, as well as beauty, of the fire *during* breakfast, need not be pointed out to the most unphlogistic observer. A person would rather be shivering at any time of the day than at that of his first rising:—the transition would be too unnatural:—he is not prepared for it,—as Barnardine says, when he objects to being hanged. If you eat plain bread and butter with your tea, it is fit that your moderation should be rewarded with a good blaze; and if you indulge in hot rolls or toast, you will hardly keep them to their warmth without it, particularly if you read; and then,—if you take in a newspaper,—what a delightful change from the wet, raw, dabbing fold of paper, when you first touch it, to the dry, crackling, crisp superficies, which, with a skilful spat of the finger-nails at its upper end, stands at once in your hand, and looks as if it said "Come read me." Nor is it the look of the newspaper only which the fire must render complete:—it is the interest of the ladies who may happen to form part of your family,—of your wife in particular, if you have one,—to avoid the niggling and pinching aspect of cold; it takes away the harmony of her features, and the graces of her behaviour; while, on the other hand, there is scarcely a

[1] Parody upon part of the well-known description of night, with which Pope has swelled out the passage in Homer, and the faults of which have long been appreciated by general readers.

more interesting sight in the world than that of a neat, delicate, good-humoured female, presiding at your breakfast-table, with hands tapering out of her long sleeves, eyes with a touch of Sir Peter Lely in them, and a face set in a little oval frame of muslin tied under the chin, and retaining a certain tinge of the pillow without its cloudiness. This is, indeed, the finishing grace of a fireside, though it is impossible to have it at all times, and perhaps not always politic,—especially for the studious.

From breakfast to dinner, the quantity and quality of enjoyment depend very much on the nature of one's concerns; and occupation of any kind, if we pursue it properly, will hinder us from paying a critical attention to the fireside. It is sufficient, if our employments do not take us away from it, or at least from the genial warmth of a room which it adorns;—unless, indeed, we are enabled to have recourse to exercise; and in that case, I am not so unjust as to deny that walking or riding has its merits, and that the general glow they diffuse throughout the frame has something in it extremely pleasurable and encouraging;—nay, I must not scruple to confess, that, without some preparation of this kind, the enjoyment of the fireside, humanly speaking, is not absolutely perfect; as I have latterly been convinced by a variety of incontestable arguments in the shape of headaches, rheumatisms, mote-haunted eyes, and other logical appeals to one's feelings which are in great use with physicians.—Supposing, therefore, the morning to be passed, and the due portion of exercise to have been taken, the Firesider fixes rather an early hour for dinner, particularly in the winter-time; for he has not only been early at breakfast, but there are two luxurious intervals to enjoy between dinner and

the time of candles,—one that supposes a party round the fire with their wine and fruit,—the other, the hour of twilight, of which it has been reasonably doubted whether it is not the most luxurious point of time which a fireside can present:—but opinions will naturally be divided on this as on all other subjects, and every degree of pleasure depends upon so many contingencies, and upon such a variety of associations, induced by habit and opinion, that I should be as unwilling as I am unable to decide on the matter. This, however, is certain, that no true Firesider can dislike an hour so composing to his thoughts, and so cherishing to his whole faculties; and it is equally certain, that he will be little inclined to protract the dinner beyond what he can help, or if ever a fireside becomes unpleasant, it is during that gross and pernicious prolongation of eating and drinking, to which this latter age has given itself up, and which threatens to make the rising generation regard a meal of repletion as the ultimatum of enjoyment.

The inconvenience to which I allude is owing to the way in which we sit at dinner, for the persons who have their backs to the fire are liable to be scorched, while, at the same time, they render the persons opposite them liable to be frozen; so that the fire becomes uncomfortable to the former, and tantalizing to the latter; and thus three evils are produced, of a most absurd and scandalous nature;—in the first place, the fireside loses a degree of its character, and awakens feelings the very reverse of what it should; secondly, the position of the back towards it is a neglect and affront, which it becomes it to resent; and finally, its beauties, its proffered kindness, and its sprightly social effect, are at once cut off from the company by the interposition of those invidious and idle surfaces, called screens. This

abuse is the more ridiculous, inasmuch as the remedy is so easy; for we have nothing to do but to use semi-circular dining tables, with the base unoccupied towards the fireplace, and the whole annoyance vanishes at once; the master or mistress might preside in the middle, as was the custom with the Romans, and thus propriety would be observed, while every body had the sight and benefit of the fire;—not to mention, that, by this fashion, the table might be brought nearer to it,—that the servants would have better access to the dishes,—and that screens, if at all necessary, might be turned to better purpose as a general enclosure instead of a separation.

But I hasten from dinner, according to notice; and cannot but observe, that if you have a small set of visitors, who enter into your feelings on this head, there is no movement so pleasant as a general one from the table to the fireside, each person taking his glass with him, and a small, slim-legged table being introduced into the circle for the purpose of holding the wine, and perhaps a poet or two, a glee-book, or a lute. If this practice should become general among those who know how to enjoy luxuries in such temperance as not to destroy conversation, it would soon gain for us another social advantage, by putting an end to the barbarous custom of sending away the ladies after dinner,—a gross violation of these chivalrous graces of life, for which modern times are so highly indebted to the persons whom they are pleased to term Gothic. And here I might digress, with no great impropriety, to show the *snug* notions that were entertained by the knights and damsels of old in all particulars relating to domestic enjoyment, especially in the article of mixed company;—but I must not quit the fireside, and will only

observe, that as the ladies formed its chief ornament, so they constituted its most familiar delight.

"The minstralcie, the service at the feste,
The grete yeftes to the most and leste,
The riche array of Theseus' paleis,
Ne who sate first, ne last upon the deis,
What ladies fairest ben, or best dancing,
Or which of hem can carole best or sing,
Ne who most felingly speketh of love;
What haukis sitten on the perch above,
What houndis liggen on the flour adoun,—
Of all this now make I no mencioun."

CHAUCER.

THE SUBJECT CONTINUED.

THE word *snug*, however, reminds me, that, amidst all the languages, ancient and modern, it belongs exclusively to our own; and that nothing but a want of ideas suggested by that soul-wrapping epithet, could have induced certain frigid connoisseurs to tax our climate with want of genius,—supposing forsooth, that because we have not the sunshine of the Southern countries, we have no other warmth for our veins, and that, because our skies are not hot enough to keep us in doors, we have no excursiveness of wit and range of imagination. It seems to me that a great deal of good argument in refutation of these calumnies has been wasted upon Monsieur du Bos and the Herrn Winckelman,—the one a narrow-

minded pedantic Frenchman, to whom the freedom of our genius was incomprehensible,—the other an Italianized German, who being suddenly transported into the sunshine, began frisking about with unwieldy vivacity, and concluded that nobody could be great or bewitching out of the pale of his advantages. Milton, it is true, in his Paradise Lost, expresses an injudicious apprehension lest

> "An age too late, or cold
> Climate, or years, damp his intended wing;"

but the very complaint which foreign critics bring against him as well as Shakespeare, is, that his wing was not damped enough,—that it was too daring and unsubdued; and he not only avenges himself nobly of his fears by a flight beyond all Italian poetry, but shows, like the rest of his countrymen, that he could turn the coldness of his climate into a new species of inspiration, as I shall presently make manifest. Not to mention, however, that the Greeks and Romans, Homer in particular, saw a great deal worse weather than these critics would have us imagine, the question is, would the Poets themselves have thought as they did? Would Tyrtæus, the singer of patriotism, have complained of being an Englishman? Would Virgil, who delighted in husbandry, and whose first wish was to be a philosopher, have complained of living in our pastures, and being the countryman of Newton? Would Homer, the observer of character, the panegyrist of freedom, the painter of storms, of landscapes, and of domestic tenderness,—ay, and the lover of snug houseroom and a good dinner,—would he have complained of our humours, of our liberty, of our shifting skies, of our ever-green fields, our conjugal happiness, our firesides, and our hospitality? I only wish the reader and I had him at this

party of ours after dinner, with a lyre on his knee, and a goblet, as he says, to drink as he pleased,—

"Piein, hote thumos anogoi."
Odyss. lib. viii. v. 70.

I am much mistaken if our blazing fire and our freedom of speech would not give him a warmer inspiration than ever he felt in the person of Demodocus, even though placed on a lofty seat, and regaled with slices of brawn from a prince's table. The ancients, in fact, were by no means deficient in enthusiasm at sight of a good fire; and it is to be presumed, that if they had enjoyed such firesides as ours, they would have acknowledged the advantages which our genius presents in winter, and almost been ready to conclude with old Cleveland, that the Sun himself was nothing but

"Heaven's coalery;—
A coal-pit rampant, or a mine on flame."

The ancient hearth was generally in the middle of the room, the ceiling of which let out the smoke; it was supplied with charcoal or faggots: and consisted, sometimes of a brazier or chafing-dish (the focus of the Romans,) sometimes of a mere elevation or altar, (the εστια or εσχαρα of the Greeks). We may easily imagine the smoke and annoyance which this custom must have occasioned,—not to mention the bad complexions which are caught by hanging over a fuming pan, as the faces of the Spanish ladies bear melancholy witness. The stoves, however, in use with the countrymen of Mons. du Bos and Winckelman are, if possible, still worse, having a dull, suffocating effect, with nothing to recompense the eye. The abhorrence of them which Ariosto expresses in one of his satires, when, justifying his refusal to accompany Cardinal d'Este into Germany,

he reckons up the miseries of its winter-time, may have led M. Winckelman to conclude that all the Northern resources against cold were equally intolerable to an Italian genius; but Count Alfieri, a poet, at least as warmly inclined as Ariosto, delighted in England; and the great Romancer himself, in another of his satires, makes a commodious fireplace the climax of his wishes with regard to lodging. In short, what did Horace say, or rather what did he not say, of the raptures of in-door sociality,—Horace, who knew how to enjoy sunshine in all its luxury, and who nevertheless appears to have snatched a finer inspiration from absolute frost and snow? I need not quote all those beautiful little invitations he sent to his acquaintances, telling one of them that a neat room and a sparkling fire were waiting for him, describing to another the smoke springing out of the roof in curling volumes, and even congratulating his friends in general on the opportunity of enjoyment afforded them by a stormy day; but to take leave at once of these frigid connoisseurs, hear with what rapture he describes one of those friendly parties, in which he passed his winter evenings, and which only wanted the finish of our better morality and our patent fireplaces, to resemble the one I am now fancying.

" Vides ut altâ stet nive candidum
Soracte; nec jam sustineant onus
Silvæ laborantes; geluque
Flumina constiterint acuto?

Dissolve frigus, ligna super foco
Largè reponens; atque benigniùs
Deprome quadrimum Sabinâ,
O Thaliarche, merum diotâ.

Permitte Divis cætera. . . .
Donec virenti canities abest

Morosa, nunc et campus, et areæ,
Lenesque sub noctem susurri
Compositâ repetantur horâ:

Nunc et latentis proditor intimo
Gratus puellæ risus ab angulo,
Pignusque dereptum lacerto
Aut digito male pertinaci."

Lib. I. Od. 9.

"Behold yon mountain's hoary height
Made higher with new mounts of snow;
Again behold the winter's weight
Oppress the lab'ring woods below,
And streams with icy fetters bound
Benumb'd and crampt to solid ground.

With well-heap'd logs dissolve the cold,
And feed the genial hearth with fires,
Produce the wine that makes us bold,
And sprightly wit and mirth inspires.
For what hereafter shall betide,
Jove, if 'tis worth his care, provide.

. . . . . .

Th' appointed hour of promis'd bliss,
The pleasing whisper in the dark,
The half unwilling, willing kiss,
The laugh that guides thee to the mark,
When the kind nymph would coyness feign,
And hides but to be found again,
These, these are joys the gods for youth ordain."

DRYDEN.

The Roman poet, however, though he occasionally boasts of his temperance, is too apt to lose sight of the intellectual part of his entertainment, or at least to make the sensual part predominate over the intellectual. Now, I reckon the nicety of social enjoyment to consist in the reverse; and after partaking with Homer of his plentiful boiled and roast, and with Horace of his flower-crowned wine parties, the poetical reader must

come at last to us Barbarians of the North for the perfection of fireside festivity—that is to say, for the union of practical philosophy with absolute merriment,—for light meals and unintoxicating glasses,—for refection that administers to enjoyment, instead of repletions that at once constitute and contradict it. I am speaking, of course, not of our common-place eaters and drinkers, but of our classical arbiters of pleasure, as contrasted with those of other countries: these, it is observable, have all delighted in Horace, and copied him as far as their tastes were congenial; but without relaxing a jot of their real comfort, how pleasingly does their native philosophy temper and adorn the freedom of their conviviality,—feeding the fire, as it were, with an equable fuel that hinders it alike from scorching and from going out, and, instead of the artificial enthusiasm of a heated body, enabling them to enjoy the healthful and unclouded predominance of a sparkling intelligence! It is curious, indeed, to see how distinct from all excess are their freest and heartiest notions of relaxation. Thus our old poet, Drayton, reminding his favourite companion of a fireside meeting, expressly unites freedom with moderation:—

> "My dearly loved friend, how oft have we
> In winter evenings, meaning to be free,
> To some well-chosen place us'd to retire,
> And there with moderate meat, and wine, and fire,
> Have pass'd the hours contentedly in chat,
> Now talk'd of this, and then discours'd of that,—
> Spoke our own verses 'twixt ourselves,—if not
> Other men's lines, which we by chance had got."
>
> *Epistle to Henry Reynolds, Esq. Of Poets and Poesy.*

And Milton, in his Sonnet to Cyriack Skinner, one of the turns of which is plainly imitated from Horace, particularly qualifies a strong invitation to merriment by

anticipating what Horace would always drive from your reflections,—the feelings of the day after :—

" Cyriack, whose Grandsire, on the royal bench
Of British Themis, with no mean applause
Pronounc'd, and in his volumes taught, our laws,
Which others at their bar so often wrench ;
To-day deep thoughts resolve with me to drench
In mirth, that, after, no repenting draws.
Let Euclid rest, and Archimedes pause,
And what the Swede intends, and what the French.
To measure life learn thou betimes, and know
Tow'rd solid good what leads the nearest way :
For other things mild Heav'n a time ordains,
And disapproves that care, though wise in show,
That with superfluous burden loads the day,
And when God sends a cheerful hour, refrains."

But the execution of this sonnet is not to be compared in gracefulness and a finished sociality with the one addressed to his friend Lawrence, which, as it presents us with the acme of elegant repast, may conclude the hour which I have just been describing, and conduct us complacently to our twilight :—

" Lawrence, of virtuous father virtuous son,
Now that the fields are dank, and ways are mire,
Where shall we sometimes meet, and by the fire
Help waste a sullen day,—what may be won
From the hard season gaining? Time will run
On smoother, till Favonius re-inspire
The frozen earth, and clothe in fresh attire
The lily and rose, that neither sow'd nor spun.

What neat repast shall feast us, light and choice,
Of Attic taste, with wine, whence we may rise
To hear the lute well-touch'd, and artful voice
Warble immortal notes and Tuscan air?
He who of these delights can judge, and spare
To interpose them oft, is not unwise."

But twilight comes ; and the lover of the fireside, for the perfection of the moment, is now alone. He was

reading a minute or two ago, and for some time was unconscious of the increasing dusk, till, on looking up, he perceived the objects out of doors deepening into massy outline, while the sides of his fireplace began to reflect the light of the flames, and the shadow of himself and his chair fidgeted with huge obscurity on the wall. Still wishing to read, he pushed himself nearer and nearer to the window, and continued fixed on his book, till he happened to take another glance out of doors, and on returning to it, could make out nothing. He therefore lays it aside, and restoring his chair to the fireplace, seats himself right before it in a reclining posture, his feet apart upon the fender, his eyes bent down towards the grate, his arms on the chair's elbows, one hand hanging down, and the palm of the other turned up and presented to the fire,—not to keep it from him, for there is no glare or scorch about it,—but to intercept and have a more kindly feel of its genial warmth. It is thus that the greatest and wisest of mankind have sat and meditated; a homely truism perhaps, but such a one as we are apt enough to forget. We talk of going to Athens or Rome to see the precise objects which the Greeks and Romans beheld, and forget that the Moon, which may be looking upon us at the moment, is the same identical planet that enchanted Homer and Virgil, and that has been contemplated and admired by all the great men and geniuses that have existed; by Socrates and Plato in Athens, by the Antonines in Rome, by the Alfreds, the Hospitals, the Miltons, Newtons, and Shakespeares. In like manner, we are anxious to discover how these great men and poets appeared in common, what habits they loved, in what way they talked and meditated, nay, in what postures they delighted to sit, and whether they indulged in the same tricks and little comforts that we

do. Look at Nature and their works, and we shall see that they did, and that when we act naturally and think earnestly, we are reflecting their commonest habits to the life. Thus we have seen Horace talking of his blazing hearth and snug accommodations like the jolliest of our acquaintances; and thus we may safely imagine, that Milton was in some such attitude as I have described, when he sketched that enchanting little picture, which beats all the cabinet portraits that have been produced:—

> "Or if the air will not permit,
> Some still removed place will fit,
> Where glowing embers through the room
> Teach light to counterfeit a gloom,
> Far from all resort of mirth,
> Save the cricket on the hearth,
> Or the bellman's drowsy charm
> To bless the doors from nightly harm."

But to attend to our fireside. The evening is beginning to gather in. The window, which presents a large face of watery grey, intersected by strong lines, is imperceptibly becoming darker; and as that becomes darker, the fire assumes a more glowing presence. The contemplatist keeps his easy posture, absorbed in his fancies; and everything around him is still and serene. The stillness would even ferment in his ear, and whisper, as it were, of what the air contained: but a minute coil, just sufficient to hinder that busier silence, clicks in the baking coal, while every now and then the light ashes shed themselves below, or a stronger, but still a gentle flame flutters up with a gleam over the chimney. At length, the darker objects in the room become mingled; the gleam of the fire streaks with a restless light the edges of the furniture, and reflects itself in the blackening window; while his feet take a gentle move on the

fender, and then settle again, and his face comes out of the general darkness, earnest even in indolence, and pale in the very ruddiness of what it looks upon.—This is the only time, perhaps, at which sheer idleness is salutary and refreshing. How observed with the smallest effort is every trick and aspect of the fire! A coal falling in,—a fluttering fume,—a miniature mockery of a flash of lightning,—nothing escapes the eye and the imagination. Sometimes a little flame appears at the corner of the grate like a quivering spangle; sometimes it swells out at top into a restless and brief lambency; anon it is seen only by a light beneath the grate, or it curls around one of the bars like a tongue, or darts out with a spiral thinness and a sulphureous and continued puffing as from a reed. The glowing coals meantime exhibit the shifting forms of hills, and vales, and gulfs,—of fiery Alps, whose heat is uninhabitable even by spirit, or of black precipices, from which swart fairies seem about to spring away on sable wings;—then heat and fire are forgotten, and walled towns appear, and figures of unknown animals, and far-distant countries scarcely to be reached by human journey;—then coaches, and camels, and barking dogs as large as either, and forms that combine every shape and suggest every fancy;—till at last, the ragged coals, tumbling together, reduce the vision to chaos, and the huge profile of a gaunt and grinning face seems to make a jest of all that has passed.—During these creations of the eye, the thought roves about into a hundred abstractions, some of them suggested by the fire,—some of them suggested by that suggestion,—some of them arising from the general sensation of comfort and composure, contrasted with whatever the world affords of evil, or dignified by high-wrought meditation on whatsoever gives hope to benevolence and inspiration to

wisdom. The philosopher at such moments plans his Utopian schemes, and dreams of happy certainties which he cannot prove:—the lover, happier and more certain, fancies his mistress with him, unobserved and confiding, his arm round her waist, her head upon his shoulder, and earth and heaven contained in that sweet possession:—the poet, thoughtful as the one, and ardent as the other, springs off at once above the world, treads every turn of the harmonious spheres, darts up with gleaming wings through the sunshine of a thousand systems, and stops not till he has found a perfect Paradise, whose fields are of young roses, and whose air is music,—whose waters are the liquid diamond,—whose light is as radiance through crystal,—whose dwellings are laurel bowers,—whose language is poetry,—whose inhabitants are congenial souls,—and to enter the very verge of whose atmosphere strikes beauty on the face, and felicity on the heart.—Alas, that flights so lofty should ever be connected with earth by threads as slender as they are long, and that the least twitch of the most common-place hand should be able to snatch down the viewless wanderer to existing comforts!—The entrance of a single candle dissipates at once the twilight and the sunshine, and the ambitious dreamer is summoned to his tea!

THE SUBJECT CONTINUED.

" Now stir the fire, and close the shutters fast,
Let fall the curtains, wheel the sofa round,
And while the bubbling and loud hissing urn
Throws up a steamy column, and the cups,
That cheer, but not inebriate, wait on each,
So let us welcome peaceful evening in."

NEVER was snug hour more feelingly commenced!—Cowper was not a *great* poet; his range was neither wide nor lofty; but such as it was, he had it completely to himself; he is the poet of quiet life and familiar observation.—The fire, we see, is now stirred, and becomes very different from the one we have just left; it puts on its liveliest aspect in order to welcome those to whom the tea-table is a point of meeting, and it is the business of the Firesider to cherish this aspect for the remainder of the evening. How light and easy the coals look! How ardent is the roominess within the bars! How airily do the volumes of smoke course each other up the chimney, like so many fantastic and indefinite spirits, while the eye in vain endeavours to accompany any one of them! The flames are not so fierce as in the morning, but still they are active and powerful; and if they do not roar up the chimney, they make a constant and playful noise, that is extremely to the purpose. Here they come out at top with a leafy swirl; there they dart up spirally and at once,—there they form a lambent assemblage that shifts about on its own ground, and is continually losing and regaining its vanishing members. I confess I take par-

ticular delight in seeing a good blaze at top; and my impatience to produce it will sometimes lead me into great rashness in the article of poking,—that is to say, I use the poker at the top instead of the middle of the fire, and go probing it about in search of a flame. A lady of my acquaintance,—"near and dear," as they say in Parliament,—will tell me of this fault twenty times in a day, and every time so good-humouredly, that it is mere want of generosity in me not to amend it; but somehow or other I do not. The consequence is, that, after a momentary exhibition of blaze, the fire becomes dark and sleepy, and is in danger of going out. It is like a boy at school in the hands of a bad master, who, thinking him dull, and being impatient to render him brilliant, beats him about the head and ears, till he produces the very evil he would prevent. But, on the present occasion, I forbear to use the poker:—there is no need of it:—every thing is comfortable; every thing snug and sufficient. How equable is the warmth around us! How cherishing this rug to one's feet! How complacent the cup at one's lip! What a fine broad light is diffused from the fire over the circle, gleaming in the urn and the polished mahogany, bringing out the white garments of the ladies, and giving a poetic warmth to their faces and hair! I need not mention all the good things that are said at tea—still less the gallant. Good-humour never has an audience more disposed to think it wit, nor gallantry an hour of service more blameless and elegant. Ever since tea has been known, its clear and gentle powers of inspiration have been acknowledged, from Waller paying his court at the circle of Catherine of Braganza, to Dr. Johnson receiving homage at the parties of Mrs. Thrale. The former, in his lines, upon hearing it "commended by her Majesty," ranks it at

once above myrtle and laurel, and her Majesty, of course, agreed with him :—

> " Venus her myrtle, Phœbus has his bays;
> Tea both excels, which she vouchsafes to praise.
> The *best of queens*, and best of herbs, we owe
> To that bold nation, which the way did show
> To the fair region, where the sun does rise,
> Whose rich productions we so justly prize.
> The Muse's friend, Tea, does our fancy aid,
> Repress those vapours which the head invade,
> And keeps that palace of the soul serene,
> Fit, on her birth-day, to salute the Queen."

The eulogies pronounced on his favourite beverage by Dr. Johnson, are too well known to be repeated here; and the commendatory inscription of the Emperor Kien Long,—to an European taste at least,—is somewhat too dull, unless his Majesty's tea-pot has been shamefully translated. For my own part, though I have the highest respect, as I have already shown, for this genial drink, which is warm to the cold, and cooling to the warm, I confess, as Montaigne would have said, that I prefer coffee,—particularly in my political capacity :—

> " Coffee, that makes the Politician wise
> To see through all things with his half-shut eyes."

There is something in it, I think, more lively, and, at the same time, more substantial. Besides, I never see it but it reminds me of the Turks and their Arabian tales, —an association infinitely preferable to any Chinese ideas; and, like the king who put his head into the tub, I am transported into distant lands the moment I dip into the coffee-cup,—at one minute ranging the valleys with Sinbad, at another encountering the fairies on the wing by moonlight, at a third exploring the haunts of the cursed Maugraby, or rapt into the silence of

that delicious solitude from which Prince Agib was carried by the fatal horse. Then if I wish to poeticise upon it at home, there is Belinda with her sylphs, drinking it in such state as nothing but poetry can supply :—

> " For lo! the board with cups and spoons is crown'd,
> The berries crackle, and the mill turns round:
> On shining altars of japan they raise
> The silver lamp; the fiery spirits blaze;
> From silver spouts the grateful liquors glide,
> And China's earth receives the smoking tide;
> At once they gratify the scent and taste,
> And frequent cups prolong the rich repast.
> Straight hover round the fair her airy band;
> Some, as she sipp'd, the fuming liquor fann'd;
> Some o'er her lap their careful plumes display'd,
> Trembling, and conscious of the rich brocade."

It must be acknowledged, however, that the general association of ideas is at present in favour of tea, which, on that account, has the advantage of suggesting no confinement to particular ranks or modes of life. Let there be but a fireside, and anybody, of any denomination, may be fancied enjoying the luxury of a cup of tea, from the duchess in the evening drawing-room, who makes it the instrument of displaying her white hand, to the washerwoman at her early tub, who having had nothing to signify since five, sits down to it with her shining arms and corrugated fingers at six. If there is any one station of life in which it is enjoyed to most advantage, it is that of mediocrity, that in which all comfort is reckoned to be best appreciated, because, while there is taste to enjoy, there is necessity to earn the enjoyment; and I cannot conclude the hour before us with a better climax of snugness than is presented in the following pleasing little verses. The author, I believe, is unknown, and may not have been much of a poet in matters

of fiction; but who will deny his taste for matters of reality, or say that he has not handled his subject to perfection?—

" The hearth was clean, the fire was clear,
The kettle on for tea,
Palemon in his elbow-chair,
As blest as man could be.

Clarinda, who his heart possess'd,
And was his new-made bride,
With head reclined upon his breast
Sat toying by his side.

Stretch'd at his feet, in happy state,
A fav'rite dog was laid,
By whom a little sportive cat
In wanton humour play'd.

Clarinda's hand he gently press'd;
She stole an amorous kiss,
And blushing, modestly confess'd
The fulness of her bliss.

Palemon, with a heart elate,
Pray'd to Almighty Jove,
That it might ever be his fate,
Just so to live and love.

Be this eternity, he cried,
And let no more be given:
Continue thus my loved fireside,
I ask no other heaven."

The Happy Fireside.—Elegant Extracts.

There are so many modes of spending the remainder of the evening between tea-time and bed-time, (for I protest against all suppers that are not light enough to be taken on the knee,) that a general description would avail me nothing, and I cannot be expected to enter into such a variety of particulars. Suffice it to say, that where the fire is duly appreciated, and the circle

good-humoured, none of them can be unpleasant, whether the party be large or small, young or old, talkative or contemplative. If there is music, a good fire will be particularly grateful to the performers, who are often seated at the farther end of the room; for, it is really shameful, that a lady who is charming us all with her voice, or firing us, at the harp or piano, with the lightning of her fingers, should at the very moment be trembling with cold. As to cards, which were invented for the solace of a mad prince, and which are only tolerable, in my opinion, when we can be as mad as he was, that is to say, at a round game,—I cannot by any means patronise them, as a conscientious Firesider: for, not to mention all the other objections, the card-table is as awkward, in a fire-side point of view, as the dinner-table, and is not to be compared with it in sociality. If it be necessary to pay so ill a compliment to the company, as to have recourse to some amusement of the kind, there is chess or draughts, which may be played upon a table by the fire; but nothing is like discourse, freely uttering the fancy as it comes, and varied, perhaps, with a little music, or with the perusal of some favourite passages, which excite the comments of the circle. It is then, if tastes happen to be accordant, and the social voice is frank as well as refined, that the "sweet music of speech" is heard in its best harmony, differing only for apter sweetness, and mingling but for happier participation, while the mutual sense smilingly bends in with every rising measure,—

"And female stop smoothens the charm o'er all."

This is the finished evening; this the quickener at once and the calmer of tired thought; this the spot, where our better spirits await to exalt and enliven us, when the daily and vulgar ones have discharged their duty!

"Questo è il Paradiso,
Più dolce, che fra l' acque, e fra l' arene
In ciel son le Sirene."

TASSO. *Rime Amorose.*

"Here, here is found
A sweeter Paradise of sound,
Than where the Sirens take their summer stands
Among the breathing waters and glib sands."

Bright fires and joyous faces,—and it is no easy thing for philosophy to say good night. But health must be enjoyed, or nothing will be enjoyed; and the charm should be broken at a reasonable hour. Far be it, however, from a rational Firesider not to make exceptions to the rule, when friends have been long asunder, or when some domestic celebration has called them together, or even when hours peculiarly congenial render it difficult to part. At all events, the departure must be a voluntary matter; and here I cannot help exclaiming against the gross and villanous trick which some people have, when they wish to get rid of their company, of letting their fires go down, and the snuffs of their candles run to seed:—it is paltry and palpable, and argues bad policy as well as breeding; for such of their friends as have a different feeling of things, may chance to be disgusted with them altogether, while the careless or unpolite may choose to revenge themselves on the appeal, and face it out gravely till the morning. If a common visitor be inconsiderate enough, on an ordinary occasion, to sit beyond all reasonable hour, it must be reckoned as a fatality,—as an ignorance of men and things, against which you cannot possibly provide,—as a sort of visitation which must be borne with patience, and which is not likely to occur often, if you know whom you invite, and those who are invited know you.—But with an occasional excess of the fireside, what social virtue shall quarrel?

A single friend, perhaps, loiters behind the rest;—you are alone in the house;—you have just got upon a subject delightful to you both; the fire is of a candent brightness; the wind howls out of doors; the rain beats; the cold is piercing! Sit down.—This is a time when the most melancholy temperament may defy the clouds and storms, and even extract from them a pleasure that will take no substance by daylight. The ghost of his happiness sits by him, and puts on the likeness of former hours;—and if such a man can be made comfortable by the moment, what enjoyment may it not furnish to an unclouded spirit? If the excess belong not to vice, temperance does not forbid it when it only grows out of occasion. The great Poet, whom I have quoted so often for the fireside, and who will enjoy it with us to the last, was like the rest of our great poets, an ardent recommender of temperance in all its branches; but though he practised what he preached, he could take his night out of the hands of sleep as well as the most entrenching of us. To pass over, as foreign to our subject in point of place, his noble wish that he might "*oft* outwatch the bear," with what a wrapped-up recollection of snugness, in the elegy on his friend Diodati, does he describe the fireside enjoyment of a winter's night?—

"Pectora cui credam? Quis me lenire docebit
Mordaces curas? Quis longam fallere noctem
Dulcibus alloquiis, grato cum sibilat igni
Molle pyrum, et nucibus strepitat focus, et malus Auster
Miscet cuncta foris, et desuper intonat ulmo?"

"In whom shall I confide? Whose counsel find
A balmy med'cine for my troubled mind?
Or whose discourse, with innocent delight,
Shall fill me now, and cheat the wintry night,
When hisses on my hearth the pulpy pear,
And black'ning chestnuts start and crackle there,

> While storms abroad the dreary meadows whelm,
> And the wind thunders through the neighb'ring elm?"
>
> COWPER'S *Translation.*

Even when left alone, there is sometimes a charm in watching out the decaying fire,—in getting closer and closer to it with tilted chair and knees against the bars, and letting the whole multitude of fancies, that work in the night silence, come whispering about the yielding faculties. The world around is silent; and for a moment the very cares of day seem to have gone with it to sleep, leaving you to snatch a waking sense of disenthralment, and to commune with a thousand airy visitants that come to play with innocent thoughts. Then for imagination's sake, not for superstition's, are recalled the stories of the Secret World and the midnight pranks of Fairyism. The fancy roams out of doors after rustics led astray by the jack-o-lantern, or minute laughings heard upon the wind, or the night-spirit on his horse that comes flouncing through the air on his way to a surfeited citizen, or the tiny morris-dance that springs up in the watery glimpses of the moon;—or keeping at home, it finds a spirit in every room peeping at it as it opens the door, while a cry is heard from up stairs announcing the azure marks inflicted by

> "The nips of fairies upon maids' white hips,"

or hearing a snoring from below, it tiptoes down into the kitchen, and beholds where

> "Lies him down the lubber fiend,
> And stretch'd out all the chimney's length,
> Basks at the fire his hairy strength."

Presently, the whole band of fairies, ancient and modern, —the dæmons, sylphs, gnomes, sprites, elves, peries, genii, and, above all, the fairies of the fireside, the sala-

manders, lob-lie-by-the-fires, lars, lemures, and larvæ, come flitting between the fancy's eye and the dying coals, some with their weapons and lights, others with grave steadfastness on book or dish, others of the softer kind with their arch looks and their conscious pretence of attitude, while a minute music tinkles in the air, and Oberon gives his gentle order :—

> "Through this house in glimmering light
> By the dead and drowsy fire,
> Every elf and fairy sprite
> Hop as light as bird from brier;
> And this ditty, after me,
> Sing, and dance it trippingly."

Anon, the whole is vanished, and the dreamer, turning his eye down aside, almost looks for a laughing sprite, gazing at him from a tiny chair, and mimicking his face and attitude.—Idle fancies these, and incomprehensible to minds clogged with every-day earthliness,—but not useless, either as an exercise of the invention, or even as adding consciousness to the range and destiny of the soul. They will occupy us too, and steal us away from ourselves, when other recollections fail us or grow painful,—when friends are found selfish, or better friends can but commiserate, or when the world has nothing in it to compare with what we have missed out of it. They may even lead us to higher and more solemn meditations, till we work up our way beyond the clinging and heavy atmosphere of this earthly sojourn, and look abroad upon the light that knows neither blemish nor bound, while our ears are saluted at that egress by the harmony of the skies, and our eyes behold the lost and congenial spirits that we have loved, hastening to welcome us with their sparkling eyes and their curls that are ripe with sunshine.

But earth recalls us again ;—the last flame is out ;—

the fading embers tinkle with a gaping dreariness; and the chill reminds us where we should be.—Another gaze on the hearth that has so cheered us, and the last lingering action is to wind up the watch for the next day. Upon how many anxieties shall the finger of that brief chronicler strike—and upon how many comforts too! To-morrow our fire shall be trimmed anew; and so, gentle reader, good night: may the weariness I have caused you make sleep the pleasanter!

> "Let no lamenting cryes, nor dolefull tears,
> Be heard all night within, nor yet without;
> Ne let false whispers, breeding hidden fears,
> Break gentle sleep with misconceived doubt.
> Let no deluding dreams, nor dreadful sights,
> Make sudden, sad affrights,
> Ne let hobgoblins, names whose sence we see not,
> Fray us with things that be not;
> But let still silence true night-watches keep,
> That sacred Peace may in assurance reigne,
> And timely Sleep, since it is time to sleep,
> May pour his limbs forth on your pleasant plaine."
>
> SPENSER'S *Epithalamion.*[1]

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 grosser minds, an enemy to self-knowledge. The consciousness of the presence of

[1] Hazlitt has omitted much of this citation and has purposely joined two separate stanzas.—Editor *Bayard Series.*

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. While he is sensible of his own delinquency, he knows that he 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 imposture, 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 their humility, but we never knew them admit any one fault in particular, or acknow-

ledge 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 stigmatize 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 stigmatized as non-conformists 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, unimaginative, self-willed understanding of the sorcerer.

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, refine-

ment 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 societé*, est ce qu'il y a de plus leger, de 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 into 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 virtù? Where, O 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 coquet 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 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 insen-

sibility 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, a man who might seem at the moment undisturbed by the death of a wife or mistress, would perhaps never walk out in 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 only felt 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 field 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

[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.

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 or interest turns the scale. Hence the severe sarcasm of Rousseau, *Tout homme refléchi 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 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 ab-

stracted speculations. Grossness and sensuality have been remarked 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.

ON COMMON-PLACE CRITICS.

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

WE have elsewhere given some account of common-place people; we shall in this number attempt a description of another class of the community, who may be called (by way of distinction) common-place 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 pragmatical, troublesome sort of people, who would pass for what they are not, and try to put off their common-place 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 common-place 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 Shakespeare'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 any body 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 that 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 any thing 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 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 indolent, of those who have time to talk, and are not bound to think: and he considers any deviation from the select forms of common-place, 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 Shakespeare 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 since been 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's 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 Steam-Boats, the Gas-Lights, the new Patent Blacking; every thing 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 common-place 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.

ON ACTORS AND ACTING.

PLAYERS are "the abstracts and brief chronicles of the time;" 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 second-hand 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 play-house, 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 shew 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 humanize mankind, is by supplying them with ideas and subjects of conversation and interest in common. The progress of civilization is in proportion to the number of common-places 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 half-way 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 farther 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 Herald's 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 play-bills 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."

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 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 Shakespeare 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 farthest. 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 *chef d'œuvres* 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 Shakespeares, 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 Shuter, 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 miss 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. Montfort[1]

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

"What found most employment for her whole various excellence at once, was the part of Melantha, in "Marriage-a-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

or Mrs. Abington was the finest lady—Whether Wilks or Cibber was the best Sir Harry Wildair—Whether Macklin was really "the Jew that Shakespeare 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 parts, 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 sets 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

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him her whole artillery of airs, eyes, and motion; down goes her dainty, diving body to the ground, as if she were sinking under the conscious load of her own attractions; then launches into a flood of fine language and compliment, still playing her chest forward in fifty falls and risings, like a swan upon waving water; and, to complete her impertinence, she is so rapidly fond of her own wit, that she will not give her lover leave to praise it. Silent assenting bows, and vain endeavours to speak, are all the share of the conversation he is admitted to, which at last he is relieved from, by her engagement to half a score visits, which she *swims* from him to make, with a promise to return in a twinkling."—*The Life of Colley Cibber*, p. 138.

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 Shakespeare 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 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 day-time 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 road-side, presents to us a perfect picture of human felicity.

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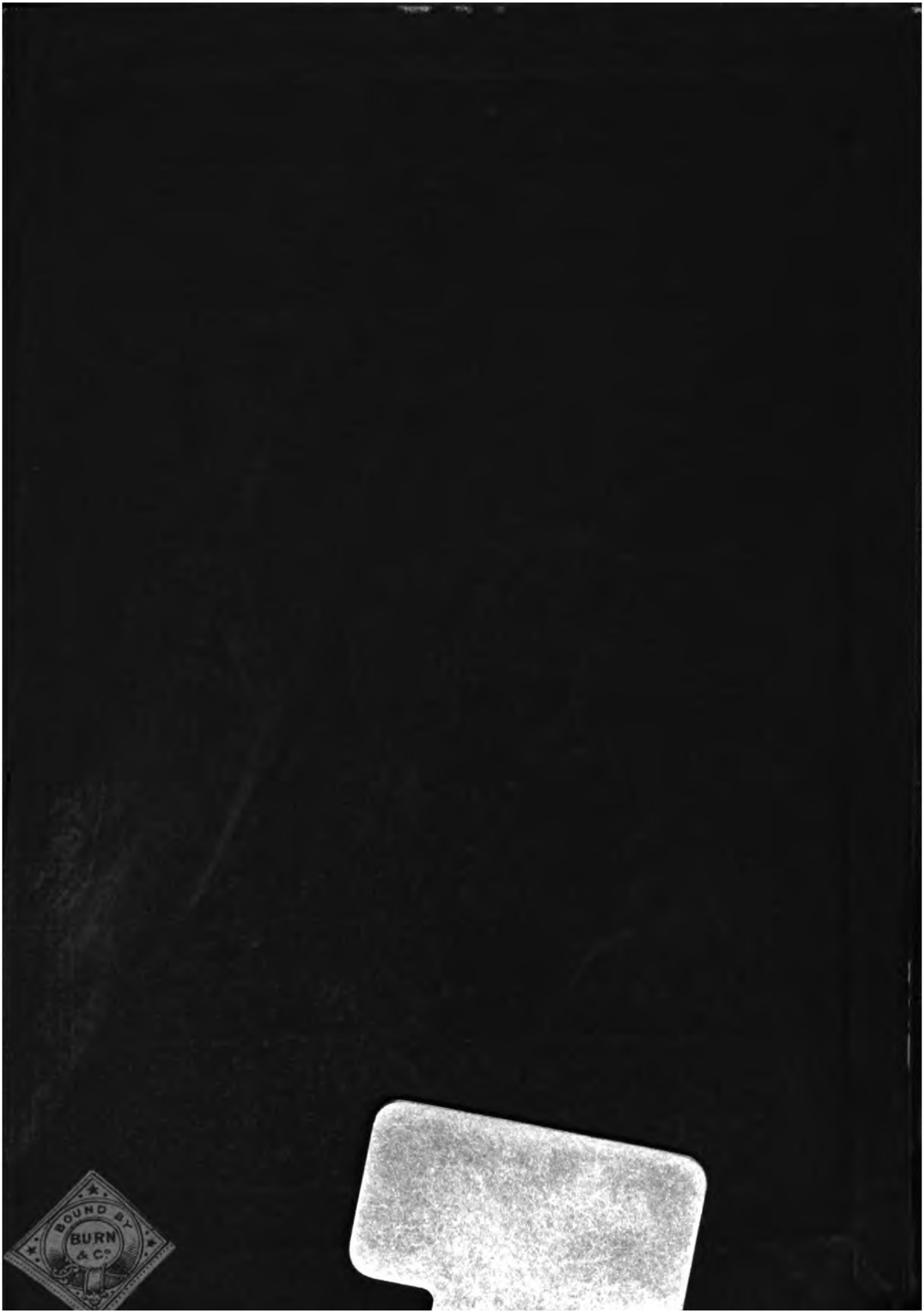
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